

Success

*I have learned that success is to be measured
not so much by the position that one has reached in life
as by the obstacles overcome while trying to succeed.*

Booker T Washington

(1856-1915)

Dedicated to

mother

who wanted me to be a top student

Dearest Mama,

Because of your. . .

<i>Endurance</i>	<i>I could bear unbearable hardship</i>
<i>Self-reliance</i>	<i>I did not fall into hopelessness</i>
<i>Self-acceptance</i>	<i>I appreciate my blessings and my troubles</i>
<i>Resilience</i>	<i>I am not defeated by setbacks</i>
<i>Determination</i>	<i>I developed a strong will to succeed</i>
<i>Perseverance</i>	<i>I never gave up hope</i>
<i>Trustworthiness</i>	<i>I value my integrity</i>
<i>Love</i>	<i>I conquered insurmountable obstacles</i>
<i>Self-discipline</i>	<i>I secured my future</i>
<i>Humility</i>	<i>I remember my roots</i>
<i>Helpfulness</i>	<i>I value friendship</i>
<i>Backbone</i>	<i>I am a man</i>
<i>Steadfastness</i>	<i>I could not bear to disappoint you</i>
<i>Vigilance</i>	<i>I learnt not to be complacent</i>
<i>Invincibility</i>	<i>I acquired inner strength</i>
<i>Modesty</i>	<i>I did not get carried away by my successes.</i>

Without the Soulprints that you left me, I would not have developed the PRAISE life skills model. I would not have achieved my *Break Through*. I would have had a *Rough Life* but no *Rich Life, Red Marks* but no *Flying Colours*...

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No words can express my heartfelt love and respect for you. Your love continues to live in all these books, and in more books yet to be written and published. In gratefulness, for all your wisdom and sacrifices, I dedicate this book to you.

Thank you, Mama.

George Tan
Mother's Day
14 May 2006

最亲爱的妈妈：

一切缘于您的……

忍耐	我扛得起千斤重担
自立	我不坠落无望之井
自纳	我为个人的祸福感恩
弹力	我自强不息
决心	我培养起追求成功的钢铁意志
毅力	我从不绝望
诚信	我正直不移
爱心	我排除万难翻山越岭
自律	我前途在握
谦卑	我饮水思源
热心	我重情义
骨气	我顶天立地
坚定	我无法让您有一丝失望
警惕	我学会了不可自满
坚韧	我寻获了心灵力量
朴实	我谨记满招损、谦受益。

倘若不是您鼓励、引导我走过<<心之旅>>，我便不可能领悟、发展出 PRAISE 生活技能模式；我生命中就不会有这样的‘突破’；所经历的将只有‘穷之旅’而不是<<富之旅>>；最后惟有‘名落孙山’而不是‘再攀高峰’ - <<才之旅>>……

在我心坎深处对您的爱与敬，并非言语所能传达。您的教诲与大爱，不但留存于这几本书中，也将藉着更多将会陆续出版的创作，而在读者心中留印。缅怀着母亲您的非凡的智慧和无私奉献精神，我谨将此书奉献给您！

谢谢您！妈妈！

水袁笔于
母亲节
2006年5月14日

Foreword

*by Michael Aun**

Miracles happen when one chooses to never give up. One of the most inspiring examples I know of this truism is that of Wilma Rudolph, better known by her nickname, Lightning Wilma. She was born premature and with polio. At the age of four, she was stricken with double pneumonia and scarlet fever, which left her with a paralysed and useless left leg. Doctors told her mother, "the child will never walk."

*Michael Aun, CSP, CPAE is the writer of "Behind the Mike", a column syndicated in some 60 American newspapers and periodicals for over a quarter century. He is also the author of four books, including *The Toastmasters International Guide to Successful Speaking*.

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Her mother's response was a line adapted from a favourite hymn, "Wilma can climb her highest mountain if she'll do it one step at a time."

