



**OVERCOMING ADVERSITY, FAILURE, AND DARKNESS
WITH AN UNSTOPPABLE MINDSET.**

Copyright © 2018 Jason R. Wray

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Printed in the United States of America
First Printing, 2018

Print ISBN: 000-0-00000-000-0
eBook ISBN: 000-0-00000-000-0

48 Hour Books

Design & Formatting by Grace Bennett

www.projectrelentless.com

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF



CARY "FLAN-THE-MAN" FLANAGAN

SEPTEMBER 9, 1959 - FEBRUARY 12, 2005

T A B L E O F
Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1

FORWARD

3

INTRODUCTION

5

THE DARK PLACE

11

01

02

**YOU ARE
WORTH IT**

19

03

EVALUATE

26

04

BE THANKFUL

33

05

BE HUMBLE

43

06

BE AUTHENTIC

53

07

BE LOVING

60

08

BE GIVING

67

09

BE FORGIVING

77

10

BE COMPASSIONATE

83

11

BE PASSIONATE

89

12

BE DISCIPLINED

96

13

BE DETERMINED

105

14

**BE AN
ADVENTURER**

114

15

**BE PRESENT
& UNPLUG**

121

16

BE A LEARNER

128

17

BE A DREAMER

137

18

BE FOCUSED

143

19

BE INTENTIONAL

150

20

BE EXTRAORDINARY

157

21

BE RELENTLESS

167

T H A N K Y O U

This book has been my passion project for several years. I would start, then stop, over and over. It would not have been possible without the continual support and encouragement from so many people who mean so much to me.

First, to my wife and kids; I cannot thank you enough for not only being there for me, but hanging in there even when times were very tough. Your unconditional love, compassionate hearts, and encouragement has made me who I am today. You make me want to be a better man. Cori, I'm not an easy guy to live with. Thank you for enduring my ups and downs for so many years. I'm so grateful for your patience and love. I wouldn't want to spend my life with anyone else. Zack, when I married your mom, I got a major bonus with you. I'm so blessed that I got to watch you grow up. I'm so proud of the man you've become and my heart is full as I think of how close we've grown over the years. Hannah, when you were born, my heart grew exponentially. Words cannot express how much I love you and how grateful I am that God gave me you. You make me proud everyday. Never forget; you **ARE** the best thing that's ever happened to me. I love you all to the moon and back.

To my Mom, thank you for being the epitome of what sacrifice means. Through the years as a single mom, you worked tirelessly to make sure I was well taken care of. You always put me first and made me feel loved. Throughout my life journey, you've always been my biggest cheerleader and it's because of your love and encouragement that I was always able to climb out of whatever "hole" I had fallen into. Today, you are my best friend and my heart. Thank you for being the mom I wish everyone could have. I love you, momma.

To my Dad, thank you for your ongoing support in me writing my story for all to see. Although things have not always been sunshine and rainbows, please know that I see you. You have taught me so much in life and I'm thankful for everything, even the "not so good times." I'm very grateful for our friendship today. Love ya pops.

To my Aunt Nita (aka Nini), I couldn't have asked for a better friend, second momma, and someone to be crazy with, than you. Our deep talks, road trip karaoke sessions, and the "laugh-till-ya-pee" moments will forever be some of my favorite memories. Thank you for always being there for me. I-4 -3.

T H A N K Y O U

To my Aunt Leta, thank you for your heart. We have always had a special connection, as we “get” each other. I’m beyond blessed to have you in my life and I’m so appreciative of your relentless encouragement and support throughout my life. Love you.

Thank you to my incredible in-laws. Tom, Terry, Kiley, and Jordan; I hit the “in-law” lottery when I married Cori. I’m so blessed to have you all in my life. You have always accepted me, loved me, and treated me like a son or a brother. Love y’all so much!

Thank you to all of my friends for your continual and persistent encouragement on seeing this book to completion. From helping me edit, to brainstorming, to simply making me feel like my words matter. You know who you are. Thank you.

F O R E W A R D

Before I was two, my parents decided to call it quits and I was left as the "man of the house" for a short period of time - charged with the duty of protecting my mother, in between building forts and taking long naps in my race car bed. When she started dating again, it was important that the man not only loved and supported her, but that he was also ready to become a "bonus dad" to me. In May 2001, that man - Jason Wray - joined our family and promised to continually stand by my mother's side, but to also provide an example for me to follow throughout my life.

