

## THE BIG IDEAS

### The Accountability Mirror

Antifragile jet fuel.

### Bringing Your Best

When you feel the worst.

### Hero Callouses

How're yours?

### The Process

How it works.

### Bursting and Burning

What is to give light must endure.

*"Do you know who you really are? I'm sure you think so, but just because you believe something doesn't make it true. Denial is the ultimate comfort zone. Don't worry, you're not alone."*

~ David Goggins

# Can't Hurt Me

Master Your Mind and Defy the Odds

BY DAVID GOGGINS · LIONCREST PUBLISHING © 2018 · 364 PAGES

"Heraclitus, a philosopher born in the Persian Empire back in the fifth century BC had it right when he wrote about men on the battlefield. 'Out of every hundred men,' he wrote, 'ten shouldn't even be there, eighty are just targets, nine are the real fighters, and we are lucky to have them, for they make the battle. Ah, but the one, one is a warrior...'

From the time you take your first breath, you become eligible to die. You also become eligible to find your greatness and become the One Warrior. But it is up to you to equip yourself for the battle ahead. Only you can master your mind, which is what it takes to live a bold life filled with accomplishments most people consider beyond their capability.

I am not a genius like those professors at MIT, but I am that One Warrior. And the story you are about to read, the story of my f\*\*\*\*\*-up life, will illuminate a proven path to self-mastery and empower you to face reality, hold yourself accountable, push past pain, learn to love what you fear, relish failure, live to your fullest potential, and find out who you really are.

Human beings change through study, habit, and stories."

~ David Goggins from *Can't Hurt Me*

David Goggins is a former Navy SEAL (and Army Ranger) who used to hold a Guinness World Record for completing 4,030 pull-ups in 17 hours.

(Yes, you read that correctly. Four thousand and thirty pull-ups. In 17 hours. And here I am reasonably happy with my 3,650 pull-ups a year accumulated 10 reps per day every day. lol)

These days he's setting records as an ultra-endurance athlete.

But he wasn't always Mr. Superhero.

In this great autobiographical self-help book, David walks us through his transformation from being a 297-pound exterminator to a "Who IS this guy?!" superhero.

If you're into SUPER (!!!) intense demonstrations of how to conquer ourselves to do the seemingly impossible (and don't mind a stream of f-bombs—lol) then I think you'll love this book as much as I did. (Get a copy of the book [here](#).)

Goggins is an astonishingly (!!!) inspiring human being.

Of course, the book is packed with Big Ideas. I'm excited to share some of my favorites so let's jump straight in!

## THE ACCOUNTABILITY MIRROR + ANTIFRAGILE JET FUEL

"You are giving up instead of getting hard! Tell the truth about the real reasons for your

*"First, a quick reminder of how this process works. In 1999, when I weighed 297 pounds, my first run was a quarter mile. Fast forward to 2007, I ran 205 miles in thirty-nine hours, nonstop. I didn't get there overnight, and I don't expect you to either. Your job is to push past your normal stopping point."*

~ David Goggins

limitations and you will turn that negativity, which is real, into jet fuel. Those odds stacked against you will become a damn runway.

There is no more time to waste. Hours and days evaporate like creeks in the desert. That's why it's okay to be cruel to yourself as long as you realize you're doing it to become better. We all need thicker skin to improve in life. Being soft when you look in the mirror isn't going to inspire the wholesale changes we need to shift our present and open up our future.

The morning after that first session with the Accountability Mirror, I trashed the shag steering wheel and fuzzy dice. I tucked my shirt in and wore my pants with a belt, and, once school started up again, I stopped eating at my lunch table. For the first time, being liked and acting cool were a waste of my time, and instead of eating with all the popular kids, I found my own table and ate alone.

Mind you, the rest of my progress could not be described as a blink-and-you'll-miss-it metamorphosis. Lady Luck did not suddenly show up, run me a hot soapy bath, and kiss me like she loved me. In fact, the only reason I didn't become just another statistic is because, at the last possible moment, I got to work."

That's from Chapter 2: "Truth Hurts."

Did I mention the fact that Goggins is intense?

Well, he's about ten times more intense than you might imagine.

Want to Optimize? As [James Stockdale](#) would say, as you hold an UNWAVERING belief that you will ultimately overcome whatever obstacles you are facing, be willing to embrace the harsh (!) realities of your life.

Of course, we do that with a radical self-acceptance a la Kristin Neff's wisdom on [Self-Compassion](#) but we need to be willing to take a nice, long, hard look at the TRUTH of what's not working for us.

Goggins' approach? The Accountability Mirror. Look into it, he says, and tell yourself the truth.

