

**LEARN TO DISCOVER,  
CREATE AND DEVELOP...**

# *blessings* IN ADVERSITY

Convert Challenges, Difficulties  
and Hardships Into Blessings  
and New Opportunities

## *Frank F. Lunn*

Author of *Stack The Logs! Building a Framework to  
Reach Your Dreams and Carpe Aqualis!*  
*“Seize The Wave” – 7 Essential Surfing Skills to  
Revolutionize Your Business and Personal Life*

**“ADVERSITY HAPPENS...BLESSINGS MUST BE  
DISCOVERED, CREATED AND DEVELOPED”**



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***Blessings In Adversity***  
*Convert Challenges, Difficulties and Hardships  
 Into Blessings and New Opportunities*

*Adversity Happens... Blessings Must be Discovered, Created and Developed*

This enhanced E-book version of *Blessings In Adversity* is normally priced at **\$29.95** — But now it is absolutely **FREE and FREE** to share with others as part of our *Blessings In Adversity* Campaign in support of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and their mission of: "Finding cures. Saving children."

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*Blessings In Adversity* is an original work with components adapted from *Stack The Logs! Building a Success Framework to Reach Your Dreams* and *Carpe Aqualis! Seize the Wave- 7 Essential Surfing Skills to Revolutionize Your Business and Personal Life*, both by Frank F. Lunn, President and CEO of Kahuna Business Group, Inc. with permission from the publisher, Kahuna Empowerment, Inc. This book is the exclusive property of the author, Frank F. Lunn and the publisher, Kahuna Empowerment, Inc.

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"We have the power to literally change the world...wherever we touch it!"

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Stack The Logs!  
Terro-Phoria  
P.L.F. (Perspective Learning Forward)  
Surf-Titude  
Your World. Your Wave!  
Blessings in Adversity

## KahunaPower *QuickSurf™* E-Book

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Learn to Discover, Create and Develop...

# *Blessings In Adversity*

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*Convert Challenges, Difficulties  
and Hardships Into Blessings and  
New Opportunities*

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# Frank F. Lunn

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Author of ***Stack The Logs!*** – Building a Success Framework to Reach Your Dreams and ***Carpe Aqualis! "Seize The Wave"*** – 7 Essential Surfing Skills to Revolutionize Your Business and Personal Life

## *Dedication*

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***"For Each Who Have Gone Before, We Focus On Those Yet To Come."***

***Blessings In Adversity*** is dedicated to the loving memory of my special friends who are now blessing heaven Maya Pettit, Nick Rudolph and their loving families who certainly mourn their loss yet celebrate and share their lives as an inspiration and blessing to share with others.

This is also dedicated to all of the children and families from past, present and future who have been or will be blessed by St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and their ongoing mission of: *"Finding cures. Saving children."* Each one of you has a special story and is a real example of the practice of taking the best out of whatever life sends our way.

I need to once again thank my family, my business partners and my awesome team who all support this endeavor with their creativity and their passion. Your support means the world to me and I am honored to serve with each of you. I humbly thank you!

**KahunaPower *QuickSurf*™ E-Book****Learn to Discover, Create and Develop...*****Blessings In Adversity***

*Convert Challenges, Difficulties and Hardships Into Blessings and  
New Opportunities*

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## *Additional BONUS Offering*

- *Surf-Titudes To Reflect On* - Compilation of Quotes and Surf-Titudes to Add Perspective to Your Situation
- Chapter 19 — Excerpted From *Stack The Logs! - Building a Success Framework to Reach Your Dreams*
- Chapter 7 — Excerpted from *Carpe Aqualis! "Seize the Wave"*
- Additional Success Resources and Tools ([www.KahunaPower.com](http://www.KahunaPower.com))

## Preface

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September, 2005

Dear Friend,

Thank you for taking this *Blessings In Adversity* journey with me. I want to be very up front with my motivation and my goals with this work. ***I want to change the world.*** Ok, that might seem a little brash, but realize that *each of us changes the world everywhere we touch it.* With our fingerprints everywhere, the world is not the same for us having been in it. The real question is, "Did we do any good with our opportunities?"

I say my goal is to *change the world* and I mean it, but not in the way you might first think. When I say "I", it really means "we". I am a representative of my team of business partners and teammates. Together we are part of a larger group of peers and colleagues; people who believe and share our philosophies about the difference we all can make. I don't think I can create world peace or stop people from killing and hurting each other. What I do believe is that together we can forward a philosophy and mindset to teach and share with others that will make a world of difference. ***Blessings in Adversity*** is both an attitude and life-skills strategy for anyone regardless of age to use when they are experiencing difficulties and challenges.

There is a story about a boy with his dad walking on a beach loaded with starfish that had just washed on to shore. Hundreds and maybe thousands of starfish certain to dry out and die. The little boy gleefully started to throw the starfish back into the water to give them new life saying, "Come on dad, let's make a difference." The father, who was certainly more wise and knowledgeable, as well as practical, smiled and with a little pity in his voice tried to reason with his boy saying, "Son, there are far too many for us to save. I know you mean well, but how can you really expect to make a difference?" Undaunted by his fathers superior logic and valid argument, the little boy picked up a starfish, looked

intently at it – then threw it into the water as far as he could. Smiling to his dad and with genuine pleasure he replied, "Well...we made a difference for that one!"

We may not be able to change everyone or everything in this world, but together we can make a meaningful difference. If only one life is positively affected through this work, for that one person it will make a difference — and that will definitely be worth it!

This *QuickSurf* E-book was created with the intent that it be passed on and freely shared as our mutual gift. Neither myself, nor the publisher, Kahuna Empowerment, Inc., will make any money from this work. We have other projects for that purpose. It is our sincere hope that you will share this with others who need to hear this message. Should we go forward to traditionally publish this work, all proceeds will go to the Kahuna Charitable Foundation to be donated to: "*Finding cures. Saving children.*" in the *Blessings In Adversity* example of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Thank you for taking this journey with us and doing your part to change the world...wherever you touch it!

Blessings to You!



Frank F. Lunn  
On Behalf of the Entire Kahuna Empowerment Team  
Bloomington, Illinois

***"We have the power to literally change the world...wherever we touch it!"***

## *Introduction – “A New Perspective”*

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**“Your life will not develop by what life gives you, it will be created by what you do with what life gives you. Destiny is not found in the raw materials life provides us; it is forged in our creation and what is built out of opportunities we are presented with.”**

The above quote is what I have come to call a *Surf-Titude* — a combination of affirmation mixed with wisdom to provide perspective. I wrote this for myself at a time in my life when I desperately needed to believe it. When I first put the words together on an index card, my confidence and belief in the statement was suspect at best. The training I received both in the military and in business, conditioned me to not retreat from problems and difficulties. Instead, this training increased my desire to do the opposite; to boldly attack and remain on the offensive. How do you do this when your life gets turned upside down and you feel like quitting?

### **Every Life Will Have Difficulties**

Each one of us will go through pain, difficulties and adversity in our lives. At one time or another, we will all feel a weight on us so heavy we can barely breathe. Avoiding this reality will not make it go away, nor will it allow us to grow. My purpose and passion in writing this is to share practical strategies and ideas with a new perspective. Within each of the adversities we will face in our lives, whether simple ones like a clogged toilet or a babysitter that doesn't show up, to more serious ones like loss of a career or loss of a loved one, that there is still value to find... If you know where and how to look.

### **A New Perspective Regarding *Applied Practical Optimism***

Some people are afraid of life and retreat from it thinking this will keep them from pain. Others take it head on, yet can't handle setbacks and temporary defeats internalizing this as failure. The *Blessings In Adversity* strategy is about taking life head on and then dealing with whatever feedback comes your way. It is about practical optimism as

applied to your life and your situation. It is about opportunity awareness and initiative combined with personal responsibility. Although you can't control what happens to you, you have control in your response and in the action and attitude you take. This response as part of the opportunity and personal responsibility equation will ensure that no matter what happens in life, you are giving yourself and those you love the best opportunity to create a better situation for yourself down the road.

When your life gets tipped upside down by a situation or tragedy, you probably won't feel resourceful or optimistic that the potential exists for good to ever come from it. *Blessings In Adversity*, as a strategy, is looking at your life as a great suspense and mystery novel still in the early chapters. No matter what happens, there is a great possibility that six chapters later it will all make sense in a way you can't possibly see now. Perhaps new characters will enter or new situations will unfold or something completely out of the blue will happen and this difficulty in your life will provide perspective or value for someone else.

All great novels have conflict and turmoil. Many include tragedy for added perspective and insight. This lets the reader create a vested interest to see how the characters develop in those opportunities specifically created for a 'didn't-see-it-coming' surprise happy-ending. Like a great drama unfolding on TV or in a book, you don't necessarily know what the future holds. You cannot see what new characters will enter *your* script or what new plot turns will happen. All you have is now and your actions today.

I apologize for the repetition, but allow me to close this introduction with the same *Surf-Titude* I opened with:

***“Your life will not develop by what life gives you, it will be created by what you do with what life gives you. Destiny is not found in the raw materials life provides us; it is forged in our creation and what is built out of opportunities we are presented with.”***

*Blessings In Adversity*

As you read this for the second time, do you see it in a slightly different way or with deeper meaning than when you first read it? You cannot control what happens to you or many of the circumstances in your life. The difference between what life gives you and what you make of what life gives you is the real measure of your success.

## *Chapter 1 - Discovering Blessings In Adversity*

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*"I know God will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish that He didn't trust me so much." -Mother Teresa*

### **Putting Things in Perspective**

Our team initially started using "Blessings in Adversity" as a phrase to represent our annual September internet marketing fundraising campaign to raise awareness and money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. This is where my son Frankie was successfully treated for leukemia in 2002 when he was only nine-years old.

After Frankie's recovery, and being touched by the lives of so many others during this time, my heart was forever changed. For our family, the St. Jude experience was a true bridge and blessing to cross a massive valley of adversity. Now on the other side, I feel compelled to share and to give back in some small measure.

The actual phrase, *Blessings In Adversity*, originated from a deeply held belief first taught to me by my grandfather, whom I was named after. He started working in the coalmines as a young child to support his family at the turn of the century, lived through the Great Depression, survived a massive flood that destroyed his house, became an engineer going to college while he worked full time *and* supported his family.

My grandfather was an amazing man with a simple perspective. He taught me to take personal responsibility in every situation and to always look for something to gain. He shared that adversity is actually a gift in disguise. Although there will be many times this gift is unwelcome, there is always something to be gained if we maintain the right perspective. Although I didn't fully grasp or apply this wisdom during his lifetime, his legacy is one that helped me survive and grow during the most difficult times of my life.

Surveying the world today with only the perspective of the media, problems loom large and the world is a depressing and gloomy place. Suicide, especially youth suicide, is at an all time high as people let this world and the adversities we all face beat them down. There is no counterbalance. We are not taught mechanisms for dealing with difficulties in our life. Sports is win/lose and life for most people is pass/fail without any safety net or alternative perspective to teach the values in learning and growing through struggles.

What most people do after a failure or setback is feel stung, hurt, embarrassed and then refuse to try again. Worse, they dwell on the negative and let it influence future situations and future outcomes.

### **Failure is only Feedback**

Failure for most people is simply that...failure. There is no honor or valor in failure. Even saying the word aloud stings. This is ridiculous! From walking and learning to speak as a child to our early education and trying to learn any skill — we fail more than we succeed. It is only through this failure that our success and victories can eventually bloom.

Almost any great success you can name has in its origin a setback, failure or door closed that can be pointed to as the original seed of the success. Robert Collier said, “In every adversity there lies the seed of an equivalent advantage. In every defeat is a lesson showing you how to win the victory next time.” An old Chinese Proverb relates the theme as, “A gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man perfected without trials.”

It is important to cling to this notion that failure and setbacks carry within their core seeds of new opportunities. Some of these opportunities lie in new paths and new directions. Some create new relationships. It may be in learning or experience which will serve you in a future application. Sometimes it may be in rescuing ourselves from a path that would prove disastrous. I can now look back at many of my experiences, which I

certainly classified at the time as failures, with the benefit of a more clear perception of time to see how each failure benefited me.

### **Developing An Applied Practical Optimism Mindset and Action Attitude**

Let me explain up front what **Blessings In Adversity** is not. It is not just about cancer or death. It is not about putting on a brave face when things go bad. It is not about hiding your genuine feelings of anguish, grief, pain, discomfort or despair. It is not about putting on a fake smile when you feel like crying. It is not dealing with the world with easy glib sayings or looking at the world through rose-colored glasses. It is certainly not a way to avoid genuine emotion or deny true feelings.

**Blessings In Adversity** is not a soft approach. In truth, it is much more like combat. "Combat?" you may ask. Yes! I don't know a soft way of saying this, so I will just blurt it out. Life is difficult and many times painful. It is a struggle and can be very hard with unseen forces acting against you. All of that said, life can be rewarding and full, but only if you make it so. As a society, we celebrate the peaks and yet retreat in the valleys. Yet, without valleys, we need to realize there could be no peaks.

Poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once reflected, "Into every life, some rain must fall." Each one of us will have adversities, setbacks, grief, difficulty and the loss of loved ones in our lives. My principal goal in writing and sharing this information is to fill a gap and void in our society. I want to prepare you to not just take these situations lying down, but rather to attack them boldly to mine whatever good can come from them.

Yes, this is combat. There is no honor to stoically accept what happens. There is no valor in whining, moaning, sulking or complaining. When something bad happens to you creating adversity (death, job loss, financial disaster, spurned by someone you care about, divorce, work issues and so on) you have a fundamental choice. The pain will be there regardless, but this approach will allow you to gain some measure of value for your pain. In good times celebrate. In hard times, grow!

*Blessings In Adversity****Blessings In Adversity is a Life Strategy***

As explained above, it is a belief and practice of *Applied Practical Optimism*. We can't always choose or control our circumstances, but we can choose our response and our attitude and our actions that follow. After we have time to process the normal human emotions of grief, anger, despair, etc. it is time to focus on the future and respond based on our goals and what is important to us.

Being miserable and depressed will not change the situation. But — when you take action to look for, discover, create and nurture opportunities within the situation you are in, you can find and develop ***Blessings In Adversity***. Again, this is a vital skill-set.

Unfortunately, this is not taught or promoted within our society. If your adversity is loss, like the tremendous loss of a child our campaign shares, then this proactive action after normal grieving and sorrow honors them as a tribute adding meaning and value to their precious lives.

*Blessings In Adversity* is a skillset and an attitude to be developed. There are a world of benefits as you learn and practice this skill. You will still have hardships and difficulties in your life, but this skillset will help you grow and find value after your pain.

It is important to realize up front that most opportunities will come into our lives disguised as difficulties, obstacles, adversity, hardship and failure. It is also true that most success grows from the initial seed of failure, adversity and difficulties. As others get dejected and quit, you can learn to engineer your own success and create positive outcomes. True failure only happens when forward motion stops and you quit trying.

***“Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker” - John Maxwell***

## *Chapter 2 - Perspective Proximity to Pain*

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***“Adversity doesn't build character... It reveals it!”***

### **Proximity of Pain**

The other day, I asked my son to get something from the table for me. After several minutes, he called out in frustration, “Dad, I can’t find it.” As I approached, I could see the item was just slightly out of his view. His search parameters were too narrow. I walked up behind him and gently pulled him back two steps to where he could easily see it.

Proximity is a fancy word for how close you are to something. How close you are to pain completely affects your perception of it. If you are going through difficulties right now and struggling for breath with the weight of the world on your chest and heart, it is difficult to maintain a balanced perspective. When your world is caving in on you, it is difficult to stay calm and centered.

In truth, we are all at different levels of proximity and pain right now. This will vary and change as our lives progress. When my father passed away in 1998, it was close and very sensitive for a long time. After seven years, it is no longer the open wound it once was. I still miss my father very much, but I am past grieving and mourning. Now I have a different set of more balanced emotions.

When your adversities and difficulties are too close it is like placing your hand right in your face touching your nose. It is too close to have any real perspective and see it clearly. Take a piece of paper with writing or a book and touch your nose with it to see if you can make out anything from it. You really can't focus on anything that close. As you move it a little further away, it begins to come into focus and the words or images

*Blessings In Adversity*

become clearer. If you pull it an inch or so back, you will be able to read about a third. Another few inches and it comes entirely into focus.

This is the way it is many times with our problems...they are too close. The saying, “Can’t see the forest for the trees” is another illustration. When you are too close, you cannot see patterns or alternatives emerge from your problems. Our lives are exactly like that with time as our proximity measure rather than the distance from your eyes.

In adversity, difficulty, hardship, loss and grief, you are given a choice to be a victim or to claim a victory with meaning behind it. You have paid the price; make sure you get your value out of it. Proximity and closeness to pain, may not allow you to see any value at this point. Over time and with perspective and practice of applying practical optimism, you will find and create value. Victory is what you claim and what you stake out as yours — bought and paid for.

***The New Lens of Applied Practical Optimism***

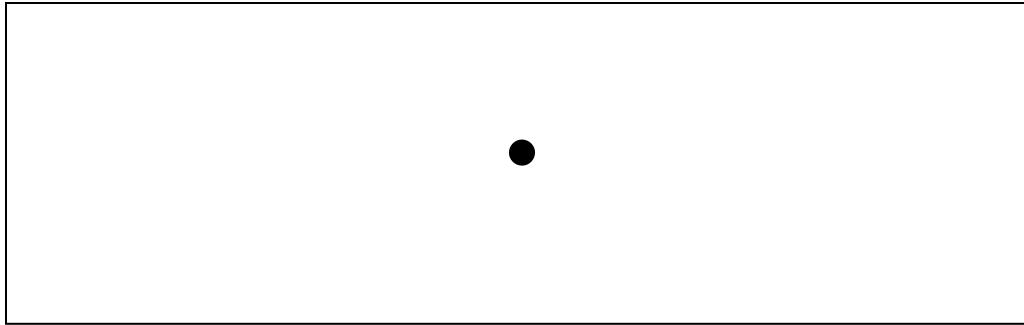
You may be sensing a theme that action is an integral part of the success process. Discouragement, disappointment and setbacks are natural to everyone. The difference in how we respond ultimately determines your result and outcome. Most people are stopped cold. If you can use discouragement, disappointment and setbacks as feedback to learn and grow and improve, you will apply the process of failing forward. As you become adept at shaking off and moving through these frustrating obstacles, you will build strength and significant advantage in attaining what you set out to achieve. It is not so much what happens to us in life that matters, but rather how we respond.

There is usually a good side or some value in every situation if you are inclined and know where to look. A practical optimist sees opportunity in chaos whereas a pessimist sees chaos in opportunity. To find the success or benefit in any situation, learn to become a practical optimist. To learn to convert discouragement, disappointment and setbacks into fuel for your success, you need to first and foremost condition yourself to change your thinking. When you learn and practice to view every problem as an opportunity of some

kind and some magnitude, it will change your life. This is not Pollyanna thinking. Everything you do and every action you take in response to a situation or event will depend on how you assess the situation.

As a practical tip, when you are confronted with a serious problem, dwell on solutions and opportunities rather than on the problem. Nearly everyone I have encountered with a serious problem that comes to me for advice usually has blinded themselves to the view of opportunities by holding the problems too close.

Look at the box below as an example of what I mean. Stare at it for a minute. Observe what you can in the illustration. What do you see?



