

— 2 —

The Environment That Creates Winners

I am going to ask you some questions now about the family you grew up in.

If your answer to all or most of these questions is “Yes,” congratulations. I’m jealous. You are one of the rare and lucky ones. You had the great good fortune to be raised in *the environment that creates winners*—the optimum environment for the growth and flourishing of human beings.

The fact is that very few of us were lucky enough to grow up in such an environment. I certainly wasn’t. It wasn’t our parents’ fault. They weren’t raised in that kind of environment either, and they couldn’t have had any idea how to create one. Given their own upbringing, it’s moving that most of them still managed to provide us with at least one or two features of that environment—because they loved us.

Every “Yes” you can answer to one of these questions is something inside you that you can build on—the beginning of a bridge between your child genius and its full adult expression. For every “No,” I’ll invite you to give a little thought to how your life could have been different if you’d been able to answer “Yes.” Even if you answer every one of these questions “No,” don’t despair. With the help of this book, you will be able to build that bridge now.

Here goes.

In your family, when you were growing up:

1. Were you treated as though you had a unique kind of genius that was loved and respected?

I hope you're lucky enough to be able to answer "Yes" to this one. Unfortunately, if you are like many of us, you not only weren't treated as if you were precious and special, but if you let it slip that you thought you were pretty hot stuff, you probably got cooled down fast.

The sad thing is, our parents sometimes did this because they loved us, and they wanted to protect us from the kinds of disappointment and humiliation they had suffered. A lot of them went out there with nothing on their side but their own frail, brave conviction of specialness, and they got clobbered. And they figured maybe if they cut our expectations down to size for us—nipped them in the bud, so to speak—we could avoid that pain. Sort of a bitter way of saying, "Don't try that, honey, you'll only get hurt. Believe me. I've been out there. I've tried."

Of course, sometimes there was a darker motive. Jealousy. Your parents may never have felt that they had the right, much less the opportunity, to get what they wanted out of life. Let's face it. How many of our mothers really had a chance to do anything but keep house, raise babies, and maybe work to supplement the family income? How many of our fathers really got the chance to explore their own talents and interests? Most of them had to start earning a living and supporting a family when their own lives had hardly begun. My parents were like that. If yours were, how do you imagine they felt when you came along? Proud. Delighted. Hopeful. But then you began to grow . . . and demand . . . and suddenly they saw blooming in you all the qualities they'd had to squelch in themselves: open, shameless wanting; free fantasy; originality; ambition; pride. They saw you grabbing the limelight when they had never gotten enough of it. They had learned at great inner cost to be modest and self-sacrificing and resigned—often for your sake—and they said, "*I learned that lesson. You'll learn it too.*"

As very small children, we sense that message. We'd rather forget our destiny than risk hurting or angering the person whose love is life itself to us.

So perhaps, whenever that stubborn “special” feeling does raise its head, it may be immediately followed by a wave of shame and an automatic little tape recording that says “Who do I think I am?” If that happens to you, it’s a sure sign that your answer to Question Number 1 was “No.”

Think about it: how might you and your life have been different if you had been treated differently? Where might you be today?

2. Were you told that you could do and be anything you wanted—and that you’d be loved and admired no matter what it was?

This is nothing more than love and respect in action. To truly cherish someone’s genius is to give it complete freedom to choose its own mode of expression—and then to support and honor that choice.

This means that when you came home from school and said, “I’ve decided I’m going to be a doctor when I grow up,” or “I’d sure like to be a movie star,” or, “I want to be a clown in the circus,” your parents said with real enthusiasm, “that sounds great! I think you’d be really good at it.”

Instead what most of us heard was something like this:

“A doctor? Well, dear, you could become a nurse.” Or:

“If it was so easy to be a movie star, everybody would be doing it. Stop day-dreaming and start thinking about the kind of grades you’ll need to get into college.” Or:

“Ugh, what a disgusting idea. The circus is so dirty.”

And so on.

