

QUIT OFTEN, EXPECT THE WORST, AND OTHER GOOD ADVICE

aim low

DAVE DUNSEATH



QUIT OFTEN, EXPECT THE WORST, AND OTHER GOOD ADVICE

aim low

DAVE DUNSEATH



aim low



aim low

**Quit Often, Expect the Worst,
and Other Good Advice**



DAVE DUNSEATH


RUTLEDGE HILL PRESS
Nashville, Tennessee
A Division of Thomas Nelson Publishers
Since 1798
www.thomasonelson.com

Copyright © 2005 by Dave Dunseath.

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without prior permission of the publisher.

Published by Rutledge Hill Press, a Division of Thomas Nelson, Inc., P.O. Box 141000, Nashville, Tennessee 37214.

Rutledge Hill Press books may be purchased in bulk for educational, business, fundraising, or sales promotional use. For information, please e-mail SpecialMarkets@ThomasNelson.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Dunseath, Dave, 1959–

Aim low : quit often, expect the worst, and other good advice / Dave Dunseath.

p. cm.

ISBN 1-4016-0242-8

1. Conduct of life. I. Title.

BJ1581.2.D824 2005

158.1—dc22

20050255

Printed in the United States of America

05 06 07 08 09 — 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

TO MY PARENTS,

who never gave up dreaming,
never gave up hoping that someday
one of my crazy ideas might actually
make me enough money to finally move
out of the basement. You're the best parents
I've ever had. I can't thank you enough.

May the rest of your dreams come true.



If at first you don't
succeed, try, try, again. Then quit.
There's no use in being
a damn fool about it.
—W. C. FIELDS

contents

[*Acknowledgments*](#)

[*Introduction*](#)

[1. History of Losers](#)

[2. Ethics](#)

[3. Parenting](#)

[4. Success](#)

[5. Attitude](#)

[6. Hope](#)

[7. Money](#)

[8. Cheating](#)

[9. Anger](#)

[10. Forgiveness](#)

[11. Work](#)

[12. Regret](#)

[13. Criticism](#)

[14. Discipline](#)

[15. Love](#)

[16. Optimism](#)

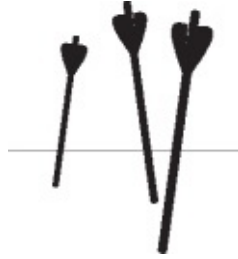
[17. Wisdom](#)

acknowledgments

A million and one thank-you's should be divided equally among the following people for making this book better than what it was: Nicole Keathley, Lori D. Hall, Anita Braunecker, Dawn Alissa Sherry, Steve Poole, Brett Beavers, and Dawn Cook.

And everyone at Rutledge Hill, especially the Aim Low team: Bryan Curtis, Jennifer Greenstein, Pamela Clements, Laura Troup, Ashley Earnhardt-Aiken, and Stacy Clark.

And last, but certainly not least, Pamela's mom, June Johnson.



introduction



I was going to buy a copy of The Power
of Positive Thinking , and then I thought:

What the hell good would that do?

—RONNIE SHAKES

I hate book intros. It's like waiting in line for the amusement park to open. Why the park was built and who inspired it are of no interest to me when I'm fixated on the giant roller coaster just beyond the gate. Besides, if a book is well written, I don't think it needs an intro.

So I wrote an intro. I wrote it because it's the law. It's an unwritten law—but it is the law nonetheless. Like having to wait in long lines at the amusement park. So if you're already getting bored, feel free to hop the gate and make a mad dash for the coaster.

In the meantime, how about a quick game of "What If?" What if I handed you a book right now called *Walking on Your Hands Is Fun*—would you want to read it? What if you found a book at a yard sale called *Hand Walking for Dummies*—would you buy it? What if I gave you tickets to a two-day seminar called "Standing on Your Own Two Hands"—would you go?

No—you wouldn't. You wouldn't because learning how to walk on your hands is ridiculous. It's unnatural. Try it and in five seconds you'd be playing a different game called "What's the Point?" Simply put, walking on your hands is a behavior contrary to your normal state of being.

