

## THE BIG IDEAS

### U.P.E.R.S.I.S.T.

And that's why you succeed.

### 2 Limitations in Life

Ability to dream + courage to pursue.

### Your Why

Here's how to find it.

### How to Plan in 3-D

Decide on it. Divide it. Do it daily.

### Magic Pill(s)

That can change your life.

### Dream Big

+ GO FOR IT!!!

*"Go confidently in the  
direction of your dreams! Live  
the life you've imagined."*

~ Henry David Thoreau

# Be Unstoppable

The 8 Essential Actions to Succeed at Anything

BY ALDEN M. MILLS · TILBURY HOUSE © 2013 · 160 PAGES

"I was doing what I loved back in those SEAL days, and I had the confidence of knowing I could do anything I put my mind to. I want this book to capture those themes in a way my boys and everyone else who reads it will remember. A series of vignettes illustrating how any among us can accomplish great things would only fade with time. I've tried to go farther. I've tried to create a framework, a code my sons can follow throughout their lives, a touchstone to encourage them when the going gets tough. I want this book to capture the essence of my spirit as a tangible reference for them, a pick-me-up when they feel like giving up on a dream, a voice of encouragement when no one else believes in them, or perhaps simply the voice of a proud father saying, 'Go for it—you can do it!' ...

That's why I wrote this book. It will give your mind a code to follow so that no matter what obstacle attempts to derail you, your mind will be working for you, not against you. And when your mind is on your side, no obstacle is too big, no dream too daunting, and nothing can stop you from living an amazing life!

Once you've mastered the code in this book, your biggest challenge will be dreaming bigger dreams! That's right: Once you've tasted success and gained the confidence of making a dream come true, a funny thing happens: You get addicted to making dreams come true. And as each dream gets a little bigger and a little scarier, you get stronger, smarter, and better at making them come true. And isn't that what life is all about? Live your dreams!"

~ Alden M. Mills from *Be Unstoppable*

This is a surprisingly awesome book—a fable about a young Captain who spends time with a Master and Commander who reveals the secret code of rockin' it.

It's kinda like if a Navy SEAL wrote *The Alchemist* or *The Way of the Peaceful Warrior* or [The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari](#). :)

Another way to think about it is if Angela Duckworth teamed up with a Navy SEAL to write a fable on her [Grit](#) research. There are a \*ton\* of parallels.

Alden Mills is a former US Navy SEAL platoon commander who invented the Perfect Pushup and created Inc 500' fastest-growing company in 2009.

He wrote this book for his four sons to capture the essence of what has helped him succeed in his life. Like I said, it's surprisingly great! I can't wait to have Emerson read it. (His mom just started reading *The Alchemist* to him today. haha) (Get a copy of the book [here](#).)

It's packed with a bunch of Big Ideas. I'm excited to share a few of my favorites so let's jump straight in!

## U.P.E.R.S.I.S.T.

"The young captain was still speechless as he gingerly held the paddle and scanned it from handle to blade tip. There were letters and words inscribed on the handle, stem, and blade. Tim looked closer and saw that it read 'UPERSIST' from the handle down the stem. On the blade was the quote from the compass on the master and commander's helm: *'Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'Press On' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.'* At the very bottom were the letters N E G U, clearly carved by someone else's hand. Tim smiled; he bet those letters were Robert's handiwork.

Captain Peter heard him recite the code: 'U—Understand; P—Plan; E—Exercise; R—Recognize; S—Survey; I—Improvise; S—Seek; T—Team up. It's brilliant! I wondered how I was going to remember all eight actions,' said Tim."

The Code of the Master and Commander has 8 essential actions that can be captured in this acronym: U.P.E.R.S.I.S.T.

You persist. :)

Before we take a quick look at those actions, how about a little more background on our setting + characters? Tim is our young Captain. His mentor is the Master and Commander named Pete. In the beginning of the story, Pete's friend calls him P2, double P, P squared and a bunch of other funny nicknames. We learn that's because Pete is called "Persistent Pete." His boat's name? *Persistence.*

They were born in the town called Uptoyou where everyone gets a boat and it's up to them to improve it throughout their lives. While most never leave their home town (and its Hardwork Harbor), the Master and Commander has charted his own course and explored the world. I smile as I type that. Alden does a great job of creating a little fictional world to weave in these lessons.

