

Charles S. Modlin, MD, MBA  
Book Synopsis and About the Author

It Isn't Difficult To Do It *If You Know How To Do It:*  
*Tips To Succeed In College and Life*

Charles Stanley Modlin, Jr., M.D., MBA

# It Isn't Difficult To Do It *If* You Know How To Do It: *Tips To Succeed In College and Life*

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Book Synopsis

It Isn't Difficult To Do It *If* You Know  
How To Do It:  
*Tips To Succeed In College and Life*

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# **It Isn't Difficult To Do It If You Know How To Do It: *Tips To Succeed In College and Life***

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## **I. THE CONTENT**

### **A. The Premise**

As a world-renowned kidney transplant surgeon and one of the only African Americans to hold such a title, Dr. Charles Modlin has overcome enormous odds, roadblocks, and trials. In his book, *It Isn't Difficult to Do It If You Know How to Do It*, he provides an extensive compilation of the successful strategies used to overcome challenges and accomplish his goals in hopes of encouraging high schools whose ambition is to succeed in life. From life in high school through applying and succeeding in college through the beginnings of one's professional years, *It Isn't Difficult to Do It If You Know How to Do It* outlines not only the proven tactics to embrace but offers navigation around many of the pitfalls that entrap youth and prevent success in college and graduation.

This resource is written specifically for ambitious high school students who are aiming to achieve no matter their goals. This book details for the reader the most important guidelines for youth to consider when transitioning from high school to college and beyond that Dr. Modlin has learned from his childhood through medical school and eventually his profession as a kidney transplant surgeon.

### **B. Unique Selling Proposition. The book will answer the following questions.**

1. How students can make the right decisions in high school that will lead to a successful college career
2. How students can face their fears of college and map out success
3. How to choose the right college
4. How teenagers can use their life experiences, school activities, and relationships to propel them to success in college and beyond
5. How students who have faced life challenges and come from a lower socio-economic background can gain access to the resources needed for college admission
6. How students can overcome negative peer pressure in high school and college to maintain focus on their academics
7. How students can develop new skills to use in high school, college, and beyond
8. How students can become lifelong learners
9. How students can develop basic business skills in high school and college for use in their given profession.

## C. Overview

The book is divided into fifteen chapters that take the reader from what is needed to succeed in high school and then during the college years. Later chapters are devoted to common sense ideas that will be useful once students are employed after college graduation. Chapter fourteen is written for parents and outlines the support that they must provide to students throughout high school and college journey. The final chapter is a dedication to the author's parents.

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## **Chapter Synopsis**

### **Chapter 1: Mapping Your Success**

Chapter 1 covers the characteristics needed as students begin to map out their journey to college and end with helpful tips on choosing the right school. Section titles include:

- ❖ Facing Your Fears Head On
- ❖ Recognize and Reflect Upon Current Successes
- ❖ Use Adversity to Fuel Your Strength
- ❖ Maintain A Strong Work Ethic
- ❖ How to Decide Upon the Right College
- ❖ The College Interviews
- ❖ Seeking College Scholarships and Funding
- ❖ Letters of Recommendations

### **Chapter 2: Developing New Skills**

Chapter 2 describes many of the skills students will need in order to navigate college and life beyond. Section titles include:

- ❖ Identify Your Strengths and Weaknesses
- ❖ Tips Verbally and Nonverbal Communication
- ❖ The Right Way to Write

### **Chapter 3 Becoming an Emotionally Mature Adult**

Chapter 3 discusses embracing the characteristics and activities needed to move from student to adult. Section titles include

- ❖ Remain Adaptable in an Ever-Changing World
- ❖ Empathy
- ❖ Learn from Your (and others') Mistakes
- ❖ Developing Meaningful Friendships and Associations
- ❖ Embrace Diversity
- ❖ Avoid Distractions
- ❖ Don't Get Ahead Of Yourself—Stay in the Present

### **Chapter 4 Manage Your Time. Don't Let Time Manage You**

Chapter 4 offers advice that will move students to manage their time in and out of the classroom. Title sections include:

- ❖ Improve Your Study Skills
- ❖ Punctuality, Promptness, and Meeting Deadlines

### **Chapter 5 Grow into a Great Student**

Chapter 5 navigates the path that will propel the reader into becoming a great student not of just academics, but life. Title sections include:

- ❖ R.E.S.P.E.C.T
- ❖ Dress for Success and Rules of Etiquette
- ❖ Expect, Accept and Embrace Competition
- ❖ Academic Integrity
- ❖ Expand Personal Intellectual and Mental Growth
- ❖ Read and Build Your Library

### **Chapter 6 Become a Better Version of You**

Chapter 6 impeded upon students the importance of embracing their diversity and uniqueness while maintaining their identity. Section titles include:

- ❖ Overcoming Peer Pressure
- ❖ Maintaining Your Spirituality
- ❖ Staying in the Know
- ❖ Becoming Innovative and Creative
- ❖ Speaking up and Asking Questions

### **Chapter 7 Becoming a Whole Person, Broaden Your Experiences**

Chapter 7 expounds upon the varying avenues that students work toward becoming a well-rounded individual, which include broadening their experiences. Section title includes:

- ❖ Expand Your Learning Base and Broaden Your Experiences.

### **Chapter 8 Physical Health and Wellness and Proper Nutrition**

Chapter 8 offers expert advice on the importance of maintaining good health and wellness while in college. Section titles include:

- ❖ Eat a Healthy Diet
- ❖ Vitamins, Minerals, and Other Supplemental Measures
- ❖ Make Exercise an Essential Part of Your Everyday Routine
- ❖ Maintaining Hydration
- ❖ Personal Health Monitoring Devices and Medical Identification Tags
- ❖ Immunizations and Medication,
- ❖ Eye Health
- ❖ Maintain Your Dental Health
- ❖ Protect Your Ears and Avoid Hearing Loss,
- ❖ Alcohol, Marijuana and Recreational Drugs
- ❖ Sexually Transmitted Infections
- ❖ Urinary Tract Infections and Safe Sex
- ❖ Pay Attention to Your Mental Health
- ❖ Perform Your Recommended Monthly Self-Examinations
- ❖ Gastrointestinal and Stool Health
- ❖ Maintaining Healthy Feet
- ❖ Hygiene
- ❖ Women's Reproductive and Sexual Health
- ❖ Pay Attention to Your Mental Health
- ❖ Posture

- ❖ Living Off-Campus

### **Chapter 9 Social Networking**

Chapter 9 offers guidance on how to use social networking to create a fuller life and nurture relationship. Section titles include:

- ❖ Hobbies and Extracurricular Activities
- ❖ Fraternities and Sororities
- ❖ The Art of Networking

### **Chapter 10: Master Business Basics**

Chapter 10 presents basic business techniques that every student should know regardless of their profession. These techniques will equip students to function better in the world of business; for which any profession is connected. Section titles include:

- ❖ Take Business Classes
- ❖ Financial Literacy
- ❖ The MBA Degree
- ❖ Learn Fundraising Techniques
- ❖ Become a Loyal Alumnus
- ❖ How to Manage a Meeting
- ❖ Office Politics

### **Chapter 11 Community Involvement**

Chapter 11 offers advice beyond academic that will create develop a well-rounded and civic-minded individual. Section titles include:

- ❖ Giving Back to Your Community
- ❖ Find a Mentor, Coach, Advocate, and Sponsor
- ❖ Serve as a Mentor, Coach, Advocate, and Sponsor
- ❖ Become a Role Model to Your Community and Society

### **Chapter 12 Now for the Tough Love**

Chapter 12 is offering of tough dosages of advice that will motivate students to move past the challenges that they will face during college life. The section titles include:

- ❖ Haters
- ❖ The Difficult Roommate
- ❖ Accepting Delayed Gratification
- ❖ Safety First: Be Street Smart
- ❖ A Word about Social Media and Safety
- ❖ Self-Defense
- ❖ Sexually Transmitted Infections and Safe Sex

### **Chapter 13 A Final Word**

Chapter 13 wraps up final messages to students.