Yet how many of today's best-selling books attempt to change you or inspire you to think, act, or do things contrary to your normal behavior? They are the teachings of shameless profiteers preaching the gospels of discipline, motivation, and achieving goals. All that really means is these authors will gladly share with you—for a profit—their alleged formulas for success. *Success* is just a fancy word for winning. And winning, for most of us, is about as natural as walking around on our hands.

The message, of course, is that winning is good and losing is bad. The authors of these books want us to believe that anyone can be a winner. Meanwhile, those of us working for companies that buy into this propaganda are sent away to be brainwashed and mentally tortured in sunless chambers called *motivational seminars*.

If losing is actually something everybody does normally—that is to say, if more people tend to finish between second and last place—then it seems to me we should be celebrating entire lives spent in vain, torment, and frustration. It is our nature to lose. For rarely, if ever, are we winners.

So, are you a loser? What does it mean if you are?

It means you were invited to life's big banquet and ended up working the drive-thru. It means you've been filling your head with lies, starting your days with sayings such as "You're a winner!" or "Yes you can!" when you know you can't or you would have by now. I've found the later you get up in the day, the less often you'll lie to yourself about how unique and brilliant and successful you're going to be.

Loser implies many things. But all it really means is that you're good at doing just one thing—not winning.

Let me say that again: being a loser doesn't necessarily mean you're a failure. It just means you're not a winner. And because you do *not* win a heck of a lot more than you *do* win, it stands to reason that you're either on the verge of losing or you're already busy taking orders at the drive-thru. By the way, working the drive-thru does not make you a loser. Pretending the new guy on fries is below you does.

Now, once in a great while, despite your efforts, you will win. You will. It's the law of averages, and that's one law a loser knows a thing or two about. On those rare occasions when you do win, it probably has more to do with everyone else not winning. Remember, winning is always the exception. It can't last and it won't last. Winning cannot be repeated at will. It is not a habit. Losing is a habit because losing fits the three characteristics that define a habit: you do it all the time, you do it without thinking about it, and you know you're going to do it even before you do it.

Losing is truly the one thing we rarely fail at succeeding in. In fact, in any competition, if you didn't finish first, guess what—you didn't finish second. You lost, my friend.

Question: What is the difference between second and last place?

Answer: Nothing.

What is second place? Second place is merely the highest point a loser can reach. And since you've got a pretty good track record of always coming in somewhere other than first, why not start aiming for targets you already know you can hit?

That's what this book is about. That's what aiming low is all about. You should never be disappointed about coming in second—or fourth or even ninth—if you aren't expecting to come first anyway. Aim low and I promise you'll go as far as you thought you would.

Aiming low is as easy as breathing. You can practically do it without thinking. And all the skills required to get there—like cheating or making excuses or even quitting—take less time to learn than you might imagine. A whole lot less. All you really need is a little bit of effort and a small amount of know-how. In fact, your expectations can go so low that anything you do achieve is completely surprising. And when you're good, that's always good enough.

Up until now, where could you find great advice like this? There are no books in the library entitled *Losing for Dummies*. Don't bother checking the phone book for a Losers Anonymous meeting. And don't ask anyone at an Amway convention what a *loser* is—they don't know the meaning of the word.

You know, as far back as I can remember, I was fooled into believing the impossible. When I was four, I believed in Santa Claus. When I was ten, I thought I could jump off the roof and fly. But does knowing the truth about Santa diminish my love of Christmas? Did a separated shoulder inspire me to jump from higher rooftops? Not really. It is my lack of believing and total lack of discipline that spared me from inevitable failures and disappointing outcomes.

I can't tell you what a relief it is to know I'll never make a difference. It's the most freeing feeling in the world knowing that whatever I want—whatever I'm chasing—has already been accomplished or already been achieved, or already been done better than I could ever do it.

I am an underachiever. I am a typical, random, average nonsuccess. I know that having a yes-I-can attitude will not make me the president or an astronaut or Tiger Woods. That doesn't make me a bad person. I have never been voted off the island. I have never bid more than the actual retail price. But I am a loser. I've got the T-shirt and I've seen the movie. All I would like to do is share with you how easy and simple an average life can be when you don't waste time reaching for improbable goals, clinging to faded hopes, or holding on to impossible dreams.