And, after each chapter in the fable, Alden helps us apply the wisdom with some vignettes from his life as a SEAL and entrepreneur. It's perfect.

And now to our acronym and the 8 essential actions to becoming a Master and Commander of our own lives!

*" Nothing in the world can  
take the place of persistence.  
Talent will not; nothing  
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the human race."*

~ Calvin Coolidge

1. **U = Understand Your Why.** It all starts with knowing your WHY. Without a strong why, there's no way (!) we will persist through the inevitable storms in life. Alden has a great little exercise to help us identify our why for an important goal. We'll get to that in a moment.
2. **P = Plan in 3-D.** Once we have our Why identified, we need to map out our plan. In 3 Dimensions: 1. Define it. 2. Divide it. 3. Do it daily. More on that in a moment as well.
3. **E = Exercise to Execute.** The key variable to executing our plan? The ability to sustain hard work over an extended period of time. Alden makes the case that EXERCISE is the way to build the engine of effort to help us do our best and tackle our big dreams.
4. **R = Recognize Your Reason to Believe.** Alden tells us we need to create small wins, and use that progress to build self-confidence. We need to see those small wins as "reasons to believe" we can achieve our big goals.
5. **S = Survey Your Habits.** We need to take a look at what's getting in the way of our success. We need to "survey our habits" to see what's working and what's not. Do more of the good stuff, eliminate the not-so-good stuff. Repeat. Forever.

6. **I = Improvise to Overcome Obstacles.** Our plans will never be perfect. We will ALWAYS (but only always) face obstacles when we chase big goals. When that happens, it's time to improvise. Try different approaches. Learn from mistakes. Persist till you figure it out.
7. **S = Seek Expert Advice.** We need to own the fact that we're never going to be great at *everything*. When we don't know something, it's time to seek out expert advice.
8. **T = Team Up.** In addition to seeking out expert advice, we want to team up with people whose strengths compliment our weaknesses. And we stay motivated with our big, shared Why. Nothing great was ever achieved alone so it's time to team up and rock it.

**U.P.E.R.S.I.S.T.** If you want to [Be Unstoppable](#), yoU've gotta **PERSIST!** :)

P.S. **NEGU?** That's short for "Never Ever Give Up." :)

## THE TWO LIMITATIONS IN LIFE

*"When you come to understand your 'why,' you will figure out your way. And once you do this, you will come to appreciate that we have only two limitations in life: our ability to dream and the courage to follow those dreams."*

~ Alden M. Mills

"There's beauty in simplicity, my friend,' Peter said. 'The code is simple, and I've put it into a framework that's easy to remember. However, putting it to use will be up to you, and you alone. I hope this paddle will serve as a constant reminder that you are limited by only two things in life: your ability to dream and the courage to pursue those dreams. There's an amazing world waiting for you outside this harbor.' Peter pointed toward the bow of the *Persistence*, which aimed toward Hardwork Bay. 'You have the boat and brains to explore the world. All you need to do now is to find a course and have the courage to follow it.'"

This is a recurring theme in the book:

There are only two limitations in life.

1. Your ability to dream.
2. Your courage to pursue your dreams.

So, let's take a moment and reflect on YOUR dream.

If you KNEW you would not fail, what would you do?

(Or, as Brené Brown so beautifully puts it in *Daring Greatly* ([see Notes](#)): "I took a deep breath and recited my vulnerability prayer as I waited my turn: Give me the courage to show up and let myself be seen. Then, seconds before I was introduced, I thought about a paperweight on my desk that reads, 'What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?' I pushed that question out of my head to make room for a new question. As I walked up to the stage, I literally whispered aloud, 'What's worth doing even if I fail?'"

If I knew I couldn't fail, I would do this: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_.

Awesome. Now, let's identify the WHY that will power that dream.

