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Finding success is one thing, keeping it is another. Yuki Hayashi serves up 10 rules for a lifetime of big wins

generation SUCCESS

You're living the high life and you've got the chic condo/front-row seats/AmEx Black Card/frequent flyer miles/insert other envy-inducing perk here to prove it. You're also young enough that career success has come to you before the arrival of any stray greys, crow's feet or yowling babies. How amazing is that?

If you've risen to the top of your chosen field, you join an elite band with the likes of Zac Posen (a marquee designer at the grand old age of 29, he showed his debut signature collection at just 21); Canadian supermodel Coco Rocha (at 21, a catwalk veteran for five years); and Montreal native, Paris-based designer, Rad Hourani (who launched his own label three years ago at age 25 after a successful career as an art director and stylist). Young success is a blessing, but it's not without its challenges.

SUCCESS ISN'T EFFORTLESS

A particular danger: letting it all go to your head. "If self-worth is measured too much from the outside world, and too little from internal elements such as self respect and pride as a result of honest effort, personal or career failure can ensue," warns Carla Fry, a Vancouver-based psychologist. And while success can be gauged by many things—an amazing job, generous financial compensation and an exciting lifestyle—in our celeb-obsessed culture, all too often its litmus test is fame. The problem: "A young success who lacks belief in their own goodness will do almost anything to be in the spotlight, crossing personal boundaries and ignoring personal values to receive external recognition. It's very dangerous for mental health, future success, relationships and professional reputation," says Fry, who's counseled high-achieving young adults working in the arts, business, sports and academics. Tabloids are full of cautionary examples, though the queen bee of pedestal-slipping former youthquakers may be Lindsay Lohan. >

Other challenges phenoms deal with include difficulties scheduling in face time with best buds or relating to longtime friends who are less successful, and resentment and/or indifference from older members of their professional industry. Consider for example, Quebec filmmaker Xavier Dolan, 21, whose debut film, *J'ai Tué Ma Mère* (*I Killed My Mother*), won three prestigious awards at Cannes last year but received only a token nod for best first feature at Canada's film awards, The Genies. One industry insider likened it to being stuck at the "kiddie table" at a family dinner. Don't worry about Dolan, his second film, *Les Amours Imaginaires* (*Heartbeats*), had its world première in official competition at Cannes this spring—the only Canadian flick with the honour.

At the end of the day though, it's the quality of your work and your winning ethic that gets you into the club. If you've got it, you've got it—regardless of how young you are. We spoke to those in the know about what it takes to get—and hold onto—success, and came up with 10 rules of success that can be *your* road map, too... No matter your age.

RULE #1:

Lay the groundwork. Many a time, a bright young thing comes out of nowhere and just takes his or her industry by storm, thanks to his or her inherent, intrinsic brilliance. Yeah right. Here's the secret behind the lore: Nobody actually comes out of nowhere and takes his or her industry by storm. They work unseen and unsung, building skills, contacts and experience, until the day they're ready to, you know, come out of nowhere and take the industry by storm.

Take Tommy Ton, 26, *FLARE*'s street-style shooter, who turned his fashion blog, *JakandJil.com*, into an international tastemaker. The Oakville, Ont.-based photog has been jet-setting around the world on assignment for magazines and major fashion brands after hitting it big in the last couple of years. But his career goes way, way back to age 16, with internships and paid work with designer Wayne Clark and retailer

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Holt Renfrew. Add to that a period studying the business and marketing side of fashion at Toronto's George Brown College, and a self-directed crash course in blogging. “In 2005, I taught myself how to create a website and how to use a digital camera. While working on *JakandJil.com* I also worked at [upscale online retailer] *Vintagecouture.com*, which improved my knowledge about fashion history,” says Ton. Then, and only then, came the Tommy Ton story you know: “In 2007, I took a risk and went to fashion week in London and Paris to photograph people outside the shows,” says Ton. The rest is history, including a regular gig for *FLARE* and fashion-insider site *Style.com*. But it was 10 years in the making.

RULE #2:

Don't take criticism personally. Use criticism to build your career, not undermine your self-esteem. “It's hard, but if you can't take criticism, you shouldn't be in this industry... The sooner you realize that the better,” says model Coco Rocha, who's strutted for Marc Jacobs, Chanel, Jean Paul Gaultier and Prada, and landed on the covers of the industry's top magazines including *FLARE*, *W* and numerous global editions of *Vogue*.

For some Millennials (the generation currently age 18–29), criticism can be hard after a childhood growing up in—and being influenced by—what California-based author Jean Twenge calls the “trophy culture,” in her books *Generation Me* and *The Narcissism Epidemic*. While your parents and old soccer coach may have fêted you for just being you, your colleagues and boss expect a bit more. “Work really hard and try not to think of yourself as special. You need a realistic assessment of your strengths and weaknesses for ongoing success,” says Twenge. Constructive criticism provides that, so get over the sting and find the lesson within like Rocha, who survived headlines earlier this year stating she was too fat for the runway (FYI: she's a wee size 4). Not one to be pushed around, she's challenging industry standards head-on by supporting the CFDA's efforts for education on the warning signs of eating disorders, and to establish an age requirement that will protect young women from unrealistic expectations and the potential onset of anorexia and depression.

