



UNSTOPPABLE

**A 90-DAY PLAN TO BIOHACK YOUR
MIND AND BODY FOR SUCCESS**



BEN ANGEL

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Introduction

Something was horribly wrong, but for the life of me, I couldn't put my finger on it. I was 34 years old and had just completed my last event on a national speaking tour throughout Australia. The second the audience left the room and the doors shut, I lay flat on the ground in utter exhaustion. I had been losing my train of thought all day, and at one point had even asked the audience what I was talking about in mid-sentence. This wasn't the first time it had happened, either.

After the successful release of my third book in 2014, *Flee 9 to 5: Get 6-7 Figures and Do What You Love*, I returned home from a solo trip to the U.S. and Canada and started experiencing severe depression, exhaustion, and anxiety. Depression, an old archnemesis of mine, used to be manageable. This time, however, it didn't matter how much personal development work, meditation, supplementation, exercise, or healthy eating I did or how much willpower I used. It clung to me like a bad smell. There was no amount of "positive thinking" that was going to get me out of this downward spiral. Everything had become overwhelming. Even music, which I used to love to listen to while working, became an irritant.

Suddenly, light, noise, and social interactions were too much for my brain to process. I couldn't manage social situations anymore and moved across Australia to cut off ties with friends. I barely had enough energy to stay awake, let alone hold a conversation or speak onstage. Reading and writing, my passions, became too exhausting for me to contemplate. My short-term and long-term memory were both failing, and my speech was slurred.

Everyone was beginning to notice, no matter how hard I tried to hide it. I became plagued with self-doubt and fear that made every waking moment painful. Worse yet, I began having suicidal thoughts.

I beat myself up because the soundtrack in my head was stuck on repeat. It kept saying, *I should know better! I should know how to fix this! Why can't I stay focused? Why can't I think my way out of this one? Why aren't I motivated and driven like I used to be? Where did my confidence and energy go? Why do I feel like I'm not good enough anymore?* And: *What the f—k is wrong with me? I know I'm capable of more!* I felt like I was falling out of an airplane without a parachute. I was just waiting to hit the ground, desperately hoping someone would catch me before I came crashing down.

Like many of you, I mistakenly thought I could self-medicate with self-help. For years, it had worked. This time, nothing worked, and I wanted to know why.

I shared my symptoms with doctors from Adelaide to Melbourne to Dubbo and was confronted with patronizing remarks like, "Most people

never work out while they're fatigued," "You look fit and healthy; you should be fine," and, "Are you depressed?" I was but not for the reasons they believed. I walked out of the last office in tears, having been told I needed to accept these symptoms as my fate.

This was my first revelation that the medical field had been failing me for more than 20 years. Doctors are trained to diagnose the symptoms, not the underlying cause. I needed to seek out doctors who didn't follow this traditional approach and were willing to investigate deeper with the newest medical advances and scientific research. I needed to find visionary doctors who realized that the traditional model was doing more harm than good.

I wanted to dig out the underlying causes from the roots, not cover them up as the doctors would have me do. None of them had any answers. I felt more and more defeated daily, on the verge of a complete mental breakdown.

Have you ever had a goal you wanted to achieve, but it always slipped through your fingertips? Have you ever doubted yourself and your ability to the point where you gave up before you broke through? Have you ever given up on yourself, your dream, and your purpose because you felt you had nothing left to give? Have you known you were capable of more, but you didn't know how to unlock that capacity? Have you read countless personal development books, listened to podcasts, or participated in coaching or therapy just to end up right back where you started? No amount of willpower can unlock this dilemma for you.

Our "hustle until you die" culture that applauds those who work themselves into an early grave would peg you as weak-minded. They would say, "You're just making excuses! You're being lazy and failing because you're not working hard enough!" Worse yet, they would tell you, "It's all in your head; you just need to push through!"

But what if it wasn't just all in your head? What if your excuses were a symptom of a deeper problem, not a poor attitude? And what if there were countless scientific links between food, mood, nutritional deficiencies, gut health, inflammation, energy, medication, and psychology being ignored and leading to dangerous consequences?

What if the “hustle now” culture, personal development, and therapeutic and medical models were too simplistic in isolation? These models for success fail to take in the bigger picture of what influences human emotion, behavior, and performance. And, worst yet, what if people ended up believing they were worthless as a result of this culture?

Every time we log onto social media, we’re overwhelmed with articles on the best time to wake up, blog posts on the productivity habits of the superwealthy, and images of people living their best lives (#Iwokeuplikethis), all designed to help us become smarter, faster, healthier, more productive, and more empowered. But what if we’ve had it backward all this time? What if there’s more to success than simply hustling for our goals, waking up early, working late nights, and pushing ourselves beyond the breaking point?

Four years ago, I was at my peak physically, mentally, and in business. I was delivering online marketing courses to thousands of entrepreneurs internationally and speaking at business and personal development events in front of thousands of people across Australia. My audiences included local and state governments, universities, and companies like Toyota on the topics of business, marketing, sales, personal development, and personal branding. I was consulting with one-on-one business clients and helping them grow their businesses nationally. And I was traveling between New Zealand and Australia to work with high-profile clients. A regular in the Australian business media, I wrote articles and conducted interviews on a monthly basis, and I loved it! I was interviewed as one of Australia’s leading personal branding and marketing experts for magazines including the Australian versions of *GQ* and *Marie Claire*, among countless others.

Every time I stepped onstage to present, I came alive. I used this energy to write my first three books, two of which became bestsellers and all three of which I wrote in 30 to 40 days each. My brain was firing on all cylinders, and I had focus like you wouldn’t believe. Nothing was too hard, and no problem was too big to solve. I used this energy and focus to build an online education business that boasted more than \$1 million in sales with two part-time team members and required only four to five hours of my time per day.

Then everything changed. I wanted to give it all up, and I couldn't work out why. I was trapped! I couldn't escape, and I certainly couldn't take on a full-time job as I was barely getting through the day. My resume would have read, "Proactive worker who naps a lot."

In 2017, I packed my bags and flew to America.

You see, I knew I had the capacity in me for more, but for some reason someone had changed the lock on the door, and I couldn't open it. My soul was willing, but my body was weak. Fearful of where my uncontrolled emotions would take me next, I drank several cups of green tea one hot summer's day and pushed myself to come up with a solution. I wasn't willing to give up on ten years of hard work. But I knew I wouldn't find the answers in a self-help book or at the doctor's office. I had tried and failed miserably. I wanted to know why!

In my exhausted state, I came across *New York Times* bestselling author Dave Asprey's audiobook *Head Strong: The Bulletproof Plan to Activate Untapped Brain Energy to Work Smarter and Think Faster—In Just Two Weeks*, in which he shares his journey of coming back from debilitating fatigue by biohacking his body and brain back to health. He gave me hope.

Biohacking is the practice of changing the environment inside and outside you so that you gain full control of your biology to enhance your body, mind, and life. It has grown in popularity in recent years as individuals are discovering the numerous benefits of taking control of their health and leaving nothing to chance.

So I did the most illogical thing of all—I pitched a book idea to *Entrepreneur* magazine in which I would go on a 90-day mission to biohack my mind and body and develop a plan anyone could use based on what I discovered from biohackers, neuroscientists, doctors, psychologists, and more. This didn't just mean getting better; it meant continuing to optimize and upgrade my performance. To do so, I had to ask the same questions we have asked repeatedly for years but look at them from completely different perspectives to come up with new answers we have never been able to arrive at before. I wanted complete and conclusive answers to questions for which I had received overly simplistic answers, questions such as:

- ▶ Why don't people really change?
- ▶ How can I improve my memory and my confidence?
- ▶ What really holds people back from becoming successful?
- ▶ What is the root cause of procrastination? Is it psychology, biochemistry, or a mix of both?
- ▶ Why do we get stressed, and what are the quickest ways to obliterate it?
- ▶ Why do we make excuses? Are we just lazy, or is there an underlying cause all the self-help gurus have overlooked?
- ▶ How can I upgrade my focus and increase my levels of motivation?
- ▶ How can I unleash my purpose and live a meaningful life?
- ▶ What is the best way to hack my own body for endless amounts of energy, clarity, and focus?
- ▶ How can I reboot my brain, reimagine my life, and reawaken my soul to become unstoppable, so that no goal or dream feels out of reach?