## **Chapter 14 Special Messages to Parents**

Chapter 14 equips parents with advice, recommendations, and suggestion that will encourage uplift, and offer the most conducive support to the success of the student. Section titles include:

- ❖ “Oh, The Places You’ll Go” by Dr. Seuss
- ❖ Don’t Dictate, But Support Their Career Choice
- ❖ Talk with Your Students and Be Actively Engaged In Their Schools
- ❖ Learn With Your Students
- ❖ Parents’ Role in the College Search: Financial Aid, Financial Concerns and Stressors
- ❖ It Is Normal For You To Miss Your Student While They Are Away At School—But Don’t Be Selfish—Let Them Soar
- ❖ Stay Connected Despite External Pressures To Separate You and Your Student—Maintain Open Communication,
- ❖ Inform Your Student About Their Personal Medical History And The Family Medical History,
- ❖ Stress, Anxiety, Depression and Substance Abuse Can Happen Even To Your Students—If You See Something, Say Something—Don’t Ignore It
- ❖ A Few Final Words of Advice, Inspiration, and Encouragement

## **Chapter 15 Special Dedication to My Parents**

The author offers memories and a photo collage dedicated to his parents.

## **II. THE MARKET**

### **A. Characteristics**

The audience is ideally geared to high schools as they begin the college process, but also for those students just beginning college. Younger students K-12 will also benefit from this book as well as individuals, including adults, not seeking to enter college but who are also seeking to achieve successes in lives.

### **B. Motivations**

This resource is written specifically for ambitious students who are aiming for success in achieving their goals, whatever they may be. This book details what the author considers to have been the most important tips for success learned during his lifetime, before, during and following his college years and continuing in his professional life. The author’s premise is that if he can provide a concise roadmap as to how to succeed in college and eventually career given the challenges, hurdles, and sometimes racism that are bound to rear their heads, then the path can be made smoother for other students.

### **C. Affinity Groups**

High School students  
High Schools  
Colleges  
College Career Placement Centers  
Middle Schools  
K-12  
School Boards

Community Libraries  
Parent groups and organization  
High School Guidance Counselors  
Teachers  
College Professors  
Community Organizations  
Mentorship Organizations  
Philanthropists  
Community Organizers

### III. THE AUTHOR



**Dr. Charles S. Modlin, Jr., M.D., MBA**, son of the late Charles & Grace Modlin, and represented Cleveland Clinic's FIRST EVER AND ONLY African American Staff Kidney Transplant Surgeon and Cleveland Clinic's FIRST EVER African American Staff Urologist. Dr. Modlin served on the staff of Cleveland Clinic from 1996-2021. He is recognized as being one of only a few black transplant surgeons in the entire country and the only one who is also a urologist. He is also a public speaker. Dr. Modlin is also a nationally renowned innovative leader in Community Outreach Engagement, Advocacy, Education & Health Navigation which he innovated as a tool in the elimination of health disparities.

As a kidney transplant surgeon, Dr. Modlin served as an invaluable and productive member of Cleveland Clinic's kidney transplant team and is most proud of having participated with the team in the care of thousands of kidney transplant patients and personally having helped enhance the lives of the more than 500

patients for whom he has personally performed kidney transplants at Cleveland Clinic main campus and at the Clinic's prior renal transplant affiliate programs at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Youngstown, Ohio and Akron City Hospital (1996-2003), affiliate programs where he also served a portion of his time in the role as surgical director of renal transplantation. In his capacity as both a kidney transplant surgeon and urologist at Cleveland Clinic, he is also proud of having helped provide surgical training to numerous kidney transplant fellows and urology residents. While a member of the Cleveland Clinic staff, Dr. Modlin in addition attended patients and served Cleveland Clinic not only at Main Campus but also served as *Director of Urological Surgery & Urological Trauma Surgery* at Huron Hospital and attended to patients at South Pointe Hospital, Stephanie Tubbs Jones Family Health Center and formerly also provided brief coverage at Euclid Hospital and Marymount Hospitals.

Dr. Modlin is board certified by the American Urological Association and as staff has performed thousands of urological surgical operations at Cleveland Clinic. He was inducted as a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, has authored numerous scientific publications and book chapters in urology and kidney transplantation, including publications on innovations in renal transplantation surgical techniques, and publications on minority health disparities. He served as a guest editor of a special series on *Disparities in Health* of the *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine* and has delivered numerous invited plenary national scientific presentations and is a widely sought after public speaker having given thousands of community presentations locally and nationally, and has served as a visiting professor at several academic medical centers, medical schools and universities and local and national conferences across the country, including Northwestern University, UC Irvine, Cleveland Clinic Florida, University of Illinois at Chicago, Michigan State University, University of South Carolina, Case Western University, Oberlin College, Kent State, University of Akron, the College of William &

Mary, Texas Tech University, Morehouse College, Meharry Medical College, University of North Carolina and others, and internationally at medical centers in Spain and Nigeria, Africa.

