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TRANSFORMING
YOUR
Life
VOLUME II

Transforming Your Life II
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6 SIMPLE RULES FOR DEFYING THE ODDS

MARK MUDFORD

“We can’t guarantee his ability to talk again, or even how well he might communicate with the outside world...”

“We have no idea how this event has affected his memory...”

“... we can’t even guarantee his survival through the surgery...”

I can only imagine how truly terrifying these words must have sounded to my (now) wife. This is because I can’t remember them being spoken. Neither can I recall the first two weeks I spent in the high-care ward of my neurosurgical unit. But for her, it must have been devastating. In a way, I feel lucky my memories only become clear later into the ordeal—when we knew I could still talk, think, and even recall memories. The full extent of the impact (including walking unaided or other permanent neurological effects) would not be confirmed for months. In time and against all the odds, I was fortunate enough to regain all of my original self; but for those first few months following surgery, no one could tell me what my future held.

To complicate matters, it would also be months before I was medically cleared to return to work. By the time I was able to start thinking again about my business, I had no business. My

clients had all moved on. My inbox was empty. Suddenly there was no income, nor any way to quickly resurrect an income. Now THAT realization was truly frightening.

I thought about the journey that had led me to that moment. Previously, I had supported and served business owners and industry leaders as an external business consultant. However, over time, I had become less aligned with the traditional consultancy model in which I was expected to deliver a specific solution based on my (and not the client's) expertise. I had noted as we moved from initial exploratory meetings to the full consultancy intervention, my clients reported a better sense of engagement at the earlier meetings. In fact, they often spoke to me about having heightened perceptions and stronger intuition as a result of those initial discussions alone, which often proved to translate into a long-term boost in business acumen. In contrast, the *momentum* gained during the actual consultation that followed these meetings often suffered a substantial drop once I had moved on.

This was initially puzzling to me, especially given the significant positive effects clients reported that appeared to be the direct result of our initial conversations. During these conversations, I realized that I was seeking to understand the client's situation, often asking questions that raised their own *awareness*, and clarified their own *responsibility*, in relation to the challenges they felt they were facing. This is something that I have, over time, come to know as a coaching conversation. However, I did not recognize it at the time.

Determined to find out more, my journey back then had led me away from needing to be the 'expert' to, instead, further cultivate my skill sets of observation and communication.

It was at this stage I realized that I had actually begun to adopt a coaching approach. This piqued my interest even further, as I had previously consumed the books from the pioneers of the field. In earlier days I had absorbed everything I could from leaders such as Zig Ziglar, Norman Vincent Peale, and Dennis Waitley before discovering trailblazers such as Tony Robbins and Stephen Covey. Realizing this historical link to my earliest business passions gave me the courage to move my approach from that of a consultant to that of a business coach. In doing so, I also set out to research everything I could find on the coaching industry. This reforged both my experience and my abilities alike, allowing me to deliver solutions of maximum value to the client.

It was then my unforeseen tragedy had struck. Following a painful and unrelenting headache, my fiancée had rushed me to Emergency at our local hospital. After the attending doctor waded through the list of usual culprits, he concluded that a migraine was the issue and instructed my fiancée to take me home. However, she followed her intuition and declined. Three times he requested. Three times she refused. And saved my life. This was despite the fact that the doctor was far more highly trained and qualified than she to make medical decisions. Later, she explained that she had stood her ground because in all our years together, she had never seen me in that much discomfort or had seen physical pain ever bring me to tears. In desperation, the doctor sought out his superior to bolster support for my discharge. To his dismay, the registrar instead advised him I was too old to be experiencing my first migraine and should actually be sent for a scan.

After the scan, the doctor returned with a different demeanor and begged my fiancée's forgiveness. The scans had revealed

a massive bleed in the brain. To his credit, he then worked tirelessly to find me a bed in a specialist neurosurgical ward. As if inspired by the defiant courage of my fiancée, he persisted, cajoled, persuaded, and influenced until he managed to get through to the specialist he was seeking. Immediately, I was bundled into an ambulance and rushed to a hospital two hours away.

As I have said, I have no memory of this part of my story. It holds no strong emotion for me. In fact, no specific emotion about that night has ever returned. But when talking about it with my wife, the apprehension and pain are still apparent in her despite the years that have passed. It sometimes feels that, in the absence of my memory of those first few weeks, those who loved me took on that burden of fear instead. To this day, I remain merely the observer who reflects on how lucky I really am.

My fear, however, did find me as soon as I arrived home: to a future that was no longer certain; to health that was not yet assured; and to a business that no longer existed. What could I do? Where to begin?

I realized this was exactly the situation many of my previous clients had found themselves in. I decided to put my own wisdom into practice.

The first step was to understand what those initial conversations with clients had contained, which had so powerfully impacted them. It was my attempt to connect with the knowledge I already possessed to resurrect my business and complete the metamorphosis into a coaching service. I realized that my previous success had been a journey over time; along the way,

some really important clues had been revealed to me. If I could just distill those nuggets of truth and use them to find a path through the fear and anxiety that now gripped me, I was sure I would be able to recreate success.

