

SUMMARY

IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD

RUSS



Summary of “It’s All In Your Head” by Russ

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Learn the inspirational story of self-made music superstar, Russ, who wishes to inspire you to believe in yourself and get out of your own way.

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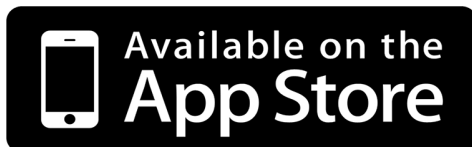


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Introduction

Do you have a passion or a dream? If the answer is yes, then you're in the right place. For Russ, his passion is music. He states, "Making music teaches me so much about myself and the world. But it isn't the music itself that teaches me, it is the pursuit of my greatest passion. Whatever that thing is that takes you to a higher level, that connects you to the best possible version of yourself, that helps you live purposefully - THAT'S YOUR PASSION." All the tools that Russ used to create his success in music can be easily applied to your own passion, whether it's starting a business or following an artistic calling, it can be applied anywhere. But if you are looking for success, you need more than just passion, you need self-belief. In fact, there are three essential qualities required for turning your dreams into a reality: gratitude, persistence, and delusion.

You see, gratitude allows you to appreciate what you have and your achievements and that gratitude will lead to even more blessings. Persistence will provide you with the strength to keep going. Lastly, delusion will give you faith when you are struggling to visualize your reality as your dream. It will prove that it is ABSOLUTELY all in your head. It's time to get out of your way and follow your dreams.

Manifest Your Dreams

As far back as Russ can remember, he had pure confidence. For example, he remembers that in high school, he would write “100%” on his tests before he turned them in. This confidence, however, didn’t make him well-liked by his teachers. In fact, Russ was voted “Most Likely to Make a Teacher Retire.” Then, when he turned fourteen, he started making beats. While he can tell you now that they were terrible, at the time, he was convinced that they were the most amazing beats ever. Even as young as five-years-old, Russ was a “veteran shit-talker” on the basketball court and was obsessed with being the best. He always had confidence even when he didn’t know what he was being confident in.

This confidence, he believes, is the main reason for his success. He also is a true believer in putting your thoughts into the universe. For instance, a long time ago, a woman told him, “You have to be careful what you think about because it comes true.” Since then, Russ has wholeheartedly believed that you can think, speak, and believe things into existence. This is called manifesting and Russ truly manifested his dreams. However, you can’t simply think that something is going happen, you have to truly encompass that reality with your entire being.

For instance, in 2011 when Russ was only nineteen-years-old, he and his friend Bugus took a trip to Los Angeles. They were incredibly confident in themselves and their music, believing that one day their music videos would be aired on major networks like MTV. While driving around LA, Russ and Bugus kept telling each other, “We’re going to get on MTV.” They decided their dream wouldn’t simply be given to them, so they decided to take action by contacting, or even “harassing” an MTV executive on Twitter. They begged him to listen to their music, and after relentless begging, he eventually agreed.

Surprisingly, the executive loved their music and decided to put them on MTV. Their dreams came true! So what does this story prove? Russ

expresses the importance of harnessing the power of social media and letting the world know about your ambitions. For instance, he once tweeted that he was making a million dollars a beat, even though was incredibly broke and living in his parents' basement. Was he lying? Technically, but there was a reason behind this claim. You see, Russ believed in himself and didn't just simply think that success was going to come one day, instead, he believed he was already successful and simply waited for reality to prove himself correct.

So how can you use Russ's claims in your own life? Put yourself into the life you want. Close your eyes and surround yourself with whatever you are manifesting. What does it feel like? Feel the pride and joy of walking into your new home or the thrill of answering the phone and being offered your dream opportunity. Can you feel your spirit heat up? Perhaps you feel that aching in your cheeks from smiling, or that electricity shooting up the back of your neck. Take those feelings into your work every day as you move toward your dreams.