Like most people, you probably answered that you see a black dot. This is certainly true. Now take a moment to re-examine the illustration and answer the following question. Within the square, what color represents the overwhelming majority of the space? The answer of course is the color of the page with the black dot being less than a fraction of 1 percent of the color. The reason you answered the black dot is because we are built and trained to notice the contrast. If this were your life and the prominent color of the page represented good things in your life and the black dot represented problems and challenges in your life, you would certainly have a most excellent life with far less than 1 percent problems versus all of the good.

Because of the contrast, the negative stands out and the black dot becomes the focus of the illustration rather than the overwhelming remainder of the box. This is what most people do with problems in their life. We get complacent and forget about the good the

blessings and advantages that we are provided with, and too quickly find the black dots in our lives that represent the negative. Sometimes we can take this approach to a far extreme, focusing so much energy on the black dot that we can hardly see anything else.

While this is a simple exercise, it demonstrates how quickly we look for, identify and dwell on problems rather than on the positive aspects of our lives. Train yourself to be optimistic and opportunity driven. Look for opportunities everywhere and in every situation. There will be disappointments and setbacks in your life that are really opportunities in waiting as blessings in disguise. Imagine if you were currently married to the first person you thought you were in love with or the first person that ever truly broke your heart. Imagine if you were still at your very first job. Over time it is much easier to look back on situations in our lives that at the time seemed like bitter losses or disappointments and now seem to have worked out for the best. A key skill set in developing practical optimism is looking at situations affecting you in the present and applying the same long term wisdom and vision. While others are wallowing in their disappointment, you have the opportunity to clearly assess your situation and the opportunities presented.

An airplane flying from New York to San Francisco will be off course for a significant time during the journey due to weather, rerouting, traffic patterns and other obstacles to a straight flight. If you narrowly define success as being on course, the flight will be failing more often than succeeding. Pilots understand how this process works and make adjustments and course corrections to get back on track. Pilots don't get frustrated, angry or hurt when they get off course; they take corrective action.

There is a certain myth where people assume that in order to be happy and fulfilled we must "think positive" all the time. To succeed and to fulfill our dreams and ambitions, we have to keep focused on what we want (goals and dreams) and then continue making progress toward it. Practical optimists accept feedback for what it is, seek to take whatever kernel of opportunity is presented and then take action within the opportunity.

Learning to do this as second nature and positive success cycle is the key skill set of the practical optimist.

Our lives are a combination of both good and bad; positive as well as negative. To paraphrase Dickens, our lives many times reflect the best of times and the worst of times...at the same time. When we learn to focus in on whatever good may be present in a bad situation, we feel better, more empowered and are more inclined to take action. When we don't, we are more inclined toward a negative pattern and a negative cycle. This neither helps the situation nor our feelings regarding the situation. Either way we choose to think, life goes on.

If someone in a vehicle forces you off the road on the way to your destination, the choice is yours whether you want to have justified anger, resentment, self-pity, or any number of real emotions. You are certainly justified to have these emotions, but as long as you stay on the side of the road, you are no closer to your objective. The other choice is to get past your situations and learn, if possible, from your experience. Regardless, get back on the road to your objective.

***"To Get Out Of A Hole, You Must Stop Digging!"***

## *Chapter 3 - The Power To Change Your Perspective (Reframing)*

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***“Difficulties strengthen the mind, as well as labor does the body.” –Seneca***

Several years ago, an exceptional 19 year-old Spanish athlete was goalkeeper for the world famous Real Madrid team. A promising sports career was derailed when a tragic car accident left this young sports phenomenon near death and paralyzed. For more than three painful years, he underwent the difficult recuperation and rehabilitation process.

Most people in this situation would have been devastated and lost all hope with the bright future torn away without any time to plan or contemplate a different alternative. This young man, however, accepted a gift from a physician's assistant in the hospital given with the intent to raise the young man's spirits. The former soccer star, still at the beginning of a long journey just to walk again, began to play the guitar and write songs.

As the song of his life began a new verse, the young man did recover and studied law before his new passion of music began to open opportunities. The young man later reflected on his journey. “I think having that experience changed the direction and the philosophy of my life, going through all that made me who I am today. I was a sporting, flirty young guy before that. All that pain gave me a sensitivity to everything around me. I became a poet without writing, a singer without singing.”

Perhaps you have heard of this singer whose passion and art grew out of the ashes of adversity. Perhaps you might recognize the voice of the man now known around the world and credited by some as the beginning of millions of babies whose music and passion inspired millions and earned this crooner fame and fortune beyond comprehension. Perhaps you have heard of a man named Julio Iglesias.

The success story of Julio Iglesias is not unique. There are thousands of known and probably millions of untold true tales of adversity giving rise to a life and opportunity far better than what was originally intended. McDonalds and the “golden arches” would not exist today if Ray Kroc had succeeded in his first several ventures. Instead, they ended in bankruptcy prior to the opportunity of meeting the McDonald brothers and purchasing a little hamburger stand which would develop to become the preeminent fast food franchise in modern history. Had Walt Disney not failed in his initial dreams to the point of bankruptcy and failure to all those around, the magic of the Magic Kingdom and the hundreds of Disney related businesses would not exist today.

It is a hard pill to swallow, but sometimes we learn lessons through pain that will benefit us. Allow yourself to be open to what life is teaching you and apply it later when the opportunity presents itself. **Reframing** a situation is taking a look from a different point of view or looking for outcomes other than originally intended. It is easy to get trapped into linear thinking and fix our minds on a certain outcome. Many times disappointments occur for our own good and benefit. When things don't go our way, we are disappointed.

Reframing allows us the opportunity to reassess what opportunities might come from the outcome we received rather than the one intended. For instance, assume you are going for a job promotion in your company and instead it goes to someone else. The natural inclination might be bitterness, hurt, anger and resentment. Using the power of perspective to reframe the situation, you might look at the message you received (accepting information only as feedback) to better prepare yourself for the next opportunity. You might find a better opportunity shortly down the road that you would have been unavailable for had you received the promotion. You have the opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to the organization which will serve you long term. There are any number of benefits you might see when you look for them.

It is a given in this life that the chips will not always fall in your favor. You will not always get what you want. The reframe on this is the great number of opportunities you will have to practice and demonstrate your skill in this area. Your ability to take what

other people see as bad or difficult situations and turn them around with a positive attitude will quickly separate you from your peer group. As you apply this to all areas of your life, you will find that situations start working out in your favor more often. Others may call it luck, but you know the power of perspective allows you to stack the chance of winning significantly in your favor since you know how to create your own best opportunity for a positive outcome within any situation.

Others will be disappointed more often than they win. You know that through the power of perspective and reframing, you have the opportunity to win nearly every time. Certainly not every win will be what you wish for, but even a learning experience is a win if you apply it to your important goals.

### **Abraham Lincoln's Journey**

History is filled with many rags to riches stories. There are countless examples of men and women who rose through their adversity stronger and better for their trials and tribulations. The history of the discouragement, disappointments and setbacks experienced by Abraham Lincoln are well known and documented. Before he was 23 years old, Lincoln lost an infant brother, his sister, his mother, nearly drowned, and almost died when a horse kicked him. After his 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday, the Abraham Lincoln disappointment, setback and failure parade continued to march on.

- 1832 Lost job
- 1832 Defeated for state legislature
- 1833 Failed in business
- 1835 Sweetheart died
- 1836 Had nervous breakdown
- 1838 Defeated for Speaker
- 1840 Filed for bankruptcy
- 1843 Defeated for nomination for Congress
- 1848 Lost re-nomination to Congress
- 1849 Rejected for land officer
- 1850 Son dies

1851 Father dies

1854 Defeated for U.S. Senate

1856 Defeated for nomination for Vice President

1858 Again defeated for U.S. Senate

**1860 *Elected 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America***

Lincoln failed as a businessman, a farmer, and in his first attempt to obtain political office. Once he did finally get elected, he failed when he sought the office of speaker. He failed in his first attempt to go to Congress and failed when he sought the appointment to the United States Land Office. He failed when he ran for the United States Senate, something he deeply wanted. He failed in his attempt for the nomination of Vice-President in 1856. He suffered personal loss and tragedy and even had a nervous breakdown. All of this failure and defeat, yet historians most generally agree that Abraham Lincoln was one of the best Presidents this country has ever seen.

The failures of Mr. Lincoln are so well documented because they are in such stark contrast to the success he proved to be. Many believe, myself included, that Abraham Lincoln could have never been the man he proved to be without going through all the setbacks, frustrations, tremendous losses and deep disappointments he suffered through. Lincoln grew into the man he became over time and with sometimes painful growth.

He did not quit despite all these setbacks and disappointments. The negative events in Mr. Lincoln's life helped him define his character qualities that proved vital as President of a country split in half. A country in desperate need of a leader with character who had experienced the very essence of sorrow and adversity. Mr. Lincoln's most successful years did not come until after many years of what appeared to be fruitless failure. Through the lens of history, we can clearly see a man made great through his triumph over failure, situation, setback, adversity and other obstacles placed in his way.

***"I do the very best I know how - the very best I can; and I mean to keep on doing so."***

*-Abraham Lincoln*

## *Chapter 4 – Convert Challenges, Difficulties and Hardships Into Blessings and New Opportunities*

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*"Adversity doesn't necessarily build character, but it definitely reveals it!"*

### **Train Yourself to Discover Blessings in Every Situation**

A few months back, I was in a big hurry to get somewhere and running late as usual so I was driving faster than I normally do and truthfully, much faster than I should have been. Then on a two-lane highway, I got behind a vehicle moving at a snails pace. OK, he was going the speed limit, but it annoyed me to no end because I could not pass him. For about five miles I got aggravated and upset. Each time I tried to pass I was stymied by other cars or poor visibility with a curving road. FINALLY, after what seemed like an eternity, this moving speed bump turned and just as I was about to accelerate to double my speed, I heard the explosion of my radar detector at the maximum level. I had just run directly into a police speed trap. My heart sank as I saw the officer with the radar gun pointing directly at me. I could only think of one word...BUSTED!

In that heartsick moment, I realized I was about to get a very expensive lesson that I deserved. I looked down at my speedometer to survey the damage and assess which bracket of penalty I would find myself owing while I waited for the piercing red lights to pop on behind me. Astonishingly, they never came on. Then it hit me; I was actually going the speed limit. I breathed an amazing sigh of relief. My body was releasing massive endorphins. My breathing was quick and shallow as though I just escaped death.

Certainly a little melodramatic, but this was certainly that momentary response. As I moved a mile down the road, at legal speed, the lateness to my destination seemed less important. Right then I realized that the slow driver I was silently cursing under my breath a minute back for impeding my progress was actually the reason I did not get a ticket and massive fine along with being even more late with the embarrassment of the

roadside stop frequented by many people I know. Smiling to myself in the rearview mirror, I thought, "Lunn, you just experienced a *Blessings in Adversity* teaching point!"

*Blessings in Adversity* is *applied* practical optimism when you realize that any situation can provide value when you look for it with the proper lens of perspective. We are all in a hurry and our time perspective is so short. Look back into your own life and you will undoubtedly see areas where you wanted something badly and it did not happen or you were disappointed in some way. Later, with the perspective of time, you can see that ultimately it was a real blessing you were initially disappointed.

### **Challenge Alchemy**

Alchemy was the medieval science of trying to turn lead into gold. Lead and gold as elements on the old chemistry class periodic chart are very close in atomic makeup. It was thought (mistakenly) that you could somehow take a low value metal like lead and convert it into the precious commodity of gold. While the scientific evidence disproved the ability for the metallurgic conversion, there is a more symbolic and valuable type of alchemy available to us. **Challenge alchemy** is converting problems and challenges into something more valuable. In essence, challenge alchemy is the science/art of converting 'lemons into lemonade.'

The phrase has become overused and trite, but there is still value in its application. At different times in our lives, we will be provided with the proverbial lemons. Our response determines our outcome. My Mom always used to tell me, "When God closes a door, he always opens a window. In every dark cloud there is always a silver lining." Philosopher Frederick Nietzsche said, "That which doesn't kill us makes us stronger."

### **Create a "Phoenix" Mindset**

The Phoenix is a mythical creature whose lore of rebirth in the ashes of death is present in nearly every single culture. From the ancient Greeks and Egyptians to the American Indians, the myth of the Phoenix symbolizes immortality, resurrection and new birth. Every society has a slightly different version of the myth, however, the template myth

tells of a bird of matchless splendor, unique and unparalleled in the entire world, living beyond five hundred years.

According to the Greek version of the mythology, when the bird felt its death was near (approximately every 500 years), it would build a nest of aromatic wood and set it itself on fire in order to be completely consumed by the flames. After three days, a new phoenix would then arise from the ashes and begin life anew until the cycle was repeated. The Phoenix Principle is not about dying, but rather about giving you a fresh start and rebirth into a new life. No matter what your circumstances or your past, today is a new day and tomorrow is a fresh beginning. You do not need a publicist or a team of spin doctors to reinvent yourself as we have seen examples of from Hollywood to Washington D.C.

The basis of the Phoenix Principle is this — all of your yesterdays are lessons and today provides new choices. The Phoenix is merely symbolic of renewal and the opportunity to shed your past. Many people hold on to the failures and setback of the past like a set of trophies earned and refuse to give up. Whatever has happened in your past must be left there. If you have achieved victories, let them be reminders of your success and inspiration to continue on your path. Let them provide confidence you have succeeded in the past to know you can succeed in the future. What you cannot do is let your past victories keep you from growing. Your disappointments, heartaches, setbacks and even failures can actually be more useful to you than your victories. With reflection and positive perspective, they can provide powerful lessons and deep reservoirs of motivation and drive. Success can at times cause complacency and failure to push beyond comfort zones. Finding and developing opportunities out of failure provides a double win of the new success as well as the confidence acquired in the transformation.

### **Become a Turn-Around Specialist**

We have all heard the famous and oft quoted expression from astronaut and commander of the ill fated Apollo 13, Jim Lovell, “Houston, we have a problem!” On April 11, 1970, Lovell, with his crew of Jack Swigert, and Fred Haise commenced their voyage to the

moon. Two days later, when *Apollo 13* was more than 200,000 miles from Earth, an oxygen tank exploded and the crew was placed in extraordinary and unparalleled danger. Any number of events or components of the situation could have killed the entire crew. On top of the critical issues that would potentially leave them stranded in space and separated from Earth, they had the more immediate life-threatening crisis of running out of oxygen. The air filters, or scrubbers as they were called, were designed to remove the harmful and toxic waste product of normal human breathing. The scrubbers for the command module were round, while the scrubbers in the lunar module were square, preventing replacement or the means to exchange and keep the air safe to breath. Without fixing this critical problem, the remaining issues would not matter, as three asphyxiated and expired astronauts would float forever into space entombed in their failed vessel.

Captain Lovell and his crew most likely felt a range of emotions from fear to anger with the situation. They could have blamed the stupid engineers who might have prevented the issue with additional forethought. They could have been upset and aggravated with each other. They could have allowed themselves to be frozen in inactivity due to the panic and terror of the situation. What they actually did was to choose to access the situation and take action with whatever resources they had available. Both in space and hundreds of thousands of miles below on Earth, scientists, astronauts and technicians worked to create a workable solution to the problems they faced. They prioritized the situations and took action in that order. Duct tape and socks provided one of the solutions for the scrubbers which led to the ability to work on navigation and eventually a safe reentry. Had the astronauts put themselves in a fetal position and waited to be rescued, they would have never survived the first day. Through knowledge and contingency training for similar events, they were equipped to turn their situation around.

This is so simple yet is so difficult to completely grasp. The outcome of our lives lies not in what happens to us, but rather how we respond to what happens. It is not by what life brings our way, but rather by our attitude and what we bring back to life.

**Develop Resourcefulness; Ask Yourself, "What Would MacGyver Do?"**

In times and situations where you are feeling powerless and circumstances take control of your life rather than the other way around, it is sometimes helpful to ask yourself this question: What Would MacGyver Do? *MacGyver*, for the uninitiated, was a show in the 1980's starring Richard Dean Anderson. Called only by his last name and placed in the most precarious and unenviable situations, MacGyver was the absolute epitome of resourcefulness. Combined with his training and knowledge, he was somehow able to convert ordinary items into extraordinary tools to get him out of any cliffhanging situation. MacGyver would apply his magical blend of creativity and applied science, and triumph as the poor man's James Bond. I don't know whether the science was always real or not, but the show taught me a mindset that has served me whenever I feel trapped and out of options.

Maintain the attitude and mindset of a creative problem solver. Learn to develop opportunity awareness. Learn to think about possible benefits and opportunities hidden in adversity or hardship. Learn to visualize any negative situation as an opportunity for metamorphosis into an enhanced situation like a caterpillar changing into a butterfly. Sometimes creativity in your personal situation is looking at a combination of things you had not thought of previously. When you get into a pinch requiring a healthy dose of creativity, step out of yourself and your normal patterns to ask, "What would MacGyver do?"

***"A great attitude does much more than turn on the lights in our worlds; it seems to magically connect us to all sorts of serendipitous opportunities that were somehow absent before the change." -Earl Nightingale***

## *Chapter 5 - Use Failure as a Key Ingredient for Success*

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***“Failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently.” -Henry Ford***

While Frankie was still in treatment in Memphis, some very good friends with two small children came to visit. One of the nights together we sat in our room and watched *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, the classic Dick Van Dyke movie about a quirky inventor who never quits despite his many failures. With persistence and the help of his support structure (along with a flying car), he eventually prevails over adversity, finding success and true love. In the end, in fairy tale fashion, they all fly away in the car of the movie's title.

This movie is simple yet truly inspiring. There is a scene in the movie where the father of Dick Van Dyke's character says, “From the ashes of the failure, grows the roses of success.” The meaning hit me like a lightning bolt. ***Our failures seed our successes.*** We cannot play it safe and still grow. It is not necessary to take extreme risks to succeed, but you must venture out of your comfort zone. Someone once told me that, “You can't get to second base without taking your foot off first.”

### **Failure is in the Eye of the Beholder**

Failures are really only lessons to be learned. They become failures when you stop trying or you continue to not learn from the event. Every outcome produces either the desired result or not. The result that misses the target still provides information to assist on the next attempt.

While in the Army, I received cross-training on the skills needed for successful field artillery, essentially blowing things up from a long distance with a big cannon. Keeping it simple, there are only two key elements — range and direction. When you fire and miss your intended target, you make a small adjustment in the angle to bring the artillery round in closer or make it go farther. In the same way if you are off to the right or left, you can

also make those minute corrections. After a miss, you analyze, adjust and re-fire. This is not failure, but is part of the process. Once you hit your target, you know your range and direction and can direct all the firepower, or “steel on target” you need to accomplish your mission.

### **Failure Is Part of the Success Process**

Aristotle, the famous Greek philosopher said, “For all the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.” Try juggling if you don’t know how. You can learn, but it will be ugly at first. Can you imagine a baby learning to walk through studying others, yet never crawling, standing or attempting the first awkward steps that usually result in a topple? A baby crawls, fails, walks poorly, improves slightly and then only after repeated failure and short success does he/she begin to dramatically improve. This is essentially true with any new skill you attempt to acquire. Anything worth doing well is worth doing poorly...at first.

The mistakes of the past are your paid in advance learning experiences to apply to the future. Without these failures, you would never have the successes. Success is sometimes in proportion to the failures you recover and learn from.

