

CHAPTER ONE



EMBRACE THE SUCK

The mind will take you where your body won't. It's a simple concept, but one few people truly understand, or put into practice. Those who harness the power of adversity, who seek out difficult experiences rather than retreating to lives of comfort, those are the people who will achieve what they want in life. *Embrace the suck* is a bit of a slogan, but it's also a reminder that life is like weight training: our muscles grow stronger as an adaptation to the stress we put them under when we work out.

Life is nothing if not a workout on a grand scale.

ORIGINS

I first heard the term “embrace the suck” in 2009, when I was in the Army Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) in college—from my buddy, Luke.

He was my best friend. We'd gone to college together and joined ROTC at the same time. His initial contract was for the National Guard, so he had to go to boot camp before I even started my training.

It's wasn't a glamorous introduction.

There he was, a recruit gutting his way through basic training. Boot camp isn't the best experience of anyone's life, and even though he's a tough guy, my friend was really suffering and having a bad time of things. One day, he's sitting in one of the porta-potties that surrounded his training site, enjoying a short relief from the constant overwatch of the drill sergeants.

And then he saw it, scrawled on the plastic wall in ball-point pen: *Embrace the suck.*

To be honest, it didn't seem like a big deal to Luke. He wasn't super inspired by it. But when he told me about it later?

Something clicked.

It struck a chord in my head. I knew it was a military term, but I adopted it on the spot. I've continued to use it in business, in life, in my personal stuff, while working out. I literally apply it to every aspect of my life.

I promise, if you adopt it, too, it'll have as amazing an impact on you as it did on me.

HUMPING FOR HARVEY

First, a word of explanation. “Hump” in military parlance has a HUGELY different meaning than in the civilian world. Ask an infantry veteran about a hump, and they'll tell you a hump is a really fast, really long march, often carrying up to one-hundred pounds of equipment (though the official standard is usually thirty-five for a timed forced march). They usually begin before dawn and end during the peak heat of the day. It's conditioning, to be sure, but also a gut check on a unit-wide basis.

The pace is usually brisk—faster than a walk, but just slow enough to *not* be a jog. Keep it up over fifteen to twenty miles in combat fatigues and boots, a weapon of some kind in your arms (or, like the poor mortar teams, heavy tubes, and plates strapped to your pack), and you can imagine: there's a significant amount of suck to embrace.

Flash forward to 2017. I've been out of the military for a year, and I was getting that itch to just kick my own ass once again. Part of it is to stretch my abilities, but a lot of it also is meant to be humbling, too. The pain and discomfort reenergizes me and recharges me creatively.

I think we all need to find that thing that re-centers us. For some, it's therapy. Others, meditation, or a long walk on the beach.

For me, it's getting my ass kicked over a long period of time. Crazy as it sounds, this is my therapy, my meditation, and it leaves me feeling refreshed and ready to kick today in the dick.

I love long endurance events, whether it's a race or some kind of training or charity event. I fell in love with running not for the usual "runner's high," (which everyone talks about but I've yet to experience) but because it helps give me clarity of thought.

I search out events that promise to leave me a physical wreck afterward. Nothing matters more during these things than to simply drive forward and push through the suck. I'm able to focus my thinking to one thing at a time, which allows me to dedicate the thought energy needed to find solutions or meaning.

To be honest, I believe this is something I learned during my time in Ranger School. I spent 141 days during this sixty-one-day course (which I will discuss later) and I graduated learning a whole lot about myself.

There were zero distractions from the outside world during my extended stay at Ranger School. I had one mission and I was going to drive through anything I had to in order to accomplish that mission.

This is where I learned the true meaning of embrace the suck, but the end state was obvious and I knew what had to be done in order to press forward.

Anyone who knows me will tell you, these events and challenges are the things that keep me moving on a daily basis. They provide me with a clear vision of what I need to be doing, and where I need to be headed.

In August of 2017, Hurricane Harvey rolled in and devastated large swaths of Texas, including a brutal hit on Houston. I live in Austin, so the catastrophic damage there really hit home to me.

I wanted to help. I knew I had a burgeoning platform on social media thanks to my YouTube video presence and other efforts to grow my company, Bare Performance Nutrition. I considered ways I could raise money to help, and I decided that the best way would be to hump from Austin to Houston.

That's about 150 miles.

In the late summer heat of Central and Southeastern Texas.

Embrace the suck? Hell yeah.



