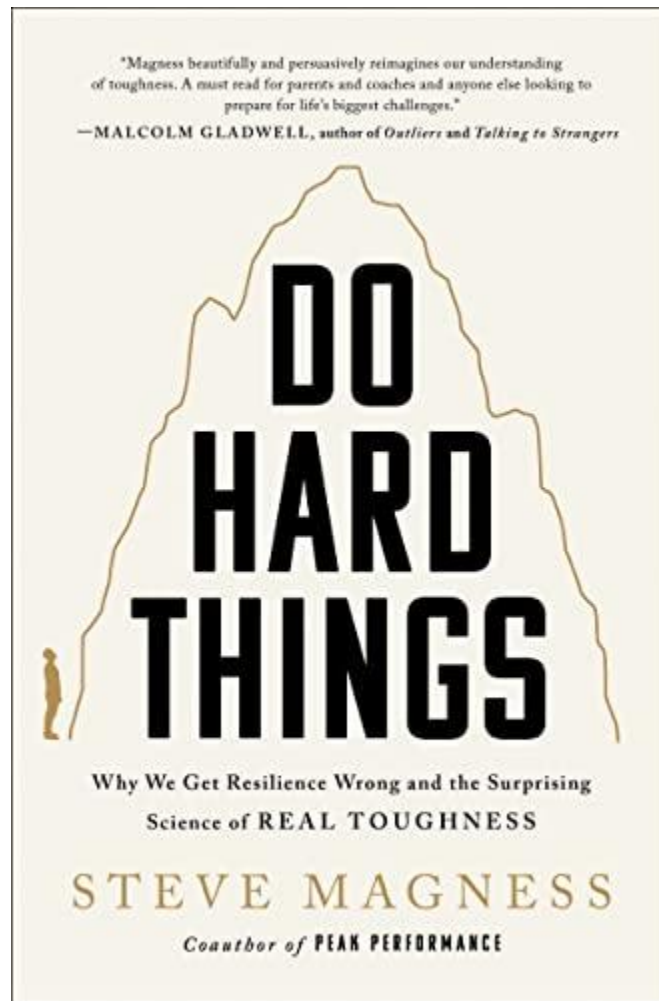


“Warren and I do more reading and thinking and less doing than most people in business. We both insist on a lot of time being available almost every day to just sit and think. That is very uncommon in business. We read and think. The game is to keep learning.” - Charlie Munger

Every Sunday, I share insights from a book I read. Reading allows me to think and learn. I am hoping that these summaries help you to learn what I learnt but in a much shorter time frame.



This week's insights come from the book [Do Hard Things](#). This is Part-1.

21 INSIGHTS

WE QUIT WHEN...

When there is an extreme mismatch between demand and support that problems arise.

When we're exhausted, or experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety, we're more likely to take the quick route, finding an exit in whatever way possible. We choose the easiest path.

Whenever we face something that throws our internal state off-kilter, we go about trying to solve it. We seek out a solution that moves disorder to order. Sometimes that means giving up, such as when we are a third of the way through a project and can't see the finish on the horizon. We often quit so that the unknown becomes the known. Other times it means changing our expectations before even beginning a task. Or it could mean exploring, accepting, or avoiding whatever it is that has led to unease or discomfort. Uncertainty demands a conclusion. We have an innate need for closure, however we can reach it.

Negative thoughts of quitting are normal. They don't mean you are weak. They represent your mind trying to protect you.

How do we get from discomfort to action? Feel → Inner debate → Urge → Decision (freak out OR find our way through)

THE AUTHORITARIAN LEADER DOES NOT WIN MORE OFTEN

Authoritarian parenting leads to lower independence, more aggressive behavior, and a higher likelihood for substance abuse and risky behaviors. In sport, the controlling, demanding style also fails. On the athletic fields, it's linked to lower grit and an increase in emotional exhaustion, burnout, and fear of failure.

The authoritarian style creates the appearance of discipline without actually fostering it.

