

Preface for a NDA protected client's memoir.

Preface

There are certain sounds that you never forget. For me, it was the sound of the jail cell door closing behind me. It was a unique sound. It wasn't the sound of 20,000 fans cheering for me and chanting my name while I played at a University of Connecticut basketball game. It wasn't my coach yelling my name or my kids calling out for me. Nah, this was a different sound. This was the type of sound that, when you heard it, put deep terror and horror in your heart. Each time I heard it, the sound made me wonder how did I get here? Every time I heard this sound, it made me feel like my dreams and goals had disappeared, diminished—had been repossessed.

This sound brought me a lot of heartache and pain. This sound came with many realizations. I would miss my kid's birthdays and holding my wife. It brought a lack of confidence, teary nights, a doubtful and blurry vision of who I was as a man.

In those moments, I would ask myself, "God, why me?" and a bunch of thoughts and visions flooded into my mind. I began thinking about my momma and how my being away affected her. I thought of how the pain nearly made her go crazy; she did not talk to anyone for months at a time. I thought about how my wife almost gave up on life. The weight of raising four kids, each with their own lives and activities, while working a full-time job plus the stress of having a single income was nearly too heavy for her to bear. On top of everything else she had on her, my wife, a Doctorate holding teacher, dealt with the public humiliation of colleagues and co-workers, repeatedly telling her that they saw her husband handcuffed coming down the stairs of the courthouse on the news. The local news played that embarrassing segment for many weeks, and the pain she experienced grew each time she saw it. My personal hell had become their reality—a nightmare. Each time I heard that sound, these emotions, and thoughts came to my mind.

It was moments like this that shaped me into the man I am right now as I write this book. So many people know me but in different ways.

I am a father, athlete, college graduate, coach, husband, and entrepreneur. But those are just titles and are only part of who I am. There is so much more to my story and the real me. This book's purpose is to give you a look behind what you see on the surface and a chance for me to share my journey with you. You will have a front-row seat to the moments that defined different changes in my life and how I survived those

dark moments by turning to the light. You will learn how I was able to keep my head up when society wanted to bury me with shame and scrutiny.

Hopefully, the biggest thing you will see is that instead of letting these moments stifle me I owned them. You are no different from me. You, too, are probably going through many factors that could make or break you. I want you to learn to dig deep, thrive and survive.

This book is for the former collegiate athlete, who may be struggling currently as an adult because their career may or may not have developed the way they wanted. For a single parent working hard to make the best possible life for their children who needs encouragement and assurance that they can make it. Or it's a blueprint of the dos and don'ts that coaches give their rising senior athletes as they ascend to higher heights and begin to face their future.

Whoever you are, regardless of your walk of life, I want you to know one thing, we are only here for a limited amount of time. But, with hard work, *you* determine who you are and what you are made of. I hope you find the strength you didn't know you had in these pages because it is still deep inside you. You may see a reflection of yourself, or your future self, in these pages. This is a story of redemption, reinvention, and perseverance—it is my story.

This journey highlights everything I used to rebuild myself from the social stigma of being an alleged drug dealer, thug, and professional basketball player, to becoming a business owner making a difference in lives. This book will be honest, bloody, and raw at times, but you can bet it will always be authentic. You may laugh sometimes, and then sometimes you may cry. I **had** to put my pain in words to help gain awareness and change the direction of my life.

I hope within these pages you find something that you can use within your life to inspire change within yourself. It's in our darkest times, the deepest moments we find what we are made of. Being down does not necessarily mean being out. It's about what you discover about who you are when you are there.

Last, of all, this story is about redemption and finding that thing inside of us to keep us going. It's something that is not just unique to my story, but also can be found in yours.

Keep this in mind. When I first told people I was writing a book, they smiled in my face and told me it was a good idea. Their words weren't genuine, nor was their support. To make it worse, I even had someone tell me, a close colleague, that this first book would be a good attempt and if it didn't succeed then I could try again. I had to

dig deep to find a way to block out any distractions or disbelief both internal and external. Please know, we all have it in us. I hope you find yours within the pages of this book.

Before we start, I have to take a moment and thank my beautiful wife, children, and my momma for their strength, love, and support. Without them, I wouldn't be here writing this book. Nah, scratch that, I *couldn't* write this book without them. Thank you for allowing me to become the man I am, and I love you all.