RULE #3:

Be hands-on. Whether you're a wunderkind, or someone important's kid—it got Sofia Coppola and Ivanka Trump their starts—build up your credentials so that even if people are surprised by your youth or any lucky breaks, they can't dispute your capabilities.

“When I started [my own label] at 23, I learned from the ground up. I did everything from shipping garments to managing production to meeting with buyers. I went into it full-force and learned about the industry,” says designer Jason Wu, 27, whose profile went global after Michelle Obama wore one of his gown's to the inaugural ball. “I still know how to do every single job in the company. Being a designer is so seldom just about designing and sketching clothes. You have to understand manufacturing, the business side of fashion and know who your customer is.”

RULE #4:

Diversify. Keep the challenges coming, even if you love your main >

gig. Toronto-based Ben Barry, 28, started the Ben Barry Agency, which reps models of diverse sizes, ages, physical abilities and ethnic backgrounds, when he was 14 to find work for a size-12, aspiring-model friend. Fifteen years later, business is booming with commercial, advertising and select runway work. In between running the agency, Barry's published a book (*Fashioning Reality: A New Generation of Entrepreneurship*), been fêted by Oprah herself, earned a BA in Women's Studies at the University of Toronto, and a master's degree from Judge Business School at Cambridge University, where he's currently working toward a PhD.

"You can't put all your eggs in one basket. It's important to diversify how you develop your strengths, fulfill your passions, and achieve your goals. If one success fails tomorrow, your professional world won't come crashing down because you'll still have more activities to leverage, focus upon and develop," says Barry.

"Who wants to do the same thing [all the time]?" agrees Rocha, who recently added fashion reporter for *ET Canada*, modelinia.com correspondent and designer of her own clothing line, Rococo, to her résumé.

RULE #5:

Chart your own success. Millennials define success differently than the status-driven cultural norm. According to a recent survey by the U.S. Pew Research Center, Millennials prioritize their future marriage, parenthood and helping others over having a high-paying career. For example, former *FLARE* intern (and hence, one-time fashion-obsessed) Ashton Lawrence, 23, traded in a potential career in couture to work for Right to Play, a charity committed to achieving better lives for children in underdeveloped countries with the physical, mental and spiritual power of sport. Love and personal freedom (a three-week surfing and voluntourism jaunt in Costa Rica? Why not?!) are two possible definitions of success with wider-reaching benefits than a status car or prestigious address, so keep your eye on the goals that would make you feel successful.

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RULE #6:

Take care of yourself. Among her high-achieving patients, Fry's observed a commitment to personal health. "Successful young people realize that 3.5 hours of sleep per night, a diet of lattes and crackers, and lack of physical activity cannot be sustained for long. They tend, on average, to get enough sleep, nutrition, water and exercise to avoid premature burn-out," says Fry. This is a lifestyle Rx to follow whether you're 18 or 38.

RULE #7:

Be positive. Reality TV may be full of sneering competitiveness but in real life, people respect a non-bitchy successful person more than a bitchy one. "If you're going to be negative, that's when the battle starts and people start taking sides. If you're the positive person, everyone's going to be like, 'Wow, she definitely stood up [for herself] but she was sweet about it,'" says Rocha.

RULE #8:

Bounce back. Long-term success is as much about riding out lows as capitalizing on highs. "Success requires an ability to deal with adversity and to get back to the task at hand as quickly and with as few psychological wounds as possible," says Fry. "Resilient young people tend to take things in stride, hold less grudges, be less fixated on

failures, and have their 'eyes back on the prize' quicker and with a clearer vision than those who achieve less in their field," she notes. So you lost that big account/got a bad review/fell on your face instead of finding another in your series of victories. It's done. Dust off your Louboutins and haul yourself back up.

RULE #9:

Cultivate a support network. "It's important to surround yourself with people outside of your work—people who value you for you. I'm fortunate to still have my two best friends since grade one," says Barry. "While we talk about our successes, they're not the foundation of why we love and respect each other. If we lose what made us professionally successful, we still know who we are."

Your inner circle of friends keeps you grounded. Every highflier needs peeps who don't have a vested interest in her being the flavour of the month. Picture Millennial "it" girls who became tabloid train wrecks at some point or another—Lindsay, Britney and Heidi—and an entourage of users, abusers and enablers comes to mind.

RULE #10:

Follow your passion. This is a no-brainer but one worth remembering if you're considering going into an industry just because it seems "safe" or "recession-proof." Many people feel that they can only truly excel at something they love. "My goal was to convince the fashion world to include the women I considered beautiful—women of all sizes, ages, backgrounds—in magazines and on runways. Making a profit was the furthest objective from my mind," says Barry, who extended his mission into his academic research and stints as chair of the Toronto Fashion Incubator and on the board of directors for the Canadian Foundation of Women's Health. As for Ton, the first time he started shooting his from-the-street fashion week photos, he was hooked: "I became instantly addicted, and from that moment on, I knew I had to be a part of the insanity." So find your own insanity, it's your surest path to success. —with files from Moshia Lundström Halbert and Lisa Tant