What does a child who was taught to follow the rules unquestioningly out of fear do when a parent isn't there to dictate his behavior? What does an adult who was taught to rely on fear for motivation do when left to her own devices in the real world? What does a football player who learns to push himself only when a coach is screaming in his face do when it's him alone on the field?

Proclaiming the old-school model as the way to develop toughness is akin to declaring that the best way to teach swimming is to throw every kid into the deep end of the pool. For some, it would work, but for many, it would prove disastrous.

Our society has conditioned us to think that autocratic coaches are better coaches; that they win more often. It's a myth.

TOUGHNESS IS HAVING THE SPACE TO MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE UNDER DISCOMFORT

Real toughness is experiencing discomfort or distress, leaning in, paying attention, and creating space to take thoughtful action.

According to one star player, “He’s never negative, doesn’t scream. He finds a way to turn a mistake into a positive.”

“Teaching guys how to feel confident enough to believe in what they’ve been prepared to do and believing what they can do and they go out there and do it,” Carroll relayed to The Bleacher Report.

It’s science-driven. In 2008, researchers out of Eastern Washington set out to explore the relationship between leadership style and the development of toughness. After conducting research on nearly two hundred basketball players and their coaches, they concluded, “The results of this study seem to suggest that the ‘keys’ to promoting mental toughness do not lie in this autocratic, authoritarian, or oppressive style. It appears to lie, paradoxically, with the coach’s ability to produce an environment, which emphasizes trust and inclusion, humility, and service.”

As podcaster Rich Roll told me in summarizing the hundreds of interviews he’s conducted, “Everybody goes through shit in their life. Nobody escapes obstacles.” If we’re going to face obstacles, we might as well figure out the best way to navigate them.

Soldiers were training their biology and psychology to work in tandem during challenging moments. It’s not that they weren’t experiencing discomfort; instead, they had figured out ways to maintain clarity when everything around them was pushing them toward chaos.

To create space so that you don’t jump straight from unease to the quickest possible solution, but to the “correct” one.

TOUGHNESS IS BUILT IN STAGES

Real toughness isn’t just about helping you deal with pain or perform better; it’s about making you a healthier, happier human being.

If we “vaccinate” someone to extreme stress, they’ll be able to handle it better. The first step isn’t to throw someone into the deep end of extreme stress; it’s teaching the skills necessary to cope with the situation. Without learning the skills, the second part—putting individuals in a harrowing environment to practice those skills—is useless. The key to stress inoculation, though, is like a real vaccine: you don’t want it to be so powerful that you overwhelm the system.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the military realized that making people do difficult things wasn’t enough. Bear Bryant–style boot camps were great sorters but poor teachers. In 1989, the US Military Academy introduced the Center for Enhanced Performance, focusing on teaching cadets about goal setting, positive self-talk, and stress management. Soon after, programs in every branch of the military introduced mental skills coaching, culminating in nearly a dozen programs focused on improving mental strength and resilience. As of 2018, the US Army is the largest employer of sports psychologists in the country.

As sports psychologist Brian Zuleger told me, “Telling people to relax doesn’t work unless you’ve taught people how to actually relax. The same goes for mental strength. The historical way to develop toughness was to do something physically challenging, and you’d have a fifty-fifty shot if they thrived. You have to teach the skill before it can be applied.” Throwing people in the deep end doesn’t work unless they’ve been taught the basics of how to swim.

Chiu reported, “If an overconfident student chooses a book that is too hard—such as *The Lord of the Rings* rather than *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*—he or she might stop reading after a few pages and let it sit on a bookshelf. In contrast, a more self-aware student is more likely to finish an easier book and continue reading more books.”

BEING TOUGH STARTS WITH OUR EXPECTATIONS

Whether it’s climbing a ladder or a mountain, our biological response and the sensations that come with it are guided not only by the actual experience but by our expectations. How we see the world shapes how we respond to it.