Thanks to my platforms, I raised \$10,000 before even taking step one on Sept. 9, 2017, with my brother following behind me in a truck as my support team.

Over the next four days, I ended up doing about thirty-five miles a day. Before that, the longest single forced march I'd ever completed was a twenty-six-miler while

stationed in Korea. This was a whole new level of suck. This was ten miles longer than the furthest single march I'd ever done, except every day for four straight days.

The suffering began early.

At the end of the first thirty-five miles, I had a litany of issues. My feet were WRECKED—swollen, blistered, and raw. Every step burned like a fire. The gear I carried chafed my hips. I'd taken my shirt off at some point and was now wickedly sunburnt. I'd also let my emotions get ahead of me, so I'd been running the downhill sections and striding uphill like I was back in the army on a forced march.

Waking up for Day 2 revealed a catalog of suffering. My brother poured rubbing alcohol over my blisters to promote their popping, along with the pins we punctured them with. We then layered the soles of my feet with moleskin as protection.

On Day 2, the first mile was the worst mile ever. I hadn't taken into account that my feet were not in the same condition they'd been in during my time in the army. I could feel additional blisters popping. My sunburn worsened. But after that first mile in, good things happened. I found my groove and remembered why I was doing this. I thought, all these people in Houston lost all their shit, and that's why I'm out here ruck marching.

My body became an accessory to my mind, which was pushing forward when my physical self screamed STOP. You learn about the power of the mind when it pushes you to put your body through something like that.

Things didn't improve on the rest of the march, either. Every night, I knew the next morning was going to be worse. There were going to be more blisters. More chaffing. More sunburn.

But my mind was driving the bus.

My body wanted to quit, but my mind wouldn't allow it.

I thrive on this feeling. I love pushing my body to this place. ENDURE is the root of the word "endurance," which I love so much. Endure the struggle, the pain, and the GROWTH that you are about to be overwhelmed with.

To honor the people who sacrificed so much on 9/11—the third day of my march, which had reached new heights of misery—I carried an American flag over my shoulder the entire day. It wasn't something I did to create an impact, but this was Texas and I walked down the side of a major highway that day. People stopped me left and right. "Why are you doing this?" they'd ask.

Whenever I told them, they'd invariably contribute to

the cause. People gave money. They brought me water bottles. Food. Truck drivers pulled over simply to say “thanks,” or to tell me they’d served, too. People wanted to join me. A few offered to go home, get their own rucks, and come out with me. I have never experienced that level of support in my entire life.

If I’d depended on my physical strength alone, none of it would have occurred. My mind pushed my body. I embraced the suck and found joy.

LAST DAY ON THE MARCH TO HOUSTON

I had to get off the highway the day I marched into Houston. The highways were too busy, so I finished the march on the side roads and surface streets of the city. I found myself walking through the neighborhoods most hard-hit by Harvey. Residents had begun digging out by then, and most of the houses were skeletons of their former selves, with water-soaked drywall torn away and awaiting replacement, leaving the studs underneath exposed.

The wet drywall and insulation and other discarded items from each of these homes were piled along the streets, and as I passed I felt as if I walked through a war zone. It was like a ghost town, all these wrecked and damaged houses.

Walking through the destruction was an eerie feeling. I’d

enjoyed the feeling of raising money for these people. But being there, seeing the crazy shit that the storm and flood had done to their homes was overwhelming. I felt helpless.

What's the lesson? For one thing, be kind, genuine, and passionate. Seeing the people of Texas come together during this tragedy was amazing. I'd seen this before growing up in Pennsylvania around the single kindest person I've ever known—my mother.

She was the definition of selfless.

Not many people in the world discover their life's passion early and go on to fulfill it, but my mother did. She fell in love with teaching at an early age, and spent most of her life teaching special education. She even coached Special Olympics and dedicated her life to helping others. My mom was a woman who always put others first.

No one ever had to tell me or my brother how to be kind. We were never told to choose the hard right over the easy wrong. We were never told how to be good people.

My parents just demonstrated those things every day.

My mom, especially, showed kindness to everyone, every day.

When I first started my nutrition company, it wasn't to make a lot of money. It was just something I did because it felt right at the time—it was my passion. The ruck march is an example of advice I'd give to anyone starting out: Be kind. Be genuine. Be passionate.

