

**THINK
THIS,
NOT
THAT**

THINK

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NOT

~~**THAT**~~

12 Mindshifts to Break Through
Limiting Beliefs and Become
Who You Were Born to Be

JOSH AXE



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Think This, Not That

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INTRODUCTION

When I was ten years old, I started spending summers with my grandparents. They owned a sixty-acre recreational campground in Lima, Ohio, that my grandfather Howard operated. It was an outdoor adventurer's paradise. An assortment of waterslides, diving boards, and rafts accessorized a big lake. The property also boasted an outdoor basketball court, tennis courts, putter golf, and almost fifty RV and tent campsites. While my grandfather Howard helped coordinate guests on family trips or retreats or reunions, I disappeared to catch frogs in the woods, cruise the property on a golf cart, and refine my cannonball technique in the lake.

My first summer at Winona Lake Water Park and Campground, my grandparents allowed me to run wild—and boy, did I. But after a couple of weeks, my grandfather wanted to see me grow and take on some responsibility. So he sat me down one day, put his sun-weathered hand on my shoulder, and said, “Josh, I love you so much, and I love that you’re having so much fun. I also wanted you to know that I could really use your help around here. It takes a lot of work to run a place like this.” That day, he taught me how to mow the grass and clean up at the campsites. Over time, he gave me additional responsibilities, and I really felt like I was contributing to the success of this magical place he’d created.

As I think about this impactful season today, I realize that my grandfather Howard was the first person who taught me how to *think this, not that*. Through his loving and challenging words, I learned the importance

of not just having fun and being happy but also serving others and working hard to build and maintain something meaningful.

Our mindset is the ultimate catalyst for change; it's what propels us forward. It's also what can hold us back. I carried this lesson with me when I became a physician. As a functional medicine practitioner, I observed the incredible power of mindset in my patients' lives. While I firmly believe in the healing potential of food as medicine, I discovered that nothing could match the transformative impact of mindset medicine. Not only did I teach my patients to "eat this, not that," but I also helped them understand the transforming power of the mind in how to "think this, not that." The results were outstanding. The patients who were committed to my plan of care and exhibited an all-in, positive, and hopeful mindset reversed disease, lost weight, had more energy, and slept better than they ever had. The patients who were stuck in limiting beliefs remained stuck.

When I transitioned into the entrepreneurial space and built multiple multimillion-dollar businesses, I noticed that when team members pursued their goals while anchored in the right mindset, they became more effective and experienced significant growth. As my employees' mindsets strengthened, so did the business. The relationship between mindset and a "masterpiece life" is clear: right thinking is a path to purpose and awakening your potential.

The genesis of becoming the person you were born to be is in your mind because wrong thinking will keep you from becoming that person. The reason people don't enjoy meaningful relationships, apply for their dream jobs, try something again after they've failed, or execute their five-year plan is not because they don't have the skills or the potential to succeed; it's because limiting beliefs have thwarted their momentum. These roadblocks are nothing more than lies they've been told or have told themselves.

Have you ever wanted something very badly—to build a great marriage, start your own business, write a book, be part of a meaningful community—but you eventually gave up on it? Your initial drive was

strong, but over time, it dwindled. Maybe now all you can think is how it's not going to work, you're too young or old, you're in it alone, or it's never going to be as good as you want it to be. A mindset of false narratives will keep you stuck, locked in a prison of unpursued dreams and unreachd goals. Life may be bearable on this level, but it's also stale and unfulfilling.

The good news is, it doesn't have to stay this way.

I've spent the past decade studying mindset, including time as a student earning my Master of Science in Leadership at Johns Hopkins, as a physician helping patients overcome physical and psychological challenges, and as an entrepreneur leading and mentoring teams to grow. I've collected here what I've learned and experienced—as I continue to do both—to help you begin to think, and live, at a higher level.

In this book, I have curated twelve mental barriers that obstruct personal growth and hinder success. Each chapter explores one of these barriers, peeling back the layers of false narratives that hold us captive, and introduces a transformative mindset shift—a *mindshift*—that can liberate us. By replacing limiting beliefs with empowering truths, we can break free from the chains of self-doubt, optimize our potential, and embark on a journey of personal transformation.

If you're plagued with uncertainty and feel stuck, these mindshifts will help you break through your limiting beliefs, grow beyond your preconceived boundaries, and unlock the greatest version of yourself. Through science, stories, and strategies, each chapter will provide you with the tools it takes to create lasting change and live a life beyond your wildest dreams.

Are you ready to upgrade your thinking, embrace new possibilities, and become the person you were born to be? The journey starts now.

Welcome to *Think This, Not That*.



MINDSHIFT 1

CREATE A BREAKTHROUGH BY UNLIMITING YOUR BELIEFS

Right before the bell rang, my freshman English teacher peered over her desk, looked straight at me, and asked, “Josh, would you stay after class for a minute?”

“Sure,” I said, nervous and unsure.

Once all the other students had scrambled to their next class, it was just Mrs. Nobel and me.

“Josh,” my teacher began, “what do you want to do when you’re older? Do you want to go to college?”

My shoulders straightened. “Actually, I want to become a doctor or physical therapist. I want to do something that helps get people healthy.” I was confident of this answer because of my mother’s breast cancer diagnosis the year before. Watching her fight this devastating disease had ignited in me a deep interest in health and wellness.

Without missing a beat, my teacher laughed out loud.

Let me reiterate—*Mrs. Nobel laughed out loud*. Looking back, while the response was unsettling, I can understand her cynicism. Mrs. Nobel

had just handed back midterm papers, and I'd gotten an F, making my overall grade in the class a D-. My grades in all my classes were mediocre at best.

After her laughter subsided, Mrs. Nobel leaned in. "Look, Josh, you'll never be able to get into med school, let alone any school, with these grades. My daughter has her doctorate in physical therapy, and she had to have a 3.8 GPA to get into school. With your GPA, no school is going to let you in."

I don't remember much of the conversation after that. I do remember standing there feeling utterly incapable. I felt foolish for sharing my hopes and dreams only to have them cut down. *Why even try?* I wondered. *What's the point?*

My confidence had been spiraling for a while. I'd always had a hard time in school. Paying attention was my biggest challenge. A few months after this chat with Mrs. Nobel, a doctor diagnosed me with ADHD, which reinforced my insecurities. I remember thinking, *Oh no! Mrs. Nobel was right. I'm actually medically not smart.* At that point, my main goal was just to get by. I did manage to bump my D average to a C average—only because I didn't want to infuriate my dad, and it was required to play sports. I graduated high school with a dismal 2.3 GPA, and the fire I'd had to pursue a career in health and wellness had been completely extinguished.



How many times over the years has someone doubted you or said you weren't capable? How many times did you believe them? It's shocking to think how much power we've given to other people's views of us as we've internalized their feedback.

What is something you've believed about yourself that has kept you from pursuing your dreams or becoming the person you were born to be? When someone you love and trust, like a parent, coach, or teacher, says something that dismisses your potential or overthrows your confidence, it

can be discouraging, even crushing. It's not uncommon to give strangers this power as well. One negative comment on social media directed at you from a random person can prompt you to question your value and create a belief that sticks in your psyche.

Maybe you are your own worst critic, constantly doubting yourself. Are you afraid to move toward a goal because you failed at something a few years back, and your own words echo in your mind?

