

## Transcript for Mark Divine | Unbeatable Mind (Episode 646)

Full show notes found here: <https://theartofcharm.com/646/>

MARK: I'm going to teach you how to tap into your intuitive intelligence, your deep emotional intelligence, and even -- let's just say -- your spiritual intelligence, which then turns that last one percent into another 99 percent.

JORDAN: Welcome to The Art of Charm. I'm Jordan Harbinger. On this episode we're talking with my friend Commander Mark Divine, former Navy SEAL and author of [\*Unbeatable Mind: Forward Resiliency and Mental Toughness to Succeed at an Elite Level\*](#). Mark Divine created a nationwide mentoring program for SEAL trainees back in the day and this program was credited with increasing the quality of Navy SEAL candidates and reducing the attrition rate at BUDS -- the Basic Underwater Demolition School -- AKA SEAL training, and was the inspiration for his program SEALFit.

We're discussing winning in the mind before entering the arena, physical and mental preparation including mental toughness exercises taught to Navy SEALs, and how these all add up to creating an unbeatable spirit. This conversation was interesting because I never thought I'd have so much in common with a former Navy SEAL. That's certainly the type of person that I thought I was almost in many ways the opposite of, so I really enjoyed this conversation. I really enjoyed discussing performance at an elite level, high performers and mental toughness, from what I thought was an outside perspective, and it turns out, not so much. So let's hear from Mark Divine.

So we were talking yesterday and one of the things that struck me was that you had started in a corporate career before joining the Navy. And that for me was kind of striking because when I ask other friends of mine that are SEALs or when I ask guys like Jocko, they're like, "I knew I wanted to be a SEAL since I was eight," and it sounds like you kind of had a very different path from most.

MARK: Yeah I would say I did. I didn't really even consider a military career until I was in my early twenties and I was working as an auditor/CPA -- working towards my CPA certificate in Manhattan, working with Coopers and Lybrand, which is now PricewaterhouseCoopers. So, yeah, I was kind of groomed to be a business guy. My family has a business that's been around since 1890 -- still cranking today, My brothers run it and my sister is there and I'm kind of the black sheep that turned its back and walked away from the flock.

JORDAN: I can't imagine that they would be disappointed with your choice of work though, right? It's kind of hard to be like, "Oh, you went to serve the country? How dare you?"

MARK: They were mortified, actually. It didn't fit their mold of reality forme and I was throwing my life away. You've got to understand this is Northeast and I was on track to hit all the wickets -- NBA, CPA from top colleges and working on Wall Street. Many of my peers are at the top of their field. I've got a buddy who runs Ernst & Young and I've got another buddy who's the CFO at Black Rock. These are my peer group. They were my fraternity brothers and so I was kind of heading down that road and my parents were thinking I'd either stay in that path but my dad was hoping that eventually I'd come back and take over the family business. So a career in the military was certainly not the image they had of me.

JORDAN: Well one of the reasons that I was really interested in talking with you is not just because it's great to talk to somebody who has the experience that you do in the military but also because of where you came from. I mean, I used to work on Wall Street as well as an attorney. But it sounds like -- and forgive the phrase here -- it sounds like you come from kind of a blue blood family in a way. Is that fair to say?

MARK: I think it's fair to say. At least they had that kind of self-concept and my mom thinks she's descended from the queen, you know? That's highly debatable. Like I said, the prevailing

attitude back in the Northeast at least, was the military is if you have no other options. In fact, I think that actually happened to my father. He got in trouble in college and the judge basically said, "Hey go to the army or go to jail," and so he joined the army and got in and did two years in 11th Airborne in Germany.

So the army and the military was not considered a good thing. And it took them a while -- to be fair, they did come around and they learned about the SEALs. And after my mom stopped listening to her liberal friends who said that the SEALs are a bunch of baby killers, she started to come around and appreciate that they actually were an elite unit that was doing an incredible service to our country and blah, blah, blah, blah. But they really had no idea what the SEALs were. And you've got to understand, Jocko came around 20 years after me or 15 years after me and there was a ton written about the SEALs. The Discovery Channel had their episode about the making of Class 226 and I was in class 170 in 1990 and in the '80s there was literally zero information about the modern SEALs.

There were some books about Vietnam and I remember a classic called Men with Green Faces, which I read about 20 times. These were the early SEALs when there were only a few hundred guys and they were just crusty frogmen who just were sneaky-peeky and scared the \*\*\*\* out of their enemies. Once I figured out who they were and what they represented, it became deeply inspirational to me. I might have been like Jocko had I known about them at eight years old. I could have been like, "Yeah, that's what I want to do," but there was no information. I had never been exposed to them until I was in my early twenties.

JORDAN: That's a good point, right? Because I guess when you joined -- and I'm not trying to make you feel old -- but there was no Internet to speak of.

MARK: No Internet, no TV shows about the SEALs -- they were truly a secret organization back then.

JORDAN: Right, and you found out about it probably when they went, "Hey, man -- pretty good at all this crazy stuff we're putting you through. Why don't you try something a little bit more your speed." I mean, is that kind of how this happened for you or there's a common knowledge inside the military?