To say that things were always easy wouldn't entirely be true. My angsty childhood years and awkward teenage phases caused Jason and I to butt heads often. I frequently wore blinders that prevented me from realizing that he wanted nothing more than for us to be truly happy. As I grew older and started to understand his backstory, I quickly began to recognize that Jason was a mentor that I desperately needed and not just some guy looking to take over the "dad" role. Once I saw that Jason had a heart for helping people, I wanted nothing more than to work with him to find a way to make a difference in the world. Together, we started a group called *WorldChangers*. It was a place for high schoolers to come together and get much needed encouragement for real life issues that teenagers face every day. Within weeks, our small group grew into 60+ kids. Each week I beamed with pride knowing that my "bonus" dad and mentor had become a role model for so many of my peers.

Fast forward to today and I can still say with 100% certainty that Jason is a World Changer for me, and hundreds of other men and women. His dedication to investing in the personal growth and success of each individual he meets is inspiring.

Jason's relatability is driven by his many experiences of riding out the highs-and-lows of life's roller coaster. Through his adversities, he was able to develop deep wisdom and empathy for those who struggle with finding purpose and meaning in the darkest of places. *I Am Relentless* is the culmination of that lifetime of experiences. A decade-long desire to put into writing the tips and tools that helped carry him out of those dark places, and an overwhelming passion for helping others recognize their true potential. Each section of this book is intricately thought out to not only provide a relatable perspective from someone who has walked through life's ups and downs, but also to serve as a challenge to readers to fully embrace all aspects of a relentless life.

F O R E W A R D

My sincerest hope is that you take the tools and wisdom gathered through these pages and step into your next chapter of life with a **RELENTLESS** mindset, knowing that no one except for you can stop you from living the life you truly want.

- Zack Koeller,

Jason's "Bonus" Son & WorldChangers Co-Organizer

Hello there, I'm Jason. Thanks for picking up this book and taking a journey with me. For the record, I have no degree or any fancy acronym behind my name, and I'm not necessarily an "expert" in any given field. But I do have some life experience, massive failures, loads of opposition, and plenty of painful situations that have taught me several lessons about life and what it takes to become resilient and relentless.

Americans spend billions on self-help and personal development materials every single year. We are all searching for growth, looking for ways to get more in life, and need help to get us out of precarious life seasons. We crave inspiration and motivation. We're all trying to find the magic cure for our feelings of sadness, loneliness, hopelessness, helplessness, or lack of purpose.

I developed an intense passion and obsession with writing this book, for two reasons:

1. I'm sick and tired of the mental health stigma throughout the world. We struggle to have real and authentic conversations around the epidemic of depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and suicide that impacts the lives of millions of people every day. We would rather sweep the alarming statistics under the rug and pretend like there's no problem. All the while, people are suffering and dying silently in communities all over the world.

2. I see talent and incredible abilities in people all around me, yet they do not see their own potential. I'd like for this book to be a source of hope and inspiration to those who have been held back with fear, insecurity, and self doubt. These feelings have been a roadblock for far too long, and it's time for you to dream again—to relentlessly pursue everything you want in life.

I believe that every human brain is a supercomputer, full of limitless potential. From birth, we begin to write the program of who we are. Our environment, our greatest influencers and our experiences shape our programmed truths inside the core processor of our brains. Our values, our integrity, and our character are formed at a very young age based on who taught us and showed us right and wrong. Unfortunately, like physical computers, our brains are not protected from

I N T R O D U C T I O N - M Y W H Y

developing viruses and “bugs” that cause malfunctions that can negatively alter the performance of the user. A painful life event, sudden loss, rejection, constant suffering, or overall feelings of inadequacy can all trigger these viruses to invade our supercomputer. We cannot always control everything that is “programmed” into us, but we are in control of how we correct, or reprogram, whatever is causing the dysfunction and interruption of our true self.

Making dramatic changes, replacing bad habits with good ones, reprogramming and repairing your brain is not easy, but it will always be necessary for positive growth. And more importantly, it’s rewarding. Invest in yourself, take care of yourself, and learn to love yourself.

Lastly, I want to encourage and challenge you to enter this book with an open heart and prepare yourself to be authentic, vulnerable and real. Use the journal sections as an opportunity to get to know yourself better.

I believe in you. I believe in the greatness and wonder that’s trapped inside of you. I believe in your dreams and your potential. I believe that you’re a resilient and relentless overcomer. I believe that you have everything inside of you to become unstoppable.