On the other hand, if we see the stressor as an opportunity for growth or gain, as something that is difficult but that we can handle, we’re more likely to experience a challenge response.

‘Here’s what I’m capable of. Here’s what the race demands. I’m going to execute based on those two things.’ Those are the ones who consistently perform.”

When we face a challenge, expectation and reality should have a high degree of overlap.

The greater the mismatch between expectations and reality, the worse off we are.

TOUGH INDIVIDUALS SEE CHALLENGES NOT THREATS

Research consistently shows that tougher individuals are able to perceive stressful situations as challenges instead of threats. A challenge is something that’s difficult, but manageable. On the other hand, a threat is something we’re just trying to survive, to get through. This difference in appraisals isn’t because of an unshakable confidence or because tougher individuals downplay the difficulty.

If we expect an immense challenge and it’s easier than expected, we’ll pick up the pace and perform better! Wrong. If our expectations swing too far in the other direction, our brain goes into what I call “What’s the point?” mode.

DON’T PRETEND. ACKNOWLEDGE WHEN SOMETHING IS HARD.

“Everyone wears a mask. We carry around a facade, projecting an outer image of who we want to be. But when you are under stress, that fades away and you’re left with what’s underneath. Stress exposes you.”

When I asked Drevan to explain what he meant, he outlined two distinct masks he'd observed during his athletic and military days. First, there was the individual who looked the part, projecting bravado and self-assurance. They were the athlete who talked big, while downplaying the difficulty of the task at hand. "This will be a piece of cake," they'd say pregame. Yet, the moment something went awry, all that self-assurance faded away. They became timid, unsure of their abilities, and would fall back when challenged during the most difficult part of the race.

The second version initially appears similar. They, too, have a sense of confidence, exuding a certainty that they'll be able to handle what's thrown at them. But standing on the starting line, they weren't downplaying what was to come, but were clear-eyed on the difficulty of the task at hand.

SET APPROPRIATE GOALS

We're often told to shoot for the moon or dream big when it comes to setting goals, but research points to the opposite conclusion: set goals that are just beyond our current capabilities. If there's too large of a mismatch between our abilities and our goal, our motivation decreases. It's as if our brain shrugs its shoulders and says, "What's the point? We aren't going to win anyway."

SET AUTHENTIC GOALS

For those who were successful, goals came from within, reflecting who they were and what they cared about. A high degree of self-knowledge is what allowed these individuals to see clearly.

Whether through introspection, journaling, or conversations with close friends and family, do the hard work to ask what matters and why it does.

DEFINE JUDGMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

When you judge yourself solely by what place you came across the finish line, it provides zero actionable information on how to improve in the future. Judging yourself by how much effort you gave or whether you executed your plan offers a road map for what can be worked on during the next go-round.

COURSE CORRECT FOR STRESS

When we flip into a threat state, a freeze reaction, or a full-blown freak-out, the normal often seems unattainable.

PRIME YOUR MIND

Stress shifts us toward a negative bias, priming us to search out and recognize danger or threats in the environment.

To combat this quirk of evolution, prime your mind to search for opportunities, not threats.

When athletes warm up by “doing what they like,” they alter their hormonal state in a positive manner.

The closer you are to a performance, the more you want to prime with what you’re good at. Reviewing mistakes, working on weaknesses, telling yourself that you “can’t hit the slider, so watch for it” backfires when you’re on deck. Those are items you work on far before it’s time to step into the batter’s box.

TRUE CONFIDENCE COMES FROM THE INSIDE AND FROM DOING THE WORK

Doubts and insecurities are part of being human. Even if you’re the best in the world. We all struggle with but want confidence, that sense of assurance that we’ll be able to prevail at whatever we do. When we lack confidence or belief, our insecurities and doubts have room to grow.

Confidence plays a crucial role in toughness, acting as the counterbalance to our natural insecurities.

Confidence is a filter, tinting how we see the challenges before us and our ability to handle them. It tips the scales toward an optimistic or pessimistic view of our current situation.

