

# BLIND AMBITION



How to go from Victim to Visionary

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A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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## APPENDIX

# VICTIM TO VISIONARY RESILIENCE EXERCISES

**LOSING MY EYESIGHT AT AGE** twenty-one was such a crushing blow that I quickly fell victim to patterns of negative thinking and self-defeating behaviors. Who wouldn't fall prey to unproductive thoughts after going blind in their twenties? I could have remained a victim of circumstance for the rest of my life if I'd let those thoughts and behaviors persist. Instead, I am leading a life today that I would have considered far beyond my reach before I went blind.

I've spent years deliberately retraining my mind to break free from the self-destructive thoughts that were holding me hostage, and I've included these techniques on the following page to help you break free and move your mindset from victim to visionary. I would never say the path was easy, but these six techniques I've developed to help me are deceptively simple.

1. Choose happiness in your daily life.
2. Recognize when you're letting excuses hold you back.
3. Practice moving out of your comfort zone.
4. Change your perspective in the face of setbacks.
5. Set a Life Vision for yourself that inspires your daily choices.
6. Tackle each obstacle that stands in the way of fulfilling your Life Vision, one task at a time. Stay focused!

Life is lived one day at a time. If you apply these tools to both your problems and your opportunities on a regular basis, you will find that positive thinking and high productivity are habit-forming. As you put your advantages to work toward your vision of greatness, you'll also appreciate the unique perspectives you've gained from your disadvantages. Your gifts will reveal themselves, no matter how ugly their wrapping paper.

You'll want to revisit some of these exercises every day. Others you'll want to turn to in times of trouble, when you're facing a difficult dilemma or a big challenge. These offer a structured process to open up your mind and find out what's in your heart.

These exercises will help you cultivate a more resilient mindset, so you are more capable of accepting what you can't change to adapt and overcome whatever life throws your way. There's no magic fairy dust in these exercises. You get out of them what you put into them. Be candid with yourself. Be kind to yourself, but be assertive, and most importantly, be relentless.

# **HAPPINESS IS NOT A FEELING**

(CHAPTERS 1 & 2)

## **YOUR CIRCUMSTANCE**

Negative thoughts and feelings of  
frustration and sadness.

## **YOUR OBJECTIVE**

Tell yourself better stories about your circumstances.

**THE FIRST FEW YEARS AFTER** I went blind, I struggled to accept my condition. I discovered that I had never envisioned or aspired to be blind, so my high hopes and self-identity were devastated when I lost my eyesight. It was during that time that I learned how happiness is anchored to our perspective, not our facts. It's a choice we make. We tell ourselves stories about our situation, and we can be deliberate about choosing stories that make us happy and power us forward, or opt for stories that hold us back.

Once I was able to accept the reality of my blindness, I could also take a factual inventory of all my skills, talents, and other advantages for which I could be grateful. I had my physical health and strength, a talent for analyzing financial information, and a supportive family, among many other gifts.

These advantages are just as true as my problems, and they cast my problems in a new light, which gave me the tools to choose stories that supported my happiness on a daily basis.

1. Write out a description of what's making you feel frustrated and hopeless in any of these four areas of your life. Work, relationships, personal growth, health/fitness.
2. Write out the story you tell yourself about each situation.
3. For each situation, write out the worst-case scenario. How much worse could it be?
4. Now write out all the other abilities and advantages you could be grateful for in that area where the situation is causing you pain.

5. For each situation, write down the control you have in the situation no matter how minor. For me, it was as simple as being able to learn how to use a computer despite my blindness.
6. Compare the list of gratitude items against your feelings of frustration and hopelessness. Write new stories about your situations that are hopeful and empowering, that account for unchangeable facts.
7. Start a gratitude journal where each night you write down the top three things you're grateful for every day. We do this at home to help our children develop the muscle memory of gratitude and perspective.

Take your exercise worksheets with you anywhere on the go. Visit [ChadEFoster.com/exercises](http://ChadEFoster.com/exercises) to download and save your worksheets on your preferred device, or just print them!

# **EXCUSES ARE FOR LOSERS**

(CHAPTER 3)

## **YOUR CIRCUMSTANCE**

*Anxiety and feeling defeated by difficulties.*

## **YOUR OBJECTIVE**

*Distinguish what is within your ability to change.*



**I FELT BRUISED AND BATTERED** after I lost my first job out of college. At that point in my life, I had plenty of excuses for giving up. I could have consoled myself with a story about how the workplace is unfair to people with disabilities, which is absolutely true. But that's not the story that would propel me forward.