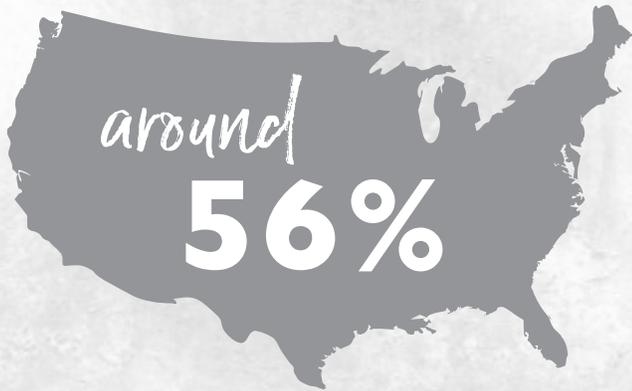
You **ARE** relentless. You **ARE** worthy. You **ARE** enough.

I see you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial 'J'.

A CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH AND DESERVES THE SAME QUALITY OF SUPPORT.

—KATE MIDDLETON, BRITISH ROYALTY



of American adults live with mental illness without treatment.

Source: www.mentalhealthamerica.net

Around 9.6 million individuals struggle with suicidal thoughts.



Source: www.mentalhealthamerica.net

MORE THAN

800,000

people die from suicide **every year worldwide.**

That's one death every 40 seconds.



Source: www.socialworklicensemap.com

1.7
MILLION

teenagers have a major depression episode, with no treatment.

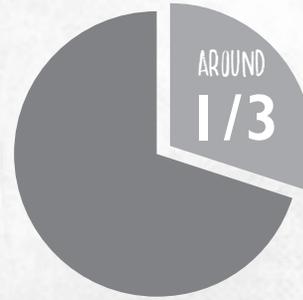


Source: nortonhealthcare.com



of middle school students report feeling bullied at school.

Source: nortonhealthcare.com



of all college students report experiencing long periods of depression

Source: www.psychologytoday.com



around
50%

of college students say that they received no education on mental health prior to college.

Source: www.psychologytoday.com



AROUND
1 IN EVERY 4

school students struggle with feeling intense sadness or hopelessness.

Source: nortonhealthcare.com

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH IS WORSENING EVERY YEAR.

Source: www.mentalhealthamerica.net

a
certain
darkness
is
needed
to
see
the
stars.

- OSHO



THE DARK
PLACE



darkness

/ˈdɑːknəs/

noun

ABSENCE OR DEFICIENCY OF LIGHT;
PERTAINING TO IMMENSE SADNESS
& DEPRESSION

RELENTLESS

T H E D A R K P L A C E

Shortly after Christmas in 1989, when I was just 12 years old, my Dad packed up his things, gave me a heartfelt sorry, gifted me some meaningful heirlooms and assured me that things would be okay. As I watched him drive away, I remember knowing at that moment, that my life would never be the same. It was time for me to grow up and be the man of the house; I had to be strong for my mom. It was that moment in the kitchen after he left, that my mom and I hugged and softly cried together, when I realized the pain of heartbreak, the feeling of abandonment, and the ache of wondering if I could've prevented this inevitable moment. That day, I believe innocence was lost and I would forever be changed.

Shortly after dad left, my mom and I packed up and left our family home, too. We needed a new chapter, new scenery, to start again. I remember having subtle short-term feelings of excitement thinking of a new town and new school, but quickly I would drift back into mourning the absence of what was.

As you can suspect, puberty was an absolute train wreck for me. I was in a new school, a new town, and I was carrying new emotional baggage. I was entering into my teenage years with a lot of weight on my shoulders. The weight of being the man of the house for my mother, the weight of trying to fit in, blend in, and feel accepted at a new school, and the weight of a strained relationship with my dad. I tried to be strong for as long as I could, but I was dying on the inside. I was lost. This was the beginning of the feelings of helplessness and hopelessness that would soon become my normal. Soon, my world became full of darkness and it consumed my former joyful spirit.

"I found that with depression, one of the most important things you could realise is that you're not alone."

— DWAYNE "THE ROCK" JOHNSON

It was about a year after my parents' divorce and the subsequent move to a new place that I began searching for a way out. I was being bullied daily, both physically and emotionally, at school. I don't think there was a day that went by where I wasn't insulted or called a degrading name. I began skipping school, faking sick, and doing whatever I could do to escape the

perpetual torment. I was developing an intense hatred of life and the cruelty that had become my reality.