When our confidence is high, we are able to cope with the demands of the event. We can manage our fears and doubts, quiet the negative voices, and redirect our focus to the task at hand.

Confidence expands our ability to act, to manage, and to make our way through difficult situations. Confidence and toughness go hand in hand.

True confidence has to be founded in reality, and it comes from the inside. It’s not in ignoring the human condition of experiencing doubt and insecurity, but coming to terms with them and what you’re capable of.

It’s not in the elimination of doubt, but in allowing enough doubt to keep us in check, while being secure in the knowledge that we’ll find a way past the obstacle in our way.

Confidence is something that we intuitively understand. It’s a feeling that makes us think, “I’ve got this.”

Just like self-esteem, with confidence, there’s a real version—one that is deep, based on evidence and understanding—and a fake version that’s based on bravado. The fake version is derived from insecurity. It’s a mask that a person wears, attempting to fake his way through a task or to put on a show for his friends.

Delusion and fake confidence go hand in hand.

Recent research found that those who tend to shout the loudest—both in person and online—do so because they lack inner confidence. We often confuse arrogance and brashness with confidence. We mistake external displays for indicators of their inner workings, not realizing that the need to proclaim that one is confident is undoubtedly a sign that they are anything but.

We think that if we can talk the talk, we'll be able to walk the walk. Just as with self-esteem, we've gotten it wrong. Confidence has to come from deep within.

If we artificially elevate our confidence, telling ourselves this will be a piece of cake or we've got this in the bag, our brain is constantly receiving the message that we won't have to work hard to achieve our goal.

"Pretending to be confident can be effective to some degree . . . however, like any façade we create, it won't last."

Confidence simply means having security in knowing that you can accomplish whatever is within your capabilities. It's not in being able to do the impossible.

To develop true, inner confidence, there are four steps:

(1) Lower the bar. Raise the floor.

It's not that we are lowering our ceiling or playing it safe; it's that we've developed the confidence to know that X performance is repeatable. That as long as we do what's in our control, we can achieve a certain standard, no matter the circumstances."

Those who raised their floors had an inner confidence about them. What once seemed crazy to contemplate was now the norm.

We create fake confidence for the same reason we build fake self-esteem: to protect the sensitive parts of our ego and to hide our weaknesses and insecurities from the world for fear of being exposed as a fraud or as not good enough.

Trust your training, trust your fitness. These simple phrases are meant to relay a much more profound lesson: that true confidence is founded in doing the work.

When fear drives the motivational ship, then insecurity pervades. When the work is done in the name of getting better, of enjoying the process, of searching for mastery of the craft, then confidence gradually grows.

(2) Shed perfection. Embrace who you are.

(3) Trust your training. Trust yourself.

Michael Jordan, once said, "If you have doubt or concern about a shot, or feel the 'pressure' of that shot, it's because you haven't practiced it enough.

Confidence is doing difficult things, sometimes failing, but seeing where you lie, and then going back to the work.

(4) Develop a quiet ego.

A bit of doubt and insecurity is normal. Too much defensiveness and protection are signs your ego's too loud.

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE? NOPE!

"They're all very individualistic, they're all very self-focused, they're also all delusional. 'Believe in yourself and anything is possible'? Nope, it's just not true."

Where we went wrong is thinking that self-esteem in and of itself should be the goal. That we should strive for the feeling, instead of having self-esteem be a by-product, something that occurs instead of is sought.

Successful people tend to have higher self-esteem not because they are striving for self-worth itself, but because it's a by-product of overcoming challenges and making meaningful connections with others.

Faking it works on easy tasks, where the challenge is low and a bit of extra motivation is needed to get you started.

THE JOY IS IN THE WORK, NOT THE REWARD

Our inner narrative changes when we are challenged and overcome adversity. When we put forth effort on a difficult task, we internalize that we have a strong work ethic. We become adept at knowing that we, too, can "grind away" at a problem.

Lasting self-esteem doesn't come from being told that we are great. It comes from doing the actual work and making real connections.

