

THE SECRET TO

LIVING A

LIFE

OF

PURPOSE

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OVERCOME YOUR CHALLENGES
AND LIVE A LIFE OF PRODUCTI
VITY, PASSION, PEACE AND
PROFIT!

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INTRODUCTION



Hello there. I am so glad that you're about to dive into this book. It's packed with nuggets about mindset and mental toughness that I know you'll find useful no matter where you're coming from and whether you are:

- A leader or entrepreneur looking for that extra edge
- Ready to up your game to be a leader someday
- A leader in faith wanting to guide your community
- A business owner wanting to orient to purpose and profit
- Finding yourself in a season of personal or professional struggle

But even more exciting to me than what my book contains is the open mind you bring to reading it. I've built a career out of sharing my message that **adversity creates purpose**. Being ready to hear the message is the first step in finding purpose and creating change. Here's what awaits you. In the following sections, you'll read about grit, growth mindset, resilience, and purpose. I share insights from thought leaders, recent research, and my own experience. At the end, you'll find three steps you can take now to start building your own mental toughness and tap into your purpose. Happy reading.

ON GRIT

Why do some people succeed in business, athletics, school, or other endeavors? Why do others fail?

Often, we assume that those who excel do so because of their talents and intelligence. Unfortunately, this is a false assumption. Through observations and studies, we have discovered that it's not always the most talented or the smartest who become the most successful. Sure, talent and smarts can play a role in helping you achieve your goals in life, but there is another factor that sustains top achievers and urges them through life's obstacles to their destinations:

mental toughness.

In fact, several studies suggest that mental toughness accounts for up to 70% of people's success, while talent or intelligence account for a meager 30%.

So, what is mental toughness?

According to Angela Duckworth,

Harvard University psychologist and thought leader on resilience, mental toughness—or what she calls grit—can be defined as “perseverance and passion for long-term goals.” In her bestselling book *Grit*, she makes the compelling case for mental toughness as the “secret sauce” pumping through the veins of successful people.

Duckworth was able to discover that on average, mentally tough people have more self-control, and as a result, they are more likely to persevere until they've reached their goals. She conducted a social experiment, and I'd like to share the results with you. The subject of her study was the US military, and she examined how mental toughness plays a vital role in determining which cadets persist in their studies at the US Military Academy, West Point, and which drop out.



Each year, approximately 1,300 cadets join the entering class. A cadet's first year in the Academy often involves them taking part in and completing a series of brutal drills. This summer initiation program is known internally as "Beast Barracks." These drills and exercises are deliberately engineered to test the mental, physical, and emotional abilities of the cadets.

The natural assumption to make would be that only the most physically fit cadets would survive this experience. However, the results of this study revealed otherwise. Duckworth discovered the cadets that made it through the "Beast Barracks" were not the smartest, nor were they the most physically fit. The cadets that passed were often the most gritty, resilient, and persistent.

It was discovered that grittier cadets were 60% more likely to finish the "Beast Barracks" experience than their colleagues. The results of this study show that mental toughness and grit play a much larger role in human success than intelligence does. Aside from the importance of grit in the military, Duckworth and other researchers have discovered that it is also a critical success factor in other areas of life.

For example, it has been discovered that those who win competitions like national spelling bees do so not because of their high IQ, but because of their grit or desire to win. In college, it is grit that determines the students who graduate, and the students who drop out after their first year.

Furthermore, the students who graduate at the top of their class are often not those who had the highest SAT scores but are students with the most grit. Often, when we examine top performers in different industries, they are not always the best and brightest in their field; they are usually people who consistently put in tremendous effort towards achieving their long-term goals. Even when we look at billionaires, many are not the most intelligent in their respective industry, and many do not have college degrees. But because grit and mental toughness, they have been able to find remarkable success.

Grit can be defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals.



ON GROWTH MINDSET

People with mental toughness have a unique perspective. Because of this perspective and their willingness to be challenged, they stick to and often achieve their goals.

Why is this? Research points to the power of our underlying beliefs about our intelligence and abilities, especially in the face of challenges that stretch these qualities.

Psychologist Carol Dweck coined the terms **fixed mindset** and **growth mindset** more than 20 years ago. A person with a fixed mindset believes that human qualities—like intelligence and ability—are stable and don't grow or change in meaningful ways. But a person with a growth mindset has quite a different perspective, believing that human capacity can be improved with effort. A person with a growth mindset accepts that challenges and obstacles are a natural part of learning.

Consider how powerful that mindset can be. If you accept—even expect—that challenges and obstacles will be part of the process of improving your abilities, then you're also willing to accept that pain is temporary and worth the success to come. You're driven less by instant gratification and more by the progress you make toward long-term goals. Your motivation comes from your ability to stay the course.