An excerpt from NDA protected client's book about combating fear. Finding Your Why

So far, fear has taken us on a journey of discovery. We've determined how it affects our body, its response in the brain, and ways to repurpose it and improve our self-talk. But you may be wondering, is it worth going through all this? The answer lies in your "why." Your why is the device you keep ever-present in your mind to keep yourself motivated to do your work. This desire is your purpose and **must** be stronger than fear. As you drive on your journey of empowerment, fear sometimes acts as an internal GPS for guiding your soul. Tim Ferris, investor, author, and podcaster, said that "fear sometimes shows you what you shouldn't do, but it shows you exactly what you should do." I would add to this point and mention that your "why" is your internal checkpoint. When you grow tired on your journey and the bad seemingly outweighs the good, your "why" kicks you and snaps you back into purpose. I can't stress how important it is.

Mark Manson, author of *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fu*k*, states, "Bravery is not the absence of fear. Bravery is feeling the fear, the doubt, the insecurity, and deciding that something else is more important."

I urge you to find what matters more. Here's an example. The controversial public figure Monica Lewinsky did a TedTalk a couple of years ago, petrified. On every page of her speech, she wrote two words. "This matters." Imagine the scrutiny she faced, but she courageously did what she had to do. She remembered her "why" and made it more important than her fear.

Please, go back to exercise seven and write a second sentence, "Overcoming my fear of public speaking matters to me because _____," and fill in the blank. Remember, when we write things down, they become real.

Now that you have your "why" locked and loaded, it is now time to visualize it and make it real in your mind. Did you know our brain does not know the difference between visualizing something and doing that thing? Numerous studies have shown that the same neural pathways are active if we visualize something or do it. For example, decorated Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps states that he does two visualizations a month before his race. He envisions himself winning his race from his point of view within the race and in the secondary visualization from the spectator's eyes. Phelps attributes this to his success. His physical training is important, definitely, but he *wins* by using visualization.

Visualization is an effective tool to erase fear while public speaking if we use it like Phelps. Except, in this case, we can rewire our brains to see ourselves succeeding while

presenting. For instance, if we envision ourselves standing in front of our audience and winningly delivering our speech. Imagine the audience engaged, attentive, and wanting to hear from you. The power of the mind enables us to create an optimal scenario for us to aim for. This fact is backed by science, as multiple studies have shown that people who visualize themselves delivering a smooth talk perform better than those who don't.

Results revealed that performance visualization was generally more effective than other interventions for reducing self-reported negative thinking. Additionally, visualization is an antidote for our negativity bias. Meaning we are developing and building new neural pathways. Why? The brain doesn't know the difference between the action of doing something versus visualizing. Both the action and the visualization travel the same neural pathways. If you can see it, you can achieve it!

Become Comfortable with the Uncomfortable - An Athlete's Approach to Fear

The main pathway of growth is change. Change is debatably one of the most transformational elements of life but can evoke a high level of fear and apprehension. One of my favorite quotes is from Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher who said, "Change is the only constant in life." Even though change is a genuinely progressive occurrence, our reaction and acceptance of it are not. But it's possible to feel change is happening, welcome it and find comfort and solace in its existence instead of resisting it. I recently heard a quote that stuck with me. "Change is the corridor between the known and the unknown." The group of people who realize the walk to greatness is scary in the hallway of change and keep going anyway are athletes.

During their walk down the hallway, athletes know they may encounter discomfort, the unknown, and other monsters that fear creates in their psyche, but they don't let it stop them. On the other side of fear is growth, and we must first reprogram our minds to realize this. Reprogramming occurs when you change your perspective and flip the dynamic. Frame them in the positive. They changed fear to excitement before the race or event started. This one seemingly minor step helps regain your power.

An interesting study done on Olympic athletes delved into their ability to relabel fear rendered some interesting results. If a reporter asks an athlete before their competition starts how they are feeling, they will never confess to being nervous or fearful. Instead, they relabel their emotions as excitement! This concept is brilliant because our psychosomatic response to fear mirrors the same reaction as excitement. We can use the same technique in our everyday lives and achieve results! We can use the discomfort as an opportunity to grow by reframing the fear. In the words of legendary basketball player Kobe Bryant, "*Pain doesn't tell you when you ought to stop. Pain is the little*

voice in your head that tries to hold you back because it knows if you continue, you will change.” Substitute the word pain for fear, and the quote holds.