In time, this reflection would clarify the six rules that now underscore my coaching approach:

Rule #1 Let Purpose Be Your Context

Rule #2 Everyone Is Unique...and Usually a Little Bit Right

Rule #3 Wisdom Is the Result of Experience, Not Age

Rule #4 Analogy Gives Clarity without Preconception

Rule #5 EVERYTHING Is Connected

Rule #6 Success Is Not A Solo Journey – Build a Tribe

Everything in this chapter is experiential. However, everything here is also backed up by scientific research. If you would like to explore further and learn about my passion for research, please visit the references listed in the footnotes.

Rule #1: Let Purpose Be Your Context

Background

“I am here for a purpose and that purpose is to grow into a mountain, not to shrink to a grain of sand.”

Og Mandino

My time in the Australian Army best illustrates this idea. Military leaders are often thought of as just using ‘one way’ to lead (and that was certainly my own belief before taking my oath). However, I was soon exposed to varied leadership styles and skill sets. One senior officer, in particular, stands out. This

man was an army chaplain who had previously served as an infantry officer before turning to his new calling. As Padre, he usually acted as our spiritual adviser and counselor—building in us a sense of trust in him and a sense of sanctuary away from the operating environment. Occasionally he would be more directive, when more urgent circumstances required a natural leader whom we could follow. Because of his ability to be sensitive to the context in which he was leading, officers and soldiers loved him. Despite the fact that we were, at times, undergoing challenging personal and professional growth, we were always inspired by his presence.

I recall one conversation with him—where we were discussing my development—when I had asked him for his favored approach in leading troops. He replied that his preferred style was simply the one that best fits the moment. Rather than being able to answer specifically, we touched on scenarios that would support more than one ‘right’ leadership style. It was here I first understood that a change in purpose could easily result in a change in the selection of strategy, even when everything else remained the same.

Beyond just an understanding of the theory, this officer always *demonstrated* that leadership was contextual. This changed all my preconceived notions. It was a contrast to what I had expected, but a valuable lesson to be able to understand. In the decades that followed, this truth has never left me.

My primary purpose today is, ultimately, to be of service to others. That underpins everything I do—from the way I am available for my family and friends to the clients I choose to partner with. Some of my clients are high-performing individuals who are seeking to improve their already impressive

results—a coaching context I enjoy working in. But my deepest passion is to help other business owners and leaders overcome circumstances that have had a massive negative impact on them. Such a passion does not preclude me from coaching those who have not experienced such challenges, however, my familiarity in the context of trauma gives me a certain unique connection with professionals who have experienced similar events.

The Research behind My Story:

There are many perspectives regarding how best to define purpose. Some encourage the distillation of purpose based on an evaluation of self (such as ‘follow your bliss’⁴⁵). Others suggest a more practical method to address the possible shortcomings that can result from this type of approach⁴⁶ and suggest that one can *develop* rather than *discover*⁴⁷ their purpose. As we will explore later in Rule #2, *comfort in ambiguity* is also an important ability for today’s leader. Ambiguity also appears important in defining the purpose, as it appears that either bliss ‘following’ or purpose ‘developing’ can be the appropriate process, under different conditions. This fact is further supported by the uniqueness of an individual (which is also further explored in the next rule).

Purpose assists in 3 specific parts of our journey:

I. In Advance

By embodying our purpose prior to taking action, we greatly

⁴⁵ Henderson, “Follow Your Bliss”: A Process for Career Happiness’, 305.

⁴⁶ Berkelaar, ‘Bait and Switch or Double-Edged Sword? The (sometimes) Failed Promises of Calling’, 157-178.

⁴⁷ Davies, *The Happiness Industry. How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being*.

improve our ability to select and develop the correct solution for that context. By extension, the specifics of a detailed purpose is better than a generalized one. Clear and specific purpose removes unnecessary distractions as we develop a strategy. They may enable better engagement with our creativity to identify options that would otherwise remain hidden in plain sight. Imagine the possibilities today for the (once) phone industry leader, Nokia, had it not ‘lost sight of its purpose’⁴⁸ to allow Apple’s present-day domination.

II. During Execution

A clear purpose also allows for solid decisions to be made, even under extreme circumstances. Consider the words commonly attributed to Viktor Frankl: “Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose.” Seasoned business people know that, despite even the most meticulous planning, there is always a chance of the unforeseen impacting both planning and execution. In these circumstances, they will rely heavily on their creativity and clarity of vision. These, in turn, are heavily dependent on a sense of psychological safety⁴⁹ that a clear purpose can help provide.

III. Upon Review

Purpose may also assist as we reflect on past outcomes. It will help place frustrations or apparent failures in a more appropriate light. For example, as we reflect on setbacks we may have encountered across our journey, the context of our purpose balances them against the overall outcome we have achieved

⁴⁸ Chevreux, et al. ‘The Best Companies Know How to Balance Strategy and Purpose’, 26.

⁴⁹ <https://markmudford.com.au/psychological-safety-and-the-team/>

(and they may start to feel more like costs paid in the name of success). In particular, processes that also utilize abstraction through analogy or metaphor (which will be expanded upon in Rule #4) can also help regulate emotional responses that would otherwise distort the true value of any outcome we have achieved. This allows us to fully engage the most advanced part of the human brain, which, among current understandings of the brain's mechanisms⁵⁰ is often considered to be the 'seat' of creativity.