MARK: A couple things happened. One is, there was a recruiting poster that I came across one day and for some reason, they were finally like, "We're going to recruit for the SEALs," but the real reason was they wanted to use it as an enticement to get really good people into the military who really had no chance of being SEALs. And do this day, that's kind of the dirty little secret. There's literally several thousand guys a year who try and 200 who make it, and those other thousands end up in the fleet and they become pretty darn good navy guys but they don't become SEALs. They get injured or they quit or the 10,000 reasons why it doesn't happen.

But there was this poster that I stumbled across one night, walking home from work and the title of the poster was, "Be Someone Special," and it had imagery of guys jumping out of airplanes doing a halo jump and a sniper in a high sight that you can barely see and really cool stuff -- a submarine lockout going on. I was just transfixed by this poster and I already been in this existential search, because I wasn't being challenged by the career of being a CPA. I was bored to death, I was a very physical -- obviously you need to be as a SEAL.

I spent pretty much every waking hour, when I wasn't working or going to my MBA classes, working out. Three times a day. I would go for long runs in the morning, I'd sneak away and go to the gym at lunch time while all my peers went and did their lunch and then I went to the Dojo between work and my night classes at NYU. So I was training four or five hours a day, doing all that and thinking that I could just do that for the rest of my life and that be cool.

Eventually I was like, "This really sucks," trying to squeeze this in. Nobody really cared about it besides me. There was no

culture of physicality in that corporate world. They made it really hard and people were thinking that I was just this dumb jock just because I liked to work out and the reality was I just I just like to work out because it was the healthy thing to do and it gave me pleasure and I felt like I was whole when I was training like that. You know what I mean by that, right? Most people don't appreciate that feeling. So the SEALs, when I found them, they were like, "Holy \*\*\*\*. This is the next best thing, or actually it's probably better for us than being a professional athlete and getting paid a lot of money, because not only do we become professional athletes and get paid to do our job -- a very cool physical job that requires us to be on the elite edge of our body-mind system -- but we get to go serve the country doing really cool and dangerous things." So, for a small group of people who identify as warriors, that's really, really inspiring.

JORDAN: What is the difference, in your mind, between the population that identifies themselves as warriors and those that don't? As a civilian I see this in some ways -- because we get a lot of Navy SEALs, special operators, coming through Art of Charm. And a lot of people go, "What? What are those guys doing there?" and the reason I think that you'll understand, versus civilians who say, "What are those guys doing there?" is because if you can get one percent edge, you will do anything to get that edge and Art of Charm will give you an edge.

And, you all don't have ego attached to training. The civilian population thinks, "Oh, I have to go do this dumb course because my boss wants me to get better at this," whereas if you have an opportunity in the military -- especially at the elite level -- it's called an opportunity for training. They look at it as an opportunity, not as some sort of punishment because you're not good at something and you need to get better.

MARK: First off, when it comes to training, the SEALs and others like SEALs -- like warriors -- it is a mandatory thing because SEALs are constantly -- and warriors, I'll use those terms kind of interchangeably -- are constantly striving to improve themselves, to master themselves, to get that one percent better

every single day, and we even -- it's part of our ethos. The ethos statement in the SEALs that speaks to this is called, "Earn your trident every day." The trident is the metal insignia that has now become well known about the SEALs.

Earning your trident every day means, "Hey, whatever you did yesterday, forget about it because you can't rest on your laurels. Check your ego. Now today is a new day and you better start putting out right now. So, put out with your physical training, put out with whatever skills you're going to develop, put out with becoming the best version of yourself -- learning how to communicate more effectively, learning how to parachute more effectively, learning how to dive more effectively, learning how to lead more effectively, learning how to be a more effective teammate, and all of the things that go with that.

So, there's a constant commitment to mastering the self but not in a way that you're just going to do it so you can go make more money but so you can serve your teammates and your mission more effectively. And what makes a warrior -- back to your original question -- what makes a warrior be like that? That's a really, really good question. I don't know. Is it nature versus nurture? Do we come in this way? Is it an archetype that just gets nurtured until we say, "Hey this is a pretty cool way to live." It's a very inspiring, let's say, ethos to live by. That's one of the reasons I teach what I teach is because people are struggling right now and it's like, "My God, I can't put out any more," and I'm saying, "Well, you're looking for improvement in the wrong places. You keep trying to do the same things and expect different results. No, it doesn't work that way. You've got to start doing different things to crack open the next level of potential."

JORDAN:

I think that you've stumbled on something really interesting here, which is that you have to do things differently. But can you give a concrete example of that because I would assume people who come to your training or our training for example, they already know that, they just don't know what those things are and it seems like you do. I think somebody who's a high

performer -- a partner at a law firm, for example -- they already kind of understand that. How do you find where they can improve?

MARK:

We're all humans, right? So whether you're a lawyer or a doctor or a Navy SEAL, we all kind of come in with the same raw material. Last week I was down in Harvard Med School talking to some neurosurgeons. I was invited down there to talk to them. It was a great honor.