In hindsight, 90-day goal looks insane, especially considering I could barely string a sentence together at the time I pitched the book. All of a sudden, I was going to not only attempt to solve a problem even the doctors couldn't but also write a book on the new science of success using neuroscience, biohacking, technology, and psychology. But what did I have to lose?

I thought I was at the end of my writing career because my cognitive abilities and motivation were no longer accessible. Thankfully, the magazine and its publishing division jumped at the idea. To be honest, I didn't know how this journey was going to unfold. But because my options were fast becoming limited, I threw every last ounce of my willpower and energy, including traveling from Australia to Canada and the United States, into seeking answers.

If willpower is the fuel in your reserve tank, mine had one drop remaining. I was going to use it as wisely as possible to completely refuel and reboot my body, brain, and soul.

The only way I could achieve this mission would be to close my "identity gap." The identity gap is the distance between who you are and who you need to become to reach your goals. Our identity dictates

our thoughts, behaviors, and actions and either sets us up for success or primes us for failure at both a conscious and subconscious level. It limits or expands our thinking and our ability to succeed, depending on which identity we hold at any given time. You can't be a good accountant if you're a painter at heart.

Our capacity for success is limited by who we believe ourselves to be, to the degree our biochemistry allows us to be it. We hold various identities throughout our lives: mother, father, brother, sister, entrepreneur, employee. But what about an identity that allows us to unlock our potential and live a life unleashed? We need to evolve into a person who can be more, do more—and have more, someone who can become a catalyst for change and never-ending improvement. This is the beautiful self-evolution of who you are becoming in the pursuit of your goals—an evolution that stretches us and encourages us to grow. When we fail, it is because we have failed to evolve into the person we need to be to solve the necessary problems to break through.

To find new answers, I traveled the world and met with the top biohackers, neuroscientists, doctors, and microbiome experts. I tried out the latest wearable technology designed to unlock human potential. Many of these devices, funded by the Pentagon and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), are being used by the military and Olympic athletes. I tested the latest smart drugs to boost my focus, mood, and cognition and met with the best of the best working in revolutionary medicine, who performed comprehensive lab tests to uncover any physiological problems affecting my mood and motivation.

You'll discover how my medications, nutritional deficiencies, and foods influenced my behavior; what changes I embraced to correct that behavior; and how these factors could be impacting your life. You'll also discover how using the latest neurotechnology devices trained my brain to focus, and how I tested my body with a four-week CrossFit challenge. You'll see the changes I went through when I experienced intermittent fasting, experimented with various dietary protocols, tracked my sleep, took countless supplements, and tested technology that reduced my

stress in less than 30 seconds. I even walked across hot coals to find some answers—literally, not metaphorically! Although, that might not have been as nerve-wracking as the colonic irrigation I had.

What I found was truly jaw-dropping. By using the real science of success, I was able to bring myself back to full health and help others in the process. In the following pages, I dive into the real science of success, not just the simplistic version we have subscribed to that is far too limiting. Along this journey, you will also meet others who through persistence have overcome serious challenges to become unstoppable in their fields by biohacking their way to the top.

I welcome you now to join me on what ended up being an incredible journey. Buckle up; you're in for a ride like no other—one that will result in an incredible paradigm shift into the science of success you never saw coming.

—Ben Angel
The Accidental Biohacker,

CHAPTER 1

A Paradigm Shift Decades in the Making Closing Your Identity Gap

I was on the verge of a breakdown and beginning to have suicidal thoughts, and I didn't know where to turn. My life at this point was an absolute lie. I was touted as "The Agent of Influence" to hundreds of thousands of devoted entrepreneurs and companies, yet I couldn't even motivate myself to look at my next goal. And I was angry about it.

It was my dream to move to New York and continue my career as an author. I had visualized this goal countless times. I could see myself walking the busy city streets, going to cafes and restaurants, and, yes,

even having my very own Carrie Bradshaw moment writing in the window of a classic New York City townhouse (don't judge me). However, for reasons that eluded me, I couldn't even bring myself to look at my to-do list; it was too overwhelming. I was fast becoming what my industry sees as a has-been. My dream was getting further and further out of reach, and it didn't matter how I tried to convince myself that I was OK. The truth was, I wasn't all right, and nobody had any answers as to why.

You may be able to relate. You know you're capable of more, but for some reason you can't unlock the capacity to thoroughly express it through your purpose, your vision, and your goals. Your dreams always feel just out of reach. And, no matter how hard you try to stretch yourself to grasp it, you always fall short. You try to convince yourself that you'll get up earlier, work harder, and do whatever it takes to achieve your goals, but time after time, you miss. Is it us? Do we just have a poor attitude? Do we just need to toughen up? What are the super-successful people doing that we're not? I followed their strategies, but I didn't get their outcomes. Why?

We are taught that if you're sad, you need to be more positive. If you're angry, you need to find peace. If you're procrastinating, you're lazy. If you're making excuses, you're weak. It's all in your head. Pick up a self-help book and get over it.

And yet if you go to a doctor complaining of these same symptoms, you'll get a medical diagnosis of depression and be put on antidepressants to fix a chemical imbalance in your brain. Even then, the doctor can't take the time to find out the cause of your decline, thanks to training, attitudes, and time constraints.

What's worse is that the self-help industry looks at these same symptoms and believes an injection of motivation and an inspirational story is the answer. It's not interested in finding out the underlying cause either.

This realization led me to ask: If these are my symptoms, what is the cause?

We all experience setbacks to varying degrees throughout our lifetimes, some more severe than others. In a 2018 online Facebook

survey my team conducted of 2,000 entrepreneurs internationally, we discovered the following revelations:

- ▶ 75 percent experienced brain fog.
- ▶ 82 percent experienced procrastination.
- ▶ 82 percent were easily distracted.
- ▶ 65 percent were easily overwhelmed.
- ▶ 71 percent experienced high levels of stress.
- ▶ 58 percent did not wake up feeling refreshed.
- ▶ 47 percent experienced sadness.
- ▶ 62 percent had inconsistent energy throughout the day.
- ▶ 65 percent got caught in a negative mental feedback loop.

These numbers are astonishing in that they demonstrate a large percentage of people experiencing symptoms that could be related to depression. In this specific demographic, we have highly motivated people who are passionate about their goals and embedded in a workforce that is usually made up of the movers and shakers of the business world, yet an overwhelming number of them are not enjoying complete wellness when it comes to their mental health. How many of them will burn out before they can achieve their dreams due to biological factors?

By looking more carefully, we can see that there is an underlying cause triggering these symptoms. I firmly believe we can cure ourselves of this “disease” of elusive well-being. Especially in the United States, we are seeing an epidemic of prescription drugs as the answer to these symptoms, and the medical industry is not yet willing to trade in their prescription pads for questionnaires to discover the root causes of our decline.

Closing the Gap to Who You Are Supposed to Be

My story is not the exception to the rule; it is the rule. These are all symptoms of an underlying issue completely ignored by the personal development industry and the medical profession.

Like a frog, which will slowly die when put into tepid water that’s then brought to a gradual boil, we, too, will adapt to our suffering

without conscious awareness until severe symptoms appear and medical intervention is required. At that point, a scorched-earth approach is taken instead of a preventative one.