Therefore, a correctly-defined purpose can potentially provide advantages throughout all three phases of any activity. It allows us to be: (i) clear on what needs to be done while developing a strategy; (ii) able to effectively evaluate unexpected changes, or even significant setbacks, as they appear during execution of that strategy; and (iii) ultimately able to better weigh benefits and issues as we reflect on our results.

In practice, I always keep purpose at the forefront of my mind. It clarifies context for any decisions that I am required to make. Honouring purpose can identify the one obvious action to take, or it can clarify the most valuable action in the case of what appears to be multiple 'right' choices.

Rule #2: Everyone Is Unique...and Usually a Little Bit Right

Background

"Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid"

Anonymous proverb

⁵⁰ Heilman, 'Possible Brain Mechanisms of Creativity', 285-296.

I think I began to understand the value of this rule largely through reflection. In more recent years, I am grateful to have received instruction in powerful approaches such as Conversational Intelligence® (C-IQ) with the late Judith E. Glaser. Through the C-IQ paradigm, I have come to recognize that by seeking to understand another's perspective, I was choosing to 'stand under' their reality. But, back at the time I had started using it, this had just seemed like the sensible thing to do.

After my initial time with the army, I worked within the security industry while attending university. I was lucky enough to hold some interesting roles including instruction in the disciplines of Defensive Tactics and Firearms. During that time, I also worked the door of a nightclub with Greg, a professional with many years' experience. Greg was always slow to anger, yet startlingly fast to physically intervene when it was necessary. One night, three men were rejected at the door for being too intoxicated. Greg quietly opened the rope and asked them to leave. They had begun the usual barrage of insults that quickly escalated when Greg didn't react. At the height of their verbal aggression, screaming "You're nothing but a...", Greg just looked over and said, "Yeah, I've been known to be" before stepping back to his spot on the door. The three men froze in their outrage. I could see them frantically trying to think through what had happened. But there was nothing left for them to say. They had hurled all the abuse they could, hoping for an escalation. Instead, all they got was agreement. I gently prompted them to move along, and they wandered off without further comment—still looking confused at what had transpired.

Greg and I had previously discussed our approach. We had agreed that we didn't see our job as needing to demean or control. The incident discussed above was just business as usual.

It wasn't a challenge we had to meet or a trial in which we had to prove ourselves. Fights came often enough without us needing to instigate them. It was likely there was some reason for the mindset they had presented (other than alcohol). In fact, when one of the men returned the following night to apologize, he explained that the group had been drinking all day following the funeral of one of the men's fathers. Greg's professionalism and complete lack of ego at that moment had been the perfect reaction. That memory has stayed with me all these years, and I have never forgotten that there is always another side to every story.

Of course, it was also important that we had first honored the previous rule. In our discussions, we already knew our purpose (Rule #1), which was to ensure the best night for our patrons and staff. We agreed that this meant having a conversation with everyone who came to the door so we might use our intuition to either allow entry to those who met our expectations, or respectfully turn away those who were unable to respond appropriately. In the nights that followed, our decisions were, for the most part, well made. By remembering everyone was unique, and treating them as such, our decisions were clear and fair. This generated the best outcome for the club and our patrons alike.

The Research behind My Story:

There are actually two aspects to the idea of uniqueness. They are the views that *everyone is unique* and that *everyone is a little bit right*.

Everyone Is Unique

There are numerous reasons as to why we are all quite unique. For many years I had been aware of (and acted upon) my knowledge of this at the spiritual and psychological level. In more recent years, the biological reasons were also revealed.

It has been documented that our DNA partly consists of ‘unchangeable’ *template* genes (such as eye color). Based just on this unchangeable component, we find there are trillions of combinations possible. This is many times more combinations than all the humans *who have ever lived* on Earth. This nearly *guarantees* genetic uniqueness for everyone alive today⁵¹. It is also well documented that genes will mutate. In fact, some studies estimate that every human being holds between 30 and 60 mutated genes⁵². When including these mutations, the number of possible combinations of unique gene sets increase. So even when we take into account only the genes that produce differing *traits*⁵³ (as much of human DNA appears to have no function that we are able to ascertain at this stage), we are still dealing with such a large combination that strongly favors genetic uniqueness.

Gene *regulation* adds another layer of complexity. The study of Epigenetics, and approaches such as C-IQ, also considers this function. In layman’s terms, *transcription* occurs via signals from both the environment we live in and from other cells in the body. Specific genes can be turned on and off by transcription. If we add this function to the complex combination of all possible genetic

⁵¹ <https://markmudford.com.au/unique-genes/>

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Tennessen, et al. ‘Evolution and Functional Impact of Rare Coding Variation from Deep Sequencing of Human Exomes’, 64-69.

combinations, our genetic makeup can evolve even further.

This makes environment a key influence in ensuring our uniqueness⁵⁴ – from the womb⁵⁵, to the world we live in⁵⁶, and even the internal environment we create within ourselves⁵⁷. Indeed, people with biologically similar gene patterns (parents, siblings) might still react in different ways to the same stimulus. In this way, our uniqueness can be considered ever-evolving.

