

S. L. Young is an author, blogger on The Huffington Post, business professor, and inspirational speaker who uses a solution-oriented approach to address life and business challenges.

This brief presentation can be viewed on S. L. Young's website's homepage: <http://www.slyoung.com>



Strategies to Help Struggling Students

A Former At-Risk Student's Perspective

This presentation details strategies to help struggling and at-risk students.

I struggled for many years in traditional classroom environments.

The strategies in this presentation are based my perspectives as a former at-risk student and my experiences as an organizational leader and educator.

Imagine You're a Student ...

- who doesn't have direction
- can't identify a way to do and be better
- who doesn't know a way to ask for help



I didn't have direction; I didn't know how to do better; I felt like I was in the middle of an ocean trying to figure things out on my own.

No one ever asked me, "What can I do; how can I help you; how can we help you to move toward a new direction?"

My Educational Story

- Failed 6 of 7 classes in 10th grade
- Attended only 1/3 of the school year
- Almost repeated 10th grade twice
- Graduated high school in the bottom 8%
- Left colleges due to poor performance

A little bit about my story...

My sophomore year of high school, I failed 6 of 7 classes and was directed to leave high school by my principal.

After a difficult journey, I graduated high school in the bottom 8% of my class. Also, I almost failed 10th grade twice.

I left several colleges due to academic challenges, before I identified methods to study better.

This mainly required me to determine the reason(s) that learning was important for me.

My Journey

- Undergraduate and two (2) masters degrees
- Teach college-level business courses
- Inspirational Speaker
- Blogger on The Huffington Post / Author of several books
- Founder of an educational non-profit

I'm an author, inspirational speaker, blogger on The Huffington Post, and I have an educational nonprofit organization --- which allows me to help individuals in at-risk communities.



My journey isn't a traditional academic experience.

My story is shared to encourage anyone who works with a struggling student to not give-up.

Struggling students sometimes need someone to help them to make different choices to become and do better.

Students must be resilient to overcome past challenges. They have to believe in themselves to make positive forward-progress, but most importantly students have to be willing to take chances.



Expand Comfort Zones

Struggling students and anyone assisting them must expand their comfort zones to maximize the possibility of successful outcomes.

An ability to reach struggling students requires creativity --- as the use of traditional techniques might not be appropriate to modify unproductive behavior(s).



Build Relationships / Minimize Differences

Helping struggling students involves building relationships.

Sometimes there appears to be a difference between those who want to help and struggling students.

There really isn't that much of a difference because a struggling student and anyone assisting them --- as both are going through a process of learning about education.



Remove Barriers

Move beyond the things that you might be thinking about the students or things that you might be thinking about from your perspective.

Relationships are built by removing - sometimes preconceived - barriers and/or biases.

Anyone who helps struggling students must remove any barriers and build relationships so that students are willing to engage in the learning process.

There's Danger in Doing This...

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

JUMRING TQ GQNCIUSIQNS (Source: Brain Games TV Show August 2014)

In reading this slide, you're probably making a judgment about the words behind the box.

You're probably thinking 'jumping to conclusions', but this is incorrect.

There's Danger in Doing This...