All these symptoms decrease our mental ability to process new information, with hazardous implications when it comes to closing the identity gap from our current self to who we need to become to reach our goals. In particular, it limits who we believe ourselves to be and our perceived ability to bring our visions to life. Even if mild, it snaps us back into who we are at our worst.

It wasn't until after visiting a doctor in the rural city of Dubbo in New South Wales, Australia, that I had my first major realization after what ended up being another patronizing interaction.

Looking at the Conundrum

I wasn't tired because I was depressed; I was depressed because I was tired. I want to know why I'm tired! Being depressed as a result of fatigue was the first of many discoveries that helped me uncover the solution, not just to my symptoms, but to reaching my goals and rewriting my model for success from the ground up. If I could discover why I was tired, making excuses, and procrastinating, everything else would fall into place. I would finally get my motivation and drive back, quit making excuses, and reignite my energy and passion for the projects I used to love.

Like millions of other people, I had started off with mild symptoms that I quickly dismissed as the result of overworking, a weak mental attitude, or late nights and tight deadlines. I had subscribed to the philosophy of “just do it” without being fully aware of the consequences.

When the soul is willing but the body is weak, the body can't fulfill the mission the soul is on. My soul was more than ready, willing, and able. Despite reading countless self-help books, attending seminars, and drowning myself in motivational strategies for 15 years, I realized that the information I had was sorely incomplete.

We've been taught that our psychology is the number-one key to success; our biochemistry doesn't get a mention unless you're an elite athlete or experiencing severe physical symptoms that are obvious to

others. But even mild biochemical problems can prevent you from reaching your goals.

Strategic planning, mindset, and willpower are essential for one's ability to think and compete on the job and in life. These factors can make one a legitimate competitor. However, biochemistry, which fuels one's endurance and tenacity, provides the speed to succeed.

We tend to automatically assume that we're all biochemically on par with the likes of Tony Robbins, Richard Branson, the Dalai Lama, and other peak performers. But some of them actively work to hack their biochemistry. Others, through a combination of factors we'll be talking about in this book, got lucky; their biochemistry naturally makes them less susceptible to stress, brain fog, and sadness, helping clear the path for their success.

That's not to say they don't experience these ailments; they do but to manageable degrees. Nor is it to say they don't work hard; it just doesn't seem as hard because they are biochemically sound, establishing a firm foundation on which everything else can flourish.

We imitate their strategies. We want to know what time they get up, what they eat, how they think, what their core beliefs and reading habits are, but not for one second do we consider that each of us is biochemically unique. We each process our food, thoughts, and emotions very differently due to numerous factors—factors we ignore in the quest for personal success, unless one of our goals is to lose weight.

Anyone can apply the same psychological principles as the ultrasuccessful, but if you're severely depleted on things like vitamin D, omega-3s, vitamin C, vitamin B12, dopamine, serotonin, or even testosterone (both women and men), you could experience mild to severe brain fog, fatigue, lethargy, anxiety, stress, and depression, all of which will severely impede your ability to remain focused and reach your goals. It's like putting a plant in toxic soil and willing it to grow. It doesn't matter how much you tell it anything is possible, that f—ker is going to die!

Ignorance of biochemistry undermines the psychological principles we're taught to apply. It's the invisible factor that derails us—an unseen hand that holds you back from crossing the finish line. Without this

information, any strategies for productivity and peak performance are incomplete and ineffective.

Instead of realizing our biochemistry is out of alignment, we attach a negative emotional mental state to our goals and decide the goal itself is too hard or too lofty. We end up with self-defeating thoughts, such as, “I’m too tired,” “I haven’t got time for this,” “What’s the point?,” “I feel too overwhelmed,” or “I’m so stressed.” To avoid that scenario, perhaps we should ask ourselves a few questions:

- ▶ What if instead of just studying the habits of highly successful people, our best creative minds, and multimillionaire game changers we compiled a database of their medical data that examines their serotonin and dopamine levels and microbiome makeup and compares it to those who routinely quit, make excuses, or experience more intense negative emotions?
- ▶ Would poor biochemical results impact their ability to cross the finish line? Do these biochemical levels impact the abilities of the highly successful to overcome setbacks and cross the finish line? Would these biological processes provide a real and complete understanding as to why successful people behave a specific way, not based on their mental attitude and upbringing alone?
- ▶ If a person were able to deplete their dopamine and serotonin levels, how would their behavior change?
- ▶ Could a successful, confident person be incapacitated physically and mentally as a result of nutritional deficiencies?
- ▶ If we were to look at their biochemical levels when they encountered a major setback, what would we discover?
- ▶ Upon examining other aspects of a person’s life during a major physical and emotional setback, what would we find? What were they eating at the time? How did their behavior change? What occurred in the body, not just in their attitude?

(We are of course setting aside the ethical dilemma of compiling such a database; these questions are purely hypothetical.) The only time we consider biochemistry is when we’re in decline or attempting to lose weight, not when we’re trying to become a better version of

ourselves. When we fail to reach our goals, it's implied we have a weak mental attitude, not a biochemical weakness that can be rapidly rectified with the right help. True personal transformation requires both biochemistry and psychology for lasting change. Otherwise, we'll default back to what's easy.

When the brain is weak, the output will be meek. One finding in our survey of 2,000 entrepreneurs was unexpected, but is blindingly obvious in hindsight: 57 to 65 percent of those experiencing brain fog were easily distracted, often procrastinated, lost their train of thought, and felt overwhelmed and sad, and were *also* experiencing food cravings. This was a *major* contributing biochemical factor as to why their day was being derailed and why they tended to give up. This discovery further led me to believe that success isn't only in the mind or body; it's in both.

To be truly successful means not only hacking our minds, but hacking our chemistry as well. Looking at this conundrum from a new perspective challenged everything I believed about self-help. I, like others, had been led to believe that you can will your way out of your excuses, procrastination, brain fog, negative thoughts, and sadness, but if you're depressed, you need a drug.

But what if that's not true?

How much does psychology play a part in your success and how much does biochemistry play a part?

The reality is that you cannot use mental ability to compensate for inadequate biochemistry. It can help, but unless you address and understand the underlying issues, avoidance and procrastination will continue. Your personal development practices will only be effective when your biochemistry is working at peak efficiency and supporting your body to its fullest.

New Approach to Old Problems

What do you tackle first, your mindset or your biology? In the past, we'd pick up a self-help book or seek out a therapist, who might or might not address our nutritional deficiencies.

These approaches might have been fine a decade ago, before the major changes to our environment and food supply, light pollution, and the psychological impact of social media began affecting our daily behavior. However, our prehistoric brain hasn't caught up with today's technological advances; our biochemistry is stuck in our evolutionary past. As a result, we're glued to our computer, phone, and notebook screens 24/7, and this addiction to technology is having a profound impact on how we behave.

Studies show that social media and app companies are using their technology to create addictive platforms, for which we unknowingly pay the price.¹ They are using cute emojis and keeping track of how many times we use their app, thus creating an addictive social media habit. These habits become pleasing to the user, embedding the need to do it again for that brief hit of pleasure. Facebook has admittedly hijacked one of our neurotransmitters, dopamine, for financial gain. Dopamine, otherwise known as the "reward chemical" due to it being in charge of our brain's pleasure-reward system, can give us the drive and focus we need to be productive. Unfortunately, we aren't always aware that this is happening until we feel it impacting other areas of our life.

Dopamine is a key component in various brain functions involving sleep, learning, motor control, working memory, and our ability to focus and concentrate.² Parkinson's, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and other conditions are at the extreme spectrum end of abnormally low dopamine levels. In other words, is social media addiction a result of lower dopamine levels due to stress and the modern world we now live in? Excuses, procrastination, and brain fog are possible symptoms of deficient levels of dopamine, not the causes.