To anyone just starting out, I always recommend kindness. I learned more while building my business from being kind and really getting to know other people than I did from any other instruction I ever got. Doing that march from Austin to Houston, and the amazing people I met along the way, reinforced for me why I do what I do, why I create content on social media, why I share my story. Growing a business while at the same time helping people as a huge component of that fulfills my heart and mind.

The other lesson I learned was that the mind is an incredible tool when you're focused. I wasn't doing this for fame or money or personal gain. This wasn't a business. If I'd quit, no one would have known except me, and probably a few friends. But I was committed, and seeing the reality of the situation in front of me, the reason I'd suffered and needed to embrace the suck in ways I never had before, that made it all worthwhile.

HOW WE'RE WIRED

Even though I'd served in the army and completed Ranger School, the march from Austin to Houston still hurt. It was one long gut check. If there was ever a time for which there was plenty of suck to embrace, this march was it.

That's when it occurred to me: people are wired one of two ways, at least in terms of whether their body controls their mind, or vice versa. I don't think it's something you're born with, not a trait encoded in everyone's DNA, but rather a mindset that can be changed or evolve.

Person A allows their body to control their minds. These are the people who respond to signals from their body rather than exercise control over it. Feeling, then reaction. They get hungry, they eat. They get tired, they sleep. Their legs hurt, they stop. It's a big feedback loop in which the mind is unable to overcome any stimuli from the body. In the end, when these peoples' bodies tell their minds that they've exerted themselves to a certain point, they stop. They quit. These people are wired so that their bodies control their minds, and if their ability to overcome physical pain or discomfort isn't absent entirely, it definitely isn't well-honed, and will fail them in times of direst need.

Person B, however, whose mind is stronger than their body, is able to drive through pain and weariness, they can ignore hunger pangs and focus on finishing what they

started. These are the people who do amazing things because their mind controls their bodies.

This is the single-biggest piece of the puzzle that I've discovered in the last couple years. Ultimately, we're talking about training yourself to make the mindset shift required to be able to embrace the suck, to thrive when times are tough and everything—and maybe *everyone*—is telling you to quit.

I am by no means telling you that sleep doesn't matter, or that eating doesn't matter, or that proper recovery protocols to prevent injury don't matter, but come on! I've grown more in my life during times of weariness, hunger, and hurt. I'm not suggesting that these should be your everyday circumstances, but I definitely search them out from time to time in order to grow.

I talked to my Ironman prep coach one day after a workout that began with a sixty-mile bike ride and transitioned into a six-mile run (a so-called “brick” workout that replicates the bike-to-run changeover in the actual race). It was my final training day of the week, and I was exhausted.

He didn't take it easy on me.

“Get ready for longer sessions, harder days, and dark places,” he said.

“I live for those dark places,” I replied.

And it was true. I am consciously aware of the pain when I’m in the middle of it, but I also know that the end result will be life-changing growth.

If there is one thing you learn about THE HURT during a contract with the US military, it is that it is not AN INJURY. There is a clear difference between being *hurt* and being *injured*.

I vividly remember sitting in a patrol base during the Florida phase of Ranger School getting foot checks by the medics. They would come around in the morning and essentially make sure soldiers’ feet weren’t falling apart after walking through the swamps for hours.

“My foot hurts,” a guy next to me said.

The medic responded with, “Is it hurt or is it injured?”

We all knew the difference and the medic wanted to get the message across without saying, “Are you trying to get out of this shit or are you actually unable to accomplish your mission?”

When you put your body through a brutal metabolic conditioning workout, that hurts.

When you try and break your personal record on a marathon, that hurts.

When you attempt your first MURPH workout on Memorial Day weekend after not training, that hurts.

But when you fall from a C-130 airplane and your parachute doesn't deploy properly, well then you are probably injured.

The hurt is fuel—it is your body's response to pushing beyond its comfortable limits. Being injured takes you out of the game.

Remember that.

For most of us, it's these times of pain, hunger, or exhaustion that our mind—not your body—flips the switch to “on.” My training sessions, though, are purpose driven. My goal isn't to “workout until dead.” If my plan for the day is a ten-mile run at a moderate pace, I'll stick to the plan. However, some of them are programmed to overreach, to go a bit further than I thought I could go, workouts where your mind is begging you to stop but you can't, because you found it's “on” switch a long time ago and broke the damn thing.

That is the way I live my life. I have purpose behind what I do, and that purpose is structured to push me forward. Sometimes I need to overreach and feel that struggle, if only to remind myself that that switch I broke a long time ago remains broken today.

