

The How-To of Never Giving Up

Regroup



JAUNIQUE SEALEY

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NEVER GIVING UP

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INKSPIRATION PRESS
LOS ANGELES

REGROUP: THE HOW-TO OF NEVER GIVING UP

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For You

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Author's Preface

I've written this book to give you an entirely different perspective on success. I am successful; but that alone doesn't make me *different*. Most successful people can tell you what they *think* made them successful, but really, they don't know and they have even less of an idea of whether or not it will work for you.

No one *along the way* to success thinks about making a map for others – they're too focused on the end goal to leave a trail of breadcrumbs for the competition. This is where I am *different*. Most of the things that I do are for the learning experience. Thankfully, in the process, I've done well, even without a specific focus on money. At some point, I decided that I wanted to learn what made success, well, success. Coming from a legacy of teachers, I believe that you haven't really learned something un-

less you could explain it to a 5 year old. That's been my standard for learning that got me to Duke (graduating high school with enough credits to skip most of the freshman year pre-requisites), to Harvard Law and to passing two Bar Exams in two states, in one shot. So, that was the standard I set for this subject, to ensure that the correct approach is applied to a complicated topic, making the information that I present clear, direct, and actionable.

Learning how to *be* successful for me came from observing, recording and interpreting my navigation of the process of becoming successful and what comes alongside it. I actually left the breadcrumbs with the intention of marking the way. What success means to me, in short, is setting a fulfilling goal, pursuing that goal and navigating all of the expected and unexpected setbacks and obstacles along the way, without giving up. And that last part is the most important. Everyone can dream, and everyone does. Everyone can set a goal and most people do. Many people will actually get going, but the overwhelming majority will stop before they reach the goal. That's the missing knowledge—*how not to give up*.

I wouldn't just write about success with nothing to add other than a 200 page version of my resume. You can find me on LinkedIn for that. In order to earn 200+ pages of your time, I need to present a novel perspective. And so, to write about finding *your* success, I have written a book about *failure*.

Through this book, I hope to show you and others how to

talk about failure and how to learn from it. Experiencing failure doesn't make you a Failure. The process and experience of failure is nothing to fear, nothing to be ashamed of, and in fact should be celebrated and studied. Failure is valuable experience. Imagine how much more we could learn from each other if we shared and discussed our own. This is my small contribution to try to change the world for the better.

Let's do this.

Introduction

This book is *not* a victory lap. This book is a *map*. After experiencing success in bone fide adulthood, I realized that all along, I really hadn't known very much about it.

The funny thing is, I certainly thought I knew – I guess we all do, but I was *wrong*. Similar to many, I grew up with the conventional idea of what success meant. To me success looked like big homes, fast cars, expensive jewelry, private jets, shopping sprees, trips to Paris and Hawaii, and hobnobbing with other elite, successful people. From my point of view, to become successful meant perfectionism leading to a cornerstone career achievement, followed by a financial windfall. And, at least according to *Forbes*, this was all supposed to happen before 40. *I've* never seen their “50 Under 50” list. Have you?

I was perfectly positioned to follow that path. I excelled in a rigorous high-school, and only applied to one college, Duke University, my first choice. I was accepted. At Duke I chose a challenging major in the Engineering School and while there, I worked intensely to gain acceptance into Harvard Law School, again my first choice. At Harvard, I worked even more relentlessly and earned a coveted summer internship at a prestigious Wall Street law firm in my first year of school. In law school, a summer internship is called a summer associate position. This is the gateway to permanent employment, if you manage to get an offer at the end of your summer. These jobs were the proverbial “golden ticket.” If you stayed 10 years, you were guaranteed to become a millionaire as an attorney with no new skill set required other than the ability to work hard and build endurance for long hours.

While most students, even at Harvard Law School, would have no certainty of employment until a successful performance during the summer after their *second* year of law school, at the end of that summer after my *first* year, atypically, I was offered permanent employment. And, while seemingly on a rocket ship trajectory to the letter of what I was *supposed* to do, I opted to make a wide turn, wrenching my story off the traditional route.

I knew I was expected to remain on the pre-established path toward success, and while I was entirely grateful for the opportunities before me, something inside screamed for more – I wanted a different life. Although I aspired to success and even the riches

that followed, I wanted to craft my own path toward it, whatever that entailed. And so, just when I had gotten comfortable with a relatively certain future, I decided to chart a different course.

I acted on my desire to work in the music industry and took a job, for less than half of what I had been offered at the law firm, at a startup record label. At the end of law school, I gave up my coveted law firm position and became an official employee of a company with an uncertain future.

The good times were short-lived. Just one year after graduation, funding for the company I had chosen over conventional wisdom, ran dry. The experience I had exchanged for my “golden ticket” now meant that my paychecks came in varying amounts, yet my bills stayed the same. I was devastated, but I had to figure a way out of my situation. I didn’t realize it, but this was my first experience with traumatic failure and I felt woefully unprepared. My life of dreams had turned into a nightmare. In a panic, I found a second job that would allow me to work as many hours as I could physically stand— I pushed myself to the limit to maximize overtime pay. I did it so that I could continue to pay my rent and afford my car until I figured out my next move. I did it because each hour that I worked felt like one more hour I could put between myself and complete defeat. I could do it because I knew, somehow, that this would give me the resources I needed to create the options that would then help me find my next step.

