

How to Overcome Anything

A Five-Step Framework for Surmounting Any Obstacle

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Introduction

Hello, and thank you for making the investment in yourself to get and read this e-book. It has been created with your success in mind. This book provides more than platitudes or mere ideas. It is a *practical* 5-step formula, a framework if you will, for you to follow to overcome any challenge, any obstacle any adversity that you face in your life.

We all face challenges in life. We can all get overwhelmed from time to time. But if we can arm ourselves with knowledge and skills, than we can rest assured that no matter what we have to face, we will be ready. That whatever may come our way, we will be able to handle it. This book is designed to be that tool for you. It provides not only the map, but also the fuel, to take your successfully on the journey of overcoming and transforming adversity into an advantage.

Good luck!

Mark

THE GOLDEN FRAMEWORK FOR OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

Step 1:

ACCEPT



Step 2:

BEYOND CIRCUMSTANCES



Step 3:

CAST A COMPELLING VISION
OF THE FUTURE



Step 4:

DECISIVE ACTION

STEP 1: **ACCEPT**

The first step in overcoming any problem, challenge or even crisis in your life, is to let go of some things. Through my challenges I've learned that one of the biggest obstacles to our finding solutions and peace amidst our troubles is the false ideas we carry around about how we think life is supposed to be.

So much stress and energy is cause by our trying to fight against, or deny, reality. The reality is, sometimes life is hard. Sometimes, it downright sucks. (very motivational I know, but stick with me here). It's okay to have moments of sadness, frustration and even rage amid life's difficult situations. However, at some point if we are ever going to be truly successful at overcoming our problems and turning adversity into a competitive advantage, as I believe we can, then at some point we must learn to accept what we cannot change and move on. The most successful self-help program of all time Alcoholics Anonymous has it right when it encourages its members to pray:

*Lord, help me to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.*

What we really do when we If we can learn how to let go of that over which we have no control, is give ourselves the time and energy needed to devote to the things we can actually do something about.

Let me say here for the record that it is absolutely essential that we take responsibility for results in our lives. So don't

think for a second that I'm suggesting you become passive and wait for everything to be dropped in your lap. Nor should you become fatalistic and pretend that you have no control over anything. That would be irresponsible. The truth is that we have a great deal of control over almost everything in our lives. The more you are willing to accept responsibility for that fact, the closer your experience and goals will match up.

Now that I've made that disclaimer this chapter is about reminding you that there are some things over which we have almost no control. Negative things like natural disasters and fluctuations in the market, and positive things like winning the lottery and deciding whether your child will be a boy or girl are all, for the most part, beyond what is called your "sphere of influence" the things you can do something about.

I make that point not to make you crazy with worry and anxiety. In fact, I do it for exactly the opposite reason. I want to help you realize that sometimes, the most empowering thing you can do when faced with adversity, is to LET GO.

Far too many people exhaust themselves so completely with worry about things they can never change, that they have no energy or time left to take action on the things that could actually improve their lives.

Don't let go of things you can do something about, but let go of the outcome and the factors beyond your sphere of influence. Why is this important? Because when you are able to effectively let go of things you have no control over, you discover that you have a lot more time and energy to devote to the things you can control.

Accepting is also about being 100% honest about where you are in life at this moment. To be effective in your life in any realm, you have to be able to take stock of exactly where you are now, honestly. Once you have become aware of exactly where you are and learned to let go of what you can't control, you are ready for the second step in the four-part process to overcoming anything, Go Beyond Circumstance.

STEP 2: **GO BEYOND CIRCUMSTANCE**

After you have gained real clarity on where you are and exactly what situation you are dealing with, you can move on to the next step which is to move *beyond* that.

If you are listening to this recording it is because you want things to change. So while taking an honest evaluation of where you are is important, if you stop there it will be a waste because nothing will change.

The difference between those who succeed in life and get what they want, and those who become victims, is that winners don't allow circumstances to determine their destiny. They go *beyond* circumstances. They understand a fundamental truth that is key to success: No matter what obstacles, conditions and circumstances you face, none of them can limit you unless you let them.

Helen Keller was born in 1880 in Tuscumbia, Alabama. While her parents had hoped they would have a healthy little girl, Helen Keller was born with significant challenges. She was born without the ability to see or hear. That's right, she was born blind AND deaf. Can you imagine that? Even when I think about it I'm sure I can't really conceive of what that must have been like. What an incredible challenge.

