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Worksheet for Akshay Nanavati | Fearvana (Episode 686)

While we all have the desire to be happy, the path that gets us to happiness isn't always clear. Along the way, we encounter countless obstacles -- from self-doubt to fear to trauma. How we choose to cope with these obstacles either strengthens us to soar past them, entangles us indefinitely, or terminates the journey altogether.


When drug addiction and alcoholism failed to help [episode 686](#) guest Akshay Nanavati cope with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) he developed as a Marine fighting in Iraq, he found himself on the brink of suicide. What happened next led to his first book: [*Fearvana: The Revolutionary Science of How to Turn Fear into Health, Wealth, and Happiness.*](#)

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A Worthy Struggle

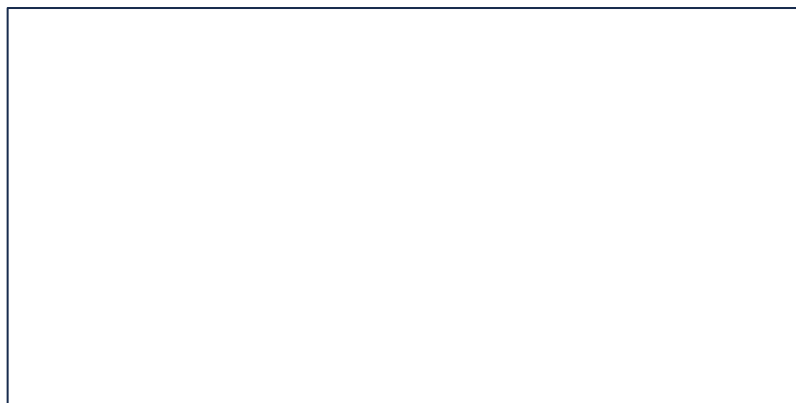
While purposely putting ourselves through what Akshay calls a *worthy struggle* may seem daunting (and even somewhat masochistic), its rewards tend to outweigh its hardships.

Think of someone you admire. Why do you look up to them? What worthy struggle did they endure to make them noteworthy?

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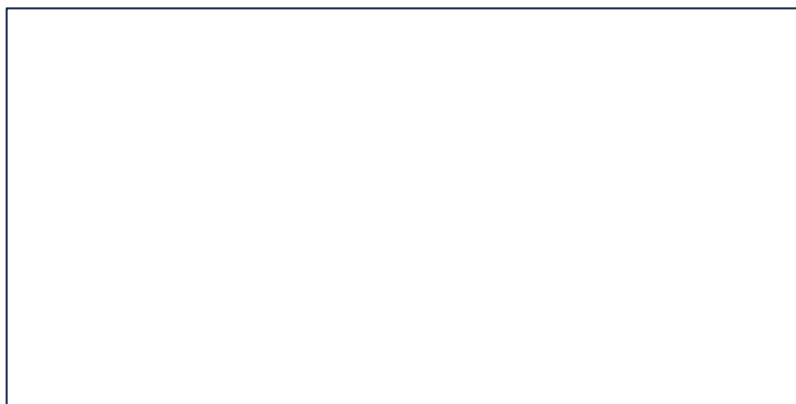
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Did you grow up enduring some sort of struggle? If so, was it imposed on you by someone else, or did you seek it out? If not, do you feel like you missed out on something important? Are you better or worse off today as a result of this struggle -- or lack thereof?



If you have children, do you encourage them to pursue a worthy struggle of some kind? If so, are you actively involved in the struggle, or do you watch from the sidelines? How might you participate in a way that benefits you as well as them?

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Cultivating Courage

Many of us have been conditioned to think of fear as a negative emotion that needs to be stifled for the sake of happiness, but Akshay contends that a life without fear is a life without challenge or growth. He was once afraid of ferris wheels; now he can scale rock formations without safety gear.

To cultivate courage, Akshay suggests exercise, [meditation](#), and stress inoculation (drilling under stressful situations to minimize its effects in real life). "Whatever your line of risk is, relentlessly become aware of that and push yourself one step at

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a time," Akshay says. "I call it the action awareness cycle."

What are your greatest fears? Are they encountered often or rarely?

Does your life currently include regular exercise, meditation, or stress inoculation? If so, how effective is it in helping you face your fears? If you don't take part in any of these courage cultivators, how much time would you be willing to devote to at least one of them?

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Second Dart Syndrome

Neuroscience and spirituality have both shown we don't control what first shows up in our brain. When we stand on the edge of a cliff, it's very normal and human to feel fear. Yet we all judge our emotions and label some as good, and others as bad. Akshay calls this second dart syndrome.

"Buddha said we are all stabbed by two darts," says Akshay. "First darts are the ones beyond our control. They can be an external event or our automatic, internal response to them, like fear on the edge of a cliff. Second darts are the manner in which we react and respond to the first ones. For example, when you stub your toe against a door, the first dart is the pain in your toe. The second dart is when you say things like, 'I am stupid,' 'This door is stupid,' or 'Why does God do this to me?'"