Believe in Yourself

What if I were to tell you that everyone is a magician? Well, according to Russ, we are! We all can turn nothing into something which is simply, “sheer magic.” While many people think you have “see it to believe it,” Russ believes the opposite is true, “You have to *believe* it to see it. In other words, you have to believe in yourself and fill your head with positive thoughts, affirmations, and a vivid feeling about what you want to perform the magic trick: turning nothing into something.

Russ believed in himself even when he had nothing. For instance, in 2015 he once traveled to Tampa, Florida to play a show. He was broke and couldn't afford to bring anyone, but he was still excited just to be performing and playing his music. When he arrived at the less than glamorous hotel, even the promoters were surprised to see him alone. And the show? It had 40 people in the audience. But to Russ, that 40 seemed like 40,000. He was so inspired that he immediately felt the need to record.

On the surface, none of this looked like success, many people might even be disappointed to be staying at a three-star hotel and performing to an audience of forty. Russ, however, found beauty in the ugly and believed this small stepping stone was a step towards success. Russ not only believed in himself, but he also had an insane level of self-confidence and a thick skin. And when you have supreme confidence, you begin to “piss people off.” When Russ began pursuing his passion, his true friends showed themselves while others tried to suck the life out of him. These energy-leeches, he says, are simply intimidated by your hopes and dreams.

You see, many of us fear to follow our true passions because of what others may think. We don't want to do something wrong or disappoint our friends and family. Our friends and family may even try to advise that we follow a more “realistic” dream, something that is attainable and will pay the bills today. That's why when we begin to pursue our passions, we must stop listening to those who want to hold us back and rely on our own self-belief.

Of course, taking the plunge will come with failure and setbacks. But if we stick with it and refuse to fail, we'll eventually be like Russ, relishing in success and proving all the haters wrong. This won't happen overnight. For Russ, it took six years until he received the recognition for his music that he desired. Throughout that time, however, he continued to make music and release singles. Today, he's released over 96 singles, proving that if we just hone our skills and work on our craft, success can come. He believed in himself, but even more importantly, he had the support of his close friends and family.

Surround Yourself With Passionate People

Growing up, his dad's family was filled with loud, "shit-talking Italians" who loved to listen to music. Russ's grandfather, Pop Pop, played the guitar for decades so it was only a matter of time before Russ picked up a guitar himself. He loved to watch his grandfather play, and once he learned a chord or two, he was hooked. For his fourteenth birthday, Russ received a guitar. Additionally, his household was always filled with music. His parents played Earth, Wind, & Fire or the Bee Gees and they were always dancing. In the car, his dad would sing and play the drums on the steering wheel. In other words, his family's passion for music was contagious and Russ caught the music bug early on in life.

Then in high school, Russ and his friends felt a passion for rap that was infectious. Russ would make the beats, his friends would rap, and soon, they were recording music in their parent's basements. Their passion was, again, contagious. While his father's passion trickled down to Russ which then spread to his friends, the other important key is to surround yourself with people who love and support you.

For instance, Russ never really saw himself as a rapper, there was even a window of time in which he doubted whether he should, or even could, rap. He simply saw himself solely as a producer, but he'd always enjoyed writing songs and poems. One day, he simply gained confidence in his abilities as a writer and just asked his brother, Frank, "Do you think I should start rapping?" Frank replied, "Yea, why not? I think you could do it." That conversation gave Russ the boost to begin writing songs.

Now, Russ knows those early songs "sounded like dog shit," but he was gaining confidence. Then, almost a year later, Russ was in Bugus' basement recording a hook on one of his songs. He remembers standing at the mic and "letting go of the wheel. Someone else had taken over." That person was the elevated version of Russ who was ready to be heard. He turned to Bugus and asked, "Yo, should I start rapping?" Without hesitation, Bugus

replied, “Hell yeah! Do that shit!” As they say, the rest was history and Russ has never looked back since.

At the end of the day, surrounding yourself with people who love and support you is key to building your confidence. When you become confident and passionate, that enthusiasm becomes contagious. For instance, Bugus only started rapping after seeing others doing it, and Russ began rapping after watching Bugus do it. “The energy of the people you surround yourself with rubs off on you; choose wisely.”

