RUBICON PERFORMANCE SYSTEMS

THE TRAINING MANUAL



P5

Prior Preparation, Planning and Practice = Performance

ALEA IACTA EST

AMAT VICTORIA CURAM

VICTORY LOVES PREPARATION

STEVE MORELAND

FOUNDER · RUBICON

Prior Preparation, Planning and Practice = Performance

Since Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon River in northern Italy, the word Rubicon has stood for one thing:

CROSSING A POINT OF NO RETURN.

P5 is much more than getting your bearings in life. It is crossing a point of no return that denies you the luxury of going back to your familiar mediocrity. In its place you will build the grit and the life-navigation skills to become meaningful, and possibly legendary.

AMAT VICTORIA CURAM

VICTORY LOVES PREPARATION

GRADUATES OF THIS LEVEL EARN THE RANK OF



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WHERE P5 COMES FROM

I ORIGIN | THEORY | APPLICATION

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.

– ARISTOTLE

ORIGIN

After nearly three decades of research, with both victories and defeats, my journey into the psychology of human performance finally became clear. What I needed was a navigation tool, something to keep my bearing locked on what the ancient Greeks called *logos*, or "meaning."

It was first called *Kaizen Do*, "the way of continuous improvement." The Compass™ is built to help you discover your bearing, understand your bearing, and then keep your bearing. That is why its logo has four points, like the four directions on a compass.

From this new way of organizing my thoughts and feelings came the P5 curriculum. It focuses on how the Best succeed, and why. Together with its tactical partner, IN|CODE, it forms the life performance system called Rubicon.

THEORY

"Failing to plan is planning to fail." I had heard it many times. But planning to go *where*? When? How? And why? Old-school planning breaks down in a world full of distractions.

Then it hit me. All the greats share something. Their results came from their inner code: their passions, thoughts, attitudes and values. That code lets them rise above mediocrity and become the Best. Prior preparation, planning and practice equal performance. It works like software inside a computer: it's the code, stupid!

P5 IS TRAINING TO DELIBERATELY CAUSE GOOD OUTCOMES THAT WOULD NOT HAPPEN OTHERWISE.

P5 training is built on that answer. We copy the strategies of the Best and model their tactics. When you start *acting* as if you're the Best, you'll start *believing* you're the Best. And when you start believing, you will *become* the Best!

APPLICATION

The Compass is the core of this recoding. It only works if your answers are crystal clear. Used every week, it teaches you that your outward behavior comes from your inner responses. Those responses are the domino effect of decades spent copying the thinking and attitudes of low-performing peers and idols. They have limited your potential.

So to fix the bad code, we go inside, into our identity. We take inventory of where we're lacking, hack the code of the Best, and simply import it.

Aiming your life toward a "Personal Legend," the words on your gravestone, is not meant to be morbid. Recoding teaches you to face what once scared you, head-on, and gets you ready for whatever comes. Hence the Latin motto: Amat Victoria Curam, "victory loves preparation."

Navigating by a Compass keeps us on course. Next-Actions steer us to Objectives. Objectives lead us to a major Goal. And the Goal keeps us aligned with our Personal Legend. This prepares us to do what others won't, so we can accomplish what others can't.

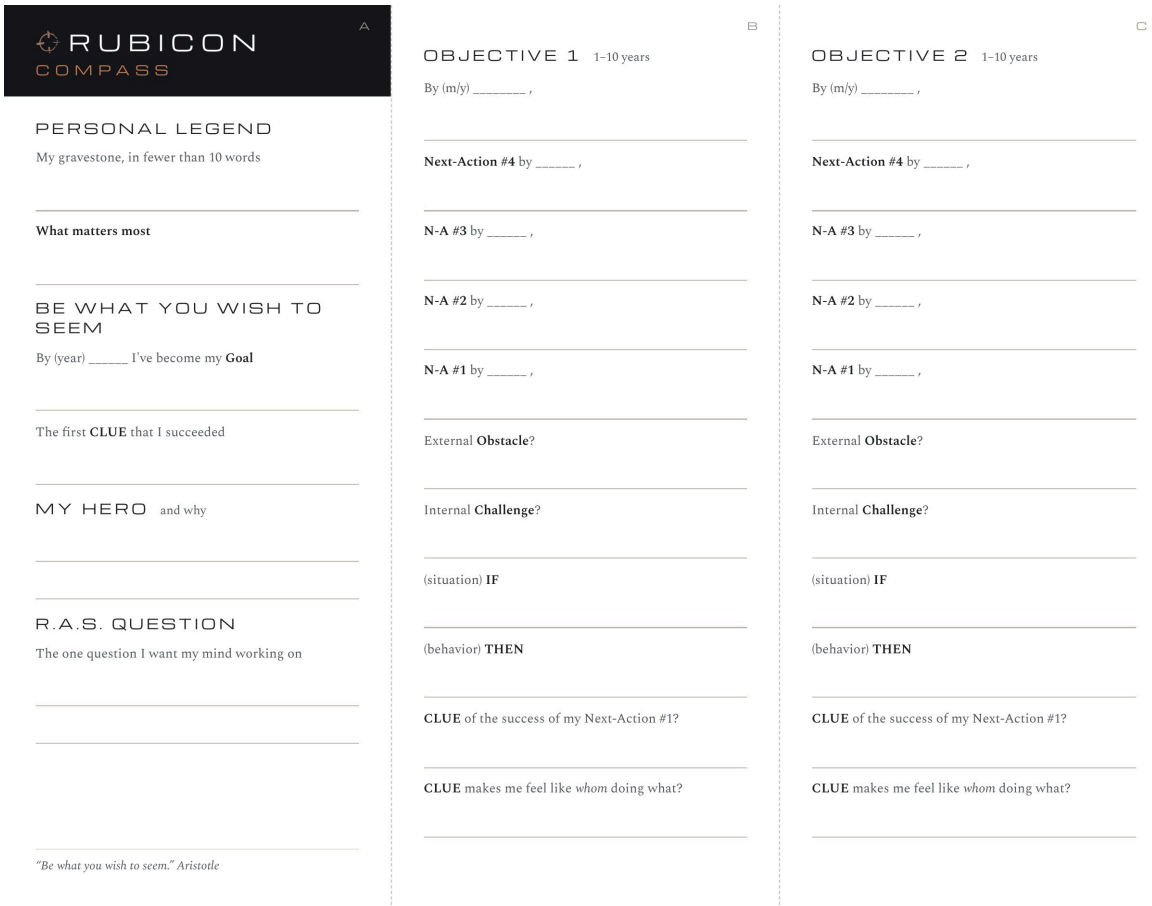
II

POCKET-TOOL LAYOUT

Compass™ Operating Instructions

Quality questions yield quality answers.

– RUBICON



THE COMPASS CARD, FRONT SIDE. PANELS A, B AND C.

Orientation

The Compass is a two-sided card. The outside is divided into six panels, marked A through F along the centerline. Fold it in half crossways so only the outside panels A–F show. With panels D, E and F facing you, fold the FC panel over the EB panel. Then fold DA over FC. You

should now see panel A on top, with panel B on the back. The inside will be explained later.

PANEL A: IDENTITY AWARENESS

1. **Personal Legend.** The ten words on your gravestone that capture your life's *logos*. *What Matters Most* should become obvious.
2. **My Goal.** In 10+ years, who will I be? Why not become something legendary? "CLUE" is an IN|CODE exercise that teaches you to act as if you have already succeeded.
3. **Identity awareness** (panels A and F):
   - A. Who you want to be like: your Hero.
   - B. Self-talk: the conversation that runs inside your head 24/7/365.
   - C. What are you teaching yourself? By default, you are perfecting your mediocrity.

PANEL B: INICODE TECHNIQUES

1. **Objectives and Next-Actions.** These are things you *do*. Next-Actions take less than a year. Objectives take 1 to 10 years. (Example: "By mm/dd/yyyy, I will finish project X.")
2. **Obstacle.** What's blocking me from the *outside*? (Like needing a license for a job.)
3. **Challenge.** What's stopping me on the *inside*? (Fear, or just plain laziness.)
4. **If / Then.** Installing pre-designed code. *If* (situation: I'm tempted to drive after drinking), *then* (behavior: I picture my son crying at my funeral, feeling abandoned).
5. **CLUE.** An IN|CODE exercise for acting as if you've already succeeded. Write down how the imagined moment makes you feel.

PANEL C

Same as Panel B, for your second Objective.

PANEL D: INICODE TECHNIQUES

1. **Questions** tune your mind to your limitless potential.
2. **Code Vault.** Write down what hit you hardest from this week's Code Vault selection.

PANEL E: RAPPORT TECHNIQUES

A quick reference you can apply fast and memorize easily.

PANEL F: IDENTITY AWARENESS

1. **Motto.** What phrase inspires you?
2. **Summits.** Paint word-pictures of your peak days and peak performances to look forward to.
3. **Values.** Codes that instruct you like software, guiding your behavior (honesty, for example).
4. **Data inputs.** Notice what you let into your imagination. It affects your mental fitness, and it shows up in your behavior.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **No FEAR:** *F*antasized *E*xpectations *A*ppearing *R*eal. If you're not on the edge, you're taking up too much space!
2. **Quality questions yield quality answers.** Brutal self-honesty produces breakthroughs!
3. **The limited space forces clarity.** Get crystal!
4. **This is your adventure:** a PΛTH to a legendary life!

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

III Personal Legend

What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.

– T. S. ELIOT

Become the creator of your Personal Legend! Your actions today shape your destiny. And when Fate takes us from this world, the words on our gravestone stand for what our life meant.

In Greek, what our life meant is called *logos*. The epitaph is a symbol of what mattered most: how we lived, and what, if anything, we sacrificed for. It is the metaphor our life stood for.

That is why defining your Personal Legend is vital to your bearing. It is the very reason the four-pointed logo looks like a Compass. When you begin with the end in mind, you get to choose a bearing whose destination stands for your *logos*: what is meaningful to you.



Think about the difference between a light bulb and a laser. They use the same energy, but they produce very different results. One spreads out. The other concentrates. "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" is how Thoreau saw people who drift without aim. A Personal Legend is the difference.