That's all a loser is, really. A loser is anyone who almost touched a star, almost held a dream, or almost got his wish. It's anyone who doesn't win and calls it fate or destiny or bad karma or jinx. Take it from me, once you make your way from *Loserindentialus* to *Losernodoubtus*, you'll have tons of great excuses to choose from—anytime you need one. All you have to do is let go of what you never were and quit imagining all the things you'll never be.

So don't be afraid to give up believing in what is too difficult, unlikely, or almost impossible. Don't be afraid to quit often, make excuses, or expect the worse. Don't be afraid to let your good intentions sit idly by while you cruise through your days underperforming.

I'll warn you now, you're going to find some real winners out there who would love to dismiss these concepts as foolish and ridiculous. I know this goes without saying, but don't listen to them. You're like me, you haven't taken advice from a winner in a long time.

I'm gonna leave you with four words every loser knows: *nearly*, *almost*, *close*, and *if*. These words are the mating calls of losers everywhere. Whistle one and a flock of losers will be whistling back in chorus of *nearly hads*, *almost mades*, *oh so closes*, and *if if ifs*.

And you should find the following phrase helpful when your dreams start getting too big. It's the Loser's Creed:

No, I can't, or I would have by now.

Every time you aim low, you'll feel like you've died and gone to Disneyland. You'll be in a place where you're never concerned about hard work, a place where you never feel guilty for goofing off a day, a place where nobody expects anything from you, a place where choosing to eat a third corn dog—or not—will be the hardest decision of your day.

One last thing. Every chapter in this book concludes with a list of Affirmations. Like all affirmations, the more you repeat them, the more they will benefit you. Read them daily—out loud when possible. In fact, take them with you everywhere you go—even keep some in the bathroom. Since bathroom visits are about as close as you get to having any success these days, why not reward those efforts with a handful of Affirmations?

I can't promise you'll be a loser if you follow and apply all the guidelines I've presented in this book. But you will know all the secrets to being all you're ever going to be.

And if you make it all the way to the end without nodding off or wanting your money back, then that'll be another bet my publisher just lost.

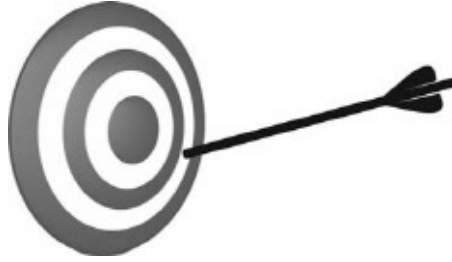
reality check



Anytime you hear someone say
it's a win-win situation,
they either don't know all the facts
or they have a stuttering problem.

chapter one

history of
losers



History is a set of lies agreed upon.
—NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

Once upon a time, long ago and far away, before diet sodas and sacrifice bunts, three ships sailed across the Atlantic and changed the world forever. They were the *Nina*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*.

But they were not alone.

Following in their wake were three lesser-known ships.

They were the *Blamer*, the *Avoider*, and the *Envier*.

So who were these distant finishers, these forgotten souls whose spirit and vision led them to sail the world as Blamers, Avoiders, and Enviars? Well, few apparently knew where they were headed. Most, if not all, believed they would never succeed. We do know that as soon as they reached the shore, they stuck an umbrella and an ice chest in the sand and declared it the Beach. They loved the Beach, even though it was crowded with pricey condos and two-hundred-dollar rounds of golf.

They made their way inland and sought shelter in trailer parks and around cul-de-sacs. And everyone talked about how wonderful the Beach was and agreed that anything was better than wearing a tie to work.

The Blamers, Avoiders, and Enviars spent their days waiting for things that never seemed to happen, so they gave up trying. They fought constantly against a ruthless tribe of pillagers called the Creditors. Yet they still managed to fill countless hours of free time playing games. Their favorite game was called the “Complaining Game.” The object of the Complaining Game was to figure out why they had to do things they didn’t like doing and why they weren’t getting to do things other people were getting to do. They played the Complaining Game every chance they could, even though it always ended the same way and everyone went home a loser.

Then one day, and no one can say when exactly, three more ships arrived. They were the *Lawyer*, the *Attorney*, and the *Paralegal*. No one could tell them apart, so everyone just referred to them as *My Lawyers*.

