

NOTES FROM: *The Undefeated Mind*, by Dr. Alex Lickerman

SUMMARY: I first read *The Undefeated Mind* when I was just getting into reading (this would have been in 2015), and so a lot of what Dr. Lickerman covers in the book was brand new to me at the time.

For that reason, this is one of my favorite books from that time in my life, as it played a massive part in shaping my character, resilience, and the emotional stability that I enjoy today. In a word, it changed my life.

The core idea of the book is that so much of what happens to us remains frustratingly outside of our control, but that we have a tremendous degree of influence over how events unfold. We can choose our response, even if we can't always choose our circumstances. At least not directly. We can choose strength and optimism, instead of weakness and fear, and we can take the bricks that life throws at us, and use them to build a solid foundation for our future success and happiness.

“We may rarely get feedback from the people around us about how meaningfully we’ve influenced their lives for the better, and even less often how they then may have gone on, as a direct result of our influence, to influence the lives of still others. But there’s little doubt this effect is real and frequently significant. The small kind word we leave with a stranger who we’ll never see again may not just spread out like ripples on a pond, but may strike with the force of a tidal wave. *We just never know.*”

“The idea is not to try and make an easy life for ourselves, but instead to develop the inner strength to enjoy the difficult lives that we all have.”

“We can only really be said to understand a principle when we actually live by it.”

“Money and possessions make us more vulnerable to suffering because they represent additional attachments to lose.”

“Decade after decade, approach the obstacles in front of you and hammer at them until either they fall or you do.”

“We have a set-point of happiness, which means that we habituate to positive and negative events over time.”

“Material possessions aren't able to carry us through crises because, since they have no power over time to boost happiness, they can't protect us against significant loss.”

“Excessive focus on material goods is associated with a slight decrease in happiness.”

“The quantity and quality of value that we create for others is what impacts our happiness the most.”

“The greater the sense of purpose we feel, the happier we become.”

“You don't deserve happiness any more than anyone else, but you also don't deserve it any less.”

“Suffering for a purpose physiologically reduces physical pain as well.”

Martin Luther King Jr.: "Even if a man is a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, 'Here lived a street sweeper who did his job well.'"

“Suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment that it acquires meaning.”

“Our lives are important at every moment.”

MK: Focus on the goal and how you might succeed, not on the obstacles in your way.

“Listing the obstacles allows you to notice which ones are actually standing in your way, because they are now literally staring you in the face.”

“Nothing keeps us going like believing that success is possible.”

“In order to surmount obstacles, sometimes it is we who have to go through a self-transformation.”

“The strength of our determination is indefinite, meaning we don't know precisely where it ends, and we can always extend it.”

“Encountering obstacles gives us the very thing we need to overcome them: strength.”

“Only in facing a strong enemy are we able to become strong ourselves.”

MK: Attribute success to ability, and failure to lack of effort.

“Freely choosing a painful experience reduces the degree to which we experience it as painful.”

MK: Using the energies you spent trying to escape the task *on the actual task itself* reorients them to the successful completion of the task.

“When we are warned that something is unpleasant, we are better able to tolerate it.”

“Expecting that achieving a goal will be difficult, we are immunized against temporary defeat.”

“Make yourself expect that accomplishing a goal will be way more difficult than it actually is, and watch yourself sail through it.”

MK: Having supportive people around us can *lessen* our own motivation if we believe that they will take action *for* us.

“If you can recognize a fact, then you can find a way to change it.”

“Only when we stand up ourselves do we inspire others to stand with us.”

“Whenever we can focus on the benefit of pain, we can reduce its unpleasantness.”

“Expecting pain to be mild reduces its unpleasantness.”

“Being psychologically braced for pain reduces its unpleasantness.”

“Recalling that we survived similar instances of pain in the past increases our resistance to it in the present.”

“The more familiar we are with a painful experience, the better we are able to manage it in the present.”

“Accepting pain enables you to stop making futile efforts to avoid it.”

MK: Emotional and physical pain light up the same centers in the brain, and Tylenol fixes both.

"Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life."

MK: Hope is one of the greatest uniquely human features, because only people can envision the future and feel something about it.

“Let go of what we can't keep, which is everything.”

“We have *influence* over things, but not complete control.”

“The capacity to be good can never be destroyed.”

“Compassionately wise people want happiness for themselves just as much and no less than they want it for others.”

“Something about disconnecting from one’s sense of self even briefly, about glimpsing oneself as belonging to a greater whole, seems profoundly and persistently comforting to most people who experience it.”

MK: Fear isn't either good or bad, but rather it depends on the actions that it causes us to either take or avoid.

“The way we expect other people to behave alters our behavior in such a way that it causes them to fulfill our expectations.”

MK: We have to take responsibility for *who* we bring out in the person we are influencing.

MK: Find someone we need to be strong for and then just keep them around.

“We can resist discouragement by articulating our life's mission; accomplish that mission by making a great determination; overcome the obstacles that naturally arise when we make such a determination by changing poison into medicine; gain the strength to change poison into medicine by accepting responsibility and standing against injustice; endure pain by accepting it and loss by letting go of what we cannot keep; enjoy what we have by learning to appreciate it and help ourselves through trauma by helping others; conquer fear by leveraging our connections to the ones we love. And, finally, I realized, gain inspiration from others who've managed to forge an undefeated mind of their own.”

“As long as our minds can think, our hearts can find their way to victory.”

“But as long as we refuse to give in to despair and resolve to continue taking concrete action, some kind of victory is always possible. So when everything seems hopeless and you want to give up, no matter how much others may doubt you or you may doubt yourself, hold that knowledge fast to your heart and fix your mind unwaveringly on this most imperative of calls to action: never be defeated.”

“Victory may not be promised to any of us, but possessing an undefeated mind means behaving as though it is, as though to win we only need wage an all-out struggle and work harder than everyone else, trying everything we can, and when that fails trying everything we think we can't, in full understanding that we have no one on whom we can rely for victory but ourselves.”