Hard Work Beats Talent

Russ remembers watching Kevin Durant get drafted into the NBA one year and saying, “Hard work beats talent when talent fails to work hard.” This quote resonated with Russ as he realized that he didn’t have to be the best, he just had to work harder than his competition. You see, no one sees the hours of hard work Kobe Bryant spent at the gym or watching film on his opponents. Instead, the public sees him scoring fifty points each game; the reality is that the public will praise you for what you practice in private.

Russ himself has struggled with work ethic. He admits he had a “shitty work ethic” in school, he didn’t study and never did the homework. Similarly, he was a shitty employee. He once worked at Outback Steakhouse as a busboy, but he only lasted a month. He even worked at Off-Broadway, stacking shoes before he left for college. Instead of using the walkie-talkies to communicate with his managers, he would simply plug his headphones into his iPod and completely ignore anything his managers told him. So why was his work ethic so bad? Well, he simply says that work felt like work. Music, however, didn’t feel like work.

For instance, when Russ was a sophomore in high school, he discovered GarageBand on his family computer. This discovery felt like he had just gotten his driver’s license, and he spent all his free time putting together a bunch of premade loops. Finally, he tried making his own beat. “The first one was so, SO bad.” But he uploaded it to his YouTube channel anyway. Frank asked, “What if you wake up tomorrow and have fifty thousand views?” Fifty thousand sounded like fifty million, it was unfathomable. Russ, however, knew that fifty thousand views were absolutely possible and he went to bed excited for what the morning would bring.

When he woke up, his video had fifty views. Many might be discouraged by these numbers but Russ was invigorated and motivated to try again. Uploading videos became a challenge to himself to blow up, and he wasn’t going to stop until that day came. That was the moment that Russ realized

he did have a strong work ethic, he just never had the work that he loved. From that moment on, Russ and his friends were constantly making music, he and Bugus even created a name for themselves: DIEMON - Do It Everyday Music or Nothing, and that's exactly what they did.

Upon the creation of DIEMON, Bugus and Russ took on plenty of new members. They created songs, put out some projects, but eventually those new members faded out. Each time they released a new video, the members would become disappointed that they didn't blow up. Russ and Bugus would try to keep the spirits up, they truly believed they were amazing. Russ states, "Picture self-belief as a cup. My cup, along with Bugus's, was running over. We had enough to spare. We would try to pour our belief into them before realizing our attempts were futile. THEIR CUPS HAD HOLES IN THEM."

Today, Russ acknowledges that those friends had SO much talent. One of their first members was older than them and Russ remembers admiring his voice, thinking "this sounds so professional. This is what it is supposed to sound like." However, that friend quit. Russ learned an important lesson in seeing many of his talented friends quit on their passion. "This world doesn't bet on talent. It bets on people who bet on themselves. The world rewards confidence and belief. Period..." Russ learned that he didn't have to be the best, he just had to work harder than anyone else, and that's exactly what he did.

Jump Off the Cliff and Be Vulnerable

How many times do you keep yourself from doing something out of fear? Perhaps you don't want to approach that cute person at the bar or you never book that dream trip because you're too scared. Well, it's time to embrace that fear. It's natural to be hesitant when you're standing at the edge of the cliff, but to have a fulfilled life, you must jump. That hesitation comes because you "don't have wings...yet."

It's time to pull the trigger and take a leap of faith. Russ took a leap of faith when he dropped out of college to pursue his music career. He hadn't even made his first song yet but wanted to focus on making beats and production. His decision wasn't quite met with support, his mother was disappointed, she only wanted her children to receive an education. His dad, however, was super supportive and they agreed to let Russ come home from college. Of course, his mother made him sign a piece of paper stating that if he wasn't financially independent by a certain date, then he'd have to go back to school or get a job. He signed the paper. But as the date came and went, Russ was still nowhere. In a good month, he would make twenty dollars from uploading his music to the music platform, TuneCore.