That first smacking failure set me off on an unscripted jour-

ney, where I experienced many other setbacks to follow. I decided to move to a new city, Los Angeles, where I would find a wider range of opportunities. It took me a year to find my footing, as I navigated the gamut of money issues, searching for a job, housing instability and more. As I had gone “off script” so to speak, as an attorney, it was tough finding someone who wanted to take a chance on me and my unusual resume. Everyone else in my position had worked at a law firm, which was the conventional hiring profile. Even more of a barrier, as an attorney, you have to take and pass a rigorous Bar Exam in order to obtain a license to work in each state where you plan to practice. Although I took the exam three days after setting foot in California, results take at least six months to receive. So, I had to try different avenues to earn a living. I took jobs that I never imagined would follow having a law degree, like tutoring French, and collecting student email addresses on the University of Southern California campus as a marketing rep.

To be honest, while stumbling my way through it all in the early days, whenever I hit a setback, I’d immediately feel like giving up. And, in the face of adversity and extremely challenging circumstances, I did give up on some of the options I had created. I stopped shopping my screenplay, I gave up on writing the blog that I launched, I stopped going to auditions – ending all of my most entrepreneurial pursuits because I felt uncomfortable and wanted to run back as quickly as I could to the safety of my traditional path that, by this time, I was starting to think I should never have given up in the first place.

I had been trained and conditioned to believe, through years of traditional preparation, that a failure, setback or negative outcome was unequivocally bad and an indication that the path that led to it should be immediately abandoned and avoided. It was a very simple logic, reinforced by decades of grades, of binary *pass* and *fail* experiences; of applications and acceptance and measurement against a pre-existing mark. So, as I'm sure you can imagine, here I was thinking I could dare to dream, and try something different than virtually 99% of my classmates and I got knocked down and kicked as my seeming "reward" for taking a risk.

Once I had ventured off the treaded path and into the woods of charting my own course, it felt like life started to fight me, hitting me with challenge after challenge after challenge. At the time, I didn't know that I was supposed to fight back. I didn't know that I was supposed to ball up my fists and keep going. I had to learn. And once I realized that I would never find the conventional path fulfilling, I did start learning how to make my own way on the route less traveled.

In the pages that follow, I'm going to teach you how to make your own way, even out of no way – for whatever you desire. It doesn't matter if you want to find the courage to move just slightly from the norm, to stand out a little more from the crowd of your competition, or, instead go full steam into charting your own course, this book is your how-to guide with advice you'll need to know. This is how to not give up.

Resilience – the New *Must-Have* Skill

Let's face it, I'm an adventurer. I've only told you very little about myself so far, but I'm sure we'd agree on that. So, when I realized that my nature wasn't aligned with my preparation or conditioning, I had to learn a new skillset – one that would allow me to reframe my thinking and not quit when the setbacks arose. I had to learn to reinterpret obstacles, and frame impossible tasks as just another problem to be solved, in order to continue my journey. I had to learn how to turn situations that called for a complete breakdown into a needed breakthrough.

After cutting my teeth on bucking convention by moving to LA and establishing myself, things eventually started to turn in my favor. Before I knew it, I had managed to land what I thought was my dream job at the world's largest record company. I tried my best to stay happy with that, as long as I could—I really did. Although, I knew in that role, I was back in the groove of another well-worn path to the top. Again came that familiar feeling, of suffocation, of the desire for change and the need to make a new way for myself. So, again, I ventured off – away from the comforts of convention to start another adventure.

Change is Hard

We'll get to more of my story later – but now, let's shift gears to talk about you and what you'd like out of this time we'll spend together. If you enjoy consistent comfort—if you want to hold onto any excuse to stay the same, and keep your life the way it is,

then this is probably not the book for you. The words that follow were written purposefully to spark a transformation. They were crafted with intention to walk you through a clear and effective process for achieving your goals. Experience may have already taught you that change is hard, so you know that in order to create a positive difference in your life, you have to want it.

Change uproots the comforts of what we know and can control, yet it is necessary to grow and thrive, and certainly to attain the highest reaches of our imagination. Everyone doesn't have to want or need broad sweeping changes – adventure isn't the warmest cup of tea. Sometimes, it's just incremental, done to achieve more fulfillment, breathe new life into a stale idea, or even simply to have more life options. Perhaps, you want change because the stress of the familiar is overwhelming and you need to find a clearer focus and less distraction. You are choosing for yourself more productivity, a better lifestyle, to take bolder risks and maximize your potential.

The current course of action isn't working. Innovation is needed to move past stubborn obstacles to achieve unfulfilled dreams. In order to get what you want, you need to change something. And that something, or someone, I should say, is *you*. Change is the only path for those who for any variety of reasons need to *find a new way*. The new way means obstacles and uncertainty that may have ended your previous attempts. This time, you're not on your own. I'm here with you – and I've got the map. This time, you'll know how to Regroup.

This is Your Success Story

Some part of you may still wonder what success has to do with regrouping. I understand why. These days, every success story sounds like a Eureka! moment—as if success runs in the veins of only a few pre-determined people and shows up through some miraculous immediate breakthrough or public victory. We hear about success as if it is only discovered, rather than deliberately invented. Like any good teacher, I happen to believe in showing the work.

The real story of breakthrough comes from learning about what was broken through. But we don't talk about this. Not soon enough – not while it's happening. And so we miss the best part of the story – the portion we could actually learn from, benefit from and use.