### **Pain Precedes Progress**

In the sport of bodybuilding and weightlifting, muscle fibers will not grow until pushed to failure. After failure and the muscle fibers break down, they will after a period of healing, rebuild larger and stronger than before. Bodybuilders seeking large muscle gains create and follow through on a systematic plan over time to constantly produce failure. Interestingly enough, they must be very creative in finding new ways to induce this failure as the muscles become resistant to breakdown and failure. The weightlifter’s adage of, “No Pain, No Gain!” has application to our lives as well. Without failing, there can be no real growth. Anyone who works out at the gym lifting weights or engaged in heavy manual labor understands that growth comes as a byproduct of resistance. The daily resistance of the hammer makes the blacksmith’s arm strong and powerful.

If you set out to learn a musical instrument, or a new language or a new skill, you will fail far more than you succeed in the beginning. Failure is a part of the process and needs to be recognized as such. Failure is not bad until we allow permanence. Attempting a new skill and quitting after initial setbacks is failure. Working through the skill and taking feedback from each failed attempt provides progress to your goal. With persistence and applied learning, each failure brings you closer to your desired competence level.

Overcome obstacles to get stronger. Pain precedes the gain. Just like within muscles, growth follows failure. Robert Kennedy said, “Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly.”

### **Take Risks**

Without risk there would be no achievement and no great endeavors. All successful people take chances. Meeting new people is a risk. Learning and growing is a risk. Risk precedes reward. Risk does not and should not be reckless. The reason most people do not take risks and stay in their comfort zone is that they fear the unknown. Preparation, knowledge and past experience soften the landing for risk and any potential downside. We need to enable ourselves to make mistakes. There is no better instructor than failure. Mistakes, disappointments, letdowns and the setbacks are part of the growth process - even failure. Failure and success are like the Chinese symbol for the Yin and Yang. It is indistinguishable where failure stops and success begins. No person who sustains success does so without failure. Most successful people have a far greater share of failures in their lives than people who are unsuccessful. Babe Ruth is an oft cited example of success through failure in that he could have never achieved the pinnacle of his successful homeruns (741) without the corresponding high number of strike outs (1,330). Failure is a stepping stone and many times the precursor to success.

There is an old story of a boy talking to his grandfather about success. The boy asks, “Grandpa, how do you achieve success? Sagely the grandfather replies, “Good decisions.” With this the young man asks, “Where do good decisions come from?” “Experience.” With that, the grandson asks, “Where does experience come from?” Sagely again, but with a sly grin the grandfather replies, “Bad decisions.”

Of course experience comes from a combination of good decisions as well as the more euphemistic “learning opportunities.” In my own life, I have made some tremendously bad decisions, easy to spot with the perspective of hindsight and time. Each of my bad decisions has led me to more positive outcomes in the future. In some cases, I could apply new perspective, make new choices, avoid pitfalls and benefit through any number of advantages as a fruit of past failure.

Failure with redirected energy seeks out new possibilities and creates new opportunities. Failing, but accepting responsibility and learning from the failure is the essence of failing forward. We all fall down. Failing and then not putting that to use is a waste of the learning resource. President John F. Kennedy’s highest level of popularity came after one of his most public failures. After the infamous Bay of Pigs incident, President Kennedy took responsibility and bore the weight of the loss with dignity and character. This failure was not in itself remarkable, but the fact that his popularity soared after the incident is. His humble and forthright approach to his short-term failure turned it into a long-term success. Ultimately he showed even his critics that he was human and subject to error, but that he also was honest and straightforward in his failure. The conclusion drawn by millions of people was that President Kennedy was a better man by how he failed.

***“When defeat comes, accept it as a signal that your plans are not sound; rebuild those plans, and set sail once more toward your coveted goal.” - Napoleon Hill***

## ***Chapter 6 – Get What You Want in Life — S.T.A.C.K. The Logs!***

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***“I respect the man who knows distinctly what he wishes. The greater part of all mischief in the world arises from the fact that men do not sufficiently understand their own aims. They have undertaken to build a tower, and spend no more labor on the foundation than would be necessary to erect a hut.”***

-Goethe (1749-1832) German Philosopher

Would you like a simple and easy five-step strategy to routinely and at-will convert your plans and goals into realities? It sounds a little oversimplified in that context, but there actually does exist such a process. Although it was through trial and error, many painful adversities and finally a reflection on wisdom shared with me by my father shortly before his death that I was able to discover this for myself. Since uncovering this “secret” hiding in plain view, my life has never been the same. It is my honor and privilege to introduce this concept, simply called the S.T.A.C.K. Strategy, representing an acronym for the five steps of the process, with you now. In addition, I will share how it works into the overall *Blessings In Adversity* framework.

The S.T.A.C.K. Strategy is in essence a five step process to convert your dreams and desires into reality. It is a success process you can apply to any area of your life to get what you want. It is very simple, although simple doesn't necessarily equate to easy. The concept of losing weight is simple: expend more calories than you take in and for every 3,500 calories more that you do this, a pound of fat will be used in the process. Very simple concept yet there are so many diet and fitness books, pills, shakes, gimmicks and shortcuts sold to where it is now a multi-billion dollar industry.

At its core, the S.T.A.C.K. Strategy is a goal-setting and goal-achieving process. I have been a student of goal-setting and similar topics in earnest for almost two decades and

can say with certainty that although there are some differences with wording and structure, if you boil it down to its bare essence, you would find that the process is virtually the same. It is timeless and also proven. Use the S.T.A.C.K. Strategy to add leverage in your life as a template and practical framework to fully realize your dreams and ambitions.

### **The Building Blocks of Success — S. T. A. C. K. Strategy**

A little less than four years before I started the manuscript for my first book, *Stack the Logs!*, my father died of a rare cancer of the bone marrow and blood. A little less than four months after I began the project in earnest, my then nine-year-old son Frankie, was diagnosed with leukemia, a cancer of the bone marrow and blood.

*Stack The Logs!* became a project inspired by the words of my late father and my son, but it is not about cancer or death. It is about life and strategies for living it to the fullest. It is about learning to take control of your life and discovering success on your own terms.

### **What Does, “*Stack The Logs!*” Mean?**

“*Stack The Logs!*” began as my father’s homespun encouragement phrase to me. The project of writing a book around this success philosophy all started with an encouraging note he wrote to me shortly before he died. My father’s words were a stark reminder of valuable lessons learned through study and through life. He knew I was on the right course, although I could not see it at that time. His words were absolutely the right words at the right time:

*Both Mom and I are very proud of your accomplishments. You have planned well, kept on an excellent forward thrust to your objectives and handled your disappointments well. If you plan to succeed and implement that positive plan, you will still have disappointments. You have a great supportive family and Lisa and Frankie will help carry you through these times. Stay positive, stay focused, maintain your great moral character and...KEEP ON STACKING THOSE LOGS!!*

Reflecting on this note several years later, I noticed seven main components jump to life:

1. Plan Well
2. Keep An Excellent Forward Thrust To Objective
3. Deal With Your Disappointments And Setbacks
4. Create A Positive Support Structure
5. Stay Positive And Focused
6. Maintain Moral Character
7. Keep On “*Stacking The Logs!!*”

In a quick note on a birthday card, my father gifted me a seven part blue print for a successful life. No magic and no shortcuts. There is wisdom within the simplicity and a roadmap for success. Success, in whatever your definition is, is an accumulation over time rather than a singular event. It is about incremental achievement. The truth is that life is not easy. Saying life is not easy, however, does not necessarily mean life has to be hard. We tend to make life harder than it has to be. We tend to focus on the wrong things and fail to take deliberate actions towards a meaningful destiny. Unfortunately, the result for most people is an accumulation of random and unplanned events chained together into a destination of chance and uncertainty.

***Stack The Logs!*** and the S.T.A.C.K. Strategy is a construction project — as we are all constantly under construction. When applied, the principles will unlock the success you desire in your life and enrich those around you.

### **The S.T.A.C.K. Strategy**

#### **S → Set Your Destination and Course**

It is easy to dream. It is easy to wish and hope. Many times people think passing thoughts and open their minds to new and different ideas they would like to accomplish. It's an easy step for most people and also where it ends for them. Most sparks of goal setting are usually stopped considerably short, ending life as a wish or a hope or possibly even a dream, but never a true goal.

Just like in travel, in order to achieve an outcome, you must have a destination. Aimless travel is merely wandering and aimless ambition is success squandering. You would never think to take a trip without having an idea of where you wanted to end up. It is so simple, yet so few people take the time and effort to create a destination for their lives. Choose a target destination and then figure out the best way to get there. This may be a dramatic oversimplification, but no less valid. If you follow this step and clearly figure out what you want, you begin to gain leverage over your circumstances.

Knowing your intended destination provides an understanding of the route you must travel and plan accordingly. If you plan to drive to a destination, you plot it on a map, estimate time, plan for fuel and other related contingencies. With a goal, you need a plan of action to factor in the same types of things. A clear goal in mind as your destination, and a clear action plan of your course, puts you well on your way to achieving your desired outcome.

### **T → Take Immediate Action**

Once you have an intended destination, the only thing that will transform your dreams into realities is ACTION! I cannot stress this enough. Having a destination and a course without action is like sitting at your kitchen table with a map highlighted from your town to Disney World and just continuing to look at the map. Nothing happens without action. If you wait two weeks, study the map further but take no action, you will still be at your kitchen table. *Nothing happens without action.*

Results follow action. Until you take action and as Tony Robbins would assert, “Massive Action!” to your plan, your plan will never turn into the reality of a goal achieved. Although it may be difficult to start, taking action is *the* defining choice. When a rocket launches, more than 90 percent of all energy is used just to get out of earth’s orbit. Newton’s First Law of Motion explains a body at rest tends to stay at rest unless acted upon by an outside force. Without action your dreams, goals and ambitions will never materialize.

**A → Accept Results Simply As Feedback**

This may be a difficult concept for some people to get over. The fear of failure is like the stinging fear of rejection. It is embarrassing and can cause doubts. When we don't get the desired results we seek or the instant gratification we crave, it is too easy to draw back and quit. We question our motives. We question our abilities. Sometimes we even question our worthiness. It is sad, but many times we use feedback as validation for our failure rather than see it for what it is...feedback.

Feedback by definition is only information. Feedback is neutral; it is neither positive nor negative. We are the ones who attach meaning to it. Feedback is there to give us indications of our surroundings and our situation. If you accidentally touch a hot stove, your instant feedback is that it is very hot and your hand should find an alternative resting place. Results should not invalidate the goal nor should it discourage us from what we seek. Results should be accepted as feedback to help understand if we are on track.

**C → Correct Your Course Based On Feedback**

If you are on the road to go from one city to the next and you hear on the radio that the bridge is out or that there was a big accident and traffic is at a standstill, what do you do? Quite naturally, you would accept that feedback and then look to alter your course. Pilots flying planes are off course far more than they are on course with wind and other factors moving the plane. Pilots are trained to gather feedback from maps, instruments and visual clues to then correct course based on this new knowledge.

If your current activity is not producing the desired result, change your activity based on the feedback provided. If Oreo cookies, mint chocolate chip ice cream, soda and potato chips don't provide the result you seek, make a change based on the feedback. If you are driving and find yourself a bit lost and then finally see a landmark you recognize, you correct course based on the feedback.

Every step you take when you walk is a miracle of feedback, neuro-communication, muscle control and course correction. You take action and stimulus goes to your brain.

Your brain is given feedback from your feet, leg muscles, eyes, as well as other parts of your body. When you walk and an obstacle appears in front of you, your brain automatically analyzes the feedback from all inputs and then sends out a course correction based on the feedback. If it is a curb, you lift your foot a little higher and extend your stride. If there is a pole in your path with other people approaching, your brain guesses the best maneuver for you to get past your obstacle without hitting anyone. On your way to achieving your goals, you will hit snags, which will provide opportunities to accept feedback to then correct course based on this new information.

### **K → Keep On Stacking The Logs!**

Your results will be small at first. In fact, your results at the beginning will be far smaller than the effort used to that point. As you progress along your journey and your objective, you will begin to see small successes and gains. Keep on! Keep progressing and making gains. It takes time and it takes persistence. On a long drive, if you find yourself in the middle of nowhere, yet you know you are on the right road, you need to have the patience and persistence to see it through till you arrive at your destination.

The phrase, “keep on *stacking the logs*” is both encouragement as well as an action step in its own right. When you have yet to arrive at your goal, but know you are taking the right action and doing the necessary things, there is a period where your action step is just continuing to take the action needed. Soon enough your desired results will come to life and your goal will be realized.

### **S.T.A.C.K. Strategy™ - Five Steps to Your Desired Outcome**

- S → Set Your Destination and Course**
- T → Take Immediate Action**
- A → Accept Results Simply As Feedback**
- C → Correct Your Course Based On Feedback**
- K → Keep on Stacking the Logs!!**

*"Success is not an event, but rather a process of building over time. Success is a cumulative effect. Oddly enough, so is failure."*

## *Chapter 7 - Opportunity Initiative – Discovering Blessings Camouflaged in Adversity*

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*"It is the Law that any difficulties that can come to you at any time, no matter what they are, must be exactly what you need most at the moment, to enable you to take the next step forward by overcoming them. The only real misfortune, the only real tragedy, comes when we suffer without learning the lesson."* - Emmet Fox

I have had many great influences in my life from family and friends mixed with education and experience. My own philosophy regarding success has certainly evolved from those; however, they have all been built upwards from the original foundation laid by my father and his father before him. At the core, I believe we have a creator who enabled us with the ability to think, create, adapt and choose.

Our power of choice is our great liberator. We can choose our emotions and our actions and set our own course. Applied over time, we are essentially in control of much of our own destiny. We are where we are and basically where we chose to be; good and bad. We have assets and liabilities and the power to make changes in our life. We may not be able to control all of the circumstances or situations in our lives. We may not be able to control loss of life or loved ones or disease or how other people treat us. We can control our attitudes and we can control our response and the actions we choose to take.

Certainly, this is not easy. We can, however, train and develop the responses we let it take on our lives. It saddens me to see people who let life happen to them and take no action other than to complain and further allow the roots of complacency to set in and grab hold. Life is to be lived and there is a world of abundance that is ours for the asking. We only have to learn how to ask.

Our lesson in all of this is that we must learn to condition ourselves to look for and create within us *opportunity awareness* even in the midst of tragedy. I hate what my son Frankie

had to endure during his initial bout with leukemia, but our first day he set the tone reminding me of these principles. Even though he was separated from his family, stuck with needles and dealing with pain and discomfort, he began to share blessings with me. From the new people we met to the hundreds of cards, letters and gifts from friends and loved ones, our family began to experience blessings in the midst of a bad and uncertain time. I would not have had the time, opportunity or life lessons to write this book if not for the opportunities presented during Frankie's illness.

### **Perspective Learning Forward (PLF)**

While still in college and part of the Army ROTC program, I was given an unbelievable opportunity to go to Fort Benning, Georgia to attend Airborne School and learn how to parachute. Airborne school was an exhilarating experience and a military right of passage for many. The course itself is three weeks long which doesn't sound like much, but trust me, it is definitely intense. Filled with rigorous physical training, the intensity of Georgia heat in the summer and an Airborne instructor in your face most of the time, the course is extremely challenging. We learned skills such as how to rig your chute, how to load and exit the aircraft, how to maneuver your parachute while in the air, how to clear the landing zone and many other facets of being Airborne. We spent most of our time, practice and focus to create expertise in the skill of controlled crashing.

A parachute slows you down so you do not crash into the earth at terminal velocity; however, there is still considerable speed when you land. Perhaps you have witnessed sport parachuting and how fast their approach is. In the last few seconds, the sport parachutist pulls down on chords to collapse the chute at the last second and slow it down. With the exception of elite units, most of the Army parachutes do not have this feature and there is little you can do to slow your descent rate. Even with a parachute, your impact is about the same as jumping from about 10 to 15 feet with no parachute. Over time, the Army has learned and perfected a method of landing to absorb and spread out the impact of the fall to lessen the overall effect of the crash. This technique, known as a parachute landing fall, or PLF, allows the body to collapse in a way that spreads the

impact out over several points of contact rather than landing on your feet and risking injury.

The essence of PLF is about position upon impact so that each point of contact can come in the right order and with the correct form to allow the body to act as a collapsible spring. The correct position is feet and knees together. The correct order points of contact are 1) feet, 2) side of lower leg, 3) side of quadriceps, 4) buttocks and 5) back. All this happens quickly in a fluid collapsing motion. We literally spent days practicing this fall from every imaginable angle and in every sadistic way you can think of.

Because you are a passenger of the wind and do not control your direction, you might have to PLF in any direction. Front PLF, left PLF, side PLF, again and again we would practice falling. We slid down cables and did PLFs in the sawdust. They had a sadistic device called a swing landing trainer which started on a platform about 6 feet high. In a harness through a pulley system, the instructor would start you swinging. Then at the instructor's whim, they would let go forcing you to do a perfect PLF...or do it again and again and again. Did I mention the intense Georgia summer sun and the people in your face? We would drill and drill and drill on how to fall culminating in a drop from a parachute hooked up to a 250-foot tower that pulled you up and then dropped you.

Like an amusement park ride on steroids, this tower exercise was both exhilarating and terrifying and the last step before "Jump Week." Drills, training, practice every day for almost two weeks did one thing above all else, it took the conscious thinking out of the equation and allowed the reaction essential to the skill to be forever imbedded in our subconscious. During the next phase we would jump five times in different situations to qualify as "Airborne" and earn our jump wings. I will always remember my jumps and will never forget learning how to fall, as that helped me significantly when I hurtled toward the ground in many situations in my life.

Just as the Army uses a PLF to teach soldiers how to fall, we need to practice PLF in our lives when we have failures or feel like our life is crashing down around us. In the Army,

every thing has an acronym, so I adapted PLF for use in my life. My new **PLFTM** is **Perspective Learning Forward**. I use this when I feel I am in the process of crashing back into earth with a failure, setback or disappointment. Henry David Thoreau said, “It’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see.”

Perspective allows us to fully look at the situation afterward, evaluating what went right as well as what went wrong. Perspective helps to put things in proper place. Learning is about moving on and learning forward is about positioning so that even if you fail, you lessen the impact and don’t remain on your fourth point of contact (your bottom) for long. When you act with integrity especially in difficult times, you sow seeds for future success. When you fail, look for ways to adapt and do better next time.

*Perspective Learning Forward* is a simple strategy when trained and drilled into your subconscious. It allows you to make the most out of every situation and even more out of ones others might classify as bad situations. Develop the habit of **Perspective Learning Forward** to maintain a positive approach in your life and a winning attitude despite what comes your way. You may still find yourself on your fourth point of contact (buttocks), but not for long.

### **After Action Analysis**

In the Army, after a mission, we are taught to painstakingly review the preceding mission in what went right as well as what went wrong. The military calls this review process an After Action Report. We were taught this skill, not to criticize or berate others, but rather to use focused reflection backward to have better results going forward. This is difficult to do as we are conditioned to want to forget and get past issues, not relive and revisit — especially when painful.

As a young officer in Desert Storm, I made plenty of mistakes, but I had a commanding officer who allowed me to grow from my mistakes rather than be broken by them. When you go through an event, perform an After Action Report for yourself. If in the situation again, what should I do differently? What factors should I have given greater

priority? What components were the greatest leverage in the situation? What would I not do again? What did I do better than I had expected? These kinds of questions can be asked honestly of yourself without blame or humiliation. The only objective in this exercise is to accept feedback to gain useful information in order to allow you to make a course correction. Without the introspective look back, it is hard to gain perspective to apply going forward.

