

THE
SLIGHT
EDGE

TURNING SIMPLE DISCIPLINES *INTO*
MASSIVE SUCCESS & HAPPINESS

JEFF OLSON

Praise From Readers of *The Slight Edge*

As an instructor of a management course in a master's program at NYU, I made *The Slight Edge* required reading. It serves as the foundation for all other course content because I believe the philosophy is key to understanding success.

—David G. Rosenthal, Advisory Board Member, Member Curriculum Committee; Adjunct Instructor; Chief Executive Officer, Shepard Communications Group, Inc.

The Slight Edge is the book that makes every other personal-development book actually work. This is the REAL secret!

—Jesse Macpherson, Los Angeles, CA

The Slight Edge was the single most formative influence on my career, health and happiness. I have gone back and read it over and over so many times that my copy is in complete tatters.

—Reed Herreid, Minneapolis, MN

The Slight Edge freed me from the pressure I had put on myself for not maintaining the progress I made. For instance, all the years spent trying to lose weight and maintain. It was always a roller coaster, up and down, never any stability. But along came *The Slight Edge*. This put everything in perspective. I can go after anything and know that without a doubt I will be successful, because of *The Slight Edge*.

—Jimmy Williams, Austin, TX

A unique view on how small changes or actions done repeatedly can change your personal, family and business life. An amazing and simple strategy anyone can apply, if they are willing.

—Pierre Rattini, North Myrtle Beach, SC

I had read self-help books before and they did very little for me, so at first I didn't think this book would be much different. I was very wrong. This book has given me the power of wanting to have some failure in my life, and made me see the point behind the one penny. Before reading this book, I thought being average and unhealthy and overweight was just the life I was meant to live. I was very wrong. This book moved me in ways I never thought I could be. I wish I would have had it when I was 17.

—Tyra Snider, Canon City, CO

It has created a sense of calm and peace for us, knowing we are on this Slight Edge journey to greatness. *The Slight Edge* has taught us the principle to be patient with ourselves, to look toward improving 1 percent at a time. It has taught us that positive and negative results don't happen overnight, but are cultivated through simple daily disciplines.

—Haas & Tahera Khaku, Anaheim Hills, CA, co-author, *Power of Mentorship for the 21st Century*

The Slight Edge is the best personal-development book I have ever read.

—Michael Clouse, Seattle, WA

This book is a treasure and I use it in every aspect of my life—business, personal, and fun!

—Shenna Shotwell, Creedmoor, NC

The Slight Edge is a life philosophy that should be taught as soon as children take their first steps. I wish someone had taught me this when I was young.

—Jane Lehman, Lexington, MI

I use this philosophy throughout my day. I've become a better person all around. I was able to correct my negative outlooks. I'm a better role model for my children, my health is getting better, I'm more connected spiritually, my relationships are improving, and my business is thriving. It is a must-have and a must-read.

—Pedro Garcia, Middletown, NY

I, like many people, get frustrated when I do not see quick results. Through the Slight Edge mentality, I was able to lose 25 pounds in just under three

months. I also convinced my father, 69, who lost 20 pounds in less than three months. My father and I are both testimony to the fact that *The Slight Edge* works!

—Christopher Mangano, Boynton Beach, FL

I find the book to be one of the best “diet books” I have ever read, and I have read quite a few of them through the last few years. So it is not willpower that is helping me to lose weight, it is *The Slight Edge*. What an amazing revelation this has been!

—Carol Chandler, Denver, CO

Before I read *The Slight Edge*, I never understood why my efforts seemed to be a degree off. *The Slight Edge* showed me how to get that last edge I needed!

—Lynda Cromar, Aurora, CO

The Slight Edge has had a profound effect on my life. After having it recommended four different times from four different people in one month, I finally purchased it. It was the first nonfiction book that I can remember not wanting to get to the end of because I loved what I was learning!

—Laura Jo Richins, Mesa, AZ

I was born and raised in Albania. I came to America 13 years ago at age 18 by myself, with nothing but a dream. I didn't speak English, and had no money or connections. I am a college dropout and a former pizza delivery driver. A friend gave me *The Slight Edge* book and by implementing its simple principles, I am today living the American Dream.