Regardless of where they originally came from, negative beliefs can become the soundtrack of your life and then start capping your potential and restricting your growth. They leave no room for transformation. When left unchallenged, they will keep you from becoming the person you were born to be.

When you *believe* you are capable of very little, you *become* capable of very little. As Henry Ford once said (and as my dad often told me when I was growing up), "Whether you think you can or you can't, you're right."

THINK THIS: I can because . . .
NOT THAT: I can't because . . .

What Are Beliefs, and Where Do They Come From?

Beliefs are more powerful than most of us can imagine. They may be the single greatest determining factor of what your future will look like. They play a role in whether you become healthy or unhealthy, enjoy loving relationships or remain stuck in a pattern of loneliness, live with significance or wander without purpose. Good or bad, our beliefs influence every part of our lives.

What is a belief? A belief is a mental certainty that something is true.¹ Beliefs can be positive or negative and generally pertain to three areas: (1) self, (2) other people, and (3) the world. Here are some examples.

Self

- I'm not smart.
- I don't deserve to fall in love.
- I'm doing the best I can.
- I'm honest and trustworthy.

Other People

- People are out to get me.
- People don't change.
- People are good for the most part.
- Every human being has value.

World

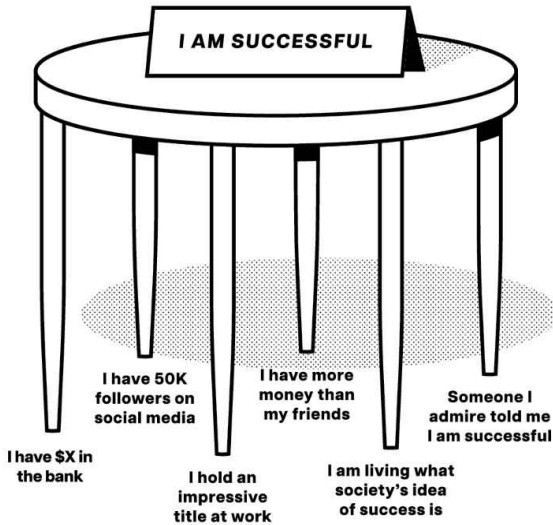
- The world is not safe.
- The system is rigged against me.
- What goes around comes around.
- Good always wins.

A belief, whether true or false, can change the outcome of your life. Say you have a belief that people are untrustworthy. As a result, you put your guard up and keep people at a distance to avoid rejection and pain. This behavior will perpetuate anxiety and stress around interaction with others and build a barrier between you and any significant relationships. Ultimately, this one belief will prevent you from leading a fulfilling life with meaningful connection.

Beliefs come from many places—upbringing, education, experience, relationships, society, the media. You can connect them to sources that reinforce them, just as a tabletop is connected to its legs. The tabletop represents your belief. The legs propping up the tabletop represent the events, circumstances, and interactions that support your belief. The more legs you have, the stronger your belief.

A mindshift we'll discuss in the next chapter is that who you

become—not what you accomplish—is what matters most. Consider for a moment the belief “I am successful” and all the reinforcing factors that, in your mind, might validate that belief.



The supporting legs in this graphic show what many of us consider supports for a belief about one’s success. Why do we connect these factors to this belief?

Frequently, we believe things because everyone else does (or seems to) or because a so-called expert said so. “Social proof” is a psychological phenomenon that depicts our reliance on the opinions of others to inform our own.² If it seems everyone else is buying into a product or an idea, that’s a solid enough reason to follow suit. The same is true of a well-known influencer or expert who publishes their opinion. Most people will take their word as gold simply because they admire the person or because of their credentials. Social proof is not always reliable, however, just as following the crowd—without thinking for yourself and forming your own beliefs based on facts—can end up hurting you and limiting your potential.

For example, we now know that smoking is detrimental to health, but it only started attracting negative attention in the early 1920s. As the public became aware of the harmful long-term consequences of smoking, tobacco companies sensed a threat to their bottom line. Knowing that the public trusted physicians, the companies created cigarette ads featuring actors dressed up as doctors who neutralized the negativity. Tobacco companies fooled consumers into thinking cigarettes weren't bad—or *that* bad—for your health. That's the thing about beliefs: they can be biased, misleading, or outright untrue, which is why they demand scrutiny.

There was a time in my life when I believed people couldn't change. I thought they were set in their ways, mostly in negative patterns. If someone was selfish, I believed they would stay that way. If they were constantly late to meetings, I was sure I could never count on them to be on time. I began to realize that this belief wasn't true, and it was getting in the way of my development as a leader and my ability to positively influence others.

To deal with it, I first had to ask, Where did this belief come from? After much reflection, I began to recognize the legs that supported it. One had developed when a respected colleague told me, "People are hard to change." Another had appeared and fortified my belief after an experience with a person who refused to change their toxic behavior. Regardless of my experience with particular people who didn't change, my belief about *all people* wasn't serving me well at all.

Next, I needed to replace my *false belief* with a *true belief*. I reminded myself that people *do* change. I sought out and read stories of people from all walks of life—from entrepreneurs to athletes to scientists—who experienced personal growth and transformation. This evidence reinforced my new belief. Eventually, I replaced that false belief with the truth that people can and do change. With this new, unlimited belief, I was more motivated to lead and influence others, knowing that my actions could have a meaningful impact.

You've heard stories about people who have proved the critics wrong.

(Maybe that someone was you!) At some point those people had to think seriously about the messages they received from others instead of simply absorbing them, and they had to determine for themselves whether those messages were true.

As you pay more attention to beliefs, you'll notice the power they have. Unlimited beliefs ultimately improve your life and others'. They inspire a more positive mood and strengthen your approach to your relationships, career, and life overall. Limiting beliefs, of course, do the opposite.

If you're convinced that you'll never change, you'll never get ahead, or you'll never break that habit, I need to warn you—it's time to challenge that belief or you might get exactly what you believe.

The Power of Beliefs

According to an article published by the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, the average person may produce fifty thousand thoughts a day, and 95 percent of those thoughts are on repeat.³ What if some of those thoughts are untrue? What if you are lying to yourself about something day after day?

In the classic book *The Brothers Karamazov*, Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote, "Above all, do not lie to yourself. A man who lies to himself and listens to his own lie comes to a point where he does not discern any truth either in himself or anywhere around him, and thus falls into disrespect towards himself and others."⁴

As the brilliant Dostoevsky emphasized, when we accept a lie, we begin to lose the ability to discern truth. In the process of self-deception, we weaken our character and diminish the quality of our lives.

Many of us are led to believe that our present situation or our destiny is directly shaped by an event that happened to us, but that's not true. It's not *what happened* to us that dictates our identity or our lot in life; it's *what we believe* about that event and about ourselves that determines our destiny. Our belief about what has occurred is even more important than

the event itself. The event may lie in our past, but our perception of that event can impact our entire future.

I'm sure you've heard of the *placebo effect*, the phenomenon that happens when a person's physical health seems to improve after taking a treatment that appears to be real but in truth has zero therapeutic quality, like a sugar pill.

