

How to Use What You've Got to Get What You Want.

by Marilyn Tam.

The following is an excerpt from the book, [*How to Use What You've Got to Get What You Want*](#) by Marilyn Tam, publisher, Selectbooks.



Part I WHAT YOU'VE GOT

Chapter 1 Inside You

The common wisdom is that in order to be a success, you have to have certain advantages: knowing the right people, going to the right schools, belonging to the right clubs, looking the right way. I am here to tell you that you can use what you've got to get what you want.

My own life has been extraordinarily diverse. I grew up in a traditional Chinese family in Hong Kong as the lowest person on the totem pole: a second daughter who was quickly followed by three sons. My childhood was an all-too familiar litany of abuse and neglect. If the common wisdom were true, I should have been a miserable failure in life, struggling to overcome a low sense of self-esteem and fighting a losing battle to win the affection of parents who are never going to give me the acknowledgement I crave.

Marilyn Tam, former President of Reebok's Apparel and Retail Products Group and Executive Director of the Us Foundation

And yet I managed to rise through the executive ranks of the international business world and become an influential corporate leader, speaker, consultant, author and philanthropist.

Photo Credit: Clint Weisman

According to the common wisdom, I didn't have the advantages you need to get to the top. Instead of having connections or running with the in-crowd, I grew up in a foreign country where English was my second language. Instead of getting an Ivy League education, I went to a State University. Instead of being one of the guys in a man's world, I'm a woman.

The lesson is this: If I can use what I've got to get what I want, you can too.

I know this isn't how the psychologists, philosophers and rescue workers think it's supposed to be, but I believe that the struggles of my childhood – all the misery, loneliness and grief – are responsible for my success. When I stood at the edge of my future, looking toward the uncharted terrain of my career, the skills I learned in childhood were all I had.

My life has proven that what I had was enough.

Merely surviving in my family gave me the skills and the inner knowing that guided my career and my success in life. I built on those early traits through trial and error with the help of Spirit and many teachers as I journeyed through life.

What I did was this:

- listen and trust my inner voice,
- envision what I wanted,
- plan and anticipate the challenges,
- learn and practice the skills needed to carry out my vision,
- confidently proceed as the situation develops
- keep trying different ways to achieve my goals until I succeeded.

And what I learned is this: What's inside of each of us is powerful enough to help us achieve anything we want.

You're Good Enough Just as You Are. You are good enough now. You don't have to wait for anything, anyone or any situation before you can start making a positive change in your life. You don't have to wait until you get a new job, lose fifteen pounds, move to a new house, get a new relationship, or wait until an existing situation improves or hold out for any other reason. The time and place to begin working toward your goals are here and now.

Believe in yourself and hold onto evidence that you are good enough.

It was Grandfather Ah Yeh who gave me my Chinese name, Hay Lit. Hay and Lit are the names of two of the Emperors in China; one was known for his intellect and wisdom and the other for his prowess in military strategy. It was a most unusual name for a Chinese girl, but it registered with me like a permanent vote of confidence from a man I deeply admired. The powerful name he gave me made me feel he must really have believed I was strong and thought I was something special.

That little kernel of hope and inspiration held me in good stead when the world around me told me otherwise. That kernel of hope and my own inner knowing always kept me going and gave me hope when I didn't know how I was going to survive the situation at hand.

You can do the same thing by holding onto any time in your life when you felt the approval or support of someone who believed in you. Dive into that feeling of acceptance. Let it sink into your bones. Cherish it as you go forth and deal with the world. You'll find your interactions much more successful when you have confidence and self-worth.

"Think you can, think you can't; either way, you'll be right."

-- Henry Ford

Trust in Something Bigger than Yourself

Throughout time, people have searched for the meaning of life. Countless religions, philosophies, and books are dedicated to answering that perennial question: What is the meaning of life? Do we enter this world from nothing for a certain number of years and then disappear forever? Is this all there is? Is this sixty, seventy, eighty or ninety or so years on planet earth all there is for us? What are we here to do?

I started discovering the meaning of life early in my childhood. I found that there was something more powerful than what met my eye. I found the power and comfort from a deeper source than the everyday reality; I found the power of Spirit.

What Spirit means to you may vary from what it means to me. The key to tapping into that sense of peace and wisdom is to trust that you are part of a bigger picture. You are not just a bobbing cork in a stormy ocean. You have a reason for being on earth and you have a mission and purpose. You are unique and have a gift for the world that only you can share.

Follow Your Passion and be Flexible

Once you find your passion, follow it. But be alert to the feedback you are getting. Linus Torvalds, the creator of Linux system, the phenomenally successful operating system, started Linux as a personal passion to improve on the existing operating systems.

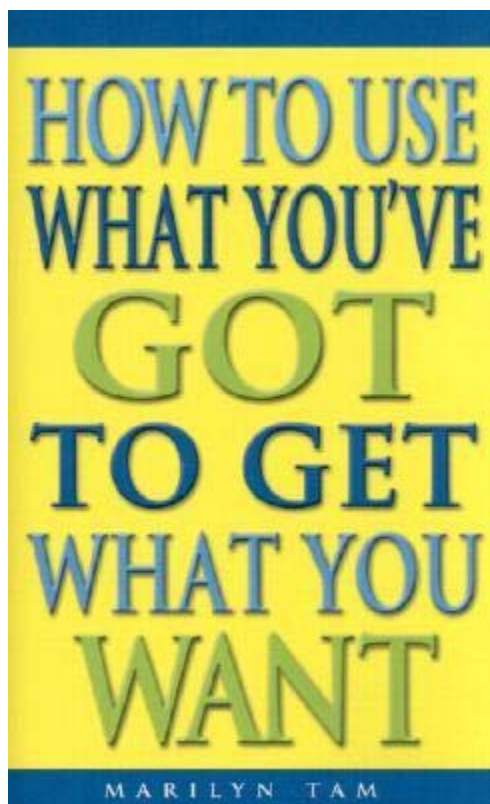
But Linus was not fixated on exactly what the new system was going to be like. In fact, he offered his work free on the Internet so that others could add their input and modify what he was creating. What resulted was a system that is constantly evolving and is used by millions of people in the world. Today Linux is still growing and developing and Linus is a legend in the computer world.

In Torvalds' book, *Just For Fun, The Story of An Accidental Revolutionary*, he speaks about how his passion was so consuming that he didn't care about anything else. Food, sleep and social interactions were all secondary. He worked diligently for years and also benefited from others' wisdom and expertise. In the end he succeeded, and in the process he also acquired fame and fortune beyond his wildest dreams.

Torvalds followed his passion but remained flexible and open. It is the best way to fulfill your dreams.

Hold firmly onto the inside insights that I've listed below to get what you want:

1. You're Good Enough Just as You Are.



2. Believe in yourself and hold onto evidence that you are good enough.
3. Trust in Something Bigger than Yourself
4. Follow your Passion
5. Pursue Your Passion and be Flexible

As you can see you don't have to conform to the common wisdom to get what you want. Many successful people have achieved more with less.

Marilyn Tam is a global speaker, author, business executive (former CEO of Aveda Corp., President of Reebok Apparel & Retail Group, VP Nike) and non-profit leader (Us Foundation). This article is excerpted from her book, How to Use What You've Got to Get What You Want, (SelectBooks). www.HowToUseWhatYouveGot.com