

**“I’LL SEE YOU AT THE TOP...”:**

**An Interview with Zig Ziglar**

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For more than 40 years “corporate America” has been listening and applying the motivational techniques of Zig Ziglar. He has taught thousands of individuals how to unlock the power of their minds to achieve their goals. He confidently asserts that it is not what happens *to you* during your life, but rather **your reaction to** whatever circumstances and challenges you face. At 80 years old he is more energetic and passionate about his message than ever before.

We recently had the opportunity to sit down and interview Mr. Ziglar. We began our discussion by simply asking: “What are you passionate about?”

**ZZ:** Well, actually I have several passions. To start, I’ll simply say that passion is absolutely necessary, but passion by itself can be very wearing on a person. It wears you out—unless you have a *purpose* behind the passion. So I like to combine those two things. I’m very passionate about my faith, my family, and what I do as a career.

**FP:** How much do you think the right state of mind affects a marriage and family life?

**ZZ:** I would say in both cases fairly close to 100%. And the reason I say that is very simple: Your attitude toward the marriage will drive the process you go through in preserving and enjoying, and enhancing the marriage. For example, I courted that pretty little red-headed wife of mine—we recently celebrated our 60<sup>th</sup> honeymoon together—but I courted her every single day of my life. I’m always trying to score points with her. And she’s always trying to score points with me. That’s what keeps it going. It’s a two-way street.

**FP:** How much power do you think we possess in our minds?

**ZZ:** An incredible amount! The mind is gateway to the heart and the heart is a very important part of our successful processes that we follow. If we really put our heart in it... well, one of my favorite simpleton stories goes: Somebody asked a high jumper how he broke the world record. And he said, “Oh I just threw my heart over the bar and the rest of me followed.”

**FP:** Can you think of an instance in which you used your mind to overcome some negative point in your own life?

**ZZ:** Very definitely. I believe motivation is the beginning of each accomplishment. Many people say that motivation is very temporary, and I would agree with that. But so is bathing and eating. But if you do both of them everyday you will live longer and smell better in the process! So I tie a motivational point to one of the greatest changes in my life:

At age 25 I had just been promoted as the youngest divisional supervisor in the 66 year history of Wea-  
rEver Aluminum—part of Alcoa Aluminum Company. And a lot of people were wondering: “Can this young guy handle the job?” Well, within the company, field managers are key and I had three field managers. By coincidence, in the first month, one of them almost completely cut his big toe off, and for six weeks he was in the hospital and out of the working formula so his group went down. When I got promoted, they moved another person into my job, who did not know the job or have much experience, and that organization also went down. The third thing that happened was that one of our field guys had an integrity problem, so he was out of the loop. So, within a month after I was promoted, a budding organization—a division that was doing really good, all of a sudden went to nothing and so the rumors started.

Well, by this time I was really having a pity party. Now the trouble with pity parties is that there are very few people who come and those who do don't bring gifts! So I picked up a book by Norman Vincent Peale, *The Power of Positive Thinking*. After I read it I realized I could have said: “It wasn't my fault he cut his toe, it wasn't my fault that he went crooked. It wasn't my fault. It wasn't my fault...” But when I read Peale's book it hit me: “That's right Zig, you are not responsible for all of those things, but you are still responsible for the sales people in your organization.” I had a tremendous change of attitude. I stopped feeling sorry for myself. And I started looking at what I had been able to accomplish up to that point. I recognized that it was all a part of the attitude I had while I built versus the attitude when I was being criticized. In the end, out of the 66 divisions in that organization that year, my first as supervisor of that division, we finished number two in the nation above all those other divisions. That lesson taught me

that it is not what happens to you but rather how you handle what happens to you that is going to make the difference.

**FP:** Most people have experienced some form of evil, pain and suffering. How can someone use their mind to get out of the “Valleys” of life and begin climbing mountains again?

**ZZ:** The mind is extremely important. One of the statements I make is that when something bad happens you can either respond or react. Respond is positive—because you say “Something bad has happened, now what am I going to do about it.” (In other words, no pity party.) There is nothing we can do about the past, but what can we do about the future? Whereas, reacting is having that pity party and saying “poor me, it’s not fair, it’s not right.” Well, all that does is bring about disaster. So when we respond, we are looking for a solution. When we react we concentrate on the problem. *When we concentrate on the problem instead of the solution it creates havoc.*

**FP:** What advice would you give to parents who want successful children?

**ZZ:** Well this one is easy. My wife and I have been married about 60 years. What we did in raising our children is we made absolutely certain that we started the day properly and we ended the day properly. In other words, two of the most significant points of the day are the beginning and the ending. For example, I would encourage people to love your children unconditionally. Not because they are bright, or not because their beautiful, and not because they are obedient, but because they are yours—and God gave that child to you, for you to be the guiding light in that person’s life.

When our children reached about the age of 10 years old I recognized that the environment they were in had a huge impact on who they were, what they were, and where they were going. So what we started doing is we would use a lot of positive affirmations—always with unconditional love. When we would put them to bed you put them into bed *lovingly* so that the last thing in their minds when they go to sleep is the love and affection expressed by their parents. That way they have a much better chance of getting off to a good night’s sleep. And you wake them up in the morning kindly and gently and with affection. You walk in and you kiss your child and say: “You are so beautiful, I love you. It’s going to be a wonder-

ful, wonderful day.” You start the day lovingly and you end the day lovingly, and the time in between is going to be much, much better. And when we always remember discipline is what you do *for* the child, whereas punishment is what you do *to* the child. When you focus on the discipline side you have an infinitely greater chance of having a disciplined and loving child.

**FP:** What would you say to older generations who feel they have nothing more to offer? What about those who feel their prime years are behind them and thus they wake up in a doom & gloom atmosphere? What would you say to them?

**ZZ:** I would say that particular mentality started many years earlier. **The reality is what you are and where you are is in large part because of what has gone into your mind.** Because if you change what you are, you change where you are, then you change what goes into your mind. I’ve been reading for three hours a day for over thirty years, **and I read good stuff....**I spend little time watching television. I spend a lot of time reading. And I spend a lot of time listening to people talk about things I do not know. The Bible says out of the heart comes the issues of life. I wouldn’t dream of looking at a pornographic Web site. I wouldn’t dream of looking at a television program that promotes sexual promiscuity. I just protect my mind.

**FP:** What about our young people? It appears as there is a movement today by atheists and evolutionists to convert our children to a godless theory. How do we convey to them the importance of protecting their minds against those issues?

**ZZ:** Well, we need to teach them that character qualities are always key. I do a lot of speaking today to very large audiences, and I never forget to mention the importance of our faith in what we are doing. Also, **we need to emphasize the fact that the theory of evolution has been the most devastating single concept that has ever been hoisted on the human being.** And then I proceed to tell them “We did not come out of the slime. We were fearfully and wonderfully made. We were made in God’s own image.” And the reality is—to be very specific—there has never been a single medical or scientific breakthrough that can be traced because of what they learned studying the theory of evolution!