The placebo effect was quantified by a professor of anesthesiology at Harvard Medical School named Dr. Henry Beecher. While Dr. Beecher was tending to wounded soldiers overseas during World War II, morphine began to run low. The doctor started injecting men with saline solution instead of the powerful painkiller, out of necessity, then noticed something fascinating. Some of the men who received the saline solution had the same amount of pain relief as the men who had received the morphine. When he came back to the States, Dr. Beecher studied this phenomenon and published his findings in a landmark paper that revealed how one-third of patients in these studies showed a significant response to placebo. This paper set the foundation for the modern clinical trial, which helps us determine if a drug really works.⁵

Dr. John Kelley, deputy director of Harvard Medical School's program studying placebos, noted, "Just *imagining* something is happening is enough to activate those portions of the brain associated with that thought, or worry, or pain."⁶ This is true of placebo as well as *nocebo*, placebo's evil twin. Chances are you're not as familiar with this term. The *nocebo* effect happens when a person experiences negative or unpleasant effects from being told they may receive a negative outcome from a medical intervention. Negative side effects appear because of negative expectations.

A patient who had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and was in a wheelchair once visited my clinic. She presented with serious inflammatory symptoms including muscle pain, brain fog, and fatigue. After examining her and conducting a full workup, I wasn't convinced she had multiple sclerosis. I noticed some of her symptoms overlapped with those relating to mold exposure. I also found it interesting that the neurological

symptoms that put her in a wheelchair began right after she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. I suggested she get a second opinion, which confirmed my suspicion. Turns out, she had been misdiagnosed. She didn't have multiple sclerosis; she had mold toxicity. Within a few days of this realization, she saw a miraculous improvement and no longer needed her wheelchair. Her new belief acted as a sort of medicine for the mind. It's staggering to think how our physical bodies react to something that isn't even true.

One case of the nocebo effect had a devastating outcome. A man in the 1970s was diagnosed with end-stage liver cancer. Doctors told him he had only a few months to live. Sure enough, the man died within the predicted time frame. The results of his autopsy were shocking, though. While there was a small tumor in the man's liver, the disease was localized and not yet life-threatening. The tumor certainly did not warrant the short amount of time the man had been predicted to live. The doctors had been wrong, but the man still died.⁷ Why? Classic case of the nocebo effect. Negative expectations prompted negative results.

Can you think of an area in life in which you are living out the nocebo effect? What limiting belief consumes and affects your outlook on your future, relationships, self-confidence, or willingness to risk and try new things?

The stories you tell yourself are powerful. As life coach Tony Robbins once tweeted, "The only thing that's keeping you from getting what you want is the story you keep telling yourself."⁸ It's time to rewrite your life story from an empowering perspective.

Memory Transplant

After graduating high school with a 2.3 GPA, I learned of an opportunity offered through a summer program at the University of Kentucky. If you could maintain a 3.0 GPA during the program and meet the other admittance requirements, you could be accepted into the school.

I'll never forget what happened in English 101 in my freshman year of college, when I worked on my first paper. For the first time in a long time, I applied myself and worked hard on an assignment. When my English teacher, Mrs. Williams, returned my paper, it felt like *déjà vu*. I was mentally transported back to my high school freshman English class with Mrs. Nobel—I expected Mrs. Williams to announce her disappointment and express doubt that I'd finish out the summer school program.

Instead, as she handed my paper back, she said, "Josh, I was really impressed with your paper. You got an A+, the highest grade in the class."

I stood there, shell-shocked.

"Have you ever thought about becoming a writer or at least an English major?"

"Uh, no."

"Well," Mrs. Williams said with a smile, "you did a great job. Keep it up!"

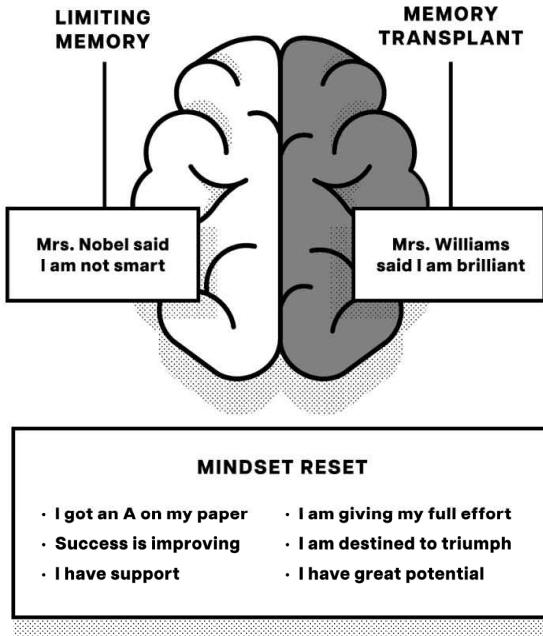
In that moment, I had what I will call a "memory transplant." I became aware of a *limiting* belief and traded it for an *unlimited* belief. I thought back to what Mrs. Nobel had said. *She had to be wrong. Mrs. Williams is right.* And instead of thinking, *I'm not smart. There's no point in even trying,* I started thinking, *I am smart. I can do this.*

When a certain memory leads to a limiting belief (as in my case with Mrs. Nobel), it is as though you have an organ in your body that is full of disease, like a kidney riddled with kidney stones or a heart plagued with clogged arteries. These malfunctioning organs wreak havoc on your entire body and can threaten your very life. Your memories, beliefs, and mindsets are no different. One single limiting belief can choke your dreams and future. A memory transplant is the moment you replace the limiting belief with an unlimited belief, like what happened when I received Mrs. Williams's encouraging words.

After my conversation with Mrs. Williams, I started applying myself in school with the goal of finding a career path that would help people get healthy. I finished the summer program with a 3.5, got accepted into the University of Kentucky, and maintained a high GPA throughout my undergrad program.

The momentum swelled. I started to believe in myself and threw off the limiting beliefs that were holding me back.

I continued my education to earn a doctorate in chiropractic medicine, founded and led a health and supplement company that hit the Inc. 5000 list, earned a master's degree in leadership from a top-ten academic institution with a 3.9 GPA, and am now writing my seventh book. Best of all, I am enjoying a wonderful family life, and I am proud of the person I am becoming along the way. None of this would have happened if I hadn't let go of my limiting beliefs and replaced them with unlimited beliefs.



Many people today are living in critical condition, their potential unrealized and unfulfilled because of unchallenged limiting beliefs. You may be one of them. If so, it's time to create your own memory transplant to help you become the person you are meant to be. Sometimes a

significant event or conversation naturally sparks a memory transplant. Other times you must make the choice to do it on your own—which this book can help you do.

Go back to a moment when you stopped believing in yourself, or pinpoint when your false narrative about others or the world started. What is that memory? Where were you? Who were you with? What happened?

Today, you can make a memory transplant by creating a new memory that replaces the old one. What day is it? Where are you? Are you sitting on a crowded subway? At home with your dog, curled up on your couch? Remember this moment. Let today be the day you deactivate the power of the limiting belief that has kept you stuck.

If this feels overwhelming, don't worry. We'll walk through the process together.

As a word of encouragement, I'll tell you that as I've continued to confront limiting beliefs in my journey, I've become more courageous, gained more wisdom, and experienced more enriching relationships than I ever imagined. But it started when I decided to change the beliefs that were undermining my potential and my future. *Deciding to change* is key.

Identify Your Limiting Beliefs

The first step in creating a memory transplant is identifying what your limiting beliefs are. Everyone has them in some area of their lives, whether related to career, relationships, faith, finances, or health. Do any of these thoughts sound familiar?

I am not strong/smart/witty/caring/educated/talented enough.

I am too loud/wild/sensitive/passionate.

People are always trying to get something from me.

Nothing good happens to people in my family.

I've missed too many opportunities, and the doors have been closed.