We shifted the focus away from the joy of actually doing the work and toward external praise and rewards. We were creating an artificial kind of self-esteem, a fragile one based on a delusion.

Summarized in his book *You Are Not a Rock*, "The pursuit of self-esteem logically sets you up for low self-esteem. It's the same trap again: If you believe your value comes from people giving you things, then you hand over control of your self-image to other people. If they don't give you those things, then your brain logically concludes you must not be valuable."

When self-esteem is contingent, it's fragile. When it's based on external rewards or praise, it's dependent on something over which we have little control.

FEELING THAT YOU HAVE CONTROL IS CRITICAL

When we lack a sense of control over our life, apathy naturally takes over.

When we lack control, our stress spikes. When we have a sense that we can impact the situation, our cortisol response is dampened.

When we have a sense of control, our alarm is quieter and easier to shut off.

When we believe we have influence over an outcome, we're more likely to persevere, even if we face a setback.

When we feel like we can have an impact on whatever it is we do, we are better off. The ability to have control is central not only to overcoming adversity, but also to being a happy, healthy human being. And it's reflected in our brains.

Giving nursing home residents more autonomy and choice over their care and their surroundings improves mood, alertness, and well-being. While in the workplace, those who report feeling more autonomy and less micromanaging have higher levels of job satisfaction and performance. We have a deep need to be in control over our environment and, in particular, our lives. When we give away this sensation, we lose a sense of ourself. And if we repeatedly do so, we lose our ability to respond even to the simplest of challenges.

It doesn't take big heroic efforts to train hope. Small signals that you are in control, that you can have an impact, will be enough to turn our prefrontal cortex back on.

Small actions that remind you that you have a choice go a long way to training the ability to put your brain back online.

Individuals suffering from depression have a reduced ability to activate their prefrontal cortex.

When we take choice away, our brain learns to be helpless instead of hopeful.

Autonomy is the switch that allows us to persist.

When athletes compete, they are alone in the competition arena. They make the decisions. Yet, in training, the coach takes on the decision-making mantle. Denison and Mills suggested flipping the concept on its head. No, not by making the athletes in charge of designing their workouts, but by giving a large portion of control back to them.

By putting the athletes in a position to choose—whether to speed up, slow down, lift another rep, or call it a day—we can take advantage of the power of choice. When we put people in a position to choose, we can “switch on” and train their prefrontal cortex, allowing them to understand and regulate the sensations of pain, fatigue, and anxiety that often come with such difficult moments.

We allow them to try, adjust, perhaps even fail, but above all, learn.

In Denison and Mills's model, the coach shifts from dictating to putting athletes in a situation where they are challenged, but then giving them free rein to find, search, and choose how to cope with the scenario.

When we don't have control, we lose the capacity to cope. It's when we have a choice that toughness is trained. Our brain literally turns on, figuring out how to work our way through the situation at hand. We were born to choose, so let us learn how to do it.

4 STEPS TO BECOME BETTER AT LEADING YOURSELF

(1) GO FROM SMALL TO LARGE - Once you have a sense of control over the smallest item, then move to something slightly larger. Move from small to large.

(2) GIVE YOURSELF A CHOICE - All or nothing often leaves you with nothing.

(3) FLIP THE SCRIPT - The next day, as Meredith began her warm-up, she came over and said, "I feel like I'm going to throw up." I replied, "Good! When do you want to do it?" Her face turned from worry to puzzlement. "I don't want to." Seeing her confusion, I replied, "I know, but it's going to happen. So what time would you like to throw up? Should it be before your jog, after you do your drills, or maybe right before your strides? Where would you like to insert throwing up into your warm-up routine? The race starts at 10 a.m. What time should I schedule your puking for?" The confused look on her face was still there, but she seemingly accepted and went along with it. "9:45, right before I do my final strides." Trying to appear as confident in this crazy idea as possible, I replied, "Great, 9:45 it is. I'll set my alarm so we both know and can get it done." For the first time in several races, no puking occurred.

