



You Are Who You Hang With

Like it or not, the quality of people that surround you in life is a major predictor of the level of success and happiness that you will reach. It has been said that you are “the average of the 5 people that you spend the most time with”, Jim Rohn. It is easy to believe that your collection of friends, family and coworkers are really not that significant in determining how your life turns out but that would be erroneous thinking. I know for myself, I would really like to believe that I have the right stuff already deep inside me that will allow me to reach any level of success I choose regardless of the people around me but again that is just plain wrong. Study after study as well as plenty of unbiased personal observation show me the opposite to be actually true. **The quality of your reference group will determine your ultimate levels of success.**

Your reference group is made up of individuals that (consciously or not) influence your beliefs, attitudes and ultimately your behaviors. Unfortunately most people don't put any thought into this success factor at all. They just hang out with people they like and feel are fun or nice but surprisingly that can lead them down the road to failure. The way the human mind works is that we will set our standards based on reference examples. Did you know that before 1954 it was thought impossible that a human being could run a mile in 4 minutes or less? It was clearly understood in the world of athletes that this was a barrier that was just humanly impossible to break. After all no one had ever done it so it must therefore be impossible right? Wrong! On May 6th, 1954 a runner named Roger Bannister for the first time broke that barrier by running a mile in just 3:54. But what is really interesting here is that for thousands of years before that date no human was able to break the 4-minute mile barrier, however once a new reference point was set a total of 10 more runners also able to beat the 4-minute barrier within the next 30 months.

We all see the problems in our world with poverty, illegal drug use and crime. It is my experience that it is much harder to be poor than to be wealthy or at least comfortably middle-class. So if it is easier to be wealthy than poor why isn't everyone wealthy? Yes you guessed it; for many the problem is their personal reference group is completely abysmal. If you are completely surrounded by other people that are poor and only see examples of government handouts, stealing from others or selling drugs to make money it is very likely that you will end up doing the same things. It's all you know and see from what you consider your peers so you come to believe that this is all that is possible for you. But there is so much more waiting for you and you could see it if you had a better reference point.

On the other extreme you may also have noticed that many kids with rich and successful parents also end up rich and successful. Some might begrudgingly and wrongly think that they just inherited the money and it comforts many to believe that these people just had everything handed to them. Even great wealth is often lost quickly without learning how to earn more. The truth is that these rich kids grow up to be rich and successful adults because their reference group presented higher income reference group. Your personal reference group not only helps you see **how to accomplish** your goals but also gives you the confidence and faith that what you want really **can be accomplished**.

Now here is the good news; you are totally free to choose any reference group (or groups) that you want to achieve the level of success you think would be beneficial in reaching your success goals. You should try to consciously align your reference groups to your success goals. If one of your goals is to be financially independent then you should attempt to find other people that are successfully financially independent or at least like-minded in that pursuit. And don't put it off – start today to be creating that new set people in your life that will provide you with the group mentality that you have set for yourself. It is really easy and fun to start adding positive people in your life but to make this completely work you will also need to start removing yourself from those negative influences as well. Do whatever it takes to make this happen. You may even have to go as far as moving to a new area or starting a new job to leave your negative reference groups behind and move on to the exciting life ahead of you!