The first step during these times is to allow yourself to recognize that you're in a tough spot. When things really suck, you need to be consciously aware of it enough to admit "OK, this does, in fact, suck." It sounds simple, but it's an admission you need to allow yourself. This admission is the first step in rewiring your brain to thrive in difficult times. The next step is to remind yourself what you have to do. "This sucks, and now I have to be aware of what I'm doing and what I'm experiencing right now, and realize that I have to live and embrace this discomfort and pain." Embracing the experience of pain and discomfort is the key to helping you shift to your mind controlling your body.

Forget the hunger.

Forget the exhaustion.

Ignore the hurt.

Embrace the suck, let your mind control your body, and drive on.

NO EASY PATH

Some sports and performance psychologists will talk about “flipping switches” psychologically to tap into this mindset. As if you’re a machine in which a setting simply needs adjustment and you’ll find the initiative and mindset you need to perform under stress and pain. We’ll talk more about this switch later, but for now just remember that the switch’s presence, and our ability to use it, is often at the heart of why people quit when they do.

Unfortunately, like the most important things in life, there is no shortcut. There is no pill to take, no mantra to recite. If anything, rewiring your brain to embrace the suck doesn’t involve forgetting or distracting yourself from the pain. It means facing the pain and discomfort straight-on, and persevering anyway.

You need to be consciously aware of the idea that “this really sucks and I want to quit,” and then happily allowing your mind to demand that your body hang in there and soak it all in.

LEARNING ON A LONG MOUNTAIN WALK

My own mindset shifted this way during Ranger School. To understand why this was so powerful, it’s worth taking a look at the school itself.

One of the most grueling courses in the entire US military, and among the toughest anywhere in the world, Ranger School is sixty-one days of unrelenting training, testing, and assessment across three phases held at Fort Benning, the remote mountains of Dahlonaga, Georgia, then finally in the swamps of Florida. It's completed on very little food or rest, involves large amounts of marching across long distances, and demanding technical evaluations for which students are rigorously graded by instructors, who demand peak performance no matter how tired, hungry, or beat-down their students become.

They tell you beforehand not to enter Ranger School with the expectation of finishing it in one attempt. Lots of candidates “recycle,” meaning they have to pause training either for failing to pass a certain phase, or injury, or any of another million reasons. Our instructors let us know that recycling would mean delays in graduation, before adding “for those of you who *do* graduate the course.”

I started Ranger School in late February, the date of the dreaded Best Ranger Competition. The BRC is a series of physical and technical events, the winner of which is deemed the best already-qualified Ranger in the world. It also meant that Ranger School stopped for a whole six weeks, so that anyone in my course who got recycled at any point ended up with a six-week holdover.

I recycled after the first phase. I got to spend an extra month and a half at beautiful Fort Benning before reentering, and passing, the first phase and moved on to the Mountain Phase. Twelve weeks in school and I was lucky enough to be starting the second phase.

Which I promptly recycled through.

By the time I arrived at the third phase, in the swamps of Florida, I'd been in school for eighteen weeks. I passed the third phase on the first try, but overall, I'd spent 141 amazing days in Ranger School.

The levels of exhaustion and stress reached in Ranger School are the closest a soldier can experience to wartime conditions without actually being at war.

My first theories on mindset came during a long overnight march during Mountain Phase. I remember it clearly. It was about 3 a.m., and we were traversing a draw deep in the mountains. We'd been on the march for several days straight. I was beat down. Delirious.

Someone started singing *The Star-Spangled Banner*. To this day, I'm not sure if it was real or a hallucination, but I remember constantly asking myself, "what the fuck is going on?"

It feels like I haven't eaten in...forever. I'm sucking. I had this surreal feeling, an out-of-body experience where I was watching myself walk from outside of myself. And then, in the midst of the most bone-deep misery and exhaustion I'd ever had, things suddenly became very clear to me. I became super aware of what I was doing and how I felt. I'd reached a point of no return with my body, but my mind took over and gave me some control over the situation.

I realized my body wasn't able to push itself anymore.

My mind took stock:

There's no more food coming.

There's not going to be any sleep for a long time to come.

My body wasn't going to carry me through.

My mind was going to have to do the pushing from here on out.

From that moment on, I regained control over my situation. I embraced the suck, and my mind was able to push my body to keep going, complete the mission, and successfully pass the remainder of the phase.