Challenges deliver setbacks and failures. This we know for sure. Most successful people have integrated and ingrained their responses to adversity so deeply that they don't even notice it anymore. That's a real loss for the rest of us. To reach that level of success, the one thing that they must have mastered, is how to expertly navigate adversity and setbacks while still maintaining a relentless dedication to their goals. How wonderful would it be to be taught *that* skillset?

Unfortunately, in our society, failure is associated with shame, so it is hidden. By the time most successful people feel confident enough to share their story, they generally no longer remember

the most instructional details of how they achieved success. Instead, what they can explain is pieced together from the sporadic memories of a travelled path. Their best advice is often summarized by clichéd platitudes and generalities with no real meaning like, “never give up.” But what does this mean, to “never give up?” I took it upon myself to learn. After much research, one-on-one interviews, and reviewing key moments of my own life, I learned it means, in short, to Regroup.

To Regroup means that no matter what happens, you always see the light illuminating your next step. And you take it. It means that you honor your pain, discouragement and disappointment; but you don't let them own you. You not only face the day with gratitude, but the night as well. To Regroup means that you learn your lessons and mark your accomplishments. It means that you're not afraid to face reality and that “reality checks” fuel and amplify your dreams rather than dull and deaden them. It means that you need good people around you and equally that you recognize the need to be of service to others. To Regroup means that you do not give up, even when you decide to quit. Regrouping is the unstoppable alignment of your purpose and power in a forward direction. You have this within you and now is the time to access it.

You Are Not Alone

At any given moment, there are millions of us who need to Regroup. Based on my experience, I believe that the greatest glories of my life, and yours, have and will come along with the relentless pursuit of very worthwhile goals. What makes a goal worthwhile is personal. I have my reasons and you'll have your own. For many, worthwhile means going after the big wins: following through on your dream of a new career; advancing in your current career; starting a new business, or educational pursuit, reaching health or fitness goals, or starting a family. These are some of the pillars of life that determine our daily experience, how we feel each morning, what we do during the day, how we view ourselves, and how we're able to maximize our time. Other worthwhile goals may be to learn how to declutter, minimize stress, find more time to spend with family, or how to paint, write code or garden. You're the only person who knows what truly lights your fire from the inside.

Despite living in times of uncertainty, we live in a period of unprecedented opportunity. Anyone can truly do anything and become the person that her or his mind conceives. What if you could harness that same process and that same power to your own benefit? To do your own good? What if you could become who you dream of being? And what if you could do what you dream of doing? If you could do anything you wanted to do, what would it be?

Aside from my educational pursuits, I have had four distinct and significant desires. First, I wanted to work in the music industry. You already know part of that story – except how it ended. I wound up in my *dream job* as an executive for the largest record company in the world, crafting the business models for the new digital era of the music business. I left to work with team Lady Gaga, and ultimately, I was hired directly by Prince. Second, I wanted the freedom to control my time and my geography. Since 2011, I haven't worked out of an office, nor has anyone determined my location or schedule other than me. Third, I wanted to publish my own book and become a paid speaker and writer. In 2012, I travelled nearly 100,000 miles around the world for paid engagements following the publication of my third book. Fourth, I wanted to launch a cosmetics brand that would be on QVC. This story, I'll tell you in the pages that follow. Do I have other goals? Sure – they're developing every day. But, my scorecard is different. This journey is my success. It is knowing that I can pick any goal that I want, and execute the same process to accomplish and see it through. When I hit an obstacle? I simply Regroup and keep going. What some people measure in money, I measure in an account of a different nature. I make sure my internal tank is full, and that my light is always on. This is my success. What is it that you really, truly want to do?

Success is not built on success. It's built on failure. It's built on frustration. Sometimes it's built on catastrophe.

– Sumner Redstone

To Talk About Success, Talk About Failure

To help you find your path, we need to take a unique approach to thinking about success and living in our purpose. To talk about success and to learn how to Regroup, we are going to have to talk about failure. As Albert Einstein once said, “*Failure is success in progress.*” Talking about failure is how we show the process of success.

The topic of failure is uncomfortable and often swept under the rug as something we acknowledge but don't really want to entertain. Most often, when we reference failure, we speak of it as a fixed circumstance. Something *is* a failure, or even worse and more inaccurate, *he* or *she* is a Failure. To add further insult to the injury of these moments, we take them and make them shameful, magnifying the pain and discouragement that follows, virtually insuring that we never get the full benefit of others' experiences. The time has come to set the record straight. As long as you have the gift of this day, it is impossible for you to truly or permanently fail.

Your Lightbulb Moment

I chose the symbol of this book very carefully. First, for reasons I'll explain in a second, I felt like it was the embodiment of what it means to Regroup. Second, I wanted you to have something that you would see everywhere that would remind you of your journey, to be able to recognize the brilliance all around you, and the certainty of your success if you just keep going.

Since it is such a mundane part of our lives today, it's hard to conceptualize what a landmark invention the lightbulb was at first. This was back in the day when candles were all people had to keep them out of the dark. Electric light paved the way for the industrial revolution and the advancement of science and education. It allowed us to control our internal environments and truly and comfortably set our own clocks, rather than being governed by the schedule of the sun. The lightbulb was the key that unlocked our ability to control time and circumstances. It illuminates our way, even when the time for darkness has come, so that we may continue. And this is exactly what Regrouping is.

“Genius is one per cent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration.”