—Andi Duli, Oklahoma City, OK

The Slight Edge is truly a gift to the planet.

—Mark Skovron, Tampa Bay, FL

I was bankrupt, had my car repossessed, and was on Medicaid and applying for food stamps. After putting the principles of *The Slight Edge* in place, I have made over a million dollars and it has also helped me in every area of my life.

—Darin Kidd, Appomattox, VA

Reading *The Slight Edge* is perhaps one of the most eye-opening things one can do. It's such a simple concept that you realize you've overlooked every day of your life. Easy to do, easy not to do. Suddenly it's shocking how many things you really haven't been doing. The examples Jeff Olson provides are easy to understand and truly show how *The Slight Edge* affects the world.

—Julie Jonak, Houston, TX

I have read numerous personal-development books through the years, and by far, this is one of the best! By applying the principles of *The Slight Edge*, I've lost 35 pounds in just three months, and am still going strong. I'm also working them into my job, part-time pursuits and every area of my life. I have quit focusing as much on the goals, and am focusing more on the little things I do every day, since I can control those. As a result, my life is going SO much better than it ever has!

—Richard Green, Franklin, TN

This is a very simple, easy-to-follow book that can lead anyone from where they are to whatever level of success they want to achieve.

—Alex Serrano, Las Vegas, NV

Over the course of the last year, by putting the Slight Edge concepts in practice, I have stopped using tobacco, and lost 25 pounds through diet and exercise.

—Bob Sutton, Ft. Collins, CO

Following the principles outlined in Jeff Olson's *The Slight Edge* has helped me become a millionaire—several times over. Thanks for refining the processes into an understandable and workable format, Jeff.

—Rex LeGalley, Albuquerque, NM

The Slight Edge principles apply to everything.... My wife and I have used it to improve our health and now we have lost over 100 pounds combined!

—BJ Baker, West Manchester, OH

I led a life of errors in judgment until I came across this magnificent book. A blueprint for life can be founded on the Slight Edge philosophy. I found myself discarding old bad habits and replacing them with new positive

habits; the result is a successful life. I was very reckless in my daily decisions, as well as my family positioning. My son noticed a huge change in my character and life perception. I no longer spend money haphazardly and my priorities are up to par.

—*Simon Ponce, Irvine, CA*

As a student of personal progress for the past 40 years, I consider this work to be one of the foundational keys to the application of literally every other resource in this incredibly important area of life.

—*Stephen McBroom, Floyd, VA*

The Slight Edge gives you that extra kick to push you beyond your wish list and into achieving your highest potential. I am able to apply the tools from *The Slight Edge* to balance my full-time work, while completing my bachelor's degree.

—*Mark Roberts, Redmond, WA*

The Slight Edge is a phenomenal book. It makes you aware of the unwritten rules that we all live by and just weren't aware of! A definite MUST READ for EVERYONE, from student to executive. Wondering why you can't pass a class? *The Slight Edge*! Tried those diets but just can't seem to lose the weight? *The Slight Edge*! Have a savings plan but your bank account just refuses to grow? *The Slight Edge*! When applied correctly, *The Slight Edge* will show you how to get things back on track in your life. You will now be aware of what you're doing and be armed with the knowledge to correct the important things in your life, from relationships to getting that executive promotion. The principles have definitely helped my life. Here's to your success!

—*Leonard Taylor, Las Vegas, NV*

Before reading *The Slight Edge*, my mindset for my life was not where it needed to be. I was a broke college student conforming to the masses. This book has changed the direction of my life dramatically by mentoring me on a new path filled with positive and disciplined philosophy.

—*Tim Walter, San Diego, CA*

After applying the Slight Edge, my life began to change for the better and I found myself harnessing the powers of completion and momentum every

day. It was amazing to see results in my business, in my health, and in my personal life.

—*Carl Coffin, Goose Creek, SC*

I was searching for many answers to my life, when all of a sudden, I came across this magnificent and truthful information. It expanded my vision and took the fog away from my eyes.

—*Michael Huerta, San Jacinto, CA*

As a successful leadership coach, I recommend two books to all of my clients. *The Slight Edge* is one of them!