This is where both our present behavior and our future ambitions began to be shaped to fit our parents’ ideas about what it was possible and proper for us to be, even if that was very different from what we really were and yearned to become. A steelworker’s son born to be a brilliant scholar may be in trouble. So may a lawyer’s daughter who dreams of being a jockey. Many families believe that certain occupations are either “beyond us” or “beneath us,” and they pass these preconceptions on to the child, so that the range of available possibilities is restricted from the start.

Of course, one of the most powerful sets of shaping preconceptions is, “What is a boy?” and “What is a girl?”

If you’re a man, when you were growing up I’ll bet there was one pair of words you never heard set up against each other with regard to you and your life, that is *selfless* and *selfish*. These words are for women. Oh, from time to time your mother may have told you you were selfish, but she didn’t really mean it. After all, you were different from her. You were supposed to be so absorbed in your own activities that you were more or less oblivious to the state of order or disorder in your room and the subtle mood changes of the people around you. You got love for being precisely that way—active and self-absorbed and good at things. (Good at *what* things is the rub, but I’ll get back to that in a moment.)

If you were a little girl, you probably weren’t told you were selfish unless you tried to do something you wanted to do that wasn’t for anybody but you. And then—especially if you got so wrapped up in it that you forgot to be nice to your baby brother or set the table—it was made swiftly clear that you lacked the quality that makes for lovable people and you’d better shape up.

Women are raised for love. That is, we have been raised to give it in order to get it. Our upbringing trained us to nurture other people. We’re supposed to be good to our children so that they can grow up and realize themselves. We’re supposed to back up our husbands so that they feel free to go out and realize themselves. In other words, the flowers are to grow, and guess what that makes us? Fertilizer—to put it politely. That’s how most of us were taught we would get love—not by being flowers ourselves. If we dared to flower—to be active and self-absorbed and good at things—nobody would feed our roots, and we would die. At least, that’s how it felt.

The psychologist Abraham Maslow has written that all human beings have a *hierarchy of needs*. Our more basic needs have to be fulfilled before we can even start thinking about the higher ones. First come food and shelter—the physical, survival needs. Then come the emotional needs—love for ourselves as we really are and a sense of belonging. Only when all those all those needs are fulfilled do we really feel secure enough to seek self-realization. Love is such a fundamental need that people go where the love goes just the way the roots of a plant turn toward water and the leaves turn toward light. Our culture trains us to take certain roles by putting the love in that direction—and we just grow that way! And the fact is that in our

culture, until very recently, most men have gotten love for realizing themselves; most women have gotten it for helping other people realize themselves.

That means a man can—if he's lucky—fulfill his whole hierarchy of needs with the same actions. Did you ever hear of a little boy who thought he was going to have to make a choice between a career and a wife?! On the contrary, the better he is in his career, the better the wife he's able to get! If you were a little girl, however, somewhere in the back of your mind you probably knew that that was one of the choices you were going to have to make. You could go ahead and be a success, sure, but you'd be loved just about as much as Joan Crawford was in all those movies, which is not at all. No wonder so many women feel divided about success, if not downright terrified of it! We're being forced to choose between two of our own human needs—a higher one, self-realization, and a more basic one, love. And that's an impossible choice.

Little girls are being brought up differently these days. But if you were born before, say, 1968, chances are you bear at least some of these marks of a nice old-fashioned girlhood:

1. You find it difficult to think in terms of what *you* want—to be, to do, to have, to see—because you've never been encouraged to think that way.
2. Even if you've managed to keep your dreams alive, you may have trouble taking them seriously, because you've never been taken seriously. Your talents and interests were considered, at best, qualities that would make you more attractive to a man, provided you didn't develop them seriously enough to threaten him!
3. You don't know how to ask for help in getting what you want, because you feel you're supposed to give help, not get it.
4. Even if you can ask for help, you don't know how to put human resources to work for you in an effective, task-oriented way. Most women are personality-oriented. We are hypersensitive to personalities and feelings, and we tend to get bogged down in them.
5. By far the most devastating: you are afraid that if you dare to go after what you want, you'll be all alone, because that's selfish—and selfish means alone.