Additionally, when they affirm aloud to others that they are excited, not fearful, athletes also tell *themselves* that they are excited. According to a study published by the American Psychological Association, this simple action of substituting an attempt to force relaxation with the declaration of excitement can improve your performance during anxiety-inducing activities like public speaking and math tests.

This action was proven by experiments conducted at Harvard University that showed that excited statements and thoughts could improve performance during activities that triggered anxiety.

In one experiment, 140 participants were told to prepare a persuasive public speech on why they would be appropriate work colleagues to work on a project. A researcher videotaped the speeches and said a committee would judge them to increase anxiety. Before delivering the speech, the participants were divided into two groups and instructed to say, “*I am excited*” or “*I am calm.*” The study’s results found that subjects who said they were excited gave longer speeches and were more persuasive, competent and relaxed than those who said they were calm. The rationale behind this is that when people feel anxious and try to calm themselves, the opposite happens, and they begin thinking of all the things that can go badly. The opposite occurs when they are excited and have a tendency to think about how things could go well. Again, we revisit our wiring for an explanation for this. When we feel anxious, the body begins to think of potential threats to prepare itself to exit or leave quickly and preemptively. By transmuting your anxiety into excitement, positivity floods in, and you begin to explore the favorable possibilities. Positivity is your fuel to keep you excited. Even if you don’t believe it at first, saying ‘I’m excited’ out loud increases authentic feelings of excitement.

As humans, our brains crave safety. We thrive in the feeling of security and finding peace in familiar things. There is nothing standard in growth, and it is new territory that may feel unsafe and uncomfortable. We have to acknowledge that being comfortable with the uncomfortable is the only way to grow. None of us win by playing it safe! We have to decide to walk straight into fear, discomfort and uncertainty. Think of highly decorated Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps. He may feel some apprehension before he competes, but he doesn’t let it hold him back. He feels his fight or flight activate, with a beating heart, and nerves pulsating, but Phelps goes for it despite it all! He realizes that is the only way to achieve greatness. It’s the price of admission to doing great things.

Tony Graham – Executive Vice President

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Thank you, Scott, for the wonderful introduction! I want to express a sincere thank you, to the recycling community, and members of the Automotive Recyclers Association for all you do for the automotive industry and the environment.

You are the heartbeat of the vehicle life cycle as you renew, reuse, and refurbish. Last of all, thank you for being here today!

Most of you have given your time to invest in yourselves, learn more about your industry, network and meet new colleagues. For some of you, it may have taken a lot to get here. I applaud you for showing up!

You're not alone. I want to share my story of how I got here.

After 26-plus years in the automotive industry working in roles from product marketing, sales, business development, and field operations with CDK Global, which used to be ADP Dealer Services, I transitioned to Solera as their Vice President. While I was settling into my new role, someone came to me and told me that one of my colleagues was no longer with the company. He had been scheduled to speak here at the 76th annual Automotive Recycler Association Convention, and I was chosen to be his replacement. Next, they sent Daniel Bailey, from Marketing, who is here today, to give me the details. Now, keep in mind I had only been with Solera for two weeks at this point. I excitedly asked Daniel if I would be moderating a panel at the convention. He looks at me and shakes his head "no." I said, "Ok, a panelist is cool, even though I prefer moderating." Again, he sighs and shakes his head "No." Now, at this point, I was unsure of where this was going. Would I be handing out swag bags, or what exactly would I be doing? This is where my thoughts were going. He then tells me that I will be the opening day keynote speaker. After my initial shock left, I happily accepted because I was and am happy to show up for an industry that has done so much for the automotive business.

As an automotive guy, working for Solera has shown me how important the role of a recycler is. As I learn more about what you do, I am proud to be a part of this vital industry. I mentioned earlier you are the heartbeat of the

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automotive industry, so; it is a pleasure for me to show up for you—and here I am!

That is my story, but I am here today to focus on *you*, how you, your company, and your employees got here after all the changes we have collectively gone through the last twenty months, and, more importantly, where you are going.

When I came up with the title of today’s keynote speech, *the Evolving Automotive Industry – Impact of Technology on the Vehicle Lifecycle*, I took a moment to break down what that means for you, the recycling industry.

I do not know about you, but I feel like the concept of evolution used to be something we would study in history, but now we feel it and are a part of it with how quickly things are changing. The automotive industry is no exception. My intention or goal for this speech is to introduce you to new possibilities and help you realize you are standing on the edge of unique opportunities because of everything happening.

