

Victory Over Self

As a young boy, Fritz wanted nothing more than to play the violin. He listened with rapt attention to violin music. His parents encouraged his interest by paying for him to have lessons. Fritz didn't make as much progress as they had hoped he would, however, and after a few years, he eventually quit the lessons.

Over the next several years, through college and young adulthood, Fritz studied medicine, but he failed to complete medical school. He joined the army, and couldn't get a promotion. He tried and quit many other pursuits. Realizing that the little bit of success he had enjoyed in life had been related to the violin, he went back to his violin instructor and said, "I want to play."

She responded: "Fine. I'll take you back as a student, but only if you acquire the irreplaceable quality that is necessary for you to become a great violinist. You must exhibit undefeatable determination."

This time, Fritz Kreisler persevered in his pursuit of music – the first time he had persevered in anything he had attempted – and eventually Carnegie Hall was filled with his music. By 1910, the Austrian had become the leading young violin virtuoso of his day. Kreisler enjoyed an enormous, and deserved, popularity, which was reinforced by his own numerous short, tuneful compositions for the instrument of which he was such a master.

What is the lesson here? We improve ourselves by victories over our self. There will be contests, and we must win.

--Beecher Hunter