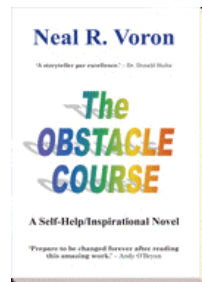


Ideas for a Productive Summer for High School and College Students

By **Neal R. Voron**, author of “*The Obstacle Course*”
and **Barbarann M. Voron, MCAT**, psychotherapist

**...PLUS, the First 5 Chapters of Neal R. Voron’s
Self-Help/Inspirational Novel, “The Obstacle Course”!**



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What should high school and college students do during the summer?

How that question is answered could mean more than you might think...

For example:

- Maintaining a regular exercise routine could help a student feel healthier and be happier;
- Time spent pursuing scholarship opportunities could perhaps eventually be worth thousands of dollars and enable him or her to attend a more expensive or more prestigious college (or it could mean the difference between attending college or not attending);

and

- Working at a temporary job could give the student the experience needed to qualify for the position he or she seeks upon graduation.

We have compiled a list of ideas for a productive summer that we hope will enable high school and college-age students to consider some activities that could be very beneficial to them. Perhaps this list will spur you to think of more ideas on your own. While summer is certainly a good time for students to have fun, socialize, and relax, some prior thought to utilizing a lengthy summer vacation productively can help to achieve those goals and so much more.

Share these ideas with someone you know who might benefit from them. You could be helping them turn an ordinary summer vacation into one filled with experiences that will make positive, lasting impacts upon their lives!

IDEAS FOR A PRODUCTIVE SUMMER...

- ***MAINTAIN GOOD HABITS/DEVELOP SELF-DISCIPLINE –***
Exercise, eat, and sleep regularly; Balance work and leisure time; Change from unhealthy habits to healthy habits. Stick with it!
- ***ORGANIZE YOURSELF –***
Get rid of clutter and clear the way of distractions so you can concentrate on doing the things that are most important to you. If getting organized or managing your time is a problem for you, many books available at libraries and bookstores can help. Do not procrastinate! Many people never accomplish things they say they will because they do not appropriately control their own agenda.
- ***DETERMINE SOME PERSONAL & CAREER GOALS/GET STARTED! –***
While nothing needs to be written in stone, think about what is important to you; Consider activities that interest you; Explore options; Develop short-term and long-term goals; Determine what must be done so you may achieve your goals; Develop an action plan; Start now!
- ***READ A BOOK –***
Or 10! – Open your mind and expand your horizons! READ. READ. READ. Reading is a key to knowledge, and having more knowledge is usually advantageous.... If you get tired of reading books, read newspapers and magazines.... If you would like specific suggestions about what to read, ask a librarian or teacher. Incidentally, summertime is a good time for first-readings of books you expect to read in class the following academic year!
- ***CREATE SOMETHING –***
Write a story or book; Draw a sketch; Invent a product or process; Write a song; Plant a garden; Build a bookshelf – the list is endless! Stimulating your imagination and utilizing your creativity can be very gratifying and confidence-boosting. It could also provide you with a product you can market and profit from!