That's when I was hit with a blinding flash of the obvious: My excuses, negative thought patterns, and lack of drive and motivation weren't simply the result of a weak mental attitude. The problem was a neurotransmitter deficiency combined with various other factors. No one is inherently unworthy, useless, or weak; we all fluctuate throughout our lifetimes. Life, as you'll find out through the course of this book, is not a controlled experiment.

Positive thinking isn't a substitute for a nutritional deficiency. Unfortunately, we don't associate vague symptoms such as low self-esteem, anger, carbohydrate cravings, digestive complaints, feeling overwhelmed, insomnia, joylessness, brain fog, and poor cognitive function with low serotonin levels. Instead, we beat ourselves up for not being as good as everyone else.³

*You are not your
excuses;
your excuses are
your biochemistry.*

With that in mind, could my internal chemistry be triggering my procrastination, fear, anxiety, and greater willingness to quit? I had only ever experienced these fleetingly in the past, and they always subsided. This time they had laid roots I had to dig up. The short answer is a resounding “YES!”

Diagnosing Failure

The greatest problem with our old approach to success is that it fails to bridge the gap between biochemistry and psychology. The two are so intertwined they cannot be separated, and yet our medical system, the personal development industry, psychologists, naturopaths, nutritionists, and therapists have drawn lines between their methodologies for decades that have led to emphasizing psychology over biochemistry, or vice versa—but not a combination of both.

The true evolution will occur when we have a convergence of all practices of medicine. This is beginning to occur in the field of functional medicine, and it will revolutionize health care and the way we think about ourselves and the science of success. But before we address success, let's talk about failure.

Why We Really Fail

Failure isn't just due to low dopamine levels. It's also a question of managing our “fight or flight” response. When we're stressed, the body's somatic nervous system triggers what is known as the fight or flight response. The body kicks into high gear and shifts its energy resources toward fighting off a threat or fleeing from an enemy.

The fight or flight response releases the hormones adrenaline and cortisol, which sets off a cascade of internal processes, including increased respiration, fast heartbeat, and blood vessel dilation in the arms and legs, which triggers our digestive system to increase our bloodstream glucose levels to deal with the emergency. Once the emergency is over, everything returns to normal.⁴

However, if it continues over an extended period, chronic stress can cause problems ranging from cognitive impairment and emotional instability to physical illness. Emotional symptoms include agitation, moodiness, feeling overwhelmed, an inability to relax, low self-esteem, worthlessness, depression, and isolation. Physical symptoms could include headaches, low energy, upset stomach, muscle tension, chest pain, insomnia, colds and infections, loss of desire, nervousness, shaking, or difficulty swallowing. Stress can also lead to cognitive symptoms: racing thoughts, forgetfulness, disorganization, inability to focus, brain fog, poor judgment, pessimism, and constant worrying.⁵

Stress, Food Cravings, and an Inability to Focus on What Matters

Stress also plays a role. A staggering 71 percent of our 2,000 respondents said “yes” to experiencing high levels of stress, and here’s where it gets fascinating: Stress causes food cravings, specifically for sugar and highly processed food. The digestion of this food releases the neurotransmitter serotonin, which brings us waves of calm and relaxation, allowing us to regain our focus temporarily, until the serotonin levels taper off.

Between 57 and 65 percent of our respondents who reported being plagued with brain fog, feeling overwhelmed, worrying, and sadness also experienced food cravings.

Carbohydrate cravings can be spurred on by low serotonin levels as this “feel good” chemical is released during the consumption of food. This results in a negative feedback loop driving people to consume excessive amounts of carbs to alter how they feel for the better. These cravings are often seen in individuals who are exposed to high levels of stress.⁶

The connection to our inability to succeed lies in two factors that are at play on a day-to-day basis. When we experience food cravings or stress, our fight or flight response is triggered. This takes blood away from our prefrontal cortex, which controls a myriad of executive functions, including complex behaviors like coordination, impulse control, emotional reactions, personality, focusing, organizing, complex planning, and prioritizing simultaneous information.⁷

This sets up a nasty cycle: Our blood sugar drops, our cravings increase, and our cortisol spikes, limiting our ability to control our impulses, attention, and emotional reactions. We reach for sweet or highly refined carbohydrates and our blood sugar increases, followed later by a sudden drop, which results in brain fog, inability to focus, loss of motivation, and the inability to reach our goals.

We attempt to address this cycle in our children by limiting their sugar intake, and yet we dismiss it when it comes to our own psychological well-being. We've also been duped by companies that are putting a "healthy spin" on their products, even though many of them are high in sugars, sucralose, refined carbohydrates, caffeine, and preservatives, all of which impact our ability to think clearly.

When your blood sugar drops or you experience high levels of stress, your brain switches into survival mode, driving you to take more risks and putting your primal brain into high gear. This shift causes your personality, mood, and identity to fluctuate throughout the day. Your motivation may be high in the morning, but by the afternoon, you'd rather sit on the couch and watch TV because you've used up all your mental capacity for the day.

In this primal state, the brain's key purpose is to sustain life, not keep you focused on achieving your goals. That doesn't even get a rating on the scale of critical functions necessary for your life to continue. In this state, otherwise known as self-preservation mode, you default to maintaining the status quo and nothing more.

The problem is that most of us can't switch it off, or if we do, it quickly comes back on again later, creating a roller-coaster ride of emotions and an inability to complete projects on time. How easily it comes on is directly linked to how we've learned to process possible

threats. This is based on numerous factors, including our upbringing, genetics, and hormone levels like serotonin and dopamine just to name a few. If your serotonin or dopamine levels are low, you're more susceptible to dealing with setbacks poorly and more likely to have a reactive instead of responsive internal environment.

Our current lifestyles bombard us with stress factors daily once the pebble starts rolling downhill from something that seems inconsequential at the time. Examples of these stress factors could be a reaction to unhealthy foods, allergies, bad news, insomnia, pollution, hostile co-workers, financial stress, too much caffeine, relationship conflicts, family issues, constant stress, or a dirty look from someone on the street. The stress begins to pick up pace, and other problems appear as a result. It happens so slowly that we don't notice it initially.

At that point, any attempt to get out in front of it becomes futile because our cognitive functions have been disabled; it's like searching for a key in a room with the lights off.

To find the switch, we have to change identities and fuel sources, even if just for a moment, to reboot our spirit, body, and mind in unison.

The Old Models of Treatment

While speaking with experts in the field of medicine, psychiatry, personal development, biohacking, neurofeedback, biofeedback, and neuroscience, I discovered something interesting. They each have their own unique formula for success, but they rarely merge them into one cohesive framework to create lasting change for those of us who are asking more from ourselves. Some of these frameworks include:

- *The Medical Model*: diagnoses and treats illness, often prescribing pills to manage symptoms without always uncovering and addressing the root cause, resulting in possible side effects. It views the body as a collection of independent organs that gets divided up by medical specialties.

- ▶ *The Self-Help Model*: drives awareness, uncovers self-sabotaging behavior, inspires through storytelling, and encourages clients to change their beliefs and model the ultrasuccessful with drops of psychology thrown in for good measure. Unfortunately, it fails to identify any nutritional deficiencies that could be contributing to these behaviors, potentially resulting in short-term success without lasting change. Clients receive an injection of willpower, but when that runs out, they default back to their old “preset mode.”
- ▶ *The Therapeutic Models*: of which there are many, including cognitive, mindfulness, behavioral, and interpersonal therapies. Similar to the self-help model, these therapies may result in patients not making fundamental changes to their biochemistry, giving them only one piece of the puzzle as to why they may lack motivation, drive, focus, and calm.