Take heart. We'll be talking about all these problems—and finding real solutions for them—as this book goes along.

Men have other problems.

If you are a man, the odds are that you *were* taken seriously—maybe too seriously. You knew very early that you were going to be expected to earn your living when you grew up . . . but your parents may have had some very definite ideas about how you should earn that living. They wanted you to be a success all right—their kind of success. You had to get into a good college or make the Law Review, or take over the family business. You certainly had to do something “masculine.” Whether your family’s idea of a man was a professor, a company president, or a longshoreman, it’s likely to have been rather clearly defined, if not rigid. And your childhood play and daydreams were expected to conform to that idea. If you were a boy who happened to like to read a lot, or play the piano, or play with dolls (dolls are toy humans and little boys, being human, are often interested in them), what did you do if your dad got a sick look in his eyes? You put down your book or doll and picked up your baseball glove and went out and threw a few with him. As a result, as early as the age of five you may have already have had a full-blown case of amnesia about what *your* unique talents and interests were. I suspect that there are a lot of poets and chefs and dancers walking around out there disguised as lawyers, even from themselves.

Whether you’re a man or a woman, if your answer to question No. 2 was “No,” think about it: how might you and your life have been different if you had been lovingly told that the whole world of human possibilities was open to you to take your pick? Where might you be today?

3. Were you given real help and encouragement in finding out what you wanted to do—and how to do it?

This one is terribly important. Because without it, even if you did get No. 1 and No. 2, they may not have been much use to you. In fact, they may have done you more harm than good. Ask those of us who were told we could be whatever we wanted—and then weren’t told how.

What this means is that if you said, “You know, I’d really love to be a scientist,” or if you spent your free time drawing or taking things apart to see how they worked, you parents noticed your interest, gently encouraged it, and

helped you feed it by putting all kinds of resources at your disposal: books, materials, people. They helped you get a library card and showed you where the science shelf was. They helped you set up a terrarium, or they gave you a microscope or a good set of pastels for your birthday. They introduced you to a scientist or an art teacher or an inventor or a mechanic who was actually doing something that clicked with your interests and was happy to let you watch—and teach you how.

In other words, they used their adult knowledge of the world to show you some of the wonderful things that could be done—and were being done—by people like you.

Many parents, with the best will in the world, didn't do this because they thought it would be "pushing" you. Or it may have been a sneaky Puritan test of your motivation: if you really cared, you'd have the ingenuity and the guts to go find out for yourself. But when you're 5 years old, or 8 years old, how are you going to know that there are pastel chalks in all the colors of the earth and sky unless somebody shows them to you? When you're 10, or 12, you take a look at the awesome competence of a grown-up dancer or doctor or carpenter, and you're just not going to see how you'll ever make it—unless someone takes the trouble to tell you that she or he started at the beginning. Like you, with nothing but curiosity and love. Talent is inborn. Know-how is acquired. And you don't acquire it out of the air; you acquire from the people who've got it. If your family was confident and aware enough to help you get in touch with even a small part of the big and thrilling world of grown-up play—the world of skills and activities and ideas—you're in luck.

Relatively few women have gotten this kind of help and most of them come from wealthy or accomplished families like Marya Mannes and Margaret Mead. More men got it because it's considered important for a boy to develop skills and interest. But on the other hand, he may also be expected to do it all by himself. Now here's a very interesting question:

If you did get No. 1 and No. 2, but not No. 3, did you blame yourself for not becoming all they said you could become?

I'll bet at least once, and probably eleven times, you've pulled yourself together, decided you could really make it, walked out the front door, and then not had the slightest idea where to go next. Of course not! *Nobody ever*

told you. But instead of walking up to somebody and saying, “Excuse me, but where do I go next?” you said to yourself, “Here I’ve been secretly thinking I was something special. It’s not true. I’d better be content with just typing 80 words per minute and being a good person.” And you went back in the house and sat down, glad that nobody had seen you. That lasted maybe a year or two, until the dream-hunger rose up again and you tried again and wound up standing on the same sidewalk, thinking, “That’s twice. That proves I’m a dummy.” And all because nobody ever told you that you’re supposed to walk out that door ignorant, and that you are then entitled to get all the information, instruction, help, and advice you need!