The Blamers, the Avoiders, and the Enviars invited My Lawyers over for an evening of Complaining. My Lawyers loved the Complaining Game but suggested three things be included to make the game more enjoyable: billable hours, consultation fees, and outrageous cash settlements. They called their new game “Filing Lawsuits.”

My Lawyers told everyone their new game would make them all winners. And as long as they continued Filing Lawsuits with My Lawyers, they could do all the Complaining they wanted, but they could do it back at the

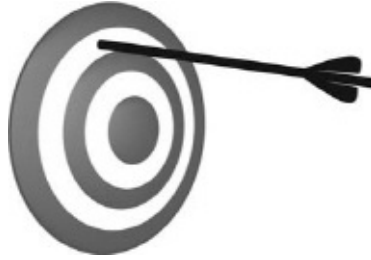
Beach from a pricey condo in between two-hundred-dollar rounds of golf—and never have to wear a tie to work again.

And everybody was happy.

So to this day, the descendants of those original Blamers, Avoiders, and Enviars continue to work as hard as their ancestors did. For they too believe it really doesn’t matter whether you win or lose, as long as you know My Lawyers.

chapter two

ethics



What's the good of a lie if it's seen through?

When I tell a lie, no one can tell it
from the gospel truth.

Sometimes I can't even tell it myself.

—GRAHAM GREENE

Ethics. It's the stuff of good parenting. It teaches kids right from wrong. Vice from virtue. It makes black-and-white of good and evil. As children, we were rewarded for displaying ethical behavior—honesty, fortitude, and self-denial. We were admonished for our unethical actions—lying, cheating, and manipulating others. We were taught early on that there is a difference between a shopping spree and a killing spree. We learned that it is the act or absence of ethics that separates us into good and bad citizens.

Of course, we're adults now, aren't we? We have neither the time nor the freedom to behave like children. We have adult responsibilities, and with those responsibilities come hard decisions that have us doing things we don't necessarily like to do. But we do them. So while children play their little game of "Right and Wrong," we as adults have to play another game called "Truth or Consequences."

Consequences is just a fancy word for results—and unfavorable results are the consequences going around and telling the truth all day long.

Have you seen the movie *Liar Liar*? It's the story of a successful lawyer who—through a selfish wish from his own son—receives a curse that forces him to speak the truth for twenty-four hours. His life is quickly reduced to shambles. Why this movie is considered a comedy is beyond me. It is nothing short of horrifying to watch someone have to tell the truth all the time. Honestly, we don't necessarily want to hear the truth any more than we like having to say it. Thankfully, we don't have to do this very often.

Do you know there are only three people in the world that will always tell you the truth? Only three. They're your mother, your doctor, and your waiter. So when you hear "I love you," "You have six months to live," and "You do get fries with that," you can believe it. The rest of the time you are being lied to and manipulated.

Question: Is lying ethical or unethical?

Two things should help clear that up for you. First, pretty much everything is a gray area. Second, nothing is ever black-and-white.

Here's a hypothetical question: You walk out of a store with an item you were not charged for. Did you just steal something?

Here is where folks get into trouble. When you're trying to determine the rightness or wrongness of anything, your first question should always be: Are you in any danger of going to prison? That will determine what the rest of your answers should be. Then try asking some questions that will make you feel better about an ethically challenging moment.

Was it only a small dollar item? Was it from a store that's been gouging you for years? Would you only get the clerk fired if you took the item back? As you can see, it's rarely a black-and-white world we live in.

The first rule of ethics:

**Find out if a wrong answer could put you in jail.
That will determine the right answer.**

You know, when I was little I wanted to be what every other kid wanted to be—a circus clown. But I grew up. I traded in my clown suit and stopped pretending I liked other people's kids. And then something else happened on the road from adolescent immaturity to adult immaturity. Survival.

dumped idealism, slept with the truth, and produced a little bundle of joy called Reality. A short time later Reality got a little brother named Ethics.

Well, it wasn't long before Reality smacked Ethics in the face while Ethics had a choke hold on Reality. They struggled and argued constantly. They went together like Cub Scouts and brewery tours. But after seeing how much money could be made by tolerating each other, Reality and Ethics formed a truce, shared an apartment, and pretended to be friends. Now, as long as they're never in the same room together, they get along just fine.