– Edison

The perception that failure is final is an illusion that does us a disservice. It makes us think that we have permission to move on, resignedly, without reconsideration. We're encouraged to interpret failure as meaning that something is just “not for us” and that we should look for greener pastures rather than search for water to nurture the very grass we're standing on. This is not the path to success and it's certainly not what Edison so beautifully described. Success relies not just on luck, but on the experience gained by trying, failing and *learning*.

Keeping Track

Somewhere along the way of my journey, when I noticed a pattern in my experience of goal setting and reaching those goals, I began to keep a journal. I recognized that my mindset at the end of a challenging process was very different from what it had been along the way, and especially at the beginning. In order to truly know what the process of never giving up looked like, I was going to have to keep a record of my thoughts and feelings - a real-time representation of my internal environment.

One day as I was looking back through the journal, it dawned on me that I had solidified my approach - not giving up had become ingrained in my actions and philosophy. I realized that this was an incredibly powerful process to have. I started looking more carefully through each entry in my journal. Had I missed something? I remembered many times *feeling* overwhelmed and I certainly remembered *wanting to quit*. But why didn't I? What allowed me to keep going through the compounding of soul-crushing defeats, arriving one after another?

Looking back over my words, what I saw was unexpected. In the language of my journal was reflected an identifiable pattern of feelings, thoughts and behavior that I exhibited in making my way from one setback to the next. Unconsciously, I was doing the same things, using the same process and toolkit over and over again. Not only had I unknowingly developed a consistent and repeatable process for dealing with failure and traumatic setbacks,

for doing the “impossible,” but now I had a record of it – a map, so to speak, that I could process for myself and then share with others.

Once I had fully internalized this discovery, I began to look to others for signs of a similar process, especially those well-known for their success – in the breadcrumbs and fragments of what they said in interviews, memoirs, videos and blog posts. Once you know what you’re looking for, you’d be surprised how much can be found. And what I did find was that there was an interconnection of instruction – not in the form of advice, but in the actual details of their *story*. While these incredible success examples were giving the well-meaning platitudes of “never give up” advice, hidden in their own story was the real treasure of *how*.

And so here I introduce to you the concept of *Regroup* – what it means to be resilient through life’s harshest obstacles, and to reach your own space of resolve and conviction. This is a place where you do not face setbacks with resignation, but instead perseverance, resilience and grit. This is a process to give you clear passage to follow your own worthwhile goal into the life of your dreams by taking the bite out of what stops most people along the way. Because success is an unavoidable, inevitable destination if you could just learn how to keep going. Discover for yourself what it means to find inspiration in your toughest times and most challenging of circumstances.

In doing this, you become a member of my beloved Regroup Nation, my dream of building a coalition of dreamers and doers, who through purpose and conviction, live out the fullest corners of their lives with accomplishment and meaning.

Join me on this journey.

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Regroup

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You are appreciated!

Chapter 1:

Three Truths About Failure, Loss and Unintended Outcomes

Failing, Falling and Flying

I had never flown on a private plane before this trip, yet, similar to our flight to New York, on the flight back to Minneapolis, I was one of only three passengers, including *the* legendary artist, Prince. At the outset, I was so green about this mode of travel that I started to panic, believing that we were going to “miss our flight” because we had arrived at the airport so late. Instead, almost synchronized with the last person’s feet reaching the top of the airstairs, the airplane door closed immediately behind us and we taxied down the runway for takeoff.

On the flight, we discussed preparations for the impending

Welcome to Chicago performances and corresponding events. Even though I was originally employed as a lawyer for Prince and his record label, I had taken on some business responsibilities along with managerial duties for some of his New Power Generation roster artists. One of my first responsibilities was to make sure that one of the artists would make her promotional rounds and otherwise have a successful performance to introduce her to the Chicago audience. Although we were landing in Minneapolis near midnight, our flight in the morning to Chicago was just hours away.

Leaving the airport, from the back of our SUV, Prince said to me, “I’d like to do a performance before Chicago.”

I didn’t turn to look at him, but based on the simplicity of the statement and the hour of night, I thought that he was being wistful, rather than delivering notice of a wish to be fulfilled.

“I know, it would have been nice if we could.” I said.

He didn’t say another word the rest of the ride. In the seat behind me, he sat silently facing forward, his eyes covered by his customary dark glasses and his lips simply closed. Thinking the conversation was complete, I turned my thoughts to the next day’s responsibilities as the car continued to Paisley Park.

Arriving at Paisley, I just expected that we, the business team, would drop Prince off, settle any lingering details for the next day

and head off to the “home away from home” hotel to steal what was left of the sleeping hours for the night. So, if you can imagine, I was simply shocked to walk into the Paisley soundstage area and see the band bustling about in the lobby. It wasn’t unusual for them to still be there, rehearsing at all hours of night; what was unusual was that they were actually packing up. *Quitting early?* I thought. *The night before we leave for a big show?* And then, I saw the girls, popping into the generous bathroom to put on their makeup. *Putting on makeup...* I wondered. And, then it clicked. We weren’t going to the hotel and neither was the band. There was going to be a show.

I remember next being in the car speeding into downtown Minneapolis, arriving at First Avenue, the location made famous as Prince’s first performance of the incomparable classic *Purple Rain*. The significance of history was lost to me in that moment, however, because my mind was sent reeling by the unfolding of a complete 15-piece band performance that had suddenly materialized before me in real time – all from a simple utterance on the way from the airport 45 minutes prior, that I thought should be dismissed as impossible.