If your answer to No. 3 was “No,” think about it: how might you and your life be different if you had been helped to decide *what* you wanted to do—and then helped to learn how to do it? Where might you be today?

4. *Were you encouraged to explore all your own talents and interests even if they changed from day to day?*

That means when you came in at the age of 7 and said, “Mama, I am going to be a movie star,” she said, “You know, you might be good at that.” Then she got out the Super-8, let you put on her makeup, took a movie of you, let you see it, and showed you and your best friend how to use the camera. And two days or two months later, when you announced, “I’m given up my career as an actress. I’ve decided to be a fireman and rescue people,” she said, “Sounds good to me. Want to go over to the firehouse and look at the engines?”

The key word is *explore*. Childhood is a great time for trying out all the myriad possibilities of your being. (Adulthood isn’t a bad time for doing that either, as you’ll find out as we go along.) And taking a child’s talents and interests “seriously” does not mean expecting a 7-year-old to choose her lifetime career.

If your answer to No. 4 is “No,” how do you think your life might be different today if you’d been encouraged to explore *all* your talents and interests? Because most of us do have more than one, you know.

5. *Were you allowed to complain when the going got rough, and given sympathy instead of being told to quit?*

This one breaks down into two parts:

5a. Were you allowed to complain when the going got rough?

That means it was OK to come in and say, “It’s too hard. I can’t. I won’t. I’m going to flunk. I don’t know how. They yelled at me. I hate it. I’ve changed my mind. I’m never going to do anything again.” And . . . they listened. They didn’t get hysterical and say, “I knew it—she can’t make it. I was afraid of this.” And they didn’t get furious and say, “Stop that! Pull yourself together!” They really listened, so that you felt that they cared about you, and that doubt, fear and discouragement were normal, acceptable feelings—not shameful or frightening ones.

5b. Were you given sympathy instead of being told to quit?

A lot of us—especially women—were given sympathy as a part of being told to quit. “Welcome home, poor darling. You’re right, it is too hard. Of course you should give up. Go to bed and relax. It doesn’t matter. We still love you. We’ll take care of you.”

I know a woman, very unsure of her capacities as a student, who started medical school at 27. She was overwhelmed by the masses of material she had to learn, but she was struggling bravely through it all when her father called her up one night and said, “You know, we’ll still love you if you fail.” Of course he was trying to be kind, to take the pressure off. She could have killed him.

What we really needed, and what precisely none of us got, was to be told, “Yeah, it sounds awful. Really rough. I remember when I was in school—it’s murder.” And then, when you’d griped and moaned your heart out for fifteen minutes and were feeling lighter: “Finished? All right, come on. Time to get out there and try again. Yes, it is hard. And you can do it.” And maybe even: “I’ll help.”

If your answer to one or both parts of No. 5 was “No,” how do you think your life might have been different if you had been given that kind of tender toughness?

6. Were you bailed out when you got in over your head—without reproach?

This one really breaks down into two parts, too.

6a. Were you bailed out? If you got into trouble and called Mama and Daddy, did you get help? A lot of us did.

6b. But without reproach? Not likely. Most of us vividly remember the scoldings on the way home in the car when we'd done something a little too adventurous or impulsive and had to be hauled out of the drink by the scruff of the neck. A lot of that anger was just the anxiety and pain of parents who would have liked to spare us the uncomfortable but priceless experience of making mistakes. Some of it may have been embarrassment at the way our conduct reflected on them. But trying something and messing it up is a complete and self-contained learning experience. Just about all a parent or teacher can do is point that out. Throwing anger or blame at somebody who's already smarting from a mistake only damages the learner's feeling of self-worth and his or her eagerness to try things again. Yet how rare it was to be told, "Mistakes don't mean you're bad. They're how you learn."

If your answer to No. 6 was "No," how might your life be different if you had been told just that?