Ideas For A Productive Summer

<http://www.ProductiveSummer.com>

By Neal R. Voron and Barbarann M. Voron, MCAT

- **CONDUCT A CAREER SEARCH –**
Investigate careers that match your interests and background; Learn what they involve; Determine which career you wish to pursue and what you must do to pursue it.
- **OBTAIN SUMMER EMPLOYMENT –**
Apply for jobs and get working! This is your chance to gain work experience and earn some money. If you know what career interests you, seek employment in that (or a related) field. If you do not know what career you plan to pursue or cannot obtain a career-oriented job, first consider pursuing jobs that enable you to gain knowledge and learn new skills; then, if necessary, consider other jobs. Work experience gained during the summer can be instrumental in helping you gain employment in the future.
- **GET AN INTERNSHIP –**
For little or no pay, many companies and organizations are glad to give you a chance to get some "on the job" training. Many schools offer to help arrange internships for their students, and you may be able to obtain class credit. Inquire at your school or college to learn about internship opportunities.
- **ATTEND A SUMMER CAMP –**
Investigate special learning opportunities, such as camps for high school and college students interested in computers, art, journalism, or one of many other subject areas
- **BE A CAMP COUNSELOR –**
Apply to a summer camp to be a counselor or a counselor-in-training. This is a great way to learn leadership skills, gain work experience, meet people, earn some money, and enjoy the varied activities and adventures of camping!
- **PRACTICE TEAMWORK –**
Join a sports team or volunteer for a community organization; Gain experience in working with others toward a common goal.
- **PREPARE FOR THE 'SAT' –**
Learn how the Scholastic Assessment Test is administered; Practice on a sample test; Determine your strengths and weaknesses and learn how to overcome them so you can perform well on the exam.

- **PURSUE SCHOLARSHIPS –**
Identify scholarships for which you would be eligible to apply; Write for applications; Mark deadlines on a calendar; Determine if you can still do more things to enhance your credentials; Work on any required essays or forms; Prepare the best possible applications, each tailored to the specific scholarship opportunity.
- **RESEARCH AND VISIT COLLEGES –**
Determine which schools are most appropriate for you; Call or write to them for information; Request an admissions application and financial aid materials; Visit, if possible, to learn more.
- **'CLEP' SOME COURSES –**
Contact your school or The College Board to determine when College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests will be administered in your area. CLEP exams test your current knowledge in an academic subject. By scoring well on these exams, you may be able to gain college credit for one or more courses for a relatively small fee as compared to normal tuition costs (check with your college or prospective college to see if they will accept CLEP scores for credit). By doing so, you can save money while gaining some early credits and you can put yourself in a better position to graduate early or to complete a double major within four years. Summertime is a good time to study in preparation for CLEP exams.
- **TRAVEL –**
By hike, by bike, by bus, by train, by plane, by boat, by car – for a day or many days – traveling to other environs can show you new ways of looking at things and help you determine activities and localities that you like. A change of scenery can be a refreshing change in routine and do wonders for your mental outlook.
- **TAKE SUMMER COURSES –**
Learn what courses are available at area colleges, and see if you will be able to transfer credit for the courses to the college that you plan to attend (or are currently attending); Enroll in courses that will help advance your progress toward your degree; Gain some knowledge and some additional credits! (Note: sometimes taking basic required courses at a community college or junior college is less expensive than at a private, four-year school.)

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- **LEARN TO TYPE –**
If you do not yet know how to type, use the summertime to learn! This skill can help you tremendously with school papers and improve your employability. Not only that, but it can be very helpful with your personal correspondence as well. Also, if you plan to be involved with computers, typing is practically essential.
- **LEARN TO USE A COMPUTER –**
Get friendly with your computer! Computer knowledge is becoming more and more of a necessity. If you know how to utilize a computer's advantages, you can make them work to your advantage. Many schools and businesses offer summer computer training classes. Get started!
- **BECOME INTERNET-LITERATE –**
Browse the World Wide Web; Explore the worlds of e-mail and autoresponders; Create a blog. Lurk and interact on e-mail discussion lists, WWW discussion group forums, and newsgroups; Study HTML. Take time to learn about, and gain experience using, this valuable, cutting-edge global communications vehicle!
- **LEARN TO DRIVE/GET YOUR LICENSE –**
Go to Driving School and/or contact your state government to learn about licensing procedures; Investigate auto insurance costs and regulations; Obtain a copy of your state's driver's manual; Study driving procedures and laws; Get any necessary medical exams; Obtain a Learner's Permit; Practice driving with qualified supervision; Take the Driving Test; Pass the test and get your license!
- **VISIT MUSEUMS/ZOOS –**
Increase your knowledge and scope of thinking by gaining exposure to these historical, educational, and experiential study centers.
- **LEARN FIRST AID/CPR –**
Contact the American Red Cross regarding classes; Learn how to administer first aid and respond in emergencies. These skills can be invaluable – perhaps lifesavers – throughout your lifetime.
- **LEARN SELF-DEFENSE –**
Enhance your self-confidence by learning how to defend yourself; Contact schools or qualified instructors; Take a class or two.