That is why we live by this maxim: **"Live for something, or die for nothing!"**

To discover your *logos*, close your eyes and see yourself in the future, standing beside your gravestone. Now think about what you want it to say to the people who visit. Ask yourself: *"What did my life stand for that was worthy of being carved in stone?"*

Keep your epitaph to 10 words or fewer. Make it crystal. Try turning your life into a metaphor, like a katana, a work of art or a game, and use strong words like *pioneering, brilliant, relentless, extraordinary* or *remarkable*. For guidance, look at how our ancestors honored a Personal Legend:

> *Do not concern yourself with immortality until you've first lived a life worthy of remembering.*
>
> BRUCE LEE

> *"Deeds, in themselves, are worthless, unless performed for a higher purpose.*
>
> PELAGIUS

YOUR TURN: YOUR PERSONAL LEGEND

In 10 words or fewer, what should your gravestone say?

Then copy it onto Panel A of your Compass.

Premeditatio Malorum

"The premeditation of evils" was an ancient Stoic practice. Today we might call it a pre-mortem. You picture what could go wrong before it happens. The result? Ambitious plans stop failing for reasons that could have been prevented.

To conquer the paralyzing fear called death, the philosopher Lucretius (c. 99–55 BC) used a unique exercise: he imagined his own gravestone. Then he asked two questions. *What if I lived well? What if I did not?* These questions triggered *prosoche*: the shift from drifting without aim to living with purpose and full attention.

The Beautiful Death

In ancient Sparta (c. 500 BC), only soldiers were allowed a gravestone. And a soldier earned one only if he was worthy of being remembered. What made him worthy? That he had bravely given his life in combat. Nothing else mattered.

IV The Bottleneck

HOW DO THE BEST PRODUCE 20 TIMES MORE THAN MOST?

The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.

– ALBERT EINSTEIN

Many people want a proven way to improve their lives. They dream of giving their children a better education, opening their own business, seeing the world, and retiring with dignity. You could argue that few make the sacrifices it takes. But maybe most people simply don't understand the riddle of the bottleneck:

Define the outcome, measure capacity, analyze risk, improve performance and control effort. This process is called **DMAIC**, and we will put it to work throughout this course.

Define your outcome

Defining your outcome tells you what matters most to you. When you begin with the end in mind, you see the big picture, from 30,000 feet instead of 300. From up there you realize it will take more than mechanics (the "how"). It will take a major cause to justify the risks (the "why"). The equation for success is **95% why and 5% how.**

DEFINE
your outcome

MEASURE
your capacity

ANALYZE
the risks

IMPROVE
your performance

CONTROL
your effort

> *All courses of action are risky, so prudence is not in avoiding danger (it's impossible), but calculating risk and acting decisively. Make mistakes of ambition and not mistakes of sloth. Develop the strength to do bold things.*
>
> NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

Measure your capacity

Measuring your capacity means using a Machiavellian mindset the right way. You must be willing to give up good to get to great, the same way you learn to ignore the urgent to do what is necessary. The Best always find some kind of edge, such as measuring their capacity in a new way that could lead to a breakthrough.

The truth is, success is seldom about happy endings. More often it is about limiting the damage and keeping emotional triage to a minimum. Often it means making the best decision you can, still being wrong… and not blaming anyone. You cannot be the Best until you've lost.

Analyze the risks

To analyze the risks around you, compare your situation with something other than the status quo: doing more of the same and expecting a different result. Look at your challenge in the light of something better (or at least different), and you will reach a EUREKA!

That could mean asking for input from unusual places. W. Edwards Deming did this while teaching his revolutionary idea, kaizen. He listened to assembly-line workers, who knew things the top executives didn't. Quality and output went up through mutual respect, real team spirit and loyalty both ways.

Improve your performance

Ask yourself: what is the difference between the person who earns $50,000 a year and the one who earns $1,000,000? Does he need less sleep? Does he not have to eat? Did he come from the right family or grow up in a wealthy zip code? Let's be real. No one gets 20 times more hours in a day. No one has a 20-fold advantage from IQ, family or education, or from working 20 times harder! **That is the bottleneck.**

Control your effort

Control is about effort, measured as real value: how much you perform in a set amount of time while carrying risk.

The solution is to increase your capacity. That means your ability to handle more risk, uncertainty and change, combined with your ability to act correctly under pressure. It is not how hard you can hit or how smart you are. It is performing the common under uncommon conditions: how hard you can get hit (by Fate)… and keep moving forward!

V

THE 10/80/10 RULE

The Path

Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path, and leave a trail.

– RALPH WALDO EMERSON

John Leach, author of *Survival Psychology*, the bible on survival, is a world-renowned military survival expert. His 10/80/10 ratio describes how any group behaves in a crisis: 10% act like zeroes, 10% act like heroes, and the rest freeze. The difference, Leach says, is preparing when others won't.

The same split applies to every group in life: 10% worthless, 10% the Best, and the majority in between. So how do we stop settling for a tolerable, comfortable and unfulfilling life?

> *Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly.*
>
> ROBERT F. KENNEDY

One, you have to become sick and tired of being the sick, the lame and the lazy! **Two,** change rarely happens without enduring extreme pain. You can't choose a life of comfortable sameness and expect to be the Best. Save your time and get crystal about this, here and now!

Three, to become like the Best, simply copy them! When Alexander was 13, Aristotle taught him something unusual: *"Be what you wish to seem."* It meant acting as if you had already become your goal. You start by hacking the inner code of the Best, then import how they think. You mirror their code.

We call it IN|CODE. Hacking starts with weekly strategic check-ins on your Compass. Rate each one honestly:

- ☐ the valor of my hero?
- ☐ the worth of my mentor?
- ☐ the rigor of my ongoing schooling?
- ☐ the quality of my 5 closest peers?
- ☐ the size of the sacrifices I've made?
- ☐ the grade of my fitness?
- ☐ the merit of my greatest defeat?
- ☐ the rank of my enemy?

People fail for simple reasons: (1) their hero has no valor, (2) their peers are average at best, (3) they never train and expect things to happen without effort, or (4) they are afraid of defeat. If you fail to plan to achieve, you land in the average majority by default.

> *It is not the critic who counts... The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena... who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.*
>
> THEODORE ROOSEVELT

That often leads to an addiction of some kind. Addictions are a way of hiding: from pressure, from responsibility, from reality. They become a substitute experience that numbs the pain of failing to "be what we wish to seem," or of not doing what we truly love.

Change begins the moment we decide to face what we fear! It is finishing the task when everything goes against you. It is coming up with last-minute answers to impossible problems. It is being your own hero, first.

"The coward never begins, and the weak die along the way." That is Fate testing us. And now she's asking you: *"What does it take to stop you?"*

Becoming the Best is doing whatever it takes, the blood, sweat and tears, to learn what others won't, so you can do what others can't!

YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE

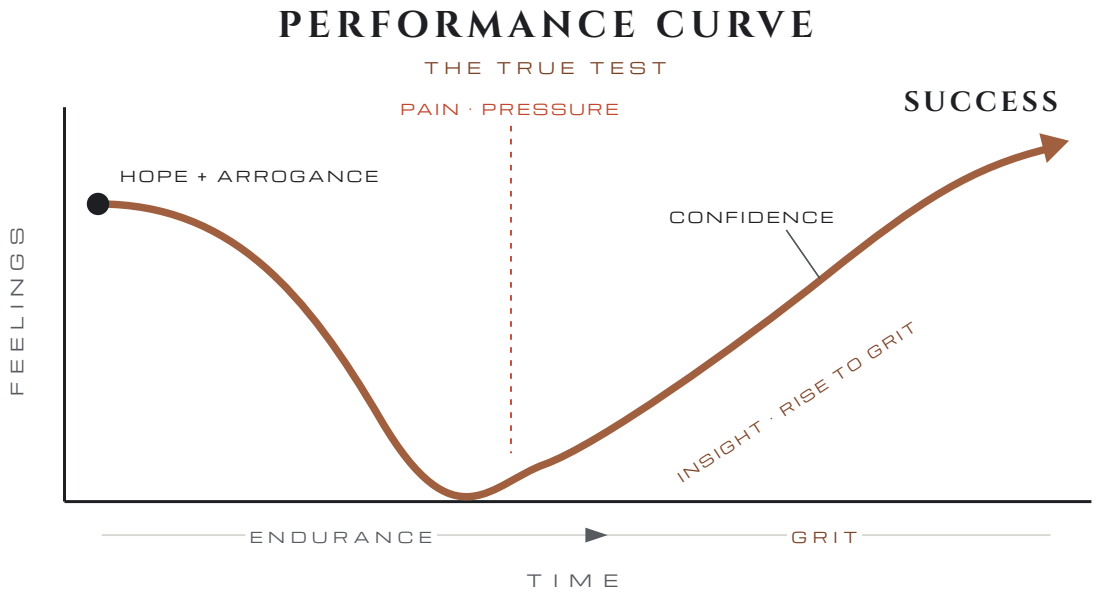
TRAIN HARDER
DARE GREATLY
DIE VALIANTLY

VI PERFORMANCE CURVE

VINCIT QUI PATITUR · HE CONQUERS WHO PERSEVERES

Aut viam inveniam aut faciam. I will find a way, or I will make one!

– HANNIBAL



ENDURANCE → GRIT

Every new venture starts with emotional highs, often along with an unrealistic hope that the path to success will be easy. But the newness wears off fast. Over time, disruptions build painful pressure. They steal our attention and pull us off course from our Personal Legend.

These disruptions come in many forms, and little by little they wear away our momentum. They start inside, with a sneaky whisper: a negative thought that grows into pessimism. It wears on us until the final blow lands, the jeers of our peers: *"What are you doing...?"*

> *Fortitudine vincimus. By endurance we conquer!*
>
> SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON

True, success is doing what others won't. It sounds easy, but thinking against the crowd takes grit. It's the gut feeling behind this idea: **"Victory is not how hard you can hit. It's how hard you can get hit, and keep moving forward."**

STOP AND ANSWER THESE

Do you make excuses? Quit? Claim that a defeat is the end of the fight? Or do you rise, and rise, and rise again? How do you respond to exhaustion? Deeper still, how much hardship can you take? What will you sacrifice to win?

