Lesson 4, Part 1 – Circle of Influence – The importance of your 5 closest friends.

As a kid, they way you first learned how to do anything, from walking to talking to riding a bike, was by emulating someone else. Sitting and watching another person and trying to copy them is one of the fundamentals of self-education. Almost every animal does this to learn and it’s a fairly basic instinct. By copying someone else’s success, you can often avoid a lot of failure that you might have experienced without following an example. It is also possible to learn what not to do by watching someone mess up and avoiding those mistakes.

Going on social cruise-control
In any social situation, there is a lot that goes on and a lot that can happen. If everyone is in agreement then everything can be fun and enjoyable. If everyone is in disagreement, then it can quickly turn into chaos. Because of this, it’s natural to tend to seek out people with similar interests, similar opinions, similar economic status, similar education, and similar physique.

What’s interesting is that if you find yourself caught in a situation where you are outnumbered and the group’s opinions differ from your own, you are more willing to go along with the group (statistically speaking). Oftentimes this goes on without our conscious control as we simply try to fit in to our surroundings. This is what I mean by social cruise-control.

Putting it into real world terms
Imagine you recently decided to watch your diet and want to slowly work exercise into your week. You have been really good about watching your portion intake and have been trying to gradually introduce the 10 Nutrition Principles into your diet.

Now pretend you also just got a really big job opportunity. You are asked to come to a restaurant for lunch for a relatively informal interview. When you arrive you notice the three interviewers are fairly overweight, they have already started on appetizers and have all ordered a drink other than water. They tell you to browse the menu and order; then, you will all talk business during the meal.
While you browse the menu you over-hear them laughing at some joggers outside, making a crack or two about the gym, and make a joke that the only 6-pack they need is one that comes with cans. When the waiter comes to you for an order, what do you get? Do you go on social cruise-control?

1) On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to order a salad and skip the appetizers (which are already abundant and on the table) to be the person you have been working towards?

2) On a scale of 1-10, how difficult would you find this decision?

Now, let’s change the setting. Imagine you show up to the same interview, only the three interviewers were fit and there was only water at the table. When you sit down, the waiter hands you a menu and asks the three interviewers what they want. Two of them order a salad and the thirds doesn’t order anything. When the waiter comes to you for an order, what do you get?

1) On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to order a salad and skip the appetizers to be the person you have been working towards?

2) On a scale of 1-10, how difficult would you find this decision?

Now, let’s change both situations one final time and assume that you are very overweight, have no fitness goals, and love to get the extra appetizers and dessert. If you arrived to each of these situations in this state, how comfortable would you feel in each? Did you notice your comfort levels just did a flip-flop? This is a big reason why we usually tend to find friends and make close company with others that share our own qualities and interests.

**Circle of Influence**

There have been a number of studies that have looked at social groups of people over a long period of time and tracked their behaviors. What was found is that the more time any two people are around each other, the more similar they become.
In fact, the circle of people you spend the most time with will shape who you are now, and who you will become tomorrow. Instinctively, you will act, talk, think, use your body and move around like the 5 people you spend the most time with each day, week, month, year, etc. The longer you’re around those 5 people, the more like them you will become. Now, 5 is an average; it could be 6, it could be 3. What's important is that your closest friends, co-workers, spouse, family, and possibly other people influence your everyday thoughts and actions. Day after day, this begins to pattern the way you think and act.

**How to get your circle of influence to support your goals**

It’s important to understand that you don’t change all your friends and re-adjust who you spend time with immediately. Start by adding in a single person into your circle of influence that shares your goals (a teammate) or knows how to support and lead you to reach them (a mentor).

As for your regular circle of influence, you HAVE to let them know about your goals. Communication is difficult, but it is essential to your success. A lot of your friends don’t understand that they are sabotaging your goals; they will continue to treat you the way they always have until they are informed otherwise. It may even result in you inspiring them to make positive change in their lives as well.

**A good book can be a close friend**

It’s also important to know that your mentors or supporting friends don’t have to be in person. They can be in the form of audio tapes, books, videos, etc. For example, of you commute to work everyday, you may spend more time in the car than you do with most people. This can be an opportunity to add audio tapes to your commute to educate you and support you in your goals. With enough time spent with the audio tapes, the more information you can absorb and the more your thoughts will shape around what you’re hearing and processing on a regular basis. You can have some of the greatest business, fitness, nutrition or master-minds of whatever your goal may be with you in your car, teaching you how they think, how they succeed, and how you can get to where they are, too. That’s a powerful tool.