I am an educator, so you will learn some things and have fun at the same time. Most importantly, I want you to become fired up with where we are. As a result, a successful, prosperous future for the recycling industry is possible. Based on adaptability to societal changes, tech innovation increased marketability and awareness. You will remain as strong as you have been.

Together we will survey where we are today. (pause)

We will discuss the state of the industry, specifically how a global pandemic has affected us, and how we can continuously positively impact our communities by working together.

The motto of this year’s conference, “Together We Succeed,” is more than a positive mantra. It is our new reality. The future is tech-based (digital). With

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adaptability and innovation, the recycling industry will keep up and survive, better yet *thrive* during the automotive industry's evolution.

In 2020, as we know, the world came to a halt. One of the many things that became obvious was how much we had been abusing our environment. The skylines of significant countries, India and China, became visible with the reduction of pollution when their governments temporarily shut down industrial plants. Fish swam freely in the canals of Venice, and we all saw things with a renewed sense of clarity.

Another unexpected but logical effect of the pandemic shutdown was the grinding halt of car parts manufacturing, which led to massive supply-chain disruptions.

In March 2020, the semiconductor chip was the lead player in this segment of our story. Preemptively sensing the worst, automakers canceled their orders for parts containing chips. Hindsight is always 2020; sorry, I had to. Still, they had no way of knowing that demand for vehicles would increase due to dealers marketing zero-percent financing deals and the modernization and digitalization of car sales with home delivery, etc.

Simultaneously, the chips were hard to get because production had stopped, so assembly plants could not do their primary function— assemble. Because of these circumstances, the US automotive industry found itself in a bonafide vehicle shortage. According to experts, the most significant gap in supply and demand since the end of World War II.

This semi-conductor chip situation, or “chip-gate,” has been a game-changer! So, much so, Toyota has unseated GM as the leading sales car company by outselling them for three consecutive quarters this year. Let’s spend a second or two on this point. For ninety years, GM has led the sales charts in the US! GM had its worst three months since the Great Depression. GM executives hope the worst of the chip crisis ended in Q3 and hope they can recover in this final quarter of the year. Let’s be clear, only in 2021, in the post-pandemic shutdown, could a historic upset like this occur!

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Leading automotive Executives share the shock of this unprecedented shortage and have some bleak outlook on the situation. For example, Jeff Schuster, LMC Automotive’s president of Global Vehicle Forecasting, states, *“There’s probably more downside risk still because of the multitude of issues going on between port problems, transport problems, getting workers in plants, other parts shortages, chips. So, we’ve got a pretty long road before the industry gets out of this.”*

You, the recycling industry, have stepped up and answered the call with the proven processes you have used and done for years—repurposing parts from totaled vehicles and adding them to existing cars or creating new vehicles from your inventory!

According to an article first published by the Detroit News in June of 2021, which was edited and republished in September, global consulting firm Alix Partners stated that the chip shortage could cause the auto industry 210 billion dollars in revenue this year alone.

You are in a good place because of supply and demand, and the lack of new vehicle inventory presents an immense area of opportunity. The used car has risen in ranks as a hot commodity as the automotive manufacturing industry has resumed chip production, and although they have tried their hardest to catch up, it has a long way to go.

The automotive resource company, Edmunds, reports new vehicle inventory is down by 48% and does not predict inventory levels to return to their pre-pandemic levels until Q4 of 2022 or Q1 of 2023.

Additionally, what new car inventory dealers do have, they are not discounting them and are selling them minimally at list price. Edmunds continues to report in a News and Tribune article written last month that the percentage of consumers who paid above list price for a new vehicle climbed to 12.7% in April, compared to 11% in March and 8.1% in April of 2020. At the time of the report, that was the highest-level Edmunds had on record, dating back to 2002.

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That means there is a massive opportunity for the recycling community. You can step in and become a significant source feeding the demand for quality used parts and refurbished vehicles. In doing so, you could stand to gain substantially a financial advantage due to your ability to supply the market. Imagine vehicles that have been in your salvage yard for months. You could fix them up and sell it to a local dealer to increase their inventory. There are many options.

As the tides have turned, used cars and vehicles that may have been given ELV (End of Life Vehicle) status and written off now have a new value and benefit to the automotive industry and the environment.