Be honest. Your answers are the key to success.

Failing because you buckled under pressure is not the same as refusing to stay down. That kind of performance under pressure has a name:

> *What you feel doesn't matter in the end; it's what you do that makes you brave.*
>
> ANDRE AGASSI

GRIT: "PERFORMING THE COMMON UNDER UNCOMMON CONDITIONS."

It takes a strange kind of craziness, mixed with a legend-driven purpose, to go where most people tremble. But Fate takes notice of the few who pay in their own blood, sweat and tears. Eventually she calms the blood-stained hurricane and rewards those who dare greatly with a gift:

> *The real test comes when all your strength is fled and you must produce victory on grit alone.*
>
> JOHN ELDREDGE

INSIGHT: "LIFE IS A TEST. THE ANSWERS COME LATER!"

In this maze, some survive and resist. And rise! And a rare few even reach their goal. We wrongly call that talent. It's simply refusing to let anything stop us!

You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face... You must do the thing you think you cannot do.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

There is no talent. There is pressure.

ALFRED ADLER

VII

WHO AM I? WHO AM I BECOMING? HOW DO I BECOME THE BEST?

Identity

Image is everything.

– ANDRE AGASSI

Successful strategists prepare by learning about (1) their opponent, (2) their environment and, most important, (3) themselves. In *The Art of War*, the undefeated Chinese general Sun Tzu wrote: "Know yourself and know your enemy, and you need not fear the outcome..."

It's no coincidence that in the same era (around 500 BC), "Know thyself" was the motto of Socrates, the father of Western philosophy. Our image of ourselves is our identity... and it means everything.

> *The greatest revolution of our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.*
>
> WILLIAM JAMES

Think about this: if our default destiny comes from how we react to life's challenges on the outside, then

by changing how we respond on the inside, don't we have the power to change our destiny? It all comes back to image. How we see ourselves inside directly shapes how we act outside.

Identity Awareness

Identity is not what other people recognize as "you": your style (clothes, hair, glasses), the way you talk (vocabulary, phrasing, tone) or your body language (gestures, posture, manner). Identity is the *cause* of all that. It is why we act the way we do: our core code for interpreting what we believe is reality.

> *If we continue to do what we have always done, which is what everyone else is doing, we will continue to get the same unsatisfactory results.*
>
> ELI GOLDRATT

Asking yourself "Who am I?" and "Who do I want to be?" sets off a domino effect that starts your identity awareness. Here's a question. Are you the thoughts running through your mind, telling you you're great, horrible, the best, the worst? If so, prove you're in control: try to stop them. Awareness is the "aha" moment when you realize you're not.

> *We are where we are, and what we are, because of our daily habits.*
>
> NAPOLEON HILL

We run on unconscious lines of code. They come from (1) what we've learned by watching and reasoning, but more often from (2) behavior we copied from others: friends, parents, teachers and so on. This code is the root of our automatic, habitual responses.

> *You are today where your thoughts have brought you. You will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you.*
>
> JAMES ALLEN

How Can I Become Better, and Eventually the Best?

The hack: look at the area you want to improve. Then find the replacement code from one of the Best (see the Code Vault) who has a better track record. Importing their beliefs follows what Aristotle taught: copy them! *"Be what you wish to seem."*



OUTSIDE AND INSIDE: HOW THE CODE BECOMES YOUR LEGEND

All of this happens in the processor called **imagination**, shown in the graphic. Like a computer and its programs, you see the end result first.

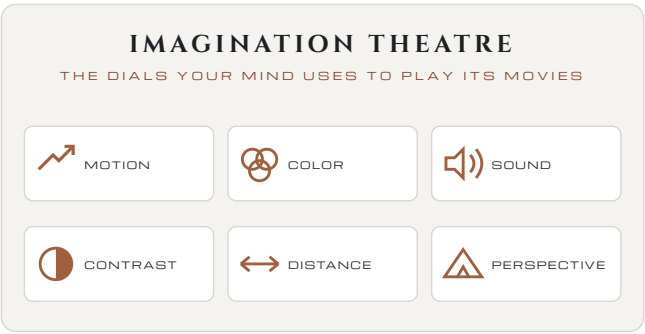
Man does not simply exist but always decides what his existence will be, what he will become the next moment. By the same token, every human being has the freedom to change at any instant.

VIKTOR FRANKL

Character comes from our habits. **Habits** are routine, unconscious behavior. **Conduct** is deliberate behavior that comes from our inner **Values**: a set of learned rules. Beneath values sit **Attitudes**: inherited viewpoints formed from memories we call thoughts. And **Thoughts** spark from a bank of emotions linked to past memories. These are **Passions**.

> *If you realize that you have created your own conditions, you can un-create them at will.*
>
> W. CLEMENT STONE

The imagination processor turns messy data into usable information. We often mistake these opinions for facts. But when we question them (using IN|CODE: the 5 Whys), our opinions reveal the weak assumptions underneath. These conveniently comfortable little gadgets are called beliefs. (Read it as be-LIE-fs.)



Re-Engineering | Re-Coding

Stone said we can "un-create" our conditions. In IN|CODE you'll learn many techniques that unlock the unconscious mind. Here we'll start with one of them: the most powerful word in the English language, **"Why?"** It is used mostly by highly trained experts: three-year-olds.

> *Drive pushes you toward something you feel compelled or obligated to do. Passion pulls you toward something you cannot resist.*
>
> RANDY KOMISAR

First, since you're already an expert at worrying, all we need to do is give that skill a new job. Close your eyes and go into your Worry Theatre, to the screen called **imagination**. Now watch one of your videos of a habit that causes you problems, one where you made a mountain out of a molehill. Then ask yourself: *Why? Why do I do it?*

> *A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes.*
>
> GANDHI

Next, just listen, and keep asking why to each new, absurd answer. Be patient. After asking why at least five times, you'll reach a EUREKA! The meaning beneath your habit will become crystal clear.

> *Consider the twin sons of an alcoholic father. When asked why they had become who they'd become, both gave the same answer: "What else did you expect me to become?" What surprised the researchers: one twin was an alcoholic. The other wouldn't touch the stuff.*
>
> THE TWIN STUDY

And while you're there, take time to realize that your identity grew out of flawed assumptions. From these irrational assumptions we build all our be-LIE-fs, and they push us toward a predictably unfortunate destiny.

> *We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.*
>
> ARISTOTLE

Training to become the Best includes the duty to rise above the mediocrity that plagues our world. We must keep improving.

VIII LATIN FOR UNCONQUERED
INVICTUS

I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.

– WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

Invictus captures a mental, even spiritual, conviction. The passages below express it where words alone fall short.

In *Angry White Pyjamas*, Robert Twigger describes a similar idea, known in Japanese as *kidotai*: "the harsh policy on senshusei (trainee) injuries was another traditional way of 'building spirit.' The idea was to produce fighters who could acquit themselves well whatever the state of their bodies. The aim was to break the subjective link between how you feel and how you perform. Instead, it sought to replace it with a decided goal and achievement of that goal using the body, rather than the body dictating what the goal should be."

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY · 1875

INVICTUS

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

In Robert Bly's book *Iron John*, you can feel this spirit in a note written in 1465 by a French knight named Jean de Bueil:

> *Battle is a joyous thing. We love each other so much in battle. If we see that our cause is just and our kinsmen fight boldly, tears come to our eyes. A sweet joy rises in our hearts, in the feeling of our honest loyalty to each other. And seeing our friend so bravely exposing his body to danger in order to fulfill the commandment of our Creator, we resolve to go forward and die or live with him on account of love… Do you think someone who feels this is afraid of death? Not in the least! He is so strengthened, so delighted, that he does not know where he is. Truly, he fears nothing in this world!*
>
> JEAN DE BUEIL, 1465

In the film *Kingdom of Heaven*, the last, outnumbered defenders gather inside the walls of Jerusalem to protect the innocent from the attacking Saracen army. In the chaos, a priest urges them to save themselves by sneaking out a back passage and leaving the people to be slaughtered. The knight refuses. Instead, he orders his men to kneel and be knighted. The priest sneers, "Does an oath really make men better fighters?" The reply: **"Yes!"**

The Oath of a Knight

Be without fear in the face of your enemies.
Be brave and upright, that God may love thee.
Speak the truth, always, even if it leads to your death.
Safeguard the helpless, and do no wrong.

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

PREPARED FOR FAILURE. READY FOR SUCCESS!

IX GRIT

What does not kill me makes me stronger.

– FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Performance traits like perseverance, hardiness, resilience and ambition are often treated as the same thing as grit. Since the days of Aristotle, they have been honored as virtues. But are they the same?

Perseverance sticks with a task, mission or journey despite obstacles, discouragement or distraction. **Hardiness** is a set of attitudes that gives you the courage and drive to do the hard, strategic work of turning painful, even disastrous situations into chances to grow.

Resilience is not a trait. It is an active, adaptive response to hard situations. It helps you overcome adversity, usually a life-changing event. **Ambition** is the desire for achievement, power or superiority.

Grit is different from all of these. People with grit keep their determination and motivation over long periods of time, despite failure and adversity. Their focus stays fully on their Personal Legend, and they don't need a crisis to set it off. And because gritty people never chase fame or outside recognition, they don't need feedback.

> *The greater the challenges life gives you, the greater the opportunity you have to raise your life above those challenges.*
>
> WINSTON CHURCHILL

And if grit's edge weren't complete already, there is one more. It isn't tied to intelligence. Unlike many traditional measures of performance, researchers found grit to be slightly *inversely* related to intelligence. They suggest this may be why some very intelligent people fail to perform consistently over long periods.

> *Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men.*
>
> JOHN F. KENNEDY

We know the coward never begins and the weak die along the way. But the measure of life goes on. The good endure adversity, and the Best become more because of it! This may be why we honor saints and glorify heroes: they perform the common under uncommon conditions, consistently. Shouldn't we aim for that? Loving Fate because she makes us what Nassim Taleb recently named *"antifragile"*?

So how we look at challenges is crucial. Consider what the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius wrote: "Our actions may be impeded… but there can be no impeding our intentions or dispositions. Because we can accommodate and adapt. The mind adapts and converts to its own purposes the obstacle to our acting. The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way."