***"When one door closes another one opens; but we often look so long and regrettfully upon the closed door, that we do not see the ones which open for us."***

*-Alexander Graham Bell*

It is important to distinguish between failure and temporary defeat or setback. Most of what people sometimes feel is a failure is only a temporary defeat or setback. Sometimes this setback is a pause to keep us from running off the cliff. After the healing power of time, many situations we initially saw as failures were really blessing in disguise. Reality is brought back into focus. We learn or are forced to redirect our energies down more desirable or prudent path. The crushing blow of rejection and failure you might have experienced in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade dating scene gave way for better relationships and opportunities. At the time it might have felt like it was the end of the world. The perspective of time and your current situation puts that emotion into new context.

Looking at setbacks and failures as valuable lessons does not happen naturally. You have to develop the habit of reflection. Being able to face yourself head on in times of difficulty is the only way to really profit from the experience. When you face the facts, analyze the situation and learn from it, you ensure that you don't repeat the problem and have to suffer through it again.

***"Perspective Learning Forward is a mindset, which allows you to make the most out of and create positive benefit from every situation — good, bad and especially ugly!"***

## *Chapter 8 - Personal Responsibility – The Glue of Your Character*

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*"Accepting responsibility is the fulcrum point for succeeding at anything." - Jeffrey Gitomer*

### **I Should Have Been Rich**

When I was young, I would spend my entire summer with my grandparents living in a small town outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My grandfather, whom I was named after, was an awesome man of marvelous skills and talents. He was an engineer by education and a carpenter, architect and craftsman of the finest German tradition by practice and patience. My grandfather designed and built his house by himself. He had a wood shop in his basement and could do miracles with creations from scratch, or repair anything from electronics to fine china. He had great patience in his tasks and I can recall only once in all of our time together where he lost his patience and raised his voice.

My grandfather was the “go to” guy for all of his and my grandmother’s relatives living in the area and was always willing to help in any task, undertaking or in any creation. My life was profoundly influenced and guided by mentoring from my Pop-Pop. He was and remains to this day one of my all time hero’s and models in my life.

When I was about 12 years old, I learned something amazing about my grandfather that blew me away. My Pop-Pop invented many things and eventually patented several of his inventions. While a student at Carnegie Mellon, my grandfather actually invented a system of windshield washers to deliver fluid to the wipers, but never got his designs patented. Instead, someone else took his idea and somewhere out there another man’s grandson and other heirs are filthy rich.

At the time and maturity level, I could not believe what I heard. When I asked my grandfather about it, he confirmed what I had heard and shared his drawings with me. He

laughed and shared with me his philosophy about life and personal responsibility. He was neither bitter nor upset about the situation in not taking the steps that eventually let someone take my inheritance. Of course I am being a little tongue in cheek, although at the time I certainly fantasized about the wealth and opulence our family missed out on.

Wealth and affluence were never the dream or within the scope of importance for my hero. He believed in God. He believed in family. He believed in service to others and he believed in taking and accepting complete responsibility for your life and your situation. As the oldest of five children born at the turn of the century to German immigrant parents, he worked in the coal mines as a child to help support his family. He missed out on nearly everything a young boy of today would take for granted. He took responsibility for his life by applying all of his resources to a life with seemingly no opportunities.

He worked full time and educated himself later earning a college degree. At 25, he was the youngest supervisor in a plant where he would later be an engineer. He lived through the great depression, lost his first house in a flood and survived through countless obstacles that would paralyze most ordinary men. He created a good life for his family and a legacy of logs stacked beyond comprehension. At his funeral, it was as if a head of state had passed away. All those who knew him understood and knew exactly what he stood for by his transparent example of living all he believed.

Unfortunately for me, in addition to the millions of dollars lost in my inheritance, somehow I missed all of my grandfather's talents and all of his creation in mechanical and carpentry skills. I ended up with C's in shop class and am allowed to try and fix things around home as the absolute last resort and only with adult supervision. Although I missed out on the physical skills, I did inherit something that has proven far more valuable to me and provides benefits far beyond a lost wealth earned though birthright. I picked up his work ethic and many of his life philosophies. The legacy and overriding inheritance I received from my grandfather was the understanding and application of accepting personal responsibility for our lives.

### **Personal Responsibility - The Glue of Your Character**

We are responsible for what happens in our lives. We certainly cannot control every detail or every event or what happens to us. We can affect and control what happens in the larger context of our lives, in our choices and in how we utilize our skills, talents and abilities. Ultimately, we can control the meaning attached to events and our response. Our life happens in tiny seconds and minutes rather than months or years. Those seconds, minutes, emotions and decisions create action, which will weave the tapestry of our lives. Used purposefully, those incremental units of time can produce results seen and enjoyed over a longer period of time.

Take responsibility for your situation. Don't blame others or yourself nor accept blame from other people. Only you can take responsibility for your actions and decisions. When you blame others, although easy to do, it takes you down the path of mediocrity. People who are successful in their lives take responsibility for everything they do as well as what happens to them. We are responsible for our lives. What we sow, we reap. Our results are our reward, good or bad, positive or negative for what preceding actions we have taken.

Successful people take personal responsibility for their lives — regardless of what happens to them. If they like the results, they keep on. If they don't, they make changes. If you are not happy, who do you have to blame? People who are successful in life do not make excuses nor blame others or circumstances for their "luck." Circumstances and luck play no part in long term success, because it is the underlying actions taken over time to bring the results. If this is not so, how can some people be poor and others wealthy in virtually the same situation? Children raised in the near identical family circumstances turn out different. Some people in prison grow and develop while others atrophy and slowly die. Some areas of extreme poverty continue the cycle and others break it.

Look at how many first and second generation Americans there are today who escaped poverty and oppression to get to America. They came here with literally nothing but the clothes they were wearing. How is it that these people with no money, no possessions, no advantages and in most cases no ability to even speak the native language are able to

become successful in America? Creating optimism in the face of adversity, pain, suffering and hardship does not mean to pretend everything will be ok and to lull yourself with false belief. Realism is ok. It is important to face reality and what happens. We sometimes cannot control what happens to us, but we can control our thoughts and response to our situations.

*Personal responsibility* is essential to the foundation of your character and your integrity. It works the other way as well. Those who are deficient in integrity and character seem to always blame others and find scapegoats for issues of their own creation. If you continue the path you are currently on, your results will be along the same path or trend. An old trite saying is, "If you continue to do what you always have done, you will continue to get what you always got." If you want to create a different future than the one that is laid out on your current path, you need to create a new path and begin to act differently. This change happens first in your belief structure then in the planning of your mind to be carried out and followed through in your actions. These actions over time yield results.

Whether consciously active or subconsciously passive, you are in control of your own choices. What happens in your life is up to you. Every choice you make carries with it a corresponding effect. Every decision made today will have an impact on your life in the future. Success is a chain of decisions to create a solid foundation. Our foundation is made from the individual bricks and mortar of our daily actions and habits.

One of the great weaknesses within our society is the increasing attitude of victimization. Many people feel themselves victims from some outside force. Governments, jobs, current spouses, former spouses, weather, economy, co-workers, other people, immigrants, children, etc. — these are just some of the scapegoats for people to escape personal responsibility. When we are victims of circumstances, or as James Allen says, a "creature of outside conditions," we have no power. We have given over the power in our life to circumstances, or to other people. The longer we give power to our circumstances the worse we allow our current and future situation to become. Dr. Steven Covey explains it like this, "Look at the word responsibility - 'response-ability' - the ability to

choose your response. Highly proactive people recognize that responsibility. They do not blame circumstances, conditions or conditioning for their behavior. Their behavior is a product of their own conscious choice..."

***"There is no security in this life. There is only opportunity."***

*- General Douglas Macarthur*

## *Chapter 9 – When Life Gives You Waves, Learn to S.U.R.F.*

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***"Adversity Happens... Blessings Must be Discovered, Created and Developed"***

Would you like to learn a skillset and a technique so powerful that you could learn to recycle every failure, disappointment, setback and discouraging situation into a steppingstone for your success? Would you like to go into every situation with confidence knowing you have the skills to convert it into one with a positive benefit?

Imagine a skilled and highly trained fighter going into a difficult and scary situation. They don't go looking for it, but when it comes, they are ready and prepared. They realize it will probably be very painful and even scary, but with their training and developed skillset, their odds are favorable.

In this same way, you and I have an opportunity to use this same approach to adversities and difficulties entering our lives. We don't go looking for adversity, but it will find us. We realize that we will not avoid pain or suffering, but if we use our training properly, we have a better chance for survival and eventually finding some benefit or lesson we can take to claim a victory through the situation.

Change, difficulties and adversity will happen. Your only point of control is the surfing skillset you develop to adapt and make the best out of whatever comes your way. It is not really what happens to you that matters as much as your response to what happens. Your response determines your outcome. Think of change and adversity like waves of the ocean, then consider your response to those waves. Success is not necessarily in your talents and abilities, but in the choices you make in application to the waves. You can't change or fight the wave. Your only real choice is to adapt to it.

## **Apply the S.U.R.F. Strategy™ to Make the Best of the Waves**

The S.U.R.F. Strategy is a simple, quick strategy to adapt and positively respond to whatever waves come your way. This keeps your attitude as an ally working for you rather than an adversary working against you. You cannot control the waves; you can only control your response to the waves and develop the skills to adapt to whatever comes your way.

### **The Four Steps of the S.U.R.F. Strategy**

**S**urvey the situation

**U**nderstand your options

**R**espond based on your goals

**F**Forward focus in action and attitude

#### **1. Survey the Situation**

When you are tumbled by a wave (adversity), you have to regain your bearing and figure out exactly where you are. Leave emotion behind and survey your situation. What new opportunities might be found or developed? Now is the opportunity to create a new plan. It might be tempting to get caught up in the heat of the moment and feel like you are without options. Take a step back to gain perspective. With an understanding of where you are and what choices you have, you can make the most of the opportunities.

#### **2. Understand Your Options**

After you know where you are, begin to assess options for moving forward. Focus only on solutions. After you survey your situation, it's time to make way for positive solutions and options. Ask questions like: "What can I gain?" or "What contacts can I make?" Maintain a positive outlook regardless of the situation — even if you do not immediately see the opportunity. Stay focused on the outcome you want and where you want to go.

Look optimistically for creative ways to use the situation for good — don't lament your misfortune. The opportunity may be hidden. Learn to look for it. This is a creative success habit, and it only comes with practice. Become an *opportunity farmer*. Look for the hidden benefits behind each change and every situation.

### **3. Respond Based on Your Goals**

Now assess the options in front of you. Some may be better than others. Some may be more complicated or difficult to see. Weigh the pros and cons of each option. You might find your best option right now is to persist in your current situation. You may find yourself riding a wave bigger than you think you can handle. It may be a Terro-Phoria™ ride, but at least it will be interesting.

Remember, you always have choices. The only thing you can control is your attitude. Regardless of the wave, you have the power to choose. Make sure your response is in line with your goals.

### **4. Forward Focus in Action and Attitude**

You can't surf yesterday's wave. The past is the past, so now it is time to think creatively toward the future. Take positive action. Do not let things just happen to you. Create the conditions and outcomes *you* seek! Now that you are surfing the wave, maintain focus on where you want to go and what you want to do. Maintain a vivid mental image of your successful future and find ways to keep taking action in that direction.

#### **When Bad Surf Happens to Good Surfers**

As you surf life's waves, you will see good waves and bad ones. You will have some awesome rides and some gnarly wipe outs. You will meet fellow surfers who want to help you out and those who would rather beat you down. There will be sunny days to enjoy the beach. There will also be storms that take away your enjoyment and opportunity as the sea becomes unstable and unsuitable for your purposes. Injustice, rude people, hardships, difficulties and even some bad things will happen in your life. We

cannot control those. The only thing we can control is our attitude and the actions we choose to take in response.

Living is not about playing it safe. Test yourself. Learn the full measure of your surfing ability. Do not hide from the waves. You can learn from both your great rides and your wipe outs. Opportunity does not come to the passive. Be active and create your opportunities. Sometimes opportunities only come through difficult situations. *Adversity doesn't build character, it reveals it.* How you choose to respond to adversity reveals your true character. Your true character is uncovered in the actions of your response and in the choices you make. Your character is revealed in the promises you keep and in the convictions you hold true. Ultimately, your character is a mirror of the guiding principles in your life. What you do and say reveal to the world who you are.

### **You Cannot Control the Weather**

One day while driving to work in the pouring rain, I heard an upbeat song on the radio with a different twist saying “Bring it on!” I had just finished a great workout after getting up early so this song truly resonated with my mood for the day. This song stayed in my head all morning and energized me. Action resulted and an incremental edge of motivation pushed me to do a little more than I would have normally. I would definitely have to classify that day as a success.

Did the song verse that became my affirmation actually affect my day? In a very positive way, the affirmation became a catalyst for me. A catalyst in scientific terms is a part of a chemical reaction that *affects* the reaction without being directly involved in it. My natural tendency is to allow myself to be affected by the weather. When it is sunny, I usually feel sunny. When the weather is dark and stormy, it is a struggle for my mood not to follow. This affirmation catalyst was a great reframe for me and it allowed me a new frame of reference for an old pattern of thinking.

Neither you nor I can control the weather. We cannot control what it will be today and we cannot affect in any way what it will be tomorrow. It is what it is. The same weather will

make some people joyous and others miserable. When there is a snow day that shuts down everything, kids rejoice, while parents who need to miss work or scramble for child care do not. Rain is great when the farmers need it for the crops and devastating when the river peaks the levies. Hot sunny days are fantastic for people to enjoy a picnic, yet miserable when you are in the field working.

Weather in itself is neither good nor bad. It is up to us in our decision of how we choose to weather our personal storms and whether they leave us stronger and more resolute or weakened and cowering until the next one. Lou Holtz said, "Show me someone who has done something worthwhile, and I'll show you someone who has overcome adversity."

***"Adversities Are Going to Come Your Way Like Waves of the Ocean... All You Can  
Really Do is Learn to Surf!"***

## *Chapter 10 – Adversity Happens — Blessings Must Be Discovered, Created and Developed*

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**“When life gives you waves... Learn to surf!”**

### **Opportunity Initiative Supported with Personal Responsibility**

One of the key ingredients of success is the ability to see and act upon opportunities in your life. This alone, is not enough for success because opportunity alone is meaningless. Imagine the strongest muscleman flexing powerful big muscles. Now imagine this same powerful man without a skeleton or any bones. It is laughable, but muscles without a supporting skeletal infrastructure couldn't lift a pound anymore than a skeleton without any muscle could. It is very important to have both.

In this same way, opportunity initiative must be supported by personal responsibility. Great ideas and opportunity initiative without a personal responsibility framework will not yield meaningful results. Personal responsibility and plodding without opportunity initiative will lift your life above the average plodding of one foot in front of the other building someone else's dreams.

When you combine these two in equal measure and strengthen both, your life will never be the same. If you look at your world and your situation with awareness and take opportunity initiative grounded in personal responsibility, you become the one in charge of your emotions and actions regardless of the situation. Your life will take on new dimensions and new growth.

My own personal evolution of success and life strategy was really forged and developed in adversity. The S.T.A.C.K. Strategy evolved out of my need for a personal responsibility framework to give strength and support to match my opportunity initiative. This became a strategy of goal setting and goal accomplishment I use everyday in my business and personal life.

The S.U.R.F. Strategy developed as I found that my best laid plans did not always work as they did when I first envisioned them. Being fluid and adaptable to take the best out of any situation, I found that the S.T.A.C.K. Strategy gave birth to the S.U.R.F. Strategy as an entrepreneurial response.

When situations and events pounded on my life to where I was not sure which way was up, the combination of these two strategies along with a healthy dose of applied practical optimism gave me yet another tool for dealing with any situation. Don't get me wrong, having a strategy does not take away the pain or the difficulties. It does give you the confidence that when the wave settles you will be able to find air.

A *Blessings In Adversity* mindset is really the combination of both the S.T.A.C.K. and S.U.R.F. Strategies as applied to difficulties, challenges, adversity, hardship, loss and grief to develop the skillset of *Applied Practical Optimism*.

### **Adversity is Inevitable...Suffering is Optional**

I want to make a clear distinction when I say *Applied Practical Optimism*. The word *applied* needs to be a trigger that action is necessary. Without *applied*, there is also no *practical* because simply thinking positive will not give you any real value.

Adversity, loss, difficulties, hardships, and grief are all real and this approach will not diminish this. What it will do is let you know that you can survive and potentially even gain some value from your suffering. It may take a while, but it can only happen when you create the conditions to make it happen.

### **Look for *Blessings in Adversity***

I believe in the power of prayer and have prayed for many things in my life. I feel some have been answered directly while others have been answered in a different way.

Looking back, some of the very best things that have happened to me came as the result of prayers that seemed to go unanswered. Life events that I once saw as heartache and

disappointment later became opportunities and blessings. If I had been spared the experience of those tough times, I would not have the family, business, opportunities and friendships I enjoy today.

Even in my son Frankie's experience with leukemia, we discovered blessings beyond belief. Our involvement with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital dramatically changed my focus as an author and entrepreneur. Our limited scope of observation and the typical human short term view does not always allow for the full perspective on the new opportunities to be found in difficulties and adversities.

### **Apply The S.U.R.F. Strategy to Difficulties and Adversities**

When bad surf happens to good surfers, it's their response that determines the outcome. It does not help to be angry at the waves. We discussed the S.U.R.F. Strategy as a response to the waves of change in your life. When difficult and unexpected situations arise, this response is even more important. It's critical to learn to cultivate potential blessings and opportunities in your adversities. There is no guarantee they will be there, but you won't know unless you learn how to look.

Below is the S.U.R.F. Strategy taken to the next level and applied to adversity in your life.

#### **1. Survey the Situation**

After the storm is over, survey the damage and create a new plan.

#### **2. Understand Your Options**

Assess options for moving forward. Discuss solutions rather than problems. Resolve to maintain a positive outlook regardless of the situation. Stay solution-based, with your focus on looking for ways of using the situation for good rather than to lament about your misfortune.

Without resistance, there can be no growth. Most people don't lift weights for the joy of it; they challenge themselves with growing resistance to get stronger. Look for hidden gifts. You never know when an obstacle is hiding an opportunity. But if you don't look, you'll never find it. Develop the mindset that the challenge you are facing has been specifically given to you in order to help you learn, develop and grow. Look for the hidden potential benefits. At the very least, see if you can learn a lesson to apply to the future.

### **3. Respond Based on Your Goals**

With several options available to you, apply your creativity to ensure your response is in line with your goals. Do not react to what happens to you; respond instead with a plan of action. Come up with a creative, positive plan of action that leads to a specific goal. Then get moving.

### **4. Forward Focus Your Action and Attitude**

Focus on the future rather than on the past. Do not waste emotional energy on worry or blame. Maintain your focus on where you want to go and what you want to do. Use the S.U.R.F. Strategy to keep you moving toward your objectives, converting challenges into opportunities, which improve your surfing skills for today and tomorrow.

#### **Yesterday's Wave Is Long Gone**

You cannot change what happened yesterday. Instead, find the lesson and use it to benefit your tomorrow. Don't punish yourself with regrets. Do not hold the past so close that it prevents your future. Whatever you have gone through, whatever your previous circumstances, it's done. You can choose to learn from it or not. It is your choice.