We have covered a pretty good amount of ground so far, and I want to make sure you all are still with me! I believe in energy and interaction, so I have an exercise for you. Reach into your swag bag, and you should have a Solera pen in there, and there should be a pad of paper. I am old-school and like to write things down, but you can use your phone if you prefer.

Attendee Exercise #1

I want you to take one minute and write down three ways you or your company has benefitted and can potentially benefit from the chip shortage.

BTCS (Bristol Tennessee City Schools) Educators, Faculty, & Staff how are y'all doing this morning?

Thank you very much for the introduction, [Principal's Name/Contact Name]. It feels good to be back here.

The students of BTCS may know me as Stan the Man, but I stand before you today as Stanley Tucker, educator, speaker, and children's show host.

The last time I was here in Bristol, it was for another reason. I spent time with the amazing students in your schools.

For seven years, I've been on the road doing school visits like I did at Fairmount elementary school.

Is Fairmount in the house? I see you shout out to all the schools within the district I've visited this year.

Depending on how I'm booked, I spend the day reading and interacting with the students, teaching them about the importance of literacy, owning their stories, and treating everyone with the highest level of kindness.

As I made my way to each school, impacting the little faces I saw, I felt that there was more to do.

As I tell the students how important their stories are, I look at their surroundings.

When I'm at these schools, I look into the eyes of all the adults at the school. From administrative staff, media specialists, janitors, and then teachers.

Each of you plays an integral role in the stories of every child that you impact. We'll go deeper into that later.

But, when I look into the eyes of every adult that interacts with the students, I am curious and want to know more about *your* story.

And I want to tell you, there are similarities in our stories.

To keep it real, I am you.

I join you in being dedicated to inspiring, disciplining, and igniting the modern child, helping them become complete and whole.

You can clap that up, give yourselves a hand and get your flowers!

I want to take a second and speak from my experience.

Teaching is arguably one of the most challenging and rewarding careers in the nation.

Trust me, I get it, which is why I only did it for a year. (pause for laughter).

But support staff, maintenance, nutrition, and health services, we could not be here without you.

You give us the fuel we need to run the school. The success of any school would not be possible without your involvement.

But, as I was saying, as I looked into the faces of the various educators and admins during my visits, I often saw the weight of their jobs on their faces.

I chatted with my team and told them that I think we could do more. Actually, I knew we needed to do more.

So, I traded in my Jordan sneakers, Atlanta Braves baseball cap and jeans for a sport's coat, hard-bottom shoes, slacks, and a button up, to address you on your level, in your time, your environment.

Look, I've been there.

Having to leave things going on at home and putting them on pause as soon as you enter the classroom.

Juggling the delicate balance between authority and a warm presence to lead and guide our friends on a path of excellence and knowledge.
I've been there.

Navigating internal school politics and external classroom actions with fellow teachers, administrators and staff.

Dealing with absentee parents. Yet at the same time fielding the judgement of your efforts from those same parents.

I've been there.

But, that is why I'm here today.

I dare not speak for you, but I believe we're both in this room because we share concern and love for the students that parents and guardians trust us to mold.

In fact, we spend more time with students than some of their loved ones do.

In a world holding so much tension and conflict, you know what I'm going to stop there because I believe what you think about grows, so I do not want to give it energy.

I will say this. It takes an effort to ensure our schools are not smaller versions of the society at large.

But, we can do it.

But first, you all are mighty quiet. Are you with me? (Crowd responds)

Thank you!

While we explore together today, we'll laugh sometimes, hopefully a lot and have some moments where we'll think deeply.

Either way, my aim is to give you thought-provoking material to pull from all throughout the school year to nurture the things we can't see within ourselves, each other, and our friends.

And if you don't get it all today during our time together, don't worry about it. I'll be making some videos to remind you of the actions we discuss today.

Throughout our time together, like I just did, I'll need to feel that you are with me and that I'm hitting my mark.

That's why my time with you will be interactive.

It's pointless for us to have this chat without you expressing how you feel and me understanding your perspective.

To be clear, there won't be any hand raising here. Because, although we'll be learning, this isn't a classroom.

We're going to go there today with some real talk, and I want your full honesty. That's why you'll be giving your opinion to me anonymously.

Can you go there with me today? Alright.

When it's time, please take out your smartphone if you have it with you, and scan the QR code that is located on your schedule of events for today.

When it's time, you'll see the poll question on the slides, and we'll pause to give you the opportunity to cast your vote.