-> *"If you look into the mirror and you see a fat person, don't tell yourself that you need to lose a couple of pounds. Tell the truth. You're f\*\*\*\*\* fat!! It's okay. Just say you're fat if you're fat. The dirty mirror that you see every day is going to tell you the truth every time, so why are you still lying to yourself? So you can feel better for a few minutes and stay the f\*\*\*\*\* same? If you're fat you need to change the fact that you're fat because it's very f\*\*\*\*\* unhealthy. I know because I've been there."*

Well, there ya go.

The Accountability Mirror.

What do YOU see when you look into it?

Be honest. See the BEAUTY of what's behind the blatant flaws you might be trying to ignore and know that the only way to get to work bringing that potential to life is to start chipping away at the stuff that's in the way. And the only way to do THAT is to tell yourself the truth. So...

P.S. Reminds me of a couple other pieces of wisdom.

In [Letters from a Stoic](#), Seneca tells us: *"Be harsh with yourself at times."*

And, in [Toward a Psychology of Being](#), Maslow tells that every single time we do something that violates our highest ideals it "registers" and that we (his words) DESPISE ourselves on some level. So, rather than lie to ourselves and pretend we aren't noticing all the times we're falling short of who we know we could be, we'd be wiser (and more self-loving) if we FACED THE TRUTH with a confidence that we can handle it and use all that negativity as antifragile jet fuel!

## BRINGING YOUR BEST WHEN YOU FEEL YOUR WORST

*"That's one reason I invented the Cookie Jar. We must create a system that constantly reminds us who the f\*\*\* we are when we are at our best, because life is not going to pick us up when we fall. There will be forks in the road, knives in your f\*\*\*\*\* back, mountains to climb, and we are only capable of living up to the image we create for ourselves."*

~ David Goggins

"Once you're in the heat of battle, it comes down to staying power. If it's a difficult physical challenge you will probably have to defeat your own demons before you can take your opponent's soul. That means rehearsing answers to the simple question that is sure to rise up like a thought bubble: 'Why am I here?' If you know that moment is coming and have your answer ready, you will be equipped to make the split-second decision to ignore your weakened mind and keep moving. Know why you're in the fight to stay in the fight!

And never forget that all emotional and physical anguish is finite! It all ends eventually. Smile at pain and watch it fade for at least a second or two. If you can do that, you can string those seconds together and last longer than your opponent thinks you can, and that may be enough to catch a second wind. There is no scientific consensus on second wind. Some scientists think it's the result of endorphins flooding your nervous system, others think it's a burst of oxygen that can help break down lactic acid, as well as the glycogen and triglycerides muscles need to perform. Some say it's purely psychological. All I know is that by going hard when we felt defeated we were able to ride a second wind through the worst night of Hell Week. And once you have that second wind behind you it's easy to break your opponents down and snatch a soul. The hard part is getting to that point, because the ticket to victory often comes down to bringing your very best when you feel your worst."

Goggins is an ASTONISHING exemplar of emotional (and physical) stamina.

The ticket to victory? It *"often comes down to bringing your best when you feel your worst."*

Of course, we don't need to be in the middle of some HUGE, obviously life-defining crucible like Navy SEAL Hell Week to put that wisdom into action.

And, that's Goggins' whole point throughout the book.

We need to CONSTANTLY "callous our minds" to pain—doing what needs to get done whether we \*feel\* like it or not.

That's [Emotional Stamina 101](#) a la [Phil Stutz](#). The WORSE you feel, the MORE committed you are to your protocol.

Then we have the whole science of second winds.

The founder of modern psychology, [William James](#), was fascinated by the same subject. Here's how he puts it (via George Leonard's [Mastery](#)): *"Most people never run far enough on their first wind to find out they've got a second. Give your dreams all you've got and you'll be amazed at the energy that comes out of you."*

*"But as I became conditioned to the risk, my tolerance for that same fear increased. It was always there, but I was used to the discomfort and before long I was able to handle multiple tasks on a jump and appreciate the moment too."*

~ David Goggins

Finally, Goggins tells us that we need to be PREPARED for the adversity (EXPECT IT!) and know WHY we're going to push through that pain we're experiencing. Former Navy SEAL Alden Mills reflects on this wisdom in his great book [Be Unstoppable](#)—which I just read to Emerson during our night-time reading.

Emerson can rattle off the eight actions of being unstoppable. They form the acronym "UPERSIST." The "U"? That's for "Understand your why."

So...

What's YOUR why?

Have it in mind. Use it to push through the pain you KNOW will show up.

Work your protocol ALWAYS remembering that the WORSE you feel the MORE committed you are to executing what you know needs to get done.