Wilma took five years just to walk one step without a brace, and another five years to develop that step into a smooth, rhythmic stride. On her 13th birthday, Wilma joined the track team. She came in last in every single race. She would shout above the laughter of her teammates, "I'll never give up. . . I promise you, I'll never give up!"

Slowly but surely, Wilma improved — until in 1960, at age 20, she was chosen to represent the United States in the Rome Olympics. She was an unknown black athlete who walked with a noticeable limp. Many in the Olympic stadium must have wondered what she was doing there. It took exactly 11 seconds to get the answer.

Wilma won her first gold medal in the 100m dash in those 11 seconds, beating the world record. She won her second gold in the 200m race. But the greatest miracle was yet to come. In the finals of the 4 × 100m relay, Wilma was the anchor runner. She dropped her baton. The German team, anchored by former world record

holder Yetta Hynie whom Wilma had previously beaten, looked set for a sure victory. With less than ten seconds to go, Wilma reached down, picked up the baton and pulled up beside her rival. The rest is Olympic history. Wilma led her team to victory. She became the first American woman to win three Olympic sprint golds.

Reading the manuscript of George Tan's book reminds me of Lightning Wilma. George, too, chose never to give up. Among his many achievements, George was a "shortie" to become captain of his school's badminton team. His greatest miracle, however, was his total transformation from being a "gangster kid" who did miserably in school, to twice becoming a top student in his postgraduate studies. And he went on to succeed in career and entrepreneurship.

Like Wilma, George came from a highly disadvantaged background. He grew up in extreme poverty, and had a father who abused him to the point of torture. He also had neighbourhood friends who introduced him to gambling and the 3 V's — vulgarism, vandalism and violence. By the time he was eight years old, George was already a hardened gambling addict. He would throw

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down his books and rush off to gamble even on the eve of his school examinations.

The inspiring story of *George's* journey forms just a small part of this book, but it sends the vital message to all who are struggling with their studies, and with life, that miracles are possible — when one chooses to never give up.

Inspiration is vital because it leads to motivation. And motivation leads to success.

On the subject of motivation, I am happy to note that *George* and I share a similar view — that motivation is an inside job. My years of observing and studying people have led me to firmly believe that motivation comes purely from within oneself. The people who “motivate” — parents, teachers, sports coaches, employers, religious leaders and others, including motivational speakers like myself — can only draw out whatever motivation that already exists within a person. Or, we might turn “negative motivation” — such as being motivated to laze around — into something more positive. But motivation has to be there to begin with. If a person lacks motivation, no one can help him or her.

Clearly, George recognises the value of motivation and inspiration. There are many "How to..." books about studies, examinations and just about any other endeavour. Most of these focus on the tools and techniques. But, as George rightly points out, tools by themselves cannot produce anything. It is the person using the tools — more specifically, the motivation that dwells within the person — that really matters.

Even though this book focuses on success in studies, the wider focus has to be on success in life. Ultimately, the difference that we make comes from having life skills, particularly the ability to overcome obstacles and rebound from setbacks. For this purpose, readers are referred to George Tan's other book, *SUCCESS Secrets: Real-Life Stories to Inspire and Motivate* — a sequel to *Scholars' Secrets*. Here, George explains in detail his own life skills model called PRAISE, which embodies six key concepts: Prizedream, Rules, Analysis, Invincibility, Strategy and Excellence. The book includes a big, inspiring chapter about people who made it in life, becoming multi-millionaires and billionaires, prime ministers and presidents, Oscar winners and Nobel Prize winners, despite having

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little or no education. Thus, there is an important message here. While examinations are important, they are not as crucial as the life skills that a person acquires in the process of getting those results.

With these tools, and the motivation and determination to never give up, it does not matter whether we are born premature and with polio, or born to an abusive father in a poor, gangster neighbourhood. We can overcome whatever disadvantages and obstacles that life presents. This invaluable book is about how we can all work miracles.

Michael Aun
1 October 2006

Acknowledgements

"We have to give every student a range of experiences from young, so that they can develop the robustness that enables them to rebound from setbacks, and the confidence to build and cross bridges in their lives."

**— Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam
Minister for Education, Singapore**

I am grateful to the Minister for Education, Mr S. Tharman, for these words, which he spoke at a luncheon session of the Malaysia-Singapore Roundtable. I was in the audience and his words struck me, as the cliché goes, "like a bolt of lightning".

It was 13 December 2004. I had started to write my life story about 10 weeks earlier.

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I encountered numerous obstacles and was feeling very discouraged. The Minister's words struck me because my life story has been one of rebounding from setbacks. I became inspired to complete my book no matter what it took. I decided not to give up!

My mother's last wish before she died was that I should leave something behind, and I felt it would be good to share my struggles and triumphs. Recently, I came across a quotation, from the 18th-century missionary Stephen Grellet, that reaffirmed my decision to write:

"I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

I am glad that I finally got down to sharing my experiences and my success model. This dream had been at the back of my mind ever since I achieved my breakthrough and topped my professional Diploma in Personnel Management

and Master of Arts in Human Resource Development at age 27.

I have many people to thank for helping me achieve my Prizedream.

I clearly remember a conversation I had in 1996 with Mr T. C. Tan, my ex-boss at National Semiconductor in 1987. He encouraged me to write my life story. I wrote 80 pages, but my story came to an abrupt stop because I was involved in another crisis. I was not ready.

In August 2004, Ruth, a church friend, asked me, "What is your dream?" I said I wanted to share my tumultuous life journey with others, in the hope that they will likewise share their life stories. We can all learn from and inspire one another. However, this was only a dream, as I am not a writer. So where do I begin?

It was the ever-helpful Professor Tommy Koh, Ambassador-at-Large at the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who got me started (again). Ruth had mentioned my dream to him and he asked for a two-page synopsis of my life story.

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That was 29 September 2004. That night, I sat down at 8 p.m. to write and did not stop until 5 a.m. I completed 30 pages. For the next 10 days, I tried and tried, but could not fit my life story into two pages. In the end, I submitted an eight-page synopsis, hoping that Prof Koh would pardon my longwindedness.

I am deeply grateful that Prof Koh took time from his busy schedule to read my synopsis, for he is a very busy man wearing many hats: Chairman of National Heritage Board, Chairman of Advisory Board of National Book Development Council, Director of Institute of Policy Studies, and many more that I may not be aware of.

Prof Koh passed my synopsis to Prof Kirpal Singh, Associate Professor of English Literature and Creative Thinking at the Singapore Management University. Both of them felt it was great for me to share my story. They asked for the manuscript.

Manuscript! It was not supposed to be part of the dream! Yet, I did not want to disappoint the two highly-respected professors, so I decided to give myself a second chance. Eight years after my aborted attempt, I decided to take on

the challenge — there was to be no turning back.

Prof Singh is well-respected in literary circles for nurturing writers. I began to meet the ever-encouraging Prof Singh and to learn from scratch about writing, writers and the literary world.

My original plan was to write one book. Prof Singh encouraged me to write a series of books as he found my rocky life journey to be colourful. He challenged me to think big and to think outside the box. His encouragement sowed the seeds for my dream to touch the hearts of many in the old frontiers, new frontiers and lost frontiers.

This book is a result of Prof Singh's exploration and encouragement, without which I would have only written my life story, or perhaps not even that. Thanks to him advising me not to stop at one, I have so far written four other books:

- *Soulprints I — BreakThrough*
- *Benjamin Franklin — A Bright Spark!*
- *SUCCESS Secrets: Real-Life Stories to Inspire and Motivate*
- *Rough Life Rich Life*

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Another book, *Red Marks to Flying Colours* — about my successes in study, career and entrepreneurship — is on its way.

I am grateful to Teri Tan, correspondent for *Publishers Weekly (USA)*, for publishing an article about me in the 3 October 2005 issue. I must also thank Gregory Vijayendran of Wong Partnership and President of Rainbow Club, for his legal advice.