This will serve two purposes: ensuring that you all are with me and to make sure that I'm aligned with you.

Deal? Alright.

I want to start by giving you an overview of what teachers and auxiliary staff face in today's school system.

AdoptAClassroom.org conducted a study surveying the biggest issues educators and staff faced in the 2021/2022 school year.

(Suggested slide Copy: 81% increase in workload. 80% more time dealing with student mental health challenges, 55%—Less planning time due to staff shortages and other factors.)

Each of these factors affects your work in every capacity in the school environment—in front of your students and to a certain extent with each other.

Because we live this daily, our preparation requires a different type of focus ensuring we nurture the whole child.

Our chat today will provide a strategy to use behind the scenes and in the classroom to navigate this changing landscape.

Remember that poll I mentioned about three minutes ago?
Well, let's kick off our time together by doing the first one of the day.

So, as a reminder, take out your smartphone, whether you are on team iPhone or Android, either will work. Scan the QR code.

I'll give you a minute or two to get that pulled up.

(wait for a minute or two)

If you need help, ask your neighbor.
Say, neighbor, I need ya! (Please write your version here)

Just so you know, there is no right or wrong answer. I just want to see and understand your perspective.

Poll Question: What does impacting the whole child mean to you?

1. Establishing a full connection with each student
2. Catering to the diversity of a modern student body
3. Understanding how mental health affects students in the classroom
4. Seeking to understand the unique needs of today's student
5. All of the above.

I'll give you a couple of minutes to select your answer.

[Go over the results in real-time. (2 min)]

This is great. Thank you for taking this poll.

Based on your answers, I have a pretty good indication of where you stand. This gives me a key understanding of how to approach each topic.

I want to begin by defining what a whole child is. My personal definition is affecting a child positively in every effect of their lives, emotionally, mentally, socially, and includes their physical well-being.

To that point, we must acknowledge the things we can't readily see and properly address those things we can see.

I call it nurturing the unknown.

Throughout our time together, you'll hear me refer to today's students as the "modern child."

I do this because the children in our schools are on a whole other level from where we were as children and the children as early as ten years ago.

I felt it was important to define who they are, because they'll need a different sort of action-plan.

The modern child was born under different circumstances with tech. So, it's important for us to make sure they receive a true human connection with us.

I'll explain how "nurturing the unknown" of every child we interact with can heal each of the issues listed in the poll.

Let's begin with the diversity of the contemporary student body in our schools.

The modern parameters of diversity among our students are more defined.

In a study done in **2020** of the **49.4 million** students there emerge five specific areas of diversity-

- **Cultural**
- **Racial diversity**
- **Religious**
- **Sex / Gender / Sexual orientation**
- **Disability**

With the emergence of these defined areas of diversity, we must nurture each student based on the diversity we can see, the unknown that may exist, and the diversity the student shares with us.

Regardless of their diversity, each student is whole and deserves to be seen.

I want to share something I created and implement daily in every student-based interaction. It's an acronym that's easy to remember. Don't judge me, you may view this as corny. But I call it S.P.I.C.E because it's been said it's the variety of life, get it?

But it truly makes sense and is relevant, because we see a great deal of variety in the modern student body.

"S" is for...

Support: Day-to-day, we may come across some things that we may not readily understand or believe, but it's imperative to offer support to our students. _____

"P" is for...

Patience: When grade-school students share their identity preferences and what they want to be called. Even if it changes daily, it's best to contribute to the child's development by patiently giving them the respect, space to be seen in their authenticity without judgment.

Inclusion: Diversity and inclusion have become post-pandemic buzzwords, but instead of idealizing them as a concept, I urge we implement it as a means of acceptance. We all know that we are the example for our students in our class or any student that we interact with. If our friends see us uplifting and supporting a diverse student, they will do the same thing, too. By paying forward acceptance, the students will begin treating each other kinder as well.

Creativity: Just that fact that you work with children, I'm sure you are creative. Use that skill to create relatability with all students by developing creative ways to teach students to embrace each other's diversity fully.

Equal: There are many ways that society attempts to separate us and divide us based on our differences. Our friends do not need to be privy to that conditioning during their time with us. We can't protect them from judgment in the real world. But, when we have them, we can do our best to foster an environment of equality.

To make it in this constantly changing social climate and to grow into compassionate adults, our children need some SPICE to become whole children who will eventually become whole adults.

