

Introduction

I wrote this book as a roadmap to help you find success, purpose, and happiness. Because there are so many confusing messages being promoted today about these basic concepts, I see a lot of people, especially college students and young adults, struggling to get started in their lives.

Having interviewed hundreds of high school seniors for college scholarships, and followed them through college and their early careers, I understand the concerns, anxieties, and even fears of the millennial generation. Trying to sort through your life choices while constantly being reminded by parents, teachers, and the popular media to "follow your dreams, do what you love, find your passion, and sell your personal brand" can be pretty intimidating for a twenty-year-old or even a thirty-year-old.

To be successful in life, I have learned that you have to put first things first, but today's popular culture has it backwards. You can't find your passion until you develop your work ethic. You can't find your purpose until you discover who you are. You can't find your happiness until you find your talent and help others. And you can't find success until you earn it.

I am a builder, not a philosopher, so I have designed this book the way a builder would design a home-from the ground up. Each chapter covers an important building block to help you build your life on solid ground-so you can realize all the good things life has to offer.

Over the course of my career in homebuilding, I have learned to appreciate the importance of a good foundation-one that is built on solid ground. When I build a house with a good foundation, it allows the owner to thrive in it for decades with maximum enjoyment and minimal problems.

On the other hand, if I build a house with a bad foundation or on shifting soil, the foundation cracks will eventually extend damage to the framing, drywall, and even the roof. These problems are expensive and often impossible to repair, creating long-term hassles and heartaches for the owner.

So it is with life.

In today's media-driven, anything-goes culture, we seem to be losing sight of solid ground-the time-tested attributes of personal character, hard work, goal setting, self-awareness, and helping others-that have always been necessary for a successful life. Popular myths are now attempting to redefine everything, and the "solid ground" is being replaced with the "shifting sands" of instant gratification, self-absorption, and consumerism.

Finding success, purpose, and happiness is not simple, and it certainly is not easy. But if you are willing to put in the time and effort to invest in your future, then this book is for you. In these pages, you will find many of the important life lessons I have learned. These lessons have come from my own experience as well as the writings and teachings of many of our best thinkers—from Socrates to contemporary philosophers, and from successful people in all walks of life. From these lessons, I will show you how to build your foundation, reach your potential, and ultimately find life's greatest achievements.

The many ideas and concepts presented here are not all my own. Having read many of the popular books on these subjects, I have tried to present a compilation or "highlight reel" of the best advice, the best ideas, and the best wisdom I have accumulated. Where possible, I have given credit to the original writers and thinkers.

This book begins with my personal story to demonstrate how your early years and family history can help you understand your roots and how this understanding can lead to purpose and meaning. Then I discuss the building blocks that will give you the stability and support you will need to deal with the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Next, we will move to the real world skills you need to reach your potential. And finally, we will explore life's greatest achievements—success, purpose, meaning, wisdom, and happiness—so that you can better understand and achieve them all.

Why This Message is Important

My generation had it pretty easy. College tuition was low, and when we graduated, there were a lot of big corporations waiting to hire and train us to do our jobs. There was a clear ladder for us to climb. We also didn't have the distractions of the Internet, the ubiquitous cell phone, or social media, and our cultural values were pretty clear—faith, family, country, and hard work.

Today, navigating the journey to success in career and life is not so obvious. In fact, for many, it is downright scary. That's why close to 35 percent of college students currently take some form of anxiety medication and only 45 percent report they are thriving. These are sad statistics, yet only a few grown-ups seem concerned.

What young adults need today, probably more than ever, is a return to the fundamentals of building a good life—one that is full of goodness, success, and even happiness. And it's not really that complicated. This book presents a model for success that has worked for centuries—and it will work today. By getting clear on what really matters in your life and career, your anxiety and fear will melt

away, and you can begin your journey to success-on Solid Ground.

I wrote this book for you-if, as I suspect, you are a person who wants to find success and happiness, who has dreams and ambitions, and the talent to achieve them, but in all the noise and nonsense and clutter of modern life, you're not quite sure how to get where you want to go.

I was once in your shoes. But with a lot of hard work, good decisions, and the confidence to take risks, I made it.

So can you.

Here's how...