Now comes the toughest and most important one of all:

7. Were you surrounded by winners who were pleased when you won?

That is: were the people in your family people who had really gotten what they wanted out of life—who had gotten their chance, and taken it—so that when *you* won, they felt great about it?

They didn't have mixed emotions. They cheered: "Terrific! Another one on board! We are some bunch of talented people."

That sounds like Heaven to almost all of us. We live in a society that has made it heartbreakingly, unnecessarily difficult for people to get what they want, or even to believe that they should or can get it. So most of us grew up surrounded by people who'd either never had a chance, or who'd had a chance but no support or encouragement. They had not gotten what they wanted—and they either blamed circumstances ("hard reality"), or they blamed themselves. Either way, they could not be anything but ambivalent about the prospect of our success . . . afraid for us if we tried, helpless to

help us, jealous and lonely if we made it across the line into the winners' world.

Have you caught on to the secret? This one single quality of the ideal family is the key to them all. *The environment that creates winners is almost always made up of winners.* That doesn't necessarily mean famous people, hot shots, or superachievers. It does mean people who are contented and curious, open and vital, who trust life and respect themselves—so that they can allow and encourage you to make your own unique experiment.

People who are happily absorbed in what they are doing are real, reachable “role models” for their children. Their kids can observe, close up, *how things really get done*—not by magic, but step by possible step—whether it's practicing the piano or building a bookshelf. What's more, parents who are “winners,” so far from “not having time” for their children's interests, are the most likely to encourage them, too, to experience the satisfaction of doing things they love. And they will know, because they've done it themselves, how to help their children get in touch with the skills, information, and resources they need. People who have tried, failed without blame, tried again in a different way, and succeeded—and all winners, without exception, have done this countless times—will be able to help their children overcome discouragement and learn from their mistakes.

Because information about what it really takes to win has not been made freely available in our society, there has been almost no way to learn it except by being lucky enough to get close to people who are doing it. If you didn't grow up in a family of winners, there was really only one other way to learn the secrets of winning. And that's the long, hard way I did it—by trial and error, against tough inner and outer odds: fear, loneliness, and ignorance.

I want to change all that. I don't think anybody should have to do it the long, hard way. Life is too short, and the unique human potential of each one of us is too precious to waste. The purpose of this book is to give you the inside dope on what it really takes to win. But first, I'd like you to ask yourself a question that may be a little painful. Daring to answer it, in spite of that pain, is an important first step on the road to success.

Suppose you had grown up in a family of winners—people who had gotten what they wanted out of life, who knew how to help you get what *you* wanted, and who were nothing but delighted when you got it.

How do you think you and your life might have been different? Where might you be today?

I'm going to run through the list of qualities of that ideal family once more, and as I do, you'll have an opportunity to pull together all the thoughts you've had in the course of this chapter.

EXERCISE 3: What You Might Have Been

Remember what you learned in the last chapter about “your original self”? Now imagine that that gifted child—you—had grown up in a family in which you were:

- treated as though you had a unique kind of genius that was loved and respected . . .
- told that you could do and be anything you wanted—and that you'd be loved and admired no matter what it was . . .
- given real help and encouragement in finding out *what* you wanted to do and *how* to do it . . .
- encouraged to explore *all* your own talents and interests, even if they changed from day to day . . .
- allowed to complain when the going got rough, and given sympathy instead of being told to quit . . .
- bailed out when you got in over your head—without reproach . . .
- surrounded by winners who were pleased when you won.

What do you think you would be doing now? What would you already have done? What kind of person would you be?

Think BIG. Be as extravagant and far-fetched as you like. What I want to hear is the big one, the dream you think you would have gone for if everything had been on your side. If you really think you might have been President of the United States, say so. After all, we're only talking “what if.” All the rules of “reality” and “possibility” and “modesty”—even the law of

gravity, if it cramps your style—are hereby suspended for the duration of the exercise. We’ll deal with them later. Right now, I want your imagination free to fly just as far as it can in whatever direction it chooses.