Let's try another hypothetical situation and see how you're coming along. Would you say that doing a favor in order to receive a favor is manipulation? By the way, I think that *manipulation* comes from the French phrase *auvré minute es borne le succour*. If you make a sale based on manipulation, you still get the commission. *Commission* is just a fancy word for money, and money is what it takes to feed your family. Well, the last I heard, feeding your family is hardly unethical. It's quite the opposite. So, if you "manipulate" someone into believing they're making a smart decision for buying more than they need or can afford, that does not make you ethically challenged. What it does make you is twice the commission.

The second rule of ethics:

If you can get somebody to do something without threatening them with their lives, it's not unethical.

Don't get me wrong. Doing the right thing is a great idea.

You always want to try for another merit badge to impress the other scouts. But if you really want to get ahead faster in this world, then sometimes a less than accurate answer might be to your advantage.

The third rule of ethics:

The right answer is always the answer that closes the deal, makes you twice the money, or gets her to agree to go out with you.

Does this mean there are times when two wrongs can make a right? Well, I think it's safe to assume that people in dangerous situations look for solutions. If you were an astronaut in trouble, that's exactly what you'd do. You'd look for the fastest and easiest way out of your bad situation. You'd want a favorable outcome and would do whatever it took to make it happen, wouldn't you?

Say you're a teenager and your parents catch you with an illicit substance. Like an astronaut in a malfunctioning space capsule, you are in trouble. Well, born losers are not born liars, but who would benefit from the truth at this point? Not you. You already know the truth. Your parents are hoping to hear what you hope is going to sound like the truth. Just as any astronaut would do, you act quickly and decisively. You find the courage to say what has to be said and you tell them, "I was just keeping it for a friend." Your parents are thrilled and you are saved from certain death. Call me unethical, but I don't know how a fairy tale ending like that could ever be considered wrong.

So, can you really lie, cheat, steal, and manipulate others and still be considered an honest person? Sure you can. We lie all the time to ugly people and tell them they look great or beautiful or whatever.

You're giving their self-esteem a huge boost while you're flat-out lying to their faces. That's unethical. That's not wanting to be alone at 2 a.m. when the bar is closing and you're far from home, which brings us to the fourth rule of ethics.

The fourth rule of ethics:

The only thing more subjective than beauty is unethical behavior.

Answer this: Is getting free cable or using pirate cards to get free satellite TV wrong? First, are you the one getting it? Second, what are the chances of actually getting caught and doing any hard time? Besides, what exactly would you be accused of stealing—electrical impulses and invisible wavelengths? They'd have to start arresting people for stealing oxygen and gravity.

Think of ethics as a valley between where you are and where you want to be. The challenge is to take the easiest path as far as you can until extenuating circumstances compel you to take detours and alternate routes to increase your odds of a favorable outcome. Isn't that how Tom Hanks brought *Apollo 13* safely back to earth?

We are all running around in an invisible world called a "Gray Area." And most of your decisions about how to get around in a Gray Area come from years of being stepped on, stepped over, and taken advantage of. Those who prosper have long since put away their childhood maps and discovered a world of secret passages, detours, and alternative routes.

Aiming low is not just about quitting at the drop of a hat or giving up before you even try, although that is a good start. Aiming low is about making a commitment to sacrificing principles—no matter what the cost. It's about turning life's ordinary, everyday challenges into halfhearted efforts. It's about allowing other people's excuses to become your own. It's believing that ethics is a Gray Area where victories justify the means, the means justify the money, and not telling the truth always falls under the "no harm, no foul" rule.

Bending the rules to get you out of a dangerous situation is not unethical. Using any and all means necessary to get you where you need to go is not unethical. Doing what you have to do to survive is not unethical. How can it be? Astronauts do it all the time.

ethics affirmations

- Manipulation is my way of capitalizing on the weaknesses of the less astute.
- If I'm still black-and-white on issues of ethics, then I must be retired, in the clergy, or just not interested in job advancement.
- I should always attempt to do what's right, but only if I have the available time and money to do so.
- Lying isn't wrong if it keeps me from spending the night alone.
- Two wrongs don't make a right unless it gets me out of serious trouble.
- If I misbehave and nobody sees me, that's one less lie I'll have to tell later.
- There are always extenuating circumstances.
- The first—and most important—rule of ethics is always establishing if a wrong answer could put me in jail. That alone determines the right answer.

reality check



Admit your mistakes and you will
mature and grow. Don't admit them and
you might get away with it.

chapter three

parenting



Happiness is having a large, loving, caring,
close-knit family in another city.

