

CHAPTER FIVE

JUST GOING FOR A B+

STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE, NOT PERFECTION

There are two types of people in the world: those who say, "Look at the mistake I almost made," and those who say, "Look at the mistake I just made." As a recovering Type A personality, I've had quite the journey transitioning from the former to the latter category. This was my Everest. Like, trying to 'ride a unicycle while juggling flaming torches' difficult; entertaining, yet perilous. Leaving behind my DRIVE to always give 110% in everything was one of the most difficult lessons I needed to learn AND adopt. If you go through life seeing the arrival time on your GPS as just information and are not someone who secretly exclaims, "Challenge accepted!" this chapter may not speak to you.

This chapter was one of the most challenging for me to write. Not because I don't believe in what I am saying, on the contrary. I feel this chapter in my soul, laying it bare for all to learn from, and getting

everything down on paper will allow me to skip therapy this week. So, silver linings, right?

Type A vs Type B

The Type A personality is one of the two major personality types initially described by cardiologists Meyer Friedman and R. H. Rosenman in the 1950s as part of their research on the relationship between personality and heart disease. The Type A personality tends to be organized, proactive, and driven to succeed. The other personality type is Type B, characterized by their easygoing and relaxed nature. Like a tightrope walker gradually letting go of the sturdy pole in exchange for freedom on the line between both personality types, I adopted the mantra of "Just going for a B+." It is a play on words between personality types and a tieback to my overachieving ways in my education. I am now learning to let go of needing an A in every assignment and believing that a B+ is acceptable. Sometimes, "good enough" really is good enough. I'm told it's called "balance." I may not have adopted it entirely, and I probably don't need to master it since I'm only "Just going for a B+."

"In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing."

-Theodore Roosevelt

By gaining insight into your personality traits, inclinations, strengths, and weaknesses, you can better understand your behavior and decision-making processes, and confront biases and prejudices. This self-awareness enables you to identify patterns and habits that limit your growth and can help develop coping strategies. Whether it's recognizing a tendency to procrastinate or a natural tendency to be introverted, this knowledge empowers you to set realistic goals that align with your unique attributes. Embracing your personality traits and assessing your motivations, desired outcomes, and knee-jerk trauma responses (we all have them), and evaluating all aspects of yourself provides the foundation for personal and professional development, enhancing your ability to excel in your field and better serve your clients.

I should probably note that the Type A and Type B personality classification systems have been "reconsidered" and represent an oversimplification of personality traits. People are more complex than just an "A" or a "B" and can't always be neatly categorized (much to the chagrin of my Type A heart). Individuals can and should draw upon elements from both personality types to enhance their overall well-being and effectiveness. Nevertheless, the concept of Type A and Type B personalities helps as a starting point when discussing people's approach to stress, work, goals, and life's ambitions.

Classic Type A Personality Characteristics

The classic Type A personality is characterized by traits and behaviors, including competitiveness, ambition, high levels of self-motivation, and a strong desire to achieve goals. (Honestly, that just sounds like fun to me!) If you haven't read Chapter Three: "The Circle Starts Here:

Blame vs. Accountability," I suggest you go back and do so because I have three words for you: Profound, Radical, Accountability. (Insert sad trombone). Thanks, Dad!

- **Competitive and driven:** Type A individuals are often highly motivated, competitive, and achievement oriented. They strive for success and are willing to put in significant effort to reach their goals.

- **Highly organized:** They tend to be organized and efficient in their work, often adhering to schedules and deadlines.

- **Productive:** Type A individuals are usually productive and focused on tasks, which can lead to accomplishing a lot in a short amount of time.

According to "the Google," common professions where Type A Personalities excel are:

- **Entrepreneurs:** (Oh hey, that's me!)
- **Corporate Leadership**
- **Sales and Marketing** (Hi! It's Me Again)
- **Finance and Investment Banking**
- **Medicine and Healthcare**
- **Law** (Have I mentioned yet that in college, I was a Poli-Sci Major with a double minor in pre-law and communications? Rhetorical Communications at that! Nothing to see here, folks!)
- **Engineering**
- **Project Management**
- **Teaching and Education Administration**
- **Journalism and Broadcasting**

Classic Type B Personality Characteristics:

The classic Type B personalities are typically characterized by having a calm, free-and-easy approach to life. They are less likely to experience

constant time pressure and impatience. Type B personalities are usually more flexible and adaptable, less rigid in their thinking, and less concerned about winning and achieving at all costs. They are more likely to engage in hobbies and activities for relaxation and pleasure. I'm not going to lie; the Type A in me felt uncomfortable just putting all of those words together in a paragraph, I even had to look up a few.