The field of functional medicine is changing the way illness is treated. It seeks out and addresses the root causes of disease. Unlike traditional medicine, where the body is viewed as a collection of independent organs, functional medicine views the body as an integrated system. Its objective is to treat the whole body, not just the symptoms.

The insights I received from the experts I spoke to and the countless supplements, diets, mindfulness strategies, and wearable devices I trialed during this 90-day period resulted in me reworking the science of success from the bottom up. Learn as I take a complete functional medicine approach to peak performance to guide you from finding the gap in your identity to being at the top of your game and becoming unstoppable.

CHALLENGE ONE

Halo Sport: Technology built for athletic training and used by Special Operations (S.O.) forces.

Unwrapping my first wearable device excited me to no end. It was Halo Sport, a pair of black headphones used by elite athletes from the Olympics, Major League Baseball, NBA, and NFL to improve everything from endurance and power to muscle movement.

Halo Sport works by sending electrical stimulation across the motor cortex, the part of our brain that controls muscle contraction, during training to establish stronger and more optimized connections between your brain and muscles, putting you into a state of “hyperplasticity.”

The research behind the device is extensive. In August 2016, a project was announced with the U.S. Department of Defense to help train their S.O. The partnership was the first commercial contract signed by the Pentagon’s Defense Innovation Unit, which aims to use technology to improve military defense.⁸

I chose it over other similar devices due to the heavy-hitting research that had gone into it, which others had failed to provide.

During the first 30 days of the 90-day challenge, I tested it using a CrossFit workout I’d completed multiple times; I had documented every workout over the past four years, so I had extensive baseline stats to compare it to. Lo and behold, it was beyond anything I’d ever experienced before. Every single day, despite experiencing fatigue, brain fog, and lethargy, I was able to break personal bests.

Not just by a little bit, but by a lot!

CHAPTER 2

Unlocking the Keys to Your Kingdom

Your Bridge to Being Unstoppable

It took me four months to track down Dave Asprey and secure an interview with him on his farm in an undisclosed location in Canada. I was willing to do anything to find answers even if that involved international travel. I wanted to feel better, have more energy, and most importantly, have the mental clarity I needed to reach my goals. This was my last-ditch attempt to succeed where I had constantly failed before.

To get to him, my partner and I took two flights and a ferry in the height of winter at the end of 2017. The ferry ride across the inlet was

picturesque yet freezing! The fresh Canadian air was a welcome relief from hot and humid Florida.

I stood shivering on the ferry as the questions I wanted to ask him rattled around in my head, such as *What do you know about unlocking our human potential that others don't?* And *What do I need to do to become an unstoppable version of myself?*

I knew Dave, one of the world's top biohackers, would have the answers. No one else had gone to such extreme lengths to optimize human performance through biohacking. Dave is also a *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Bulletproof Diet* and the creator of Bulletproof Coffee and a supplement range. He is followed by more than 1 million loyal fans globally and has even launched Bulletproof Labs, based in Santa Monica, California. While it looks like a gym, it isn't. They take a scientific approach to training your mind and body by using the most cutting-edge, science-backed technologies to achieve the highest state of physical and cognitive performance. I was heading to Dave's own personal lab to get an insider's look at how he thinks and operates.

I first heard of Dave when I was at my lowest point. Listening to his audiobook gave me a sense of relief that my fatigue and illness wasn't all in my head. I wasn't unwell because I was weak-minded. There was something biochemically wrong with me that was influencing my mindset and ability to succeed.

The problem was no matter how many doctors I went to, none of them saw things from the perspective of a biohacker. A biohacker seeks to understand illnesses at the source and create a plan of attack. The interactions left me unsatisfied.

I soon realized that if I was going to change my life, I had to seek out others who had taken unconventional approaches to solving their problems. Dave fit the bill. He'd spent more than \$1 million hacking his own biology over the past two decades. His objective was to help people succeed at levels far beyond what they would typically expect.

The Snapback Effect and the Identity Gap

To do this required an identity shift, not just at the psychological level but at the biochemical one as well. I realized I would always default

back to my original psychological settings if my biological settings weren't brought up to speed with the new requirements placed on them.

I call this default setting the snapback effect. You cannot outperform your current concept of “self” or your existing biochemistry. I will go into more detail about the snapback effect a bit later, but first, I want to explain to you why we have an identity gap between who we are and who we want to become. Then I will show you the steps to create a biohacking and psychological model for successful, long-lasting change.

Change can be phenomenally hard unless all the factors are taken into consideration, especially when we need to identify anything that is holding us back from success. The objective is to escape our self-imposed echo chamber: those negative thoughts that reinforce and echo back our beliefs, ideas, and values in a way that reinforces and amplifies them through repetition.

There are myriad ways our echo chamber sets us up to fail. For example, in order to keep you coming back, Facebook's algorithm is designed to show you what you want to see based on your online behavior and biases. This acts to reinforce all the existing beliefs you have about yourself and the world, as do your physical environment, relationships, and biochemistry.¹

Your biochemistry, when in mild to severe disarray, can lead to negative thoughts that are difficult to suppress or eliminate.

Think of the last time you tried to reach one of your goals. Maybe it was one that had you really excited at first, but as time progressed, you fell back into your old routine until you forgot about it. This is what I call the snapback effect.

Anytime we try to evolve from who we are to who we want to become to reach our goals, we create tension between our old and new selves, both psychologically and biochemically. This is what I call the identity gap. Each “self” is fighting for residence within your mind. The one that wins is the one that avoids triggering your “fight or flight”

A change in attitude will only hold for as long as your biochemistry supports it.

response. Therefore, you are creating a “gap” between who you are and who you want to become.

The greater the distance between the biological resources you have available and the psychological needs required to reach your goal, the greater the likelihood is that you’ll snap back, give up, and default to your old self.

Why?

The new psychological needs deplete your biochemical resources. When you cross the threshold, your brain switches modes and seeks to preserve the limited energy supply left for critical biological functions. This can manifest behaviorally via excuses, brain fog, lethargy, and avoidance. And you thought you were just lazy!

You Under the Microscope

Thinking of adding another goal to your already full task list is like a power station lighting a city at maximum capacity and then suddenly adding another city to the grid without additional capacity being added. The new city will max out the entire system and a safety switch will flip, defaulting back to its original settings to protect itself from damage, much like our brain.

Our primordial brain is that safety switch. When it comes on, it reduces our available output in areas we’re not even aware of, thereby changing our behavior.

In this state, our brain seeks to preserve the status quo. To do otherwise would jeopardize our life. Our brain must guard its resources and defend against further attacks, such as attempting to leave our comfort zone and seeking a new identity.

The first signs of this snapback will be mild symptoms, such as brain fog, slight headaches, and sleeping more than usual. You might simply brush them off. As you adapt to them, the symptoms will eventually escalate and become more extreme, manifesting as anxiety, stress, and possibly depression. Your body and brain will not stop reacting to the stimuli to reject change until you do something about it.

Attempting to leave your comfort zone and evolve into your new identity is like putting a stake in the ground, throwing a rubber band

around it, stepping into the open loop, and trying to sprint as far away from the stake as you can, without building up your muscles first.

But if you don't have enough energy to push against the tension (the change created based on these new needs), you'll snap back into your old self hard and fast. This old self is drenched in behaviors the primal brain considers safe, since it doesn't exert your energy levels further.

The shock from the snapback can dramatically impact the way we see the world and ourselves, making us cautious about future attempts at change. The key is to evolve into our new self without flipping the switch that makes us snap back and resume our former status quo.

Turn Off Decision Fatigue to Reach Your Goals Faster

No matter how stable and rational we are, we cannot make decision after decision or maintain high levels of focus and output without paying a biological price. This is one reason why ordinary, sensible people lash out, make irrational decisions, buy junk food, make excuses, and ultimately quit before they experience a breakthrough.

