



# Success in an Alarm Clock Age



Life is either lived or tolerated– a miracle or a burden – a blessing or a yoke . . .  
and every day offers the opportunity to redirect its course.

Like a river, there is the natural course of a life. Life’s course will follow four stages unless some internal or external force changes its route for better or worse.

A Life - The Normal Natural Progression		
Stages	Primary Resource(s)	Chief Obstacle(s)
Play	Time	Boredom
Impress Others	Natural Talent	Fear, anxiety and selfishness
Get by/Tread Water	Education and Training	Lack of Time and Money
Play	Time & Accumulated Money and Possessions	Poor Health and Impending Death

Life should begin without alarm clocks – as a gradual awakening to the reality of a new and stimulating environment. Everything is bright, noisy . . . sensations are everywhere and, unless the baby is protected, these sensations will agitate and alarm him or her – babies are, above all, to be protected. These should be times to play. Time is plentiful with boredom the foe.

Even developing into small children, protection is still the key – causing or requiring young children to deal with issues “above” them will cause developmental problem throughout life. Bad parents do this through neglect of their responsibilities, being immature themselves or by deliberately “pushing” children to grow up sooner than they should. Alarm clocks are not for children!

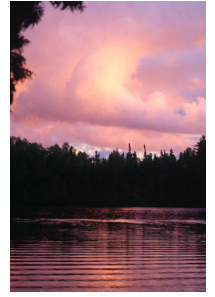
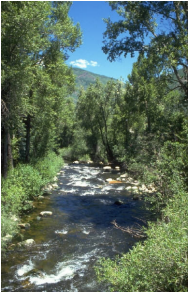
Phase 2 is when the young person is becoming conscious of themselves, not just the young child’s awareness of what they want, but a perception of who they are – their looks, gifts and talents, etc. This is the first primary danger zone in life, especially in a society that values money and possessions and all they supposedly buy. Rather than properly directing and focusing them, many  parents, teachers and other authority figures (even with good intentions) pour fuel on the fire  by either rewarding the attributes of selfishness or modeling this immaturity in their own lives. What is an inevitable and natural passageway for the child is just that, one that should be passed through (with the selfishness, fear and anxiety left behind!) – not lived in for many years!

Then comes the next natural stage of life – work, work, work at the job and at home! Young people, too often aided by supposed authority figures, drag out Phase 2 as long as they can because these same authority figures, by word or deed, display the tediousness and monotony of this “heart” of life – the portion that typically is the longest period of life. Almost from work day 1, people complain and dream of *Shangri-La* – retirement; just get me to Chapter 4. Life, in this period, is too often lived as a slave to the alarm clock.

And retirement arrives, with its exhaustion from work, to (after a few days, weeks or months) the ultimate monotony of aches, pains and lack of purpose. The Promised Land becomes the pits with a whole set of worries of its own – “Can I afford my medicine? Will I get better? Why isn’t anyone coming to see me?” Life becomes sleep, TV, eating and focusing on medical costs and issues. We could wish for the need of an alarm clock.

This is reality, about the best we can expect, without some dramatic intervention.

# And then came hope!



If one picture is worth a thousand words, maybe five will be worth 5,000.

While everyone’s “river” of life is different, all have one thing in common – either by imposed or self-discipline, their lives can be altered for the better. And the great news is that a life can be improved no matter the age of the person, stage of life or past errors.

The key is seeing some past dislikes as friends, certain former thoughts as stupid, earlier (or present) habits as harmful . . . meaning to exercise and develop the discipline of repentance – changing! Good discipline is simply learning how to repent. Children need to be disciplined to learn how to repent so, as they age, they mature into self-discipline – knowing how to see areas in and of their lives needing change and then, by some form of exercise, accomplishing a positive change. There is no question, the key responsibility of parents is to teach their children discipline.

And like other learned traits, it is never too late . . . Whether 9 or 90, a person will benefit from even a poor start at developing the discipline of repentance. It is never too late to repent and develop a discipline of manners, education, work ethic, proper rest, exercise, continual development and learning . . . Yes, it is better that these undertakings are tackled in order, at the proper time, in sequence . . . but, that said, no one had perfect parents and teachers – everyone has **more than one** discipline they would greatly benefit from by focusing on **right now**.

Ultimately, discipline is an attitude – wanting to find a better way to accomplish what I would like to achieve; understanding that the *Shangri-La* I imagine at the end of any slow “drift” is a mirage or worse, a disaster!

- ✚ Children who think they are getting by, by avoiding all discipline (often enabled by even well-meaning but poor parents), will pay for this many times over in the future.
- ✚ Youth resting in their strengths (rather than learning special gifts and talents carry equal or greater responsibilities) will be second-rate until repenting of their natural laziness and pride.
- ✚ Parents who are unfocused and undisciplined with make themselves, their children and co-workers unhappy until the repent and recognize they are, in fact, in the “heart” of their lives; a heart they should, though the joy and discipline of repentance, celebrate, not cannibalize.
- ✚ Those “seeing the sunset” should be an example and, in doing so, encourage all those younger in having (to steal a great term from Charles Dickens) Great Expectations that they will, by and through the Joy of Repentance, fight the good fight so they grow until they die!

A Life Focused on the Joy of Repentance		
Stages	Primary Resource(s)	Chief Opportunities
Young Child	Time	Start Grasping Discipline as Good
Youth	Natural Talent	Learning How Discipline Leads
Establishing & Building	Education & Training	Modeling Positive Disciplines
Supporting & Encouraging	Time & Accumulated Money and Possessions	Striving for and Enjoying New and Better Disciplines

At what point is it wise to give up to the challenges that we face? Why stop benefiting and growing from the unique disciplines that each stage of life offers?