FIND THOSE CHALLENGES AND YOUR SWITCH

Finding ways to push yourself isn't just about achieving a goal or checking off a box on your bucket list. The goal of challenging yourself, of reaching for something that seems way out of your reach, or unattainable, is an act of conditioning. Signing up for a one-hundred-mile ruck march, or an obstacle race, or an Ironman Triathlon is teaching your mind to “flip the switch.”

I'm a huge advocate of finding challenges that bring you to the brink of physical collapse, hitting that space where you have to “flip the switch” and have your mind take over to push you through. Do it enough and you'll find it becomes a conscious habit—enduring pain and stress, and in the middle of that asking yourself, “OK, my body has taken me as far as it's going to, now what does my mind want to do?”

That's the switch.

I recently signed up for my first Ironman distance triathlon. That's a 2.4-mile swim, followed by a 112-mile bike race, capped by a 26.2-mile marathon. I'll need to move my body for over 140 miles in one race. It's intimidating. It's kind of insane. But I'm excited. I KNOW my body is going to want to give up at some point. My only question is: when will my mind kick in, when during that race will I “flip the switch” and harness the mental and willpower to

push through? Because I've conditioned myself so thoroughly, both mentally and physically, I know it's a matter of *when*, not *if*, my mind will step up.

Test your limits.

Find your wall.

Train your mind to break through it.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO KNOW EVERYTHING

When I was young, whenever I was confronted with something I didn't know, I'd try to bluff my way through it. I feared looking ignorant, or like someone who didn't have all the answers. High school, college, the early days of my business—I worried about creating the perception that I was an idiot, so when I didn't know the answer to something, I faked it. I always tried to “fake it until you make it.”

My mindset changed when I went to Ranger School. I realized the moment I got there that there was going to be a lot of stuff in the course that I didn't know, and that I wouldn't be able to fake knowing about. I committed to asking questions, asking for help, and admitting when I didn't know something.

Right away, this mindset was challenged. It was while

we were in one of the rock pits at Fort Benning, learning knots. I was learning how to tie an inline bowline knot, and a classmate asked me if I knew how to dress (a fancy way of saying “finish”) the knot? I had to consciously force myself to admit I didn’t, then to ask, “Can you teach me?”

It was like a light bulb went off in my head, and the results were amazing. It opened doors to accelerating my knowledge and skills, and sparked an urge to learn, to stretch myself. It wasn’t a physical kind of pain, but it still represented the “embrace the suck” mindset perfectly. I knew that a lot of the things I wanted to figure out were going to be difficult, and I was going to have to ask for a lot of help. It was going to suck at times, that much I knew. But I also knew it would be worth it in the end.

One of these first areas was fitness. I wanted to know everything there was to know about transforming your body, proper nutrition, and creating the physique I wanted. Like anything else, the best way I figured to do that was by entering a bodybuilding show. I decided to figure this shit out. I knew it would suck, I knew it would be hard, and I knew it would be worth it.

Then I tried powerlifting. A completely different discipline than the kind of workouts required in bodybuilding, I decided the only way to learn it was to enter a power-

lifting competition, then figure out how to get ready for it. Where bodybuilding was about reaching as close to aesthetic perfection as you can with your body, powerlifting is all about force, pushing your muscles to get them to move massive amounts of weight. Powerlifters aren't lean and cut like bodybuilders, and getting good at it takes a whole different type of training.

Probably the best example of embracing the suck and learning something new as a way to achieve goals was through my experience with running. I've always been a big guy. I'm not built to be a marathoner, and running has not been my strong suit. So of course, when I decided to get better at running, I entered a marathon.

Embracing the suck means learning, and learning, that burning desire to acquire new knowledge is the not-so-secret sauce to growth in your personal life and career. What happens to unused muscle? It atrophies—loses form and mass and becomes useless. Embracing the suck means you exercise every fiber of your body and soul, and the end result is success and happiness that you'd never envisioned.

THIS IS NOT A HACK

I didn't invent the concept of embracing the suck. When I was in the army, it was an idea we saw every-

where. Whether you are an infantryman in the army, a helicopter pilot in the marines or a TACP (tactical air control party) in the air force, this phrase is well and widely known. “Embrace the suck” endures because it works.

This is not a life hack. It’s not a shortcut to tapping into performance potential hidden from the average person. It’s a real way of approaching the obstacles facing you, and growing beyond them. We used to say that we “trained as we fight,” meaning no half-efforts, no taking it easy simply because we were in training and not on an actual battlefield. Success in life is often like that—you make your own luck, and often that luck is the result of hard work no one else ever sees.