I am indebted to the many international best-selling authors and top motivational speakers for their encouragement as well as their endorsements of this book and my other titles. I am touched by those who also shared their writing experiences and advice.

My ever-hardworking team at BOOKSOUL International put in their best brains and efforts to bring about this book. Thank you to the behind-the-scenes heroes who supported me: Debbie So, Lynnette Leong, Ong Chin Ann, Charles Ban, Sheron Oh, Irene Wong, Nancy Awyong, Geraldine Ng and Ruth. Additional assistance came from Seow Hwey Tiong and Dr Tan Mei Leng of Hwa Chong Institution, Clare Lee, Chia Keng Ser, Lam Yuen Wah,

Melvin Ho, Lam Yuen Chin, Ku Swee Yong, Lai Yeu Huan, Choo Boon Tiong and John Lim.

The cartoon illustrations in this book were provided by Philip Lim. I thank him for his kindness and hard work.

This book is an excellent example of dynamic teamwork and unswerving commitment. All these people have helped make my impossible dream a reality. I am deeply grateful for all their insights, encouragement and generosity.

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1



Hopelessly Saddled

"You must write about Arthur."

"Arthur?" I asked, disbelievingly.

"Yes, Arthur!"

"But... He's so..."

"Lost?"

"Yes. He is such a lost soul. He is full of self-pity and arrogance. He is easily distracted, he daydreams and he is lazy. What's more, he is crippled by exaggerated fear. He said he had exam phobia!"

"Exactly. Doesn't he remind you of someone in his younger days?"

"Who? Me? You told me not to focus too much on the past!"

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"But the past does hold useful lessons. Can you remember how your army and navy instructors conducted training?"

"Well, they would demonstrate how the exercise ought to be done. They would also perform a 'negative demonstration' — they purposely did it the wrong way to show how it should not be done."

"Exactly! Without darkness, would you know what is light? Without sorrow, would you know what is joy? Without being lost, would you appreciate how vital it is to have a map that shows you the way?"

Arthur had walked into my office without an appointment, just past 9 a.m. He greeted me with a bright red windbreaker, brighter red motorcycle helmet and a red-striped tie. He wore strong colours, but I found his personality weak. He was obviously talented, yet he lacked focus and direction in life.

"I see that you like red."

"I actually like black," Arthur asserted, as if he needed to prove me wrong. *"But red reinforces my safety when I ride my motorbike."*

And red gives a strong impression when I go for a job interview."

He passed me his name card, which showed that he was a financial advisor with an insurance company.

"I hope you are not asking me to buy insurance..."

"Selling insurance is only temporary. It gives me some pocket money. You see, I have a lot of potential that is dying to come out. Unfortunately, I have yet to find the right company that will recognise this and develop my potential to the fullest."

Arthur pushed his thick resume towards me. He had straight A's all the way in school, but then his grades slid and he did not qualify for the local universities. Arthur called this a "mystery".

After his National Service, Arthur pursued a four-year degree in mass communications at an American university. His father was a retired investment banker. His mother, a fine arts graduate, had stopped work to care for her children. The family was well-off.

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"How did you perform at university?"

"Average, I would say. But I managed to get the degree."

Arthur clearly had talents. After his studies, he started a jazz band as well as a one-man company designing websites. He also excelled in golf and oil painting. However, his application for a US Green Card was turned down, so he returned to Singapore.

Thus began a series of job hops. He went through eight jobs in three years, but none drew out that huge hidden potential in him. Once, he quit his job after four days. As Arthur explained, *"the boss was terrible! He could not adapt to my working style at all."* I thought it odd that an employee should expect his boss to adapt to him.

Arthur felt he should be his own boss, as only he could draw out his own potential. He convinced his father to give him \$50,000 to start his own web design company. Soon after, his church pastor approached him to set up the church's website. The job later extended to setting up a music department and producing all the church's publications. After a year, Arthur

suddenly realised that he was grossly underpaid for his multiple talents.