Learn from your past, but focus on the future. Yesterday's successes and failures are your investments in tomorrow. Don't overcomplicate the process. It's as simple as one, two, three.

1. Learn from the past.

2. Live in the present.
3. Plan, prepare and take action toward your future.

How you handle difficulty and hardship reveals your character. Adversity faced makes us stronger. It's like carrying a weight around willingly. Your muscles grow and become more powerful. So does your character. The mere act of accepting adversity with a positive attitude and a proactive approach makes you more able to overcome it. As Thomas Paine wrote, "The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

We can't control the weather or the waves. The same surf will make some people joyous and others miserable. The ocean in itself is neither good nor bad. Some days will bring good surf. Others bring storms. Often storms bring the best surf. How you weather a storm is your choice. That choice will leave you stronger and more resolute or weaker and discouraged.

Adversity is an unforgiving revealer of character. The good news is, if you don't like what adversity shows you, you can change it. Character isn't static. Challenge and adversity allow you the opportunity to choose your response and your action. You can change your character and grow into the person you wish to become by taking full advantage of the adversity in your life. Learn and grow in each difficulty and you will be better prepared for anything that comes your way.

***"Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors." - African Proverb***

## *Chapter 11 – In Good Times, Enjoy. In Difficult Times, Grow.*

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**"Every adversity, every failure and every heartache carries with it the seed of an equivalent or greater benefit," – Napoleon Hill**

### **Even Tragedy Can Teach You — If You Are Open To Learn**

As a lifelong entrepreneur, I have always been blessed with opportunity awareness and initiative. This did not always fit well with my personal responsibility driven father. The truth is, I was unfocused and always jumping from thing to thing. My life was like a powerful magnifying glass on a bright hot sunny day with piles of dry and brittle leaves ready for a flame... I just couldn't keep still to focus long enough to start a fire.

Don't get me wrong, I had fun in my life and had many great adventures from being a salesman, a soldier, to learning to fly airplanes and starting my own business in college. Although I had many successes, I couldn't sustain anything long term. In truth, I lacked the personal responsibility skeleton and framework to focus and reinvest my opportunity driven life back into my current focus to start a fire with the leaves.

I did not fully learn this lesson until 1998, at the age of 32 with a wife and two young children. I learned the lesson of personal responsibility from my father upon his passing as I reflected and pondered on his main phrase to me, "*Stack the Logs!*" This phrase would eventually change my life as I learned a valuable lesson. The bigger your dreams and ambitions, the more you need to support those with a strong foundation of personal responsibility. In construction, the bigger the building is, the broader the foundation must be. In life, the bigger your goals, dreams and ambitions are, the more they must be supported by the success framework of personal responsibility, to support and then ultimately reach your dreams.

Applying my father's wisdom and supporting my ambition was the first major step. I began to get comfortable with the thought that I had arrived. I was now the president of my own successful multi-million dollar business, married to a beautiful wife with three great kids. I was at the top of the world until one day in March 2002 when my life changed forever. I got a call from the doctor's office regarding a routine blood test for my son Frankie's pesky rash...

### **"Mr. Lunn, I Need to Tell You That Your Son Has Leukemia..."**

I was to be given another life lesson, which would be gifted to me in the form of adversity. Four years after my father died, my young son Frankie was diagnosed with leukemia. A few days later and he began his treatment at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, renown for their pioneering work in both finding cures and saving children.

In this adversity, I learned to apply my father's "*Stack the Logs*" strategy of success by taking consistent action, one log at a time, to build a strong framework of success. I also learned another valuable insight from my son and others who were struggling for their very lives. You can't always control your circumstances, but you can control your attitude and your approach to your situation. In doing so, you keep a measure of control over your life. In simplest terms, you can't change the waves, but you can learn to surf.

### **"Don't cry Daddy...everything will be OK..."**

Those are the words my then nine-year-old son Frankie used to console me as I choked back tears and tried to explain to him that he had cancer. I fought hard not to weep, but the harder I tried, the more my chin quivered and my voice trembled. I was supposed to be strong and comfort him, but I broke down in heaving sobs and all I could do was hold him tight. No father should have to tell his 9-year-old child he has cancer! Nevertheless, that day, I did and I will never forget it. We were overwhelmed with fear knowing Frankie was about to enter the fight of (and for) his young life.

The quote opening this chapter is from Napoleon Hill in his famous book, *Think and Grow Rich*. I have read this book numerous times and each time this quote seemed to

jump out at me. I thought I got it, but now realized I wasn't so sure. I kept thinking about this quote and repeating it to myself, over and over, as my wife Lisa and I drove down to Memphis to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital with Frankie.

What possible good can come from this? In fleeting moments of self-doubt, I began to ask myself where I could possibly find blessings in this adversity? It took some time and a little perspective mixed with prayer, but the answer was suddenly right in front of my face in the form of my 9-year-old son. I watched as Frankie bravely faced the unknown. He taught me quite simply that blessings are what you create out of the circumstances you are given. Blessings are always present, but usually they need to be discovered, created and developed.

For Frankie, it was a challenging six-month fight, one in which the final chapter has not yet been written. For now, we're happy to say our prayers were answered and Frankie is now in complete remission! We are tremendously thankful for Frankie's recovery, yet take nothing for granted!

### **The Decision of Finding Blessings In Adversity**

Frankie's bout with leukemia and his struggle to survive was an ordeal I would never wish on any family. In the midst of this terrible storm, our family made a decision when Frankie's treatment started. Although we couldn't control the circumstances, we vowed to make the very best of whatever came our way and committed to applied practical optimism - looking for and discovering blessings and value in every situation.

As time adds perspective to the situation, it is possible to look back and see the good in contrast to the bad. You may be wondering what blessings were in Frankie's bout with cancer. Here's a quick sample off the top of my head:

- We made hundreds of new friends and acquaintances (patients, family, staff).
- We were humbled by the suffering and courage of others.
- We grew closer to God.
- We grew closer to each other.

- We learned to rely on other people.
- We found joy in simple things.
- We were genuinely touched by the generosity and love of hundreds of people.
- Our church family rallied around Frankie and offered generous support.
- Our community family rallied around Frankie and offered generous support.
- My company grew and prospered during my absence.
- People in my organization developed new skills and confidence in my absence.
- We became a part of St. Jude's worthy cause of: "***Finding cures. Saving children.***"

I could easily list pages full of blessings and ways our life was impacted by our experience and new family at St. Jude. Again, I would not wish the experience on anyone, but neither would I trade it for anything. I learned optimism from my son and our family learned that blessings are always present, but you need to look for them. Looking for and distinguishing blessings in the midst of adversity is a major part of the *Blessings In Adversity* skill-set.

*Blessings In Adversity* is both opportunity initiative and personal responsibility combined to form **Applied Practical Optimism** in any situation. Applied Practical Optimism is an approach to strengthen and claim value as a hard fought prize especially in adversity.

*Blessings In Adversity* is an approach to life much like Judo is to martial arts. Judo is not about fighting head on, and force against force. Judo is the gentle art of redirection of force. It is applied by taking the force bearing against you and re-channeling it or moving it with much less force. Judo is the martial art of redirection. The basic premise is to use the force and momentum of your foe against them. When they throw a punch or lunge at you, they have taken themselves off center and presented you with an advantage. The momentum of their size and strength now works against them as you redirect their momentum to your advantage. Judo is thousands of years old and has a tradition of allowing smaller opponents to win over much larger and even stronger foes. In a way similar to challenge alchemy, the Judo principle of situation transformation takes a

situation others may classify as bad or negative, and allows you to redirect the energy to your benefit.

This skillset does not come easy at first. We are trained to see problems as situations to be avoided at all costs. This principle is about energy redirection. Escape and fear from adversity should not be the thought, but rather the benefits to be gained through the adversity and overcoming it to your benefit. Like everything else we have previously discussed, the process begins in the mind. It starts with imagination as the tool employed in redirecting the momentum of the situation.

Discovery is about seeing what everyone else sees, but then thinking originally and creatively. It is about relating the normally unrelated. Newton observed an apple fall from a tree and that began his scholarly thinking regarding the nature of gravity. Benjamin Franklin observed nature and was prolific in his scientific discoveries from lightning and electricity, to the earliest understanding of weather patterns and the effect of the Gulf Stream, to modern day refrigeration. Nearly every great discovery or invention came about from an observation relating the normally unrelated. Another way of phrasing this might be non-linear thinking or thinking outside the box.

Just as in the sport of surfing, surfers ride the waves and channel the power bearing against them to their advantage. In life, we can apply the same thinking as the waves come at us.

***“You are free to choose, but the choices you make today will determine what you will have, be and do in the tomorrow of your life.” - Zig Ziglar***

## *Chapter 12 - Weather Your Storms and Come Through Stronger*

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***"We cannot direct the wind but we can adjust the sails."*** - Author Unknown

Below is a quote from a man who was completely despondent. This man was so upset and melancholy that his friends were concerned about the possibility of him taking his own life. They removed all the sharp objects from his house and made sure he was not alone.

***"I am the most miserable man in the world. If my sadness were spread equally among the family of Earth, there would be not one smiling face on the planet. Whether I shall ever be better I cannot tell; I awfully forebode I shall not. To remain as I am is impossible. I must die or be better."***

As you read this quote, you can feel the despair and depression. What would become of this person? Would he allow himself to wallow in self pity and fade away? Would he take his bitter mood and infect all those he came in contact with? Would he choose to cease life or would he choose to turn around and grow from his experience? A clue to the answer lies in the choice presented in the last two sentences.

This quote was from 1841 from a very young country lawyer in Illinois struggling with personal loss and disappointment. Fortunately, for all of us, and the America we know today, Abraham Lincoln chose the latter of his choices. How did this change happen? Another quote by Mr. Lincoln later on in his life reflects his simple philosophy that turned his life around. He went on to profoundly say, "I've noticed that most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be."

Even in the midst of tragedy, sorrow and adversity, successful people find a way to maintain their positive and optimistic qualities. They are able to find joy, humor, gratitude, beauty and sunshine even when the situation around is dark and stormy. We all

will have storms in our life of some sort. We will have hard times and rough patches. We will also have opportunities for reflection and the chance to benefit, improve and grow.

Hard times, loss, sorrow, disappointment are part of life. Helen Keller, a woman famous for her triumph over adversity commented, “Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experiences of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired and success achieved.”

### **Train Yourself to Discover *Blessings in Adversity***

The late Norman Vincent Peale said, “When God wants to send you a gift, he wraps it up in a problem. The bigger the gift that God wants to send you, the bigger the problem he wraps it up in.” To apply this principle to the future, begin by looking for the lessons to be learned and the hidden benefits within each difficult situation from your past. There is always something to be gained from adversity, setbacks and difficulties. We are not always trained to see what they are. Once you realize how this works, it is easier to have faith that your current hardships and adversities will work out for the good in the long run. It may not be what you want now, but chances are it will be better for you in the long term and after the perspective of time defogs the rearview mirror.

People who survive tremendous hardships do not overlook adversity, but neither do they dwell on it. I have heard and read many inspiring stories of men who were imprisoned and faced the most severe and unimaginable pain and suffering. Most people gave up and died in those situations, yet others were completely transformed and used the horrible for positive affect later in their lives. Men like Dr. Victor Frankl, who went on to write the groundbreaking *Man's Search For Meaning* after barely surviving the atrocities in a World War II Nazi death camp.

During the war in Vietnam, many men were unfortunately captured ending up as American POWs or Prisoners Of War. Some courageous men did not make it through the ordeal. Others were broken by the process. In the face of an overwhelming personal storm, others managed to not only survive, but to grow through the ordeal. Admiral

James Stockdale, Captain Gerald Coffee and Senator John McCain each spent many years in captivity during the Vietnam War. Each was starved, tortured, isolated and near death for years on end.

How were these men able to not only survive, but go on to lead successful and productive lives? How did these men leverage their adversity into something positive while others died or were ruined by the same situation? Each man decided that they would do whatever was in their power to retain control of their emotions and how they would respond to the situation. They each employed various techniques to maintain their sanity and their outlook on life. They had no control over what was done to them or what they were deprived of. The control they did have was in their ability to choose their response to the situation and the actions stemming from that response.

Dr. Frankl asserted in his post-concentration camp reflections that you cannot control what happens to you, but you can control your emotions. He felt like he was able to survive by keeping this control. We can control how we feel by changing how we think and how we act. Emotions and attitudes do not come from events or outside circumstances, but rather the meaning we attach, give or are conditioned to give to the events. This is key as most people create their own negative reality out of situations that don't have to go that way.

Thoughts cause feelings. We can control our feelings by learning to control our thoughts. We can control our thoughts through practice, habit and conditioning. Our emotions are rooted in our thoughts. If you are feeling down and depressed or out of control of your own life, don't ask yourself how you feel or dwell on the feelings as it only roots the emotions securely. Instead, change your approach and ask yourself what thoughts are making you have these feelings or emotions. Thoughts are the starting point so you must go there.

We all have negative thoughts, doubts and worry. Successful people are able to derail the train of negative emotion before it picks up any real steam. Successful people develop

habits of optimism and learn to interrupt or stop negative thought patterns. If you are lost, it makes no practical sense to dwell on being lost. It is more important to assess where you might have gone wrong, get back to that place and to resume going in the right direction.

Unforeseen events will happen in our lives. People of decision will make choices of meaning and how to respond or proceed based on the meaning they attach. People of circumstance will be at the mercy of the situation. Brian Tracy observes, “The quality of your life is determined by how you feel at any given moment. How you feel is determined by how you interpret what is happening around you, not by the events themselves.” There certainly was value for Frankie and our family through his battle with cancer. It sounds very strange to say, but adversity brings with it opportunity to learn about yourself and provides a growth experience. Our family grew stronger, our senses were heightened to value we might have otherwise taken for granted, our relationships grew and, although scary and trying, we would not change it for anything. In the same circumstances, we saw other parents who carried a “why me?” attitude about the situation.

In the Bible, in the book of James it is written, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking in anything.” Reflecting thoughtfully on our trials, challenges, defeats and hardships allows for the seed of situations to grow into a tree of experience, which will ultimately bear the fruit of wisdom.

When adversity presents itself to you as it most certainly will, it can be taken as either a blessing or a curse. A curse produces nothing positive; a blessing produces knowledge and understanding as well as wisdom. Probably the greatest separator in human progression is this moment of choice. You don’t go looking for adversity as it knows where you live. Those who try to avoid it by refusing to challenge and grow still have adversity in the fear they live in.

Life is to be enjoyed and savored, but when hardship comes our way, we need to choose to make the best out of what is presented to us. Sometimes the hidden blessing is being thankful for what we have left. Other times it is relationships, new beginnings, wisdom or being brought back down to earth with a gift of humility. Some people pay for the equivalent of a new house or more for an education they are proud of and reflect on. Are the storms we have weathered in our lives any less valuable? All our experience has brought us to this point and all can be profitable if we allow it to be and reflect with that intent.

Right now you fall into one of three categories or schools of thought. You either believe destiny and life happen and you deal with it as it comes, or you believe that you are the architect of your life largely controlling your destination and path to arrive there. The third category, and the one that most people fit into, is believing the second yet practicing the first.

*“...everything can be taken away from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms -- to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. The last of the human freedoms is to choose one's attitudes.”*

- Dr. Victor Frankl

## *Chapter 13 - Blessings In Adversity Life Skill - APPLIED Practical Optimism*

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***“All that a man achieves and all that he fails to achieve is the direct result of his own thoughts.”*** - James Allen, author of *As A Man Thinketh*

### **The Skill of Developing Practical Optimism**

Thoughts are alive. The application of those thoughts in a positive, results-oriented manner creates optimism. Optimism is a vital component to a happy and successful life. It seems a simple concept and yet is so misunderstood. Most people relate optimism to the analogy of the half full/half empty glass of water. This is true, but it goes far beyond.

The other facet of optimism that is misunderstood is the two very distinct types of optimism. There is the wishful thinking, everything-is-going-to-work-out, rose-colored-glasses, Pollyanna-type of optimism. This type of optimism is passive and sometimes proves more harmful rather than helpful. This manner of optimism gives up control to circumstances and is merely an internal positive “spin” to fool yourself out of worry.

The other type of optimism and the one we will learn to harness and utilize is a more proactive and strong-minded optimism that allows you to assert control into your situation. This practical optimism, as I will refer to it, is the skill set similar to mental judo. Judo as a martial art, is the redirection of force an opponent uses against you to give you leverage against your opponent. Practical optimism as a skill set allows you to be proactive and assert control to redirect and re-channel whatever situation you are in to provide you with personal leverage in your situation.

***“A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties.”*** - Harry Truman

Have you ever known anyone to actually admit they were a pessimist? This is very rare; most pessimists like to refer to themselves as realists. I am not knocking realism as it is certainly critical to assess reality in your current situation. Our very thoughts about every situation and our attitude create opportunities for us to grow, learn and succeed. The way you think, whether positive or negative creates emotions reflecting your beliefs. The words you speak and the actions you take tell your whole story. College football coach and motivational speaker Lou Holtz aptly observed, "Ability is what you are capable of doing. Motivation determines what you will do. Attitude determines how well you do it."

Within each singular thought transaction is a choice to grow healthy plants of practical optimism that can be used positively over time. Conversely, every thought regarding each situation might plant seeds growing bitter roots of negativity, anger, resentment or apathy. Over time these thoughts produce a cumulative result as well.

Think of two people you know for examples of each end of the spectrum. Think of a person that you know or work with or associate with whom no matter what happens to them in their lives remain optimistic and hopeful. More importantly they take action to make the best of whatever the situation is. Even if a negative outcome happens, they feel positive about what they learned. This person has all of the normal emotions including anger, fear, sadness, grief, and yet even in those situations show their ability to not allow the negative emotions to overtake their personality. This person is fun to be around especially in tough situations. Their practical optimism is contagious allowing you to see opportunities. Basically, they lift you up.

Now think of another person that you know who is at the other end of the spectrum. They enter the room and you can feel the barometric change as the dark weather they brought with them affects the mood in the room. They walk without purpose with shoulders slumped. Their voice lacks hope. They complain about their situation rather than take meaningful action to change it. If forced to read a book, go to a seminar or listen to an audio program, they will immediately be drawn to any inconsistency or flaw to discount the growth opportunity. They are not always doom and gloom. Sometimes they are funny, yet they very seldom leave you feeling better than before your interaction started.

Now the tough question. If you created a scale of one to ten with the practical optimist as a ten and the other as a zero, where would you rate yourself? The good news, regardless of how you scored yourself, is that you can adapt and learn to increase your skill set of practical optimism. This is absolutely a master skill that will provide tangible benefits and certainly a personal incremental advantage in your life. Go back to the two people you thought of in the previous example. If you were an employer, which would you rather have work for you? Who do you think will earn more money over their career? Who will have a more satisfying relationship with their spouse, family and others?

### **The Art of Practical Optimism**

*Practical optimism* is an understanding and appreciation of the situation you are in and then searching for the blessings, benefits, or opportunities contained within. More importantly, practical optimism allows you to take action and take the best from whatever a situation provides. There is a positive expectation that even bad things or bad situations can carry seeds of optimism within. Successful people use their imaginations to rehearse success, and to rehearse it taking the very best of the opportunities presented to create an Incremental Advantage. Successful people still have trials and tribulations; they just learn how to assess the best response to each situation.