Acceptance with radical kindness is the solution.

Chapter Excerpt: Pro- Basketball Player Memoir

So let me tell you a little bit about sacrifice. To get to where you ultimately want to go, you **have** to do things you wouldn't necessarily do. In my case, I did a *lot* of free work to prove my worth and build my brand and reputation from the ground up. So, this move wasn't about the money. It was about me rebuilding my name, proving and showing my value.

It was a humbling experience, and without strength, I could have easily given up. I remember an instance when I met two different sets of parents and told them I was a Basketball Player Development Coach who had played for UConn and overseas. They were very excited to have me train their children.

But that changed when they went home and did a Google search on me. Press from my arrest would come up in the search results, and they would then label me a thug drug dealer and didn't want their children around me.

The irony is that I was the best person for their student-athlete to be around because of my experience and knowledge in basketball fundamentals. It was frustrating, but I kept going and believed that all it would take was one "yes."

Soon after that, I met a shy kid with dyslexia who wanted to play ball but had no basketball skillset.

At this point, I had stopped waiting for people to Google me and learn about my past. I went ahead and told every set of parents about my past upfront and let the chips fall where they may.

His parents were different from the ones I'd encountered before. They told me they didn't care what I'd done. They wanted me to work with their son, Donovan. Donovan needed something to build his confidence, discipline and strong work ethic.

His parents gave me my first big "yes." They were all that I needed! They were that one set of parents to believe in me and my ability.

Once I saw I could get one kid, I realized I could eventually get ten thousand! Donovan and I began our work, and he had heart. He showed up session after session, month after month, and not only did he learn the skills, but he also got even more—a survival kit!

After all, the tools you learn to play basketball are almost identical to the tools you use when playing the game of life.

I remember calling my uncle Jamey and telling him how I'd booked Donovan for Swain Basketball Academy. I excitedly told him I had made fifty dollars for the month. He asked, "What, in the hell are you thinking?" He said that was no money, and I needed to be on somebody's higher paying job. I paid it no mind and kept grinding.

The next month I signed up three kids and made \$150. I called Uncle Jamey to tell him, and he told me I needed to stop playing and get some real money. The following month I called him and told him I made \$500. Again, he told me to quit wasting my time and get a higher-paying job.

The next month I made \$1500. He said that was good, but I needed more. The following month I doubled it, and the month after that, I did even more. I remember I called

him when I made ten thousand dollars. When I did that, he asked me for a job!

When Uncle Jamey doubted me, I knew his words didn't mean he didn't love me or support me; he just wanted the best for my kids and me. I didn't hold it against him either, and most importantly, it didn't bother or stop me—the reason was because he didn't go through what I went through.

God didn't come to him, as he came to me in my sleep that night in January 2014. Uncle Jamey didn't feel the power I felt when God spoke to me about his calling on my life. He couldn't see what I saw and couldn't imagine what I was visualizing. That's what happens when God comes to you with a purpose. You don't have to explain your journey and path to anyone, and you just have to be obedient and consistent with your work. When you know these things, it doesn't matter what NOBODY says.

Always remember, don't waste any time on the opinion or thoughts of others when you know what you know. No one was there in the darkness with me, the sleepless nights, or for all the nights I cried. Those things took place when I was alone in solitude.

Plus, I had grown numb to human criticism by that point. That's what happens when you get direct communication from the source—God himself! My thought process was to complete the mission or die!

As my popularity grew, the kids I worked with began to tell their friends who'd tell their parents about my

basketball academy, who'd tell other parents. Soon many families wanted me to work with their kids.

When I was in prison, technology took off with the invention of smartphones and social media. I didn't know how to use any of it when I got out. My clients and God were my marketing plan. Those two were enough because my basketball academy began to take off. At one time, I can remember having sixty kids in the gym at once!

Since I had more kids enrolled, my confidence in the process began to grow, and I started to put myself out there. I went to as many basketball tournaments and games as I could at middle and high schools. My goal was to be as visible as possible to become more well-known and communicate with as many parents I could. I had to make sure the people got a better feel for who I was and what my academy could do for their kids.

Again, I knew I had to counter everything they heard about me in the media. I became my own street team and publicist, building a campaign of being a relatable and reliable resource in basketball techniques and fundamentals.

Although there were many times I could've stopped when things got tough, I didn't. I dug my heels in and faced criticism and judgment until my skill and value began to speak for me.