Being blind is a significant obstacle to overcome. To navigate a world without sight is far from easy. However, with the help of aids, perhaps a seeing-eye dog and your ears to use sound to guide them, many people who are blind are able to lead full and active lives.

Deafness is also very difficult. Being able to see where you are is great but if you can't hear it makes many of life's normal activities challenging. Driving a car when you can't hear traffic noise, or watching TV without volume, are challenging.

The thing about having one or the other of those disabilities is manageable when you can use the other sense to compensate.

If I can hear, then I can use that sense to get clues to help me navigate the world and overcome my blindness. I can learn to speak because I can hear others speaking. If I can see then I can use sign language, closed captioning and other tools of sight, to overcome my deafness.

But what do you do when you can't hear OR see? You can't learn sign language, at least not the tradition way, you can't see the signs!

It would seem, at least to someone like me who was blessed with both senses, that this was an impossible situation. Helen Keller certainly could have chosen to see her challenges as impossible to overcome, and thus sat in a chair and done nothing her whole life. People would have understood. In fact, many probably expected that. Her circumstances were so stacked against her that Helen Keller could have given up. Some would say, she should have. But she didn't.

For those who don't know the rest of the story, Helen Keller not only learned how to communicate. She was an author, political activist and lecturer. She became the first deaf-blind person to earn a university degree.

Without being able to hear or see she not only learned to function in life for herself, she achieved more than many who have both sight and hearing and became an inspiration to others.

Helen Keller's story, besides being incredibly inspiring, demonstrates perfectly this principle of this chapter; that obstacles need not define outcomes. YOU are NOT a predetermined result of your environment. You have choices, power, and to a great extent control, over your life and how it turns out. So go beyond your circumstances.

At this point, you may be thinking, "Ok, I agree with this in *theory*, but how do I actually do it? How do you rise above circumstances?" There are many things you can do to positively affect how you deal with life's challenges, but the single most important step, and the first thing you should do, is step back and gain *perspective*.

Most of the time, when we're feeling overwhelmed, defeated or lost; it's not actually because of the particular problem or problems that we're dealing with. It's not because this problem is SO big while others were easy (at least not most of the time). More often than not, the stress comes from state of mind that you are in and with which you approach the problem.

Let me give you an example:

Have you ever had a day at work where you felt totally swamped? You were overwhelmed by all the work, the stress, the deadlines etc? Sure you have, we all have. But let me ask you this: have you ever had a time when you had just as much work, just as much stress and just as many deadlines and handled it fine?

If you're like me, the answer is yes. Why is that? Why is it that sometimes we handle equal amounts of stress and strain with varying levels of effectiveness? Why, because in one situation you approached the issues with a different perspective than the other. In one case you had an attitude of being capable. You knew that the situation was tough but that you could handle it. You relied on your strengths and had confidence in your abilities and they saw you through.

In the other case you probably gave in to that little voice we all have in our heads that says, "You can't handle this. Who do you think you are? Don't you remember all of the times in your life when you failed? You aren't good enough, smart enough or skilled enough to handle this situation."

So how can we increase the number of times we feel we did in the first case and decrease the number of times we feel like we did in the second? PERSPECTIVE.

When you begin to feel like you're sinking and stress is taking over, take a breath. Literally take a big deep breath in to the count of 3 and exhale to the count of six (exhaling is actually what is relaxing). Then, think about the situation for a minute and see if you can recall a time in your past when you dealt with this, or something similar, in an effective way.

There is always an example you can pull from your past (if you are honest with yourself) where you were effective and didn't allow stress to take over. Once you've recalled that situation you can take confidence in knowing that you've "been there, done that" and you can rest easier knowing you can do it again.

Many years ago I had a period in my life where I fell victim to my circumstances. I was in a job that stressed me out; I was a wreck emotionally; and was drowning in negative emotions and self-talk. I was broken and didn't know if I could fix myself. (Hey, I never said I was perfect).

What turned things around for me, was a realization that I had overcome things far more difficult than this before. I thought about overcoming a life-threatening heart problem, surviving a very strenuous and dangerous heart-lung transplant. I thought about the marathons I'd run and how each one presented moments where I felt like I had to quit.

As I reflected more and more on what I'd already overcome, I began to draw strength from those victories in my life. I realized that I had not let circumstances determine my future before and I didn't have to let them do it this time either.

Are you allowing yourself to be ruled by your circumstances?

Have you decided that because of a particular situation in your life, you can't do something?

Have you ruled out certain career options or dreams you have because you think you don't have the right background or personality to do them?