A key characteristic of practical optimists are that they understand and accept what they cannot change. Beyond this fact, they find and develop active strategies to mine the opportunities presented. It is easier to become optimistic when you begin to take action. Any action is sufficient to begin to improve your outlook and your feelings of optimism. As action happens, solutions begin to appear.

We are born who we are. We possess a unique set of attributes and a unique set of limitations. Our choices, made up in small increments, allow us to define and redefine as we create our destiny. Destiny is a power word that might scare people. Replace destiny with destination. Create your own destination. Your destiny is nothing more than your selfcharted course to the future you desire. A relatively small percentage is actually born into the “lucky sperm club,” with affluence and opportunities their birthright. If this is not

you, take heart. We are all given opportunities. Stories abound about people succeeding after tragedy or overcoming great poverty to achieve wealth.

We are all equally empowered to reach our highest potential. We need to define and create our own destiny as a selfcharted course. Our successful future is the one envisioned and acted upon. The biggest secret as well as the biggest obstacle to your success is you. The formula is there for everyone to know; however, there is a big difference in knowing what to do, and doing it.

### **Strategies to Develop Practical Optimism**

When a tricky situation comes your way, take on the identity of a problem solver. Think how someone you greatly respect in this area might handle your same problem or challenge. Look for multiple options in every situation. Search for applications and creative solutions outside normal thinking. Anticipate problems in advance and accept reality. Create strategies and contingency plans to break though difficulties in your way.

In grief and in hard-hitting situations, allow true feelings to be released (even if they are negative). This might sound contradictory to what I have said earlier. I am not in any way advocating becoming negative. Emotions are important in our lives and even the negative ones serve a purpose. When my father died, I cried and grieved. When my son was diagnosed with leukemia, I was scared and filled with sorrow and dread. When someone cheated me and caused me grief, I was angry. All of these emotions at the time were healthy. Over time the emotions changed and adapted to allow me to take a more practical and proactive approach to my situation.

Identify yourself and your identity with your strengths, not your weaknesses. Create beliefs to support what you want rather than what you don't want. Follow your thoughts. Create a new self-fulfilling prophesy for yourself. Our identity is who we think we are. We have the power to control our thoughts. Some people identify who they are as their profession - doctor, lawyer, businessperson, author. Others identify themselves by race,

gender, weight, athletic ability, age, friends, etc. Be careful not to be too limiting in your identity and giving up power to a single role.

Martin Seligman, a professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania and the author of, *Learned Optimism*, explains that optimism is not about always being cheerful and happy or not acknowledging adversity, setbacks, problems, fear, loss or sorrow. No one will go through life having only positive and joyful experiences. It is unrealistic to think that you can go through life happy all the time. Instead, he explains that optimism is a habitual way of explaining setback and disappointments to yourself as response to learn and correct.

If you blow an important meeting, you can reflect negatively or you can take the optimistic approach. The negative approach, although funny, might resemble the self-talk of Tommy Callahan as played by the late Chris Farley in *Tommy Boy*. As he smacks his forehead with the open palm of his hand as if to stamp on the label or beat into his brain his three word belief of himself, “STUPID! STUPID! STUPID!”

Perhaps a better approach after stumbling would be a more balanced and optimistic approach. “Boy, that was not what I had in mind, but I know I can do better. This hurts, but I know I can learn from this and I will get better!”

Interestingly, it has been proven that optimists have better immune systems and are generally healthier than pessimists and doom-and-gloomers. Optimists are not afraid to look at situations for improvement or to try to squeeze the good out of a less than desirable situation.

When a pessimist gets bumped from a flight and has to stay the night in another city, they look for all the bad creating acid in their stomach as they seethe about the injustice. Then they seek to ruin the day of other unsuspecting victims complaining and reliving the incident countless times. The optimist is disappointed and upset and then quickly assesses the situation to look for opportunities. Tune into the self-talk of the optimistic personality

in the same situation. "This stinks, I really wanted to get home. Oh well, here I am. What is there to gain? Maybe there is a free flight out of this if I treat the gate agent with more respect and courtesy than the negative person in front of me. Maybe I can take some time to catch up on some reading, after all, they are putting me up at a hotel, and I could sure use a chance to catch up on a little sleep after this trip. Oh well, let's make the best of it."

It is human nature to remember the bad over the good. If nine great things happen to you and one bad thing in a day, your natural tendency will be to think about the disproportionate bad thing.

Instead, try to concentrate on what is positive rather than what is negative. When you are frustrated, recognize where you want to direct your energies remembering that ultimately, you are in control and that it's your choice. The energy of negativity produces bitter fruit that is acid in your stomach. The energy of positive optimism may not always bear good fruit, but the chance is better that over time your harvest will be far superior (and edible).

***"Our destiny is not found in the gifts we are given or the tools we are provided with.  
Our destiny lies in the cultivation and use of what we are provided with."***

## *Chapter 14 – Benefits in Creating Blessings for Others*

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*“The greater the difficulty, the greater the glory.” - Marcus T. Cicero*

### **Flying Lessons**

When I was 16 years old, I began to take flying lessons. I had flown with a family friend very early in my life. I found it to be exhilarating and vowed that someday I would be a pilot. I actually started flying when I was 14, but the rules were that you could not fly solo until you were 16 so I briefly stopped and used that time to earn money for my newest passion. I really enjoyed flying and the biggest thrill of my life at that time happened when one day after practicing takeoffs and landings, my instructor told me to taxi back to the hangar. I was disappointed because I thought I was doing pretty good and improving. My disappointment turned to shock when my instructor got out and told me to go do three take offs and landings...by myself! I had confidence and knew that I could do it, but I was alone and could look to no one but myself for this task. I successfully soloed and continued to grow in my confidence as a pilot.

The remainder of my training was a combination of instructor training mixed with solo flight. A funny thing happened toward the very end of my training. When I was by myself doing cross country flights or night landings or other maneuvers, I felt very confident and sure of myself. When my instructor would fly with me, however, I felt nervous and tense and seemed to constantly make stupid mistakes. I couldn't figure out why this happened until he wisely filled me in. When I was flying in the left seat, I was pilot in command and totally responsible. Like most new pilots, I let the fact that a more experienced pilot was in the aircraft distract me from the fact that I was personally responsible.

Have you ever had to make an important phone call where others were listening? Have you ever had to perform a task with others watching? Did it make you tense and self

conscious of every word or action causing you to make mistakes and get more flustered? This is what was going on with me at the time. I learned over time that sometimes a safety net can also be restrictive to your freedom. Until you embrace the understanding of your personal responsibility, you will never be totally free. In life there will always be outside forces acting upon us. Whether people or situations, there will be times where we will have to adapt and take responsibility. When you can step up and take personal responsibility, you take back a great sense of control over your life. The more responsibility you take on, the more your self-confidence and directed energy grows. You feel completely up to the task and competent in any endeavor. My grandfather believed with all he was and shared with me the philosophy of accepting complete responsibility as a cornerstone to your foundation of self-esteem, pride and worth as an individual.

***"If It Is To Be, It Is Up To Me!"- Oft quoted motivational saying***

Success does not come from luck, or inheriting money or being born with great talent. The only path is to take control and assume responsibility for your own destiny. Separate yourself from the crowd as you accept responsibility for where you are in your life... good, bad and yes, maybe even ugly. Now take stock of your realistic situation. Determine exactly what you want and where you want to go. Take immediate action toward your goal by accepting feedback and correcting course as necessary until your life is of your design rather than accidental. ***Live your life on purpose and by choice rather than by chance.***

My personal turning point in life came when I finally realized I was responsible for my own success or failure. If I did not like my current result, I would have to make a change. This is true for every area of life. If you are broke, it is a choice. It is a cumulative choice made up of hundreds and thousands of individual decisions previously made. If you are spending more than you earn and not saving, where you are is up to you and in your control. The change and difference in your life may not be immediate, but your course correction can and should be.

If you are on a trip and suddenly find yourself going the wrong direction, how long will you wait and complain before taking action and getting back on the right course? As soon as you realize your mistake you turn around at the nearest safe opportunity. Shouldn't it be the same if you are traveling down the wrong road with your personal decisions? To change your result you must change your decisions. There is an old saying, "You can't dig yourself out of a hole."

"If it is to be, it is up to me" is certainly Motivation 101, yet it is absolutely true to the core. How liberating that statement is. Do not be a victim of circumstances. Take a look around you and gather your resources and take action to make a change. Only when we take control of our character, does the rest of our life follow suit. Decide for yourself what your life will be and what circumstances you want for yourself. If you abdicate, outside forces or other people and situations will decide for you. It takes a measure of self-discipline and sacrifice to accomplish what you set out to achieve, but it is worth it.

### **Forging Steel**

Forging is the act of shaping, strengthening and hardening metal far beyond its natural characteristic. It is both art and science and dates back to far beyond medieval times. The process of forging steel is about changing the very nature of the metal.

Through a system and combination of extreme heating, beating with instruments, and fast cooling in water steel can be made extremely hard or very pliable. Regular steel is fibrous or stringy where as forged steel is small and granular. The smaller the size of the grains in forged steel, the stronger and tougher it is. For steel to be forged properly, the steel is heated above a certain temperature (somewhere between 1300 and 1600 degrees F), called the critical temperature. When this happens, the heat causes the grain size to increase.

When steel is hammered with hard blows with a forging hammer while it is just above the critical temperature, the grain size will greatly reduce. As grain size gets smaller it hardens. Steel can be refined and improved by repeating this process. Steel heated above

critical temperature and cooled in water immediately will have a much larger grain size and different properties. Steel that is heated too much (glowing white instead of glowing red) will have the grain size permanently enlarged and the metal will become brittle and most likely worthless.

### **Our Forging Process**

Steel can be strengthened and tremendously improved through the forging process. Steel also can be damaged or permanently ruined through the process. Steel has no choice in this process. The resulting quality of steel, whether positive and valuable or a negative waste of metal is dependent largely on the skill of the blacksmith. The forging process will present itself in your own life and you must be the blacksmith. Your attitude and response to your circumstances will determine the strength of your mettle. Your example in the midst of forging will show the world a representation of your character. Your example through adversity tells you who you are.

### **After Experiencing the Forging Process...You Have a Key Decision To Make**

Whatever has happened in your life that causes you pain is in the past. What you do from this point forward, if you apply the skillset of practical optimism, will help you create meaning and purpose to grow and develop from the situation.

The best way to learn is to teach. As you live *Blessings In Adversity*, you share this with others in your example. When you share *Blessings In Adversity*, lives will be changed and the world will be a better place. It is a myth to think we cannot change the world. Each one of us literally changes the world every place we touch it.

Use your situation to benefit others and create meaning and value. This is the ultimate in personal responsibility. You can be a burden or a blessing...it all comes down to a choice.

***"When you take ultimate personal responsibility for your life, the price of success is literally paid up front in one lump sum. The price of failure, however, is painfully paid on the lifetime installment plan."***

## *Chapter 15 – Reflect on the Past. Hope for the Future. Take Action Now!*

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***“To establish true self-esteem we must concentrate on our successes and forget about the failures and the negatives in our lives.” - Denis Waitley***

Stacy Allison, author of the book, *Many Mountains to Climb*, holds the rare distinction of being the first American woman to reach the summit of Mount Everest. I had the pleasure of meeting Stacy in person and hearing her speak about her amazing adventure. Stacy talks about examining your experiences. She asserts that, “Whether we succeed or fail at it, the most challenging climb in the world will not help us grow unless we take the time for reflection. Unexamined experiences don’t produce insights. Insights and wisdom come with reflection and analysis.”

I have had many setbacks, defeats and failures in my life. I can’t say with certainty that I always profited from the experience. In reflecting back on some of my setbacks and defeats, I can now clearly see each for a value in my life. In some cases what was at one time a demoralizing defeat was actually a turning point in my life.

This exercise in active reflection will be very revealing. It may offer you much needed answers to some burning questions in your life. There is an old saying, “If you continue to do what you have always done, you will continue to get what you have always got.” If you run up your credit cards and then get an offer for a home equity loan to repay your credit cards only to later rerun your cards, you have not learned nor profited from your situation. The profit in the adversity or setback is applying it to your future. I would challenge you to take a little time out to dwell on some of the setbacks, failures or adversity you may have encountered in a mini after-action review. See now with the perspective of time what value you can create from the situation. See if you can recognize the lessons you were being exposed to and if you learned from them.

### **Good and Bad Are Related**

Good and bad are opposites and create a contrast to differentiate between them. Every situation carries with it elements of both good and bad. You might think winning the lottery is good, whereas the woman who lost her son to drug abuse stemming from the newfound wealth and his new but undesirable acquaintances does not. You might look at a car accident as a bad situation, whereas the man who had a close enough brush with mortality to forever change his life for the better might see it as a blessing. In some situations there is a razor thin line of separation in the analysis of what is good versus what is bad. Sometimes, the positive result of a bad situation does not show up until long after the event happens. Without the contrast of bad times, how can you savor the good? Without experiencing pain, how can you know joy? Without the distinction of struggling financially and doing without, how can you understand wealth? Without the depth of loneliness, how can you know the peak of companionship and love?

Successful people don't experience fewer disappointments or less pain than others. They instead view their failures, setbacks and disappointments through a more positive lens directed and focused forward toward their intended objective. Knowing this, train yourself to always seek the positive and avoid as much as possible wasting thoughts and lamenting on the negative. This is not to say that you should never have genuine emotions like grief, disappointment, anger or sorrow. Recognize these emotions and allow them their proper place. If you try to hide or suppress these emotions, you will do yourself no favors and eventually do damage to your psyche. Normal emotions are just that - normal. Just remember that you are the master of your emotions and you can train yourself how to respond rather than react because of a situation.

Our thoughts and emotions are the staging area for our destiny. Everything that happens to us is a byproduct of our thoughts. Our choices and actions have brought us to where we are today. Our decisions, affected by our thoughts and outlook direct our actions. Events and things that happen to us are but a very small percentage in life. Far greater is the impact of our reaction and response to every situation that comes our way. Things that happen to us and for us in our lives are ultimately the product of what and how we think. More importantly, our actions and response that arise from our thoughts greatly

affect our situation. We can learn through practice to focus, harness and control our thoughts, and direct our actions. In doing so, we can exert a far greater degree of control than someone who allows their life to randomly flow from one event to the next.

### **Happiness is a Choice**

In the same way happiness is a choice. It is an inside issue rather than an external one. We are bombarded and brainwashed into thinking we are unhappy and unfulfilled. Advertiser's number one objective is to create discontentment. Every commercial you listen to or watch leaves you somewhat empty if you don't drive the new car, have the latest fashion, take the newest drug, etc. It is all shallow and superficial. Happiness does not come from what we own, it is born out of who we are.

Here is a secret - happiness is a game where you get to make your own rules. Right now, you may be living under some bad rules. I used to have a rule that I could only be happy when it was sunny. Some people can only be happy when others like them or when situations fall into place for them. The truth is you are in control. If your rules aren't working for you, change them! Set the game up to where you always win. Press your advantage. If your happiness is dependent or given up to others, chances are you will never be fully happy.

Count your reasons to be happy and take inventory of your blessings. Gratitude allows you to keep perspective, especially in hard times. Don't concentrate on what you lack. Focus on what you have. No one can make you happy or unhappy. People and events can certainly influence you that way through normal stimulus-response behavior, but ultimately the choice is up to you.

### **Weather Your Storms**

There are things in our life that we cannot control and cannot change. There may be times when we just cannot be happy. Even so, we still have the choice at those times to maintain a cheerful disposition even if we cannot be happy. This is not, "fake it till you make it." Keeping a cheerful disposition allows you the ability to tread water in a

situation rather than to drown. The best character example is provided to others through the opportunity brought by difficult times and adversity. Our adversities, once unburdened, serve only to make us stronger. It is like carrying a weight around and adapting to the weight. Once that weight is lifted you are stronger for the struggle.

***“The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph” - Thomas Payne***

Adversity is a teacher instructing us through revealing our character and our true nature. If we do not like what is revealed, the good news is that we can change it. Our character and our constitution are not static. Challenge and adversity allow us the gift to choose our response and our action. We can change our character and we can grow into the person we wish to become if we take full advantage of the adversity that will come into our lives. It is different for each person, but adversity will find you. You cannot hide or run to avoid it. You must instead choose your response.

White contrasts black as dawn is contrasted by the darkness. Without the darkness, there would be no dawn and without storms there would be diminished value in the good weather. A man I used to work with always used to remind me, “Without bad days, how would you know what a good one looked like?”

Your past is only alive if you allow it to remain that way in your thoughts. You cannot change what happened yesterday. Instead, build and work to benefit your tomorrow. Don't bind and shackle yourself with regrets or feel sorry for yourself. Don't hold the past so close that it prevents your future. Whatever you have gone through or your previous circumstances, keep in mind that others have gotten through the same or worse. Learn from your past, but keep in mind the phraseology used in advertising investment products: "Past performance does not automatically guarantee future performance." Make this work in your favor as you recognize benefits from your past as applied to your future. Appreciate yourself and your situation as a survivor stronger for the trials and determined to make the best from every situation.

*Blessings In Adversity*

Maintain a positive perspective. A healthy sense of optimism and a cheerful disposition has tremendously more potential than a surly, negative outlook. Assess your situation honestly. See your adversity as a gift. Ask yourself what you can learn. Look for the seed of greater or equivalent benefit. Determine what action is necessary to change to favorable outcome or to make the best of the situation. Take action as this helps birth optimism.

There can be no real growth without resistance. Every challenge, obstacle or problem you face will present you with a learning opportunity. As we are challenged, we learn and we grow to meet the new challenges. We become better equipped to deal with future challenges. Fourth grade math may have seemed difficult at the time, but it was a cakewalk compared to calculus. The challenge of fourth grade math seems to push the boundaries at that level, yet the capacity becomes so much greater as the challenge is met. Everyone encounters problems in their life. It is your choice to be unhappy and upset about the cards you are dealt or to play out the hand as best you can.

Live your life with passion and purpose equipped with your *Blessings In Adversity* skillset. Live your life boldly with confidence in the knowledge and mindset that every problem and challenge you face will give you both an opportunity to show your character and to become stronger as you learn and grow through your problems, difficulties and challenges.

***“In good times, enjoy. In difficult times, grow.”***

## *Afterword: Sharing Hope Through Our Blessings In Adversity Message*

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September 2005

***"Reflect on the Past. Hope for the Future. Take Action Now!"***

***Dear Friend,***

I would like to thank you for taking this journey of discovery together. No matter how many times we have been here, each time we travel it, the view is always different.

*Blessings in Adversity* is a philosophy and positive approach to live our lives. It is also an ongoing entrepreneurial internet marketing campaign initiated in 2004 sponsored by Kahuna Empowerment, Inc. in conjunction with the newly created Kahuna Charitable Foundation – a Not For Profit corporation. This campaign is active every September coinciding with Childhood Cancer Awareness Month as a way to raise money and awareness for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

This campaign gives our team an opportunity to push forward our philosophy of *Applied Practical Optimism* and to share and grow with others. Each year we learn and grow and make new friends to share the journey with.

For more information about our annual campaign, or to send someone you care about a copy of this *Blessings In Adversity QuickSurf E-Book* with our compliments, simply visit [www.BlessingsInAdversity.com](http://www.BlessingsInAdversity.com).

God's Blessings to You!

