

The Success Imperative

Discussion at The Park

Wednesday 19 October 2016 7:30pm at *The Park Tavern, Macclesfield*

From education to relationship, we are urged to perform, achieve, succeed in everything. Is this feasible? Success at what price?

A few definitions:

an imperative: an obligation, a necessity, an unconditional moral obligation

success: a positive outcome; reaching an objective

to perform: to carry out an activity/a task (often measured against some standard)

to achieve: to reach an outcome through special effort, hard work, courage

A few questions:

1. From early childhood we are urged to succeed - and this enables us to walk, talk, learn and develop. We integrate this process. The desire to succeed becomes 'natural': everybody wants to succeed at everything. Or maybe not?

- Is this desire 'natural' or 'cultural' or both?

- Are some categories of people more likely to be subjected - or more likely to be sensitive - to this 'social pressure to succeed'?

- Is it possible to ignore it?

2. How is success measured? Different gauges - quantitative and qualitative apply in different circumstances (eg: passing an exam, completing a marathon, having a successful career, etc). Is success an absolute concept (perfection?) or a relative one?

3. What are the consequences - positive and negative - of this drive to succeed for individuals and society?

- development, fulfilment, happiness, creativity, innovation ...

- risk aversion, fear of failure, disappointment, cheating, competition, stress, single-mindedness ...

4. How to strike a balance between the positive and negative consequences in the quest for success? Or does the main challenge reside in selecting 'good' criteria to define success? Is 'continuous improvement' a better alternative?