In a nutshell, limiting beliefs are excuses that keep you from living your best life. Limiting beliefs often fall into three categories:

- **“I’M NOT ENOUGH.”** People who struggle with this limiting belief feel like a fraud, not because of merit but because of some faulty perception. Also known as *impostor syndrome*, this is a common phenomenon successful people like Michelle Obama, Emma Watson, Sheryl Sandberg, and Howard Schultz have experienced.⁹ Impostor syndrome is often associated with depression, anxiety, and social dysfunction.¹⁰
- **“WHAT I’VE DONE IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH.”** Often, a statement like this stems from perfectionism. It’s about striving to reach unrealistic or unachievable standards and basing your worth on whether you can reach those standards—and when you don’t, it’s the end of the world. Perfection, of course, is an illusion. Striving for an illusion, and inevitably falling short, leads to stress, burnout, fatigue, and low self-esteem.
- **“I WILL NEVER HAVE ENOUGH OF SOMETHING.”** If you are convinced you will never have enough money, work, opportunity, love, or anything of value, you will develop a mentality of scarcity. You are constantly comparing what you have to others and always fall short. Who you are is tied up in how much you have—and it is never enough. You will hoard whatever you do have and engage in self-protective behaviors that will limit your potential, growth, and success.

Albert Ellis, a clinical psychologist from Columbia University, developed a tool called the ABCDE model to overcome his own limiting beliefs because he was incredibly afraid of talking to women.¹¹ It worked so well that he later used this same technique to help his patients overcome limiting beliefs associated with low self-worth, shame, and guilt. The ABCDE model helps people break free of false psychological perceptions.

ACTIVATING EVENT OR MEMORY: What triggered the limiting belief? (For me, it was my conversation with Mrs. Nobel.)

BELIEF: What is the limiting belief formed from the event or memory? (*I'm not smart.*)

CONSEQUENCES: What will result from continuing to believe the limiting belief? (*I will fail my class. I will not succeed. I will not even try.*)

DISPUTATION: How can you dispute the limiting belief and take a more rational approach? (*I can study harder and take more time to learn. I have succeeded when I've applied myself.*)

EFFECTS: The limiting belief has turned into a rational belief and has a healthier and more positive outcome. (*I get better grades. I improve my skills.*)

Studies indicate that this technique has tremendous benefits for lowering psychological stress. It reduces burnout at work and school, helps people overcome depression and anxiety, and improves job fulfillment and engagement. It's now being used in sports psychology to help athletes perform at a higher level.¹²

Spend some time right now thinking of three to five limiting beliefs about yourself that are stopping you from becoming who you could be. They might be one of the top three mentioned on the previous page. If you're not sure, consider what thoughts have kept you stuck in your personal growth, relationships, career, or health.

Here are some ways to identify whether a belief is limiting:

- Does the belief limit your potential or help you improve?
- Is it good for you and everyone around you?
- Is the story you're telling yourself completely true?
- What do the wisest and most successful people in the world believe about this?

Choose one category in the following table, and, in an empty space, jot down the lies that are limiting your potential:

My Limiting Beliefs

CAREER	RELATIONSHIPS	FAITH	FINANCES	HEALTH
Example: I could never get that promotion because I'm not smart enough.	Example: I don't deserve to be loved.	Example: God can't heal me.	Example: No one in our family has ever made money working for themselves.	Example: I'll never lose weight.

If you're unsure of whether a limiting belief carries weight, consider the cost if you continue to believe it. What is going to change a year from now if you continue to believe that you will never be successful or find love? Staying fixated on what's not possible will increase frustrations and result in a higher chance of failure. Focusing on the beliefs that lead to a healthier outcome will result in a healthier future.

Create Unlimited Beliefs

Now that you *recognize* your limiting beliefs, your next step is to *replace* them with unlimited beliefs. When you adopt a mindshift of unlimited beliefs, you unlock the door to becoming the person you were born to be.

Here's what this looks like:

LIMITING BELIEF: I'm too old to go back to college.

UNLIMITED BELIEF: I can get an education at any age.

THINK THIS, NOT THAT

LIMITING BELIEF: I've made too many mistakes.

UNLIMITED BELIEF: I can't change the past, but I can choose how to move forward.

LIMITING BELIEF: I can't become successful, because I have a learning disability.

UNLIMITED BELIEF: I can increase my potential in every area of life by growing my skills and in character.

Perhaps you have an easy time recognizing a limiting belief but struggle with finding a new belief to replace it. If this is you, think of someone you admire, someone who is thriving in the area of your life in which you're stuck. Maybe it's a mentor who's been happily married for thirty years or an entrepreneur who not only has experienced financial success but has channeled that prosperity into philanthropic impact. How have they produced the results you want in your life? Consider their way of thinking. This might mean asking them about their mindset, listening to someone else interview them, or reading their memoir. Zero in on their unlimited beliefs, and see if you can use them as a model for your own.

Then review the limiting beliefs you wrote down on page 15. Take a moment to determine alternative unlimited beliefs. What best serves you and your future instead? Write those down in the space below.

Unlimited Beliefs

CAREER	RELATIONSHIPS	FAITH	FINANCES	HEALTH
Example: I can work hard, dream big, and strive for what I want.	Example: I can be a loving person in a loving relationship.	Example: God has a plan and a purpose for my healing.	Example: I can earn money, save, and invest to build a secure future.	Example: I am responsible for my health.

Tips for Transforming Beliefs

Swapping a limiting belief for an unlimited one is not an overnight process. It will take energy, time, and some practice to cultivate your new belief. You'll need to do this over and over until the new belief becomes a habit.

Write it down somewhere you'll regularly see it. Put it on a mirror, your coffee machine, your water bottle, or a phone app. Say it out loud—do this often, especially when you hear the echo of your limiting beliefs. The more you see and voice your unlimited beliefs, the more you'll begin to absorb them.

After my memory transplant and adoption of unlimited beliefs, the limiting beliefs still crept into my mind. Every time I heard, *Josh, you're not smart*, I fought it off with the facts that I was capable and that I could learn what I didn't know. At one point, I even put the A+ paper Mrs. Williams gave me on my bathroom mirror so I saw it every day. I repeated these habits until the limiting belief lost its power over me.

A mindshift toward unlimited beliefs is also a progression, not a destination. After my conversation with my college teacher Mrs. Williams, I could have continued the false narrative that I wasn't smart, that I couldn't write, that college was just a way of following the crowd, but something about that moment stirred in me a truth I clung to. It leveled up my confidence. That one belief shattered a ceiling, which then shattered another ceiling, and so on. This shift is what creates a pattern of unlimited beliefs.

You don't have to know every single limiting and unlimited belief of yours right now to create a future of great potential. All you need to do is change *one belief at a time*.

Pleasure and Pain

One way to motivate yourself is to understand how pain and pleasure drive beliefs. Sigmund Freud developed the principle that human beings are driven to both avoid pain and pursue pleasure.¹³ Everything we do in life comes from our desire to do one or the other. Most of us get more satisfaction out of avoiding immediate pain than gaining immediate pleasure.

When I was in high school, I kept a C average to dodge being disciplined by my father. The pleasure of the inner satisfaction of getting higher grades wasn't on my radar. After my memory transplant—thanks to Mrs. Williams—I forced myself to think of what was possible if I nurtured a more positive belief in my ability and my future. I linked *pleasure* to the goal of creating a career in which I could help people live healthier and more meaningful lives. And that helped override the *pain* of my limiting beliefs that I wasn't smart and I shouldn't even try.

