

## Tim Allen

I love to hear stories about how other people influenced someone's life to be more successful. Tim Allen's life is one such story. Few people know this, but Tim Allen (born Timothy Allen Dick in 1953), television and movie star, best-selling author and philanthropist was once jailed on drug charges.

Allen was in prison in Michigan in 1980, when he heard a motivational speaker deliver a message that changed his life. Tim had always wanted to be an entertainer. In fact, in prison he organized a stand-up night so he and the other inmates could enjoy comedy. Of course, he shared his comedy as a part of the program each night.

Tim knew that he wanted to go into comedy, but he had always faced roadblocks that had stopped him. Being incarcerated was another major roadblock to his career--or so he thought. The speaker he heard spoke about goal-setting. He told the audience that success was in their grasp. *The only obstacle they faced was themselves and their own attitudes.* This message hit home with Tim. He realized that *he* was the stumbling block between himself and his life goal.

After his release in 1981, Tim went back to his adopted home of Michigan (he was born in Colorado) and got a job as a graphic artist. By day he would work at his graphic art job, but by night he crafted his stand-up comedy in regional clubs.

One night while performing in Ohio, he noticed something about the audience that was to change his act forever and start him on the road to success. He noticed that most of the men were busy eating steak, drinking beer and not paying much attention to his routine. They would eat and sit back and make grunting noises. Tim started to imitate them to get their attention. It became his famous "AR, AR, AR!" ape-like grunting sound.

He had hit on a winner! The men began to sit up and listen. He started talking about men, their tools and their marriages. Men and women alike loved the act. One night HBO taped his performance and aired it nationally. It brought him overnight fame. Now he was getting calls from big comedy clubs in Los Angeles and all over the country. One call though would send him in a direction he never dreamed of.

The Disney production studios called and wanted to feature him in one of two television shows they had in mind. Amazingly, Tim turned both ideas down. Neither concept majored on his strengths in tool jokes. He proposed a situation comedy based on his humor. It was about a man who stars in a tool show in Detroit with a wife and family. It became the hit show *Home Improvement*.

The program skyrocketed to Number 1 in the ratings right away. It was in a time when most television executives were writing off traditional situation comedies. Tim proved them wrong. He appeared on The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson (a life-long dream fulfilled) and was asked to sit next to Johnny on the sofa after his routine (an honor

bestowed on few first-timers to the show). He even did an episode of *Home Improvement* where he and his television family dealt with drugs to reflect the mishaps in his own life.

Disney wanted to capitalize on his popularity so he was offered the starring role in an upcoming movie about a divorced father who reluctantly takes on the role of Santa Claus to please his son. *The Santa Claus* became a Number 1 hit movie for Christmas. By 1993, Tim was the star of both the Number 1 movie and television program in the country, the winner of The People's Choice Male Entertainer of the Year and the author of the Number 1 book (*Don't Stand Too Close to a Naked Man*) on the New York Times' Bestseller's List.

Tim's contract reflected his success. He was offered the highest sum in the history of television at that date. He starred in Disney's *Toy Story* alongside of Oscar winner, Tom Hanks in 1995 as the voice of "Buzz Lightyear." Many other live action and animation movies followed.

Tim's popularity was at the top in 1997. He was getting over \$1.25 million per episode on Home Improvement. He started his own signature tool line with the proceeds going to children's charity modeled after Paul Newman's condiments example. He was starring in movies, had a hit show and several books that sold millions.

It all almost came tumbling down when he was arrested for DUI the following year. This was a wake-up call to Tim that he was letting his personal life slip into a dangerous area. He went through a program to be free from alcohol. Shortly thereafter, Disney offered him \$3 million per episode. Surprisingly, Tim turned it down. He didn't want the show to run out its welcome and knew when to back away. The show went out in style with a retrospective of past highlights.

In 1999 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, Western Michigan University. That same year, he starred in *Toy Story 2* and *Galaxy Quest* (a take-off on the Star Trek phenomenon). That same year, he separated from his wife, Laura (who had left her landscape architecture career to serve as his agent) of over 15 years. Although his marriage was ending he remained a very devoted and caring father to his daughter, Kathryn. He continues to star in movies and his popularity continues to this day. *Home Improvement* is as much a hit in syndication as it was originally and probably will be for quite some time.

Tim Allen's story is one of triumph over personal demons... a story of succeeding when you believe in yourself... a story of taking advantage of life's opportunities and believing in one's self against the perceived odds. Nothing will change until you change yourself.

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