- **Relaxed:** Type B individuals are generally more laid back, less stressed, and less competitive.

- **Adaptable:** They easily adjust to changing circumstances and are better at handling unexpected situations.

- **Enjoy leisure:** Type B individuals often prioritize downtime, contributing to a better work-life balance and reduced stress levels.

And just for fun, I asked "the Google" what jobs I am (probably) not suited for: Here are some professions where Type B individuals would excel:

- **Therapist or Counselor**
- **Librarian**
- **Graphic Designer**
- **Environmental Scientist**
- **Writer or Editor** (oh boy! This is awkward)
- **Artist or Illustrator**
- **Historian**
- **Yoga Instructor or Wellness Coach**
- **Park Ranger**
- **Social Worker**

Is it wrong that most of the Type B personality jobs seem stressful to me? Is it me? It's me, isn't it?

Combining Positive Aspects

What if, instead, we were to combine the strengths of both personalities? Learning how to make the most of the positive aspects of various personality traits helps people adapt and thrive in different personal and professional situations. Certainly, no personality type is better than the others; each has unique strengths and weaknesses.

- **Balance ambition with relaxation:** Strive to adopt Type A personalities' driven and goal-oriented nature when pursuing your ambitions. However, remember to balance this with the ability to relax and enjoy the present moment, as Type B personalities do.

- **Set realistic goals:** Emulate the Type A trait of setting and working toward ambitious goals, but ensure they are achievable and prioritize your well-being while meeting them.

- **Time management:** Learn from Type A's organizational skills to manage your time efficiently and meet deadlines. At the same time, don't overcommit or create unnecessary stress.

- **Embrace adaptability:** Develop the adaptability and resilience of Type B personalities. Recognize that some things are beyond your control, and adjusting to changing circumstances is essential without excessive stress.

- **Prioritize self-care:** Like Type B individuals, make time for leisure, relaxation, and self-care to reduce stress and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

- **Seek self-awareness:** Understand your personality traits, strengths, and weaknesses. This awareness can help you make informed decisions about when to push yourself and when to take a step back.

In my opinion, the most important of these is self-awareness. Through self-awareness, anyone can learn how to leverage the positive

aspects of different personality traits, allowing them to adapt and thrive. Walking the tightrope between being driven to achieve and self-care does not have to be your Everest. By drawing from the best personality traits, you can learn to accept "mistakes" on the horizon or in your rearview mirror, not as "issues to resolve" but as significant turning points on your road to success.

"It is better to be boldly decisive and risk being wrong than to agonize at length and be right too late."

-Marilyn Moats Kennedy

The following are some essential insights I've had to learn firsthand or that I have helped my coaching clients with.

Strive for excellence, not perfection.

Aim for doing your best, not being perfect. Many people delay taking action when uncertain about the outcome or their abilities. They often want everything to be flawless before they start. But the truth is perfection doesn't exist. Perfection is an unattainable ideal rooted in subjective standards. The pursuit of perfection often stems from underlying fears of criticism and a deep-seated need for control and validation, acting as a trauma response for some. Recognizing and moving beyond this pursuit can lead to healthier, more realistic goals, fostering personal growth, resilience, and self-compassion in the face

of inevitable imperfections and challenges. It's okay for things to be "good enough." Remember, failure is a wise teacher; avoiding those lessons means missing out on great experiences. Research, plan, and then take the plunge. Wanting everything to be perfect is the classic "look at the mistake I almost made," but striving for excellence only requires you to look back and say, "Look at the mistake I just made" as you move forward, wiser and more prepared. Just going for a B+.

"For failure is a teacher wise, In its depths, new strength does rise, From shattered dreams, we learn to glean, The seeds of hope, the will to dream."

-Red Hilton

Learn to step into discomfort.