Dr. Modlin is the first and only African American at Cleveland Clinic to date to serve as *President of Cleveland Clinic's Medical Staff*, for which he focused his efforts on staff advocacy. He proudly served as an elected member of Cleveland Clinic's *Board of Governors, Board of Directors* and *Board of Trustees* and was appointed in 2008 as Cleveland Clinic Executive Director of Minority Health by former Chief of Staff Dr. Joseph Hahn. In this role, he helped facilitate the development of health equity programs throughout the enterprise to improve health outcomes in populations predisposed to health disparities. Cleveland Clinic CEO Dr. Tom Mihaljevic appointed him in 2018 as *Cleveland Clinic Physician Lead for Public Health Community Partnerships*. Dr. Modlin also established in 2006 the Louis Stokes Health Equity Lecture Forum, and he collaborates in partnership with Cleveland Clinic's Office of Diversity, having partnered in establishing the Diversity-Minority Men's Health Center Health Equity Speaker Series, and he also served as physician-lead for the Office of Diversity's *Daniel Hale Williams Saturday Academy*. He has served as a research and career mentor for numerous students in the Office of Civic Education since its inception, and he routinely mentors high school, college, graduate, medical and nursing students to expose them to and guide them on their paths to pursuing careers in the health professions. He also served as a mentor to other Cleveland Clinic professional staff. He has also collaborated with Cleveland Clinic's Office of Professional Staff Diversity and actively served on several Cleveland Clinic leadership committees. Dr. Modlin, in collaboration with Glickman Urological & Institute Chair, Dr. Eric Klein, also established the nation's first *African American Biorepository* which serves as a resource for basic science investigators to study the genomic causes contributing to the pathogenesis of health disparities. In 2019 Dr. Modlin established an *Annual Cleveland Clinic Black History Patient Appreciation Lecture & Recognition Series* to honor and recognize the life, living legacy, and contributions of current African American Cleveland Clinic patients and in 2020 established the *Inaugural Cleveland Clinic Black Doctors Black History Appreciation Lecture Series*.

In 2004, Dr. Modlin **Founded and Established** Cleveland Clinic's *Minority Men's Health Center* (MMHC) and in 2003 established Cleveland Clinic's nationally renowned *Annual Minority Men's Health Fair*. Dr. Novick, in his *Cleveland Clinic History of Urology, since 1921* Book included the *Minority Men's Health Fair* in this book as representing an important milestone in the history of urology at Cleveland Clinic. Dr. Toby Cosgrove, former Cleveland Clinic CEO recognized the contributions of the *Minority Men's Health Fair* during several of his *State of the Clinic Addresses* and current CEO Dr. Tom Mihaljevic has acknowledged the valuable contributions of Dr. Modlin efforts in leading and advancing Cleveland Clinic's Community Cornerstone imperatives. Dr. Eric Klein, chairman of the Clinic's Glickman Urological & Kidney Institute, said in regards to Dr. Charles Modlin, "Nothing gets in his way when he wants to accomplish something. He's focused and intense. When he pursues a task, he becomes a real bulldog." Although the health fair is now supported by many staffers and vendors, Dr. Klein stated that Modlin launched it "almost single-handedly."

The *Minority Men's Health Fair* welcomes all men regardless of race or ethnicity, since its inception, has served, saved, benefited and improved the lives of countless men by providing free preventive health screenings, health examinations, and health information to over 35,000 men to address the significant health disparities which disproportionately afflict men of color. The health fair has been expanded to include four sites in NE Ohio and also virtually by distance health technology serves men in Florida. The health fair will expand to include the SUNY Downstate in New York City in 2019 and plans are underway to expand to Cleveland Clinic Florida.

Dr. Modlin is proud of his persistent work in building trusting relationships between Cleveland Clinic and the community, from homeless shelters to City Hall, and in forming important community partnerships central to facilitating Cleveland Clinic's goals to improving the health status and outcomes of the community environs in which Cleveland Clinic resides. In 2011, Dr. Modlin was named by *The Atlanta Post* as one of the *Top 21 Black Doctors in America*. Dr. Modlin is humble and accepts these honors in the name of his parents and his many colleagues and all the caregivers at Cleveland Clinic. He emphasizes that such recognitions are important for the purposes of inspiring others to dedicate their lives to helping others and to inspiring and empowering students to believe that if he can be successful, with hard work, dedication and determination they too can succeed. As such, he proudly has been featured in *MD Magazine*, *Jet Magazine*, and *WebMD*, and, with modesty, he has graced the covers of several magazines including *African American Lifestyle Magazine*, *Canvas Magazine*, *Kaleidoscope*, and *Shaker Life* among others.