—*Dennis Antoine, Coral Springs, FL*

The Slight Edge kept me going on those days when I felt like I was not making progress by reassuring me that taking even the smallest positive action would eventually pay off.

—*Susan Mix, Santa Clara, CA*

What an incredible masterpiece! *The Slight Edge* challenges me daily in business and in life. An absolute “must read” and “must apply” in every area.

—*Dr. Vanessa R. Booker, Glendale, AZ*

The Slight Edge principles are so powerfully uplifting and inspirational that they are a catalyst for action. The Slight Edge gives me the momentum to achieve my daily goals in life.

—*Antoinette Mims, New York, NY*

I have read personal-development books for over 20 years, and I can say this is the one that tied them all together, because it is so easy to read and understand, and so powerful in its simplicity.

—*Mike Bishop, Wilsonville, OR*

The Slight Edge has been a philosophical staple in my life, and in the lives of those I mentor. I have started a business, and have gotten in better physical shape. The most memorable anecdote I use is, “What you do matters. What you do today matters. What you do every day matters.”

—*David Mack, Sacramento, CA*

I LOVE THIS BOOK! As a former professional athlete, coach for over 25 years and wellness consultant, I strongly recommend *The Slight Edge* to everyone. If you want success in your health, finances and relationships, embrace this book and create a new mindset, thereby a new future for yourself. *The Slight Edge* is empowering! The philosophies and thoughts will hit home with everyone who reads it.

—Lucy Del Sarto, Olathe, KS

The Slight Edge is serving as a timeless way for me to help share the principles in which one must live to succeed in life. I have literally shared the concepts in this book with thousands.

—Ryan Chamberlin, Belleview, FL

As a full-time police officer, I believe *The Slight Edge* mentality should be a part of the educational system across America.

—Bobby Garcia, Tucson, AZ

This book has given me the vision to look past my current circumstances and into my desired results!

—Steven Joseph, St. Louis, MO

The Slight Edge took years of personal-development study and rolled it all into one, easy to understand book. Jeff Olson did an awesome job of communicating how anyone in any profession can improve his/her productivity, personal relationships and family life. WOW!

—Brian Kennedy, Jacksonville, NC

I would recommend *The Slight Edge* to anyone who is looking to understand why they have not been able to achieve their goals. They will understand that it is not all the fancy words many of the television hosts talk about, but the small things Mr. Olson writes about in his book—things that make absolute sense and are easy to do. I enjoy this book and have plans to make it part of my daily routine. I plan to give my family and myself a slight edge lifestyle. Thanks Mr. Olson.

—Glenn Watkins, Cibolo, TX

I use the Slight Edge philosophy every day in my personal life and especially in my business. Doing the daily activities compounded over time

has led me to the kind of success most people only dream about. As a single mother of three boys, it is the principles in this book that have made me over a million dollars in just a few short years, and have allowed me to achieve levels of success in business and in life. *The Slight Edge* will help anyone.

—Christa Aufdemberg, Orange County, CA

The Slight Edge has given me and my family the secrets to a successful and abundant life. Practicing the basic philosophies of mastering the mundane has given my entire world a complete paradigm shift. There's a one-degree difference between hot and boiling, and this book has given me the necessary degrees to go from Good 2 Great. *The Slight Edge* is a lifer in my arsenal of personal development.

—Ken Hills, Syracuse, NY

I found *The Slight Edge* to be a remarkable book. It was refreshingly different than other self-help books, as it focused on the hundreds of little daily and weekly decisions that build up to deliver the big hairy goals that one wants in life. My problem was that I can dream big and expect a lot from myself. But saying I wanted something huge next month and failing month after month just led to reluctance overall. Instead, after reading *The Slight Edge*, it was easier for me to focus on the daily schedule and on making daily progress.

—Timothy Sharpe, Redmond, WA

I have used the principles of *The Slight Edge* to improve my physical fitness. I have used it to help pay off debt, build my savings and investments, and improve my relationships with my children.

—Stan Snow, North Yarmouth, ME

I came across *The Slight Edge* and it instantly captured my attention. As an actress living in New York, it is so easy to get overwhelmed by everything that comes with this competitive business. *The Slight Edge* helped me to understand that the small choices I make every moment of every day make a huge impact on my life. Living in a society with so much emphasis on success, I found that *The Slight Edge* redefined what success is for me. It helps me to take the next step forward in my everyday life and do the next right thing. This ultimately leads to a very successful and fulfilling life. I

attribute much of my success to the simple principles this book has outlined.