Think about the pleasure you can associate with your new, unlimited belief. If you believe you can begin to make better food choices, think of how much more time you can spend playing with your kids without feeling tired or out of breath, or what it would feel like to get your blood test results back within the normal range and not need medication, or how great it'd be to pick up the new sport or hobby you've been wanting to do.

The more you think about the pleasure of what's possible, the more motivated you will be to keep tuning into that new belief. You'll be able to watch the cycle of progression of how beliefs “become your thoughts, your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, your values become your destiny.”¹⁴

Take Action

There's one caveat when it comes to discerning your beliefs. You are not the things you *say* you will do; you are what you *actually do*. Beliefs are more than your feelings or deepest convictions. They align with your behavior; they demand action.

If you tell me your family is the most important thing in the world to you, but you log more hours in the office on the weekends than at home and are distracted when you are with your family, your claim is not accurate. The adage “Actions speak louder than words” is famous for a reason—it’s true!

What’s Possible

When former Denny’s waitress Jamie Kern Lima began to pursue her dream of creating her own makeup brand, inspired by her own journey of dealing with rosacea, she struggled with two major limiting beliefs. One was that she wasn’t good enough to succeed.¹⁵ Another was that marriage would keep her from fulfilling her potential.¹⁶

When she met and fell in love with Paulo, a fellow student in grad school, Lima wasn’t interested in becoming a wife; she wanted to build an empire. She wrote in her bestselling book *Believe IT*, “I grew up believing that men hold women back, and that belief transitioned into the conviction that I didn’t want to get married.”¹⁷

Yet she was so in love with Paulo that, sensing deeply that she belonged with him, she surprised herself by answering yes when he proposed. “My intuition [to marry Paulo] shocked the heck out of me. . . . I set aside my fear and doubt to follow it.”¹⁸ Together, they worked on the business plan for her company while traveling for their honeymoon in 2007.

As she worked to pursue her dream, she was met with a barrage of criticism that added to her self-doubt and insecurity about her own skin issues. One potential investor told her that no one would want to buy makeup from someone who looked like her. The statement hit hard. But it also ignited a challenge to get her mind right.

“While the logical part of my mind wondered if he was right,” Lima said, “I felt this overwhelming gut instinct that he was wrong. And I also knew the journey of proving that would hinge first on me learning to truly believe it for myself.”¹⁹ While Lima worked to build her brand,

she was determined to believe that she could be the woman, the wife, the mother, and the entrepreneur she was born to be. In her words, “I decided to believe that I could no matter what anyone else said.”²⁰

Lima’s company, IT Cosmetics, is now one of the most well-known beauty brands in the US. In 2016, L’Oréal bought it for \$1.2 billion. Lima stayed on as CEO of her brand and became the first female CEO in L’Oréal’s 108-year history.²¹ Today she’s a bestselling author after stepping down as CEO in 2019. Lima says, “I’m just scratching the surface of what I have to give and what I have to do.”²² The future is unlimited for Lima because of the powerful beliefs that drive her.

What could be possible if you identify and eliminate your limiting beliefs? You may have to sit for a while and think about it, and that’s okay. But if you choose not to identify and eliminate your limiting beliefs, someday you will likely wonder, *What if?*

What if I had pursued my dream?

What if I had developed the specific gift I have?

What if I started being more vulnerable in my relationships?

Imagine all the good that’s possible instead of setting yourself up for regret.

Before we close this chapter, I want to tell you about one more mental exercise, one I use to help people get unstuck in business and life. It’s called the “10x Strategy,” and it entails visualizing what you want—but ten times bigger.

One of my clients, John, was an entrepreneur who held a limiting belief that the more he grew his business, the more work and less freedom he would have. I showed him the opposite was actually true. I told him that when I started my clinic, I was in charge of everything. Not only was I examining and educating patients, but I was also marking up X-rays, doing blood work, and even answering the phones and making Costco runs. The bigger the clinic became, however, the more employees I was able to hire, which allowed me to narrow my focus to leading my staff and treating patients. When John understood the possibilities that come with growth, he was able to remedy his limiting

belief and imagine his business growing ten times—which is exactly what happened!

It's your turn. Sit for a moment and "10x" what you want out of life. What could your life look like if you moved the needle ten times further than where it is now? The marriage of your wildest dreams? A million-dollar company? To write the book that's been a blank document on your computer for the past five years? Break away from the limiting beliefs that tie down your life and your future. Then start believing in what's possible and keep building, one belief at a time.

Maybe your life is not what you once dreamed it would be. You've made mistakes. Maybe something awful happened to you. I want to remind you that you are not your past. You are not that event. You are a unique individual with vast potential who can use failures and even injustices to move forward and flourish.

It's time to shatter your limiting beliefs.

As you adopt unlimited beliefs and unlock unlimited potential, you'll likely begin envisioning what you might have been created to do. Before that becomes your focus, though, I want to show why and how you must first become who you were always meant to be.

MINDSHIFT 1:



**Create a
breakthrough
by unlimiting
your beliefs.**

Limiting Beliefs → Unlimited Beliefs



MINDSHIFT 2

REDEFINE SUCCESS BY *BECOMING*, NOT ACCOMPLISHING

“He was my best friend,” a man in his sixties blurted out. The heartfelt cry was barely recognizable between the sobs.

I admit, I was skeptical. *I know this man, and he is not my grandfather's best friend.* My doubt began to subside, however, as I listened to the praise of other people ring out in honor of my ninety-six-year-old grandfather, whose life the packed crowd was celebrating in the funeral home.

“Howard gave me money when I lost my job.”

“Howard showed me what a great father and husband looked like.”

“Howard offered me wise advice that saved my marriage.”

“Howard prayed for me when I felt like all my hope was lost.”

After hearing these heartfelt statements, I realized that my grandfather likely was the best friend this man had ever had. I had a feeling that half the people in that room viewed my grandfather Howard as their best friend, their father figure, or the person who had the greatest impact on their lives.

I was overwhelmed by the nonstop tributes that people voiced for this

World War II veteran who had lived for almost a century. He embodied so many qualities that we all should aim for—integrity, honesty, wisdom, generosity, love, and compassion—but that so few live up to today. In that moment, I began to realize my grandfather Howard was the type of person I wanted to become. People could always count on him. He was acutely in tune with the needs of others, always ready with an encouraging word and a comforting hand on the slumped shoulder of a person struggling with life's problems.

After the funeral, I started thinking more about my grandfather Howard. What was it about him that made me want to become like him? It wasn't his wealth; he didn't have much money. It wasn't his online influence; he didn't even participate in social media, much less have a million followers. It wasn't his list of impressive achievements, at least according to society's standards; he had never been ranked on any *Forbes* lists. I had never considered my grandfather successful, and maybe that was the problem. I needed to reexamine my definition of success.

A False Notion of Success

Up until this point, I thought the definition of success was obvious—a growing list of accomplishments, influence, and financial prosperity. By our culture's gauge, I was traveling the trajectory of success. I was operating a successful wellness clinic and had just written my first book. I had a clear vision of myself and my future and had put strategies in place to achieve my goals. But something was missing. There was more to life than striving and accomplishing.