But, it's really cool, and I said, "Okay guys, you are like the SEALs of the medical profession. This is Harvard. You're brain surgeons. I'm not going to give you anything on how you can do your job better at a technical or physical level. You already know how to get all the knowledge and skills that you need and you've pretty much mastered that. So, let's just say you're operating at 99 percent effectiveness already, right?" Whereas most human beings are probably at 50 percent.

So these Harvard surgeons are working about 99 percent and they put in a 110 hours a week just mastering their craft. I said, "There's one percent that you've left on the table and that feels like a lot to you," and I said, "And what the SEALs can teach you and what I can teach you, through my training -- which I call [\*Unbeatable Mind\*](#) -- is how to take that one percent and turn it into a whole other 99 percent of potential. What you're going to do different is not what you've been doing before," this is back to your original question. "What you've been doing before is like looking at skills and knowledge -- which I call horizontal learning -- and then just trying to scoop up as much as you can but it's just filling your head with all sorts of stuff and then you use that stuff -- that knowledge stuff -- to do your job. Temporarily empty your mind of all that stuff."

"Empty the cup and turn your attention inwards. So, instead of outwardly looking for horizontal skills, turn your attention inward and begin to develop the skills for what I call vertical knowledge. Vertical knowledge is essentially the skills to evolve your consciousness so that when you click into another

level of conscious awareness, then A, you have more capacity to absorb more knowledge and skills, B, the way you approach the application of the skills and the knowledge -- the horizontal skills that you already have -- you approach those from a whole other level of awareness or insight."

I said another way is, "I'm going to teach you how to tap into your intuitive intelligence, your deep emotional intelligence, and even -- let's just say -- your spiritual intelligence, which then turns that last one percent, which has been focused mostly on outer world, turns that into another 99 percent of potential, from which you can start to perform at a higher level with.

JORDAN: Can you give me an example of horizontal knowledge versus vertical knowledge? Because I understand the concepts but I'm not sure I can put my finger on a particular type of skill.

MARK: Sure, and I've classified the vertical into actually plateaus. I call them the five plateaus. Most people in our country are either at the second, third, or fourth plateau. So, second plateau is someone who's extremely conformist, these are the people that elected Trump, they're very ego/ethnocentric, meaning their community, their company, their tribe, their football team, their religion is the only one worth caring about and they live in a very archetypal way. Like, "I'm meant to be," -- just like my family said, "I'm meant to be a business guy for the family business. That's pretty much all they can see of me," and they grease the groove of my subconscious mind to think that was the way I was going to go.

So, I went about accruing the horizontal skills of becoming a business guy. So CPA, MBA, learning how to read financial statements, learning how to communicate in the business setting, learning how to dress and project myself as a successful business guy -- all the things you teach -- plus learning the technical skills, passing the CPA exam, getting my MBA, learning how to audit a company, all that stuff -- those are horizontal skills. And had I not then turned my attention to zen



meditation, mindfulness meditation, yoga, all the eastern tools which got me on the path of vertical development, I would have stayed right there. There would have been no vertical development. I'd still be at Pricewaterhousecoopers or I'd be running the family business right now. The outer skills were easy and that's what everyone's been focused on -- getting those new knowledge, getting that new skill.

What I learned, starting at age 20, was that -- I mean, literally, when I sat down to practice zen through my martial arts training -- and not just talking about it or doing a little bit here or there, but hour long sits, weekends at the Zen Mountain Monastery in Woodstock New York -- it began to change my brain. There was a neuroplastic effect and it unlocked this verticality in the sense that when I came back from those and over time -- it's not an instantaneous thing, there's not a linear road map that shows, "Okay, you do 27 hours and all of a sudden you're going to shift into this. And if you do 1000 hours, you shift into that."

It's different for everybody. You have to be patient but I generally found that a year of training of that type of meditation -- and to be fair, Jordan, there's many, many different ways to meditate and they're very important to appreciate the progression and the path. So, that's what I mean by vertical development is using skills to curate the inner domain -- the mind -- so you can expand the capacity of your mind beyond the linear, rational, judging mind which is the whole work or the bulwark of the work that we do -- thinking, analyzing, making decisions -- and to curate and to tap into that, like I said, the emotional, intuitive, and spiritual intelligence that is also part of our mind system. But it takes different skills and different tools to access those.

So third plateau is very achievement oriented. So most, if not all of the business community is there -- a lot of my SEAL friends -- and it's all about, "Hey, this is great. We're outward focused on achieving, we're really operating on a high level of success," my Harvard friends are all there -- you know, there's something

kind of left on the table. The fourth plateau is what we call the sensitive self. This is where you're starting to open up to more of a world-centric point of you. It's not just your viewpoint or your knowledge. You're feeling a little bit more connected to the rest of the world. So this is where the green movement and environmentalists all fit in here, but it's still not a complete, integrated point of view or perspective or consciousness. That doesn't happen until you hit the fifth plateau which is the integrated plateau and this is where we want to get to and beyond.