**Frank F. Lunn and the Kahuna Empowerment, Inc. Team**

## *Special Thank You to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital*

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***“No child should die in the dawn of life.”***

**-Danny Thomas**, entertainer and founder of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

What could ever be said or what gift could ever be given to appropriately show your full appreciation to the people who saved the life of your child? To the entire dedicated team of doctors, nurses, technicians, child life, security, scientists, administrators, marketers, photographers, researchers and everyone else involved: *Thank you!*

You saved our son and showed us a face of compassion combined with a purpose for continuing the mission started by Danny Thomas over forty years ago. With heartfelt gratitude and motivation to see your excellent work continued, we joyfully pledge ten percent of all proceeds from all Kahuna Empowerment products to be donated to your mission of: *“Finding cures. Saving children.”* - Powered by the Kahuna Charitable Foundation, a Not For Profit corporation.

We wish you tremendous continued success and progress!

Sincerely,

*Team Kahuna and the family of Frankie Lunn — leukemia survivor!*

## *About the Author*



**Frank F. Lunn** is the President and CEO of Kahuna Business Group, Incorporated., a family of entrepreneurial companies focused on business development grounded in leverage, value and partnership for the clients they serve.

With annual revenues over \$25 million dollars per year, Lunn is a respected authority on leadership, motivation and opportunity, who understands how to make change a constructive force in life. An expert leader, marketer, small business entrepreneur and author of ***Stack The Logs!*** *Building a Success Framework to Reach*

*Your Dreams, and ***Carpe Aqualis! "Seize the Wave,"*** Lunn brings great perspective to teaching others his proven methods for success.*

Lunn attended Illinois State University majoring in economics with a minor in military science. Commissioned in 1987 as an officer in the U.S. Army, he served in the Persian Gulf during Operation Desert Storm, receiving a Bronze Star for meritorious service. After six years of military service, he retired as a captain.

His unique experience and visionary leadership is vital to his role in facilitating and leading the companies within the Kahuna Business Group. Frank Lunn has taken on the waves of Hawaii as an amateur surfer—his true passion is challenging others to surf life's waves of change with a ***Carpe Aqualis!*** attitude. Lunn is a devoted husband to his wife Lisa and a loving father to their three children Frankie, Matthew and Rachel.

## *About Kahuna Empowerment, Inc.*

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*“Success is found where opportunity meets personal responsibility”*

Kahuna Empowerment, Inc. is proud to publish and freely offer the *KahunaPower QuickSurf™ E-book, Blessings In Adversity – Convert Challenges, Difficulties and Hardships into Blessings and New Opportunities*. Everyone hits unexpected turbulence at one time or another. Kahuna Empowerment, Inc. strives to uncover valuable tools and resources for meeting life's challenges head on with joy and strength.

Established in 2003 as a subsidiary of Kahuna Business Group, Kahuna Empowerment Inc.'s mission is to: ***Inspire, Educate and Empower People to Take Bold Action to Achieve Their Dreams***. We assist our clients to gain maximum advantage in all their endeavors through leverage, value and partnership.

***"We achieve our victories through the victories of those we serve."***

Kahuna Empowerment, Inc. is lead by Stacy Laffere, Director of Marketing Communications and Business Development. Stacy brings a broad scope of expertise to the company by providing strategic communications counsel and flawless program execution while continuing to develop Kahuna Empowerment, Inc. into a publishing powerhouse.

For more information about Kahuna Empowerment, Inc., Stacy Laffere or the Kahuna Empowerment Team, please visit:

[www.KahunaPower.com](http://www.KahunaPower.com)

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## An Invitation to Share our Dream

### **Annual *Blessings In Adversity* Campaign**

***Powered by the Kahuna Charitable Foundation, a Not For Profit corporation***

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In 2004 with the publication of our first book, *Stack The Logs!*, the entire team at Kahuna got behind the goal to raise \$1 million (one day's operating cost for the hospital at the time) for the ongoing work of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital through the first Annual ***Blessings In Adversity*** Campaign.

#### **About Blessings In Adversity:**

The Annual *Blessing In Adversity* Campaign is a fundraiser to raise \$1 million for St. Jude during Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. The campaign stands or falls on the generosity, spreading of the word, and goodwill of its participants. We'd like to invite you to become a ongoing Partner in Action in the battle against childhood cancer and catastrophic diseases. As of this year, donations for the 2006 *Blessings in Adversity* campaign can be made at anytime leading up to our September campaign so that we will be that much closer next year to reaching our goal.

We are committed to raising our yearly goal of \$1 million for St. Jude. If we fall short of that goal we will try again next year and the year after that. When we hit our goal we will set a new one, so that we are always striving for the betterment of our cause rather than easy victories. Thank you again for your generous support and participation in the 2005 *Blessings in Adversity* campaign. Our greatest victories will not be possible without you. For more information, to make a donation, or to find more ways to get involved, please visit us on the web at [www.blessingsinadversity.com/helpus](http://www.blessingsinadversity.com/helpus).

#### **About Kahuna Charitable Foundation:**

Kahuna Charitable Foundation was established in 2005 as a Not For Profit corporation with a mission dedicated to adding leverage, value and partnership along with accountability for the fundraising activities of Kahuna Business Group and all subsidiary

*Blessings In Adversity*

companies. We are proud to be a corporate partner supporting the mission of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and they receive the majority of our support.

Ten percent of all royalties generated by Kahuna Empowerment, Inc., are joyously donated to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital - *Powered by Kahuna Charitable Foundation.*

In addition to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, the Kahuna Charitable Foundation provides us with flexibility to partner with other worthy charitable causes and organizations with other fundraising initiatives. We are very excited for the opportunities to give back and make a difference knowing, "A rising tide lifts all surfboards."

For more information about the work of the Kahuna Charitable Foundation, to make a donation, or to get involved and share our dream, please visit [www.KahunaCharitable.org](http://www.KahunaCharitable.org) or contact me directly at [Jamie@KahunaCharitable.org](mailto:Jamie@KahunaCharitable.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie Atchison". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Jamie" on top and "Atchison" below it, slightly overlapping.

**Jamie Atchison, Executive Director  
Kahuna Charitable Foundation, a  
Not For Profit Corporation**

# *Surf-Titudes To Reflect On*

*What if you could convert stress and problems in your life into opportunities and benefits? What if you could go into any situation with knowledge you can turn it into a victory? Don't deal with change...MASTER IT!*

**carpe a·qua·lis** (cär' pay ah' kwa lis)

[Latin derivative: carpe, seize + aqualis, wave.]

1. (*verb*) Taking full advantage of skills, talents, abilities and attitudes to convert challenges into opportunities and victories.
2. (*noun*) Powerful combination of opportunity awareness grounded in the realization of ultimate personal responsibility; see also: "Your World. Your Wave!"
3. (*adjective*) To represent a person or organization applying full measure of creativity and adaptability regardless of the situation.
4. (*interjection/expression/battle cry*) **Carpe Aqualis!**

Surfing is both skill and attitude. Skill because it takes craft and practice to ride the waves. Attitude because you have to accept that you can ride the wave, but you can't affect it. Surfing is the perfect metaphor for dealing with change. Surfing is about flexibility and creative adaptability. It is the ability to take what is given to you and make the best of it. Don't adapt to change... MASTER IT!

**Carpe Aqualis!** is both a mind-set and a skill-set you do not want to be without. It is an innovative entrepreneurial approach with skills and strategies to make change work for you rather than against you. *Seize Your Wave* and take control of your life regardless of what happens around you. **Carpe Aqualis! "Seize The Wave."**



**Surf-Titude:** “Observe how all things are continually being born of change... whatever is, is in some sense the seed of what is to emerge from it.” — Marcus Aurelius

**Surf-Titude:** “Great opportunities never come to those who wait; they are captured by those who learn to surf!”

**Surf-Titude:** “Seize the opportunities created in change! *Carpe Aqualis! Seize The Wave.*”

**Surf-Titude:** “God provides the waves. What you do with those waves is up to you!”

**Surf-Titude:** “To be a *Carpe Aqualis!* surfer, make sure your dreams are bigger than your fears!”

**Surf-Titude:** “The better surfer you are, the less you have to tell others.

*It is demonstrated in your actions and attitudes. The higher you go in any organization, the more humble you need to be.*”

**Surf-Titude:** “Define yourself with your actions. Your ‘can do’ attitude will be contagious and lift all surfboards!”

**Surf-Titude:** “Opportunity is optimism with a plan creatively applied to the future.”

**Surf-Titude:** “When life gives you waves... Learn to surf!”

**Surf-Titude:** “*Carpe Aqualis!* is taking personal responsibility to create and nurture the development of opportunities in your life.”

**Surf-Titude:** "Success in your career and in your life is NOT you against the world... it is you against you!"

**Surf-Titude:** "Unfortunately, average people develop arrogance as they ascend the Stewardship pyramid, which is completely contrary to partnership. Develop humility and a realization that, although you alone are responsible for you, no one ever climbs to the top alone."

**Surf-Titude:** "Don't look at your peers as competition. Learn from them and help them be better surfers. This will enhance your skills and opportunities. Surfing with the best makes you a better surfer."

**Surf-Titude:** "Let the success of those you serve be the fuel for your success and your ultimate measurement of it."

**Surf-Titude:** "In life, there are really only waves of challenges and opportunities. Both have the power to wipe you out or give you a tremendous ride. The only difference is in your approach."

**Surf Titude:** "The more difficult the wave, the more spectacular the ride!"

**Surf-Titude-** "In good times, enjoy. In difficult times, grow."

**Surf-Titude:** "Never turn your back on the waves of the ocean. It is far better to see what is coming so that you can respond or adapt than to be blind-sided."

**Surf-Titude:** “Success in surfing is not about the waves in your life but rather your approach to surfing those waves.”

**Surf-Titude:** “Success is found where opportunity meets personal responsibility.”

**Surf-Titude:** “Live your life on purpose rather than by default. Design it, build it, live it, enjoy it!”

**Surf-Titude:** “Learning to ‘seize the wave’ will change your situation. Learning to seize ‘your’ wave will change your life.”

**Surf-Titude:** “Who you are is more important than what you do. Focus on who you want to be and what you want to do rather than be disappointed in where you are or what you don’t have. Be happy with who you are today, knowing tomorrow you will improve and be even better!”

**Surf-Titude:** “Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it! Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth — the moment one definitely commits oneself then providence moves too.” — Goethe (1749–1832)

**Surf-Titude:** “Many people dream of success. To me, success can only be achieved through repeated failure and introspection. In fact, success represents the one percent of your work which results from the ninety-nine percent that is failure.” — Soichiro Honda, Founder of Honda Motor Company

**Surf-Titude:** "Make *Carpe Aqualis!* your battle cry every time you are confronted with difficulties or change."

**Surf-Titude:** "Waves represent change. Change represents opportunity. *Carpe Aqualis!* and seize your opportunity!"

**Surf-Titude:** "Seize your opportunities created in change!"

**Surf-Titude:** "Great teams are built with great individuals of passion, purpose and commitment to the goal and the team itself."

**Surf-Titude:** "Great surfing starts in the mind! Develop the *Carpe Aqualis!* mind-set as you approach every aspect of your life and work."

**Surf-Titude:** "A *Carpe Aqualis!* surfer is opportunity-driven yet centered in personal responsibility. Make a big splash and own it!"

**Surf-Titude:** "Success is not external shining in; it is internal radiating out."

**Surf-Titude:** Luck definitely plays a part in success. Luck is created in bold, determined action in the direction of your objective. Don't wait for your wave. Seize it!"

**Team Surf-Titude:** "Great teams magnify, build on and multiply each other's strengths and talents while working around, managing and minimizing individual weaknesses."

**Surf-Titude:** "Like attracts like. To attract great surfers... be one."

**Surf-Titude:** "Your life will not develop by what life gives you; it will be created by what you do with what life gives you. Destiny is not found in the raw materials life provides us; it is forged in our creation and what is built out of the opportunities we are presented with."

**Surf-Titude:** "Failure without learning is still failure. Failure with learning is experience!"

**Surf-Titude:** "Be a catalyst to enable the success of others and you will find your success naturally."

**Surf-Titude:** "True success in any endeavor is found in the powerful combination of opportunity awareness grounded in the realization of ultimate personal responsibility."

**Carpe Aqualis! — "Your World. Your Wave!"**

**Surf-Titude:** "Your **Carpe Aqualis!** opportunity-based attitude, combined with the "**Your World. Your Wave!**" personal responsibility will drive your aptitude and determine the results in your life!"

**Surf-Titude:** "It is your world. It is your wave. Design it, build it, surf it, enjoy it, live it... **CARPE AQUALIS!**"

**Surf-Titude:** "Never turn your back on the waves of change. It is far better to see what is coming so that you can respond or adapt rather than to be blind-sided."

## CHAPTER 19

# *The Incredible Power of Continued Incremental Improvement™*

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*“Success has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It’s what you do for others.”*

—**Danny Thomas**, entertainer and founder of  
St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital

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## Applied Incremental Advantage

A young man named Amos Jacobs was born as the fifth child of nine to Lebanese immigrants on January 6, 1912. This young man had a dream to be in show business. He thought he had talent. Along with his brother Ray, he formed a burlesque duo and achieved some success until Ray decided to leave the business for a more traditional path. Amos wanted to be in show business. He had a dream and he had the passion to pursue his dreams. He worked hard and found some small success as a radio actor and singer in the Detroit area.

Amos, looking for a spark to his new career, changed his name by taking on the persona in the combination name of two of his brothers. At this time, he married his beautiful childhood sweetheart Rose Marie. Amos knew he had talent and knew his course.

His wife now pregnant, Amos was still a struggling entertainer and worried if he could support his new family as well as maintain a career in show business. His heart heavy with the responsibility, a troubled Amos visited a church in Detroit and earnestly prayed to St. Jude Thaddeus, the patron saint of hopeless causes. He beseeched the saint, "Show me my way in life and I will build you a shrine." Within a few weeks, Amos, now better known as Danny Thomas, secured a regular job at a Chicago nightclub. From that point, Danny Thomas's career as an entertainer skyrocketed. He set his course, took action, accepted his results as feedback, course corrected and kept Stacking the Logs! until he achieved the outcome he desired. Danny Thomas lived the STACK Strategy for his show business career; but he would not stop there.

## The Success Story of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

By all accounts, Danny Thomas was a Hollywood success. He was a nationally known entertainer who could have easily coasted through an enchanting life with all the perks and benefits of the glamour industry. But Danny Thomas was a man of great character and personal integrity and as such, he accepted personal responsibility for his life. Danny never forgot his promise to St. Jude Thaddeus. Danny created a trusted support structure to share in his dream and his passion. Danny Thomas and friends set out in the early 1950s to found St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, which unquestionably is his most lasting legacy.

In 1962, the first patients began their treatment. Today, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, located in Memphis, Tennessee, is the world's premier institution for the study and treatment of catastrophic childhood diseases. When St. Jude officially opened the doors, the most common form of pediatric cancer, acute lymphocytic leukemia, was literally a death sentence as little more than 4 percent of children with this horrific disease survived. This was to be the starting point, knowing the destination lay far, far ahead. I would later learn through many

other people and in our family's experience that the abysmal survival statistic was the motivation behind and the starting point of an ongoing journey.

Danny Thomas magnetized the conditions he sought. He attracted like-minded men and women as support structure dedicated to share his dream that, "No child should die in the dawn of life." Together this group knew their outcome and set their course accordingly. They took action on fronts from fundraising to breakthrough science to groundbreaking research and outstanding patient care. They achieved results as feedback. Some of the results were painful and heartbreakng as parents and families watched their loved ones die. They had breakthroughs and they had setbacks, but each patient treated brought the St. Jude team closer to understanding and closer to the desired results. The course was corrected each time new information was learned or discovered. Each painstaking component of the process has been invented and reinvented with the end goal in mind. Most of all, Danny Thomas and his support structure with the St. Jude team never gave up.

Through more than 40 years of the highest highs and the lowest lows, St. Jude continued to make incremental improvement and incremental progress. Today, largely because of discoveries made at St. Jude, unbelievable advances have been made on many fronts with regard to childhood catastrophic disease and illness. Each success was reinvested into the process. Each discovery shared with other institutions and other scientists expanded the information and knowledge base. Every victory has been reinvested for a compound cumulative incremental improvement. Now the survival rate for the initial leukemia enemy with the initial survival rate of 4 percent has increased to over 80 percent and is improving.

## Close to Home

The success and humanitarian story of Danny Thomas and his dream could not hit any closer to home for me or my family. On Easter Sunday, March 31, 2002, our family became forever a part of the family of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital as

Frankie's treatment for acute myeloid leukemia began. When I first learned my son had leukemia, I was immediately numb, thinking he had just been handed a death sentence. We were reassured by many who were familiar with St. Jude that we were going to the best place available.

What I would observe over the next six months solidified all we were told. We were cared for by a very human organization that daily lived out the purpose of the man who founded it. In the past, I have worked with hundreds of corporations and organizations and have seen hundreds of mission statements adorning the walls or pages of company brochures. What I found in St. Jude was one of the finest organizations I have ever observed or been associated with in the daily demonstration of the mission and vision.

This incredible legacy and continuing living breathing organization began with a thought in Danny Thomas's mind. It began as a ripple spreading out from the center of Danny Thomas's being. This is in no way intended as a slight to the other fine institutions, but rather only what I witnessed as a critical observer.

Much of this book was written while Frankie was in his initial six months of treatment in Memphis. We lived in St. Jude—provided housing and all of our needs were met far beyond expectation. We were given a rare glimpse of not just a hospital, but also a family and community at work with complete alignment and singleness of purpose to the vision. I was able to talk to (and pester) and make some excellent friends while at St. Jude. As I look and review the material presented in this book, I can think of no better organization to share as a practical illustration of the principle of applied Incremental Advantage. Since I was writing this book during Frankie's treatment, my reticular activating system was on overdrive drawing me to observe and witness the very practical side of the material I was working on.

## Practical Application

My father's letter of encouragement to me is what makes up the seven parts of this book. The components of his wisdom are

evident to me in everything I witnessed while we were at St. Jude. As I reflect on what Danny Thomas began and his far-reaching legacy, I can clearly see the message my father shared with me at work in Danny Thomas and others' determined actions.

## Plan Well

Danny Thomas began his journey as a tribute to St. Jude Thaddeus, the patron saint of lost or hopeless causes. What could be more of a lost cause than childhood catastrophic diseases? In addition to leukemia, there are a great number of other catastrophic and life-threatening pediatric maladies St. Jude treats. From the outset, the plan was simple and straightforward: to find treatments and cures to allow children to live far beyond the dawn of their lives. There is nothing more heartbreakingly tragic than the death of a child and no more motivating factor for the dedicated work of hundreds of staff and a legion of volunteers.

Not only was there a plan in place for the incremental improvement of medical care toward treatment and cures, but there was an incredible plan for the creating of a marketing and fundraising arm to provide support for families so that no child in need would ever be denied because of a lack of money. In this day and age, benevolence comes at a mighty cost. However, the creation of a dedicated marketing and fundraising organization working in complete alignment of the goals of St. Jude provides just that. ALSAC (American Lebanese Syrian Associated Charities) is an extraordinary organization that through its charter and existence allows the hospital the sole focus of its founder's intent.

## Keep an Excellent Forward Thrust to Your Objectives

The lifesaving work at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital is far broader than what it might seem at the surface level. When you think of a hospital, you naturally think about a process to go from being sick to being well. With regard to the

catastrophic childhood diseases St. Jude has targeted, there is ongoing focus and effort toward the task of finding effective therapies and cures. Much deeper at issue is the cause and understanding of why these diseases attack children. The focus drills down all the way to the molecular and biological level of the DNA blueprint. Without proper understanding of the causes, the cures will not be complete.