Our perceptions also play a role. We can all have a different perception of the same event within the body. Consider the nearly identical states in the body when we experience either excitement or anxiety. Our perception (or how we choose to interpret this biological reaction) creates yet another potential difference. Our biology responds, and we perceive its meaning (as either excitement or anxiety). Thus, our own cognition can further influence our uniqueness in any situation.

Everyone Is a Little Bit Right...

It is also important to recognize that, in any situation, everyone can be a little bit right. This is why, in particular, having *comfort in ambiguity* is a must for today's leaders and successful business people. But realizing that opposing views might both contain grains of truth isn't a new concept. Hobbes and Locke argued

⁵⁴ Glaser, *Conversational Intelligence: How Great Leaders Build Trust and Get Extraordinary Results*, 82.

⁵⁵ Teh, et al. 'The Effect of Genotype and In Utero Environment on Interindividual Variation in Neonate DNA Methylation', 1064-1074.

⁵⁶ Canady, 'Increased screen time promotes depressive symptoms in teens', 3-5.

⁵⁷ Echouffo-Tcheugui, et al., 'Circulating Cortisol and Cognitive and Structural Brain Measures: The Framingham Heart Study', e1961-e1970.

about it in the 17th Century. Older texts, including ancient religious writings, can seem either inconsistent in their views, or even appear to contradict themselves⁵⁸.

However, the hostility and partisanship that dominate the news cycles, political debates, and even our discussions in general today also create risks for anyone attempting to develop and implement a solution. I am often bemused by the hostility that is over-represented in the media. It seems the norm to no longer have colleagues or peers. They have been replaced by opponents. This ignores one very basic fact: all of us have unique views within our shared understandings. When we forget the fact that everyone is a little bit right, we become vulnerable to things such as confirmation bias.

In practice, I always honor the uniqueness of an individual. I first look for the parts of someone's perspective that I agree with before considering to comment on the things that I don't.

Rule #3: Wisdom Is the Result of Experience, Not Age

Background

"Any fool can know. The point is to understand."

Albert Einstein

As I progressed along my working journey, I was given some extraordinary opportunities within my workplaces to make a positive difference. One that I feel humbled to have been involved with was a high-profile corporate project that was really impacting my organization at the time. After being fortunate

⁵⁸ <https://markmudford.com.au/ambiguity-a-history/>

enough to have seen some good results on smaller projects, I was handed an issue that had, to that point, defied any attempt at resolution. The organization was struggling with customer orders being ‘stuck’ during the provisioning process and were unable to resolve it. This was affecting tens of thousands of orders. Rather than just defining a technical solution that looked good on paper, I physically went and worked with the team who had been dealing with this issue. By first clarifying the problem with them, and then engaging them all for the suggestions that resulted in preventing more orders from entering the ‘stuck’ phase, we finally had a clear path to co-create a strategy to attend to those stuck orders that remained.

As with previous examples, this rule also required all of the earlier ones to be honored. In this case, our purpose (Rule #1) was to deliver the best customer experience. This ensured that our decisions and actions were always in context. Given the team I was now working with had been across the issue from the start, they really were uniquely qualified (Rule #2) to deliver the solution. When difficulties arose, or multiple solutions were produced, we were uniquely placed as a team to get the best outcome by combining their experience at the operational level with my strategic view of our corporate capabilities. At team discussions, we knew that any disconnect we encountered usually meant both sides would probably be a little bit right. By committing to always speak openly and honestly, and finding the common thread, we could develop the most powerful solution in the shortest possible time.

The customer team had also developed informal processes that had become unwritten shortcuts as they attempted resolution of orders. We were also able to capture this and ensure that the *entire* wisdom of the customer team was drawn upon—ensuring

anything they contributed was always as valuable to the development of the solution as the corporate imperative that I represented. In honoring all of these rules, the employees dealing with the difficult issues felt supported and engaged, and the customers they were dealing with also felt the care and attention they were owed. In the end, the team took each order and walked it through to completion. In the space of a month, orders in the tens of thousands (some of which had been outstanding for up to 24 months) were reduced by 75%. Corporate was extremely happy, and accolades, recognition, and rewards flowed to the hardworking team as a tribute.

The Research behind My Story:

‘With Age Comes Wisdom’ is certainly a myth. I have met some very senior business people who are extremely naive and make foolish decisions, and some relatively young people who drip with insight, despite being barely out of their teens. It appears that overcoming adversity is the catalyst that results in wisdom⁵⁹. Research that stretches across interdisciplinary fields backs this up⁶⁰. In addition to this, there is evidence that wiser people pursue activities that are more meaningful, which in turn enhances mental health⁶¹.

In fact, when faced with the most extreme of circumstances, one of the most valuable things any survivor can be grateful for is the experience they now have in coming through that challenge. Of course, they have to get through it first to gain the full value

⁵⁹ <https://markmudford.com.au/with-adversity-comes-wisdom/>

⁶⁰ Bachmann, et al. ‘Practical Wisdom: Management’s No Longer Forgotten Virtue’, 47-165.