It was *happening*. As I sat in the back corner of the darkened club, next to Prince at a two-top high table, the band had taken the stage and it was only then with a look of mild amusement that he said his next words to me.

“So what do you think, Jaunique?”

Simultaneously, I wanted to sink into the floor and float up to the clouds. Yes, my ego had been bruised a bit and I felt foolish in front of my idol turned boss, but I had learned that day. While my mind was conceiving impossibility, “impossible” was already being accomplished by someone with a different perspective.

The next day, we continued to Chicago and I wish I could say I had left my blunders in downtown Minneapolis. I hadn't.

Following a listening party at the Chicago House of Blues, we were to embark on a grueling schedule of morning shows and PR rounds the next day starting at 4:30 am. I probably went to bed at 3 am. Thank God for the amazing showers at the Chicago Four Seasons, it was the only good part of that day.

Before 5 am, I had assembled eleven members of Prince's band, The NPG, to accompany our artist to a morning show performance, scheduled to air at the 6 am hour. With everyone accounted for, we boarded the Sprinter bus and headed to the station. When we arrived, we entered a soundstage with nothing but a piano. No drum kit, no guitar amps, not even microphones, nothing needed for the performance. Nothing, except an 11-piece band, and me feeling like an incompetent disaster.

I was mortified. I called our PR executive on the West Coast and in her sleepy voice, she insistently told me that the lack of instruments was my fault, and that “everybody knows” that you need to order backline to perform at a television station. Every-

body but me. Evidently, there is no “I” in everybody, because *I did. not. know. that.*

Unbelievably, I had to shepherd the entire *professional* band back onto the bus because we were going to have to cancel the performance. To say I was devastated would be like calling an amputation a paper cut. I was stunned – and humiliated. If I could, I would have evaporated into the wind, and blown off in a wisp of the brisk Chicago morning air.

In full triage mode on the phone with Prince’s manager, she was able to scramble a backup set of instruments from the United Center to meet us at the next interview location in time to make our appointment. I will never forget the relief I felt when I heard the sweet sound of those horns starting the familiar opening bars of the performance song. A relief that washed over quickly and was replaced with dread – knowing that there would be hell to pay when Prince found out.

Still operating on no sleep, once we had made our a.m. rounds, I collapsed on my bed at the hotel, not even taking notice of the luxe surroundings. My mother and cousin had driven in from Detroit, and it was all I could do to respond to their questions. Not only was I exhausted, I was also personally spent. Every atom in my body felt like lead. Sure, perhaps it was a rookie mistake, but the stakes were so high – on all levels. Eleven people dragged themselves out of their beds at the crack of dawn, for a broadcast television performance that had to be cancelled specifically

because of *my* mistake. I had let myself down, our artist and the band, and worst of all, Prince, who had entrusted me with such a huge responsibility.

The tortuous minutes passed until the phone in my hotel room finally rang. The message was simple, “Your services are no longer needed here.”

And just like that, the travel team called me to make my arrangements to take the first flight back to Los Angeles.

Once I got back to LA, I perched my shattered remains into a chair in my living room where I think I sat for days. I played it over in my mind, the incredible *Welcome to Chicago* performances at the United Center that I would be missing. How I was embarrassed and humiliated and disappointed and just, simply undone. For a week, I walked through my own echo chamber of thoughts – thinking I had not only completely blown my opportunity with Prince, but that I had also now become a Failure in the most spectacular way.

The pain was immense, an exquisite shame mixed with loss, mixed with a gripping and physical fear. It felt like a consequence that would alter the entire course of my life. As an engineer by education and an attorney by training, I had spent over a decade fully immersed in a world of precision and relentless attention to detail. I typically would never find myself in a completely unfamiliar circumstance, let alone over my head in

a situation beyond my knowledge and capabilities. This was a first. My confidence was shaken - the very way I defined myself, as a competent professional, had been eroded. Sure, I had made mistakes in the past, but they had only been to my detriment, not others. I could make them invisible, socially and professionally as long as I internalized their effects, putting on a brave face to the world around me. But in this, my shame was public - my errors had touched others. I wondered how could I face them, any of them, ever again.

Now, perhaps the above seems a bit extreme – melodramatic, even. In retrospect, it was really not that big of a deal. Instruments were located, and the performance got rescheduled. I had been thrust into a completely unfamiliar situation; I made a rookie mistake – and we all lived to tell the tale. On the radar of life, this likely amounted to less than a blip. So why devote so much time to it?

At the time of a setback, of a failure or mishap, there is no perspective. There is only the present. And in the present, you feel overwhelmed, drowning in your own feelings and perhaps even the immediate judgments of others. Time has not yet addressed the chaos you feel within; you have no way of contextualizing the current events in light of their future resolution. The weight of *now* is the heaviest burden.

During one of my very first conversations with Prince, he told me the story of his friend, another well-known musician, who

had cultivated a spirit of freedom and fearlessness in his daughter. A trait Prince seemed to admire. He said that he asked his friend what he did to give her that nature. In reply, the friend said that as a little girl, he would take his daughter to a flight of stairs. He'd put her on the step, lower ones at first, stand back a bit, and encourage her to jump into his arms. Of course, he caught her. Their game continued over time, progressing to higher and higher steps. Yet, no matter how high she climbed and how far the fall, her father always caught her. Of this, Prince said, "this is what I want for you." His "you" was generous and wasn't just in reference to me; it meant all of us working for him.