Dr. Modlin has been honored and served as commencement speaker for John Hay High School, Cleveland High Tech Academy, Cuyahoga Community College, among others, and delivered numerous addresses at academic achievement ceremonies at schools and colleges. Dr. Modlin recently completed authoring his first book, entitled "*It Isn't Difficult To Do It If You Know How To Do It*," which is a book on success tips for students and others aspiring to be successful in their academic and life pursuits. He is now also authoring "*The History of the Minority Men's Health Fair*" book. He has been featured numerous times in Cleveland's *Call & Post* and the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* Newspapers, including in the Plain Dealer's feature, "*The Secret of My Success*." Dr. Modlin has been featured in each issue of *Who's Who in Black Cleveland* and was among a select few of Cleveland high profile leaders featured in its inaugural issue as one of "*Cleveland's Most Interesting Personalities*."

Dr. Modlin graduated from Northwestern University in 1983 and from Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medical School in 1987 and was inducted into the AOA Honor Medical Society by Northwestern University Medical School. He remains a very active Northwestern University Alumnus and has served as an elected member on the Northwestern University Medical School Alumni Board and class representative, Northwestern University Class of 1983 reunion co-chair, Northwestern University alumni interviewer, and he initiated and led his medical school Class of 1987 Scholarship Endowed Chair campaign. After receiving his M.D. degree from Northwestern, he completed a six-year residency in Urologic Surgery at New York University in 1993 and then completed a three-year fellowship in Kidney Transplantation & Renovascular Surgery at Cleveland Clinic from 1993-1996 under the leadership of Dr. Andrew Novick, whom Dr. Modlin recognizes as being the best surgeon with whom he has ever seen and worked. Dr. Modlin credits recently retired Cleveland Clinic urologist and kidney transplant surgeon Dr. Stuart Flechner as his most impactful mentor who helped him train and develop to become a successful kidney transplant surgeon. During his fellowship Dr. Modlin conducted basic science immunology research in the Lerner Research Institute (1993-1994) under the direction of Dr. Robert Fairchild. He then joined the Cleveland Clinic Staff in 1996 where he has practiced urology and renal transplantation surgery and innovated the Clinic's minority health initiatives.

Dr. Modlin is a noted and celebrated national leader for and innovator in the elimination of health disparities and his contributions have been featured in local and national media. He has made numerous appearances on the nationally syndicated *Tom Joyner Morning Radio Show* and also on the BBC, Cleveland's *Ideastream* and numerous times on television, radio, print and social mediums.

Dr. Modlin is quick to credit his successes to his parents and family who raised him to have a strong work ethic, empathy to others and to understand that it is his responsibility to use his medical education to give back to those less fortunate than himself. Dr. Modlin is the first male from his family lineage to graduate high school, like his father, while in excellent academic standing in high school at the age of seventeen, left high school to enter into the U.S. Navy to serve the nation during World-War II. Dr. Modlin also credits his successes to the countless sacrifices of generations of known and unknown unsung heroes who helped pave the way for him to have an opportunity to achieve his medical education, and to his teachers, professors, and mentors who helped guide his way and inspire him. He also is quick to acknowledge that the successes of the *Minority Men's Health Fair* are a direct result of the generosity of thousands of Cleveland Clinic caregiver volunteers, community organizations, community volunteers, sponsors, friends and advisors who come together to donate their valuable time, expertise and their energy, enthusiasm and their hearts and souls to serving the needs of the community. Dr. Modlin is also appreciative of the leadership of Cleveland Clinic and well as to the leadership, his colleagues and caregivers of the Glickman Urological & Kidney Institute, all of who support the health fair, which takes nearly a year to annually plan, and who understand and embrace the importance that Cleveland Clinic play a leading role in improving the health of the community in which Cleveland Clinic resides. Dr. Modlin dedicates much of this time to community outreach to educate people about the importance of preventive health screenings, to raise health literacy levels in the community, and, given the disproportionate need for kidney transplantation in African Americans, to educate especially black communities regarding the importance of organ & tissue donation and options for living kidney donation as well as imperatives of blood and bone marrow donation.