⁶¹ Webster, et al. ‘Wisdom and Mental Health Across the Lifespan’, 209-218.

of the experience, but simply knowing this will occur can also turn a paralyzing situation into a more positive opportunity. This can assist in gathering energy to pass more quickly through the difficulties. In times of my greatest adversities, I have always found it helpful to remember the words (perhaps incorrectly) attributed to Winston Churchill, “When going through Hell, keep going.”

Rule #4: Analogy Gives Clarity without Preconception

Background

“A journey of a thousand miles starts beneath one’s feet.”

Lao Tzu

I have always been a fan of analogy. From my earliest days of reading the masters of business and entrepreneurship, I understood its potential. In addition, I have found analogy and metaphor to be extremely powerful in enhancing understanding when dealing with other cultures. After finishing up in corporate, I worked throughout South East Asia, helping some of the poorest populations develop their business skills and acumen. Often, our conversations suffered educational, language, and/or cultural differences. This could create an impasse. At those times I would introduce a narrative or an analogy to assist people in developing their solution. Why? Because I have found that facts are subjective, at least as far as interpretation at the personal level is concerned. But analogy was often the tool that overcame these limitations by highlighting the process rather than the specific details.

When I was working in a region that was strongly Christian (over 92% of the population), I can recall referring to the parable of the Talents⁶² from the Bible. This was in an attempt to get the local vendors to start thinking about the value of putting their money to work, especially those who already had very little and were naturally afraid to risk their last available funds for business. I remember one particularly devout businesswoman who was re-opening her small store. She was struggling with the realization that she would need to invest her precious coins in fittings, stock, and operational expenses in order to take that step. After discussing her concerns, we talked about that parable, and in particular of the man who simply hid the money that his master gave him, where it did not grow. I was buoyed to see a knowing smile light up her face; then she laughingly told me that she would not (as she put it) ‘bury her gold’ by not spending her money to allow the business to succeed.

We had, of course, already explored the earlier rules. She had already clarified her purpose (Rule #1). In this case, it was survival for her family and the only way to reliably provide food for her children. She also realized that, as a local with previous business experience, she was uniquely qualified (Rule #2) to build the store up. She recognized that she had valuable wisdom due to her previous failures with the shop (Rule #3). She now understood that these things, combined with the skills of those who were supporting her in this courageous move, held the key to her success. This memory remained an important one for me as I faced my own litany of dilemmas after my time in the

⁶² *Matthew 25:14-30*. A master leaves on a long journey, entrusting gold to three servants. When he returns, he asks his servants to account for their decisions regarding their gold. Two have put it to use and are rewarded. One has buried it and squandered any opportunity for it to grow. This servant is punished.

hospital. How could I let my fear stop me from re-launching my business, when this amazing woman had been prepared to (again) risk everything she had, for hers?

The Research behind My Story:

In the West, Aesop had his fables and Socrates (according to Plato) had his teachings. In the East, Confucius had his sayings, while Lao Tzu had his parables. All the major religious teachings contain similar instruments. In fact, the narrative form has been a powerful instrument throughout the history of writing. Even the earliest surviving works of literature, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, shows our preference for narrative. Of course, this does not consider even older cultures who have practiced oral tradition for millennia.

However, an analogy must not be too prescriptive or it will lose the power to relate to a situation. An overly prescriptive approach will give no room for the analogy to be ‘real’ to the listener. Consider when we see someone mimicking another—do we concentrate on the message they are conveying, or will we be distracted by the prescriptive approach itself? Abstraction can be less distracting and therefore a more effective process than adopting the literal. This also highlights the importance of the delivery, particularly at the broader level. For example, consider the positive impacts at the interorganizational level if a leader uses charisma to deliver an analogy in a positive way. Yet that same message might be perceived as negative if it is delivered narcissistically⁶³.

Science has also indicated that analogy engages a different part

⁶³ Gupta & Misangyi, ‘Follow the leader (or not): The influence of peer CEOs’ characteristics on interorganizational imitation’, 1437-1472.

of the brain to normal thought⁶⁴. This means we can access more of the brain in the analogical process. In addition, it allows us to view an otherwise emotional situation in a way that does not appear (or feel) threatening. Without a negative emotional response, we have access to the higher functions of the brain that are responsible for our greatest abilities—including creativity, wisdom, and insight. This can assist in ‘downregulating’ the negative effects and ‘upregulating’ the positive effects of our neurochemicals⁶⁵. Either of these reactions will enhance the executive function of the brain.

In addition, the selection of the analogy is also important. There are many difficulties in transferring what we currently know into new contexts⁶⁶. This can be due to either the complexity⁶⁷ and/or the uniqueness of the learning. It is also suggested that, in order to put the analogy to full use, the listener must first have mastery of the prerequisite skill set(s)⁶⁸ that underpin it (in the same way that using the analogy of a surgeon performing an operation might only be of value to other surgeons). Therefore, it is important that any analogy to be utilized is very familiar to both the coach and the client, or it will not deliver the benefit of higher executive functions.

⁶⁴ Gilead, et al. ‘From mind to matter: neural correlates of abstract and concrete mindsets’, 638-645.

⁶⁵ Glaser, *Conversational Intelligence: How Great Leaders Build Trust and Get Extraordinary Results*, 82-83.

⁶⁶ Day & Goldstone, ‘The Import of Knowledge Export: Connecting Findings and Theories of Transfer of Learning’, 153-176.