I began to think about the people I admired most. Why did I hold them in such high esteem? I noticed a common thread. Their goal wasn't only to reach certain milestones in their career or cross off a list of lofty ambitions; they aspired to be better men and women than they were the day before and to positively influence other people. This purpose manifested in their lives not only in words but in actions. It was embodied

in the choices they made and how they led people, spent their time, and interacted with everyone. They were people of virtue who could be described as courageous, wise, just, and loving. They encapsulated the true definition of success, which was something I hadn't fully understood as a younger man.

I was reminded of one of my heroes when I was a triathlete in college, cycling champion Lance Armstrong.

In 2010, Armstrong was considered the most influential athlete in America, above Kobe Bryant, Tiger Woods, Serena Williams, Tom Brady, and Tim Tebow.¹ However, he had a questionable reputation. Rumors of his use of performance-enhancing drugs had circulated, and Armstrong had vehemently denied them throughout the years. In 2012, an investigation by the United States Anti-Doping Agency confirmed the allegations. As a huge fan, I was disappointed and felt betrayed when I discovered Armstrong had cheated and lied thousands of times.²

His cheating and lies forced him to resign as chairman of the board of his foundation and cost him his career, the loyalty of his fans, multiple sponsorships, millions of dollars in settling the false claims he had made, his personal relationships, and most importantly, his reputation and character.

It wasn't just Armstrong who suffered from his deception. Those around him felt the devastating repercussions, from the cancer survivors who looked up to him to his family and loved ones, to the nonprofit organization he founded, and to the millions of fans who esteemed his work ethic, perseverance, and supposedly "clean" method of reaching championship status.

When you don't live up to who you say you are, you and those around you suffer. It's a ripple effect. When have you known someone—an influencer, friend, spiritual guide, or someone you admire—to be one thing and then found out they weren't? It hurts, doesn't it? Even if it's not personal, it feels like you've been betrayed.

This duplicity can happen when people focus solely on accomplishing without paying attention to who they are becoming. When you accumulate

accomplishments while ignoring your character, it's like building a house on sand. Eventually, your house will crumble and wash away.

If your idea of success has anything to do with how I once thought of it, and how most people define it, you've been lied to. You may have been told by your parents, a professor, a coach, your peer group, or a social media influencer that you will attain success when you get the trophy, acquire a position, make a certain amount of money, or buy the car of your dreams. This is false.

The Formula for Success

Let me set the record straight. It's when you *maximize your unique skills for the greatest good* that you achieve success. This definition of success is not a matter of meeting an end goal; it's a way of approaching your everyday life.

**Success = maximizing your unique
skill for the good of others**

What is your unique skill? What is the one or two things you can do well? Is it writing, organization, innovation, athletics, leadership, communication, customer service? According to John Maxwell, talent itself isn't enough.³ Great leaders recognize that the greatest returns actualize when they maximize their talent. The idea is not to rely on your natural skills alone to fuel your direction and momentum in life but to add effort and optimize them to a higher level. Focus on doing what you're good at—and getting better at it.

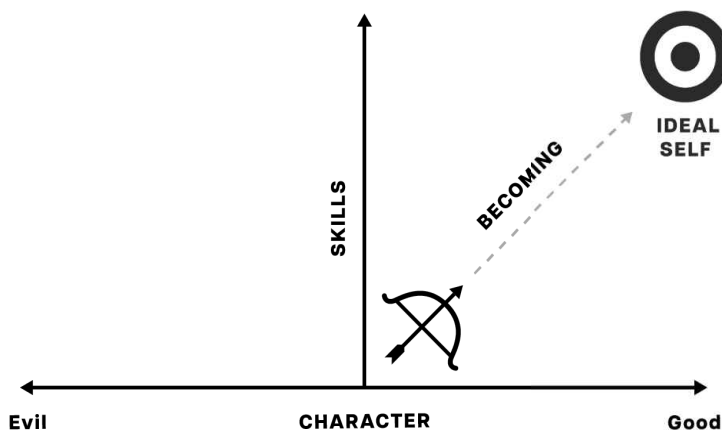
Honing your skill is a process, not a destination. And it's not instantaneous. The first time I did a radio show and listened to myself afterward, I was horrified. I thought I sounded dull and boring, and I'm positive I said "um" close to forty times. So what did I do? Practice, of course! I researched ways to improve my communication skills over the radio and

spent hours and hours rehearsing in front of the mirror until I improved. There's always room for development, and while I've certainly not arrived, I've made tremendous strides since that first radio show.

If you're good at something, get even better at it. If you're a good writer, kick it up a notch and take a workshop or two, read books about writing, and interview top authors and journalists. Create a plan of growth so that in six months, a year, and two years from now, you will have excelled at your skill.

To become your greatest possible you, you need to excel in your character and your skill. The graphic below illustrates what happens when you move the needle in those two areas to the highest level possible.

WHO COULD YOU BECOME?



If you know what your unique skill is, great! But I wonder if you are using it for the good of others. Every person has their own idea of what that means, and we'll explore this in depth in mindshift 4. For now, consider your answer to the following questions: "How can I add the most value to others and to the planet?" and "What can I offer that can help others become the people they were born to be?"

There is a plethora of intelligent, savvy, creative, and talented entrepreneurs, artists, influencers, and financial tycoons who are maximizing their skills but not using them for the good of others. Just think of those celebrities who flood their social media pages with pictures of themselves, financiers who profit from illegal schemes, or politicians who favor power over the interests of the people.

When you begin to intentionally live with purpose, you experience *the reward of contribution*. You know that you have made a difference in someone else's life, whether it comes in the form of your parenting, innovation, or leadership. Adding value to others and to the world is something you can be proud of, which is the truest test of success.

Before you throw out your list of goals and aspirations, though, I want to remind you that accomplishments aren't bad—in fact, they can be used in a positive and meaningful way. The key is having the right mindset.

THINK THIS: Success is about optimizing my skill to help others and bring good to the world.

NOT THAT: Success is using what I'm good at to look good.

An Accomplishing Mindset

To understand this right mindset, let's first look at its opposite—the wrong mindset.

When what you *have* and what you *do* are your focus, you are guided by what I call an *accomplishing mindset*. If you zero in on reaching a certain level of material success without aiming to develop your character and enrich your relationships, inner satisfaction will always be out of reach.

When entrepreneurial legend and Apple founder Steve Jobs passed away from pancreatic cancer at the age of fifty-six, he left behind a legacy that revolutionized the computer, music, phone, and movie industries.

Founder of the world's first trillion-dollar public company, Jobs developed groundbreaking products like the iPod, the iPhone, and the iPad and transformed the way people listen to music and talk on the phone. When he died in 2011, Jobs was worth \$10.2 billion.⁴

This visionary genius left more than a legacy of great wealth and world-changing innovation; he also left behind great regrets. Toward the end of his life, he said this to his biographer: "I wanted my kids to know me. I wasn't always there for them, and I wanted them to know why and to understand what I did."⁵ In a way, Jobs held the world in his hands, yet in the process of accomplishing what most of us can only imagine, he paid a steep price: his relationship with his family.

What good is gaining the world but losing your soul?⁶

What good is growing a company but losing your family?

What good is gaining wealth but losing your health?

What good is being right but ruining your marriage?

What good is getting a promotion but losing your integrity?

An accomplishing mindset may lead to receiving an award, high esteem among people, or impressive accolades, but it rarely produces the type of person you are proud of becoming. Our culture may glorify talent, fame, fortune, and power, but accomplishments at the expense of character will always lead to disappointment, and sometimes a bitter end.