Dr. Modlin's honors and recognitions are numerous and include several appointments to the Ohio Commission on Minority Health by Ohio Governors Ted Strickland and John Kasich, the Northwestern University *Presidential Alumni Medal* in 2003, numerous MLK community service awards, including MLK awards from Cleveland Clinic, 2008 Cleveland Cavaliers MLK Community Service Recognition, 2017 Cleveland City Council MLK Award, Southern Christian Leadership SCLC MLK recognition, and he received the most highly prestigious *Greater Cleveland Partnership Cleveland Orchestra MLK Community Service Award* in 2007. Other recognitions include the Lifebank of Ohio community service award, *Call & Post 100 Top Influential Leaders recognition*, several Cleveland Magazine *Best Doctors* recognitions, Northwestern University Medical School *Inaugural Humanitarianism in Medicine Award*, 2016 Crain's Cleveland *Health Care Heroes Award*, the first African American staff physician to receive the Cleveland Clinic *Bruce Hubbard Stewart Humanitarianism Award*, and he has received awards and recognitions from the Greater Cleveland Urban League, Greater Cleveland NAACP and many proclamations from Cleveland City Council, Cleveland and East Cleveland Mayors, among many others. In 2015 he received the highly prestigious *Black Professional Association Professional of the Year* recognition, becoming the first physician to receive this award in the more than 35-year BPA existence.

Dr. Modlin is also a member of the American Urological Association, National Medical Association and other medical societies and has also been very active on numerous local and national non-profit boards, including the Shaker Schools Foundation, Bellflower Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Lifebank of Ohio Multicultural Committee (which he co-founded), Cleveland MOTTEP, Health Legacy of Cleveland and the local and National Boards of the National Kidney Foundation, and he has served three times as the National Kidney Foundation Walk Chairman, walk chair of the African American Wellness Walk, and health committee chairman of the Cleveland NAACP and 100 Black Men of Greater Cleveland. In 2017, Dr. Modlin served as enterprise-wide medical co-chair of Cleveland Clinic's United Way Campaign.

Dr. Modlin's late father, Charles Sr., continues to hold 4-track & field event records in National Senior Games. His late mother Grace Modlin was an elementary school teacher and the first black school teacher in the history of Henry County, Indiana.

Dr. Modlin, while at Cleveland Clinic, focused 24-7-365 on strategizing ways in which to further the Clinic's and the nation's health equity initiatives, and with the little free time he does have he plays trumpet and enjoys spending time with family and friends, reading, listening to music and attending concerts, going to the theatre, museums, *Cleveland Indians* baseball and *Cleveland Cavalier* Basketball games, and is drawn to the beauty and majesty of the Great Lakes and hiking in the area Metro parks.

## IV. INTRODUCTION

It is advised that you read this book in its entirety ideally before you finish high school or before you complete college. Parents, it is even better if your student begins reading and digesting the success tips contained in this book while even in middle school (or even at an earlier age with your help and interpretation). At whatever stage you pick up this book, it will never be too late to benefit from the lessons contained within. The chapters in this book do not have to be read in chronological order, as each of the chapters is packed with extremely valuable information, which will augment, supplement and facilitate you in achieving your goals, whatever they may be. This book is written for students of all races, ethnicities, and nationalities. It is not only written for students, but also their parents, guardians, and anyone who aspires to help a young man or woman achieve his or her life's dreams. This book is also useful for anyone who needs a refresher on the key principles that lead to success.

Certain sections in this book specifically address or reference the fact that I am an African American, and as a result of this, detail how I faced unique challenges in life which I contend were genuine and not imagined. In fact, to this day, I continue to face certain challenges as an African American. I include this perspective in this book in order to highlight that being African American or of any other minority group persuasion should not be an excuse for you to not aspire to achieve great goals in your life. However, I do profess that, in reality, being of a particular minority group persuasion may, more precisely will, unfortunately, force and necessitate you to work harder than the next person, as my parents taught me and as I have observed vividly over the years to be true. As a person of the African diaspora, I realize that often, we, though ambitious and bright, experience unfortunate situations that lead us to question whether achieving our goals is possible.