As the day goes on, your mental capacity gets used up and slows down to a crawl, and it becomes less likely that you'll be able to sustain that newfound positive attitude. The more decisions you make, the harder each consecutive decision becomes, resulting in the brain seeking one of two shortcuts. One shortcut is to act impulsively without taking time to assess the consequences. The second is to do nothing.

In a 2011 study by the National Academy of Sciences, scientists demonstrated the impact of decision fatigue. Researchers Jonathan Levav formerly of Columbia Business School and Shai Danziger formerly of Ben-Gurion University analyzed more than 1,100 decisions from a parole board in an Israeli prison over a ten-month period. They discovered that prisoners who appeared early in the morning or just after a food break received parole approximately 70 percent of the time. Those who appeared before the board at the end of the day or just before a break received parole less than 10 percent of the time.²

These researchers found that the judges' decisions exhibited no ill intent toward the prisoners. The likelihood of receiving parole was purely linked to the countless decisions they had to make. This research demonstrates that there is a finite amount of mental energy for applying self-control, and it wanes as more decisions are made. The mental state can become further compromised by stress, nutritional deficiencies, and other environmental factors. You thought it was something innate about you that was keeping you from achieving your dreams, that perhaps you were meant to fail. But now there is a glimmer of hope that there is truly a way out of this rabbit hole.

It raises the question: Are you working with or against the tide? When we're in the zone, everything flows, it's easy, we remember names, stay on task, and tune out distractions. When we're going against the tide, our attention is easily stolen, misused, and spent on activities that take you further out to sea.

Anytime you feel yourself overexerting, it is an indication that something in your physical, emotional, or biochemical makeup is out of alignment. This misalignment causes a change in attitude and a switch in identity from confident, self-assured, and focused to

*You're fueling
your goals with
one energy source
instead of two,
and because
it's depleting,
your brain has
switched on "self-
preservation mode"
to save you from
yourself.*

unfocused and lacking in confidence and clarity. Everything becomes more difficult. You start making excuses and sit there glued to your phone, desperate for a hit of dopamine.

Based on countless discussions with psychiatrists, doctors, neuroscientists, and biohackers and the numerous experiments I conducted during this 90-day period, my understanding of what fuels success reaches well beyond mere habits of peak performers. Habits are critical, but not as significant as the entire system working as one toward a goal that lights up your soul.

Wouldn't you love it if you could take the weight of the world from your shoulders and place it lightly on your fingertips? Now you can! This new model brought an awareness that I hadn't been able to glean from one single source. It came from an entwined understanding of many individual connections. It empowered me to continue improving and allowed me to relax and reboot when something was out of alignment with my awareness. Something *was* out of alignment and not just in my head.

The problem will always be when we switch into self-preservation mode. We go from conscious thought and deliberate creation to unconscious thought and unintentional creation with our impulse controls turned OFF.

Try solving a problem when you're not even aware you have a problem in the first place. That's 90 percent of the population at any given moment.

Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to burn that light bulb bright. To do that and get on your way to being unstoppable, you first need to close your identity gap (see Figure 2.1).

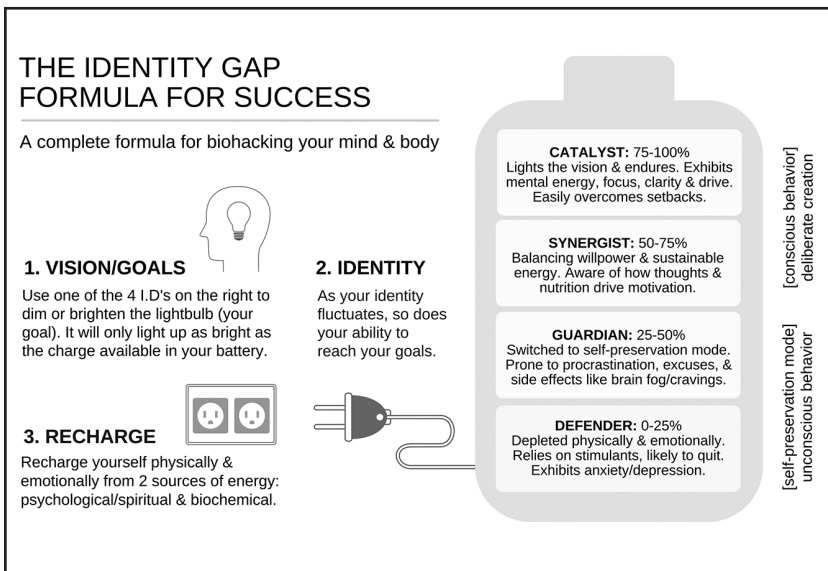


Figure 2.1 The Identity Gap Formula for Success

The Identity Gap Formula for Success

The first step in closing the identity gap is to choose your goal, defining who you are by the achievement of the goal. The light bulb represents your purpose, your goals (an expression of your purpose), and the person you wish to become.

Your mission is to light the bulb and keep it lit without flickering. Any flickering can result in a loss of momentum. If your battery runs flat, the light bulb will go out, any progress made will be halted, and even more effort will be required to relight it. The entire system may even need to be rebooted.

The second step is working with your identity, which is the battery that powers this light bulb. And, just like any battery, it can run flat at any point during the day, week, month, or lifetime. Also like any battery, it will begin to hold less charge over time.

This battery is broken into four levels, each representing a different identity. As we've seen, our identities fluctuate throughout the course of a day, not just a lifetime, and depend on our energy levels, mental clarity, biochemistry, and decision fatigue. When we're fully charged, we're unstoppable, but when we lack energy, we're as useless as a cell phone with a dead battery.

The four identities that make up your battery are the Catalyst, the Synergist, the Guardian, and the Defender. When an identity is running the show, it takes control of everything, consciously or unconsciously. Both the Catalyst and Synergist sit above the 50 percent line—these are the most effective mental states for you to reach your goals.

Fifty percent is the threshold mark that indicates the difference between conscious and effective behavior and unconscious and ineffective behavior. Dipping below 50 percent, our brain switches into self-preservation mode to save our energy for more critical tasks. At this point your light bulb begins to flicker, and your likelihood of giving up significantly increases.

Your Power Supply

As you can see in Figure 2.1 on page 23, the battery is the fuel that drives your vision and shapes your identity. It is recharged by two specific energy sources:

- ▶ *Psychological/Spiritual energy* incorporates your beliefs, values, outlook on life, willpower, focus, and attitude. This energy is nourished via ongoing education, spirituality (for some), and life experiences that lead to heightened levels of self-awareness and emotional IQ.
- ▶ *Biochemical energy* encompasses various factors, including nutrition, genetics, environment, allergies, overactive/underactive immune system, oxygen supply, neurofeedback, stress, movement, and electricity. All these factors must work in unison to be effective. When one factor is missing or inactive, it can cause disequilibrium to all the others, to the detriment/destabilization of your mental and physical well-being.

However, psychological and biochemical energy do not necessarily play equal roles in creating your identity. As it turns out, psychological energy is more reliant on biochemical energy.

In effect, your biochemistry, when lacking in energy, can become the thief of your psychological energy. It can steal your drive, willpower, motivation, clarity of thought, and focus. Your willpower can override it for only so long before your brain is forced into self-preservation mode and your battery drops below the 50-percent threshold. While positive thoughts and expectations can boost your serotonin levels, it may only do so temporarily, resulting in a short-term identity shift that fails to stick.

You can't simply will more vitamin D into existence. Consider your attempts at materializing a bag of money from thin air: How's that working out for you?

Stress, prescription pills, and poor nutrition can hijack our thoughts. If some prescription medications can trigger suicidal thoughts through altering our biochemistry, then could we also generate positive thoughts by hacking our own biology?

Closing this gap is one of the first and most crucial steps to setting yourself up for success.