- ***PREPARE YOUR RESUME –***
Document your educational background, honors received, extra-curricular and community-oriented activities, and work experience so you will have the information ready when you need to prepare a resume. This will save you time and worry later (especially because, over time, details about activities are often forgotten). Review books about resume writing. Write a preliminary resume and keep it with other information about your credentials in a file.
- ***RESEARCH POST-GRADUATION EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS –***
If you only have one year of school left, this summer might be a good time to investigate job prospects. Call personnel offices; Try to arrange "informational interviews" with people in your intended career field; Contact professional or business organizations and begin "networking"; Read to learn about companies that interest you; Let family, friends, teachers, and others know that you will be looking for employment upon completion of your schooling next Spring (or whenever you graduate). They may be able to provide you with job leads. Be thorough and persistent in your job search!

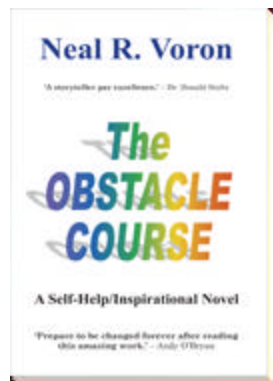
Have an Enjoyable and Productive Summer!

We hope you find ***“Ideas For A Productive Summer”*** to be helpful!



Now, you are invited to read the following FREE excerpt of the first 5 chapters of **Neal R. Voron’s** acclaimed self-help/inspirational novel, ***“The Obstacle Course”!***

The story is about an old but untraditional teacher, Dr. Ernest Acton, who takes his class on an adventure towards self-growth and personal development. Dr. Acton's unique off-beat style keeps the class – and the reader – guessing (and thinking) throughout the "course".



What readers are saying about “The Obstacle Course”...

“The Obstacle Course is one of those books that you will find yourself reading over and over again. And each time you read it, you'll come away better than you were before. You'll have a better perspective on life, your place in it, and the way you look at it. Prepare to be changed forever after reading this amazing work."

Andy O'Bryan

Founder, Principal Visions, LLC

<http://www.IncentiveToolkit.com>

Ideas For A Productive Summer

<http://www.ProductiveSummer.com>

By Neal R. Voron and Barbarann M. Voron, MCAT

“I have studied and published self-help information for many years, and rarely do I see something as unique and fresh as *The Obstacle Course*.

Its story format is fun and entertaining to read, while making it easier to understand and remember the lessons... And these lessons are some of the most important things to know in life, things which aren't typically learned in school.

I believe anyone can take a course from ‘Dr. Acton’, benefit from this book, and enjoy the story at the same time.”

Steve Moore

Editor/Webmaster, Personal-Development.Com

<http://www.Personal-Development.com>

"This quick-paced story entertains, enlightens and is filled with pearls of wisdom that will inspire positive change in a loved one's life. So, do your loved ones a favor, buy them a copy!"

Ken D. Foster

Best-Selling Author, *Ask and You Will Succeed*,
and CEO, Shared Vision Network

<http://www.Ask-Succeed.com>

"*The Obstacle Course* is in the same genre as *Who Moved My Cheese?*, but has its own unique labyrinth of stories that not only entertain, but move and challenge the reader to think about larger issues.

The story has special applications to those in academia and especially those in business. *The Obstacle Course* touches the realm of spirituality without being overtly religious or sectarian. To that extent, it is a book for everyone.

Rather than being another ‘how-to’ book, *The Obstacle Course* is lightly seasoned with humor that makes for an enjoyable read that touches the soul as well as the mind."

Kenneth M. Lankin, M.D.