Next, Arthur got interested in real estate. One of his schoolmates was earning big money in the business. Arthur believed he could do better. But he could not make himself take the examinations to qualify as a real estate agent. He had developed an exaggerated fear of examinations since his junior college days.

So Arthur began hopping from one head-hunting firm to another, hoping to find the right employer who could draw out his great potential to the fullest.

Saddle

Once I started writing about Arthur, I felt that I should not only write about him, but I should also write for him — for all the Arthurs who are still searching to unlock their hidden potential.

These are the people that I describe as being in the "SADDLE frame of mind". They are full of **Self-pity**. They are **Arrogant**, easily **Distracted**, always **Daydreaming** and **Lazy**. They also have so-called **Exaggerated fear**. They are afraid to

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be tested, not just in school examinations, but in life itself. They are afraid to fail.

This fear of failure is not their fault, really. As children, they were not allowed to make mistakes. Their parents did not allow them to experiment with new things. Even when they exercised initiative or creativity, they were scolded for trying to be too smart. As a result, these children grow up afraid to take risks, afraid to do what is unconventional, afraid to fail.

When we are under SADDLE influences, we block our own paths to success. We may blame others for our failures, but the true culprit is the enemy within. SADDLE is the robber within that takes away our opportunities for excellence and success.

Like Arthur, I, too, grew up under SADDLE influences. I engaged in **Self-pity** whenever I thought about my childhood situation, and that gave me the excuse to do badly in my studies. I also behaved badly. I was a rough and tough "gangster" kid addicted to gambling and the 3 V's — vulgarism, vandalism and violence.

To the other children in the neighbourhood, I probably appeared **Arrogant**. In reality, I was feeling insecure and lousy inside.

Even as I tried to act grown up, all the little child in me wanted to do was play. I had many **Distractions**. Once, I was nearly killed because I was too distracted chasing a kite. I ran across the road without looking and, moments later, a lorry crashed into a stationary car at the exact spot where I was.

My classmates at least devoted some time to studies. I did not. I did not care if I got 22 marks for Mathematics, or 19 marks for English. In spite of this, I had **Daydreams** about entering one of the top secondary schools, but I did nothing to deserve a place.

I loved my mother. But I did very little for her when I was young. I did help her clean the school on Saturdays. But I was full of **Laziness** in my studies — the one area where my mother really wanted me to work hard and excel.

And I certainly had more than my fair share of **Exaggerated fears**. I was full of insecurities. I never had self-confidence until I topped my professional diploma when I was 26 years old. Subsequently, this new-found confidence led me to top my master's degree a year later.

Yet, I am not unique. Many others achieved success in life despite having a rough start. In

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fact, many overcame far greater challenges and achieved greater successes. But because my story is not as fantastic, I believe it can be a source of inspiration to those who might find it hard to relate to the really great achievers like Microsoft founder Bill Gates or Hong Kong businessman Li Ka Shing.

It is not necessary to reach their level. However small your achievement, you can consider yourself successful if you are better off than what you used to be, and if you make your own unique contribution to your family, friends and society.

Inspiration

Two weeks before I met Arthur, on 13 December, I attended a segment of the Malaysia-Singapore Forum 2004. At the event, the Singapore Minister for Education, Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, remarked that there had been many instances where children who did not do well academically were able to unlock their potential later in life and become very successful, especially in business.

His words struck me, as the cliché goes, like a bolt of lightning. They seeded my idea that

PRAISE can be the key to unlock the potential of so many people — thousands of people struggling with finances and with life itself.