## WANT TO FIGURE OUT THE "WHY" TO YOUR BIG GOAL? HERE'S HOW.

"So how do you get to understand your why? What's worked for me is using what I call my Outcome Accounts. Whenever I dream up a new Milestone Goal, I create an Outcome Account. It's a simple way to test how truly important this goal is to me. Some goals are just not as important as others—some are just nice-to-have goals, not must-haves. You can use Outcome Accounts for any goal, but I find this tool especially helpful when I'm going after a Milestone Goal—something that will require months, if not years, of persistence to attain. ...

*"The future belongs to those  
who believe in the beauty of  
their dreams."*  
~ Eleanor Roosevelt

I've used an Outcome Account to outline my reason for putting my head down, working hard, and filtering out those who will help me from those who want to see me fail. The Outcome Account is my single most important first step toward being UNSTOPPABLE. As Master and Commander Peter teaches young Captain Tim, 'Once you understand your why, you'll figure out your way.'

Step one in creating unstoppable persistence?

Figure out your WHY.

*"Once you understand your why, you'll figure out your way."*

Here's how Alden figures out his Why. It's fantastic.

Take a piece of paper. Write your goal at the very top. Underline it. (I drew a box around mine.) Draw a line down the middle of the page. On the left side, put a "+" and on the right put a "-."

Then, think about all the amazing positive things you'll experience when/if you achieve that goal at the top. Write those on the left side of the page.

Then, think about all the icky bumner things you'll experience as a result of *failing* to persist until you achieve your goal. Write those on the right side of the page.

If you're like Alden (and me), you might find one thing that just jumps out at you and becomes your #1 motivator.

Super simple. Equally powerful.

I did this for my #1 goal. It's amazing. Highly recommend you try it.

Now's a great time, btw. I'll wait. :)

## HOW TO PLAN IN 3-D

*"Prepare for the worst,  
expect the best, take what  
comes with a smile."*  
~ Alden M. Mills

"None of it is hard; it just takes time, creativity, commitment, and perspective. Training for a SEAL mission and going after your own Milestone Goal both require three-dimensional planning. I call Action #2 'Plan in 3-D' not only because great planning requires thinking in three dimensions, but also because each of those dimensions begins with the letter 'D.' Remember, it's not about creating a perfect plan, because there is no such thing. It's about creating a plan to succeed no matter what obstacles you encounter."

We have our dream + our Why. Now it's time to Plan.

Alden tells us to do it in 3-D: Define it, Divide it, Do it daily.

- **Define it.** What's your goal? Be SPECIFIC. Remember, specificity in their goals is the #1 thing that successful people do according to Heidi Grant Halvorson in the most popular Harvard Biz Review blog post in history. What, SPECIFICALLY, do you intend to do and by when? Define it. And write it down and put it somewhere where you can see it all the time.
- **Divide it.** You've got your big goal. Alden calls this a "Milestone Goal." It'll take you months or years to achieve it. Now you need to take a sledgehammer to it and break it down into TINY pieces—little action steps you can easily take care of in a given day.
- **Do it daily.** You've got your big goal defined. You smashed it into pieces with your sledgehammer. Now you need to take care of a little pebble every single day. As we discuss all the time, science says that consistent PROGRESS—however small—is huge. What can you do TODAY to make progress toward your goal? *"Daily action is the key to success."*

Define it. Divide it. Do it daily.

That's how to plan in 3-D.

## THE MAGIC PILLS THAT MAKE YOU SMARTER, HAPPIER & ...

*"He eventually came to appreciate what a storm represents—an opportunity to learn and excel. What would you do and, more importantly, how would you feel if you treated every adversity as an opportunity to excel?"*

~ Alden M. Mills

"What if I told you of a pill that makes you smarter, helps you lose weight *and* build muscle, fights off depression, improves your ability to work longer and harder, and prevents numerous life-threatening conditions including heart disease and diabetes? What would you pay for this pill—\$10, \$50, maybe \$100?

Now, what if I told you this pill could change your destiny by making you successful and perhaps famous, if fame is a dream of yours? And what if I told you this pill could give you the confidence to do anything you put your mind to? How much might the pill be worth to you now? \$1,000? Maybe \$10,000?"