Find your second wind. Give us all you've got.

*"Remember, visualization will never compensate for the work undone. You cannot visualize lies. All the strategies I employ to answer the simple questions and win the mind game are effective because I put in work. It's a lot more than mind over matter. It takes relentless self-discipline to schedule suffering into your day, every day, but if you do, you'll find that at the other end of that suffering is a whole other life just waiting for you."*

~ David Goggins

## HEROIC SOUL CALLOUSES

"Time stood still as I realized for the first time that I'd always looked at my entire life, everything I'd been through, from the wrong perspective. Yes, all the abuse I'd experienced and the negativity I had to push through challenged me to the core, but in that moment I stopped seeing myself as the victim of bad circumstances, and saw my life as the ultimate training ground instead. My disadvantages had been callousing my mind all along and had prepared me for that moment in that pool with Psycho Pete.

I remember my very first day in the gym back in Indiana. My palms were soft and quickly got torn up by the bars because they weren't accustomed to gripping steel. But over time, after thousands of reps, my palms built up thick callous as protection. The same principle works when it comes to mindset. Until you experience hardships like abuse and bullying, failures and disappointments, your mind will remain soft and exposed. Life experience, especially negative experiences, help callous the mind. But it's up to you where that callous lines up. If you choose to see yourself as a victim of circumstance into adulthood, that callous will become resentment that protects you from the unfamiliar. It will make you too cautious and untrusting, and possibly too angry at the world. It will make you fearful of change and hard to reach, but not hard of mind. That's where I was as a teenager, but after my second Hell Week, I'd become someone new. I'd fought through so many horrible situations by then and remained open and ready for more. My ability to stay open represented a willingness to fight for my own life, which allowed me to withstand hail storms of pain and use it to callous over my victim's mentality. That shit was buried under layers of sweat and hard f\*\*\*\*\* flesh, and I was starting to callous over my fears too. That realization gave me the mental edge I needed to outlast Psycho Pete one more time."

That's from a chapter called "Armored Mind" in which we go through Hell Week.

Goggins' childhood was CRAZY (!!!) toxic. Incessant physical abuse. Poverty. Gah. I wince just typing that as I recall the stories he so powerfully shares in the book.

But, at some point, he decided to be the HERO of his story rather than the VICTIM.

When I read that passage, I immediately thought of a passage from Ryan Holiday's *The Daily Stoic* where he tells us: "*Seneca writes that unbruised prosperity is weak and easy to defeat in the ring, but a 'man who has been at constant feud with misfortunes acquires a skin calloused by suffering.'* This man, he says, fights all the way to the ground and never gives up.

*That's what Epictetus means too. What kind of boxer are you if you leave because you get hit? That's the nature of the sport! Is that going to stop you from continuing?"*

Ryan was riffing on this gem from Epictetus's [Discourses](#) which is worth repeating here: "*But what is philosophy? Doesn't it simply mean preparing ourselves for what may come? Don't you understand that really amounts to saying that if I would so prepare myself to endure, then let anything happen that will? Otherwise, it would be like the boxer exiting the ring because he took some punches. Actually, you can leave the ring without consequence, but what advantage would come from abandoning the pursuit of wisdom? So, what should each of us say to every trial we face? This is what I've trained for, for this my discipline!"*

We've gotta remember that we, as the HEROES of our life stories TRAIN for this hard stuff!!!

Of course, Epictetus would definitely say THIS about Goggins: "*This man, he says, fights all the way to the ground and never gives up."*

Begs the question: What would he say about you?

Here's to doing the hard to work to callous our heroic souls.

Let's chant together: "OMMS!!" "Bring It On!!!!"

*"It takes great strength to be vulnerable enough to put your ass on the line, in public, and work towards a dream that feels like it's slipping away."*

~ David Goggins

## THE PROCESS

"The main objective here is to slowly start to remove the governor from your brain.

First, a quick reminder of how this process works. In 1999, when I weighed 297 pounds, my first run was a quarter mile. Fast forward to 2007, I ran 205 miles in thirty-nine hours, nonstop. I didn't get there overnight, and I don't expect you to either. Your job is to push past your normal stopping point. ...

Whether you are running on a treadmill or doing a set of push-ups, get to the point where you are so tired and in pain that your mind is begging you to stop. Then push past 5 to 10 percent further. If the most push-ups you have ever done is one hundred in a workout, do 105 or 110. If you normally run thirty miles each week, run 10 percent more.

The bottom line is that life is one big mind game. The only person you are playing against is yourself. Stick with this process and soon what you thought was impossible will be something you do every f\*\*\*\*\* day."