Too often, discouragement or prejudice prevents people of color from even pursuing their dreams. Lack of support, lack of opportunities, poverty and other social circumstances, such as experiences of racism and discrimination, account for some (many) of the attitudes that many African Americans, as well as others, have developed early in life. These experiences too often result in self-doubt coupled with a particularly toxic and pessimistic view about the future. Consequently, many give up and many never even try.

The same certainly holds true for other ethnicities besides African Americans. Therefore, this book will be beneficial for anyone desirous of success in life regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or age. Different readers will find specific segments of this book particularly advantageous. While some concepts will serve as reminders or refreshers, for many readers, these success tips will bring new awareness to the overall scheme of what is required to achieve success in this increasingly complex, interconnected, global and complicated world in which we live.

“It’s a jungle out there.” I am sure that you’ve heard this phrase from a parent, loved one, friends, or in the media. I admit, in many ways, it is a jungle out there. The world is not always a friendly or hospitable place, and the people whom you will encounter may either intentionally or unintentionally make life difficult for you at times for a host of reasons. Many people may see you as the competition, which often causes people to be fearful and unkind. When you hear the phrase, “every man for himself” from a loved one, it is often being said to help prepare you “for the real world” in which you need to be street savvy and possess survival skills and strategies to become successful. Your loved ones tell you these things because they care for you and don’t want to see you hurt. The lessons in this book, whenever unpleasant, are not meant to scare you. I believe that the majority of people are good. But, remember, the goal of this book is to help prepare you for the

next phase of your life, whether as a student in college or trade school, a military recruit, intern or a new employee entering the workforce. My goal is to strengthen and prepare you with the tools necessary for being on your own as a productive member of society, no longer protected by the sanctity of high school, home, or your parents' watchful and caring eyes.

As a surgeon and physician, I understand the hurdles that students, young or older, face in attempting to achieve their dreams of attending and graduating from college, trade school, etc. to pursue their chosen career objectives. I had to endure seventeen long, arduous years of formal education and training following my high school graduation to become a kidney transplant surgeon. I often speak to students about the four years of college, four years of medical school, six years of urological surgery residency, three years of kidney transplant and renovascular surgery fellowship and transplant immunology research that I had to complete to become a kidney transplant surgeon. And as a practicing physician and surgeon, I am still required to undergo ongoing medical education and additional training to remain afoot of advances in the medical profession.

One of the questions students often ask of me is "how did you do it?" "How did you become a kidney transplant surgeon, Dr. Modlin?" Of course, I cannot answer this question completely in a few sentences. However, I relay to students that through resiliency, planning, decision, drive, desire, devotion, dreaming and daring to think big, dedication, determination and "doing," I became a kidney transplant surgeon. I endured and suffered many hardships, and sometimes many indignities, on my journey. I also learned a multitude of important lessons along the way that I readily share with the students whom I mentor and coach as well as with those students who come to me with questions and for advice. Only after being repeatedly questioned over the years by

countless numbers of students, their parents and others as to what my journey was like and inquiring of me how I achieved my goals to become an *African American* kidney transplant surgeon and urologist, one of approximately twenty or fewer African American transplant surgeons in the entire United States, did I begin reflecting back on my journey. I reflected on what it took for me to complete my college education, get accepted to and complete medical school, residency, and fellowship and then to acquire a staff position as a kidney transplant surgeon and urologist at Cleveland Clinic and to go on to become a champion for the elimination of health disparities which disproportionately afflict minority communities.

It was others, including my parents, family, friends, patients and their families and members of the community and community organizations, who alerted me to the significance of my accomplishments through the many awards and recognitions bestowed upon me for my innovative minority health community outreach initiatives which I have become noted for establishing at Cleveland Clinic, in particular our Cleveland Clinic Minority Men's Health Fair and Minority Men's Health Center, which I, with the support of many volunteers and supporters, established to address the elimination of health disparities disproportionately afflicting minority and underserved men, along with establishing initiatives to help improve the health of their families and communities in which they live. During my long educational journey, I was fixated on achieving my goals, and *I always looked forward and projected myself living in the future I desired*. This is a success tip. I did not take time to analyze as a whole the secrets of my success. I had never considered comprehensively reflecting upon my personal experiences and assembling a comprehensive guide as to what I consider to have been the "secrets" of and for my success so that others could benefit from some of these "secrets" (reasons) of success.