⁶⁷ Nokes-Malach & Mestre, ‘Toward a Model of Transfer as Sense-Making’, 184-207.

⁶⁸ Vogelaar & Resing, ‘Changes over time and transfer of analogy-problem solving of gifted and non-gifted children in a dynamic testing setting’, 898-914.

Finally, there is also value in understanding the metaphors or analogies being used. Examining someone's speech will highlight indicators of thought process, preferences and bias. Approaches such as Clean Language and Symbolic Modeling⁶⁹ show just how powerfully embedded such things can be in all of us.

In practice, all of this suggests that it is best to select an analogy with which my clients are extremely familiar. It is also essential to select one that they already have skills in (as we are seeking to engage the part of our mind within which our intuition and creativity reside, not wasting resource in activating our learning centers). Finally, as we are using an analogy to avoid responding emotionally to the situation, we must be careful to choose one that the client can relate to in a positive manner. This will allow us the full benefits of *upregulated* positive neurochemicals in our bodies—capturing the benefits of our biology.

Rule #5: EVERYTHING Is Connected

Background

“Invisible threads are the strongest ties.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

The bleed that resulted in my hospitalization seemed to come out of the blue, at least initially. However, it was the direct result of an earlier injury. A number of years ago, I had been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). At the time I was diagnosed, I recall feeling overwhelmed with emotions when I

⁶⁹ Campbell, *Mining Your Client's Metaphors: A How-To Workbook on Clean Language and Symbolic Modeling*, 2.

was told the news: a combination of fear (based on the limited knowledge I had about the condition), a sweeping sense of relief (that I had not been going crazy and there was a reason for my struggle), and lots of other emotions—all crowding into my body.

While undertaking Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), I also set out to discover as much as I could about the condition. In the process I came across research that indicated that this type of injury was also held physically in the body. However, for some reason, I chose to only work on the cognitive side, as if everything could be resolved just by addressing my manner of thinking.

The situation that resulted was incongruity between mind and body. This was not dissimilar to a driver in control of a vehicle that had its accelerator stuck to the floor. My mind was the driver, and the CBT I undertook allowed me to gain better control of my abilities to drive, and even make better driving decisions. But the vehicle, my body, remained with its engine revving at maximum. Ultimately, it did not matter how much I improved my ability to drive (to anticipate situations, note reactions, or engage other options) because with the accelerator stuck fully open, only misuse of gears and overuse of brakes remained available. Of course, driven this way for so many years, the vehicle had to wear out. Eventually, my body paid that price.

As with other examples, aligning with previous rules was also necessary to move forward. Following my hospitalization, my purpose (Rule #1) was the most basic of all—to survive. The uniqueness of the situation (Rule #2) was underscored by being generally the youngest in the neurosurgery ward. However,

my awareness of the mind-body link suggested that if I HAD acted more wisely (Rule #3), I would have avoided my current situation. Finally, my recovery proved to be a journey (Rule #4) with the destination being a return to who I was before the bleed.

The Research behind My Story:

All around us, there are examples of connection. Science has only started to make inroads into ancient knowledge on this subject. For example, Meditation and stillness—in its modern interpretation of Mindfulness⁷⁰— are once again recognized as an important, indeed a vital, addition to any employee’s activities. And even at the smallest conceivable level, what scientists call the quantum realm, it seems we are connected in ways that we cannot yet fully comprehend⁷¹.

There is an obvious risk in believing that all things are directly connected. If we overextend the concept that everyone is a little bit right (Rule #3) it is as bad as ignoring it completely. Then we will be in danger of confirmation bias, in which we cherry-pick as valuable only those things that directly support our views, minimizing or even ignoring things that challenge them. For this reason, it’s always important to seek disconfirmation of our perceptions—to validate that we have not stumbled into this sort of cognitive bias. As Voltaire famously stated, “Illusion is the first of all pleasure.”

We should also consider the effect of the environment (both external and our own internal thinking). Beyond what has already been discussed in Rule #2, it is possible to encounter

⁷⁰ Khoury, et al. ‘Embodied Mindfulness’, 1160-1171.

⁷¹ <https://markmudford.com.au/quantum-connection/>

risks such as ‘groupthink’⁷², in which an individual may support an option that is harmful to themselves just to align with the group. This also raises the possibility of breaching psychological safety⁷³, as examined by Project Aristotle⁷⁴, in which psychological safety was considered a critical component for making any group effective in their actions.

Other important connections that seem true include the benefits that seemingly unrelated areas provide each other. These stretch from the more obvious examples such as exercise appearing to allow stressed individuals to perform at the performance levels of stress-free colleagues (in mice, at least)⁷⁵, or less obvious links such as how remaining sedentary may negatively impact our personality (once thought to be very difficult to change)⁷⁶, and even to the effects our environment appears to have—not just to our moods and emotions, but now even on our long-term cognitive functions⁷⁷.

In addition, while the process of learning teaches us to connect with the cognitive abilities of the mind, it largely ignores the

⁷² Glaser, *Conversational Intelligence: How Great Leaders Build Trust and Get Extraordinary Results*, 171.