IUMRING TQ GQNCIUSIQNS

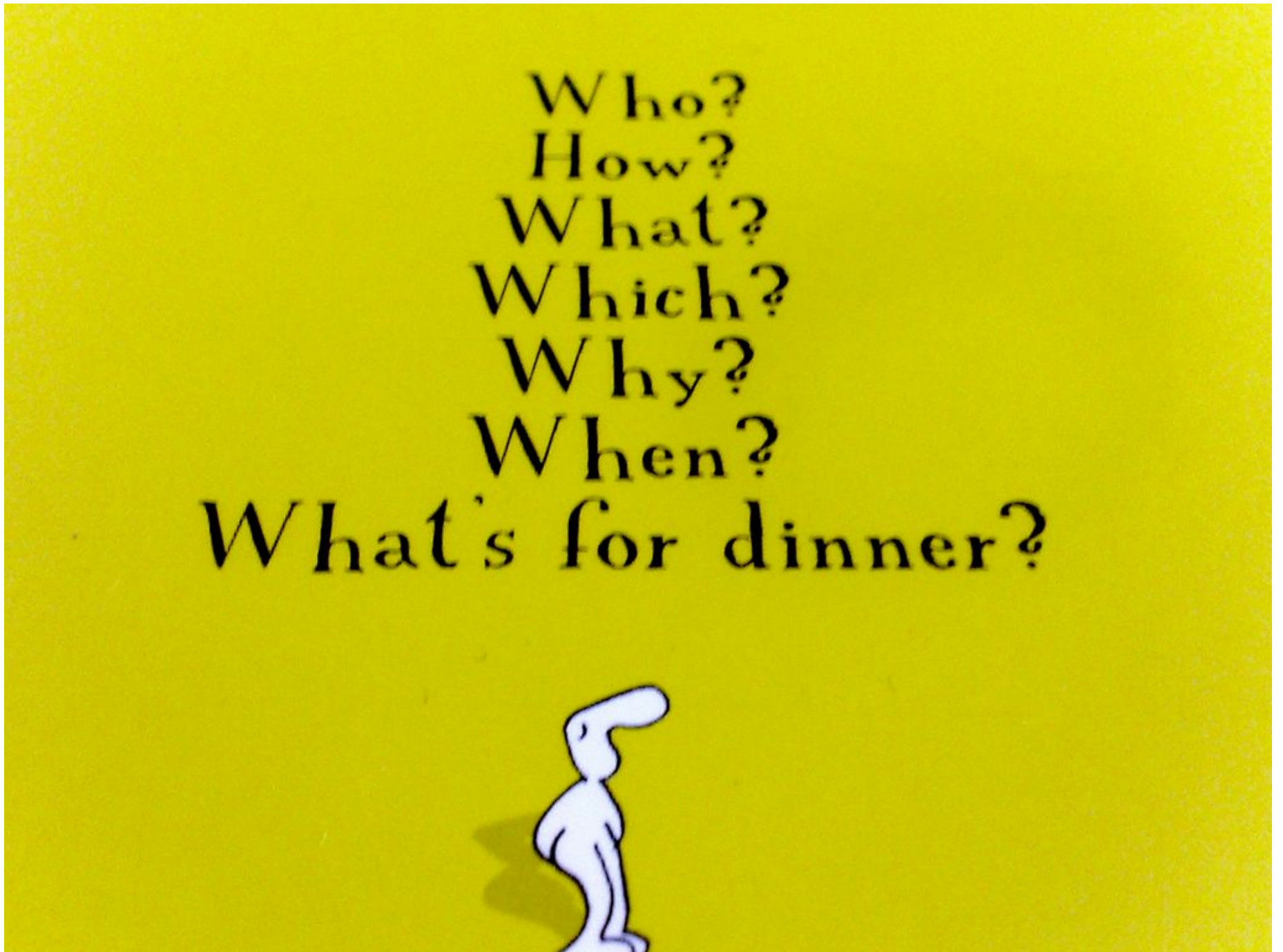
Source: Brain Games TV Show August 2014

These words don't spell anything.

Anyone who helps struggling students shouldn't 'jump to conclusions' either.

Just because someone believes that a struggling students' challenges are understood ... doesn't make it true.

The only way to determine any potential issues is to ask questions to obtain additional information.



The way to obtain additional information is to ask questions.

Ask a lot of questions to provide many opportunities for struggling students to provide their perspectives.

Use open-ended questions.

The goal is to engage struggling students, obtain information, and get food for thought to help them do better.



It starts with listening.

Anyone who helps struggling students must listen to their stories. Each struggling student has a unique story.

Struggling students might not have anybody at home or in their community who can or is willing to help.



Anyone who helps struggling students must be compassionate.

The difference between struggling students who stay or leave is sometimes based on a single interaction that could cause a change in direction or an outcome.

My high school principal - Ms. Gwen Felder - did that for me. She believed in me, helped me, and guided my life toward a new direction.