You interested in that pill? ... Can you guess what it is? :)

Research says: EXERCISE gives you all those benefits and more.

It's unequivocally awesome. Our bodies were MADE to move and violating that basic programming is, obviously, not a wise idea. That's why Exercise to Execute is Action #3 in our plan to being UNSTOPPABLE.

The fact is, if we want to achieve our big goals we need a TON (!) of *ENERGY*. Exercise is one of the best ways to build that. (Goes very nicely with sleep + nutrition, of course, eh?)

This is why leading experts like [Tony Schwartz](#) tell us that consistent peak performance is not about "time management." It's about ENERGY management.

And, Alden makes the important point that the benefits of exercising consistently are both *physiological AND psychological*.

When we exercise, we get all the scientifically proven *physical* benefits of exercise (remember, as John Ratey tells us in [Spark](#), exercise is like taking a little bit of Prozac to boost your mood and a little bit of Ritalin to focus your attention) PLUS we get the *psychological* benefit of knowing we're the kind of person who does the little things well.

Those little ways of showing up and crushing it matter. They form the cornerstone of the next Action item which is Recognizing a Reason to Believe in ourselves. If you consistently fail to do the little things well, there's no way you're going to have the trust in yourself to handle the big things. So... EXERCISE. :)

Alden recommends the pill be taken in the form of 30 minutes of exercise. As Michelle Segar tells us in *No Sweat* ([see Notes](#)), we need to look for OTMs—"opportunities to move" throughout the day. How can you step up your game (yes, it's a GAME!) a little more today?

P.S. Alden tells us: "When I get stuck, I take a break and pop a thirty-minute exercise pill. Exercise clears my mind and helps me get unstuck. In SEAL training, instructors would offer a simple solution when doubt cluttered our minds: 'When in doubt—push 'em out!' As much as we despised doing tens of thousands of push-ups during our training and our careers in the teams, they remain one of the simplest and most effective forms of exercise."

"When in doubt—push 'em out!" <— That's awesome. Next time you're feeling stressed or anxious, why not bang out ten push-ups or pop a thirty-minute exercise pill? :)

P.S. Remember this great pill prescribed by Dr. Haidt in *The Happiness Hypothesis* ([see Notes](#)): "Suppose you read about a pill that you could take once a day to reduce anxiety and increase your contentment. Would you take it? Suppose further that the pill has a great variety of side effects, all of them good: increased self-esteem, empathy, and trust; it even improves memory. Suppose, finally, that the pill is all natural and costs nothing. Now would you take it? The pill exists. It's called meditation."

Let's pop the exercise and meditation pills. Daily.

*"A Vietnam veteran SEAL compared SEAL training to the forging of a samurai sword: heat the metal, pound it with a hammer, stick it in cold water, and repeat the process approximately 2,000 times. He said no one can sustain that kind of punishment without first knowing \*why\* they want to be a SEAL. Knowing why enables the trainee to endure the pounding he endures."*

~ Alden M. Mills

## DREAM BIG AND GO FOR IT!

"No matter what your goal, always remember that nothing great was ever achieved without a team. Period. No single person can do it all. Teaming up is an essential step in accomplishing your dream. It can be the difference between languishing with inaction and finding unbelievable success. It all starts with the first action of UPERSIST: Understand your why. When you know *why* you're willing to work hard and take risks to achieve your goal, you'll be able to show others why they should team up with you. Once you have a teammate, you can attract more teammates, and then there is no limit to what you can accomplish. It all starts with a dream. So what are you waiting for? Dream as if everything is possible. Dream big and GO FOR IT!"

Those are the final words of the book.

First, NOTHING great was ever achieved without a team. Period.

And the only way you can get a team fired up is if you, the leader, have a clear WHY that can become a shared why. Then? Magic happens as we create a culture of gritty, purpose-driven persistence.

So, what's your big dream?

Remember that only two things limit us in life: Our ability to connect to our most authentic dreams and our courage to go after them.

Dream big. GO FOR IT! :)

B

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

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## About the Author of This Note

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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).