It took me a long time to understand, but I began to realize that I was fooling no one about my lack of experience as I attempted new things. He knew that I was a novice. I was the one who didn't know. He wasn't giving me opportunities to fail, he was giving me opportunities to *fly*.

About a week passed following my first class seat on the "flight of shame" back to Los Angeles. I was contemplating moving to Antarctica where I wouldn't have to tell anyone that I'd been fired by *the* Prince when my phone rang.

And just as if I hadn't been sent to my own planet of misery, as sure as if nothing had happened, Prince's manager was on the line with a new assignment.

"But...I thought I had been fired?" I managed to say.

“Oh, you were. From Chicago and working with his artist. Now, Prince wants you to only work with him.”



You can't learn to fly without spreading your wings and taking leaps. My time with Prince was a first-hand education in many of the fundamental qualities of life: dedication to excellence, hard work, determination, resilience. But, what I really learned was that nothing in life, no matter how big the moment seems at the time, is important enough to stop you from trying again. You can always fix what is broken; you can always make your second chance, but you can never regain the chance you didn't take. I realized that impossible, really, is just your opinion. And sometimes in life, it just might take getting fired, to get promoted.

Talking About Failure

We simply do not talk enough about our failures. Especially the really painful, catastrophic ones that threaten our very sense of self. These are the failures that leave us vulnerable to the judgment of others. There's something about setback that feels so deeply personal, that if we do share it with someone, it's almost as if we've given a key to open the very core of who we are as a person. And perhaps, we won't have any protection for what is found there. Holding our failures in, and making them secrets makes us susceptible to the crushing weight of shame that we've been taught to associate with failure.

Even the word *failure* has its own power – it implies an inherent trait of character that once triggered, risks becoming an immutable, predictive and concrete description of its owner. It's as much of a weapon as it is a label, bludgeoning the accused with a hopeless future and summarily wiping away prior accomplishments.

Yet, when we speak of *success* – it too carries a meaning beyond its definition. Success is a badge of honor to be worn by its holder that may often even substitute for actual character failings. It is referred to as a result, a finality that also wipes away any semblance of *process*, especially the process that led to its achievement.

In the way we commonly speak, you *become* a Success or a Failure, rather than having *achieved* a success or having *experienced* a failure. And we subscribe to this perception, even though the latter is closer to reality. In fact, success and failure are impermanent, fleeting results – creations outside of the person, not the person herself.

When we hide our failures, we create the space for fear to foster. But *why*? Why be afraid to fail? If we knew more about what was on the other side of failure, how it can serve us and what makes it a part of success, we'd develop a power over this fear. For that to happen, however, we have to stop hiding our failures. We have to *talk* about them.

We race to hear stories of *success* but are only just starting

to acknowledge in our collective consciousness that failure also deserves its seat at the table. Without the complete story of the role that failure plays, the biggest and most visible success stories become little more than victory laps, often coming up short in helping the rest of us understand the key question: *How did you survive that with your dream intact?*

Without the answer to that question – without the lesson and knowledge of an accessible process that we ourselves could repeat, we assign mythological status to the heroes of the success stories we know. We subscribe to this categorization of “us” and “them,” choosing to increase the distance between ourselves and our own dreams, and accept the thinking that only certain people have the *stroke of luck*. But in true innovation, in creative pursuits and in living the life of one’s dreams, there is no such thing as luck. There is only a process. Knowledge of this process can close the door to fear of failure and conquer the experience of disappointment and doubt that comes from ambitious pursuits.

When the Stakes are High

It’s not the simple losses that sting—the loss of a regular season game, the loss of a dollar or a small bet in the casino. These are the easy “coin toss” failures that we can ignore. Not only have we risked and lost little, but we expected little as well.

Compare this to a situation in which you expected a result that would change the fundamental condition of your life in some way and possibly even risked something of similar value.

This is the loss and resulting disappointment that we're all afraid of. We run from it – because it is sure to be painful. We avoid it because we don't know the damage it will wreck against us. We don't know what it will take from us and if we will ever get it back. It is the proverbial monster under the bed, lying in wait for our tiniest slip up, to then drag us into the abyss.

These are the losses that feel most debilitating. Yet, as I learned, even when we encounter them, we can find a way to move on. Perhaps not without pain or hard work, but we can certainly survive it to meet the opportunity of another day.

Beyoncé and the Risk of the “This is It” Narrative

In 2013, without warning or promotion, international superstar Beyoncé released an eponymous “visual album” that reached platinum status almost overnight. Not only did she coin the term “visual album,” her popularity also drove an innovation that changed the entire music industry and the way new albums are released. It is now normal to hear about an album release through friends first or via social media, as a “surprise release.”

On that album, there is a song called “Flawless” that begins with footage of a young Beyoncé appearing on the television show *Star Search* along with her group Girls Tyme.¹ The segment is short, but if you watch a longer version, you'll see these young ladies stand perfectly still as their performance is rated, resulting in a disappointing loss to their competitor, a metal band named Skeleton Crew, that incidentally no one has heard from since.²

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THE REGROUP

Chapter 2:

Control Your Inner Dialogue

Wired to Conserve Energy

As humans, we have a propensity to conserve energy. Blame our biology. We're not inclined to expend effort on doing something, unless we can be reasonably assured of a likely payoff. This is quite bad news if you face the prospect of starting a new or innovative process, moving beyond a setback or disappointment, or if you perceive that the odds are stacked against you in some way or another.