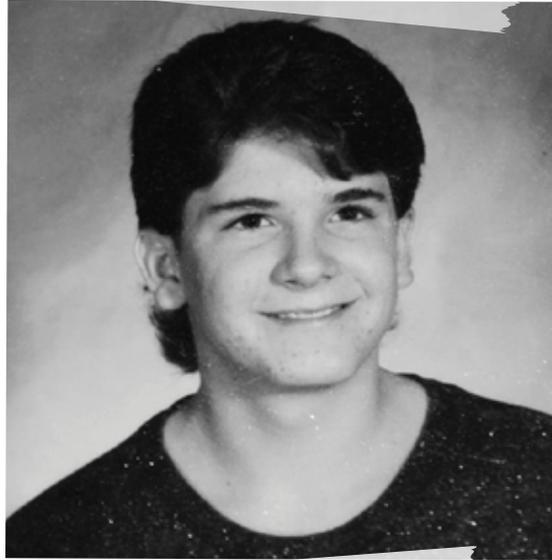
Shortly after turning 13, I retreated from the bullies at school and moved in with my dad for a bit. I was hopeful that my dad and I could become close again, but at the same time, I was terrified about starting all over again at another school. I was an awkward young teen and my weak and defeated posture must've put a mark on me, as I was picked on and bullied from day one at the new school, and again... felt hopelessly alone. My dad worked constantly trying to provide for us, but the selfish teenager inside of me didn't care about his ambition. I wanted a relationship with him, I wanted to feel important. I wanted to confide in him about how bad school was, but I didn't want to reveal how weak I was. My dad was my hero and all I wanted was to feel that he was proud of me. Yet, somehow I felt like I was failing at everything I did.

My thoughts became suicidal, manic, and irrational. After two years of constant turmoil, loneliness, deep insecurity, and the constant ache of crippling depression, I had convinced myself that I was done. I was done feeling like a tattered rope in a divisive game of tug-of-war between my parents. I was done being bullied and feeling like the outcast. I was done seeing the world through the eyes of a cynical adult. I just wanted to go back to being a little kid again. I was done living. At 13, I felt as though I couldn't go any further; I couldn't take any more pain or rejection.

"Sometimes to live, is an act of courage."

— SENECA

Thankfully, I decided to reach out for help. I went to school and immediately visited the counselor. I remember breaking down so uncontrollably that I couldn't be understood. She just let me sob and comforted me until I was able to say the dreadful words, "I don't want to live anymore." I don't remember much after this, I suppose I kind of blacked out for a bit, and then later arrived at a hospital that had a psychiatric department. I met with multiple doctors and therapists over the course of two or three weeks. I felt embarrassed and ashamed for being there. I felt awful for putting my parents through this, yet I felt numbed by the pain I had been experiencing. I honestly don't remember much of my hospital stay, but I do believe it was a temporary turning point.



MY SCHOOL PHOTO IN 1991

In general, life seemed to improve, or at least I learned how to cope a bit more with the adversity I was facing. As I entered high school, I began to fit in a little better and I even attracted some close friends. Although I seemed to have more good days than bad, the depression never left me. The helpless and hopeless feelings of loneliness never fully left me. I just covered them up better. I didn't want to hurt my mom ever again with the seemingly "selfish" feelings of depression and thoughts of suicide, so I forced myself to be "normal" when she was near. I didn't want her to worry about me or fear losing her son, when she was searching for her own happy self.

What a depressing way to start a book about bettering yourself. Sorry about that but I wanted to be real with you right out of the gate and share my first battle with feeling lost. The good news is, neither of us are finished writing our life story.

”

Every man has his secret sorrows which
the world knows not; and often times we
call a man cold when he is only sad.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

In retrospect, is my pitiful tale the saddest story you've ever heard? Absolutely not! Many folks, maybe even you, have endured much worse in their lives than I did. At the time, though, I felt that there was no one else with as horrible of a life as mine. I'm a firm believer that our perceptions shape our realities. I long lived in the perception that I couldn't open up to people, as I was continually told that I was just too sensitive, overly dramatic, or just plain irrational. This caused my reality to be filled with bottled-up emotions, high anxiety, and no outlet to tell my story. All I wanted was for someone to truly listen to how I felt and tell me it was okay to not be okay.

My story is my truth, and the same goes for you. You are the only one who will ever experience your precise pains and struggles. Never apologize for “feeling” a certain way or finding ways to cope with your pain. Nobody has lived through your exact pain, except you. Those are your feelings, so it's important for you to listen to them and respond accordingly. As you begin your *I am Relentless* journey, open your mind and spirit to vulnerability by embracing your truth and recognize that your story does continue. None of the words in this book will be of any help unless **YOU** make the conscious decision to allow yourself to become the best version of you.

IT'S PERFECTLY

OKAY

TO ADMIT THAT

YOU'RE NOT

OKAY.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

WHEN HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE "DARK PLACE"? AND HOW DID YOU GET OUT?

WHAT NEGATIVE FEELINGS OCCASIONALLY CREEP IN? IS THERE A TRIGGER?

WHEN DO YOU FEEL LIKE LIFE IS THE HARDEST?

WHAT NEGATIVE THINGS DO YOU SAY ABOUT YOURSELF? (EXAMPLE: I AM _____)