The pain can come in as it dawns on you how much you might really have done if your circumstances had been different. But uncomfortable as it is, that is a *good sign*. It means you are beginning to cherish and respect yourself—and without that, you’ll never know how much you still can do. So just let any anger or pain lend your imagination defiant wings. Your capacity to do will depend on your capacity to dream, so prove that *that* capacity, at least, has survived intact.

What might you have been?

I’d have been a famous movie star, and gotten bored with it and given it up already!

Here are some answers given by a roomful of perfectly “ordinary” people:

“I’d either be Judy Collins or the president of a corporation.”

“I’d be a whole lot richer.”

“A great surgeon.”

“The Sarah Bernhardt of the 21st century.”

“I’d have my own company.”

“A traveling news correspondent.”

“A top administrator in the school district.”

“I’d be an architect.”

“A world-famous organist.”

“An anchorwoman.”

“This is very immodest, but I’d be the president of IBM.”

Stop right there! I asked you to throw out modesty, but this woman—it *was* a woman—said, “very immodest.” That’s an important thing to notice about women: whenever we confess to having big dreams or ambitions, we get embarrassed and apologetic. Show me a man who feels that it’s “immodest” to head for the top of any business or profession! You don’t have to dream of being Barbara Walters or the president of a corporation—to open a plant nursery or learn to play the guitar is every bit as fine an ambition—but if that *is* the kind of thing you yearn for, don’t apologize!

“I’d have made a movie, traveled all over the world, and had several hit records.”

“I’d have given Mme. Curie a run for her money.”

“I’d have three Olympic gold medals.”

“I’d be the female counterpart of David Letterman.”

“I’d have published a novel, and I’d play folk guitar, and I’d be studying mime, sign language, drums, Spanish, and Japanese!!”

“I’d be a multilingual interpreter at the UN.”

“I’d be the originator and head of a very unusual kind of textile center—a design and manufacturing center for fabrics and a learning institution. Or I’d be a painter. Or an anthropologist. And a folksinger in twenty languages on the side.”

Yes. There’s evidence that we are all, at least potentially, “Renaissance people” —that a single human brain contains many more capacities than we realize.

Now look at your answer. Were you as daring as the people quoted above?

Examine your answer carefully. Make sure you’re not pulling your punches, settling for the “possible” or the “realistic.” If you are, stop and adjust your sights upward. Remember that this is fantasy. We’re talking about you as you would have responded to a loving, encouraging, instructive environment expressly designed to cultivate your genius.

I’ll bet you would have done some pretty fantastic things.

Would you still like to do them? Or a lot of other things that are just as much fun and just as grand?

You still can.

I don’t care how old you are, or what your past history has been, or what your present circumstances are: you can still do and have and be anything in the world you really want. And the way you do it is by creating the environment that creates winners around you *now*.

BEYOND “FREUDIAN FATALISM”

“But isn’t it too late?” you may be asking. “The damage is done. OK, I can see how growing up in that kind of family would have made me creative and strong and unafraid. But I didn’t. So I’ve already lost my best years for learning skills, and I don’t have any of those fabulous inner strengths that are built by good early nutrition—self-confidence and self-esteem and the courage to take risks. I’m going to have to limp along through life without them—unless I can undo some of the damage in therapy, and that’s a long, slow process.”

I believe in therapy. But if I’d waited for it to fix me, I’d have been 90 before I walked out the door. It’s not only that untying all those emotional knots takes time. (After all, it took years to tie them and deeply impressionable years at that.) It’s that *understanding is one thing and action is another*. You can spend years understanding your fear of water and still never walk to the edge of the pool and jump in.

But you don’t have to be doomed to a half-life by the environment you grew up in. Put us in a nourishing environment, even late in a hard life, and we burst into bloom. The misconception I call “Freudian fatalism” has had its day. Now many therapists themselves are rejecting the idea that character is almost irreversibly stamped by the early years of life. They have discovered that we never lose the capacity for growth—or for new learning.