Have you decided that because something is a certain way right now, it will stay that way forever? Like maybe you're stuck in a job you hate but you don't want to leave it because it pays the bills?

If you have answered yes to any of those things, take a step back for a minute and think about WHY you've made those choices. Becoming conscious of the choices we make and why we make them is often all it takes to change them.

Now that you're conscious of what you're telling yourself you can be empowered to change those messages. Here's an exercise to help you:

1. Make a list of 3 things that you'd really like to do or have in your life. 3 things that you've always dreamed of. It could be a job, a home, or a trip you want to take. Whatever you think of.

2. Now write down all of the reasons why you don't have these things yet. Think of as many reasons as you can and write them below (ie: I don't have enough money, I'm not smart enough etc)

Did you make that list? Okay, now ask yourself this question about each of the things you wrote above, and answer it honestly (I didn't say this was going to be easy): Is this really a REASON or is just an EXCUSE? Is the obstacle really beyond my control, or is it just my circumstance and something I can change?

Let me give you an example to illustrate what I mean. Let's say that one of the things you said that you wanted was to weigh 50lbs less than you do now. What were your "reasons" for why you don't? Maybe they looked something like this:

- My life is too hectic. I have no time to exercise.
- I don't have a lot of money I can't afford a gym membership
- Everyone in my family is overweight. I just have bad genes.

Those may all seem like good, legitimate *reasons* until you get a little perspective. To give you an idea of what perspective can do let me ask you this, "if your life depended on it could you lose 50lbs? Literally, if someone said I would shoot you dead one year from today if you don't lose those 50lbs. would you lose the weight?"

Heck yes you would! You'd find a way. You'd do whatever it took. You'd starve yourself, sell things to pay for a gym membership, give up every favourite junk food you have. You'd make it happen.

What's my point? I'm not recommending you become reckless to achieve your goals, or that threatening someone is the way to make them do something. What I'm trying to help you see is that if we gain a little perspective, our

circumstances don't seem nearly as daunting. With a little perspective, you can rise above circumstances.

One of the biggest benefits I bring to an audience that I speak to is the gift of perspective. People think they have challenges that are overwhelming, and then they hear about me going through a transplant and those challenges don't seem so tough any more. So give yourself perspective. Step back and analyze what's REALLY stopping you from having what you want. You can do that in the last part of the exercise below:

2. Now the most important part of the exercise. For every "reason" you have above for why you don't have what you want in your life, think of a solution and write them below.

Were you able to come up with some meaningful solutions to what you thought were series obstacles? I bet you were. If you weren't, you either didn't give it enough time, or you don't really want that goal badly enough to do what it takes to achieve it. That's fine. Get new goals. The point is simply that if you want it badly, you can find a way to do almost anything.

It comes back to a basic principle of human behaviour and intrinsic motivation: by default we take action to seek pleasure and avoid pain. That is the essence of all human motivation.

We will always act in a way that will help us to either pursue pleasure or avoid pain. More about this in another e-book but for now just remember, if you ever want to achieve something and can't get yourself to do it, get a little perspective and evaluate if what is standing in your way is really an insurmountable obstacle, or just an excuse.

So I challenge you starting now to go beyond your circumstances. Make a decision right now that you will not allow your circumstances to conscript you to a life that you don't want. Go beyond your current situation and you will find that you can transcend trauma, pass over problems and obviate obstacles to realize your goals.

Speaking of which... the next step in how to overcome anything is all about goals...

STEP 3: **CAST A COMPELLING VISION**

We have already discussed how important it is to get clear about where you are so that you have a place to start. Avoiding reality will never change it and so acceptance of what is, is the first step to creating what can be.

We then talked about the fact that, contrary to what we may have been told, or have come to believe, our circumstances cannot constrict us and force us into living a life we don't want to live, unless we let them. No matter what you are up against, there is always a way to transcend it if you take ownership of your results.

The next step to overcoming anything and turning adversity into an advantage is to Cast a Compelling Vision. The reason that this step is so crucial is that once you have a dream, a vision of the future that you can get excited about, it gives you the drive to do what it takes to get out of your current situation.

The reason that so many people flounder through life, going through the motions and never really achieving their goals is not that they are lazy, stupid or otherwise deficient in some way. What holds people back most often is that they get bogged down in the details. They get caught up in the treadmill of daily living and forget to step off and see if they are heading where they really want to go.

Someone once said: "Most people live by default rather than by design." Isn't that true? For many people they get set on a particular course of life not so much because they want to as because that's where they *happened* to end up, and happy or not, they continue on that road because it's the way

they've always done it. They let life happen TO them instead of working FOR them.