So I began to evolve very quickly through the fourth and into the fifth plateau because of this training, which then kept it going and was accelerated through my Navy SEAL career as a leader. It's a big part of what I train today. So it was probably a little bit more than you were reckoning for but that's generally what I mean by vertical development -- is evolving your consciousness which shows up as your sense of self, your worldview, your ability to connect and relate to more and more expanding sets of people until at the world-centric fifth plateau, all human beings become equally valuable. That doesn't mean equal in terms of who they are and what they bring to the world but you can see their worth and you're not going to vilify them or demonize them. This is akin to the total warrior who loves his enemy but is still okay to take his life because the guy is doing bad things.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: I love the idea of the five plateaus and I love the idea that people are stuck on each one, right? Is stuck the right word? It almost seems like if you're developing, you're not really stuck.

MARK: You're not really stuck but you are in a rut. So you can say stuck in a rut but there's nothing sticking you there, you're just there, and it's because the belief systems that you've been relying on for so long are deeply grooved into your subconscious and into your actions and behaviors that it's kind of like you're inside the bottle, you can't read the label. And this training that I'm

talking about really shifts your perspective to all of a sudden, you're outside the bottle and you're like, "What the heck was I doing for all those years?" When I woke up, I would say -- that's kind of a common term you hear in the Buddhist tradition, "Awake to your true self." When I woke up to my true self that said, "Hey, I want to be a warrior," then I could look back at my life and go, "What the hell am I doing as a CPA? If I'm meant to be a Navy SEAL, what the hell am I doing as a CPA?" Those are about as far away as you can imagine. I'd finished my CPA, finished my MBA, got my black belt and blasted off to officer candidate school and then went to BUDS training in 1990 and never looked back. This whole philosophy kind of unfolded as I was a SEAL and then got out and started teaching other SEALs and professionals.

JORDAN: I would imagine that not everyone is cut out to be a warrior, is that correct in your estimation?

MARK: Well, I would say not everyone is cut out to be a Navy SEAL but everyone has -- the warrior archetype is within everyone when you activate it. So it really is kind of the part of you that is willing to stand your ground and to not compromise on your values and to really step up and do the right thing in spite of the consequences. It is a challenge.

So some people are going to have more capacity to step into their warrior spirit and archetype than others but it can be trained and developed in pretty much everyone and then you'll express that in a way that's right for you and meaningful for you. A mom is going to express it by showing that she's strong for her kids and that she's not going to get pushed around by society or by her boss or even some jerk -- and/or, in a more extreme example -- she's going to be willing to do whatever it takes to protect them in a crisis and you see this all the time with women who are protecting their kids from some crisis. So that's one way you see it expressed.

You see it in the corporate leader who says, "Enough is enough. I'm not going to stay with this organization. I'm going to stand

up to this organization that might be polluting the environment, doing something unethical," because it's systemic. A lot of times these happen in the corporate world because no one's taking accountability for the actions of the organization. It's all too easy to just think, "Oh, this is the way things have always been done." So the corporate warrior is someone who stands up and says, "Enough is enough." In fact, organizations that are declaring themselves B corporations or conscious capitalist organizations, these are people who step into their warrior archetype as business leaders.

JORDAN: In some of your work you talk about the human spirit soars when it's challenged. Can you explain exactly what that means? Does that go back to the plateaus that you were just talking about?

MARK: Yeah, I think so. One of the reasons you get in a rut is because things get easy and everything gets patterned and this is where the midlife crises come in. Yeah, people are like, "Okay, I've mastered my domain and I just keep doing the same thing every day," and then 30 years go by and you're like, "Holy \*\*\*\*, is this all there is to life?" and people have these real existential crises. And the way out of that is -- and it's part of what's wrong with our society in general is that the hard has been taken out. The hard work of working the land and up at dawn and asleep at sundown because you've got to work a 12 hour day and whatever it is -- working with your hands as a master craftsman -- all of that kind of forged your character. It's kind of like the martial arts idea of polishing the sword. Every day you woke up and you polished the sword of your character and it was very liberating in a sense.

It sounds hard but over time it just cultivates a refinement of your character and that refinement is experienced as simplicity and grace and a tamping down of the dark shadow aspects of your ego. So you tend to develop great humility, non attachment to material things -- it doesn't mean you can't have them or don't desire or enjoy the fruits of your labor through a nice house on the lake or the boat and stuff like that but you're not

really attached to it and you could easily let it go in a moment. That type of refinement has been lost in our society because everything has kind of gotten easy. Our kids just don't have any of that. I grew up with a lot more than even you did but listening to your story -- you went out and found it in the world. You went out and got your ass kicked.

JORDAN: Literally.

MARK: Quite literally. But those experiences crafted who you are today. So the warrior takes that to the extreme because they appreciate that hard work cultivates character and it allows you to tap into emotional control and emotional development and feel extended flow states and you want more of that. And you're like, "That's cool. I want more of that," and so you seek out challenge.

I barely ever talk about Jocko but he was a teammate and a peer of mine and he's out there doing great work. Guys like us are the extreme side of this archetype of the warrior and so warriors like us seek out the severest schools. So BUDS was the only option for us. I didn't look at the different special ops and say, "Yeah I could be a ranger or I could be a Green Beret." No, I just said, "I want the toughest, hardest thing I could possibly do," and that's SEAL training. I see that a lot in the guys that I train -- that they just want to challenge themselves in the severest school so that they can grow and really meet themselves at a much deeper level and then that helps forge who you are.