You can't outthink bad biochemistry by medicating it with self-help. You may get better, but will you get well?

Rethinking Your Body/Mind Connection

When we understand that our identity, mood, and behavior can fluctuate throughout the day, it highlights just how flawed traditional personality models are. This is why we experience a disconnect when we look at these models. When our body and mind are in alignment, we can demonstrate the personality traits assigned to us by such models (extrovert/introvert, sensitive/cautious, etc.). However, if things shift a few millimeters the other way, perhaps due to a change in their biochemistry, even a peak-performing extrovert can become an unproductive introvert. Personality is only as fixed as the biochemistry that supports it. An individual who is dedicated to their beliefs, behaviors, and patterns can suddenly throw caution to the wind and fail to assess the consequences of their actions if they are depleted of energy.

This also explains why personality test results can vary greatly depending on the time of day or the mood you are in when you take them. This demonstrates the need for a test that incorporates all elements that are key to your success, including the underlying factors that drive an individual to succeed.

Your Quest for Success

Trying to hold on to a specific identity 100 percent of the time is futile. No matter what you do, change is inevitable. We will forever encounter setbacks that will force us to embrace multiple identities at varying times of our lives. It's normal—and more important, it's life!

By breaking down the four identities I mentioned earlier, we kick off our quest to lift our awareness, achieve our goals, and let that light bulb shine. Once again, the identities are the Catalyst, the Synergist, the Guardian, and the Defender. In the sections below, I've broken each down into their vital functions and characteristics, including their strengths, emotional characteristics, cognitive functions, physiological characteristics, and energy sources. Once you read through all four, you'll understand which level you've been operating at and why. Soon you will discover why all your efforts to succeed have been trapped in

a vicious cycle, like a psychological and biological tug of war. Let's dig into the specifics of each identity.

The Catalyst (75–100 percent)

The Catalyst feels they've bypassed the battery and plugged directly into the power grid, making them unstoppable.

This is your natural state. When it is eluding you, you feel a deep internal disconnect between who you are and who you know you can be. This leaves you feeling restless and anxious.

The Catalyst identity paves the way for your success and provides the fuel for the journey. Catalysts have an abundance of mental energy, focus, clarity, and drive. They are the key driver for change in society, both globally and locally. They endure even in the face of monumental setbacks. They light the way for others.

While their path may not always be easy, they are biochemically and psychologically wired to believe that it is. Catalysts are proactive and go with the tide, and when they feel themselves beginning to struggle, they take action to correct their course and continue. They are not afraid of seeking help; that's the reason they've made it where they are. (See Figure 2.2 on page 28.)

There's only one way to become a Catalyst, and that's by recovering from major setbacks that force them to be consciously aware of how they got there in the first place.

To do this, the biochemistry of a Catalyst must be healthy enough that they can still cognitively process this awareness and take corrective action. We can see this play out in rags-to-riches-to-rags stories. Many times, the person becomes hugely successful without fully understanding that it was a mix of psychology and biochemistry that helped them succeed. New success brings new challenges. For example, in celebrities, these often manifest as problems with alcohol and drug dependency.

If their psychology or biochemistry is compromised, their lack of awareness can turn them into a Defender, in which they become depleted of both types of energy. As a result, their body and brain enter self-preservation mode just to get through the day. Unless major intervention

Attributes of the Catalyst	
Strengths	Quick to adapt, problem solvers, undertake new challenges with positive expectations, deliberate creators, outgoing/reserved depending on what's required, not susceptible to criticism, not easily distracted, focus on long-term sustainable success, social media kept to bare minimum.
Emotional Characteristics	Inner strength, calmness, optimistic, even mood, friendly, high self-esteem, unstoppable, high drive to succeed, motivated, sense of satisfaction, love of learning.
Cognitive Functions	Fast thinking, conscious behavior, decisive decision making, high-functioning memory, organized, mental clarity, mental resources available to fully assess consequences of their actions, easily get into the "zone."
Physiology	Shoulders back, head up, posture in alignment top to toe, deep breathing, clear skin, confident stride, balanced digestion.
Weaknesses	Sometimes overly reliant on willpower to drive success during intense work periods. If they have become an "accidental catalyst," they will often perceive anyone less than them as weak-minded, albeit based on good intentions for others to succeed.
Energy Source	Their batteries are charged by two fuel sources: biochemical and psychological energy. Their fuel sources are clean, running on healthy fats/ketones, instead of sugar/refined carbohydrates that would cause them to crash midafternoon. While their energy levels still fluctuate throughout the day, it is not as extreme as others. They understand how to manage it with proper nutrition, rest, and recovery.

Figure 2.2 Attributes of the Catalyst

and help from others is available, they may remain stuck in this state. But when they recover, oh boy, do they make a comeback! Robert Downey Jr. is one of Hollywood's biggest career rebound stories. It wasn't that long ago that no one wanted to hire him, due to his drinking and the drug abuse that landed him in prison; now he's paid hundreds of millions to star in blockbuster films like *The Avengers* and *Iron Man*.

The Synergist (50–75 percent)

Synergists, although in a state of conscious awareness and deliberate creation, are still learning to balance willpower with sustainable energy that keeps them moving forward.

They're in the process of becoming more and more aware of how their psychology and biochemistry affect their motivation, their self-esteem, and their view of the world. They are future Catalysts who require some simple fine-tuning to make the next leap successfully and sustainably.

Synergists can benefit from ongoing education that teaches them how to coordinate and optimize their biochemical and psychological performance. They will have some off days, but they won't beat

Attributes of the Synergist	
Strengths	Medium to high adaptability, problem solvers, undertake new challenges with expectations of positive outcomes, deliberate creation, not easily distracted, focus on long-term sustainable success, waste energy on social media from time to time.
Emotional Characteristics	Inner strength, calmness, optimism, relatively even mood, friendly, medium to high self-esteem, drive to succeed, motivated, fluctuating sense of satisfaction, love of learning dependent on other demands for energy/attention.
Cognitive Functions	Moderate to fast thinking, conscious behavior with some aspects out of conscious awareness, do not always fully assess consequences of their actions, organized, solid memory.
Physiology	Shoulders back, head up, posture in alignment half the time, deep breathing, clear skin, confident stride.
Weaknesses	Because they are finding their balance, it makes them susceptible to biochemical and emotional setbacks, including criticism from others. Either one may deplete their battery. The consciousness of the need for change is there; they're just slightly slower to reach full-blown awareness, when action can be taken. This may cause their light bulb to dim now and then but not entirely go out.

Figure 2.3 Attributes of the Synergist

Attributes of the Synergist	
Energy Source	We've all been the Synergist at one point or other. However, an overreliance on one energy source throws us out of step (e.g., relying on sugar/refined carbohydrates in times of high stress). If left unchecked, this behavior can devolve a Synergist into a Guardian or Defender. Because they've previously experienced a level of self-awareness, it makes them less likely to remain there, however. A Synergist may also eat clean yet experience symptoms of a nutritional deficiency. As you'll discover, you can eat healthy but still have nutritional gaps that prevent you from being all you can be.

Figure 2.3 Attributes of the Synergist, continued

themselves up about it. They realize that rest and rejuvenation are required for long-term, sustainable success.

The Guardian (50 percent and below)

Guardians are protecting their current resources, but not defending themselves from an attack. The Guardian's body has switched to self-preservation mode, which triggers them to preserve their energy for critical functions. Keeping that light bulb lit isn't one of them. They can keep it going briefly through sheer force of willpower, but even that has its expiration date if it doesn't get biochemically replenished.

They still have their goals in sight, but for the life of them, they can't work out why they're unattainable. Self-doubt starts to creep in, and excuses amplify. They're not where they want to be, but they don't know why. They have a win from time to time, but they don't have the energy to sustain it.