Ahh, discomfort. Much like the meeting, that could have been an email and is now running 30 minutes over because there is one person who keeps asking questions; no one wants to be here. Steve Harvey said, "Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable." We all have a comfort zone, a familiar and secure place where we feel at ease. However, this comfort zone can also hinder us from realizing our dreams and business goals. If everything feels too comfortable, it's time to shake things up.

In my intro to this book, I wrote, "I've come to understand that the phrase "not yet" holds much more power than the notion of incapability. It embodies a mindset that perceives challenges not as insurmountable obstacles but as opportunities for growth and learning. By viewing the unaccomplished as the yet-to-be-accomplished, I've developed a resilience that enables me to face the unfamiliar with curiosity rather than fear."

Get curious! If something is not passing the "gut check," or you're not feeling "comfortable," ask yourself why. Are you questioning your abilities? Are you enthused about the outcome but not willing to put in the work to get there? Does the action not align with your goal or purpose? Getting to the heart of the reason for your discomfort is imperative. Remember, your vision needs to be bigger than your fears. Challenge yourself to "get comfortable with being uncomfortable."

"That's the way we have always done it."

Give me strength. What do smoking in restaurants, open alcohol containers in vehicles, corporal punishment in schools, a TRS-80, and lead-based paint have in common? That's right, they were all common at one time. How about something more benign: payphones? When was the last time you saw a payphone? Why? Because laws, technology, and societal norms change over time.

The phrase "That's the way we have always done it" is the most counterproductive mindset for any business owner, resulting from a tendency to normalize complacency. It reflects a resistance to change and a reluctance to explore new opportunities. Sticking to the familiar might provide a sense of security and feel safe, but it can also limit a business's potential for expansion. This might be a good place to remind you to go back and (re)read Chapter Two: Safety Vs Happiness.

To thrive in business, it is essential to embrace change, stay open to new ideas, reach new clients, and be willing to step beyond the safety of the status quo. Like our tightrope walker leaving the sturdy pole behind and walking the line between the safety of complacency and the perilousness of "all out" Guerilla marketing (also Chapter Two), finding the middle and your center of gravity, staying fixated upon your gazing point in the distance, and taking small steps will allow you to bridge the gap between where you began and the adventure in front of you. You can do it. I believe in you!

Decision-Making and Analysis Paralysis

One of the most challenging tasks we face in business is decision-making. The word "decision" originates in Latin and means "to cut off." When we decide, we're essentially cutting off specific options, which means we're choosing one path and leaving others behind. While this might seem like arriving at an end, it's actually a freeing and empowering process that brings progress forward. In business, if we're going to achieve our dreams, we need to make some decisions.

The greatest barrier to decision-making is analysis paralysis. Analysis paralysis refers to becoming overwhelmed by the abundance of information or choices available when making a decision. This overwhelming feeling of having too many options can cause people to overthink, obsessively gather more information, or excessively weigh pros and cons, leading to indecision or inaction.

"If you obsess over whether you are making the right decision, you are basically assuming that the universe will reward you for one thing and punish you for another."

-Deepak Chopra

Analysis paralysis can be a thief of time, as overanalyzing and constantly seeking more information can lead to missed opportunities and reduced confidence. Remember to strive for excellence, not perfection. When faced with analysis paralysis, consider the following strategies:

- Create a decision framework with evaluation criteria to allow for informed choices and limit options to prevent becoming overwhelmed and streamline decision-making.
- Define clear objectives and prioritize critical information to focus on essential details and reduce distractions.
- Set a decision deadline to avoid procrastination and take timely action.
- Seek input from trusted advisors to gain diverse perspectives.
- Step Into Discomfort: We covered this already, but understand that no decision is perfect, and mistakes are part of the learning process.

If all else fails, go back and reread Chapter Three, and just remember to "be like Sully."

We fail at the level of our systems.

"We fail at the level of our systems" means that the success or failure of a business depends on how well its internal processes and procedures are organized and run. In simple terms, a business needs efficient and well-structured systems in place to avoid failures.

Having a good system in place allows for:

- Consistency
- Efficiency
- Scalability
- Productivity Automation
- Decisive Decision-making
- Client satisfaction

What does having a "good system" in place look like for a business?