Growth mindset is part of mental toughness. It helps you believe that you can not only face the new challenges that lie ahead, you can prevail over them to achieve your long-term goal.

Mentally tough people take risks, fail, and learn from their experience.



ON RESILIENCE

If grit is the secret sauce and growth mindset is about belief, resilience is our source of mental strength. When faced with tragedy, adversity or stress, your resilience is about how easily and quickly you can adapt. If you are a very resilient person, you will “bounce back”; if you’re not as resilient, you could end up feeling stuck in negative patterns as you struggle.

We all have resilience. It’s not something we’re born with, it’s a skill we can build and put to good use in life. Resilience doesn’t mean that you’re not going to feel the intensity of your problem or the grief and stress of adversity. Resilience doesn’t eliminate stress.

What it does do is help you cope. Being resilient will help you find ways of dealing with adversity more quickly than others. You are more likely to accept setbacks and failures as part of the process, and you are less likely to feel overwhelmed when you are faced with adversity.





Some people are born with personalities that may help them have more natural resilience than others. But that doesn't mean you can't build your own capacity for resilience.

As with any skill, building it takes practice.

One of the easiest ways to begin to practice resilience is to reframe how you think about a

problem. Instead of reacting negatively the next time an obstacle comes your way, think about what it offers you. Consider it a growth opportunity. Focus on the first small step you can take rather than dismissing it as something you can't possibly solve.

Psychologists call *resilience* the ability to cope with problems or setbacks while keeping your cool.



ADVERSITY CREATES PURPOSE

By this point, we've talked about grit and mental toughness, growth mindset, and resilience. We've acknowledged these are all activated and strengthened when we are presented with adversity.

Let me tie it all together, though. As humans, we're programmed to not want adversity. Adversity is difficult. It challenges us. It's painful. It's when the going gets really tough. But it's also where we find our purpose. I believe that pain is your passport. Only when facing adversity, only in pain, can you find the clarity to know how much achieving your goals matters to you. Embracing life's difficult times can help you find the passion and resilience that carry you to a new destination.

I know, because that is how I got here. At age 11, I learned that my parents were HIV-positive. I went through the heartbreak of their divorce. By age 16, I had lost them both to AIDs, and I was one of the first children in the US to lose both my parents to this disease. I made choices and found ways to blunt my pain before I embraced it as my opportunity to make something out of my life.

Pain can be as defined in as many ways as there are people. What is painful for me is not the same as what is painful for you. What matters though, is what you make of it. You can be more, achieve more, and endure more than you've ever thought possible when you are willing to face adversity and tap into your own capacity for mental toughness.

Adversity
Creates
Purpose



THREE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

So, where do you begin? What first steps can you take to turn adversity into purpose?



1.

CHOOSE TO FACE ADVERSITY HEAD-ON.

The first step is to understand that avoidance has a cost. Avoiding certain activities or failing to look reality full in the face may relieve short-term discomfort, but it isn't a profitable long-term strategy. To put it another way, trying to escape pain has very short-term benefits but carries very long-term costs! Choose to embrace the pain or stress instead of running away! Understand that focusing on short-term outcomes will be a barrier to accomplishing long-term goals of productivity, passion & peace.



2.

GET TO KNOW YOURSELF.

Building more mental toughness starts by understanding where you are right now. What is the gap between the life you're living and the one you want? What separates you from your goals? Be specific. Be observant. Write down where you want to go, because the act of writing can strengthen your commitment to your longer-term goals.



3.

PRACTICE REFRAMING YOUR THOUGHTS.

We are what we tell ourselves. You must never underestimate the power of positive self-talk. Tune into the stream of thoughts inside your own head. When you find yourself on a negative loop, flip the script. Instead of dwelling on what happened and what you could have done better, focus on what you can take from the experience and on what you can learn.

In every area of life, from education to career, mental toughness and perseverance predict your level of success. Overcoming the death of both of my parents to AIDS before the age of 16 gifted me with grit. Overcoming such adversity has helped me earn the reputation as an expert on how to face life's toughest challenges and use adversity to your advantage.

My story of turning pain into purpose has been featured on many media outlets including ESPN, The Huffington Post, The New York Daily News, Good Day Atlanta, and many more. If you would like to learn more about how you can help those you lead, teach or parent to become more resilient, mentally tough, and grittier, I would love to help! Through coaching, consulting, workshops, keynote speaking and a new digital Adversity Creates Purpose course, I teach millennials and those that lead them techniques proven to increase GRIT!





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