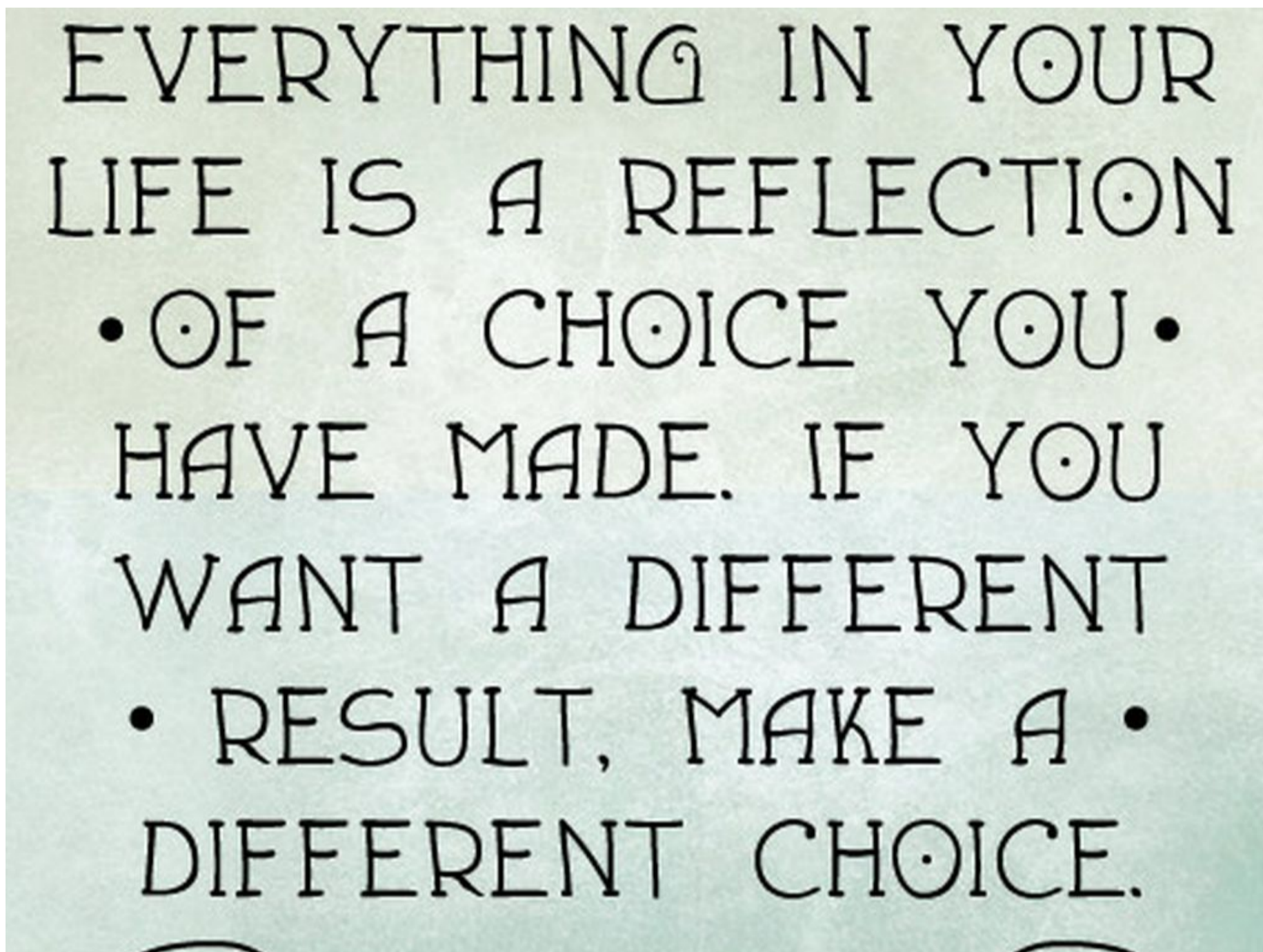
My changes didn't happen until years after my interactions with Ms. Felder ended; however, Ms. Felder's words, actions, and support helped me to continue to make positive forward-progress.