(4) ADOPT A RITUAL - Tennis stars like Rafael Nadal and Serena Williams have their particular quirks—tying their shoes in the same manner, water bottles placed in the same spot, and so forth, before they go out to dominate. Why do these bastions of athletic superiority resort to painstaking and seemingly silly rituals? Control.

When we utilize rituals, we shift our focus to behaviors that we are in charge of, pushing to the back of our mind the items that we have little control over.

If you're completing a task with a high degree of uncertainty and a low degree of control, creating a ritual can be a successful way to keep negative inner voices and emotions at bay.

3 STEPS TO LEADING OTHERS BETTER

(1) LEARN TO LET GO

When you dictate and control, you're sending the message "I don't trust you to do the job."

As those in the Special Forces often say, "Trust but verify."

Your goal is to put people in a position to do their job.

(2) SET THE CONSTRAINTS TO LET THEM GO

For example, in athletics, inform the athlete that they need to complete ten 100-meter repeats, but it's up to them how much rest they have in between. Let them choose.

(3) ALLOW THEM TO FAIL, REFLECT AND IMPROVE

Don't throw them into the deep end with an incredibly demanding task, tell them, "You figure it out," and then watch them sink. Give away control in small bites that eventually grow into something much more significant. Then have a system in place that allows for reflection and growth.

In the sports world, after a game, coaches break down the game tape.

OUR FEELINGS CAN INFORM AND GUIDE US

Feelings nudge us toward evaluating whether a signal means danger or we should ignore it and move on. If we listen, our feelings inform and guide us.

In two studies out of Europe, a group of psychologists found that individuals who were clear about their feelings, understanding where they came from and what they meant, were more likely to thrive under stress, anxiety, and pressure. They turned anxiety into excitement and pressure into information and motivation. All thanks to clarity on the message their body was sending.

The first step to toughness is training your body and mind to understand and interpret the signals you are receiving.

Feelings like disgust send a message, telling us whether something is good or bad for us. Feelings don't just communicate; they nudge us toward a behavior. Push us toward action. They help us decide what path to choose.

An experienced athlete can separate pain and injury. A stage performer can distinguish between nervousness and anxiety. An executive understands when her gut is pushing her in the right direction and when she should ignore it.

Feeling is nothing more than a piece of information. The better we understand the signals coming from our body, the better decisions we can make.

NAME YOUR EMOTIONS TO CONTROL THEM

Take the example of depression. It's common to say, "I'm sad." But that doesn't make sense when you think about it. That implies that sadness is concrete, a trait that you can't change. If instead you say, "I'm experiencing a wave of sadness," it implies that it's a trait that will pass. It

might seem trivial, but the language we use to describe what we are experiencing goes a long way in determining whether we have power over our emotions or they control us.

Some feelings are meaningless or unimportant—false alarms triggered by an overactive inner self.

The nerves you feel before giving a talk? Call that your performance adrenaline. When we name something, we exert power and control over it.

“Individuals who are clear about their feelings are more likely to thrive on anxiety.” Even so-called negative feelings can be beneficial. It comes down to clarity of our inner world.

OWN THE VOICE IN YOUR HEAD

How we talk to ourselves during stressful situations influences our subsequent behavioral response.

Psychologists have used the same paradigm of self-immersed (i.e., “I can do this!”) versus self-distanced (i.e., “Jim/He/You can do this!”) self-talk in a variety of stressful situations with adults.

When put through stressful situations, if we use self-distanced inner dialogue, it not only helps decrease anxiety, shame, and rumination, but also leads to better overall performance.

All from switching from I to you.

Happiness starts with health. Reading is a form of mental health. Food is a form of physical health. Consider trying [Happy Ratio](#). I have been consuming it everyday since 2013. If you want to look better by being healthier, thinner and stronger and want it all without compromising on taste then look no further.



Harsh Batra
Founder

10 HEALTH PRODUCTS IN 1



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