That was kind of the emphasis for my SealFit program. And I started with this program called KOKORO camp or KOKORO which is a 50 hour non-stop physical, mental, emotional training program that was modeled after the SEALs hell week. I was doing it just for SEAL candidates and literally by the second time I ran it, I had more civilians come than SEALs. They were like, "Hey can we do this?" Initially they contacted and said, "Hey, I know this is for SEAL candidates and prep for SEAL training but this sounds fantastic. I've always wanted to

do this. I kind of missed the boat," or, "I chose not to go down that path," or maybe even, "I'm kind of considering it. Can we do this?" and I said, "Sure but I'm not watering down standards." And sure enough they came.

Nowadays, 20 percent of my clientele or less are spec ops candidates. The rest are guys like you who maybe had missed the challenge and now are trying to make up for it and so they want to go into the severest school.

JORDAN: Yeah, my friend Ben Greenfield, who you probably know, took KOKORO. There was something about being held in a tank and breathing out of a straw or something like that. I don't know, maybe he was messing with me but it sounds like something you would do.

MARK: Yeah, it's exactly something we would do. Ben did a great job. He came to our three week training and then finished up with KOKORO Camp. It had a profound impact on him just like it does everyone else and he's a stud, you know?

JORDAN: Yeah.

MARK: It did challenge him physically, obviously. It was more the other aspects and we say KOKORO Camp addresses five domains: physical, mental, emotional, intuition, and spiritual. And so, if you're coming as a stud then -- the top adventure racer in the world has been through it three times and every time he says he learns something new and profound about himself. And so, obviously the physical part doesn't scare him.

JORDAN: Right.

MARK: Doing 50 hours of nonstop training is, "Okay, I can do that. No problem. Let me do it again and see what else I can learn."

JORDAN: It sounds horrifying to me on multiple levels, which I think is kind of the idea, right?

MARK: It should scare you.

JORDAN: Mission accomplished. I noticed in some of your work that the essence of mental toughness for you -- or according to you in some cases, anyway -- is when you unconsciously make the wrong choices and then notice that you're doing that. What does that actually mean? What are we talking about when we're talking about noticing the wrong choices and living moment to moment and making the right choices? What do you mean by that?

MARK: Yeah, part of it is the progress of first, getting control of your physiology so that the external stress is not manifesting internally as anxiety or fear or your mind racing and out of control, which paralyzes you. So, that is something we teach at length in our SealFit training to control the physiology. So we use breathing practices, we use intense physical training, we use sleep deprivation, we use cold water -- things that scare people, we make you face your fears, we teach people that moving toward the fear -- like a SEAL will run toward the fear, will run toward the sound of gunfire because that's how they're going to learn what's on the other side, where on the other side of that is knowledge and mission success.

And so, physiological control leads to mental clarity. In that mental clarity you can begin to examine what decisions of yours are working and what aren't working. That's what I mean by -- it's kind of a law of contrast. You can see, "Okay, this thought led to this action -- cause and effect -- and that was suboptimal or flat out sucked." So what was it about that thought? So then we call attention control. We begin to control our attention to be able to examine -- slow down time to be able to examine our thoughts and to root out unproductive thoughts. So now we want to shift to more productive thoughts so we turn attention or control our attention and direct it toward something that's going to be more powerful.

First we have to decide on what that's going to be, which takes even more clarity and a little bit more time. But, we turn our attention toward the thinking process that's going to be

powerful and productive and get us toward mission success, however we define that. And we maintain this now with a very positive mental, energetic state, which I call feeding the courage wolf, which over time tunes your mind like a tuning fork, to always be optimistic, always be very positive outcome -- in the SEALs we say, "Failure is not an option," and what they're really saying is we're kind of like feeding the courage wolf because no matter what happens to us, we will find a way or make a way to win the mission. Whereas someone else might look at a down helicopter as a failure, we expect things like that to happen. How can we deal with that and still move briskly toward the target and toward mission success? So there's a lot there but each one of those could be a long topic of conversation -- each one of those things I said.

JORDAN: I'm sure and one of the things that I'd noticed in [\*Unbeatable Mind\*](#) was you'd said that, "One of our skills as a SEAL -- special operator -- was to expect nothing to work out," and I immediately thought, "That is so helpful in business because, well, nothing ever really quite works out a lot of the time."

MARK: "No plan survives contact with the enemy," is what we used to say and so that's what we mean. Have a plan but don't obsess about the plan. It doesn't need to be a perfect plan. Make it an 80 percent good enough plan and then go execute. But in that 80-percent good enough plan, you're still anticipating and dirt diving everything that could go wrong that you can think of. So you already have a mental image or a mental construct about how to navigate Murphy's law and how to navigate the screw ups.