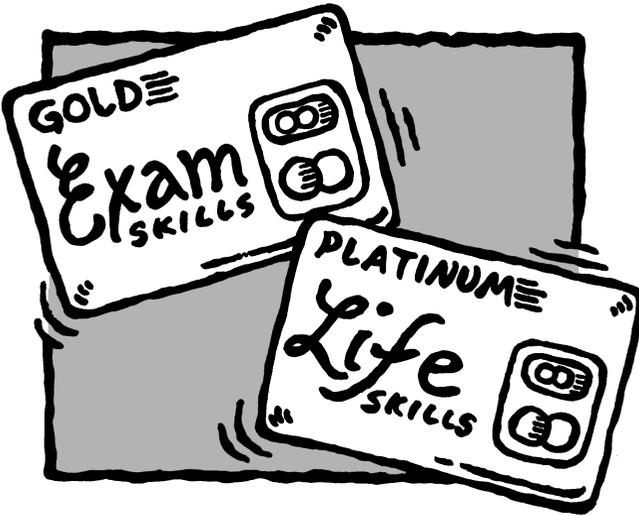
I was lucky to have PRAISE as the key that unlocked my potential. Initially, I applied some of its principles subconsciously and achieved limited success. Only when I was in my mid-20s, however, did I recognise PRAISE as a complete life skills model that can be consciously applied in a systematic way.

That was the breakthrough that turned my rough life into a truly rich one — rich in every sense of the word. Being rich does not necessarily mean having lots of money. One can, and should, also be rich in terms of learning, experiences, joy, blessings, happiness....

You, too, can turn your life around.

First, you must become aware of the SADDLE influences in your life. Then, by learning and applying the PRAISE model, you can overpower that robber and begin the process of transformation.

Congratulations for having come thus far. Your PRAISE journey — towards success unlimited — has already begun.



2



Hopefully Praised

My life in Hwa Chong Junior College¹ was one of the darkest periods of my life. It was in Hwa Chong that I got my first zero — for one mathematics test. The feeling of failure was awful. I became depressed and suicidal.

It was not just because of one zero. My whole life, up to the time I was in Hwa Chong, had been a difficult struggle. I came from a very poor family. We were so poor that I had to survive on porridge with soya sauce or salted vegetables.

¹Hwa Chong Junior College was established in 1974 by the board of Chinese High School, which was in turn founded in 1919 by philanthropist Tan Kah Kee. In 2005, the school and college merged to form Hwa Chong Institution. Hwa Chong has, as of 2007, produced 47 President's Scholars — the highest number of students from any Junior College to win Singapore's top scholarship award.

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My parents could not even afford to buy me a pair of slippers.

Can you imagine how painful it is to walk under the hot sun without a pair of slippers? When I was seven years old, I sold my favourite pet — a champion spider — for \$2 to buy my first pair of slippers. Being poor and despised by people in my neighbourhood, the spider was my only friend, my only best friend, my most valuable and faithful comrade who had won countless battles for me. In my moment of greed, I sold my royal title away. I felt a sudden sense of loneliness.

For survival, I chose to sacrifice my champion spider. And I used the money to eat my first ice cream.

I was also badly abused by my father when I was a child. Sometimes, he would tie up his children and hang us on a ceiling hook before he caned us.

Once, my father used joss sticks to burn my face. When I had to get an injection in school, the memory of that incident came back. The needle poking into my arm was like the joss sticks poking my face. Till today, I have a phobia of injections.

I felt so horrible when I was growing up such that I had a strong inferiority complex. So when I was in Hwa Chong, my study crisis escalated into a life crisis.

I used to go to the beach — to Changi beach — to throw stones into the sea... to throw my troubles into the sea. My cousin taught me this long ago, when he took me to the beach for a picnic with his brothers and friends. He told me that each stone represented one trouble, and the waves would wash my troubles away. As one wave subsided, the next wave came. They never gave up. They seemed to be telling me never to give up too.

I would stay at the beach until late at night, and catch the last bus home. Many times, I did not feel like going home. I wanted to just walk into the sea and disappear into the darkness.

This was an important turning point for me. I began to change because of my mother's love for me. I studied hard, I tried to be a good boy, I gave up my bad habits and what I call the 3 V's — vulgarism, vandalism and violence. Do you want to know how I kicked my addiction to gambling? When I was in Hwa Chong, the

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students were very serious. They engaged in the 3 L's — lecture, lunch and library. I could not find anyone to gamble with me. In the end, the 3 L's triumphed over the 3 V's and I became a good boy.