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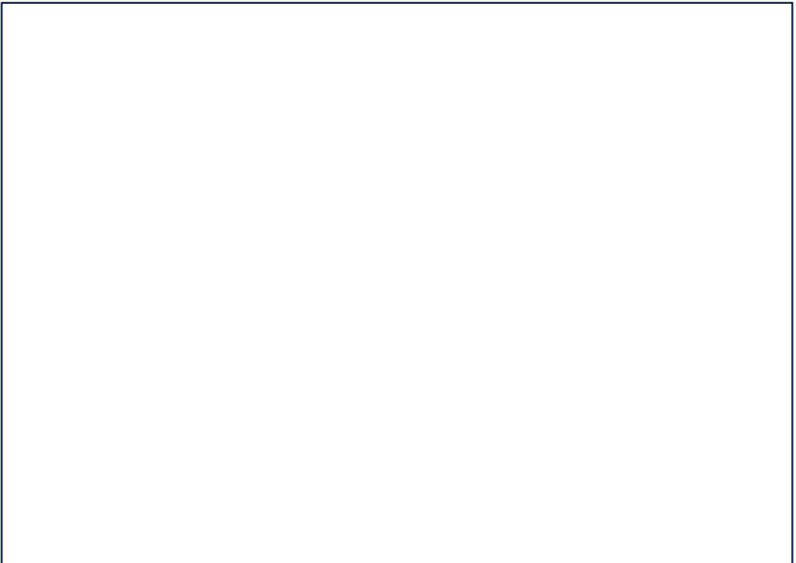
"Stepping outside of that destructive spiral is what allows you to embrace any emotion, find value in it, and ultimately channel it into purposeful action."

Think of a time when you've been stricken by second dart syndrome. How might you have found value in the ensuing emotion and used it to learn and grow from the situation?

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Going forward, try to identify when you've been stricken by a first dart so you can avoid stabbing yourself with a second dart. Does this result in better outcomes? Note your observations here.



The LMNOP Cycle

LMNOP is one of the most powerful tools Akshay has created for changing the brain. It has helped people with PTSD, anxiety disorder, addiction, depression, daily stress, fear, food cravings, and procrastination, among other things. Here's how it works.

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L: Label and Language -- Dr. Matthew Lieberman, a psychology professor at UCLA, has shown that labeling an emotion reduces activity in parts of the brain related to fear and emotions. Simultaneously, it increases activity in parts of the brain associated with focus and processing emotions.

Any time you find yourself stuck, label the negative emotion you are experiencing to release yourself from the impact of it (step one of mindfulness). Then immediately shift your body language into a position that facilitates feelings of confidence (e.g., if you're slouching, sit up straight).

M: Meaning -- Psychologists like Dr. Michael Gazzaniga have shown that the subconscious is constantly assigning a meaning to everything without our awareness. In this step, the goal is to find out what that meaning is.

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Emotions and events have no inherent meaning; the meanings we assign shape our experience of life. Ask yourself what meaning you have attached to the event, the emotion, or both.

N: It's Not You; It's Your Brain --

Neuroscience has proven we don't control what first shows up in our brains. This step separates you from your subconscious so you can start to direct your mind to where you want it to go.

Tell yourself: "This is not me; this is my brain, beyond my control."

O: Opt for the More Empowering

Meaning -- This is when you choose outside of your negative emotion by using your conscious self to ascribe a new meaning either to the emotion, the event, or both. This, combined with the next step, will start to create new neurological pathways in your brain.

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P: Purpose and Preemptive Strikes --

Take an action aligned with your true purpose, and continue ingraining the new behavior with preemptive strikes.

Patterns only form in your brain when neurons are activated long enough for those neurons to wire together. So take a new action -- something more in line with the person you want to be.

To then prevent yourself from getting stuck in that same pattern in the future, use preemptive strikes. A preemptive strike is to set a clear, detailed plan for how, when, and what you will do the next time you know you will be in that disempowering pattern again.

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Jordan Harbinger is a Wall Street lawyer turned talk show host, social dynamics expert, and entrepreneur.

He's the owner and co-founder of The Art of Charm, a consulting and coaching company — as well as a top 50 podcast on iTunes — which he's been hosting for over a decade. Jordan has spent several years abroad in Europe and the developing world, including South America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East, and speaks several languages. He has also worked for various governments and NGOs overseas, traveled through war zones, and been kidnapped — twice.

He'll tell you the only reason he's still alive and kicking is because of his ability to talk his way into (and out of), just about any type of situation.

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30-DAY CHALLENGE CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3	4 CHALLENGE 1	5 Facebook Check-In	6 CHALLENGE 2	7	8 Weekend Challenge	9
10	11 CHALLENGE 3	12 Facebook Check-In	13 CHALLENGE 4	14	15 Weekend Journal Activity	16
17	18 CHALLENGE 5	19 Facebook Check-In	20 CHALLENGE 6	21	22 Hobby Immersion Weekend	23
24	25 CHALLENGE 7	26 Facebook Check-In	27 CHALLENGE 8	28	29 Weekend Challenge	30
1	2 CHALLENGE 9	3 Facebook Check-In	4 CHALLENGE 10	5	6 Challenge COMPLETE!	7

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