That's from Challenge #7 from the chapter on "The Most Powerful Weapon" in which we enjoy reading about Goggins doing even more (seemingly) I M P O S S I B L E stuff.

Including that 39-hour, 205-mile nonstop run. Of course, running that far (and that long) is mindboggling. But what I find even more incredible is the fact that eight years earlier, he could barely run a quarter of a mile. 8 years. 800 TIMES further. THAT is amazing.

How'd he do it? He went just a little past his normal stopping point. Day in. Day out. Again. And again. And again.

We talk about this all the time. Most recently with our +1% incremental [Atomic Habits](#) gains that lead to quadrillion-fold gains.

Then there's Steven Kotler's 4% number from [The Rise of Superman](#). We stretch ourselves JUST a little outside of our comfort zone. Establish THAT new best as our new baseline. Repeat.

- > "This is why the challenge/skills ratio is so important. If we want to achieve the kinds of accelerated performance we're seeing in action and adventure sports, then it's 4 percent plus 4 percent plus 4 percent, day after day, week after week, months into years into careers. This is the road to real magic. Follow this path long enough, and not only does impossible becomes possible, it becomes what's next—like eating breakfast, like another day at the office."

THAT's The Process.

So... How can you go a little past your normal stopping point today?

P.S. I didn't follow the exact formula of time but, after getting all fired up by Goggins I had fun going past my "normal stopping point" last week with my +1's. I usually stop at 90 minutes of Deep Work. I allowed myself to go for 3 hours (with the 1,000-second breaks for burpees/etc.).

And... I hammered out 22 +1's in ONE 6.9-hour Deep Work-filled day—shattering my previous best. (Laughing.)

## BURSTING AND BURNING

"That doesn't mean I was having any fun. I wasn't. I was over it. I didn't want to do pull-ups anymore, but achieving goals or overcoming obstacles doesn't have to be fun. Seeds burst from the inside out in a self-destructive ritual of new life. Does that sound like f\*\*\*\*\* fun? Like it feels good? I wasn't in that gym to get happy or do what I wanted to be doing. I was there to turn myself inside out if that's what it took to blast through any and all mental, emotional, and physical barriers."

*"I'd come to SEAL training to see if I was hard enough to belong and found an inner beast within that I never knew existed. A beast that I would tap into from then on whenever life went wrong. By the time I emerged from that ocean, I considered myself unbreakable."*

~ David Goggins

*"The reason it's important to push hardest when you want to quit is because it helps callous your mind. It's the same reason why you have to do your best work when you are least motivated."*

~ David Goggins

Did I mention that Goggins' was intense? (Hah.)

That's from a chapter all about "The Empowerment of Failure" in which we get the inside story on how Goggins broke the then-Guinness World Record for pull-ups.

First: Recall that he banged out over 4,000 (!) in 17 hours. Think about that when you tell yourself you can't do 1 pull-up (or whatever other limiting story you allow to loop in your head).

Second: Know this: Before Goggins broke the record, he FAILED twice. Once on *The Today Show*. Oops. Ouch. How do you think THAT felt? After his second failure, he got to work figuring out what he needed to Optimize via what SEALs call "After Action Reports." (Basically: What went well, what needs work, what will you do differently next time?)

Third: He DECIDED the record was his: *"I didn't know when it would become mine. It might be in two months or twenty years, but once I decided it belonged to me and decoupled it from the calendar, I was filled with confidence and relieved of any and all pressure because my task morphed from trying to achieve the impossible into working toward an inevitability. But to get there, I'd have to find the tactical advantage I'd been missing."*

I LOVE (!!!) the idea of "decoupling" our goals from the calendar. <- That's super powerful. Decide you're going to do the work to achieve what others might be saying is impossible. Then figure out what you need to do. And do it.

Then there's that image of a seed BURSTING (!) *"from the inside out in a self-destructive ritual of new life. Does that sound like f\*\*\*\*\* fun? Like it feels good? I wasn't in that gym to get happy or do what I wanted to be doing. I was there to turn myself inside out if that's what it took to blast through any and all mental, emotional, and physical barriers."*

<- Wow.

[Viktor Frankl](#) comes to mind.

He once told us that *"What is to give light must endure burning."*

Here's to enduring our *bursting* and our *burning* as we master our minds and defy the odds, my heroic friend.

B

**Brian Johnson,**  
*Heroic Philosopher CEO*

## About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He's spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at [heroic.us](https://heroic.us).

If you liked this Note, you'll probably like...

[Unbeatable Mind](#)

[The Ultra Mindset](#)

[Extreme Ownership](#)

[Be Unstoppable](#)

[Spartan Up!](#)