But when I was faced with a life crisis, I realised that my mother's love was not sufficient to pull me through. After a while, I began to see the positive side of my father's harsh treatment. The more he wanted to break my will, the more determined I was to prove him wrong. Though he did not deliberately train me, he ended up toughening me up. I needed both factors — my mother's love and my father's tough training — to survive a life crisis.

I must also add that I have always felt protected by some higher force. Throughout my life, whenever I was in a crisis, I always felt an invisible hand guiding me and saving me. So when I did badly in mathematics, out of the blue a kind schoolmate offered to give me free tuition. She helped me pass my first year re-exam and, eventually, I made it to the university.

The lowest period of my life was in Hwa Chong. The major turning point of my life was also in

Hwa Chong. It was in Hwa Chong that I broke out from my inferior cage that had imprisoned me since my childhood. In this regard, Hwa Chong gave me fond memories too.

Once, when I was in Hwa Chong, I broke the school rules. I stayed overnight to study because my house was just too noisy. I had eight other people at home in a two-room flat and I was the only one who needed to study. My brothers had all dropped out of school. My sisters never went to school in the first place. My brothers and sisters would watch TV in the living room, while my father would listen to his radio in the kitchen.

In any case, I was not the only one who stayed back in college. There were about 20 of us in total. The principal became suspicious and he conducted a series of surprise checks to catch us, but he never caught us because we were so united. We displayed our Hwa Chong spirit. In the end, my friends and I decided not to stay back anymore.

So I had to find a new strategy for studying to make it to the university. The strategy and techniques that I used are described in detail in the later chapters of this book.

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In return for all that Hwa Chong has given to me, I am donating some of my books, plus a bit of money, to set up the Hwa Chong literary fund and the Alumni Display Section in Jing Xian Library.

University and Postgraduate Studies

While my friends were lucky to go to university with the financial support of their parents, I was not so lucky. As my parents could not afford my university education, I signed a six-year contract with the Republic of Singapore Navy after my Pre-University. During the first two and a half years in the Navy, I saved up sufficient money for my university education.

Surprisingly, I found university studies relatively easy. Each year, my grades improved. But I could never make that quantum leap to become a top student and fulfil my mother's lifelong yearning.

After my graduation, I had to serve my remaining contract in the Navy. While I was pursuing a diploma in Personnel Management sponsored

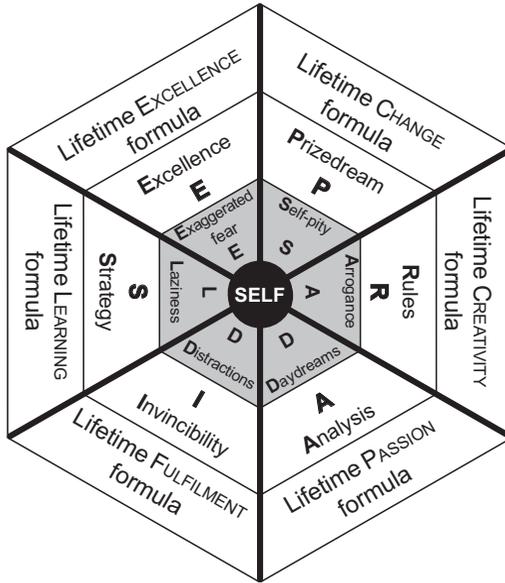
by the Navy, George Washington University offered, for the first time, its prestigious Master of Arts in Human Resource Development as an external degree in Singapore. I decided to give myself the challenge — and stress — of concurrently undertaking two postgraduate programs whilst holding a full-time job.

Through my study of strategy — based on Sun Zi's *The Art of War* and Naval Battle Procedure — I developed a life skills model for overcoming challenges and achieving success. I call the model PRAISE, as it embodies six success principles — Prizedream, Rules, Analysis, Invincibility, Strategy and Excellence.