Tentative efforts lead to tentative outcomes. Therefore give yourself fully to your endeavors. Decide to construct your character through excellent actions and determine to pay the price of a worthy goal. The trials you encounter will introduce you to your strengths. Remain steadfast... and one day you will build something that endures, something worthy of your potential.

EPICTETUS

To make this point crystal clear: the obstacles we meet in life, and our ability to overcome them, are the true measure of what makes us worthy. Hence the phrase: **what stands in the way becomes the way!**

X VALUES

THE GUIDING FRAMEWORK BEHIND ALL CONDUCT

The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives everything its value.

– THOMAS PAINE

The word *value* comes from the Latin *valere*, meaning "to be strong" and "to be worthy." When someone acts despite extreme risk, we honor it with our highest measure of value: *valor*, from the same Latin root.

Values are the bridge between what happens inside us and what we do outside. They hold back improper behavior that custom or law forbids, and they set the standard for good conduct in society. Other names for them include *code of conduct* and *rules of etiquette*. Case in point:

> *"Privations and danger are the toll of deeds of glory. "What is sweeter than to live bravely and to die leaving immortal renown? When you seek my colors tomorrow, you need look only to the fore!"*
>
> ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Bushido

Bushido, Japanese for "the way of the warrior," was the code of the honored Samurai. It stressed honor, courage, mastery of all arts, fierce family pride, selflessness and thrift. Built on dutiful self-denial and fearlessness through constant preparation, it inspired action without hesitation. The only fear was the disgrace of defeat in mortal combat.

> *When your expression doesn't change even if a mountain crumbles before you, you're unafraid when death is imminent, and you are unfailingly fearless and imperturbable, this is courage.*
>
> HOJO CHIKUHO-SHI

The code is defined by seven principles:

> *The ultimate stratagem in martial arts is not in cutting a man down, but in killing one man's evil in order to save ten thousand.*
>
> YAGYU MUNENORI, THE LIFE-GIVING SWORD

1. **Gi** · rectitude. Justice is the strongest principle, the backbone all the others depend on. It is "the power of deciding upon a certain course of conduct in accordance with reason, without wavering" (Inazo Nitobe).
2. **Yuki** · courage. The difference between bravery and courage is whether it follows rectitude: reckless action versus reasoned action.
3. **Jin** · benevolence. Mercy is love and generosity toward others.
4. **Rei** · respect. Courtesy is rooted in benevolence, and it is valued more when it comes from love rather than fear of breaking etiquette.
5. **Makoto** · honesty. A true samurai looked down on wealth because "riches hinder wisdom." Thrift was encouraged, because Spartan-style self-discipline was a duty.
6. **Meiyo** · honor. Personal dignity and worth defined the samurai. Showing emotion, especially temper, was weakness. Patience meant bearing the unbearable.
7. **Chugi** · loyalty. Stay loyal to those you owe. Personal faithfulness was the highest expression of chivalry.

> *"For Sparta, it was not dying but fleeing that was death.*
>
> PAUL CARTLEDGE, THERMOPYLAE

The unwritten eighth is **Character**: behavior that follows an absolute standard, higher than logic. No excuses or justifications for unbecoming conduct. Those who lived this code were called Samurai, meaning "those who serve."

> *Nothing can be accomplished by worrying about nonessential things. It is best to keep one's heart clear, face the work at hand directly, and act boldly.*
>
> YAMAOKA TESSHU

U.S. MARINE CORPS · U.S. ARMY RANGERS

XI Creed

A Recon Marine can speak without saying a word and achieve what others can only imagine.

– RECON MARINE SAYING

Why are U.S. Marines considered the world's elite warriors? What puts the Marine Corps above the rest? The answer lies in the individual Marine.

He did not simply join the Marines. Roughly 40,000 try each year. Those who survive the crucible of Marine basic training have been shaped in mind and body. They have *become* Marines.

Once he has earned the title and joined the Brotherhood, a new warrior draws on the legacy of his Corps. That is his strength. In return, the strength of the Corps lies in the individual Marine. The character of these warriors (often defined as "what you are in the dark") rests on three constant Corps values:

Honor

Honor requires each Marine to set the highest standard of ethical and moral conduct. Honor is many things, and it requires many things. A Marine must never lie, never cheat, never steal, but that is not enough. Much more is required. Each Marine must hold to an uncompromising code of personal integrity, accountable for his actions and holding others accountable for theirs. And above all, honor demands that a Marine never stain the reputation of his Corps.

Courage

Courage, simply stated, is honor in action. Courage is moral strength: the will to follow the inner voice of conscience and do what is right, no matter how others behave. It is mental discipline, holding to a higher standard. Courage means being willing to take a stand for what is right in spite of the consequences. Throughout the history of the Corps, this courage has carried Marines through the chaos, dangers and hardships of combat. And each day it lets every Marine look in the mirror, and smile.

Commitment

Commitment means total dedication to Corps and Country. Gung-ho Marine teamwork. Whatever you call it, commitment combines (1) selfless determination and (2) relentless dedication to excellence. Marines never give up, never give in, never willingly accept second best. Excellence is always the goal. Commitment never dies.

These values are the bedrock of every Marine's character. They make U.S. Marines the Warrior Elite: the most respected and revered fighting force on earth.

RECON MARINE CREED

Realizing it is my choice and my choice alone to be a Reconnaissance Marine, I accept all challenges involved with this profession. Forever shall I strive to maintain the tremendous reputation of those who went before me.

Exceeding beyond the limitations set down by others shall be my goal. Sacrificing personal comforts and dedicating myself to the completion of the reconnaissance mission shall be my life. Physical fitness, mental attitude, and high ethics: the title of Recon Marine is my honor.

Conquering all obstacles, both large and small, I shall never quit. To quit, to surrender, to give up is to fail. To be a Recon Marine is to surpass failure; to overcome, to adapt and to do whatever it takes to complete the mission. On the battlefield, as in all areas of life, I shall stand tall above the competition. Through professional pride, integrity, and teamwork, I shall be the example for all Marines to emulate.

ARMY RANGER CREED

Recognizing that I volunteered as a Ranger, fully knowing the hazards of my chosen profession, I will always endeavor to uphold the prestige, honor, and high esprit de corps of the Rangers.

Acknowledging the fact that a Ranger is a more elite soldier who arrives at the cutting edge of battle by land, sea, or air, I accept the fact that as a Ranger my country expects me to move further, faster, and fight harder than any other soldier.

Never shall I fail my comrades. I will always keep myself mentally alert, physically strong, and morally straight and I will shoulder more than my share of the task whatever it may be, one hundred percent and then some.

Gallantly will I show the world that I am a specially selected and well-trained soldier. My courtesy to superior officers, neatness of dress, and care of equipment shall set the example for others to follow.

Energetically will I meet the enemies of my country. I shall defeat them on the field of battle for I am better trained and will fight with all my might. Surrender is not a Ranger word. I will never leave a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy and under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.

Readily will I display the intestinal fortitude required to fight on to the Ranger objective and complete the mission, though I be the lone survivor.

XII LEARNING HOW TO PERCEIVE
Interpretation

Perceptions are portraits, not photographs.

– DANIEL GILBERT

To share ideas, we need a common foundation: symbols we all agree on. In language, those symbols are letters. Letters build words, words form sentences, and strung together they carry a thought.

This is where many of our problems begin. We pick up ways of interpreting the world that are rarely linked to reason. These are called beliefs, better read as **be-LIE-fs**. As Gilbert notes above, they are portraits of reality, not photographs.

> *"Don't criticize them; they are just what we would be under similar circumstances.*
>
> ABRAHAM LINCOLN

"Everything is interpretation."

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Leonardo da Vinci's favorite saying was *saper vedere*, "knowing how to see." His genius came from trying to interpret without prejudice, even though true objectivity is nearly impossible. Why? Because when you perceive something, you are interpreting what you *think* you know, while being unaware of what you don't know. Here is a story that shows this common problem:

THE BULLOCK CART

In a remote part of Burma, an army left a small machine behind. They were in a hurry, retreating, and for some unknown reason they left it. The villagers found the machine but couldn't figure out what it was. They guessed it must be some kind of bullock cart, since that was the only thing they could imagine. To them, the bullock cart was the ultimate vehicle. So they started using the machine as a bullock cart, and they loved it. It was the best bullock cart they had ever found.

Then a man from a distant part of the tribe came to see the cart. He said, "This is not a bullock cart. This is a vehicle, and I know something about these." So he fixed it. They were amazed that the machine worked without bullocks. It was such a joy that every morning and every evening they looked at it again and again from all sides, climbing in and sitting in it. And because there were few roads, traveling just a few feet became thrilling.

Then one day a pilot passed through the forest and said, "What are you doing? That is an airplane! It can fly!" When they left the ground, they could not believe it. This was beyond anything they had imagined! Yes, they had seen airplanes in the sky, but they had always believed those belonged to the gods.

The moral of the story: you cannot discover something new by interpreting it from your old point of view. As Einstein said, "The significant problems

we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." In other words, "knowing how to see" means interpreting without the same limited beliefs.

In the end, there was a breakthrough. The villagers learned that it wasn't the gods flying these carts in the sky. It was men, just like them, who had left ignorance behind so they could see more clearly.

XIII

ÊTRE FORT POUR ÊTRE UTILE · BE STRONG TO BE USEFUL

Persistent Consistency

Be strong to be useful.

– GEORGES HÉBERT

Persistent consistency is practice. It gets us ready for the chimera, the monster, the chance to rise to an epic challenge. We enter the fight like Bellerophon, prepared to meet our end or to defeat the beast. It is in that perfect moment, in the contest to create the work of art our lives were meant to be, that we see the value of our preparation.

In *Turning Pro*, author Steven Pressfield describes persistent consistency beautifully: "an engagement in a ritual of focused intention aimed at the achievement of mastery… a desire to communicate with that which is greater than ourselves. [It is] sacred… an odyssey towards transcendence… where the regimen becomes a powerful space, where our intention of service is eventually recognized… if we persist."

