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I've tried as much as possible to align my definitions of success and fun. I figure I'll be successful when I can live by my wits — getting by on the product of my imagination. It's my goal to make a living by making stuff up!

I've spent a lot of time in my career teaching at elite private schools — and going to some — and one of the great benefits of that experience is having met a lot of people who are really successful financially. And that has shown me that having a lot of money is not really a good predictor of happiness. Leadership in a corporate context is very different from that in a family context. To me that's painfully and brutally obvious, but I've run across many who don't seem to recognize that distinction and the relationship with their families suffers irreparably.

I also believe successful people think of success in a holistic way. The time you spend with your kids is going to be as valuable to your ultimate success as the time you spend with your colleagues. For me, it's all tied together because my business, DadLabs, is parenting. It's easy for me to see if my life at home and at work are balanced — home is where I get my inspiration for the things we do at DadLabs, and our office environment inspires me to be a better dad.

I feel most successful as a dad. I know there's some danger in saying that because it will ultimately be up to my kids to decide. But I'm really proud of the relationship I have with my kids and proud of myself for recognizing the sacrifices I had to make for that. I'm thrilled with what we've accomplished at DadLabs and writing a book was a really great moment for me, but I can't think of anything I've spent more time on than my kids — although the jury's still out, they're not teenagers yet, they could turn on me!

The successful people who I really admire have identified what makes them passionate and joyful in work, and they've found a way to get paid doing it. I'm always inspired by people who say, "I can't believe I get paid to do this!" It's not an easy trick, and not a whole lot of people pull it off, most have to compromise.

As I've made the transition from being an artist to being a businessperson, my good friend and UT luminary Lowell Lebermann has profoundly affected my life. I went to him at a low point and told him I thought I needed to go to law school. He laughed at me and said, "Please, you didn't spend two years in my attic writing plays so you could go off and be a lawyer. No, that's not you."

On the creative side, David Mark Cohen was my playwriting mentor at the University. David taught me to be a craftsman and a great rewriter of my work. He taught me that you can be involved in the passion of the moment in creating a work of art, but then you've got to stand back and be objective about it and unearth its strengths and weaknesses.

There's still a lot I'd like to accomplish. I want DadLabs to be a network TV show. I want to write a bunch more books: a parenting book, a history book, a children's book. I don't think I'll ever be able to leave my mark in one particular genre, but maybe I'll be able to cover the spectrum, to say, "I did a little bit of everything."

When I'm gone, I hope people will remember laughing at funny stories I've told or funny videos I've made or a funny article I wrote. The happiest moment I've ever had professionally was at a special performance of one of the plays I wrote for a children's theater in Louisville. My son was in my lap, and at one point during the play, the room filled up with the sound of 600 children laughing — it was the most remarkable sound. That was the moment when I knew that I wanted my legacy to be laughter.

*The "Success to Me" series is prepared by Aruni Gunasegaram, BBA '92, MBA '98, an entrepreneur, and Pam Losefsky, an Austin writer and editor.*