Founder, Dr. Lankin’s Specialty Foods, LLC

<http://www.AwesomeAlmonds.com>

Ideas For A Productive Summer

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By Neal R. Voron and Barbarann M. Voron, MCAT

“I’m a firm believer that – right along with teaching math, reading, and history – our schools and universities should be teaching the ideas that are shared in this novel. Everyone can benefit from the lessons that Dr. Acton teaches in *The Obstacle Course*.

Neal R. Voron has a winner in this book... and, in this case, you'll receive the rewards in your life from applying the principles shared.”

Josh Hinds

CEO, GetMotivation.com

Publisher, "Let's Talk Motivation!" newsletter

<http://www.GetMotivation.com>

“*The Obstacle Course* is a clever, cerebral, thought-provoking adventure in pedagogy. Dr. Ernest Acton is a professor, philosopher and motivator, and Neal R. Voron is a storyteller par excellence who introduces us to the teacher we all wish we had.”

Donald R. Stoltz, D.O.

Physician, Children’s Book Author, and

Author of Books About Norman Rockwell

"*The Obstacle Course*, written by Neal R. Voron, is a literary prescription. I recommend it for all ages. It is a story filled with mental calisthenics... Doctor Acton teaches his students and, you, the reader, how to be aware and to take positive action when faced with an unexpected or an expected obstacle.

Refreshing, stimulating, offering you a challenge to ignite the power of positive thought... Mr. Voron has a whimsical way of storytelling, opening your mind to truth, as Plato and Aristotle did... Clarity versus veiled uncertainty.

Every school and library should have this humanitarian self-help book as a staple.”

Joseph F.M. Pokorny

Songwriter, Musician, Composer

Co-Founder with Neal R. Voron of RyKy Records (tm)

<http://www.RyKyRecords.com>

Mr. Pokorny was so inspired by the story that he has created

The Obstacle Course Musical!

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"The Obstacle Course is just that – a course about obstacles and how they affect our futures. Although this short book is written in a fictional form, it is actually a guide to self-realization that carries numerous truths – many which we may have always known, but lately have put aside in the pace of the day, and many that may be new to our thinking.

The sum total of *The Obstacle Course* reminds us that the single most important obstacle in life is ourselves.

This is a book for students – both formal learners and life-long learners. As a former teacher, I see *The Obstacle Course* as a wonderful supplement to any classroom experience. It encourages students to take charge of their goals and of their own education.

Each chapter is a springboard for a spirited discussion session. There are exercises that can be duplicated in the classroom and even a short page of review questions at the end.

If you are looking for something to inspire and lighten your day, *The Obstacle Course* will meet the challenge. If you are a teacher, you owe it to yourself to investigate this tool."

Janna McGlasson

Former Drama Teacher

Co-Host, Cheap Thrills Bookstore

"A fast, fun, mind-expanding good read."

Joe Vitale

Best-Selling Author, "Spiritual Marketing",

"The Greatest Money-Making Secret In History!",

"Hypnotic Writing", and Other Books

<http://www.MrFire.com>

"Read this book! Fast-paced, entertaining and most importantly, it'll get "under your skin" and transform your life. Great reading. Great fun. The principles are powerful, practical and timeless. Once again – buy and read this book!"

Philip E. Humbert, Ph.D.

Author, Keynote Speaker and

Personal Success Strategist

<http://www.PhilipHumbert.com>

“The Obstacle Course”

By Neal R. Voron

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Chapter 1

There was an excitement in the air unlike any phenomenon I had ever experienced before. The anticipation of the arriving crowd of anxious students was that something wonderful was about to happen... and it was going to happen any minute now... to us, to all of us!

In small groups – one, two, three students at a time – we filtered through the doorway. The gathering class increasingly became transformed into a frenetic group of fidgeting and high-pitched, fast-speaking, but enthusiastic, conversationalists. The room was so abuzz with such supercharged energy that goosebumps appeared on my arms and I sat away from the window lest I get struck by lightning.

We were all eager to begin what was rumored by other students to be "the most worthwhile course you'll ever take."