> *It's not the will to win that matters; everyone has that. It's the will to prepare that matters.*
>
> COACH PAUL "BEAR" BRYANT

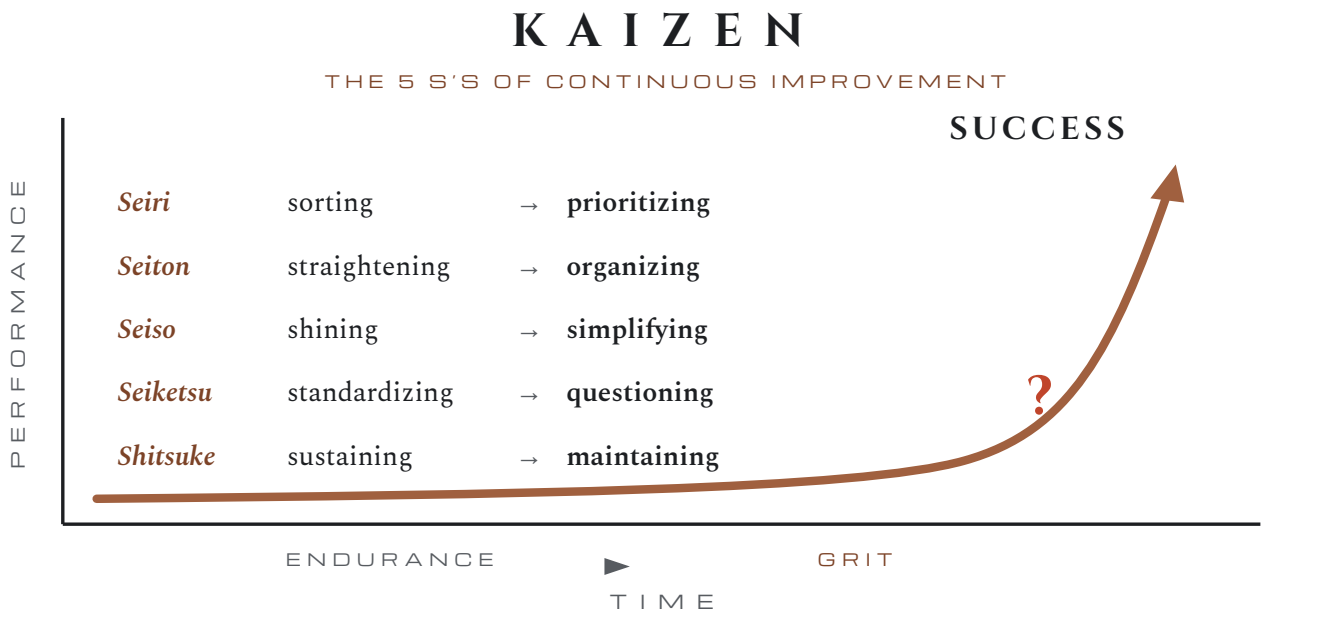
After World War II, Dr. W. Edwards Deming helped Japan rebuild its devastated industries into global competitors within three decades. As the father of quality management, he succeeded with a radically new idea: relying on every worker's insights to improve quality.

> *It is not a daily increase, but a daily decrease. Hack away at the inessentials.*
>
> BRUCE LEE

At first the small improvements looked meaningless. But persistent consistency created what we now call the "hockey stick effect." The Japanese call it **kaizen**, continuous improvement.

> *When you're not practicing, someone somewhere is. And when the two of you meet…*
>
> COACH ED MACAULEY

No formula predicts when the compounding effect will turn your persistent consistency into a vertical payoff, shown below as the "?". It lies beyond the point where endurance turns into grit.



> *Getting to great starts by cutting out stuff that's merely good.*
>
> JASON FRIED

> *There are efforts and there are results. And the strength of the effort is the measure of the result.*
>
> JAMES ALLEN

> *Focus and simplicity. Simple can be harder than complex; you have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple. But it's worth it in the end because once you get there, you can move mountains.*
>
> STEVE JOBS

> *What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for a worthwhile goal.*
>
> VIKTOR FRANKL

You are the way you are because that's the way you want to be. If you really wanted to be any different, you would be in the process of changing right now.

FRED SMITH

The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence.

COACH VINCE LOMBARDI

> *Fools learn from experience. I prefer to learn from the experience of others.*
>
> OTTO VON BISMARCK

If we continue to do what we have done, which is what everybody is doing, we will continue to get the same unsatisfactory results.

ELI GOLDRATT, THE GOAL

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

XIV Performance Pyramid

The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it.

– JOHN RUSKIN

Preparation (planning and practicing ahead of time) does not magically guarantee success! Winston Churchill saw it as the tipping point: "Plans are worthless, but planning is everything."

Mastering the Performance Pyramid

1 · LOGOS

Logos doesn't apply only to your Personal Legend. Everything we do is based on meaning. The Best choose their *logos* instead of accepting the default. (See IN|CODE: the 5 Whys.)

> *You want to set a goal that is big enough that in the process of achieving it, you become someone worth becoming.*
>
> JIM ROHN

Most people fail because they use the word *goal* for anything they want to accomplish. P5 separates a Goal from its Objectives and Next-Actions in a few ways:

> *If you want to be happy, set a goal that commands your thoughts, liberates your energy, and inspires your hopes.*
>
> ANDREW CARNEGIE

Time to achieve.

> *Most people overestimate what can be accomplished in a year, but underestimate what can be accomplished in a decade.*
>
> TONY ROBBINS

A **Goal** is a major life event that should take more than 10 years.

> *I am looking for a lot of men who have an infinite capacity to not know what can't be done.*
>
> HENRY FORD

Objectives take more than one year but less than 10.

Why not be legendary?
aka your gravestone

Be who?
in more than 10 years

Do what?
in 1 to 10 years

Do what?
in under a year



Next-Actions take less than a year.

> *If your goal does not scare you, it's not big enough!*
>
> MATT MORRIS

Be versus do. A Goal is something you *become*, part of your identity. Objectives and Next-Actions ("mini-objectives") are what you *do* to become your Goal.

SECRET #1

When you think you know your Goal, ask "Why?" Your answer means that what you thought was your Goal is really an Objective. Now ask "Why?" about your new answer, and keep asking about every answer after that until you reach the end, when there is no other answer. That last one is your Goal. (See the IN|CODE example: the 5 Whys.)

SECRET #2

The Best "act as if" they've become their Goal from day one. Example: "I want to be worth a million dollars" is not a Goal. You can't act as if you're a million dollars! But you *can* act as if you're a millionaire. This rehearsal is priceless for reaching any Goal. Think of it this way: when does a millionaire start acting like one? Not years from now, when he reads his financial statement and decides, "Oh, I guess I'm supposed to start acting like a millionaire."

SECRET #3

Acting as if, or "being what you wish to seem," connects us to our hero's traits. Example: Muhammad Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize as a banker who helps the poorest people become self-sufficient small-business owners. Pablo Escobar gave millions to the poor and built community centers in Colombia. Both gave to the poor, yet their legacies are complete opposites. Do you want to be a saint, or a tyrant? Who you aspire to become defines you today, predicts your actions tomorrow and, in the end, writes your Legend.

3 · MEASURABLE

Measuring is part of planning for any target. Example: most people spend more time planning their vacation than planning their life. That is why so many reach retirement without enough to live on. They never measured where they were or how they would reach their goal.

Act in such a way that the maxim of your action could become a universal law of nature.

IMMANUEL KANT

In the DMAIC model, defining everything is the first step to measuring it. "I want to be wealthy" is not measurable, because *wealthy* isn't defined. "By December 2030, I want a $1 million net worth: $600k of equity in my business plus $400k in personal real estate" *is* measurable, because it's defined. And because it's measurable, we can start planning.

> *The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.*
>
> ATTRIBUTED TO MICHELANGELO

Deadlines trigger better performance. Notice the December 2030 deadline in the example. That pressure forces you to get creative.

> *The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one, immediately.*
>
> ATTRIBUTED TO MARK TWAIN

The Best aren't about doing more or working harder. They're about working smarter. A long to-do list to check off is *efficiency*: a way to hide in mediocrity from the difficult but important tasks. *Effectiveness* is doing only the important ones.

Example: How to Put It All Together

PLAN	DEMONSTRATION
PERSONAL LEGEND	***To be the best father!***
GOAL	To be my son's best man at his wedding
OBJECTIVE	By 2030, to be admired by my son and teach him to be the Best
NEXT-ACTION	By [date], 365 days alcohol-free
OBSTACLE	Addiction to alcohol
CHALLENGE	Lack of meaning to focus on
IF (SITUATION)	If I'm afraid of having a wreck when I drink,
THEN (BEHAVIOR)	then I'll remember how my 5-year-old son will feel at my funeral!
SUMMIT CLUE	Standing next to my son as he takes his vows!

ALIGNING YOUR IDENTITY TO YOUR PERSONAL LEGEND

XV Alignment

Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.

– HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Warning! Reverse engineering your life doesn't happen overnight. It starts by focusing on a beacon called your Personal Legend. Working backward step by step, you arrive at the present moment, with the planning done. Now you can improvise, adapt and overcome Fate's challenges.

It's just like flying a plane that is off course 95% of the time. You reach the destination by constantly correcting toward it. That's kaizen, Japanese for "continuous improvement."