—GEORGE BURNS

The best things you can give your children are the same things your parents gave you: fear, guilt, and anxiety.

These will help kids keep their guard up in an uncertain world.

For parents, fear rules. Fear is like risk prevention for the soul. Fear lets others make decisions so you can remain blameless. Fear prevents embarrassing moments from ever starting by keeping you out of situations where results are unpredictable. Fear keeps you from attempting the impossible.

Fear is the invisible leash that keeps your kids from playing piñata with the neighbor's cat. Ask any parent and they'll tell you it's only the fear of Santa watching that keeps little boys from kicking each other in the jimmies during the holidays.

But the moment Christmas is over, there isn't an eight-year-old alive with an older brother who isn't dropping to his knees and humming the "Nutmcracker Suite" like a natural-born soprano.

Those are just the ways kids behave when fear is real and when it isn't. That's why it's crucial for you, as the parent, to provide your children with a backup system when fear breaks down and is unable to govern their behavior. Moms call this little miracle "guilt."

Apart from television, guilt is the only thing controlling your kids when you need to take a little break from "parenting." Guilt is what makes your kids feel bad for not doing the things they should be doing, and worse for doing things they enjoy doing.

The fear of failure is one of life's lessons that kids rarely get over. It starts in elementary school as the fear of being ridiculed and carries over into the teen years as the fear of being rejected. Giving your kids the gifts of shame and humiliation early on will make it less traumatic for them once they start getting picked on and beat up in middle school. And once guilt gets a good foothold, your kids won't do all the things you don't want them doing when you—or fear—cannot step in quickly enough. You'll never again worry whether your children have enough anxiety or fear to control their behavior. Guilt is that good.

Life is simply too unpredictable and uncertain to try to instill consistent habits and routines. That's why telling your little ones that nothing they do is right and never offering any encouragement are the best ways to prepare them for living and working in the real world.

So why are we as parents running to shrinks to try and undo all the bad, evil things our parents did to us when those are the very things we're passing on to our own kids? It's because our parents told us when we were little that if we Of course, the very things we fail so horribly in are the very things we want to protect our kids from—risk, uncertainty, and Algebra II. The question now is twofold. How do we protect our kids once they're out from under our wings? just believed in ourselves, someday we could be a movie star or a professional athlete or even the president of the United States. If you ask me, it's a bad idea to tell children they can grow up to become anything they want to be. You're only making sure they end up in therapy to overcome inferiority complexes for attempting things they were never capable of achieving. Kids need constant reminding that, even as adults, they will get burned when playing with fire. Despite numerous songs to the contrary, we don't have wings and we cannot fly. The world is a dangerous place. Safety and success are uncertain. And how do we pick them up after their dreams come crashing down around them?

Well, the bad news is they can't be picked up, dusted off, and made to dream even bigger. They're just like you, remember? The good news is that you can tweak your child's spirit very early on to help prepare him for failure. By "tweak" I mean numb. Numbing a child's spirit will make it easier

- [click *Death before Dying: History, Medicine, and Brain Death* pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub](#)
- [read online Historien Om Pi pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub](#)
- [download Bonjour Tristesse](#)
- [read Tatiana & Alexander \(BUR Rizzoli\)](#)

- <http://test1.batsinbelfries.com/ebooks/Hegemony-and-Socialist-Strategy--Towards-a-Radical-Democratic-Politics.pdf>
- <http://www.mmastyles.com/books/The-Language-Wars--A-History-of-Proper-English.pdf>
- <http://fitnessfatale.com/freebooks/The-Story-So-Far--What-We-Know-About-the-Business-of-Digital-Journalism.pdf>
- <http://serazard.com/lib/Tatiana---Alexander--BUR-Rizzoli-.pdf>