When Russ looks back on his decision to quit school, he realizes that the decision was his jump off the cliff. But why wasn't he scared? Fear is simply all in your head and when you think about something for too long, fear begins to creep in. When you think, you begin to doubt yourself. Instead, Russ overcame that hesitation by thinking less and doing more. Russ relied on his intuition to make decisions, whether it was quitting school, picking an album title, or making important business decisions. For instance, in 2014, two different labels reached out to Russ. He was dead broke and the offer of a record label was certainly enticing. However, something just didn't feel right about the record deals so Russ turned them down. He had faith that something better was coming.

The offers, however, told Russ that he was doing something right, that he was on the right track. They were an acknowledgment from the universe that his work was not going unnoticed. Through these experiences, Russ learned to never hesitate, don't doubt, and don't even worry about falling. Wings will grow, so it's time to jump. Additionally, when you decide to go for it, you begin to put yourself in a place of vulnerability. Don't be scared of that vulnerability, it's not a sign of weakness as many people perceive. Instead, facing your insecurities takes strength and blocks others from weaponizing your vulnerabilities against you. It's like Eminem's final battle in 8 Mile when he rapped about all the insecurities that his opponent would use against him. In the end, his opponent had nothing and forfeited the battle. So be honest with yourself and others.

For Russ, his songs are three-minute autobiographies, he bares his soul to the world in each one and that vulnerability led to his success. He puts his life out there for the world to see and doesn't care what others think, even when he completely fails. Once in 2017, when he was already successful, he tweeted: "I can't wait to be at the Grammys next year, I'm winning 10." However, when the 2018 Grammys rolled around, Russ wasn't there and the internet had a field day. At first, Russ didn't feel foolish, he was simply trying to manifest his dreams by putting them out into the universe. On second thought, he felt a bit foolish and deleted the tweet, but he learned an important lesson: embrace your vulnerability and sometimes, you have to check yourself and remind yourself of who you are.

Have Gratitude and Enjoy the Journey

When it comes to success, it's like a tornado. Russ calls this the tornado effect; when you know a tornado is coming, the weather forecasters announced that the storm would hit, you've been told to take shelter, and you listen while the wind uproots trees and knocks debris against the house. However, when you emerge from your shelter, you can't help but stare at the wreckage in awe. You knew it would happen, but it's surprising even though you expected and prepared for it. Similarly, you knew your dreams were going to come true, but when that success finally hits, the reality of it can still inspire awe.

Therefore, it's important to recognize your achievements and feel gratitude for everything in your life, both big and small. If you give thanks to the universe, the universe will continue to provide blessings beyond belief. Of course, there is no end to success either. You see, success is a journey, not a destination. Russ is obsessed with getting better, that's why he keeps working to become an upgraded version of himself. And when it comes to inspiration, his biggest motivator is his own potential. Why limit yourself to a one-million-dollar deal when you could get a two-five-or ten-million-dollar deal? Similarly, why limit your boutique to a local shop when it could be a national chain? As long as you are becoming the best version of yourself, you will never become disappointed.

Lastly, you must trust the process. Have faith in your journey and never be content. For instance, Russ can make his favorite song and be absolutely in love with it, but by the time the song is finished, he is already hooked on the idea of making a better one. Once, a fan even gave him a ukelele and instead of just letting it sit around and collect dust, he used it. He had never played the ukelele but he wrote two songs on it. Like John Lennon said: "I'm an artist, and if you give me a tuba, I'll bring you something out of it." Part of the journey is embracing newness and enjoying the process. The journey is forever, so enjoy the ride.

Final Summary

Through Russ's story, we can learn what it takes to follow your dreams. By believing in yourself wholeheartedly and surrounding yourself with people who share the same passion as you, you can unleash the magic of creating something out of nothing. Even when Russ wasn't the most talented person in the room, he had the confidence to believe that he was. Not only that, but he worked hard to achieve his dreams. Even though he wasn't the best, his hard work made him stand out amongst the rest. He relied on faith and intuition which allowed him to create success on his own terms; he didn't have the stress of record deals or managers trying to sway him in a new direction. Instead, he created his success through a positive mindset and a belief in his talent and abilities. Russ didn't care what others thought and he showed his vulnerability by sharing his dreams with the world. It's time to follow the advice of Russ, so take risks, jump off the cliff, and finally follow your passion.



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