Not until sitting down to write this book did I remember being asked while I was in college to return to my hometown of New Castle, Indiana to give a talk to the youth of Wiley United Methodist Church about advice I could give them regarding how they could achieve success in high school and prepare for entry into college. I recall not really wanting to give this presentation, because at that point in my life I assumed that anyone wanting to achieve academic success would know how to do it and also because I wasn't fond of public speaking. However, I recall my father's encouragement and insistence that I do so. I still to this day recount how proud he was sitting there watching me speak that morning in church. Likewise, a few years ago, when I was asked by the faculty director of the Shaker Heights Woodbury Elementary African American Scholars (a group of high achieving 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders) to speak at their 6<sup>th</sup> grade graduation ceremony, I responded that I might not be able to arrange my schedule to do so and I advised that he should invite my son, Trey, a recent graduate of Texas Tech University and a national chess master, to serve as their graduation keynote speaker rather than me. My son accepted the invitation, and I was there sitting up in the balcony watching him deliver a very heartfelt, inspirational and motivational speech to the young scholars which were very well received. I was so very proud to see my son do this because he too was very reserved and doing so required that he get out of his comfort zone in order to impart his experiences and wisdom to benefit the young scholars. Success tip: be willing to get out of your comfort zone. I video recorded my son's speech which is online (please watch it now) and available for you to watch by Googling "Trey Modlin Woodbury Scholars" or at the following link: <https://youtu.be/2xrlPYw8jVw>

By the way, I also am quick to point out to students and others that I have not yet reached all of my goals (nor will I ever achieve all of my goals) because people who aspire to achieve always are striving to reach new goals. Nevertheless, after several years reflection, I herein now have

assembled into this book a collection of some of the most important life skills and lessons I have learned during my journey in becoming a physician and surgeon. Moreover, within this book I have looked deep into my memory banks and inner soul to assemble for you, the reader, some of the lessons, practices, principals, and tenets that I believe undeniably have helped me achieve my academic and professional successes along with my personal and professional goals and dreams.

The tools and resources herein include guidance for developing personal, academic, and professional habits that will enhance and facilitate your success journey. From discussing the keys to building good relationships and social skills, to reinforcing that you develop effective study habits, to highlighting techniques to assist you in enveloping practices that will help you avoid, navigate around and even prevent some of life's hurdles and to helping you realize the multiple ways in which you will additionally transform yourself into a well-rounded individual who embraces lifelong learning, this book is written and formatted for students in high school as well as college or trade school and for their parents, guardians and families who want to help them succeed. This book, in no way, is limited to or directed specifically toward students seeking to enter the medical profession. I have organized each tenet of success into a chapter according to a specific theme for easier understanding, organization, and reference; however, in practice and real life situations, these tenets overlap and often build upon one another. Therefore, I strongly encourage the student to effectively adopt and utilize each tenet concurrently and fluidly as a part of their daily life. Every reader is different and unique and has differing past experiences to date and different goals in life. We each come from varied backgrounds, and life experiences and each of us views the world from our own perspectives based on who we are and what we have experienced in life and according to our family, environmental and social circumstances.

Nevertheless, my hope in writing this book is to provide you, no matter how sophisticated (academically, I.Q., socially, street smart, savvy, worldly, emotionally or intuitively) you may or may not be at this stage (age) of your life, with an opportunity for self-reflection in combination with developing a deep appreciation for the details of what has already substantively contributed to your current level of success. I hope that by writing this book and reflecting back upon my own life and journey from my childhood to becoming a practicing urologist and kidney transplant surgeon that I will successfully disseminate to you much knowledge I have acquired over the years to ultimately make your journey in accomplishing your goals easier than mine. I know that by reading this book, you *will* find some pearls of wisdom at an earlier age than if you had not read it. Consequently, if reading this book has been at all helpful to you, I encourage you to please send me an email to [Charles.Modlin@gmail.com](mailto:Charles.Modlin@gmail.com) and share your experiences with me.

For further guidance, I have included a list of suggested references, books and other materials that I have found to be helpful and informative for me, that you may choose to access. So, with this being said, it is time for you to now read on, enjoy and absorb like a sponge the information contained within the pages of this book; because by reading this book, you too will soon recognize and discover the profound wisdom, astuteness, and cleverness as to what my daughter Hannah, at the young age of 3 years old, was communicating when she proclaimed, “It isn’t difficult to do it if you know how to do it.”