Now certainly there are times when things happen in life that are beyond our control, that we could never have predicted or prepared for, and that will change our course no matter what we do. Sometimes those changes are good, like the birth of a child or a job promotion, and sometimes they are bad, like a car accident or sudden illness.

I'm the first to acknowledge that sometimes things don't go as we planned. After all, I had a heart and double-lung transplant at 23 years old. I understand that sometimes \$*&# happens!

However, more often than not, people who are living lives they aren't totally happy with are doing so not because of some major tragedy or significant life event, but because of a series of small decisions made over decades that have left them on a path to a place they don't want to go. And rather than take decisive action to change that, they continue blindly along hoping that magically somehow, things will get better.

Let me give you an example...

Have you ever had a time in your life when you wanted something really badly? You set a goal to achieve or attain whatever that something was and you were sure you could do it? Then time passes and you wake up one day and remember the goal and realize that you haven't done anything to achieve it? Has that ever happened to you?

If you're human, it probably has. That's okay. What's important is not the fact that it happened, but WHY it happened. Why is it that we can have something we truly want, great intentions to achieving it, and even know exactly what we have to do to achieve it, and still not achieve it?

Well there are a variety of reasons that might play a role but they all come down to one thing; we let life get in the way. We do that because we fail to learn the most important lesson in achieving any long term goal in life whether that's finding a mate, getting fit or buying a home; mastering the contrast between short-term versus long-term thinking.

Most people in today's world have become accustomed to our instant gratification way of living. The Internet and cable TV have made things accessible at our fingertips. The concept of waiting to have something is quickly becoming a bygone idea. If you want it, you get it. Just witness the mortgage crisis of recent years fueled in large part because people bought houses they couldn't afford because they wanted their ideal life today rather than saving to have it tomorrow.

What's wrong with that? Well many things, but the biggest is that we all know instinctively I think that anything worthwhile takes time, and there are no shortcuts to lasting success. And yet many of us try to get corners. We live in the short term without thought for the long-term consequences.

Why are so many people obese? Because they prefer the short-term gratification of the fatty, sugary food they want to eat, rather than eating healthily today so that they will feel good tomorrow. They sacrifice long-term health for short-term gratification of their taste buds.

Let's pretend that you have always wanted to take a trip to Hawaii. Well that's not really pretending, who doesn't want to go to Hawaii right? So you want to go on this great trip and when you are about 30 years old you make that one of your long-term goals and you start to save for the trip. Each week you put away some money into a "Hawaii account".

After a few years the money starts to really accumulate and you can see that some day you will actually get to go on this great trip. It's exciting. Then one day some friends are planning a weekend getaway. Nowhere too special, just a little vacation town a few hours from home. It won't break the bank but you also don't have the money in your checking account so you dip into your "Hawaii account". You have a great time.

A few years later you go to a friend's house and they have this awesome new surround sound home theatre they want to show you. It's amazing. They tell you that they got it on a great sale on at the local store. You decide to check out the sale and end up buying the system for yourself. Again you don't have a lot of extra money kicking around so you dip into your "Hawaii account".

Before you know it the "Hawaii account" has become the go to spot to get some extra cash when you need it for just about anything. Need new tires? Hawaii account. Want a new car, "Hawaii account" and so on and so on it goes.

Fast-forward now twenty-five years. You're retired now and some friends call and tell you that you that they are planning their life-long dream trip to Hawaii and they'd love for you to join them. Can you come?

You're thrilled at the prospect and tell them you'll check the account and talk it over with your spouse. Then the sad news hits you. There is no Hawaii account any more. Over the years it became the "need spare cash" account and now there's nothing left in it. You have to tell yourself and your friends, you can't go on the trip. You just can't afford it.

Does this scenario sound familiar? Have you, or someone you know, had this kind of experience? What could have been done to avoid this sad story? What could have been done differently so that the day those friends called, you could have said "YES!" and enjoyed the trip of a lifetime? How could have thought long-term instead of short-term.

When we think long-term instead of short-term, we can say "no" to things that would be fun, but aren't part of our grand plan. We can make sacrifices today so that we can enjoy great gains tomorrow.

Creating a compelling vision gives you a long-term plan to get excited about. When you can make that vision clear and you are able to picture it in your mind, and stay focused on it, it becomes infinitely easier to make the short-term sacrifices necessary to make the long-term goal a reality.