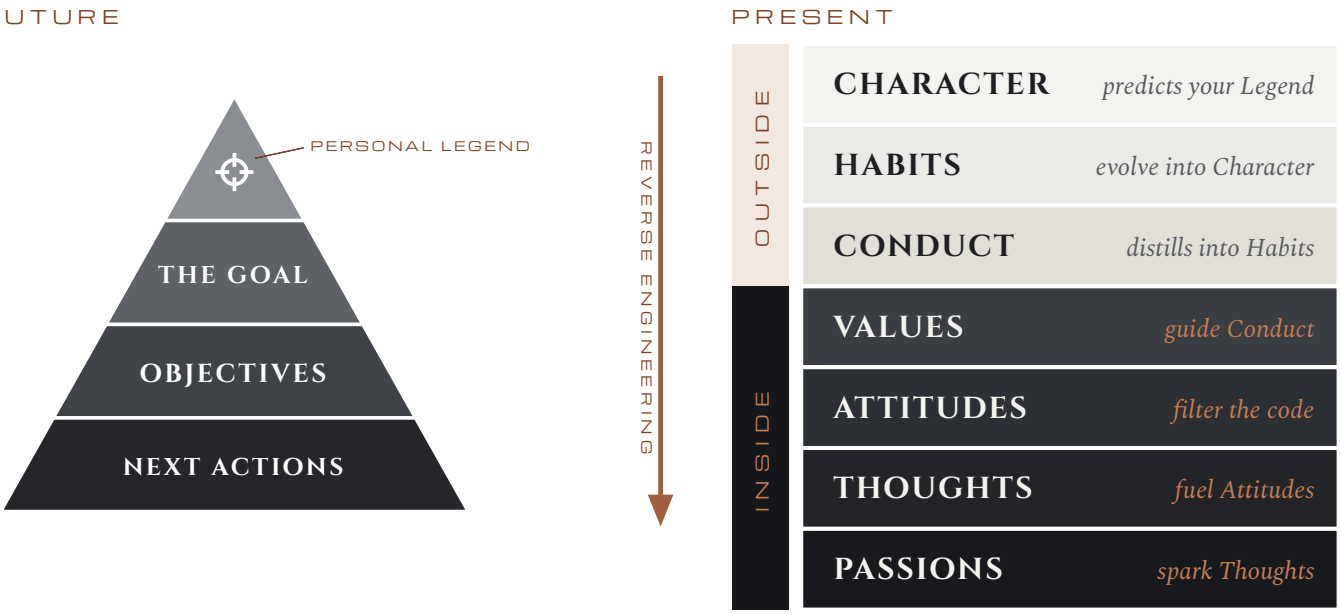
Staying focused on the mission is mostly about what *not* to be distracted by. Notice that most of the thoughts that show up uninvited chatter about the past or the future, and rarely about the present moment. Too often they live in regret about yesterday or fear about tomorrow. "What's done is done; you can't change the past" is a common, lame cliché. And trying to convince yourself it didn't happen the way you remember, because memory is colored by interpretation, does little to change the habit.

You could argue that the future deserves our attention. True, but only in small doses: enough to check our bearing and adjust our course. If you don't control the rudder, your focus scatters into daydreams. Or worse, you worry about something that hasn't happened until it becomes a self-fulfilling tragedy.

Reverse Engineering

So what can we do? The Best excel at lining up their long-range Legend with the most effective Next-Action. This works as a filter that makes choices for you: who to talk to, when to take a trip, whether to make a major purchase, how long to waste surfing the web, even what to order off the menu.

When we pull our attention back together, awareness of where we are now reveals what we so often miss: how we sabotage ourselves from the inside out. Learning to ignore the ego that keeps distracting us with the past and the future is a huge step toward success. We realize we've been living like a scattered light bulb instead of a focused laser. And by reverse engineering our identity, we become the pilots of our own lives for the first time.



WORK BACKWARD: FROM THE LEGEND YOU WANT TO THE CODE YOU RUN TODAY

XVI THE CRUCIBLE

THE 10,000-HOUR RULE

Chance favors the prepared mind.

– LOUIS PASTEUR

In *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell argues that "success is not a random act. It arises out of a predictable and powerful set of circumstances and opportunities." In other words, poor performance comes from laziness: failing to educate ourselves, failing to practice, failing to relentlessly pursue excellence. Period!

Chance favors the prepared, because they can (and do) perform. But Gladwell's research shows that talent alone does not equal success. Success is more about being in the right place at the right time, with the right connections, plus one more thing: readiness. Being prepared.

In *The Lucifer Effect*, Stanford psychologist Philip Zimbardo links behavior to context, not nature. Our conduct comes from what Zimbardo calls the "Situation": our culture, our community, even our age group. Think peer pressure from a Situation or a System: the world a person lives in.

It may look like random chance, but patterns of behavior drive the conduct of outliers. They live by unique values that most people don't have, and those values amplify their ability and intelligence.

> *Human beings always act and feel and perform in accordance with what they imagine to be true about themselves and their environment.*
>
> DR. MAXWELL MALTZ

Gladwell goes on to say that achievement is talent plus preparation, but the two aren't equal. The famous psychologist Alfred Adler said talent plays a small part: "There is no talent. There is pressure." Preparation may be nothing more than being ready to endure under pressure. Success becomes the ability to perform the common under uncommon conditions.

Sociologist Annette Lareau found something interesting about *expectations* of preparation. In other words, what was all the planning and practice *for*? Studying how parents in different income groups raised their kids, she saw the difference was involvement. She called it "concerted cultivation"

Does learned skill play a role? Stanford psychology professor Lewis Terman, in his *Genetic Studies of Genius*, showed that "intellect and achievement are far from perfectly correlated." Psychologist Robert Sternberg argues that success comes not from IQ but from a skill he calls **practical intelligence**: "knowing how to do something without necessarily knowing why you know it or being able to explain it."

versus "the accomplishment of natural growth" (nurture versus nature, again).

The first meant involved parents who led by example. The second meant parents who left their children on their own too often. The key was planting the seed that the child was being groomed for something great. Later it was communicated as an expectation, wrapped in belief and built on trust. Aristotle taught Alexander the Great the same way: *"Be what you wish to seem."*

The 10,000-Hour Rule

But is the key simply practicing, "acting as if," or raw repetition? Neuroscientist Daniel Levitin found that "ten thousand hours of practice is required to achieve the level of mastery associated with being a world-class expert, in anything… no one has yet found a case in which true world-class expertise was accomplished in less time. It seems that it takes the brain this long to assimilate all that it needs to know to achieve true mastery." And what is ten thousand hours? Roughly 10 years of hard practice.

THE OLYMPIC MATH

Just to *compete* in the Olympics, the rough numbers are 4 hours of training a day, 310 days a year, for 6 years. That's 7,440 hours!

To win gold, the effort is higher.

So was Aristotle right? "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit." Sociologist Stephen Steinberg found exactly that kind of habit when he studied immigrants of the early 1900s: "These immigrants worked hard. They sacrificed. They scrimped and saved and invested

wisely." The bar to get started was low, but the investment included eighteen-hour days.

And they changed their children's destinies by giving them a unique mindset: "If you work hard enough and assert yourself, and use your mind and imagination, you can shape the world to your desires."

This way of thinking challenges the idea that success is random. Instead, success "arises out of the steady accumulation of advantages." That echoes Zimbardo's theory that our behavior grows out of our Situation. All of it adds up to what he calls the "System." In short, man-made traditions and learned attitudes imprint on each of us. Later, they drive our behavior.

It is not the brightest who succeed... Nor is success simply the sum of the decisions and efforts we make on our own behalf. It is, rather, a gift. Outliers are those who have been given opportunities, and who have had the strength and presence of mind to seize them.

MALCOLM GLADWELL, OUTLIERS

Historian David Arkush supports this. He compared two basic mindsets. The first grew out of "fatalism and pessimism typical of a feudal system, where peasants have no reason to believe in the efficacy of their own work." Its attitude: "If God does not bring it, the earth will not give it." The opposite mindset held that "hard work, shrewd planning and self-reliance or cooperation within a small group will, in time, bring recompense." Its motto: "No one who can rise before dawn three hundred sixty days a year fails to make his family rich." That second mindset traces back to the wet-rice farmers of Asia, who worked about 3,000 hours a year.

Refusing to give in, the habit of practicing relentlessly long after most people quit, has no equal. Gladwell argues it helps explain why Asian students now top the highest test scores. And this attitude still lives in some American students, for example at KIPP Academies, which require longer days, more homework, less free time and very short summer breaks. These students from underprivileged communities choose this opportunity. Most keep the hours of a lawyer trying to make partner or a medical student, yet they don't complain. And because they are ready to endure that kind of pressure, most go on to earn college scholarships and claim meaningful roles in life.

The 10,000 hours that separate the ordinary from Pasteur's "prepared" are a necessary crucible: a proving ground of extreme challenges that comes before exceptional performance.

XVII

COUNTERINTUITIVE MOVES THAT PRODUCE X-FACTOR RESULTS

Force Multipliers

It is vain to do with more what can be done with less.

– WILLIAM OF OCKHAM

Tim Ferriss describes life for most people as "time famine, creeping dread" and a tolerable, comfortable existence doing unfulfilling work. In *The 4-Hour Workweek* he argues it should be "for fun and profit." Here are some of Ferriss' ideas, put to work to multiply the force of your effort.

A.D.D. (Adventure Deficit Disorder)

It's caused by extreme sameness with very little variety. Most people chase happiness, when what their mind really craves is excitement. The Best don't aim for inactivity (like a happy retirement) as the destination. They aim for the adventure of the journey!

LEARN HOW TO BE MEDIOCRE

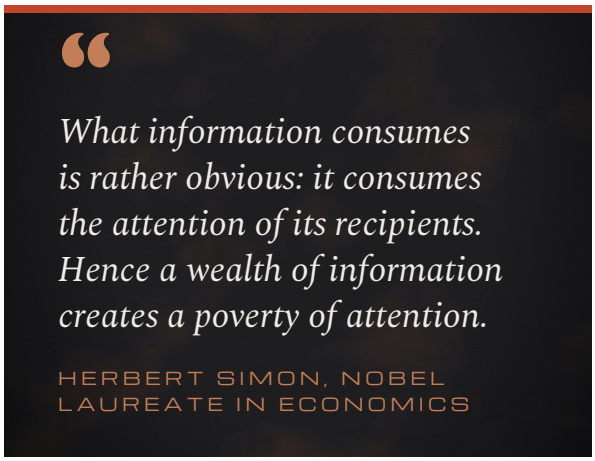
1. Be available 24/7/365.
2. Do meaningless work to feel efficient.
3. Wait until you have a perfect plan to start.
4. Settle for small gains by fixing weaknesses.
5. Live for obligations instead of preferences.
6. Expect higher pay without more skill.
7. Choose absolute income over relative income (maximum time for a steady, lower income instead of minimum time for maximum income).
8. Build debt to chase stuff, style and status instead of investing in calculated lifestyle risks.
9. Make lots of idle time your final goal (retirement).

Focused Concentration

It uses a simple but strict process for thoughts that hijack your attention:

Can every word in the question or idea be clearly defined? (Example: "How do we become successful quickly?") If not, drop it. If yes, continue. Since "successful" and "quickly" aren't defined here, drop it.