Naturally, we wanted to know why the course was so terrific, but the standard reply always was, "you'll have to find out for yourself!" The words were always spoken with great enthusiasm – as from souls who had found a new self-confidence, a sense of purpose – and they always sounded sincere in their encouragement to take the course, as if they wanted to bestow upon us a secret gift. When college students speak with that much enthusiasm about a class, either they're playing a cruel prank or they're letting you in on something special. I decided to take a chance and find out for myself.

So, there we were... a full house – 40 desk chairs, 40 students – 20 men, 20 women – awaiting "The Obstacle Course", taught by Dr. Ernest T. Acton, known to the fortunate few as a truly remarkable "teacher" in the fullest sense of the word.

And then there was a roar of thunder outside, and you could hear a torrent of rain driving hard down from the sky, riveting the outer world with drops of polluted water as the horizon flickered with momentary illumination. As if on cue, the atmospheric distractions coincided with the entry of Dr. Acton into the room.

Chapter 2

What a shock! Not having met Dr. Acton before, I had no idea of what to expect in terms of his appearance, his manners, his methods... Somehow, I had visualized him as being in his mid-40's, well toned, perhaps 6'3", weighing 200 pounds, with a full head of dark, shining, wavy hair, and a glowing complexion.

Galloping into the room with a quick, direct stride was a man who looked to be nearing 70, about 5'5", 130 pounds, with a huge, shining bald spot trimmed with white hair, and a complexion that clearly had seen many days. Dr. Acton looked remarkably like my paternal grandfather, but he seemed to have two conspicuous attributes that belied any frailties he may have possessed: his hazel eyes radiated with life, and his cheeks formed a ready, easy smile that made him seem personable.

Placing his tattered and worn burgundy leather portfolio atop his desk, he leaned his side against the desk so as to be half-sitting.

"Good evening!" he greeted the class with seemingly sincere enthusiasm. "My name is Dr. Ernest T. Acton, and I am so glad that so many of you made a decision to fit this evening course into your busy schedules. It is a wise move for those of you who are serious about accomplishing things that are important to you in your life."

"'The Obstacle Course' is a class about dealing with life's happenings and the things you would like to happen," Dr. Acton continued. "If you want this course to be helpful to you, open your mind to it. I will work hard to help you learn."

"Okay, class dismissed!" he said, his voice raising with excitement. "See you next week!" he said, as he grabbed his portfolio and then quickly walked out of the room.

We were all stunned. We could not believe what had just happened: he basically just came in, said 'hello', and left! A few guys in the class quickly ran into the hallway, hoping to corner Dr. Acton and find out why he did that. Most of us just sat there in the room, dumbfounded. We waited a few minutes until our classmates returned with their report: "We couldn't find him! He disappeared!"

"Why did he leave?" we wondered. "Were we victims of somebody's joke?" More than a few students weren't too amused with the evening's events. I must say, I, too, was disappointed.

Chapter 3

When the class met again, several faces were missing. Before Dr. Acton arrived, there were a number of discussions about why he may have left so abruptly the previous week. The consensus opinion was that he probably prefers a brief introductory first meeting. But, we were curious, why hadn't he at least handed out a course syllabus and list of reading materials? We were determined to find out.

Dr. Acton galloped in promptly at 7 p.m. just as he had for the first meeting.

"Good Evening!" he cheerfully greeted his audience, his smile brimming widely while he tossed his portfolio onto the desk.

The smile was not returned.

"Oh, I see," he said, surveying the dour faces and seven empty desk chairs. "Even though some of your classmates were able to overcome any obstacles last week that may have prevented them from taking this evening class, they apparently were unable to overcome the obstacles they faced this week. That's too bad."

John, one of the students who had tried, unsuccessfully, to catch up with Dr. Acton last week, then jumped up from his seat. "Dr. Acton, why did you leave so abruptly last week? We were all excited about getting started with our classwork! You didn't even give us a course syllabus or a reading list!"