A team of scientists at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver discovered that the human body, in search of even the smallest energy savings, will contort itself almost instantly to minimize caloric spend when walking. The researchers outfitted subjects with

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Chapter 4: Debrief

Sometimes, at the conclusion of a project, wise leaders schedule a debrief. A debrief brings all of the players back together to talk about what they did, how they did it and to extract the lessons for the future. In a world where we tend toward moving on quickly once something is done, a debrief requires to you linger just a little longer and put in some extra work—for yourself. During a debrief, everyone on the team is expected to undertake a methodical process of determining what happened during the experience and how they felt along the way. Then through an analytical process, asking questions, and examining thoughts, behaviors and decisions, they evaluate the experience to identify the lessons that can be learned for the future.

The process of a debrief can also be used personally to properly extract the valuable lessons presented during a challenge and to inform your plan for the future, even if you do it on your own with just your journal as your witness.

Dr. James Pennebaker, a social psychologist, researcher and professor at the University of Texas at Austin has conducted some very interesting experiments on the effects of expressive writing on both emotional and physical well-being, as well as on tangible positive professional results, such as being rehired after a layoff.

In an early study, while researching people with terminal illnesses and autoimmune disorders, he found that by simply giving patients an exercise to write out their thoughts and emotions in the context of receiving treatment, those who did so tended to fare better in managing the symptoms of their illness. Even HIV patients found their immune system counts higher than those who had not pursued the same outlets.¹⁹

Dr. Pennebaker's subsequent study, "Expressive Writing and Coping with Job Loss," details the astonishing result that proved that people who write about their thoughts and emotions relating to a job loss (i.e., *expressive writing*) are prone to be rehired faster than those who do not.²⁰

In the experiment, 63 individuals affected by a layoff, ranging in age from 40 to 68 years, and who had been working for an av-

erage of 20 years for their former employer, were given the option to participate in a writing exercise as part of their outplacement support activities. Of the 63 people in the study, 20 were in the group that would engage in the *expressive writing* exercise. The control group, consisting of 21 people, would also write, but only about basic objective details, such as the activities that they had planned for each day generally, or as part of the search for employment. The remaining 22 individuals in the group, would be non-writers, serving as a control group to measure against the expressive writing group.

After the first three months of the experiment, in the expressive writing experimental group, 5 individuals had gotten new jobs; none in the writing control group and 2 in the non-writing control group. After eight months of the experiment, 10 out of 19 of the expressive writers (one dropped out) had found full-time employment, as compared to only 5 of the 21 writing control group subjects and 3 of the 22 non-writing control subjects. In fact, the results were so clear that the experiment, originally designed to continue for a year, was stopped after this time so that all of the participants, including those in the control groups could take part in the obvious benefits of expressive writing in their own job searches.

The other aspect of these results to note is that those in the expressive writing group were not observed to send any more letters, make any more contacts or receive any more phone calls

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Chapter 5:

Rely on “Forceful Congratulators”

A “Forceful Congratulator” may sound like a non-sequitur and in some ways, the actual person is as unique and unusual as the title. Many of us, taught to be achievers, are raised from childhood within a system that clearly rewards *winning* and punishes *losing*. This system has entrenched in us a very binary way of looking at ourselves. We get *grades* and we are hired, or fired—we graduate or we don’t; we *fail* or *succeed*. And all of this means something pretty definitive when it comes to considering the options available to us for our future. Because the consequences are entrenched at such an early age, we internalize the teacher, the critic, and the measurement to make sure that we always make the mark and never fall below it. But, what we do not learn to do is congratulate ourselves for a job not

well-done, but a job half-done.

If we miss the mark of our goals and objectives, we are not likely to throw ourselves an “almost, but not quite” party to celebrate our accomplishments. In fact, if someone did this on our behalf, we’d probably become offended and march out. Most of us do not want false praise.

False praise is not useful along the path of learning, growth and progress. It can do the job of temporarily bolstering our damaged egos, but not the real work of building actual confidence in ourselves and our capabilities. This aside, even when we do not make it all the way to our goal, we still need to recover and recognize what was actually achieved in the attempt. This type of congratulations is not a replacement for the rewards of a goal met, nor should it erase your goal or substitute your drive to accomplish that goal. It should not completely eliminate the itch of discomfort from knowing that something you badly want still eludes you.

What we want to avoid, is the discomfort becoming so heavy, so unnecessarily thick that we are unable to see the breadcrumbs of success that we earned along the way. A little bit of discomfort is good; too much can be destructive. To balance, false praise is also unwanted, as it threatens to prematurely remove our discomfort and lull us into complacency. Yet, for some of us, the resistance to *any* praise is so strong that a truly forceful voice, from someone that you not only trust, but who is credible, informed

lessons and value to be found, no matter how things turned out; and finally, they should be credible—someone that you look up to and trust, with your best interests at heart and with some working knowledge of the situation at hand.