Do you have any control over the outcome? (Example: "What if the train is late today?") If not, drop it. If yes, engage. Since we can't control the train, drop the idea or the discussion. It has no value.



Vital Paradigm Shifts

1. Work less, play more!
2. Live where you'd retire!
3. Empower others, like a Skilled Virtual Assistant (SVA), to do the grind work.
4. Use rule-based action plans (rules of non-decision) so SVAs can work on their own.
5. Use the "minimum effective dose" for maximum leverage (batch processing, 80/20 sorting).
6. Set up metrics so you never manage blindly.
7. Control, but never own.

Best R.O.I. (Return on Investment)

Cut loose your problem 20%, stop chasing the average 60%, and put all your effort into your best 20%. Pareto's 80/20 rule says that 80% of your clients produce just 20% of your profits, and your bottom 20% cause 80% of your nightmares. Meanwhile, your top 20% generate 80% of your profits… and need little or no babysitting. Invest your time and effort there for a return like the Best!

Fat-Free Performance

It happens when you identify your mission-critical Next-Actions and set clear, short deadlines. You trade efficiency for effectiveness. *Efficiency* is doing tasks in the most economical way possible. *Effectiveness* is doing only what moves you closer to the Goal.

Ask yourself: *"If I had to stop 4 out of 5 activities today, what would I keep doing to lose the least profit?"* Or try this one: *"If I could do only one thing today that would make sure I was profitable next month, what would it be?"* That is Pareto's 80/20 rule in action.

8. Only attend meetings with clear, agreed-upon agendas and end times, and don't stray.
9. Focus on quality of output, not quantity.
10. Work the latitudes: earn in dollars, pay for labor in rupees, live on pesos.
11. Build self-running systems from the start so you can manage by absence.
12. Design for scale from the start.
13. Net zero: never chase the time value of money.
14. Get to the point already.
15. Give up capability for reliability.

Choose a Low-Info Diet and Selective Ignorance

1. More output requires less input.
2. Be willing to let the urgent fail in order to finish a Next-Action.
3. Use a razor-sharp SVA to organize your life and to handle:
   A. **Emergencies:** take yourself out of the loop by setting rules of non-decision.
   B. **Disruptions:** redirect them, because they're usually irrelevant, unimportant and not actionable.
   c. **Information worth not knowing:** redirect it when it's time-consuming, negative, irrelevant to your goal or outside your influence. An SVA can boil it down to what's mission-critical.

Conclusion

Some people mistake Ferriss' *4-Hour Workweek* for a plan to be ultimately lazy. In fact, it's about optimizing your life for legendary activities. Use these patterns of thinking to multiply your force and operate like the Best.

Why not learn to enjoy life and be legendary? Why not?

XVIII Opportunity Cost

EVERYTHING WE DO COSTS SOMETHING

The difference between successful people and really successful people is that really successful people say no to almost everything.

– WARREN BUFFETT

Opportunity cost is the value of the next-best choice you give up when you pick one option over others. That may sound complicated, but it really isn't. Think of it as what you have to give up when you choose a certain path. The cost of an opportunity is really a matter of the time you have.

Warren Buffett is famous for understanding the value of his time. As he explains it, everything we do takes away from something else we could be doing. That's an important idea to remember. We all have a pile of ideas and creative ventures we just *know* will be the "next big thing." But how often do we stop and count the time we spend thinking about them?

It can be thrilling to imagine all the ideas that could lead to gains in life, but how grounded in reality are they? For some people, coming up with new ideas is their job. For most of us, though, time spent dreaming is just that: time spent dreaming. And it pulls us away from our most important work.

Not Just External Opportunity, but Internal Opportunity Too

Staying focused and on task is extremely hard when we have a million distractions. How do we stay focused? Find the priorities among the million things,

and confirm a few of them. Leave the rest for later, when the priorities are done. Spending time worrying about an idea someone else will probably get rich from is a fool's errand. The most important part of your workday belongs to making progress on your most valuable objectives.

The moral of the story? Invest in what we know. Invest in ourselves. And most important, invest the time it takes to weigh the true cost of every new opportunity.

Success Breeds Opportunity

As we become more successful, more opportunities and ventures compete for our limited attention. This is called "deal flow": more success brings more deals. It becomes a paradox. It's exciting to see our work pay off and attract people and opportunities. But we can get tangled up in it, out of fear of missing the "big deal." Remember: saying "yes" to one deal closes the door on another. This give-and-take is best described as

THE ART OF DECIDING THE BEST USE OF OUR LIMITED ATTENTION, AND REFUSING TO SECOND-GUESS OURSELVES OVER MISSED OPPORTUNITIES THAT DON'T MATTER.

Why Do We Need a New Direction?

How many times have we watched a successful businessman make millions over his lifetime, only to change direction at the last minute on a new venture that costs him everything? A "sure thing" stock deal. A "can't lose" property investment. A "guaranteed" startup that's about to blow up. The rags-to-riches-back-to-rags stories happen over and over.

So we ask, why do people fall into this trap? The simple answer: the mind craves excitement. People get bored with the same old thing, even when the same old thing is doing extremely well. They look to new ventures to feel fulfilled.

This is where the true cost of opportunity shows most clearly. The "new direction" usually does two things. First, it pulls attention away from the path that was already working, so performance drops. Second, jumping into a new arena brings the realization that we know little or nothing about handling the problems that will come. So in the long run, we weaken one business only to get burned by another.

XIX

SECRETS FROM THE EX-WIFE OF A REAL-LIFE TONY STARK

How to Be the Best?

What makes extreme success? Be obsessed. Be obsessed. Be obsessed.

– JUSTINE MUSK

The question came from the website Quora: "How can I be as great as Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Elon Musk and Richard Branson?" The answer that came back stirred up the who's who. It came from Justine Musk, married from 2000 to 2008 to the co-founder and CEO of SpaceX and Tesla. Her insights are especially qualified.

It wasn't academic theory or psychological mumbo-jumbo, or even self-absorbed moguls explaining why everyone envies them. Her insights came from firsthand experience. In fact, what people *think* causes success didn't match what she had observed for years.

"Extreme success results from an extreme personality and comes at the cost of many other things," she wrote. "Extreme success is different from what I suppose you could just consider 'success.' These people tend to be freaks and misfits who were forced to experience the world in an unusually challenging way." Then she added, "Other people consider them to be somewhat insane."

> *Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.*
>
> VINCENT VAN GOGH

She wasn't being critical. "Extreme people combine brilliance and talent with an insane work ethic, so if the work itself doesn't drive you, you will burn out or fall by the wayside or your extreme competitors will crush you."

In her view, these extreme people didn't set out to become moguls. They became moguls as a byproduct of their intense focus.

> *There is no passion to be found playing small, in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.*
>
> NELSON MANDELA

"Shift your focus away from what you want (a billion dollars) and get deeply, intensely curious about what the world wants or needs," she advises. "It helps to have an ego, but you must be in service to something bigger if you are to inspire the people you need to help you."

Elsewhere she reflected on how these people think about money. "Money is rarely just money," she noted. "Sometimes it stands in for love or self-esteem or freedom or sense of control over your destiny (especially if you lacked these things in childhood)."

> *Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.*
>
> ATTRIBUTED TO GOETHE

"Money can also serve as a scorecard to indicate how well you are doing, the impact you are having, or if you are winning. Sometimes it's not so much the money that matters, but the win is everything, particularly when you are invested heart and soul in your mission."

Many tried to read Elon into her comments, but she simply said, "Elon is a fascinating character." Asked whether he had any hobbies, she replied: "No, his job is his hobby. The nature of these things is so all-consuming. Unless you see that up close it is hard to understand." Then she added, **"Obsession has a bad rap."**

If this inspires you, try the morning ritual of another extreme:

If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?

STEVE JOBS

XX LIVE TO LEARN!

How to Live?

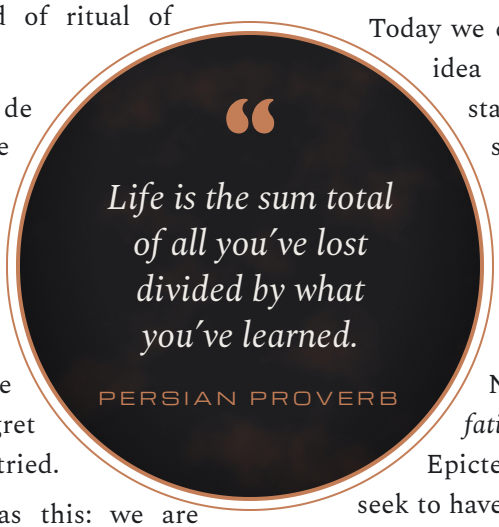
Whoever cannot seek the unforeseen sees nothing, for the known way is an impasse.

– HERACLITUS

The ancient Greeks cared about living a right and honorable life, but they also wanted a deeply satisfying, flourishing one. The question of "how to live" goes back to three schools: the Skeptics, the Stoics and the Epicureans. The last two both offered awareness of the present moment as the answer, but they practiced it very differently.

Zeno (c. 334–262 BC) founded Stoicism on becoming indifferent to everything beyond our control. That spared people the anguish of losing stuff (property or people), style or status. The Epicureans, in this telling, indulged the senses fully, a kind of ritual of defiance against Fate and death.

The French philosopher Michel de Montaigne (1533– 92) spent his life weaving the strategies of these schools, and others, into his *Essays*. One key principle he lived by: *regret nothing*. The Stoics regretted nothing by staying unattached to everything outside themselves. The Epicureans lived without regret because there was little they hadn't tried.



What Montaigne was sure of was this: we are unaware of our own unawareness. We are chained to other blind fools while we chase absurd ideas cooked up in our imaginations.

To fix this, the Greek schools shared the same goal:

> *In life our first job is this, to divide and distinguish things into two categories: externals I cannot control, but the choices I make with regard to them I do control. Where will I find good and bad? In me, in my choices.*
>
> EPICTETUS

Seneca (c. 4 BC–AD 65) saw the next step for the Stoics. Not just enduring Fate through strong preparation and detachment, but coming out *stronger*! (Nassim Taleb recently named this "antifragile.") Though it's rarely practiced, this strategy reduces your personal vulnerability. And it comes with an obligation:

A DUTY TO REDUCE HUMAN VULNERABILITY, BY READYING OTHERS TO ENDURE THE MOST DEVASTATING HARDSHIPS.