The clinical research at St. Jude includes study and focus on bone marrow transplantation, chemotherapy, radiation treatment and surgery as therapies. There is also an ongoing study of a wide variety of issues relating to the desired outcome. From understanding the biochemistry of normal versus cancerous cells, blood diseases, issues causing resistance to therapy, viruses, hereditary diseases, all facets from cause to cure are under the microscope. In addition, there is another ongoing biostatistical study on adults living cancer-free as St. Jude is blessed with positive results and the first considerable population of adults living cancer-free after having received chemotherapy and radiation treatments as children. The hospital maintains contact long after treatment with these former patients to conduct long-term studies on the history of their health. These studies have led to improvements in ongoing treatment to avoid potential additional problems related to the initial treatment. This has a positive effect to improve the life of future children diagnosed with cancer.

The dedicated team at St. Jude knows specifically what they want as an outcome and take focused consistent action toward that conclusion. The enemy in this work is not so much what is known or not known, but more so what is not known that is unknown. Each theory must be tested and proven and some effects or outcomes are not known until much later down the road. The effect of all this is a frustrating and many times dark journey. The team at St. Jude does a miraculous job focused on what they can do today while keeping an eye on where they desire to progress to tomorrow.

## Deal with Your Disappointments and Setbacks

In the beginning, St. Jude was facing an amazing uphill battle. According to St. Jude's website information, in 1962, the survival rate for cancers and tumors affecting children were dramatically low. Below is just a sample as referenced by St. Jude faculty statistics ([www.stjude.org](http://www.stjude.org)) of the many types of cancers treated at St. Jude and their respective survival rates at the beginning of the hospital's existence compared to the progress made after 40 years of incremental improvement:

DISEASE TYPE	SURVIVABILITY STATISTICS	
	1962	2002
1. Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia (cancer of the blood)	4 percent	80 percent
2. Ewing Sarcoma (bone cancer type)	5 percent	75 percent
3. Hodgkin's Disease (cancer of the lymph nodes)	50 percent	90 percent
4. Neuroblastoma (cancer of the nervous system)	10 percent	59 percent
5. Non-Hodgkin's Lymphom (malignant tumor)	7 percent	80 percent
6. Osteosarcoma (bone cancer type)	20 percent	70 percent
7. Retinoblastoma (type of eye cancer)	75 percent	90 percent
8. Rhabdomyosarcoma (solid tumor affecting muscles)	30 percent	75 percent
9. Wilms Tumor (cancer in kidneys)	50 percent	90 percent

Behind the J-shape curve of these statistics hide two distinct stories. One is the amazing progress and the incredible life-saving advances made by St. Jude. The other side of the story is the amazing people who sadly are no longer with us today and the tragic loss for thousands of families. In 1962, 96 percent of childhood leukemia patients died. This is tragic.

Like all successes over time, St. Jude has had its share of heartache and disappointment in the past 40 years. Unfortu-

nately, there is no success in this endeavor without the learning curve that must be traveled. The positive future cumulative effect and the value of lives saved through enduring this sometimes painful process can never truly be measured. This sorrow and frustration can only be contrasted by the priceless upside of children's lives saved.

## Create a Positive Support Structure

Once Danny Thomas firmly had his vision in mind in the early 1950s, he began discussing with friends what this vision might look like. Over time, the idea of a children's hospital came about. In 1955, a group of Memphis businessmen agreed to help Danny. They would lend their support and leverage in the creation of a unique research hospital to be devoted to curing catastrophic diseases in children. The dream was to be more than just a treatment facility or regular hospital. The dream of Danny Thomas and his support structure would be to create a world-class research center to benefit the children of the world in treatment and a search for cures to catastrophic childhood diseases.

In the mid-1950s, Danny along with his wife, family and many supporters began raising significant money for Danny's vision of St. Jude. Tapping into Danny's entertainment friends as well as business leaders in the Memphis area, they created all of the necessary funds to build this great hospital and begin this worthy endeavor. Now built, they faced an even larger undertaking of funding the annual operation of the new hospital.

Danny looked to his fellow Americans of Arabic heritage. He deeply believed that Arabic-speaking Americans should, as a group, show respect and thanks to the United States for the gifts of freedom provided to their parents. Danny felt that supporting St. Jude would be a noble way of honoring his heritage and his immigrant forefathers who had come to America. Danny's commitment and passion for his cause struck a resonant chord. A hundred representatives of the Arab-American community met in Chicago in 1957 to form a fundraising arm dedicated to the support of St. Jude. ALSAC (American Leba-

nese Syrian Associated Charities), also founded by Danny Thomas, was created to be an ongoing positive support structure with the sole purpose of fundraising and generating support for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Currently, ALSAC is the fourth largest not-for-profit health-related fundraising organization in America. Headquartered in Memphis adjacent to the hospital and with regional offices throughout the United States, ALSAC has 100 percent of the responsibility of the hospital's fundraising efforts. ALSAC is supported with the dedicated efforts of over one million volunteers across the nation and in many other countries. Together, this amazing support structure raises millions of dollars annually through a variety of creative methods. The fundraisers, benefits and solicitation drives involve Americans of all economic, religious, racial, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In addition to the many millions of dollars raised is the education and awareness created for the ongoing mission of the hospital. Danny Thomas truly created a positive support structure to enable the dream to continue beyond his life.

## Stay Positive, Stay Focused

Frankie was initially diagnosed by Dr. McAllister from the St. Jude Midwest Affiliate office in Peoria, Illinois. After the initial shock, I tearfully asked him, "How much time do I have with my son?" He looked me right in the eye and said something I will never forget. He said to me, "You cannot think that way. You have to think 100 percent that your son is going to live!" Those confident words started our journey on the right path and kept our mind-set where it needed to be.

Studies upon studies have proven a direct correlation between a patient's mental attitude and his or her progress in healing. With children as patients, the parent's attitudes and beliefs about their children are crucial as the children look to the parents for understanding. The response of the children mirrors the attitude of the adults. With this knowledge, St. Jude provided care far beyond the scope of treating the disease. With a dedicated child life team of employees and volunteers work-

ing with the doctors and nurses, St. Jude assisted parents and families to remain positive and focused on the desired outcome. It is difficult to measure how this affected patients and their recovery, but it was easy to observe. St. Jude is a hospital full of life and hope with practical optimism in practice daily.

## Maintain Your Moral Character

St. Jude is a research hospital. What this means is that as a patient family, you are completely informed at the outset that with your consent, your child will be part of a treatment protocol. Some parts of the treatment are done differently with one group than with others to study the long-term effects. There were some parts of Frankie's treatment where a certain medicine's dosage was unknown to the doctors and to us. There were instances where another patient with the same diagnosis might have a slightly different treatment path to study different effects. Before Frankie started his treatment, we were given a complete briefing by his team of doctors and nurses. We were told the truth as were given the good, bad and ugly with regard to his prognosis and treatment plan. We were told what the negative outcomes could be for everything from different medicines to the possibility that he might not survive. All of this was presented to us in candor and with great humanity and sensitivity to our needs.

I am convinced that since St. Jude was founded, each patient has received the absolute best care, the best medical treatment and the best technology available at the time. The best decisions were made and the best course of treatment was put into place. All grouped together, this is called a protocol. Each disease has its individual protocol created by the best minds with the best information available. The treatment plan is carried out and a result for each patient and group of similar patients is studied over time. The results as feedback allow the scientists and doctors to make changes, modifications and course corrections in the treatment plan and a new protocol is established.

The treatment my son underwent without a shadow of a doubt saved his life. What is so sad is the understanding that

many lives were lost prior to Frankie's treatment in order to build the knowledge base of the disease and the treatment. There is no other way to describe the process of treating cancer than trial and error. I am certain the process I witnessed by the team at St. Jude is similar to other hospitals and other treatments of catastrophic diseases.

As a research hospital, there are clearly opportunities for competing interests taking precedent over patient care. There is clinical research, drug testing, patents, grants, legislation, regulation and funding issues all at stake. In a research hospital, ethics are paramount. There is a gray area in need of constant balance to maintain service to present needs with integrity as well as pursuing the desired outcomes for future generations. I feel 100 percent confident and can say with total certainty that I witnessed an institution possessing moral character and living integrity throughout the entire process and organization. We never felt for a second anything but confidence in the process or the motives during any facet of Frankie's treatment.

In addition to the ethical side of the equation, St. Jude demonstrated a humanitarian side in how they dealt with the financial aspect of an exorbitant process. With treatment costs of healthcare nationwide skyrocketing and the daily operating cost of St. Jude edging up close to a \$1 million per day, all St. Jude patients are treated regardless of their ability to pay. ALSAC covers all costs above what is reimbursed by third-party insurers. When there is no insurance, ALSAC generously covers all of the costs.

## Keep on Stacking Those Logs!

As of this writing, St. Jude has treated nearly 20,000 children from the United States and more than 60 foreign countries. Research discoveries and patient care victories are freely shared with other institutions to add leverage and increase the collective medical community's advantage to the common goal. Unfortunately, every patient experience is filled with ups and downs and in some cases the patients do not survive. Even though there are still gut-wrenching heartbreaks, every patient is cared

for as part of the St. Jude family with love and respect. Patients and families understand that every patient experience provides increased knowledge and insight toward finding the cause and the cure for these terrible diseases as a benefit for future patients. The progress continues!

## Applied STACK Strategy of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

The basis of this book is creating success through applied Incremental Advantage and utilizing the STACK Strategy as a framework or blueprint tool to assist in guiding and determining your outcome. As you look at the components below, it is clear that Danny Thomas and all of the dedicated team who created and funded St. Jude Children's Research Hospital used the major principles in their creation.

Although he did not know the STACK Strategy as a formal course of action, Danny Thomas certainly applied the principles. He used them effectively to create not only his entertainment success, but also success far beyond the scope any man could see in his founding of St. Jude and ALSAC. He knew his desired outcome and took action. He accepted his results as feedback and retooled his approach until he achieved the result he sought. He continued to Stack The Logs!, providing ongoing benefits for children and families today.

## Achieving Incremental Advantage Through Persistence

Starting with Danny Thomas and carried through the doctors, nurses, scientists, fundraisers, volunteers, and everyone else associated with the hospital, St. Jude put into practice every important principle and natural law contained within this book. The practical application of applied Incremental Advantage for the St. Jude team created a results graph starting at the 4 percent in 1962, growing to over 80 percent survivability in 2002 and improving. The results graph of St. Jude Children's Research

Hospital is the personification of the J-shaped curve and I can think of no better illustration to demonstrate the effectiveness of the STACK Strategy. Creating leverage through information sharing and researching genetic root causes as well as searching for cures, St. Jude has ultimately helped save the lives of innumerable children everywhere in the world...including my son.

Danny Thomas began St. Jude as a commitment repaid to his prayer request. His initial pledge of, "Show me my way in life and I will build you a shrine" began a creation and a dream fulfillment that would outlive the creator. Sadly, but with no regrets, Danny Thomas passed away on February 6, 1991, only two days after celebrating the hospital's 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Laid to rest in a family crypt at the Danny Thomas/ALSAC Pavilion on the grounds of the hospital with his beloved wife, Rose Marie, his dream and his legacy will forever live on. Danny and Rose Marie's three children, Marlo, Terre and Tony, carry on the passion and important work of their parents. Together, along with an army of dedicated friends and supporters, they continue to be a driving force in fulfilling their father's mission.

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*"Never give in! Never give in! Never. Never. Never. Never..."*

**—Sir Winston Churchill**

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# Chapter 7

## Rule 4 – Apply No-Wave Thinking™

### Surf -Titude:

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*"In good times, enjoy. In difficult times, grow."*

#### **If You Miss a Wave, Another Will Come**

Surfing the waves you are given allows you to learn, adapt and grow. Opportunity is meaningless by itself. It is like telling someone they have “potential.” That really means, “You have ability, but you haven’t done anything with it yet!” Opportunity is a blank canvas; to turn it into a masterpiece, you’ve got to work. It’s a wave moving toward you, and you’re in the right position. Many people find opportunities, yet they fail to realize their potential. The swell lifts them momentarily, but they fail to catch the wave. The other side of the swell lets them down as the water reaches its lowest point before rising to normal levels again. If you let it pass you by, it’s meaningless. Some people will sit on their board all day and yet never catch a wave.

## ***Don't Ride a Bad Wave All the Way***

No-Wave Thinking™ is a strategy you should use to evaluate all opportunities. Ask yourself, “Knowing what I know now, would I still ride this wave?” If the answer is no, with no sound reason to stay with it, bail out. If the answer is yes, ride it as long and as far as you can. Apply No-Wave Thinking to every area of your life. Ask yourself whether there is anything you are doing, knowing what you now know, you would not continue to do today. If you find something, change it. Otherwise, you’re staying with a bad wave.

Remember, you can only ride one wave at a time. If you choose to stay on one, you cannot ride a different one without abandoning the first one. If you choose to abandon a wave, you’ve got to be committed to the new one, because once the old wave is gone, it’s gone.

This isn’t a call to immediately quit your job or a relationship, as these relationships are certainly more complicated than this simple metaphor. However, you should evaluate where you are and apply No-Wave Thinking. If something is not working, at least take action to understand and improve where you are. You are not doing your relationship, yourself or your organization any favors if you cannot give your all. If you find yourself over your head on your wave, there is nothing wrong with jumping off and starting again. It is certainly more graceful than losing your shorts on a wipe out!

## ***When Bad Surf Happens to Good Surfers***

As you surf life’s waves, you will see good waves and bad ones. You will have some awesome rides and some gnarly wipe outs. You will meet fellow surfers who want to help you out and those who would rather beat you down. There will be sunny days to enjoy the beach. There will also be storms that take away your enjoyment and opportunity as the sea becomes unstable and unsuitable for your purposes. Injustice, rude people, hardships,

difficulties and even some bad things will happen in your life. We cannot control those. The only thing we can control is our attitude and the actions we choose to take in response.

Living is not about playing it safe. Test yourself. Learn the full measure of your surfing ability. Do not hide from the waves. You can learn from both your great rides and your wipe outs.

Opportunity does not come to the passive. Be active and create your opportunities. Sometimes opportunities come only through difficult situations. *Adversity doesn't build character, it reveals it.* How you choose to respond to adversity reveals your true character. Your true character is uncovered in the actions of your response and in the choices you make. Your character is revealed in the promises you keep and in the convictions you hold true. Ultimately, your character is a mirror of the guiding principles in your life. What you do and say reveal to the world who you are.

### ***Look for Blessings in Adversity™***

I believe in the power of prayer and have prayed for many things in my life. I feel some have been answered directly while others have been answered in a different way. Looking back, some of the very best things that have ever happened to me came as the result of prayers that seemed to go unanswered. Life events that I once saw as heartache and disappointment later became opportunities and blessings. If I had been spared the experience of those tough times, I would not have the family, business, opportunities and friendships I enjoy today.

Even in my son Frankie's experience with leukemia, we discovered blessings beyond belief. Our involvement with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital dramatically changed my focus as an author and entrepreneur. Our limited scope of observation and the typical human short-term view does not always allow for the full perspective on the new opportunities to be found in difficulties and adversities.

When bad surf happens to good surfers, it's their response that determines the outcome. It does not help to be angry at the waves. We discussed the S.U.R.F Strategy as a response to the waves of change in your life. When difficult and unexpected situations arise, this response is even more important. It's critical to learn to cultivate potential blessings and opportunities in your adversities. There is no guarantee they will be there, but you won't know unless you learn how to look.

## ***Applying the S.U.R.F. Strategy in Difficulties and Adversities***

### **1. Survey the Situation**

After the storm is over, survey the damage and create a new plan.

### **2. Understand Your Options**

Assess options for moving forward. Discuss solutions rather than problems. Resolve to maintain a positive outlook regardless of the situation. Stay solution-based, with your focus on looking for ways of using the situation for good rather than to lament about your misfortune.

Without resistance, there can be no growth. Most people don't lift weights for the joy of it; they challenge themselves with growing resistance to get stronger.

Look for hidden gifts. You will never know when an obstacle is hiding an opportunity. But if you don't look, you'll never find it. Develop the mind-set that the challenge you are facing has been specifically given to you to help you learn, develop and grow. Look for the hidden potential benefits. At the very least, see if you can learn a lesson to apply to the future.

### **3. Respond Based on Your Goals**

With several options available to you, apply your creativity to ensure your response is in line with your goals.

**Do not react to what happens to you; respond instead with a plan of action. Come up with a creative, positive plan of action that leads to a specific goal. Then get moving.**

#### **4. Forward Focus Your Action and Attitude**

Focus on the future rather than on the past. Do not waste emotional energy on worry or blame. Maintain your focus on where you want to go and what you want to do.

Assume you invested one thousand dollars into a dot com start up, which is now worth \$250. What are your options? You could moan about your loss. You could vow never to invest and keep your money in your mattress. You could choose to throw more money at it, figuring it would not be fair for this stock not to go back up and make you whole. Or you could survey, understand and respond, and then forward focus on options in line with your investment goals. The S.U.R.F. Strategy keeps you moving toward your objectives, converting challenges into opportunities that improve your surfing skills for today and tomorrow.

#### ***Yesterday's Wave is Long Gone***

You cannot change what happened yesterday. Instead, find the lesson and use it to benefit your tomorrow. Don't punish yourself with regrets. Do not hold the past so close that it prevents your future. Whatever you have gone through, whatever your previous circumstances, it's done. You can choose to learn from it or not. As always, it's your choice.

Learn from your past, but focus on the future. With a *Carpe Aqualis!* mind-set, yesterday's successes and failures are your investments in tomorrow. Don't overcomplicate the process. It really is as simple as one, two, three.

1. Learn from the past.
2. Live in the present.
3. Plan, prepare and take action toward your future.



## Surf -Titude:

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*"Never turn your back on the waves of the ocean. It is far better to see what is coming so that you can respond or adapt than to be blind-sided."*

### ***It May Not be Your Fault, But it is Your World and it is Your Wave***

You are where you are. Accept it and move forward. You can't surf yesterday's wave. Don't be locked into hurts or issues from your past. This ultimately diminishes today, which also takes away from your future. If you were wronged or hurt in the past, go ahead and scream, "It's not my fault!" Feel better? Good. Now, here's the harsh truth: no one cares. Blame isn't the issue, responsibility is. Self-pity, blame and accusation will not move you forward. No matter what was done *to* you, you are the only one who can take responsibility for today, make smart choices and ride your wave in a way that does great things *for* you.

Once, I was watching my son playing outside when he was a toddler. I could see him, but he did not know where I was. He fell down and started crying, waiting for someone to pick him up and comfort him. While I watched and listened, he wailed, until he finally realized that no one was coming to pick him up. Then he stopped crying, got up and kept on playing. Maybe that sounds harsh, but my goal as a parent is to raise a self-reliant, independent son. The lesson is this: no one is coming to pick you up, so stop crying and keep moving.

Discouragement and setbacks happen. Your response will determine the outcome. Use setbacks as excuses to learn and improve. This is called "failing forward." As you become adept at moving through obstacles, you'll get stronger and be more able to achieve your goals.

## Surf -Titude:

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*"Success in surfing is not about the waves in your life but rather your approach to surfing those waves."*