"Young man," the old man replied, "I left because the lesson was over. This class is about dealing with life's happenings and the things you would like to happen. I said that if you want this course to be helpful to you, you must open your mind to it. If you are to learn, you must think. Prior to last week, you – all of you – had set a goal to take this course. Last week, you embarked on a path toward your goal and overcame any obstacles – such as the time of the meeting – that may have gotten in the way. That was good! But it was also fairly easy..."

"Easy?" I asked aloud, not realizing Dr. Acton had heard me.

"Yes, my friend. I think perhaps having to adjust one's schedule to accommodate participating in an activity for which you have high interest is not too difficult an obstacle for most people," he replied. "The anticipation and excitement level shown by the class last week when I entered the room was extraordinarily high. It's much more difficult to overcome obstacles when the enthusiasm for achieving your goal has dimmed somewhat or when a tougher obstacle gets in the way. My quick departure last week seems to have drawn a few of your classmates off the path."

"Why do you think that happened?" John interjected, still a bit miffed.

Ideas For A Productive Summer

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By Neal R. Voron and Barbarann M. Voron, MCAT

"Let me ask you," Dr. Acton retorted. "Why do you think that happened?"

"Well, because they probably didn't think it would be worth their time to continue in class. Maybe they thought they would be throwing their money away. Or perhaps they thought you were too strange to learn anything worthwhile from, considering the way you left so suddenly," John replied.

I cringed upon hearing that! John was being awfully bold!

"You may be right, young man," Dr. Acton said, "Your fellow classmates may have left the class for any or all of those reasons or for some other reason. But the reasons you suggest represent an obstacle that stops many people from ever accomplishing things they originally set out to do. That obstacle is 'uncertainty'."

"Class, the differences between you who are attending class today and your classmates who decided not to attend are clear: they allowed obstacles to block their path to learning the material for this class; you did not allow obstacles to block your path, and you are learning new lessons here today."

"Now, son," Dr. Acton continued, addressing John, "your questions regarding a syllabus and reading list seem to confirm my assessment of the class' unreadiness to learn last week..."

"Unreadiness to learn?" I heard myself question.

Dr. Acton had heard me, too.

"Yes," he turned towards me, "unreadiness." He grabbed the leather portfolio from his desk. "Look," he said, unzipping the portfolio to show the entire class that it was empty, "there's no syllabus, no reading list!"

We were astounded. "Why?" we asked collectively. "How will we learn?" one student asked. "How will we get graded?" asked another.

Dr. Acton replied, "Think about it." The old man paused for a moment, smiled, enthusiastically said, "See you next week!", and walked quickly out the door.

Nobody chased after him. We had a few things to think about.

Chapter 4

Think about things, we did. But we had more questions than answers. In fact, we still didn't have much of a clue about what Dr. Acton and "The Obstacle Course" were all about.

Why didn't Dr. Acton give some structure to the class? If he was following a lesson plan, why didn't he let us know the schedule? What did he expect from us? And, yes, what about grades? When the course is over, how will we know how well we did?... And another thing... Why did the old man carry around an old, soft-leather briefcase that's empty? What was the purpose?

That question intrigued me because everything Dr. Acton said and did seemed so purposeful. Yet, his actions and his reactions seemed to occur so spontaneously! He possessed an extraordinary sense of control – so extraordinary that we wondered whether anything could rattle him.

I wasn't the only one so intrigued. In fact, word spread quickly among my classmates that someone devised a plan to "trick" the dear doctor. He was going to be in for a surprise, and everyone was anxious about what would happen. Not only did the 33 of us from last week show up for class, but so did two others who had attended the first week.

What was "the trick" going to be? I felt a pang of guilt as Dr. Acton galloped into the room promptly at 7 p.m.

"Good evening, everyone!" the unsuspecting leader said with a smile as he propped up his portfolio on the desk. "Good evening!" was the reply in unison.

"Is this a newfound enthusiasm, or have you all conjured up some answers to the questions you posed last week?" Dr. Acton asked.

John was first to reply. "Doctor, you threw our questions back at us again. How are we to find the answers?"