⁷³ <https://markmudford.com.au/psychological-safety-and-the-team/>

⁷⁴ Anderson, ‘The Future Of HR: Part 2: Organizational structure’.

⁷⁵ Miller, et al. ‘Running Exercise Mitigates the Negative Consequences of Chronic Stress on Dorsal Hippocampal Long-term Potentiation in Male Mice’, 28-38.

⁷⁶ Stephan, et al. ‘Physical Activity and Personality Development over Twenty Years: Evidence from Three Longitudinal Samples’, 173-179.

⁷⁷ Dadvand, et al. ‘The Association between Lifelong Greenspace Exposure and 3-Dimensional Brain Magnetic Resonance Imaging in Barcelona Schoolchildren’, 1-8.

‘emotional-engagement’⁷⁸ system that is hardwired into all of us. Porges’ Polyvagal Theory⁷⁹ has been instrumental in shining a light on some of these factors. As a result of recognizing the mind-body connection, research is currently exploring other aspects essential to recovery. These include alternative treatments—utilizing links to eye movement, body movement, and even physical expression⁸⁰. There may also be differences in our own responses based on the way we perceive the injury. For example, we might either passively accept PTSD as a *disorder*, including all the negative connotations this then leads us to. Or we might choose to instead unpack and repack memories and feelings associated with the injury to instead access them as an opportunity for *growth*⁸¹.

Finally, we must also consider connection on the rules themselves. Individually, the rules may form a part of the solution for any client. In reality, they honor the fact that they, themselves, are connected. In this way, no one rule can exist without the others, and each will enhance the other. They operate as a continuous improvement loop, each raising the others to new levels.

In practice, all of this means we need to honor the connections we intuitively know about—not just the connections that appear obvious. This includes all of the rules, where advantages though

⁷⁸ Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, 88.

⁷⁹ Porges, ‘Orienting in a Defensive World: Mammalian Modifications of our Evolutionary Heritage. A Polyvagal Theory’, 301-318. See also ‘The Polyvagal Perspective’, 116-143, by the same author

⁸⁰ Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*.

⁸¹ Joseph, *What Doesn’t Kill Us: The New Psychology of Posttraumatic Growth*.

actioning one will lead to advantages when implementing others.

Because of these connections, and my own personal struggle, I love to coach those who have ‘stayed in the fight’ for longer than they should have. I am passionate about coaching those who have ended up with this type of injury. They have already demonstrated discipline and courage under harrowing circumstances to have ended up with such an injury. However, it’s still vital that survivors remain aware of the less-obvious connections (in particular, the mind-physical connection that I ignored). Regardless of this, my observations of my client’s achievements to date support the likelihood that success is their most likely outcome from any structured program that connects the rules to their wisdom and resilience.

Rule #6: Success Is Not A Solo Journey—Build a Tribe

Background

*“If I have seen further it is by standing
on the shoulders of Giants.”*

Isaac Newton

I have always believed that success is a team sport. When I partner with clients, we join each other’s teams. This is why I named my business “Mark Mudford & Associates.” Because no one succeeds in a vacuum. In the context of Tribe, it is the quality of people, and their diversity of views, that make for the healthiest environments and most powerful solutions.

I am a member of the International Coaching Federation (ICF),

an organization that works tirelessly to ensure the standards in our industry continue to improve. The ICF also provides me the opportunity to connect with an incredible group of fellow coaches who are undertaking their own journey—some who have overcome challenges I may soon face and some who may benefit from my own perspectives and experience. I also have the .coach team, who support me in managing my business approach with the technical and strategic aspects of my online presence. The group also provides me another opportunity to be a part of a cohort with other successful and influential business professionals. Added to this is the wonderful community from Judith E. Glaser's C-IQ, who have continued to support and guide my seemingly insatiable appetite for research in the intersections between business, social sciences, neuroscience, and epigenetics.

Apart from this, I also have an amazing family. My incredible wife, Arlyn, who teaches me something new about the wonder of gentleness and respect every day. I also have those who I call my Personal 'Board of Directors'—a few key people with very unique perspectives and skills who help me fine tune my own skill sets (and yes, even coaches need a coach!) or test my thoughts and perception to co-create with me the incredible content and insights I later share with others.

Of course, the previous rules are always present for Tribe: (Rule #1) by understanding and embodying our own true purpose—which for me is to serve; (Rule #2) through applying our unique skill sets while being respectful of the fact that every client (and every other member of the Tribe) will always be a little bit right—which for me means to energize the uniqueness of all, yet also seek out our common understandings; (Rule #3) via accessing the collective wisdom

of the Tribe, which clients have found particularly powerful during co-creation conversations; (Rule #4) to be dedicated to continuing our individual and collective *journey* together, sharing our experiences along the way; and (Rule #5) never losing sight of the fact that everything is connected (even in ways that science is only now learning to measure).

In many ways, this final rule also delivers the power of Tribe to all the other rules. It amplifies them, allowing them to multiply benefits that could not be achieved alone. Through Tribe alone, we have morphed the business from consultancy into a successful business coaching service. Our success has been overwhelming, and I am humbled every day by the amazing impacts and responses we achieve.