This became my chance not only to fulfil my mother's wish, but also to test my life skills model. I topped both classes, and my PRAISE model passed with flying colours. The model also helped me to achieve success in my corporate career, entrepreneurial pursuits and other life's challenges, such as climbing Mount Sinai, the mountain where, according to the bible, Moses received the Ten Commandments from God.

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PRAISE Model



PRAISE

PRAISE, a life skills model for all-round excellence and success in studies and in life, provides a SUCCESS 6 Formula:

- **Set the Prizedream.** This will initiate the process of change and lead you to discover a lifetime CHANGE formula.
- **Use internal Rules.** When you are guided by your own internal rules, you learn to think

out of the box. This gives you a lifetime CREATIVITY formula.

- **Conduct Analysis.** Examine the factors that are for or against you and identify the higher cause that drives you. This is your lifetime PASSION formula.
- **Cultivate Invincibility.** Acquire the virtues that lead to invincibility. These give you a lifetime FULFILMENT formula.
- **Execute the Strategy.** Learn from your failures. Turn setbacks into opportunities and weaknesses into strengths. This ongoing process equips you with a lifetime LEARNING formula.
- **Sustain Excellence.** Achieve it not once or twice, but over and over again in a cycle of success unlimited. Acquire a lifetime EXCELLENCE formula. And...

Success shall be yours, without limits.

After I topped my master's degree course, I went on to apply PRAISE in my corporate career, entrepreneurship and other life's challenges. I have been using the PRAISE model for over 20 years now and it has never failed me.

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Even though this book focuses on success in studies, the wider focus has to be on success in life. PRAISE imparts life skills that will help you achieve this wider success.

PRAISE Books

A summary of the PRAISE model is presented in my other book, *Success Secrets*. For an in-depth study of PRAISE, I recommend another of my books, *Rough Life Rich Life*. This is a reference book that discusses each of the concepts in detail, with illustrations from my personal life and the lives of other great achievers.

Another series of books looks at how the greatest men and women in history — I call them PRAISE Champions — all lived by principles similar to those of the PRAISE model. They come from diverse cultural backgrounds and achieved extraordinary success in all areas of human endeavour — conquests and politics, science and inventions, the arts, humanitarian work and so on.

The first book in the series, *Benjamin Franklin — A Bright Spark!*, has drawn high praise from academics, scholars and fans of

Franklin, many of whom feel that the PRAISE model gives interesting and important new insights into the reasons for his greatness. Roy Goodman, Curator for Printed Materials at the American Philosophical Society (which Franklin founded in 1743) and President of The Friends of Franklin, Inc, wrote in his Foreword:

"As America and the rest of the world celebrate the 300th birth anniversary of Franklin, there will be many books, conferences, exhibitions... However, there may not be a tribute as valuable as Benjamin Franklin — A Bright Spark!"

Ralph Archbold, member of a US Federal Commission appointed by President George W. Bush and Congress to oversee the celebrations of Benjamin Franklin's 300th birthday, wrote:

"I have never found a book as important as this... Every person should read it and, for the sake of their future, every parent should make sure their children read it."

Soulprints

We may never become as great as some of these PRAISE Champions. Yet all of us can leave

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our imprints by making a difference in the lives of the people we encounter. When we touch people's lives in a deep and profound way, we leave imprints on their soul.

These may be called "soulprints". My mother, despite being an uneducated, illiterate woman, left me many soulprints through her love, sacrifices and wisdom. In the same way, all of us can leave soulprints in the lives of the people we touch.

You may read more of my life story in *Soulprints I – BreakThrough*. This covered my difficult childhood, growing up in extreme poverty and being badly abused by my father, to the time I left school. This was the period I broke free from my cycle of despair.

This book, *Scholars' Secrets*, is therefore not a book in isolation. It forms part of a larger collection of books that will help you unlock your potential and overcome the difficulties and challenges of life in order to achieve excellence and success.

Congratulations for having this book in your hand. Your process of transformation has begun. In school, as well as in life, may you pass with flying colours!