Some Thoughts Especially for Women and Girls

Sara Blakely's story is encouraging and unusual, not just because of the level of success that she's attained. Girls and the women we grow into tend to need forceful congratulators more than men. From what I've observed, *we*, myself included, sometimes internalize failure more often and more deeply. In terms of self-talk, we speak a different language. Whereas it seems that our male counterparts are more adept at finding an external attribution for shortcomings, women, we tend to blame ourselves and be less forgiving of our own mistakes. Perhaps, the world around us is also less forgiving of our mistakes as well. The need to prove ourselves becomes a persistent habit and distraction. So, as a woman, to have someone who can break through what can be louder noise, the defeating self-talk, is invaluable. This doesn't mean that men don't need a forceful congratulator, because they certainly do, but women might need one more often to balance our apparent inclinations.

At the risk of a generalization, I do believe that men are naturally more boastful, perhaps in some way conditioned to be so, and therefore are accustomed to taking credit as well as seeking and accepting praise more frequently. I've seen many (not all)

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REFOCUS

Chapter 6: How to Quit Without Giving Up

So far, I've spent this entire book encouraging you to stick with it, whatever "it" happens to be, no matter what. Now comes the time that we couple the pepper with the salt. You've been prepared with the right attitude, and know that you always have an opportunity to persevere. So, now, the coast is clear to give you some additional options.

The truth is, every attempt is not going to be the winning shot. Given unlimited time, resources and energy, you can accomplish absolutely anything you set out to do, even without finding the optimal way to get there. That said, and this is very important, we do not have unlimited time, resources or energy. Whatever we choose to put our efforts toward will necessarily

take away from something else that we could also pursue. For this reason, our minds, similar to our bodies, are always taking us through the “*is it worth it?*” exercise, forcing us to constantly evaluate the cost of any effort we exert. In fact, it is often that “*is it worth it?*” question that derails us from an otherwise worthwhile pursuit because the weight of that question combined with any doubts lingering in our minds can often be too heavy to bear. As a result, we drop some of our best ideas and efforts because that single shred of doubt becomes magnified by the normal course of questioning in our own minds.

It is important not to let your ambitions, projects and plans come to a premature end. It is critical that you do not let the weight of doubt, whether magnified or not, convince you to turn a setback into a full-scale permanent stop. Coupled with that understanding, the reality is that some *projects* you attempt should at some point come to a conclusion, even before your actual goal is met. For whatever the reason, the *attempt* will be incomplete; perhaps due to missing resources, like time, money, knowledge, or even physical or emotional energy. An incomplete attempt does not mean a final end to an incomplete goal, dream or ambition. It just means that it may be time for you to pause, gather yourself, let the emotions come and pass, so that you can heal and start again with an improved plan.

In this chapter, we will discuss how you can quit, without ever giving up.

“The size of your success is measured by the strength of your desire; the size of your dream; and how you handle disappointment along the way.”

– Robert Kiyosaki

In any daring pursuit, there will come an inevitable moment when the task outmatches your skill, wit, resources and possibly even energy. Throughout this book, you have learned how to manage the way you interpret this moment. But, now what should you do? To Regroup in this moment means simply giving yourself a break. Temporally give it up, and just, for a precious few moments, lift off all of the weight of your struggle and relax. When you hit a wall, the best approach is not just to plow through it; it is to take a step back for a pause to gain perspective.

Giving yourself a break doesn't need to be a long and intense effort. There are many shortcuts and 'cheats' to provide a quick reset. Sleep is an incredible tool for resetting, as is exercise.⁴⁰ In a study published by Emily Bernstein, a Harvard University researcher, participants had an easier time managing their emotions in a controlled experiment, following a period of moderate aerobic exercise.⁴¹ You can literally walk right into a new attitude.

Whichever path or method you choose, the most important thing is to give yourself permission to pause. Burning out is a completely avoidable end to an otherwise worthy endeavor. And believe me, I certainly wish that I had this advice on hand in some of my earliest pursuits.

How to Quit

Quitting can be a process, a rewarding one, if you approach it that way. In order to do that, at the time of a setback, given the strong negative emotions and thoughts that swirl, if you feel like you want to quit, the first thing to do is allow that feeling and entertain the thought. Don't act on the impulse, but engage in the purely mental exercise. Assume that you were going to act on how you feel. In this particular circumstance, what would it mean to quit? Does it mean affirmatively doing something? Does it mean not doing something? Does it mean not fulfilling an existing obligation? Is the next immediate step to take something that you absolutely cannot do, or is it something that you simply do not *want* to do?

As I have found in my own experience, in the times that I most wanted to quit, the next step was not something that I could not do – in fact, the next step was fairly minor. The problem was that I did not want to do it. I was uncomfortable and wanted the discomfort to end immediately. If you've reached a place that the next step is something you cannot do, you've reached a stopping point that you didn't create. If you cannot continue, then this point might be the best time for you to gather yourself, process your lessons and use that information to develop an approach to your next attempt. If you can continue, then not quitting is simply the force of will to take the next logical step, because you can.

Operating the force of will gives you options. You have the

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REGROUP NATION

In Conclusion

I believe that we all have within us the capacity for greatness. Greatness isn't uniform, or even measurable by customary means. It is the very essence of the unquenchable human spirit at its best—curious, unafraid, resilient, and hopeful for what can be made of our time on earth.

Writers are trained to focus on characters that have something to learn. We put flawed people in extreme or unusual circumstances, and then in the pages of our paper laboratory, we watch what unfolds. These flaws, we call character development; these twists of circumstance, plot. In the earliest part of my life, I certainly would have made a very poor choice of a character, as my own perfectionism confined me within the walls of others' expectations. Following the prescribed path ahead of me, there were supposed to be no twists—just a predictable existence marked by

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