"Good question, son! How are we to find the answers? WE ASK!" the wise man said.

"But, we did ask..." John said.

Dr. Acton then interjected, "Sometimes you must ask, ask, and ask again to get the information you want. Give up, and what will you have?... NO ANSWER!!! You must know what you want to ask; you must know how to ask it; you must figure out who to ask it of – and sometimes you need only to ask it again of yourself because YOU have answers within you to questions that have not been asked!"

"So, now I ask again," John implored. "Why haven't we been given a course syllabus and a reading list, Dr. Acton?"

"My friend," he finally obliged, "the answer is simply because you don't need them for this course. You are here, in class. If you pay attention, if you open your mind, if you think about what is discussed, if you ask questions, if you seek the answers, if you understand the concepts, if you utilize those concepts in your everyday life, you will LEARN and you will continue to learn for as long as you practice these things."

He continued, gazing throughout the audience, "I want your minds focused on learning about obstacles and how to deal with them. You will learn by earnest, thoughtful action, not by locking your minds to some inflexible guideline that assumes authority simply because it has been committed to paper!"

Suddenly, the door to the room closed with a click. "Don't bother getting it," Acton instructed. "Let's not let anything interrupt this discussion."

There was a brief shuffling of bodies in their seats in the back of the room, and a quick glance back revealed some not-too-well-concealed smiles.

The teacher continued, "Regarding a reading list, YOU KNOW what you have to read to learn about things that you need to know and YOU KNOW what you have to read to learn about things that are important to you. If you don't know, you can find out by ASKING. Reading is your responsibility. All I will say is don't let lack of knowledge or lack of ability to acquire knowledge become an obstacle in your lives. It doesn't have to be. YOU can decide about that."

"Uh, Doctor, what about grades?" came a voice from the far end of the room.

The old man winced as if his most heartfelt prose had just been pierced by a sling of outrageous fortune.

He stared icily ahead, quickly and boldly moving his eyes from one to another of us, seemingly searching to connect with the inner vision deep beyond the surface of our brows. There was just a brief second of almost breathless anticipation, and then came a jarring SILENCE. Dr. Acton merely leaned against the desk, rested his chin upon his open palm, and stared at us.

After about a minute, he spoke, softly, addressing the questioner in form, but the class in posture. "What about grades? Why do you think I haven't mentioned grades?"

Everyone remained silent.

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"If you focus on grades, your perceptions of this class may not be broad enough to include whole spheres of opportunities for your minds to grow. You may ruin the fun, shut down the creativity, get stuck on form, and never see the path to what is most important."

He continued, "Your participation in this class is most relevant to me; your grades are not. Those who journey on "The Obstacle Course" always learn where they stand."

"If you are afraid about what grade you will receive, I give you two choices: leave the class now, and don't worry about it; or stay in the class, and do not worry about it! Do yourselves a favor – leave your worries at the door. Come to class – pay attention, think, learn, and use what you learn – and you will do well."

"...Now, let us get on with the course!" he said, clapping his hands with excitement. No one rushed toward the door.

Suddenly, it appeared something wonderful was about to happen: Dr. Acton was about to teach!

Chapter 5

The old man turned towards the blackboard and reached for a piece of chalk. For the first time, notebooks opened and caps lifted off from many pens.

He wrote just one word, L-E-A-R-N. "Learn".

"Please put your notebooks away," the teacher implored. "You will not need them. The core of learning is listening, you hear? You must listen to what is being taught! When we couple listening with thinking about what is said, we begin to gain some understanding based upon this new information and our previous knowledge and experiences. Once we have some understanding of a topic, we can use that information to help understand other topics."

"In this course, L-E-A-R-N, 'Learn,' is our foundation word. It is the key to "The Obstacle Course"; it is the key to life. We are all learning things constantly, yet we only choose to recognize the learning process when we are in classes in school. Even then, as you, my friends, know, we tend to complicate matters by adding some structure and form to the process – things like syllabuses, published reading lists, and... yes, believe-it-or-not, grades!"