—*Cara Cooley, Spokane, WA*

THE
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Eighth Anniversary Edition

JEFF OLSON
with John David Mann



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A Personal Invitation

Life-Transforming Books

Acknowledgments

About the Author

Preface

When the first edition of *The Slight Edge* came out in 2005, I had no idea how popular it would become. There was no media campaign, no bookstore placement, no press release. We just published it. Promoted by word of mouth, from person to person, soon it was spreading like a grassfire, and before we knew it hundreds of thousands of people had read it and told others about it. Clearly, there was something in these pages that had struck a chord.

Since that time we have received thousands of personal letters and emails from readers, of all ages and from all walks of life, telling us how *The Slight Edge* has touched their lives. Now it was our responsibility, as we saw it, to make sure we kept making the book as relevant and as available as possible.

In 2008 we helped produce an adaptation of the book aimed at teenagers. Titled *SUCCESS for Teens: Real Teens Talk about Using the Slight Edge*, the book presented the core slight edge material in a more teen-friendly format, accompanied by dozens of stories from real-life teens about their experiences applying the principles in their lives. Through the efforts of the SUCCESS Foundation, the book has since been given to nearly two million teenagers.

In 2011 we produced a revised and expanded edition of the original book, with some additional principles I'd developed in the course of giving slight edge talks and new material by my daughter, Amber Olson Rourke, along with the inclusion of many personal experiences by *Slight Edge* readers.

With 2015 only a few years away, we started thinking about a tenth anniversary edition, which would incorporate a few new and critical concepts based on observations and experiences that had unfolded with *The Slight Edge* in the years since it first appeared. But we soon realized we couldn't wait until 2015. Too much had happened in the meantime.

So we decided to pull the trigger and make the Tenth Anniversary Edition into the *Eighth* Anniversary Edition you now hold in your hands.

This edition offers a complete rewriting and reorganization of the original material. For example, the discussion that revolves around the “roller coaster” graph that appears in [chapter 1](#) (The Beach Bum and the Millionaire) presents an evolving understanding of where success and failure come from, and why, which did not appear in the earlier books for the simple reason that I hadn’t yet articulated it. The “seven slight edge habits” in [chapter 15](#) build on ideas that first appeared in the 2011 edition and take those ideas to their logical conclusion. Ongoing experiences in business led to several new story-illustrations, as did formative experiences from early in my career that I haven’t shared until now.

Probably the most significant change in this edition is the addition of two entirely new chapters—The Secret of Happiness and The Ripple Effect—that take the concept of the slight edge to new levels of depth and breadth. These chapters explore the effect the slight edge has on two critical areas of life, everyday happiness and long-term impact, and insights from these two chapters play out throughout the rest of the book as well.

I hope you enjoy it.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J. R. Co." with a stylized, cursive script.

Part I

HOW THE SLIGHT EDGE WORKS

1. The Beach Bum and the Millionaire

“The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be.”

—*Ralph Waldo Emerson (attrib.)*

I want to tell you about two friends I’ve known since I was a kid, guys from my old neighborhood in New Mexico. These two characters grew up together, went to school together, graduated together, and roomed in college together. They were both pretty personable guys, and I got along with both of them. They had identical childhoods, though, and by high school they had both earned reputations as mischief-makers. Still, they both had more than enough drive and ambition to make up for whatever strikes they had against them. When you add it all up, in terms of their skills and potential, I would say they were evenly matched. In fact, they were almost identical in every way.

Every way except one—which was the different paths they took, and where they led.

The first friend dropped out of college, moved from New Mexico to Daytona Beach, Florida, the spring break capital of the world, where he became a beach bum, lifted weights, chased girls, and let his blond hair grow long and curly. People started calling him Gorgeous George, after the WWE wrestler who brought pro wrestling into America’s living rooms. My friend was pretty popular, in a big-fish-in-a-small-pond way. But he was a beach bum, cutting golf greens to make ends meet, sweating in the sun while he lugged around bags of golf clubs for the wealthy. Frustrated and unhappy, he eventually left Daytona Beach and went back to New Mexico, where he went into business for himself. And what happened? The business failed and Gorgeous George lost everything.