Here’s your hack: work hard. Seek out experiences that stretch you out physically and mentally. Learn how to flip your switch. Do a good job at whatever you do.

It’s as simple as that.

Flip that switch and break it, so you have no choice other than to maintain and sustain that drive.

What keeps you from being able to fix that broken switch? You have to respect the process. People often talk about enjoying the process. That’s easier said than done. Trust

me. Sometimes the process is rough, unrelenting, and hard, but you need to respect it.

Instead of bitching and complaining, the “pre-workout” of quitters, just keep your sights set on YOUR goals and aspirations; YOURS, and no one else’s.

NEVER TURN DOWN OPPORTUNITIES

Many people, from my perspective, don’t reach their goals, or fail, because they turn down opportunities. We hear a lot of praise for the word “no,” but I discovered in college, and enduring through my military and business careers, that the word “yes” is even more powerful.

When an opportunity comes your way, you’ve got to take it. In college, I made it a point to accept invitations to travel, challenge myself, or step outside of my comfort zone because I knew opportunities would open up (barring the presence of a valid reason not to).



In the military, everyone wants to go to the “cool” schools—Ranger, Airborne, Sniper, etc. Those are the badge schools, the stuff that we all kind of thought we’d be doing in the army. But the military offers schools in all kinds of things—languages, establishing drop zones for equipment and paratroopers behind enemy lines, logistics. I advised my soldiers and NCOs (non-commissioned officers) to take any opportunity to go to a school, “cool” or otherwise. They were guaranteed to learn something from the process and grow in the process.

I fell into a rhythm of where, if it was ethical and moral and seemed right, I’d never turn an opportunity down. Saying yes couldn’t hurt me. Worst case scenario, I’d fail, but I also knew I’d learn something from *that*, too. People will often wait for the perfect time and perfect moment to try something new. I knew, though, that if I waited

for that perfection, it would never come, or would take a long time to arrive, during which, if I'd said yes even if the timing wasn't awesome, I'd have been able to attain ten times the results.

DISCIPLINE

Sometimes, embracing the suck means denying yourself diversions. During downtimes, it's typical for people to seek comfort, whether in parties or movies or whatever it is they do to fill the space between one day and the next. When I shipped out to Korea, I knew I wasn't going to waste my spare time that way.

I'd started Bare Performance Nutrition three years earlier and was struggling to scale, running it out of the small room the army gave me. I knew going into it that there were lots of people smarter than me, who had better credentials, better experience, and who had done more than me, at least in their business lives.

I didn't come to the industry with a Harvard degree. I hadn't done any crazy internships. No one had hired me in a high-profile company. What I DID have was a strong work ethic. I knew the way to overcome gaps in education or experience was simply to challenge myself and work my ass off harder than anyone else.

That's what I did. Talk about a productive nine-month overseas tour.

When I first arrived in South Korea for my unit rotation, I vowed to see this as an opportunity. I had a chance to really scale my brand. While I was in South Korea to do a job for the army, I had lots of free time. Many soldiers spent that downtime playing video games, watching television, streaming movies, or hitting the bars (when we weren't on lockdown), or just bullshitting in the barracks.

Not me.

I committed to spending every waking hour outside of work to building Bare Performance Nutrition. I read books on business and marketing, listened to podcasts, taught myself video editing, photography, videography—anything and everything to build my brand.

I arrived in South Korea making between \$2,000 and \$3,000 per month with my business. My goal was to hit \$10,000 per month by the time we rotated back to the US in nine months. By over-committing, over-obsessing, and sticking to that schedule, I built the brand and managed to reach my goal in just three months.

Now, you may be asking yourself: How the hell is this guy

logistically managing all of this stuff? Shipments going out? Inventory coming in?

A TYPICAL DAY IN SOUTH KOREA FOR ME:

0400—wake up, talk to US manufacturers and handle customer service

0600—Morning meeting with company leadership before PT

0630—Army PT (Physical Training)

0800—Workout and film YouTube videos during the only time available for filming in the post gym

0900—First Call for work

1700—Work Day concludes

1730—Grab my camera equipment and film more YouTube videos

1900—Dinner

1930—More filming YouTube videos and begin editing

2100—Watch online courses on digital marketing, branding, and social media

2300—Write handwritten thank-you cards for customers who placed orders that day

2400—Finish YouTube filming and editing, then upload for release the next day

0030—Sleep

When I left with my unit for South Korea, I needed someone I could trust to fulfill orders and packages. From the beginning, my dad and brother were always willing to step up and help out. They would take over while I was in the field for a month at a time, or they stepped up while I was at Ranger School for 141 days. I could always count on them any day I needed help.

