

Chapter 4

PHIL MANDEL



THE INTERVIEW

David Wright (Wright)

Today we're talking with Phil Mandel, a Master Practitioner of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), Hypnotherapist, Certified Flight Instructor, long-distance cyclist, accomplished pianist, and recovering engineer with degrees from MIT and Northwestern University. He coaches individuals and leads workshops on topics ranging from Motivation to Getting Things Done to Losing Weight to Reducing Stress.

Phil, welcome to *Getting Things Done: Keys to a Well Balanced Life*.

Phil Mandel (Mandel)

Thank you, David; I'm very excited to be here!

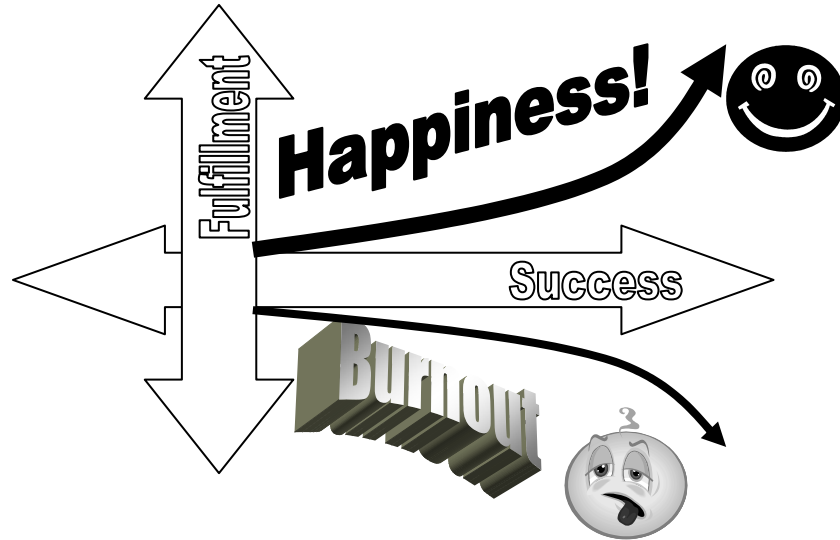
Wright

People often think of success in relationship to material things or accomplishments. What are your thoughts on that?

Mandel

Material things trip people up more than anything. Many folks think that if they're driving the right kind of SUV or they've got the right kind of house, they are successful—or that thing is going to bring them happiness.

There's an author you may have heard of—he also does speaking and training—his name is Robert Fritz (www.robertfritz.com). He talks about the success versus fulfillment axis. Some people are wildly successful and have all kinds of money and material trappings, but they don't feel particularly fulfilled. If you imagine a graph with success as the horizontal line and fulfillment as the vertical line (below), these people are over in one quadrant where there is lots of success, but they don't feel terribly good about themselves or their lives (burnout). They're always looking for more. What they think they're looking for is more success, more money, more things, but really what they're looking for is more *fulfillment*, which may or may not go hand-in-hand with material things.



There are studies that show developing countries, for example, where people are as happy as can be. When they are studied by psychologists and anthropologists, they find that these people are having a good old' time even though they work their fingers to the bone every single day and don't even know what a car is! And yet there are folks here in the United States who have won the lottery and come into millions or tens of millions of dollars overnight; if you watch them over time you'll find that many of them are miserable ("Windfall not always a blessing, psychologists say," *The Boston Globe*, July 10, 2004).

Money and material things don't automatically bring fulfillment or happiness. But if we broaden our concept of success to *include* fulfillment and happiness—feeling good about ourselves, being excited to get up in the

morning—these are the things that I personally consider *success* and what I strive for myself!

For example, at the moment I have more debt than money. Part of the reason for that is because I invest in real estate occasionally. I either find good tenants who help me pay the mortgage until the property appreciates or I purchase the property and improve it, then resell it for a profit. I'm temporarily in debt because of that, but after I sell something, I pay the debt and put some money in the bank. Right this very minute (September of 2007), I'm upside down—I have more debt than money. I still slept like a baby last night, all the way through the night until it was time to get up, have breakfast, and get ready for this interview. I feel excited about the day, I have a Bridge game later on with some friends that I'm looking forward to, and then I'm going to help someone lose weight this afternoon when he comes over for a consultation.

So, success doesn't necessarily come from having material things or money, but they can help! Sounds like I'm contradicting myself—I'll explain. There's absolutely nothing wrong with having money, collecting accomplishments, and striving for material things. I'm not faulting people for doing this—I do it myself! It's just not the be-all and end-all. It's not that money and material things are by themselves going to make you happy. What I'm saying is that you've got to have more to strive for than just simply "the stuff."

Wright

Speaking of accomplishments, I can see from reading your bio that you have accomplished a thing or two. Since our readers may not know about you except for your bio, would you be willing to share some of the details with us?