So today I want to encourage you to map out a long-term plan for yourself. Where do you want to be in a year, 5 yrs, 10 yrs? Create as compelling a vision as you possibly can. Describe what your life will be like, where you will live, who will be important to you in your life etc. The more clear you can be, the more real you can make that vision, the greater will be your drive to make it a reality.

My 5 Year Plan:

In 5 years my work life will look like this:

In 5 years my personal life will look like this:

In 5 years my financial life will look like this:

In 5 years my spiritual life will look like this:

In 5 years my health will look like this:

My 10 Year Plan:

In 10 years my work life will look like this:

In 10 years my personal life will look like this:

In 10 years my financial life will look like this:

In 10 years my spiritual life will look like this:

In 10 years my health will look like this:

STEP 4: **TAKE ACTION**

The last step to overcoming anything is to take ACTION. This might sound rather simple and the reason for that is, well, because it is simple. Just do SOMETHING. In fact, do ANYTHING. Almost any action, beyond being destructive or reckless is better than doing nothing at all.

Too often people get in a difficult situation and they become paralyzed by fear. They spend weeks and months weighing the pros and cons of every possible course of action not wanting to make the wrong choice. And what happens? Nothing. The problem isn't solved, it doesn't get better and in many cases, it even gets worse.

Imagine what would happen If everyone acted this way. Imagine you are in bad car accident (of course I don't wish this on you but pretend with me for a minute) and you have had your leg crushed in the car. You are bleeding quite severely and if action isn't taken soon, there will be serious consequences.

You are taken to the emergency room. Doctors see that you have been seriously injured and begin examining your injuries and figuring out how best to help you. Once they have completed their examination what would you want them to do next? Would you like for them to consult with ten other colleagues at different institutions, review the latest research, and take a few days to chart a course of action? Of course not! You want them to cut. You want them to act. You want them to do whatever they have to do and do it NOW! We should be the same way about taking action on our goals and dreams.

When I was twenty-three years old, I was told that I was dying of heart failure. I was given two years to live unless I had a rare and dangerous heart-lung transplant surgery. The news was obviously incredibly difficult for my family and I to hear. For a few moments we sat in shock not knowing what to do.

The surgery was incredibly risky. The odds were not in my favour at all. As a small person it would be hard to find a suitable donor. Needing both a heart and two lungs, the donor pool was quite small. Because of the severity of my illness, I didn't stand a great chance of surviving the wait. There were many reasons to do nothing. In fact, doctors suggested that I might want to just go home and live out whatever time I had left to live.

I understood that there a great risk to taking action. However I also knew the consequences of not taking action were severe. I would die. The question was only how long that would take. And so, I decided that the pain of not knowing what would happen and taking a chance, was less than the pain of knowing that for sure I'd be dead within a few years. So what did I do? I took a chance. I took action. I asked to be put on the transplant list.

Obviously the decision paid off. Here I am almost nine years late in good health and thankful for each day that I've been given to share with my family and friends and work to try to help make the lives of others better.

What is important here, what I want you to take from this lesson is that I took ACTION. I DID something. I committed to course of action and knew that even if it didn't work out, I could rest in the knowledge that I took a shot.

I believe that we rarely regret the bad decisions we make nearly as much as the decisions we failed to make; the action we didn't take. So whatever you are dealing with right now in your life, take action on it. Do SOMETHING, today. I know you may be afraid. I know you may be hesitant because you don't want to do the wrong thing.

Most people don't take action out of fear. They either fear failure or they fear making the wrong decision. But fear is only False Evidence Appearing Real. It can only harm you if you give it power. The best antidote to fear is action. The best way to break through a fear of something is to do whatever it is you are afraid of. Face it head on. And stop worrying about making a mistake. Some of the best things in the world happened because of mistakes. The only real mistake is not learning from our experiences.

How to Overcome Anything – Mark Black

So right now I want you to write down one decision that you have been putting off. One thing that you need to take action on and list at least one action that you can take on that item right now. Maybe it's a phone call you need to make, a conversation you need to have. It doesn't have to be huge; it just has to be something you decide to act on. Write down that decision and the action here:

DECISION:

ACTION:

SUMMARY:

I hope you have enjoyed this e-book. The framework provided within it can truly transform the way you approach challenges and obstacles in your life.

It has been my pleasure to guide on this process. For the past seven years I have been helping people transform adversity into a competitive advantage and find opportunities amidst life's obstacles.

For more information about other products and services we offer, go to: <http://www.MarkBlackSpeaks.com>.

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