My family was my biggest supporter while building Bare Performance Nutrition. When I first arrived in South Korea, we were shipping between thirty to fifty orders a month. After the first ninety days, we were processing between 170-200 orders a month.

This increase in volume forced my brother, Preston, to quit his job (that he started about six months prior after graduating college) to be part of Bare Performance Nutrition. Even though I couldn't afford to pay him at the time, he believed in the vision and was willing to move to Texas from Pennsylvania to keep the momentum moving.

The Bare family believes in hard work, building the American dream, and good old-fashioned discipline.

That discipline continues today. I continue to challenge myself with new experiences because I know, whenever I do those things, they never hurt me. They only make me better, both physically and mentally.

Once I accepted that I was entering a competitive environment without all the credentials some of my competitors possessed, I had to ask myself, how do I get better? My answer: do more shitty things to make me a stronger person. In short, embrace the suck. I've always valued practical experience over book learning. Whenever I talk to someone, I can tell right away as to whether they're talking from experience, or from something they read in a book, or saw on a video, but have never actually experienced themselves. I never wanted to be that guy.

WORK HARDER *AND* SMARTER

We've all heard that old saying, "Don't work harder. Work smarter!" It's reassuring for all the wrong reasons. It suggests that the main goal in life is to find the easy way, to skip out on hard work and struggle and to hack your way to achieve your goals.

Repeat after me: there are no shortcuts.

Not for the stuff that really matters, anyway. Working smart is always a good idea (it never pays to be a dummy) but I'd prefer to work harder in most cases, because I know I'm going to get my ass kicked. It's going to hurt, and I'm going to experience pain and struggle, but I'm going to learn a whole lot more from the journey. I'm going to have stories to tell afterward that can help other

people, too. Having stories to apply to experience gives you a great reference point. They form the foundation of the world you're creating, and they represent knowledge that can never be taken from you. Struggle and stories add depth to your experience, and in the end, will make you more successful than you ever imagined.

DON'T FEAR INEFFICIENCY

There are times to be ruthlessly efficient. When peoples' lives are at stake, for sure. As a general principle, though, I think it's OK to be inefficient at times. That's another way you learn.

Building my business, I wasted tens of thousands of dollars, and thousands of hours, doing things that turned out to be dead ends, or outright mistakes. I rarely proceeded from Point A directly to Point B. To get where we are today, successful, thriving, and growing, was a long, circuitous trip. I made a lot of mistakes, but in the making, I paid attention, learned, and won't make the same mistake again.

Over the years, I've had conversations with well-meaning folks who wanted to focus on the things I've done wrong in building the business. They wanted to point out the inefficiencies in the process, the things we did wrong, and to offer solutions to do a better job. Usually, though, these

aren't people who've actually done what I've attempted to do, namely, grow a business from scratch. It's easy to analyze mistakes, but those mistakes were part of my process. Those were the things I had to go through to get where I wanted to be. Don't be afraid to make your own mistakes, either. Creation is messy. Following a dream isn't always a straight line. The only real sin would be to make mistakes and not learn from them.

BOTTOM LINE

Find the next challenge. Don't avoid them, embrace them. See the struggle for what it is—an opportunity to grow, to create something amazing and fulfilling and kick-ass. Search those challenges out.

Don't avoid them. Whenever I try to avoid challenges, it anchors me firmly in my safe zone, doing the things I've always done, ensuring that I minimize pain and discomfort and the chance of failure.

It's a trap.

No one grows in their safe zone. It's a static place. No change, no evolution, no learning.

When you search for those things that are really hard, those things that really suck (like a four-day, 150-mile

ruck march in the heat of late summer Texas), and embrace them, you'll have those life-changing experiences that will lead you exactly where you want to be.

The payoff might take two years or two days. Some challenges are bigger than others. But the payoff will always be there, if you face those challenges head-on.

IF IT WERE EASY...

Now that we've talked about embracing the suck, or how to learn and grow not just through adversity, but because of it, in this next chapter we'll face another reality: if it were easy, anyone could do it.