The accomplishing mindset focuses on things, not people. Are you truly a success if you build a great business but do it while sacrificing your employees' well-being and destroying your family life in the process? Of course not. When you build your life around metrics and outcomes outside of personal character and relationship building, you miss out on a meaningful future and life.

One study published in the *Journal of Research in Personality* followed 147 college graduates. Their goals and happiness were tracked twice—first at twelve months after graduation and then one year after that. There was a vast difference between the people who achieved extrinsic goals like wealth and fame and those who achieved personal growth and relationship-oriented goals. Researchers noted that the participants

who valued material goals (e.g., a high salary) over close relationships and community involvement had less life satisfaction and well-being.⁷ A meaningful life is anchored in developing strong character, creating deep connections with others, and adding value to their lives.

Many of us slip into an accomplishing mindset without realizing it. Answering these questions can help you see if that's where you are:

- Do you find yourself in a persistent state of frustration because no matter how much you achieve, it's still not good enough?
- Are you chasing dreams and goals but losing relationships and your identity in the process?
- Has trying to attain a false definition of success left you feeling empty and unsatisfied?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, I've got great news for you—you don't have to live like this anymore. It's time to take the pressure off. There's a better way to think and be.

The Mindshift of Becoming

A *becoming mindset* is the key to living a life of success. This principle zeroes in on the most important element of who you are—your character. Rather than focusing on what you accomplish, aim to grow in wisdom, honesty, courage, and justice.

Becoming unlocks your full potential and positions you on the path toward being who you were born to be. Albert Einstein had it right when he gave the following advice to his son: “Try not to become a man of success but rather try to become a man of value.”⁸ People of great character adopt a regular habit of asking themselves, How can I be a better man/woman, son/daughter, spouse, colleague/leader, student/mentor, [fill in the blank]?

Becoming = growing in character

THINK THIS: What's most important is who I become.
NOT THAT: What matters most is what I accomplish.

As the father of a toddler, I am constantly striving to be a better dad. I don't know of a greater example to follow than my friend Isaac Meek, a third-generation local business owner and baker. I met him and his wife, Stephanie, in 2010, when they were patients in my clinic. Isaac loved two things: his family and baking. He worked as an accountant, and while he didn't care for his nine-to-five job, he was committed to providing for his family and never once complained.

Everything changed for him in 2015. After much prayer and reflection with his wife, Isaac admitted his job caused him to waste his true talents and set aside his dreams. It was also "crushing" his family, he said.⁹ He and his wife decided the right thing for him to do was to step away from his corporate job and start a baking company. This did not come without a massive risk: 90 percent of entrepreneurial startups fail.¹⁰ But Isaac and Stephanie both felt a conviction that Isaac was called to use his greatest skill of baking for a greater purpose.

My friend woke up at three o'clock every morning and made mouth-watering croissant-style donuts with the highest-quality ingredients. He began selling them to local coffee shops and in farmers markets before he opened his first location, Five Daughters Bakery in Franklin, Tennessee. It was a joy to watch him include his five daughters in the baking and selling process. As he mixed dough or handed out samples, his little girls were the best employees, helping however they could from the beginning. Isaac was devoted to the business and to his family, demonstrating that commitment by always putting his family first.

I learn from Isaac by watching what he does, not just listening to what he says. His character aligns with his actions. Isaac devotes time to serving and loving his wife by scheduling annual trips to New York City where they first met, taking dance lessons with her, and planning

group activities for them and their friends, even though he is an introvert at heart. Isaac also plans monthly date nights for each of his daughters and is deeply involved in their lives, teaching them ethical principles. He leads his team at his company by example and through mentoring his employees. He donates proceeds from his monthly specialty donuts to raise money for charitable causes.

Isaac also constantly reminds me that an encouraging word goes a long way, whether it's to a stranger on the street or the people closest to you. This man lives by the mindshift of *becoming* because he knows who he wants to be, which is a good husband, father, son, and leader, and he acts on that knowledge. All those ingredients—pardon the pun—make great character.

What is character? Character is made up of traits at the core of our being. In other words, it is who we are on the inside. American entrepreneur Jim Rohn called it “a quality that embodies many important traits such as integrity, courage, perseverance, confidence, and wisdom. Unlike your fingerprints that you were born with and can't change, character is something that you create within yourself and must take responsibility for changing.”¹¹

Even the business world values character over performance. If you had to guess why most company executives are fired, what would you say the top reason is? Poor financial performance? Lack of skills? In fact, it's misconduct. Nearly 40 percent of CEO and company executives are fired due to moral and ethical failures versus only 35 percent fired for poor financial performance.¹² If we focus on accomplishing before becoming, the weight of achievement will eventually crush us.

This priority of character over accomplishment also applies to our relationships, our personal mission in life, and whatever it is we strive for.

None of us can claim the prize for perfect character, but how many of us are committed to being a person of moral value when no one is looking, when we know we won't get caught, or when it doesn't hurt anyone? Think of your behavior from an ethical standpoint in the workplace. Did you really work on that project over the weekend? Did you ask for permission to take supplies home? Would your spouse appreciate the

conversations you're having with your coworker? Were you completely honest about being sick and unable to work or about how many hours in total you reported working per week?

Let's focus on lying for a minute. According to studies:

- 78 percent of job applicants lie during the hiring process.¹³
- 60 percent of participants in one study admitted to lying about being sick.¹⁴
- 41 percent of people who didn't like their job admitted to lying once or more a week.¹⁵

Most people who say they work more than sixty hours a week are lying or overestimating by eighteen hours.¹⁶

President Abraham Lincoln earned the nickname "Honest Abe" because of his commitment to fairness as a young man. According to one source, when he worked as a store clerk and realized he shortchanged a customer by a few pennies, he always shut down the store and walked, sometimes for miles, to the customer to deliver the correct change.¹⁷ Because he consistently showed his strong character, he eventually was invited to mediate disagreements in town. "Lincoln's judgment was final in all that region of the country," reported one townsman. "People relied implicitly upon his honesty, integrity, and impartiality."¹⁸ By the time Honest Abe became president, he was already known and respected for being a person of value.

To me, this type of character display from Lincoln and others is a greater sign of success than any title, trophy, promotion, or accolade. It is a true indication of becoming someone great.

ACCOMPLISHMENT MINDSET	BECOMING MINDSET
What matters most is what I accomplish.	What's most important is who I become.
Whoever dies with the most toys wins.	"A good reputation and respect are worth much more than silver and gold." ¹⁹
Achievements trump character.	Character development comes first.

THINK THIS, NOT THAT

Win at all costs.	Consider what is right over what I can gain.
Focus on looking good or doing what's right when others will notice.	Who I am in public is who I am in private.
Everyone else needs to change.	How can I become a better person?

Begin Becoming

Before you concentrate on your bucket list or determine your top ten goals for the next five years, focus first on becoming. If you do this, you will maximize your potential to live the most meaningful life possible and fulfill your potential for good. Investing in *becoming* by growing your character may not sound as important as investing in your skills, but there will always be a return on your investment.

Here's what that can lead to on a personal level, according to multiple research studies:

- improved leadership capabilities
- greater financial success
- stronger relationships and marriage
- lower risk of depression and anxiety
- increase in physical fitness
- increase in life fulfillment and meaning²⁰

When you develop character, people learn to trust you. Trust is the foundation of relationships.

