



Marshmallow's and It's Relationship to Successful People

Author: Sonia Clayton

September 20, 2017 -- I recently graduated from the Stanford Latino Entrepreneur Program at Stanford University. While being involved with this program I read some powerful books and researched several Stanford Studies. The things I learned in this program were invaluable. But, one of the stories that impacted me the most was the Marshmallow Study, a study conducted between the 1960s and early 1970s and led by psychologist and professor Walter Mischel (1962). This Stanford Study is an important illustration of Emotional Intelligence and immediate gratification.

During the study, a child was offered one small reward (a marshmallow) presented immediately or two small rewards (2 or more marshmallows) that could be even bigger and better later on and within a span of 15 minutes. Some of the young participants eat the marshmallow immediately, but others chose to deal with all the challenges of managing the "urge" to grab the marshmallow and eating it, focusing in the ultimate reward.

During this extensive study, Mischel and Ebbenson (1972), observed participant's behaviors for the following 14 years and subsequently 18 and 20 years. After this study, researchers compared the behaviors of the grabbers and contrasted them with those who chose to wait. Conclusions were:

1. The Grabbers – "Immediate Creatures," become young adults with compulsive tendencies, who had a hard time managing stress, had issues connecting with others and being team players and had less will power to overcome temptation.
2. The Resisters – Became more focused individuals and scored an average of 210 points higher on their SAT tests and other indexes and they had better life outcomes.

What made the difference? The answer is the type of Emotional Impulse produced and our human ability to deal with all distracting factors involved, combined with the capacity to pay attention and execute what is in our minds. Those who waited are classified as people capable and able to perform with discipline, self- control and will-power to restrain "urges" and remain focused. They were less impulsive, more strategic, better at dealing and coping with stressful situations and able to improve individual behaviors.

1. Grabbers were unable to concentrate and develop close relationships. They displayed less self-control, show more impulsiveness and dependability and had trouble solving complex problems or dealing with adversarial situations. They also showed more resistance to change.

In today's world and as an IT recruiting professional, I have learned that when employers look for Education and Professional Experience while sorting through resumes, they are not concerned so much about what applicants "know" but what they are willing or "capable of doing" and how they do their job. Rather than focusing on basic skills, they focus on the applicants' motivation, self-direction, technology adoption, knowledge,

capability and desire to assume responsibility and leadership. They want people able to work in teams and ready to listen and solve problems independently instead of complainers and problem generators.

Mischelle (2011), explained that there is much to be said about how people are wired, however, training can always make the difference and help as the most powerful correcting agent between those with natural behaviors and those without. We may also conclude that impulsive behavior can be modified. Mischel, a heavy Nicotine addict, stop smoking after he saw a lung cancer patient living with all the horrific side effects of cancer. Something clicked in Mischel's conscious mind and from that point on, when he wanted a cigarette (approximately every three minutes, by his own account) he would recreate a picture in his mind of the man he saw at the Stanford hallway. "I changed the objective value of the cigarette. It went from something I craved to something disgusting." Ever since, Mischel stopped smoking completely. Hence, we can conclude that conditional training can change employees and help them acquire new skills that increase contributions to business and build self-esteem.

About Author

Sonia Clayton is the President & CEO of Virtual Intelligence Providers, LLC (www.vipglobal.com) a Houston-based corporation specializing in Information Systems Implementations and Training. This multi-million-dollar corporation serves customers across the world and since inception has generated an economic impact of \$40M. Sonia is also an entrepreneur and philanthropist and a member of several higher education and community boards to include the information systems advisory board of the Marriott School of Business at Brigham Young University. Sonia is also a Harvard Business School Certified Negotiator.