Then there was my other friend, Gorgeous George's buddy. As an adult, this guy led a charmed life. Graduating from college as an A-student, he went on to business school and graduated in the top of his class, then got recruited by a gigantic tech firm, built a stellar résumé, and went on to create a string of entrepreneurial ventures, each one more successful than the last. Today his life is rich in every way. He has a beautiful, amazing daughter, thousands of friends around the world, runs a record-breakingly successful company, and is happy beyond measure. Yet he still stays in touch with his childhood friend the beach bum.

In fact, they stay in *very* close touch.

I often think about these two guys, because I know that I could have been either one of them. Matter of fact, I *was*. Because here's the one piece of the story I left out: the reason those two guys were roommates all those years, and the reason they are still in constant contact today, is that they are one and the same person.

They're both me.

That college dropout who became a frustrated beach bum, who eventually took his shot at business but bottomed out there too? That was yours truly.

That straight-A college graduate who went on to create one business success after another, who became a millionaire with a fabulous family, friends all over the world and a richly happy, fulfilled life? Guilty as charged.

I've been blessed with a lot of success in my life. But I sure didn't start out that way. I started out as Gorgeous George the college-dropout golf-greens-cutter. And I'll tell you a secret: I'm the same person today that I was then. Not that I haven't changed a lot through my experiences; we all do that. What I mean is, deep down inside, I'm really no different than I was then. It's not as if I had any sort of lightning-strike overnight transformation. I did not go to a mountaintop, did not experience enlightenment, did not have a near-death experience that showed me the truth of universal brotherhood. (Although I did go through some pretty terrible failures that at the time sure *felt* like near-death experiences.)

I didn't change who I *was* as much as I changed what I *did*.

I didn't change who I am, because no matter what the gurus and therapists might tell you, I don't believe any of us can really do that. I mean, we are who we are. The kid who became a frustrated beach bum was never anything but average: average at schoolwork, average at sports, average in social skills. The incredibly fortunate and deeply happy man I am today is still that average kid, no more, no less, and I say that without an ounce of false modesty. The only

reason I've made the transformation from there to here is that, somewhere along the way, I've had the good fortune of being exposed to the slight edge.

How I got from there to here—and how *you* can get from wherever you are to wherever you want to be—is what this book is about.

My Day of Disgust

The transition from beach bum to millionaire did not happen overnight. It was a long, slow, at times painful roller-coaster process, because frankly, I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't yet have the key you're getting in this book: I didn't know about the slight edge.

I was working it out by trial and error. Lots of error.

I was born and raised in Albuquerque. My dad died when my brother, sister, and I were just kids, and somehow my mom held everything together. She was a terrific mother, a loving and constant presence in our lives. But it was still a rough way to grow up, as a fatherless, blond-headed kid in a Hispanic neighborhood where he didn't fit in. I didn't know what to do with it all, so I channeled my energy into mischief and misbehavior. A few years before my dad died, when I was in the third grade, my teachers had informed my mom that I had a low IQ. Now I started proving the point, and pretty quickly had gained that mischief-maker reputation. While my mom worked her way through the years, I struggled my way through school.

By age eighteen, it was clear to anyone who knew me that I didn't have much of a future.

I begged my way into the University of New Mexico. At college, I built upon my previous academic career and succeeded in taking my C average down to a D average. I did learn one thing, though: I learned that when spring break came, all the students went out east to Daytona Beach for a week to party hard. I thought I could do them one better—I quit school altogether and moved there.

In Daytona Beach I pursued my first calling, as the beach bum with the long curly locks. To make ends meet, if you can call it that, I took a job at the Orlando Country Club cutting the golf course grass.

One day, as I was cutting the greens under the scorching Florida sun, I paused to watch the wealthy club members playing golf all over the porcelain-smooth grass I had just cut for them. Watching them hum to and fro in their zippy golf carts, in their dapper golf outfits, with their classy golf bags filled with expensive golf clubs, I felt a burning question simmer up inside: