

## **STRAIGHT-A GUIDE**

### **LESSON TWELVE: APPLICATION**

The Straight-A Guide began as a way for me to survive and grow through a 45-year federal prison sentence. I built the framework while living inside confinement, stripped of freedom, opportunity, and control over nearly every aspect of my daily life. At the time, my crisis was clear. I had made reckless decisions in my youth. I broke the law. A federal indictment followed, and I received a sentence that would keep me incarcerated for decades.

The Straight-A Guide helped me engineer a pathway out of that crisis and into a better life.

What I did not anticipate when I first began writing the framework was how useful it would remain after my obligation to the Bureau of Prisons concluded in August of 2013. Although my circumstances changed dramatically, the framework did not. I continue to rely on the same principles today to guide decisions in business, advocacy, finances, health, and personal growth.

That continuity is the reason for this lesson on Application.

### **A FRAMEWORK**

Although I developed the Straight-A Guide during incarceration, it is not a prison-only strategy. It is a decision-making framework that applies to any period of challenge, transition, or ambition.

As human beings, we all face crisis at some point. Those crises take different forms:

- » Career stagnation or job loss
- » Financial instability
- » Health or fitness struggles
- » Substance abuse or destructive habits
- » Relationship breakdowns
- » Identity loss during transition or reinvention

The source of the crisis may differ, but the solution always begins the same way: by reclaiming agency and applying a structured approach to decision-making.

That is what the Straight-A Guide provides.

### **APPLY THE STRAIGHT-A GUIDE TODAY**

After release, I used the same ten principles to build businesses. I defined success for each stage, set clear goals, chose an attitude that emphasized discipline over entitlement, aspired to contribute beyond myself, and took consistent action. I built accountability systems, remained aware of changing conditions, showed my work authentically, celebrated incremental achievements, and practiced appreciation along the way.

I used the Straight-A Guide to pursue reforms that I hoped would open opportunities for people in prison to earn higher levels of liberty through merit. That work required patience, credibility, coalition-building, and resilience. The framework helped me stay grounded when progress was slow and resistance was real.

I continue to apply the same principles to guide financial decisions, fitness goals, and long-term planning. The context changes. The framework does not.

### **APPLYING THE STRAIGHT-A GUIDE TO DIFFERENT AREAS OF LIFE**

The Straight-A Guide works because it is adaptable. You do not apply it once and move on. You apply it repeatedly, adjusting definitions and goals as your life evolves.

Here are examples of how the framework applies across different domains:

#### **CAREER OR BUSINESS**

- » Define success for your current stage.
- » Set measurable goals tied to skill development or value creation.
- » Take consistent action that builds credibility.
- » Document progress so others can see your growth.

#### **HEALTH AND FITNESS**

- » Define what success looks like now, not eventually.
- » Set realistic goals that fit your environment.



- » Build routines that compound over time.
- » Track effort, not just outcomes.

### **RECOVERY AND PERSONAL DISCIPLINE**

- » Define success as stability and progress, not perfection.
- » Use accountability tools to measure behavior.
- » Stay aware of triggers and risks.
- » Practice appreciation for progress, even when setbacks occur.

### **ADVOCACY AND CONTRIBUTION**

- » Define success as service and impact.
- » Aspire to contribute beyond your own interests.
- » Build coalitions and remain authentic.
- » Celebrate incremental wins that move the mission forward.

In every case, the same principles apply. Only the definitions change.

### **CREDIT FOR THESE IDEAS**

I cannot take credit for inventing the Straight-A Guide. I observed people who were far more accomplished, disciplined, and thoughtful than I was. I studied how they made decisions, how they responded to adversity, and how they structured their lives around values and goals.

By observing them, I learned. By learning, I adapted those lessons to the context of my own life. Over time, I organized those observations into a framework that helped me navigate confinement and later freedom.

Anyone can do the same.

You do not need my background. You do not need to serve multiple decades in prison. You do not need to face an extreme crisis. If you want to prepare for higher levels of success, the Straight-A Guide can help you structure your thinking, your decisions, and your actions.



## **THE STRAIGHT-A GUIDE AS A LIVING TOOL**

The Straight-A Guide is not a checklist you complete once. Use the guide as a tool you return to whenever circumstances change. Each time you revisit it, you redefine success, adjust goals, and recalibrate action.

That is how progress compounds.

The framework helped me move from crisis to preparation, from preparation to opportunity, and from opportunity to contribution. It continues to guide my decisions today.

It can do the same for anyone willing to apply it deliberately.

## **SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING EXERCISE**

Complete the following exercise in writing:

1. Identify one area of your life where you are currently facing a challenge or transition.
2. Define success for that area in one clear sentence.
3. Write one goal you can pursue over the next 30 to 90 days that supports that definition.
4. Identify one daily or weekly action you will take consistently.
5. Decide how you will track and document progress.

At the end of the period, ask yourself:

6. Did I apply the framework consistently?
7. What evidence shows progress?
8. What adjustment will I make next?

Application turns principles into results. Results create confidence. Confidence opens new possibilities.