To be a visionary and not a victim is to envision with clarity the difference between what can be changed and what cannot. You need to accept the aspects of your situation that are beyond your control without judging yourself. Then you must identify what actions are within what I call your "sphere of influence." Once you've told yourself new empowering stories about how to change the aspects of your situation within your sphere of influence, you can also tell yourself stories of acceptance about what you can't change.

As Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson says, "Success at anything will always come down to this: focus and effort, and we control both."

1. List the top three or four situations in your life that are a source of anxiety and difficulties.
2. List the plain facts at the source of each of these situations.
3. Which ones of them are outside of your sphere of influence? What would it take to make these circumstances look good, so it's easier to accept them? Be bold here. Paint a vision that inspires you.
4. Now note which of those facts are *inside* your sphere of influence, allowing you to take action to improve

the situation and drive toward your inspiring vision painted in step 3.

5. For each situation, list the top two goals. Use positive and not negative action-oriented goals. For example, if your goal is to lose weight, instead of listing “lose weight,” list “eat a set number of calories each day” and “exercise for a set number of minutes per week.” The more specific the better. Consider SMART goals that are: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based.
6. Now, write down the step-by-step tasks within your sphere of influence that will help you reach each goal. Action is key. Progress prevention is caused when we have good intentions with no actions. As Tony Robbins said, “A real decision is measured by the fact that you’ve taken a new action. If there’s no action, you haven’t truly decided.”
7. Start a thought journal where each day you write down the thoughts you’re having when the distressing situations listed above arise. This simple practice helps you pay attention to the thoughts and feelings underneath your anxiety.

Bonus: Regular mindful breathing is another way you can strengthen your awareness of inner thoughts and feelings. Just as routine exercise causes your physical conditioning to improve, the consistent practice

of mindfulness causes your mental conditioning to improve.

It doesn't require hours every day. Only ten minutes of mindful breathing has demonstrated enhanced cognitive function—often leaving people happier, more emotionally balanced, better with concentration, and exhibiting an improved working memory.

In fact, brain imaging techniques have revealed that after only eight weeks of mindfulness, the amygdala (the brain's fight-or-flight center) appears to shrink, while the pre-frontal cortex (the part of the brain associated with higher order functions such as awareness, focus, decision-making) grows thicker. Mindfulness redirects the activity in the brain from the primitive, reactionary part of the brain to the part of the brain responsible for executive functioning. This helps us cope with stress while boosting our awareness and focus.

Don't worry if you've never done it before—there are many great tools available for it. The one I use is Headspace ([www.headspace.com](http://www.headspace.com)).

# **LIFE BEGINS OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE**

(CHAPTER 4)

## **YOUR CIRCUMSTANCE**

You are facing new challenges in  
unfamiliar situations.

## **YOUR OBJECTIVE**

Overcome fear of risk and the unknown.

**IT CAN BE TEMPTING TO** seek a comfortable life that follows the path of least resistance, but that's not how we learn and grow. Comfort has never been an option for me. I spend every day outside my comfort zone, so I get more practice in the daily experience of learning and growing than most people.

What I've found is that the further I venture into my discomfort zone, I keep finding new challenges that open up exciting new possibilities I never would've learned about any other way. So try doing things that keep pushing you toward your new edge of discomfort. Regular physical exercise, by the way, is a great way to acclimate yourself to the value of pushing beyond your comfort zone. When you stress your body with daily exercise, it builds mental toughness and keeps you better prepared to handle the stresses that life sends us every day. Your body gets used to the feeling of stress from the physical exertion, so when your body feels the anxiety from life's natural stressors, you're better equipped to handle it.

1. Name three areas of your life where you've avoided doing something fun or interesting because it's outside your comfort zone.
2. For each area, identify a dream or goal that seems out of reach.
3. For each dream/goal, identify an action you can take tomorrow that gets you incrementally closer to reaching it. This is not about being bold or daring. It's about progress.

4. Try to do one thing every day for the sole reason that it's outside your comfort zone. Get comfortable with discomfort.
5. Start a confidence journal where each night you write down three things capturing how you displayed skill, effort, and/or determination.

Bonus: Start a habit of regular exercise. In the beginning it's not about how much you exert yourself.