- Delegating Work as Needed
- Automation for Email Marketing
- Inventory Management System
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System
- Online Payment Processing and Income Reporting System
- Human Resources Management System (HRMS)
- Project Management Software
- Customer Support Ticketing System
- Supply Chain Management System
- Temporary Staffing Agencies as Needed

"Don't fear the stumble, nor humble's roar, In failing, we unlock destiny's door. From grand failure, a brighter path appears, Rising anew, our dreams conquer fears."

-Red Hilton

Being a victim is not a choice, but having a victim mentality is.

I say this with love (or some reasonable facsimile of love and caring...): Stop carrying your trauma around and asking everyone else to hold on to it for you; it's not a purse. Years ago, I worked with a man who, I'm the first to admit, had suffered a tragedy in his life, like a real, life-altering tragedy. At the time when our paths crossed, it was around 8 years post-tragedy. My office and his were within earshot of each other. After the first few months, I noticed a pattern with him: within the first 4 minutes of meeting someone for the first time, including clients, the UPS man, the poor soul who delivered his lunch take-out, he would invariably recount his "story of tragedy" to them. Once he had exhausted that story, he moved on to the next tragedy in his life, recounting the failure of his business during the Reagan administration. I was witnessing this in the early-mid 2000's, so we were almost 20 years removed from that administration, but that didn't stop him from recalling the story to explain how he always felt like he was digging

out of a hole. He would also work into most conversations that he was divorced, that his dog was sick and not expected to make it much longer, and that he chopped wood on the weekends and lived on the first floor only of his house in the winter to save money on heat. Sir, this is a Wendy's.

You may be surprised to hear that he was not the most successful person in the office, not even the second most successful. I really liked the guy, but he lacked the confidence to talk about himself and his accomplishments. Like that one guy who peaked in high school and never made it to the "pros" because of a knee injury, he carried forward his previous setbacks as a distraction, using them as conversation points to explain his performance, even decades later. In business, our past personal and professional experiences undoubtedly play a significant role in shaping who we are and how we interact with people. They are the building blocks of our skills, knowledge, and character. However, it's essential to recognize that while our past may have contributed to our current state, we should not lead with our traumas. We will cover this more in Chapter Ten, but to paraphrase Nadia Bolz-Weber: "Preach about your scars, not your wounds." The wound is the tragedy; the scar is what you did to heal from it.

If my former colleague used his personal stories to illustrate his character, and he promptly followed up with details about a memorial scholarship he established, of which he was rightfully proud, I could appreciate his approach. Or if he explained how he faced tough times in business but managed to come back and be even more successful, then I would appreciate his attempt to inspire his clients to trust him with their financial future. I could understand if he talked about his past challenges as scars, but he didn't; they were all still wounds.

Sharing our experiences, not just the successes but also the obstacles we've overcome, can make us more relatable to clients and colleagues.

The key word here is "overcome." Clients want to work with people who demonstrate their capability to overcome challenges and who they can trust to provide reliable solutions for their own lives. Basically, if you don't have your ducks in a row, how can anyone expect you to help them gather theirs?

If you feel that everything that has ever happened in your life has happened TO you, remember being a victim is not a choice, but having a victim mentality is. While you can't always control circumstances, you have the power to control your responses. This shift in perspective is not only empowering for you but also serves as an inspiration to clients. Be a beacon of hope and motivation by demonstrating the strength gained from overcoming adversity.

You cannot be a victim of circumstances you create.

And finally, you cannot be a victim of the circumstances you create. I'll keep this simple. If things are not going the way you want or expect, let me introduce you to a profound and radical sense of accountability. (Chapter Three, BTW). As a child, I quickly learned that going to my father to be coddled or reassured was an exercise in futility. Don't think for a minute that I had an alternative option or Plan B, so I learned at a young age to manage my expectations. Occasionally, in a moment of weakness, I would "complain" to my dad. As plain as day, I remember he would wait for me to be done and look at me and say, "Are you going to sit there and cry about it, or get up and do something about it?" (Well, I am 5 so my instincts tell me to cry about it, but the vibe in the room is telling me that is not the answer...).

Here is my advice. Setting aside situations involving violence and personal safety (these are not part of this topic, we are talking about superficial "victimhood" mentality in this chapter), the next time

something is not going your way, get up and figure out what you did to create the situation or what you can do to change the situation. Assigning blame will not help you. Being a victim will not help you. If your goal is to succeed, know you can; you need to decide and “just go for a B+.”