Numerous factors got them here, including chronic stress and nutritional deficiencies. In this state, troubleshooting their way out requires external intervention or relying on willpower to research a solution. If they don't find one fast, their willpower will become so depleted that their body will defend the few resources they have left, turning them into the Defender.

Attributes of the Guardian	
Strengths	Their willpower is attempting to override self-preservation mode. They can endure for a period of time before the brain takes over and puts them into rest and recovery mode to heal.
Emotional Characteristics	Lowered self-esteem, mood fluctuations, friendly to abrasive, overwhelmed, poor memory recall, decreased satisfaction, agitated, anxious.
Cognitive Functions	Cognitive functions beginning to decline, harder to remember names or crucial information, impulse control beginning to turn off, limiting their ability to make educated decisions, decision fatigue beginning to kick in, easily distracted, brain fog, getting stuck in negative thought patterns.
Physiology	Slouching posture, drooping head, mild to severe digestive issues, posture out of alignment, shallow breathing, oily or dry skin, increase in food cravings, possible insomnia, mild anxiety, inflammation in the body.
Weaknesses	Susceptible to procrastination and criticism and sensitive to their surroundings, making them easily overwhelmed.
Energy Source	Rely on caffeine, sugar, and refined carbohydrates to motivate them and give them enough energy to get moving. While this may relight their light bulb, it quickly dims after they crash from the side effects of these dirty fuel sources.

Figure 2.4 Attributes of the Guardian

The Defender (25 percent and below)

Defenders are simply focused on guarding what's left over and defending themselves from further attacks.

Defender mode can be triggered by a number of changes, including a change in the stomach's microbiome, a course of antibiotics, chronic stress, a traumatic event, or a severe nutritional deficiency that crept up so slowly you weren't even aware of it until it trapped you in your own toxic echo chamber. Remember the poor boiling frog?

Any attempts to escape using only one fuel source, such as willpower or biochemistry, will only result in your battery becoming even more depleted. At this point, people may tell you that depression is a choice. But when your biochemistry is pointing you in an entirely different direction, you will continue to default to this mode until the

Attributes of the Defender	
Strengths	Finding a clear thought in this state is like searching for something in a dark room with a flashlight with a failing battery. You know the answer exists, but you don't have enough light to find it in time. There's a deep underlying desire to feel better; you just don't know where to start.
Emotional Characteristics	Lack of self-awareness, low self-esteem, abrasive to depressive behavior, extreme ups and downs, highly sensitive to other people's comments, criticism cuts like a knife, reactionary instead of responsive, sense of numbness, easily agitated, isolating self from others to preserve energy.
Cognitive Functions	Cognitive functions in serious decline, forgetting key dates/names/information, lack of self-control, inability to make decisions, brain fog, inability to focus on anything for an extended period.
Physiology	Slouching, digestive issues, drooping head, posture out of alignment, shallow/erratic breathing, oily or dry skin, intensified food cravings (especially toward sugar), joint pain, muscle atrophy, insomnia, mild anxiety, inflammation in the body.
Weaknesses	All systems have been depleted. External intervention by professionals is your best bet.
Energy Source	Caffeine, sugar, and refined carbohydrates are being relied upon for short bursts of energy. It never lasts. If you're like me, you'll be eating well, but you will be deficient in key vitamins and minerals. This has more to do with food supply. More on this paradox in Chapter 3.

Figure 2.5 Attributes of the Defender

underlying cause is addressed by the right professionals—specifically, experts in functional medicine.

In this state, you are fighting the current, fighting your thoughts, and fighting change. This takes even more energy, depleting you psychologically because you're unsure what is going on. This added stress can also trigger further physiological symptoms. Some may pinpoint these symptoms as the cause, but they most likely are not, as you'll discover later in this book.

Before you start freaking out because you recognize yourself as a Defender, this is precisely where my journey began. These are the symptoms I exhibited when I was at my worst. At best, I would only sit in “Defender Mode” for a few hours and then self-medicate with caffeine to turn myself into a Catalyst so I could get some work done. This never lasted, and I ended up bouncing between these two extremes.

The great news is that it's not all in your head: It's in your biochemistry, and once your biochemistry becomes balanced, your head will clear. At that point, you'll really get to ramp up and focus on what you want because you'll finally have the energy to do so.

It is crucial to remember that if you recognize yourself as a Defender (remember, we can fluctuate throughout the day, week, month, or year), it's because of a few simple issues you can begin to rectify, such as:

- ▶ You are nutritionally deficient in key areas.
- ▶ You have been relying on unstable fuel sources, such as sugar, refined carbohydrates, or fatty foods, resulting in the more extreme ups and downs.
- ▶ You have been relying too heavily on one of two fuel sources, i.e. biochemical or psychological, and they're burning smoke, making you choke on your own internal environment.
- ▶ You are experiencing inflammation in your body. (There'll be more on that in Chapter 3.)

If this is you, your internal environment has become toxic. Your body is doing everything it can to preserve your existence, which reduces your available energy, causing you to further isolate yourself. This isn't weak-mindedness; it's an inbuilt strategy designed to support us when

our needs intensify. At this point, it's key to go easy on yourself. Don't beat yourself up because you're not driven or motivated. Instead, methodically work toward a solution, doing what you can when you can.

So why don't people change? Based on this new way of thinking about identity, it's clear why self-help intervention alone doesn't always result in people changing their behaviors—especially if they are already guarding their current resources from further depletion or fending off attacks such as inflammation or stress. There is no energy left to spark or maintain that change.

With this in mind, we can have greater empathy for ourselves or those people in our lives who are struggling. It's not that we're incapable; it's that we can't become who we want to become while we're applying the same old self-help, medical, and psychiatric models in isolation to our problems.

All is not lost. In fact, this new awareness may have just lit up your light bulb, if only momentarily, with the hope that there is a way forward.

It is from here that we revolutionize the game plan.

What's your identity gap? Visit [www. areyouunstoppable.com](http://www.areyouunstoppable.com) to take the free online quiz now.

CHALLENGE TWO

Muse: the Brain Sensing Headband: The first tool in the world to provide accurate feedback on what happens in the brain during meditation.

Who was I kidding? I was still fluctuating between Defender and Guardian. Meditating in that state is about as useful as trying to vacuum your house with the power turned off. Nonetheless, I persisted.

The Muse looked promising. It promised to provide real-time tracking of what was going on in my brain while I meditated and audio feedback by

CHALLENGE TWO, continued

the sound of waves crashing when my thoughts became overactive or birds chirping when I entered a state of calm.

My goal was to use the device every night before I went to bed for a minimum of 30 days.

I put on the headset, connected it to the app, and began meditating, something I'd never really done before. I've always used visualization to imagine my day unfolding the way I wanted. I'd view this video in my mind's eye and rewind, fast-forward, and rewind it multiple times to trick my subconscious into thinking I'd already completed the tasks I needed to. Hence, there was no need to be anxious about a large workload. Having used this practice for more than ten years, sitting there just observing my thoughts was challenging.

The Muse app gave me a score at the end of each session. After my first session, I scored 48 percent calm. It took me more than two weeks to score higher than 70 percent. During this time, I made some interesting observations. I felt a lot calmer, although I was still exhausted, and I was having random flashes of beautiful memories I hadn't thought about in years.

As a result, my mood started to improve, and it was easier for me to relax. Little things that would have triggered my anger before no longer had the same sting to them. Instead, I would acknowledge them and then let them go. I even noticed that I would slip into a peak meditative state while working out at the gym during my CrossFit challenge. Combined with Halo Sport, my workouts became far more effective. It was still a struggle to meditate at times due to the meager power supply available to my brain, but I felt the meditative process was still beginning to rewire my brain for the changes yet to come.



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