Offer Assistance

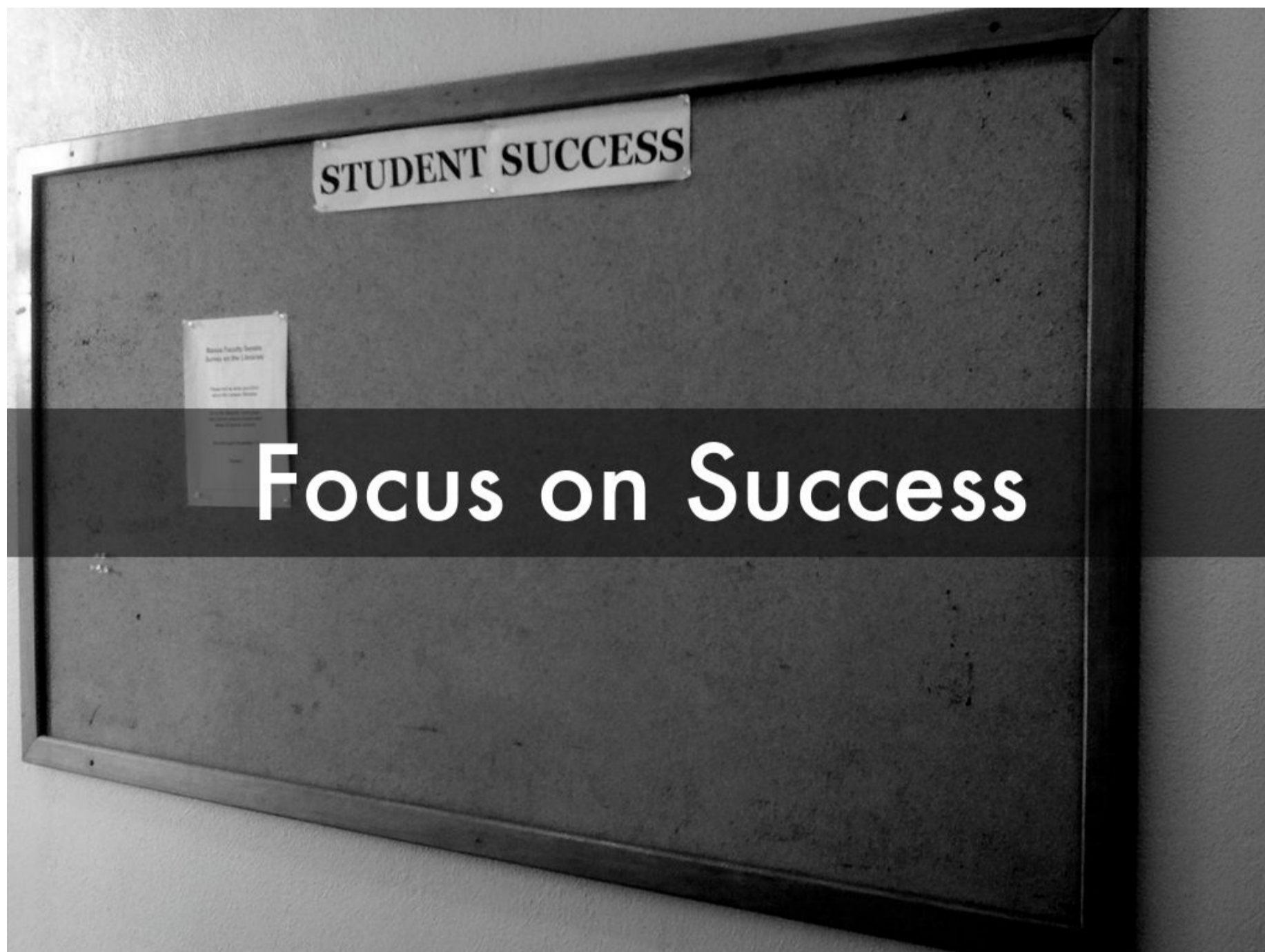
Helping struggling students involves providing assistance --- as sometimes struggling students don't know which direction to go.

For me... I didn't know, but then I started to work with individuals who did. These interactions helped to guide me toward a positive direction and toward educational success.



Life is about choices; the choices made today help to influence the things that happen tomorrow.

If the things that are done today don't work, then make different choices to create opportunities to have better outcomes.



The focus should be on success.

Struggling students' past outcomes don't matter because they're in the past; leave them there. The focus should be placed on this moment and the future.

It's the potential for better outcomes that helps to drive struggling students' toward future successes.

Don't dwell on past negative outcomes. Leave the challenges behind and focus on the students' future successes.



Follow-up: Many Times

Follow-up many times. A single conversation isn't enough. Anyone who helps struggling students must have many conversations.

The first conversation might begin to engage struggling students, but additional conversations will help drive their willingness to engage in more in-depth discussions.



Students must be taught that learning can be fun and it doesn't have to be painful.

Struggling students need to be encouraged throughout the learning process.

By creating exciting learning environments, students will be inspired to want to learn.



Struggling students - like me in the past - do change over time.

It took me a long time before I could change, but I did and this allows me to now bring this perspective to the classroom.