The Research behind My Story:

As explored when discussing Rule #2, the study of Epigenetics looks at how the environment changes every person in a very individual way. As a result, every person is unique in ability, thought, and behavior. As individuals, we are also in a constant state of flux as we release the potential of the group and then begin anew to further develop one other. These facts on their own highlight the value of Tribe.

Interconnection at the biological level, also touched on throughout the Rules, is further supported by the C-IQ theory of the multiple brains⁸², now updated to 6 by the inclusion of the gut. Both my experience with PTSD and the C-IQ approach support the concept that nothing may occur in isolation. This also suggests that, because we are already social

⁸² Glaser, *Conversational Intelligence: How Great Leaders Build Trust and Get Extraordinary Results*, 82-83.

creatures operating within a social structure, we are also not designed to succeed in isolation.

The benefits of socialization are heavily at play here. We know that socialization has many positive physical effects such as improving physical health⁸³ or even overcoming injuries such as PTSD⁸⁴. It has been linked to improving the enjoyment of experiences⁸⁵. Even business success in overseas markets can be strengthened by this rule⁸⁶. It is important to remember that the individual gifts of every member, including gratefulness, can be enhanced this way. The resulting advantages at the individual level then further benefit the Tribe.

In practice, this means that the Tribe brings together the skills of the individual to a benefit greater than the sum. This is then amplified further by the associated benefits that we humans, as tribal creatures, then provide through things such as encouragement, guidance, and sacrifice.

Conclusion

I did not write this chapter as a self-appointed expert. We are all unique. We all have greatness within us. My purpose is to serve,

⁸³ Cohut, *Socialization: How does it benefit mental and physical health?* Available at: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321019.php>

⁸⁴ Rodriguez, et al. 'The Effect of a Service Dog on Salivary Cortisol Awakening Response in a Military Population with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)', 202-210.

⁸⁵ Caprariello & Reis, 'To do, to have, or to share? Valuing experiences over material possessions depends on the involvement of others', 199-215.

⁸⁶ Gould, et al. 'Opportunities and opportunism with high-status B2B partners in emerging economies', 684-694.

and it is my humble hope that this chapter may give someone a gem of insight on their next step or a glimmer of light in the darkness.

These six rules are connected and promise to deliver their own benefits, multiplied again by the benefits of Tribe. They have allowed me to keep balance in a world that felt somehow more chaotic after my discharge from the hospital. In fact, they are so valuable that they form the basis of every coaching conversation I now have. Others have also reported experiences similar to mine in clarity of direction and resilience in the face of our often-ambiguous world. Clients tell me these rules are at the root of many of their successes. Anyone who has embodied these rules has already begun that journey to success. A journey that will deliver them true alignment with their values and beliefs.

Let's finish as we started—with the six rules.

Rule #1: Let Purpose Be Your Context: Find your true purpose, connect with it, and then allow it to drive your business to new heights.

Rule #2: Everyone Is Unique...and Usually a Little Bit Right: Recognize and celebrate your contribution to the world. Realize that your staff and customers bring a uniqueness that deserves to be honored. Embodying this knowledge will harness your business.

Rule #3: Wisdom Is the Result of Experience, Not Age: Revel in your experiences, and realize that the knowledge you have gained from your 'failures' or 'catastrophes' is actually your greatest asset. Once this is clear, be prepared to use those learnings to unleash your success!

Rule #4: Analogy Gives Clarity without Preconception:

Remember that an analogy will be more powerful than a prescriptive solution. So, first, find the right analogy and then use it to improve your situation in business and life... and the lives of everyone around you.

Rule #5: EVERYTHING is Connected:

Realize the power of small improvements, and understand its impact on your business and your life. Create a positive environment where you can best support your staff and serve your customers.

Rule #6: Success Is Not A Solo Journey—Build a Tribe:

This is the golden rule. It simply states that you cannot succeed in isolation. Build your team with those you trust. Build it with those who have the skills and experience that you lack, or the support that you require. And get ready to see your business explode!

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Mark Mudford

After a very successful career in corporate life, Mark had taken all his learnings and experience to build up his own successful business. Overcoming various challenges, he was able to pursue two of his deepest passions – to make a difference in people's lives and provide for others. Then one day, he woke up in a hospital. Missing all memory from the preceding weeks, it would be many months before he could return to his business. By that time, he HAD no business. Everything he had built up, over such a long time, was now gone – seemingly, in an instant.

By that stage, Mark's career had spanned many years. From years in the military and then security industry, followed by nearly a decade in senior positions in corporate before moving into the not-for-profit sector—all before finally moving into business for himself. Throughout his career, his development had also been enabled by a strong scholarly focus that saw him the recipient of multiple awards for Undergraduate, Honors, and Masters levels degrees as well as significant recognition in more practical/technical courses.

After tragedy struck, he decided to tap more completely into his own experience and knowledge base. He also realized that his expertise had previously been assisting business professionals in

difficult circumstances, which was now exactly where he found himself. With the thought of ‘physician, heal thy self’ echoing in his mind, he set out to action his own wisdom. And he began to truly experience the amazing power of growth from adversity.

Today, he coaches around this exact process, supported by the latest research in the sciences and the areas of business leadership and entrepreneurship.

The best part? Every one of his clients is able to make the breakthroughs that uniquely apply to them.

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