What put my academy on the map giving it nationwide attention, was a five-foot-seven player who had heart. I told my Uncle Jamey that he'd be an All-American McDonald's player.

That player was Alterique Gilbert, who went on to play for UConn and is now playing professional ball overseas in Europe. Another successful player who gave my academy attention was Josh Okogie, who went on to play for the NBA team, the Minnesota Timberwolves.

With both players, I helped change their mindset, helping them realize that they were destined for greatness if they persevered and knew in their minds that they were professional basketball players.

As my brand began to grow, so did my staff. I met many men who wanted to do the same thing that I was doing as a trainer. I took them under my wing out of the kindness of my heart and taught them everything I knew.

They had a funny way of thanking me. They showed their appreciation and gratitude by stabbing me in the back by leaving Swain Basketball Academy with some kids I signed up. It happened so many times that I hardly trusted anybody.

Without telling me, some of them went on to create training programs trying to be my competition, stealing from my training market. It bothered me at the moment, but I've become happy for them because I shared my gift, and I will do it a thousand more times.

You see, I was extending the gift God gave me. It took me a while to be at peace with them betraying me because I'm human. To be honest, I wanted to do some ungodly things to them, but growth and maturity made me realize that they weren't worth it.

Like I mentioned before, everything that could have derailed or stopped my Basketball Academy happened. But I never stopped. The goal was always in my direct vision, and I fought every day to reach it.

Now that I've been a professional player development coach for eight years, the success of Swain Basketball Academy is known nationwide and internationally.

After I began placing so many kids in Division I schools, I started building relationships with the coaches of those programs. I did the same thing with Division II, NAIA and Junior College coaches.

In 2020, when everything shut down during the pandemic, I began interviewing coaches and giving young athletes a vision to strive for on my new show, College Talk-LIVE. From the University of Georgia's Women's Basketball head coach Joni Taylor to the University of North Carolina's head coach, Courtney Banghart, this YouTube series features the best of the best.

In my first year holding AAU tryouts in 2021, one-hundred-eighteen kids showed up, which is unheard of for a trainer. I ended up with thirteen teams, my first year!

We produced eight players that no one knew who signed with Division I Colleges.

This year, in 2022, I will have even more teams because I'm adding a girl's branch. So my brand is growing and doing what God wanted it to do—helping kids realize their dream and create their own realities.

We're training players across the country, girls, boys and professional athletes. We are continuing to build this

brand to its highest. The beauty of my story is that it is truly just beginning.

My story is simple. I'm a man with a dream and vision, answering the calling on my life and heart.

My future is just as dynamic as my past. I dream of working with the National Basketball Association, NBA, in some capacity.

God will let me know how, and I'm not stressing it. I see myself counseling or doing player development. I have the experience and knowledge to be an asset. I also see myself on stage sharing my story with anyone who will listen. I want as many people as possible to be inspired by my story.

My discipline has let me share my talents, skills and experiences with others to make their dreams come true. Through all the trials and tribulations, the wins and losses, the triumphs, and defeats, I never forgot the mission. I encourage everyone who reads this book to do the same.

My grandmama, may God eternally bless her, would always tell me that God doesn't send you down here with nothing. She meant that each person has a purpose of fulfilling on their journey through life.

I want to add this, if you get quiet and ask God what his purpose is for you, he'll let you know, and you can impact the lives of others and change your own.



Each part of my life has led me to grow, learn, and fulfill my purpose. Although the circumstances were not the best, had I not gone to prison, I wouldn't have had time to sit down in silence and hear God's message for me. I encourage you to do the same for yourself.

It's easy to get stuck in the repetitive cycle of everyday life—paying bills, responsibilities and everything else in between.

We get caught up in putting all this time into someone else's company and dreams and forget to do the same for ourselves. Before we realize it, time has passed by, and we can't operate or activate the dreams and plans we have inside us.

You must create isolation for yourself, and you don't have to go to prison to do this, but it's necessary to take the time. You can do this in meditation or with daily reflection. Create a moment of clarity for yourself.

Isolation was a gift for me. It freed me from who I was before and improved me by giving me time from everything and everyone I loved. In that silence and solitude is where I heard God's voice.



I hope my story has helped you and caused you to think about your life and what you want. I encourage you to trust the process, work hard and be disciplined. Greatness is yours if you claim it.