"Remember when you were all children?" he asked. "Wasn't it FUN when you first learned the names of people, places, and things? Wasn't it FUN when someone asked you what color something was and you guessed... and you were right? Wasn't it fun when words in books started to make sense and symbols that you learned were numbers started to add up to other numbers... and you understood it all?"

Heads started nodding in agreement.

"For most people, learning is FUN!" he exclaimed. "For many people, learning continues to be fun – even till the day they die – because we, as human beings, have a natural curiosity about things. We gain a sense of excitement from understanding the world around us and from using our understanding to influence our individual and collective relationships with society and our environment."

"Unfortunately," Dr. Acton continued, "Many of us get turned off by the structure and form of the learning process itself and by the many pressures that are often placed by well-meaning people upon us. We tend to rebel, and 'learning' somehow becomes no more fun."

More heads nodded in agreement.

Ideas For A Productive Summer

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By Neal R. Voron and Barbarann M. Voron, MCAT

"Now," he continued, "Our first couple of classes may have seemed a bit odd to some of you... no, probably all of you... but I hope I have made a few things clear."

Dr. Acton then wrote on the board:

- (1) If you want this course to be helpful to you, open your mind to it.
- (2) 'Uncertainty' stops many people from accomplishing things; You did not allow obstacles to block your path, and you are learning here today.
- (3) Sometimes we all need to think.
- (4) Sometimes we need to ask.
- (5) Sometimes we need to ask again.
- (6) We must focus our minds to learn that which we are seeking to learn.
- (7) We must learn by earnest, thoughtful action.
- (8) We must not let interruptions block our course.
- (9) Leave your worries at the door; you will do well.
- (10) 'Learn' is our foundation word. It is the key to the "Obstacle Course". It is the key to life.
- (11) At the core of learning is listening.
- (12) For many people, the learning process itself becomes an obstacle.
- (13) Remember, learning is "FUN"!

We sat astonished as Dr. Acton filled the entire blackboard with these 13 messages. Why 13? Probably coincidence, but after these first few classes, we weren't so sure. We were amazed that the old man wrote everything down, one point after another, without hesitation... and without any notes!

Furthermore, he insisted that we not copy the information from the board. "There's plenty of time left for the class. Read it to yourselves over and over again until you're sure you have the gist of each message," he said. "See you next week!"

Then he swiftly grabbed his portfolio from the desk and walked quickly to the door.

"Oh, it's jammed shut!" he said.

The "trick" worked. Got him! It was difficult to conceal our smiles, but he probably thought we were just surprised, too. It was funny.

What would Dr. Acton do now? Boy, were we curious... we were stuck in the room, too!

...We Hope You Enjoyed This FREE Excerpt!

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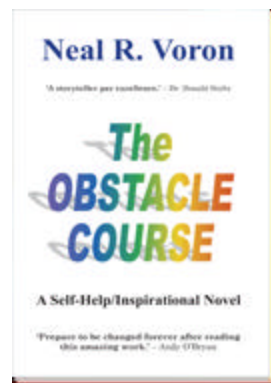
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“*The Obstacle Course*”

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About the Author...

Neal R. Voron, author of *The Obstacle Course*, is a writer, lyricist, and entrepreneur who believes in the power of communications to "make a difference" in people's lives and in society as a whole.

Neal is the president of [Voron Communications](#), Philadelphia, PA, and the co-founder, with Joseph F.M. Pokorny, of [RyKy Records \(tm\)](#). His writings, song lyrics, and creative Internet communications ventures are all part of Voron's efforts to share the benefits of his personal experiences and creative insights with a global audience.

Voron is also the founder of the [Motivation Inspiration Month](#) and [Resolution Kick-Off Day](#) celebrations held in January, and is the developer of [AffiliateMarketingPower.com](#), [LyricSongbooks.com](#), and other web sites.

Neal and his wife, Barbarann, a psychotherapist in private practice, reside in Philadelphia with their two children, Ryan and Kyle.

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