In fact, that is counterproductive as you'll be too sore to return to the gym. Instead, start slowly. And, it doesn't even matter if you work out at all the first few times. Consistently showing up to the gym is a victory. If you change your lifestyle to include regularly going to the gym, eventually you'll start working out and get into shape.

And when you start seeing yourself as a mentally disciplined person who routinely challenges your physical limits, your self-image begins to reflect the discipline, mental toughness, and determination you display to make exercise a daily habit. You'll feel stronger, more confident, happier, and better prepared to handle whatever life throws your way.

# **WHO WANTS IT MORE? NOBODY!**

(CHAPTER 5)

## **YOUR CIRCUMSTANCE**

Facing big decisions with a lot at stake.

## **YOUR OBJECTIVE**

Overcome fear of risk and the unknown.

**DURING MY DARKEST DAYS, OR** when I've found myself at a cross-roads, there's always been a big new chapter in my life ready to open up. A crisis in your life reveals what's most important to you. The critical factor is to take action. To develop a visionary mindset, you must test your fresh thinking in the real world and experience the results.

1. List the top three ambitious goals you think about most often. Be bold here.
2. Are you afraid of success? Are you comfortable with reaching these goals?
3. Or, are you hesitant about putting yourself out there and not quite making it?
4. Write down how you feel deep inside when envisioning the prospect of pursuing and reaching these goals.
5. What scares you more—failing in pursuit, or not knowing whether you could've made it? Which fear drives you?



# **DARE TO BE GREAT**

(CHAPTER 6)

## **YOUR CIRCUMSTANCE**

Confusion over your goals in life.

## **YOUR OBJECTIVE**

Having a Life Vision that will inspire your  
achievement of personal greatness.

**WHAT I DISCOVERED WITH MY** speech at Harvard is that when you keep pushing yourself outside your comfort zone to overcome your fears of the unknown, your purpose in life can reveal itself in surprising ways. And when it does, you have to seize your personal vision of greatness and nurture its growth.

Blindness has not prevented me from pursuing one vision of greatness after another for the past twenty years. At first, all I wanted to do was excel at my job and serve as a role model for other blind people and the disabled community. With time, my vision expanded to include leading and teaching teams in the workplace. Now, my vision includes using my story and life lessons to help the greatest number of people—whether it’s through this book or keynote presentations.

My fellow Knoxville native, the great film director Quentin Tarantino, says that the job of moviemaking is “explaining your vision.” The same is true when directing your life story, and the stakes couldn’t be higher. You need to understand your vision, be able to see it, describe it, explain it, and inspire others in pursuit of it.

Use these steps to paint a vision of greatness for yourself. Be bold. Dare to be great. Aim higher than you think is possible. You will be surprised at just how far you can go. Once you’ve painted that vision, you should believe it’s as real as the water you drink. It should permeate into your vocabulary. The words you choose should reflect your vision. Those words will become your actions, and your actions will drive you to your outcomes, and to new visions of greatness that await you in years to come.

1. When you look back on your life many years from now, what are the three most important factors for

your “success”? What can you live with and live without?

2. When you look back on your life many years from now, what are the three most important factors to your happiness? What is really important in life?
3. What are the three things you should change now that currently take priority but didn't make your list above?

# **OBSTACLES EQUAL GROWTH**

(CHAPTER 7)

## **YOUR CIRCUMSTANCE**

Unforeseen difficulties in pursuing your goals.

## **YOUR OBJECTIVE**

Tell new stories about the obstacles in your way.

**IF YOUR VISION OF GREATNESS** is bold enough to inspire you, then the path in pursuit of your vision will inevitably be littered with obstacles. There's so much you don't know or can't do by yourself to get where you want to go.

The best story to tell yourself about obstacles is that each one represents a new opportunity: to learn new skills, to find valuable allies, to open up new possibilities you couldn't have seen any other way.

Take all the facts about your obstacles and perform a gap analysis to pinpoint what it will take to overcome each one. What will be your next step for tomorrow? Next month? Next year?

With each obstacle, tell yourself the story about your vision of greatness, that your vision is as real and solid as the ground you're standing on, that it's out there just waiting for you to fulfill its promise.

Believe it. Assume it. Demand it.

1. List the top three obstacles preventing you from being happy and successful.
2. For those obstacles outside of your sphere of influence, list the possible stories to explain those obstacles to yourself—both good and bad.
3. Now, decide if you want to live a life according to the good stories, or the bad stories. It's your choice.