
1

Self-Discipline Is Key

EDWARD JAMES OLMOS

Actor, Director, and Community Activist

*Maintaining self-discipline requires avoiding negative influences
and focusing on succeeding at what is right for right now.*

Edward James Olmos remembers his grandfather walking him to Belvedere Elementary on the first day of school and reading to him what was written on the archway they walked under: “If it isn’t said in English, it isn’t worth saying at all.” This insensitive statement didn’t discourage Spanish-speaking Olmos. Instead, it empowered him to be proud of his roots and never forget who he is.

Olmos was born on February 24, 1947, and was raised in an underprivileged area of East Los Angeles, California. His father had left Mexico City, Mexico, at a young age, with nothing more than a sixth-grade education. After settling in Los Angeles, his father beat the odds and returned to school, proudly earning his high school diploma. Olmos’ mother left school after the eighth grade, but she, too, returned to school to complete her education after her children were grown. Education was always an important goal for the Olmos family.

The Olmos believed their children should be involved in sports as well, as a means of staying out of trouble and developing self-discipline. Edward James and his father believed he would become a professional ball player one day, but when he was fifteen years old, he changed his

BUILDING THE LATINO FUTURE

mind about his career goal. Olmos decided he wanted to become a singer and dancer. His family respected his choice and supported his decision. By the time he graduated from high school, Olmos and his band, Pacific Ocean, was playing regular engagements at the top nightclubs in Los Angeles.

“To maintain self-discipline, remind yourself to avoid distractions at work or play.”

Edward James Olmos realized early on that self-discipline is a key element of success. Succeeding in Hollywood, as in any industry, takes focus and determination. Self-discipline provides focus and direction, but it is self-generated; it is up to an individual to focus on his or her goals. Distractions are inevitable in busy lifestyles, but the key to self-discipline is staying composed and listening to one’s inner voice, always being cognizant that the distractions of one’s life can cause setbacks, and that being disciplined is the key to staying on track.

Olmos remembers the inspiration he received from his parents and grandparents. They told him that he was capable of succeeding at anything he set his mind to. And so he set his mind to being successful in Hollywood. It takes focus and discipline to accomplish what Olmos has in the film industry. Edward James Olmos has become a great star, with such films as *Blade Runner*, *Stand and Deliver*, *Mi Familia*, and *Selena*, and the TV series, *Battlestar Galactica*, to his credit.

“Create your goal, find the discipline, and stay on track.”