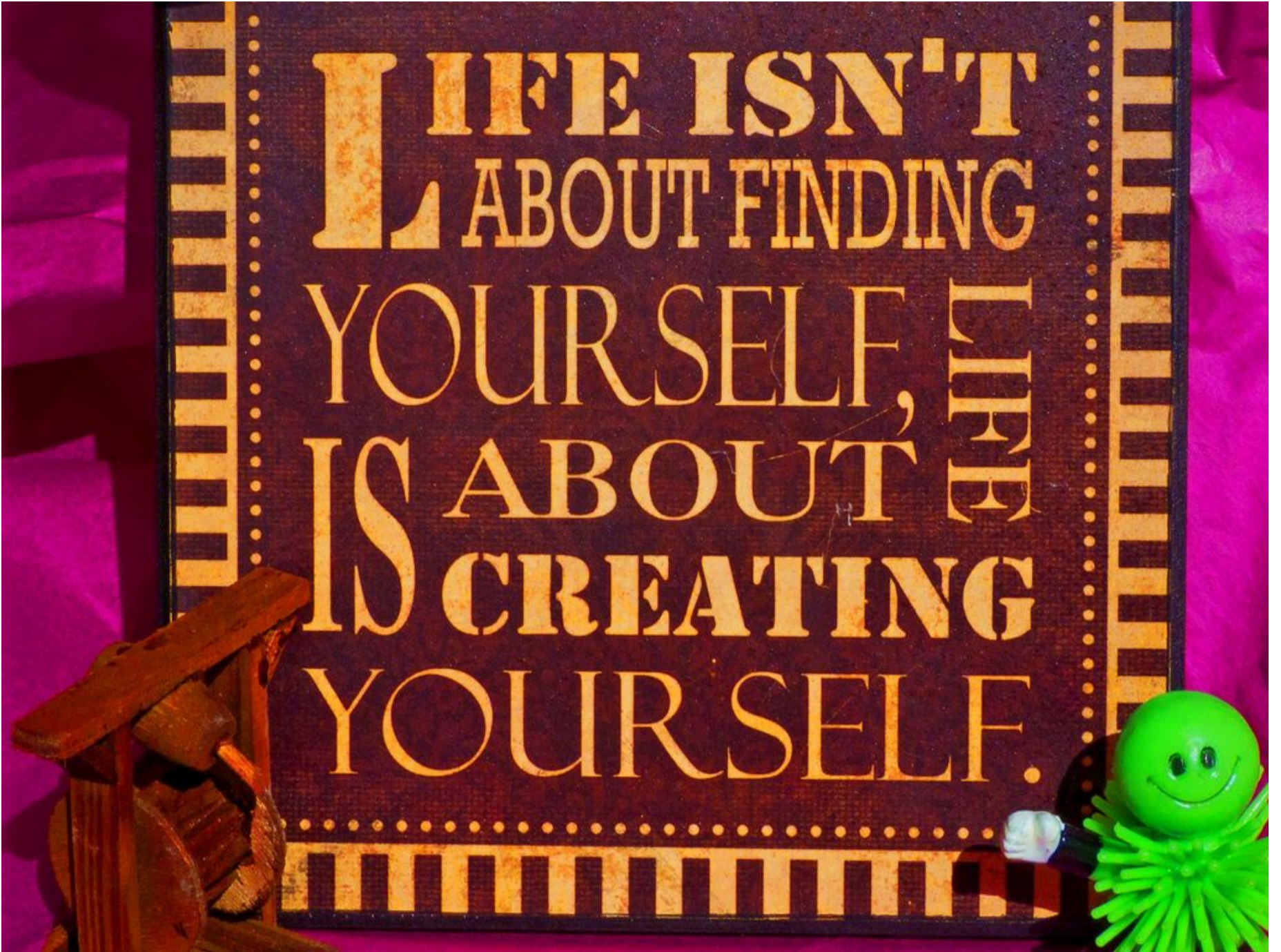
I want to help the next generation to do and be better.

I want to reach back and help students who are lost ... because I could have stayed lost without someone who cared to make a difference.



As kids we dream a lot, but as we grow older ... we don't dream as much.

Anyone who helps struggling students must assist them to develop their dreams, because they might not develop dreams on their own.



Remember ... "Life isn't about finding yourself, life is about creating yourself."

I did it, you can help a struggling student do it, and let's help the next generation do it, too.

Additional Information from S. L. Young

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