First, you know this is how the mission should go if everything was perfect but we know conditions aren't perfect so here's all the contingencies that can go wrong. If this happens, we do this. If this happens, we do this -- contingency planning -- and we can mindgame those but then we also expect that there's going to be what Rumsfeld will call, "The unknowable unknown." So, even then we expect to have to get creative and be MacGyvers and figure \*\*\*\* out on the fly. So then nothing



surprises the SEAL. He's like, "Okay yeah, that didn't work out. How can we solve this one?" We find a way or make a way. We go over, under, around it, or we just obliterate the obstacle with a drone.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: You also mentioned that the most important lesson for mental toughness is to you know your why. It sounds like this goes back to what you were referring to earlier which is you can't read the label from the inside of the jar and to get that clarity is to know your why, which helps lead you through. Can you explain how that process works? What is our why and how does it help us become mentally tough?

MARK: Sure. The why is ultimately the last thing you have to connect to. Viktor Frankl and his book Man's Search for Meaning -- he actually created a whole philosophy called logotherapy and it essentially means that ultimately you don't have control over anything except for the way you think. So, if you're imprisoned or like you were, kidnapped, and all of a sudden you were freaking out because you're like, "Why is this happening to me? Why am I this victim? Life sucks. Somebody come save me." Guess what? You probably wouldn't be on this podcast.

JORDAN: Right.

MARK: Right? Instead of that you said, "Hey, I got myself into this thing. My why is not to end my life here. I've got a lot of great work to do. These guys are idiots. Let me solve this problem," and ultimately in your darkest moments you can go back to a deep sense of why -- your purpose and your place in life. I'm imagining, right?

JORDAN: For sure. When I was 20, I wasn't really thinking about it. Probably because I wasn't even necessarily mature enough to have a why. I just thought, "Well this is awful. I'm not going to go out like this." But, when I was 25 and when I got kidnapped by those state security officers, I think what really did go

through my head was, "There's so much more that I have to do and this is just such a shame. I know that I can survive this but I have to start getting it together. I can't just wait. No one's going to come rescue me -- metaphorically, physically, realistically -- I really have to do this. It's up to me."

MARK:

Yeah, exactly. "This is not my time." And so, get your \*\*\*\* together, use all the skills you can draw on and more, and get out of this mess. So Viktor Frankl was talking about that in the context of Jewish prisoners of war and he said, "You can't control what the guards are going to do, you can't control the fact that you're in this \*\*\*\*\* place, but what you can control is your attitude and you can control what you give to other people." So he basically said, "Listen, find meaning, find your why in giving and supporting and helping the other people and if we're all in this together and we all help each other, we'll get through this." So that was very powerful and very inspiring for people and it worked, by the way. The Navy SEAL, like me, once I figured out that that was my path, then that was my why. I am going to be a Navy SEAL, they'd have to kill me to get me out, this is an imperative for me to go do this to serve and to be a warrior and serve my country. So when I went through SEAL training everyday, when I woke up I connected that and said, "Here I am. Today is the only thing I have to worry about. I don't have to worry about tomorrow. The next evolution, whether it's a five mile timed run or a three mile ocean swim, is the only thing I have to worry about. I don't have to worry about what comes after that and I'm going to get through this. I'm going to kick ass and take names, do the best I can because I know why I'm here. I'm here to be a Navy SEAL. Period."

But a lot of my peers didn't have that attitude. They were physically fit and they were smart and they had all the right stuff from the outer but inside when the going got tough and they hit that dark night of the soul moment, they just couldn't answer the question, "Why am I doing this?" In fact they started asking bad questions like, "What am I doing here? This sucks. I could be A, B, C, or, D." You know what I mean? I tell the story about this guy Bill who I went to Officer Candidate school --

who was a total stud. He went to a college just like mine, he was an athlete just like I was, he ran circles around me sometimes in PT -- physical training. All around gung-ho all-American guy and he quit in the first two hours of SEAL training. The first day. The first evolution was a several hour beat down on the beach and I remember being out there and I'm like, "Wow, the odyssey has begun," and I'm really feeling excited like, "This is going to be awesome." I'm getting paid to be on the beach here and I'm getting the \*\*\*\* kicked out of me and these instructors are larger than life. This is exactly what I signed up for and Bush was obviously thinking something differently.

JORDAN: Yeah, sure.

MARK: It didn't happen for him and he decided that wasn't what he wanted and he went and rang the bell. And you know, that's fine. He's having a great life but he didn't know what he wanted until he was faced with that decision quare on. When the going got really, really tough.

JORDAN: Sure, because he thought he was going to run circles around everybody. When that didn't happen, he cracked immediately, right?

MARK: Yeah, pretty much. And so when you translate this to mental toughness, it's like, okay, ultimately you made it have pretty good control over his body when it came to functional fitness and athleticism and what not. That control hadn't extended to the internal domain where he could control his thoughts and begin to analyze and parse through what's going on. But he got obsessed with or stuck with that mental dialogue that said, "Holy \*\*\*\*, I can't do this," or, "I'm not sure I'm good enough to do this."

Whereas in my mind, I was like, "Take a breath. Okay, they're asking me to do a pushup. Do a pushup. Take a breath. They're asking me to climb this rope. Just climb this rope," and then behind all that was, "I'm going to be a Navy SEAL. I've got this. This is easy. Stay focused. They've got to kill me to get me out of

here." And so there was this dialogue that, like I said earlier, I call feeding the courage wolf, which is just continually stoking my courage that I was going to get through the evolution. And then when the evolution was over, you got a little break and you're like, "Okay, that wasn't so bad." So many people quit during SEAL training like five minutes before the damn evolution was over.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

MARK: Three hours of just brutal -- and they're like, "I can't take anymore." They quit and the instructors -- they're like waiting for that one last guy to quit. He quits and then they say, "Okay you're secure. Go take a hot shower and go grab lunch," and the guy is like, "Wait. I didn't know you were going to stop. Can I get back in?" They're like, "Sorry dude."

