

If I can imagine it, I can have it!

Is this really true? Is there some powerful cosmic force that will enable me to get whatever I want just by wanting it enough? This would be great if it were true but I'm afraid I don't personally believe it is. I say this as someone with a belief in God and as a practising member of a religion. I think prayer works but I don't think it works because I want something badly enough.

Now before you get all upset and wonder why on earth this mad man is talking religion when he said he was going to talk about success I need to crave your indulgence for just a little longer. I wanted to make the point that I do find it possible to believe in a spiritual world but experience tells me that just imagining doesn't make something happen.

If imagining were the secret to life then as a teenager I would have been the happiest person on the planet. I imagined the beautiful redhead that I saw every week would be my girlfriend – never happened. I imagined that I had loads of money – didn't happen. I imagined I had a very nice car – didn't happen. I imagined that I had the body of Arnold Schwarzenegger – didn't happen. I have always had a vivid imagination and if having was just down to imagining I would be the most successful person in the world.

Imagining something and desiring it greatly is not the cosmic law it is simply a means to get motivated to act. Without desire there is seldom any action and without action there is never success.

We could ask the same question about that other great solver of all our ills: optimism. If I'm optimistic enough will it mean I will get what I want? Positive thinking and optimism are important qualities to cultivate for a happy life. I have to read a lot of stuff about positive thinking and just occasionally I come across an article or a book that seems to imply that if I think positively I can have anything. This isn't positive thinking its positively deception.

Now it is true that positive people get what they want more than negative people but it isn't just because they are positive. A positive person will have an attractive personality and this will help; they will have more friends and this will help; they will have a happier disposition and this will help. However the single most important factor is that positive people, or optimists, have a tendency to get up off their backside and go for something because they believe they can get it with some effort. Studies have shown that optimistic people who have a strong sense of self are successful because they are more motivated. They stick at things longer and so get what they wanted more often.

So the reason to be optimistic is not because just by being optimistic life becomes easy but that if you are optimistic (or at least act like you are optimistic – that's for another day) then you will be more motivated to succeed.

Is it true that if I want something strongly enough it will be mine? The answer I'm afraid is no, but the best chance of getting something is by acting on those strong feelings of desire. If you can create a strong enough feeling of desire for something then you will start getting motivated to find a way to get it. If only I had worked this out when I met the redhead – but then again if I had I would have missed out on my beautiful wife.