Through hard drilling and the discipline to stay emotionally unattached, happiness comes from the sense of excellence after an elite performance: standing on top of a seemingly impossible summit, victorious.

Lucretius (c. 99–55 BC) used a unique exercise to this end. He imagined his own gravestone to conquer the paralyzing fear called death. Then he asked two questions: *What if I lived well? What if I did not?* These triggered *prosoche*: the shift from drifting without aim to living with purpose and attention.

eudaimonia (from *eu*, "good," and *daimon*, "the genius within"), meaning happiness, joy and "human flourishing." The mindset needed to get there was *ataraxia*: unshakable calm, or "freedom from anxiety."

Today we call this grit. It's a counterintuitive idea also known as **poise**: the art of staying balanced no matter the situation. The emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180) practiced grit through mindset: "Choose not to be harmed, and you won't feel harmed. Don't feel harmed, and you haven't been." It inspired Nietzsche's (1844–1900) maxim *amor fati*, "love your fate." Both followed Epictetus' (c. 50–135) insight: "Do not seek to have everything that happens happen as you wish, but wish for everything to happen as it actually does happen, and your life will be serene."

> *A good person dyes events with his own color… and turns whatever happens to his own benefit.*
>
> SENECA

The Hack

To reach *ataraxia* through *prosoche*, you had to practice *epoché*: "I suspend judgment." In other words, to keep nerves of steel, to perform the common under uncommon conditions, your attention can't be distracted by judging.

What's interesting is that *epoché* wasn't about holding back judgment of other people. It was about suspending judgment of Fate. When you do that, a major shift happens! Your failings and mistakes become necessary practice and preparation. Obstacles and challenges become "opportunities… to learn!"

Most outside events pull our attention away from the "awareness of the moment." The distraction comes from judging: pointless reasoning and attempts to explain situations that don't matter. They *shouldn't* matter, because they're beyond our control!

> *Beliefs configure perceptions. Biases shape how we interpret, molding it to fit the way we want it to be, not how it is.*
>
> MICHAEL SHERMER, PH.D.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) went deeper, suggesting that "civilization corrupts." What makes us sociable also makes us slaves: weak, fearful and unmanly. Why? Because people crave excitement from any belief that stirs them, as long as it distracts them from their ordinary lives. This "civilizing" chains us to despair, anxiety and, finally, regret. As proof, Rousseau asked: "When has anyone ever observed a savage suffering from despair?"

Montaigne's conclusion: "Chance and caprice rule the world." Therefore, "I try to have no express need for anyone [because] it is very pitiful and hazardous to be dependent" on what may distract my attention. So Montaigne embraced Fate. Not out of undeserved mercy, but because she was beyond his control. In doing so, he lived his maxim: *no regrets*.

Whether it's called poise, *amor fati* or grit, each one describes an epiphany like Montaigne's: in learning "how to live," you may discover the secret of life itself.

Living to learn is learning how to live.

XXI

SUPERSURVIVOR · FROM THE LATIN SUPER VIVERE, TO LIVE BEYOND

Grounded Hope

The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places.

– ERNEST HEMINGWAY

In *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Edmond Dantès survives the impossible: years in a horrible French island prison in the nineteenth century. In the end, his strength comes from his adversity, and he vows: "Life is a storm. You will bask in the sunlight one moment, be shattered on the rocks the next. What makes you a man is what you do when that storm comes. You must look into that storm and shout: 'Do your worst, for I will do mine!' Then the Fates will know you as a man."

What makes that kind of strength possible in the middle of so much misery?

In *Supersurvivors: The Surprising Link Between Suffering and Success*, Dr. David Feldman explains how a few people transform themselves by rising above the worst that could have happened to them. Their tipping point? Poise: knowing that their wildest dreams are possible.

> *Only after you've survived do you realize something within has changed, when the blissfully mundane events of inconsequential value pale; its emptiness makes no sense, and involves no passion.*
>
> LEE KRAVETZ, CO-AUTHOR OF SUPERSURVIVORS

He writes that it is "an ability to peer into the face of tragedy and somehow emerge fundamentally changed and able to impact the world in previously unimagined ways." What he found is not plain hope but **"grounded hope,"** something "more pessimistic than positive thinking yet more realistic than pessimism. It avoids the comforting fiction that 'all will be fine' and courageously searches for 'what now?'"

The Stockdale Paradox, named for a man who endured more than seven years of torture in the notorious North Vietnamese POW camp called the "Hanoi Hilton," backs up the research in Ben Sherwood's book *The Survivors Club*. "You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end, which you can never afford to lose, with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be," explained retired Navy Vice Admiral James Stockdale.

After interviewing countless survivors of the Holocaust, plane crashes, terminal illness and other impossible tragedies, Sherwood credits their survival to the practical mindset of Epictetus' *Handbook*, the bible of Stoicism:

1. **Face hard reality,** because wishful thinking kills! The "optimistic" POWs died.
2. **Master the will to prevail, daily.** It's about focusing forward.

3. **Hope for a future purpose** that inspires you beyond your present circumstances.

In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Dr. Viktor Frankl came to the same realizations. He kept a strict routine of picturing a positive future to keep from getting lost in his years in the Nazi death camps, including Auschwitz and Dachau. Each night before sleeping, he recited a chapter of his book, not yet written, picturing himself in a future lecture hall teaching the priceless lessons that had cost him so much.

In our world of PTSD, there is a newer term. Dr. Feldman describes PTG, "post-traumatic growth." Fate's ups and downs leave everyone helpless. A few find resilience and bounce back. Of those, a few bounce *forward*, refocusing on big goals and transforming in unexpected ways because they have nothing to lose. These few turn the worst that could have happened into the best. They find poise: knowing that their wildest dreams are simply doable.

Life's blood-stained hurricanes can't be solved by ignoring them. Nor can they be fixed by waiting for someone to rescue us. It seldom happens that way. Instead, we must fight. And in the fighting, we realize that where we battle, and what we battle for, is sacred.

LEANING INTO THE FIGHT, INSTEAD OF FREEZING OR FLEEING, IS THE MEASURE OF THE MAN.

XXII COUNTERINTUITIVE THINKING
FAIL BETTER

Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.

– SAMUEL BECKETT

Being the Best isn't about ability. It's about responsibility. It's making the best decision you can, still being wrong, and not blaming. You cannot be the Best until you've lost.

> *Would you like me to give you a formula for success? It's quite simple, really. Double your rate of failure.*
>
> THOMAS J. WATSON, FOUNDER OF IBM

> *If things are not failing, you are not innovating enough.*
>
> ELON MUSK

> *If everything you do works, then you're not taking many risks and probably aren't innovating either.*
>
> PAUL BUCHHEIT, Y COMBINATOR

> *Don't worry about failure. You only have to be right once.*
>
> DREW HOUSTON, CO-FOUNDER OF DROPBOX

> *The entrepreneurs I admire iterate; they pivot. I admire the ones who succeed, and I really admire the ones who have persisted.*
>
> MARC ANDREESSEN, FOUNDER OF NETSCAPE

> *The people that thread the line between vision and being able to execute, and having this healthy fear of failing that drives them to be more persistent, to work harder than the next person: that's a magic formula.*
>
> JOE KRAUS, CO-FOUNDER OF EXCITE

> *If you don't make mistakes, you're not working on hard enough problems.*
>
> FRANK WILCZEK

> *Only those who are asleep make no mistakes.*
>
> INGVAR KAMPRAD, FOUNDER OF IKEA

It's not because things are difficult that we dare not venture. It's because we dare not venture that they are difficult.

SENECA

No man ever became great except through many and great mistakes.

WILLIAM GLADSTONE, BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.

ATTRIBUTED TO ALBERT EINSTEIN

Courage is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm.

ATTRIBUTED TO WINSTON CHURCHILL

I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles overcome while trying to succeed.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

Nothing splendid has ever been achieved except by those who dared believe that something inside them was superior to circumstance.

BRUCE BARTON

Talent develops in quiet, character in the torrents of the world.

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

I can be changed by what happens to me in life, but I refuse to be reduced by it.

MAYA ANGELOU

Losers visualize the penalties of failure. Winners visualize the rewards of success.

ROB GILBERT

The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it.

JOHN RUSKIN

What is defeat? Nothing but education; nothing but the first steps to something better.

WENDELL PHILLIPS

Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

XXIII

DUCTUS EXEMPLO · LEAD BY EXAMPLE!

Bearing

A man is never more a man than when he embraces an adventure beyond his control, or when he walks into a battle he isn't sure of winning.

– JOHN ELDREDGE

Courage is almost a contradiction in terms. It means a strong desire to live taking the form of a readiness to die. "He that will lose his life, the same shall save it," is not a piece of mysticism for saints and heroes. It is a piece of everyday advice for sailors or mountaineers. It might be printed in an Alpine guide or a drill book.

This paradox is the whole principle of courage; even of quite earthly or quite brutal courage. A man cut off by the sea may save his life if he will risk it on the precipice. He can only get away from death by continually stepping within an inch of it.

A soldier surrounded by enemies, if he is to cut his way out, needs to combine a strong desire for living with a strange carelessness about dying. He must not merely cling to life, for then he will be a coward, and will not escape. He must not merely wait for death, for then he will be a suicide, and will not escape. He must seek his life in a spirit of furious indifference to it; he must desire life like water and yet drink death like wine.

G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*

FROM THE CODE VAULT

Aut viam inveniam aut faciam. I will find a way, or I will make one.

HANNIBAL

Tôi kratistôi. To the strongest!

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

> *Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once.*
>
> WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Who dares wins.

BRITISH SAS

AMAT VICTORIA CURAM

VICTORY LOVES PREPARATION

“The ones who come out on top are the ones who have been trained in the harder school.”

THUCYDIDES · HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

GRADUATES OF THIS LEVEL EARN THE RANK OF

PATHFINDER

AMAT VICTORIA CURAM



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