JORDAN: Yeah.

MARK: "Bad decision."

JORDAN: That's the point.

MARK: Yeah, the instructors are fantastic at what they do and they know -- they can see in people's eyes when they're about ready to quit. And they'll take evolutions like -- okay, on paper this evolution is going to go two hours and twenty minutes and they get to like two hours and eighteen minutes and they can look at this one guy and they're like, "You know what? This guy is going to go." And so they might go two hours and twenty-one minutes until he just, "Uncle. I'm out of here." And then they'll be like, "Okay, we're done."

And sometimes it goes the other way. They're like, "Okay everyone who is here is just locked and loaded," and sometimes there's this energy that comes over the boat crews in the class and they're just like, "We have met every objective of this evolution and nobody here is showing any weakness," and so they'll end it early and give the guys a little break, which is kind

of cool. So the instructors are masterful at evolving -- that's why we call them evolution. I believe it's because we're evolving character.

And there's a certain objective that we're trying to meet at every evolution and when it's met, everything else is kind of gravy. But they're great at poking and prodding and exposing weaknesses and then pouring a little salt in the wound and trying to see, "Is this person going to grow from this challenge that I'm throwing at them or is he going to fall apart?" and 80 percent plus fall apart because this is relentless. Day in and day out for nine months.

JORDAN: That sounds just terrible. You really have to be wired to want that and most people are not and that's what you're searching for, correct?

MARK: Yeah, the SEALs are searching for that and what I'm teaching is how people can wire themselves for that. Not necessarily to go be a SEAL -- although we do that -- but to have that same level of resiliency and fortitude in the face of whatever challenge comes your way or whatever challenge you accept.

JORDAN: In [\*Unbeatable Mind\*](#) there's also, "Five critical skills for developing mental toughness including the big four taught to Navy SEALs." Does that mean that physical toughness, mental toughness is a set of discrete skills that are teachable and learnable?

MARK: I believe so. Yeah, absolutely. The broadest level -- I've already alluded to most of them -- one is control over your physiology so that the external stresses don't affect you. So that you're not in a constant state of fight, flight, or freeze. You're calm in spite of what's going on inside of you and that extends to a calmness in your mind in the middle of whatever firefight you have, metaphorically or for a SEAL, in a real sense.

So that is physiological control leading to clarity of mind and in that clarity of mind, now we have the ability to separate from

your thinking processes and to think about your thinking in a very powerful way so that you don't have a quit moment. You literally keep stoking courage and you translate fear into persistence and performance and you translate what used to be anxiety into motivation into determination, using your mind to develop emotional control which leads to emotional power. That's a very distinct skill for mental toughness and resiliency.

And now we also work with our imagery so that we can see the win, we can also see -- we already talked about see where the mission could fail so that we've already dove within our minds once the failure does happen or the incident happens, we're quick to respond to it in a positive way, rather than get slowed down or stopped in our tracks. And then all of this leads us to be very task oriented and chunk things down into a task that we can achieve right here, right now, that's going to move us toward victory. It's connected to a larger task which is connected to a larger task in this long beaded thread of tasks. So each task that you knock down and accomplish for goal/target becomes a victory and then -- so in this way, you just keep focusing on one task at a time -- we call them micro goals -- and then half way toward your objective, you've had so many successes, so many victories that momentum is on your side. There's really nothing that can hold you back at this point.

So those are the big four skills that I just walked through there and the fifth is to really make it not about you but about your teammate or at least something higher. And this goes back to the why. If you're doing this for a bigger why -- in the SEALs, it's to serve my country and to serve my teammate when it gets really \*\*\*\*\* -- there's a compounding effect on your energy and your positive energy when you're serving your teammate and you're in it for your team -- and for the SEAL, the team is our unit and then also because we're fighting for America, the Americans are our team and we're doing it for them. We're doing it for the country to preserve our lifestyle and that's very motivating for all of us.

So those are the skills and I guess the big thing here, Jordan, is to recognize that these skills are trainable like we said earlier, but in order to train them, you've got to work them. You've got to practice them. That's what SEAL training does and that's what I teach in my [\*Unbeatable Mind\*](#) and we do a lot of it through SealFit in a more of an applied setting.

JORDAN: Mark, thanks so much. This has been really, really enlightening and of course fascinating as well and a little scary, which is the point. Is there anything I haven't asked you that you want to make sure that you deliver?

MARK: You know, I would just say it all starts with physiological control. I've brought that up a few times. You can't do any of this if you're out of control. And so, starting a breathing practice that I call box breathing is probably the biggest gift I can offer. And that's simply to slow your breathing down and to breathe in a pattern that looks like a square or a box.