Navy SEAL Jocko Willink has found that trust is the primary attribute people look for in a high-quality teammate, friend, or partner. He considers it to be more important than any skill. When you are at war, in business, or with your own family, you need to be able to trust that each person has your back, will operate with integrity and honesty, and will take full responsibility for their role. If you can't trust a person, the

relationship is weak, and you can't count on them. This, in turn, leads to feelings of resentment, distrust, and dishonor.

A becoming mindset is ultimately about us serving and adding value to the lives of others. It's about people, not objects or numbers. It's about helping others fulfill their hopes and dreams and become the best version of themselves. These tenets are central to becoming a person of great character.

Life is about relationships. This is the key difference in how Lance Armstrong and my grandfather Howard approached their lives. My grandfather always thought about others, while Lance's defining characteristic appeared to be his "ruthless desire to win at all costs."²¹ It's more important to build up others than to build up things.

Character is the strongest foundation to build your life and identity on. It is the ultimate bedrock on which your talents, skills, and abilities can become even more powerful. As you grow personally, you will help others grow, and eventually they will become people who do the same for others.

It's important to note that character is not a one-hit wonder; it is not demonstrated in a single action or event. Who you are shows up in what you do day in and day out. It is not static, like DNA or your height. You become greater in character every day. It is also not something you will one day attain perfectly. The *accomplishing* mindset is a destination, but the *becoming* mindset is a lifelong journey.

So be committed to personal growth and forming your character. Ask yourself each day, Is what I'm doing hurting others and creating a more cynical and unhealthy world? Or is it building up others and causing the world to flourish?

Who Can You Become?

The late leadership expert Myles Munroe said this about untapped potential:

The wealthiest spot on this planet is not the oil fields of Kuwait, Iraq or Saudi Arabia. Neither is it the gold and diamond mines of South Africa. . . . Though it may surprise you, the richest deposits on our planet lie just a few blocks from your house. They rest in your local cemetery or graveyard. Buried beneath the soil within the walls of those sacred grounds are dreams that never came to pass, songs that were never sung, books that were never written, paintings that never filled a canvas, ideas that were never shared, visions that never became reality, inventions that were never designed, plans that never went beyond the drawing board of the mind, and purposes that were never fulfilled. Our graveyards are filled with potential that remained potential. What a tragedy!²²

Imagine what you can offer the world when you couple the mindshift of becoming with the accomplishments that come *as a result*. Imagine the loss you and others suffer when those gifts are wasted.

Your greatest potential is not just about *you*; it's about *us*. It's about influencing others. It's about becoming the greatest *you* so you have the greatest impact on helping someone else become the greatest *them*. Transformation like this starts in one place: recognizing what's possible.

I'm pretty sure that when you were seven or eight, you wanted to become something or somebody. A ballerina, the president, a firefighter, or a professional athlete. As adults, we're quick to dismiss what were likely nothing more than fanciful dreams, but scientific research tells us a person's future vision of themselves is a helpful guide to what they might become.²³ It can be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Possible selves, a term coined by researchers Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius, describes how an individual thinks about their potential and future. An individual's possible selves are thought to be the link between past experiences and future hopes and fears. They represent what a person would like to become (future self) as well as what they dread becoming (feared self).²⁴ This principle aligns with the ancient proverb "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."²⁵ In other words, how you envision your future self determines how you make choices today.

Research tells us that the more connected we are to our future selves, the more emphasis we will place on becoming that person.²⁶ In one study, participants were given the choice to receive a smaller amount of money soon or a bigger sum later. The participants who had a stronger connection with their future self chose to wait for the larger amount of money. The researcher found that these same participants had a larger amount of savings than the participants who had a weaker connection with their future self.²⁷ The study discovered this principle holds true not just in finances but also in issues of health, relationships, and moral standards.

The lead researcher of the study, Hal Hershfield, refers to a scene in the hit TV series *The Simpsons*, which illustrates his point. Homer Simpson's wife, Marge, says to her husband, "You know, someday these kids will be out of the house, and you'll regret not spending more time with them."

Homer responds, "That's a problem for future Homer. Man, I don't envy that guy."²⁸ He then pours vodka into a jar of mayonnaise and guzzles it down.²⁹

Don't be like Homer! When you're not connected to your future self, you make bad decisions that harm your future.

The clearer we visualize who we want to be and the better we nurture that connection, the more decisions we will make to become that person, and the more successful we will be. If you see your future self as kind and generous, you will be kind and generous right now. If you see yourself loving and enjoying fulfilling relationships, you will build a strong community now. (Mindshift 11 will bring you on a deeper journey into the tool of visualization.)

What is your future self like? Do you see yourself as an innovator in the health field? A person who will one day be happily married for fifty years? A political leader who uses her power for good? Envision your ideal future self. Who are your friends? What is your day-to-day life like? How are you using your skills and platform? What do you stand for? Now envision the person you would need to become for that to happen. What character traits do you need to develop to become your possible self? What needs to change?

Let's say you want to see yourself as a great parent. Visualize yourself going camping with your kids, playing tag in the backyard, or taking them out for ice cream (coconut milk-based, if you're a health nut like me) for no special reason. Picture having heart-to-heart conversations with them in which you share how important they are to you and how much you love them. Imagine yourself gently correcting them instead of lashing out when they make a mistake.

Think of your future self as an actual person. What steps can you take, starting now, to build that relationship that's important to you? Do you need to tweak your financial habits so you can enjoy economic security in the future? Get into therapy to focus on the emotional trauma you have been avoiding so you can be free of emotional dependencies? Spend more time with your children so you can build strong relationships with them in ten or twenty years? Pre-decide and visualize your ideal self, then live it out.

One more thing. Rather than focus on checking off the items on your to-do list each day, consider making a *to-be* list. At the start of every morning, for instance, set a goal to be more compassionate. Throughout your day, recognize a hardship someone may be enduring and ask how you can help. Think about it this way. Future selves aren't something we want to *do*; they are people we want to *be*.

Two Mindsets, One Choice

After my grandfather Howard's funeral, a group of family members and I went back to a recreational campground where we swam in the lake, barbecued, and shared memories. My grandfather had a special knack for bringing people together, even after he had passed. I remember taking a minute to myself at one point to walk on one of the beaten paths while there was still light. I wondered if, at the end of my life, there would be a roomful of people speaking highly of who I was and the meaningful impact I had on their lives, rather than reciting a list of what I had

accomplished. I knew in that moment that I didn't want accolades about titles or things; what was most important was making a positive impact on others. I wanted to leave this world without regret, knowing I had done everything I could to be the best son, husband, dad, friend, leader, and person to others and to make the planet a little bit better than the day I entered it.

Take a minute right now and view your life through the lens of an *accomplishing* mindset. If you're focused on tackling your goals without first developing your character, building wealth without first forming virtue, or creating influence without first considering the good of others, you are headed for temporary satisfaction and a life absent of purpose.

On the other hand, if you live with a *becoming* mindset, you can look forward to flourishing in life. You are on the path toward enduring relationships, high life-satisfaction, and living with purpose.

Your greatest life accomplishment is becoming a better spouse, parent, friend, boss, daughter, or son. Think for a moment about who you could become. What needs to change?

The best way to act like your possible self is to start becoming that person today.

MINDSHIFT 2:



**Redefine
success by
becoming,
not
*accomplishing.***

Accomplishing → Becoming

Click here (joshaxe.com/thinkthis) and you'll find FREE quizzes, exercises, and downloadable PDFs to help you grow.