But we never lose our basic needs, either—for food and shelter, acceptance and love. And if you know someone who’s winning and *loving it* (and that’s the only definition of winning I’ll accept), you can bet that there’s a source of support and nourishment in that person’s life. And I don’t mean only in the past. I mean right now.

You know that “self-reliant” entrepreneur who made it to the top by lonely struggle? He’s got . . . a wife. A woman who cheered him when he was low, listened to his gripes, told him he could do it, typed his proposals, and fed him his dinner. In Chapters 5 and 10, you’ll learn how to create that kind of support for yourself without taking over anyone else’s life—whether you’re a man or a woman.

He has something else, too. A little black book full of phone numbers he knows he can call—classmates, cronies, colleagues, friends—whenever he

needs information, advice, an introduction, a loan, or an expert's services. That's called the *old-boy network*, and you will learn how to create one for yourself in Chapter 7, even if you're not an old-boy yourself, or if you're a girl.

And how about that ever so "self-disciplined" novelist who turns out a complete first draft in nine months, when you can't get past page one? She has a structure. A deadline. An expectant editor waiting for her work. A place to sit down undisturbed. A certain number of hours a day. A regular daily output of words or pages. Someone to give her a cup of coffee and a sendoff like Odysseus in the morning, and then meet her at three and say, "How'd it go?" and maybe even read what she's written. Virginia Woolf had Leonard. George Eliot had George Henry Lewes. Gertrude Stein had Alice B. Toklas. Soil and air and water and sun.

You know how hard it is to get anything done entirely on your own. You look for any reason to stop, or you forget, or your pencil breaks or your finger gets stuck in the typewriter. You don't do it. *And nobody notices*. The times in your life when you have gotten things done, it was probably in a situation where somebody set tasks for you and would have noticed and minded if you didn't do them—like when you worked in an office, or when you got assignments and papers in school. That isn't a terrible weakness. It's human nature. A structure is to us what a loom is to a weaver, or a door-frame to a spider. That's why the first thing all "self-motivated" people do is set up a structure that will not only help them but *make* them do what they want to do! You will learn to create that kind of structure for yourself in Chapters 6 through 11: a plan that breaks down your goal into manageable tasks and assigns them to you one by one, and a *report-in system* that puts your boss and your conscience outside yourself.

To succeed in our thin and chilly atmosphere, you need a Portable Life Support System, like the backpacks the astronauts wore on the moon to give them oxygen, comfortable pressure, and communication. The rest of this book is going to be your Portable Success Support System. It will provide all the features of the environment that creates winners. Since you are a unique individual, you will adapt this support system to your own needs. Which parts of it you find most useful will depend on which features you were missing in your past:

- *If you were never treated as if you had a special kind of genius that was worthy of love and respect, you will find that genius alive and well in Chapter 3, “Stylesearch.”*
- *If you weren’t told that it was fine to do and be anything you wanted, Chapter 4, “Goalsearch,” will help you find what’s exactly right for you out of all the possibilities in the world.*
- *If you weren’t helped to figure out what you wanted to do—and HOW to do it, Chapter 4 will take care of the “what”; the whole “craft section of the book will show you HOW.*
- *If you weren’t encouraged to explore ALL your own talents and interests, Chapters 3 and 4 (and especially “Five Lives,”) will introduce you to some you didn’t even remember you had—and show you how they can all be active in your life.*
- *If you weren’t allowed to complain and given sympathy instead of being told to quit, you’ll have a ball in Chapter 5, “Hard Times, or The Power of Negative Thinking.”*
- *If you weren’t bailed out of trouble without reproach, you’ll find ample permission to goof up in Chapter 9, “First Aid for Fear.”*
- *If you weren’t surrounded by winners who were delighted when you won, Chapter 7 (“Barn-Raising”), Chapter 10 (“Don’t-Do-It-Yourself”) and the Epilogue (“Learning to live with Success”) will show you how you can encourage your friends and family to win with you. But this whole book was written in the hope that we can gradually change the desert around us—with its rare, lush oases of celebrity—into a worldwide garden of winners who are delighted with and for each other.*