So, you're inhaling to a four or five count, hold your breath to a four or five count, exhale to a four or five count, hold your breath -- and just do that every day for -- you know, just starting for five minutes and do it in the morning when you wake up so you don't get off and rushed by your day and then check back in with you and see how it goes because I've had thousands of people who just started with that and then three months later or even earlier they're like, "Wow. Holy \*\*\*\*, this has had a profound effect on my ability to really be clearheaded and to stay calm." So, I've got surgeons who use it during surgery and attorneys who use it during cases and businessmen who use it during speeches. So, it's a very, very powerful introductory practice.

JORDAN: Yeah, I like box breathing. I learned it when -- took a course on what to do if you're kidnapped, which is a few years too late but probably something -- you just never know. You get kidnapped two times, you're like, "Maybe I should get this under control." And they taught us box breathing because -- basically they throw you in a van, you have zip ties on, a blindfold, and things

like that and they teach you not to panic. And they're throwing water on you the whole time, which is kind of -- I'm imagining this van with no windows driving down the road leaking water and sweat from these dirty guys in the back, but it must have been a hell of a rental to return, now that I think about it.

They're throwing water on us and stuff like that and it's really cold -- on purpose -- and then they turn the heat way up and then they leave us in the sun for a while. And then they come back and they're dousing us with this stuff and they're trying to get us to stay calm and then we have to escape, get out, navigate to a certain point -- and box breathing was one of the parts that they showed us. Because if you're just letting your heart race as quickly as it wants to, to either heat you up, cool you down, or manage the adrenaline, you end up in trouble because you can't think about what you need to do next and where you need to go and what you need to do to get out of there. So the box breathing is very interesting and definitely useful if you're a public speaker and you're up on stage and you find yourself freaking out or you lose your kid in a shopping mall and you're freaking out. It's a pretty universal skill, so thank you so much for sharing that.

MARK: You bet, yeah.

JORDAN: Mark, much appreciated. We will link to SealFit, [Unbeatable Mind](#), and your books in the show notes and I really appreciate your time.

MARK: It's been a lot of fun. Thank you very much, Jordan.

JORDAN: All right.

MARK: Here we go!

JORDAN: Great big thank you to Mark Divine. The book title is [Unbeatable Mind: Forge Resiliency and Mental Toughness to Succeed at an Elite Level](#). This conversation was cool for me. When I interview these tough, military, Navy SEAL, special operator guys -- I



mean, I've got friends who do this but they're on a different level and I often feel like I'm on the outside looking in. So, it was cool to explore these emotional development, personal growth, mental toughness concepts, which -- I really just don't associate with myself at all -- personally. And I was on Mark's show recently and it was really interesting to see the parallels there too. So these two kind of back to back interviews with me on him and him on my show, really did open up something. I just never looked at myself in this way and I'm not saying that I'm basically a Navy SEAL because I do a lot of learning.

That's not what I'm saying here but I think what you'll hear when you listen to this and when you start to explore your own mindsets -- maybe some of you have a lot of this in common -- high performers especially have a lot of this mental toughness stuff in common. It doesn't mean you can do 5,000 burpees while getting hosed down on a beach in Coronado, but it does mean that many of us are performing at a high level, and we don't really think about the mindsets involved and we certainly don't think about how we can improve them. So, looking forward to exploring more of that and it's going to be cool having Mark Divine come through Art of Charm as well, which he had mentioned perhaps on his show. He's planning to come through AoC, so that's pretty rad.

Tweet at me your number one takeaway from Mark Divine. I'm @theartofcharm on Twitter. Remember, you can tap our album art in most mobile podcast players to see the show notes for this episode. We'll link to the show notes directly on your phone. I also want to encourage you to join us in the AoC challenge, at [theartofcharm.com/challenge](http://theartofcharm.com/challenge), or you can text the word, 'charmed,' C-H-A-R-M-E-D to 33444.

The challenge is about improving your networking skills, your connection skills, and inspiring those around you to develop a personal and professional relationship with you. It's free -- a lot of people may not know that -- it's a great way to get the ball rolling and a great way to get some forward momentum. We'll also email you our fundamentals Toolbox that I mentioned

earlier on the show. That includes some great practical stuff, ready to apply, right out of the box, on reading body language and having charismatic nonverbal communication, the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, networking and influence strategies, persuasion tactics, and everything else we teach here at The Art of Charm. It will make you a better networker, it'll make you a better connector, and a better thinker. That's [theartofcharm.com/challenge](http://theartofcharm.com/challenge) or text 'charmed,' that's C-H-A-R-M-E-D to 33444.

For the full show notes for this and all previous episodes, head on over to [theartofcharm.com/podcast](http://theartofcharm.com/podcast). This episode of AoC was produced by Jason DeFillippo, Jason Sanderson is our audio engineer and editor, show notes on the website are by Robert Fogarty, theme music by Little People, transcriptions by [TranscriptionOutsourcing.net](http://TranscriptionOutsourcing.net) -- I'm your host Jordan Harbinger. Go ahead, tell your friends because the greatest compliment you can give us is a referral to someone else, either in person or shared on the Web. Word of mouth is everything. So, share the show with friends and enemies. Stay charming and leave everything and everyone better than you found them.



