

HIGH PERFORMANCE COACHING

How to survive lockdown series, Part two: Don't back down from the sharks.

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In the first part of this series we focused on:

1. If you want to change your world, make your bed.
2. If you want to change your world, find someone to help you paddle.
3. If you want to change your world, measure a person by the size of their heart, not the size of their flippers
4. If you want to change your world get over being a sugar cookie and keep moving forward.
5. If you want to change your world, don't be afraid of the circus.

We are still focusing on the key questions:

How do I get myself out of this negative space and back into a space where I can be myself and see the light at the end of the tunnel? How can I protect my mental health during this time?

Here are the next five more things you can do during this lockdown to protect your mental health:

1. If you want to change your world, sometimes you must slide down the obstacle headfirst.

“At least twice a week, the trainees were required to run the obstacle course.... Among the obstacles was a three-level 30-foot tower at one end and a one-level tower at the other. In between was a 200-foot-long rope. You had to climb the three-tiered tower and once at the top, you grabbed the rope, swung underneath the rope and pulled yourself hand over hand until you got to the other end.” (1)

“The record for the obstacle course had stood for years...and the record seemed unbeatable, until one day, a student decided to go down the slide for life headfirst. Instead of swinging his body underneath the rope and inching his way down, he bravely mounted the TOP of the rope and thrust himself forward” (1)

This was a dangerous move — seemingly foolish with high levels of risk. If this did not work, it could mean injury and being cut from the training. The student slid down the rope dangerously fast and without hesitation. Instead of several minutes, it took him half that time and by the end of the course he had broken the record.

Use this time to expose yourself to things that would normally scare you or you were to uncomfortable to expose yourself to. Do things differently, work meetings, meeting with friends, hobbies even engaging in shopping may need to be done differently. Embrace it and learn from it. It may lead to some exciting permanent changes.

2. If you want to change your world, don't back down from the sharks.



Figure 1: Megalodon from prehistoric times scene 3D illustration GETTY

“During the land warfare phase of training, the students are flown out to San Clemente Island which lies off the coast of San Diego. The waters off San Clemente are a breeding ground for the great white sharks. To pass SEAL training there are a series of long swims that must be completed. One is the night swim.” Admin McRaven elaborates.

“Before the swim the instructors joyfully brief the trainees on all the species of sharks that inhabit the waters off San Clemente. They assure you, however, that no student has ever been eaten by a shark — at least not recently. But you are also taught that if a shark begins to circle your position — stand your ground. Do not swim away. Do not act afraid. And if the shark, hungry for a midnight snack, darts towards you — then summon up all your strength and punch him in the snout, and he will turn and swim away.”

During this time there are a lot of sharks (negative thoughts, self-doubt, criticism, etc.) and it's important that if you hope to complete the swim you will have to deal with them. Summon up all your strength and punch them in the snout. One of the ways this can be done is to create a time during the day where you have quiet time and can sit and meditate and work through these thoughts. Through meditation you can create a calm and collected environment in your mind and this will set you up to deal with the day to day challenges during and after lockdown.

3. If you want to change your world, you must be your very best in the darkest moment.



Figure 2: 10 Life Lessons from Admiral William McRaven - <https://www.universitycoop.com/blog/life-lessons-admiral-mcraven>

Adm Mc Raven explains one of the darkest moments during SEAL training. “As Navy SEALs one of our jobs is to conduct underwater attacks against enemy shipping....The ship attack mission is where a pair of SEAL divers is dropped off outside an enemy harbor and then swims well over two miles — underwater — using nothing but a depth gauge and a compass to get to their target.”(1).

“During the entire swim, even well below the surface, there is some light that comes through. It is comforting to know that there is open water above you. But as you approach the ship, which is tied to a pier, the light begins to fade. The steel structure of the ship blocks the moonlight, it blocks the surrounding streetlamps, it blocks all ambient light.” (1).

Adm McRaven explain that to be a successful mission, the SEAL diver must swim under the ship and find the keel — the centerline and the deepest part of the ship. The keel is also the darkest part of the ship — “where you cannot see your hand in front of your face, where the noise from the ship’s machinery is deafening and where it is easy to get disoriented and fail” (1).

Every SEAL knows that it is at this point, at the darkest moment of the mission, that it is the time when you must be calm and composed. That it is at this time that all your tactical skills, physical power and inner strength must be brought to bear.

During this lockdown there will be times when it’s the darkest of darks and it is during this time that you must show your resilience and composure because it is during these times that character is developed and molded.

Something that could assist you during this time is a book called [The Daily Stoic](#). The book focuses on how some of the greatest minds in history developed their resilience and their view of the world. From George Washington to Frederick the Great to Ralph Waldo Emerson, along with today's top performers from Super Bowl-winning football coaches to CEOs and celebrities. By following these teachings over the course of a year (and, indeed, for years to come) you'll find the serenity, self-knowledge, and resilience you need to live well.

4. If you want to change your world, start singing when you’re up to your neck in mud.

“The ninth week of training is referred to as “Hell Week.” It is six days of no sleep, constant physical and mental harassment, and one special day at the Mud Flats. The Mud Flats are area

between San Diego and Tijuana where the water runs off and creates the Tijuana slues, a swampy patch of terrain where the mud will engulf you.

It is on Wednesday of Hell Week that you paddle down to the mud flats and spend the next 15 hours trying to survive the freezing cold mud, the howling wind and the incessant pressure to quit from the instructors. As the sun began to set that Wednesday evening, my training class, having committed some “egregious infraction of the rules” was ordered into the mud.

The mud consumed each man till there was nothing visible but our heads. The instructors told us we could leave the mud if only five men would quit — just five men — and we could get out of the oppressive cold. Looking around the mud flat it was apparent that some students were about to give up. It was still over eight hours till the sun came up — eight more hours of bone-chilling cold.

The chattering teeth and shivering moans of the trainees were so loud it was hard to hear anything. And then, one voice began to echo through the night, one voice raised in song. The song was terribly out of tune but sung with great enthusiasm. One voice became two and two became three and before long everyone in the class was singing. We knew that if one man could rise above the misery then others could as well.

The instructors threatened us with more time in the mud if we kept up the singing, but the singing persisted. And somehow the mud seemed a little warmer, the wind a little tamer and the dawn not so far away.” (1)

Admin McRaven explained that “If I have learned anything in my time traveling the world, it is the power of hope. The power of one person — Washington, Lincoln, King, Mandela and even a young girl from Pakistan, Malala — one person can change the world by giving people hope.” (1)

During this dark time, be that person who brings hope to the people around you. Be the one voice of hope that ignites the rest of the people around you. Be that one person that drives love, empathy, caring and compassion during this time.

5. If you want to change your world don't ever, ever ring the bell.



Figure 3: Ring the Bell: Take Ownership of Your Life - NAVY SEAL Hell Week - Ring the bell

“Finally, in SEAL training there is a bell. A brass bell that hangs in the center of the compound for all the students to see. All you have to do to quit is ring the bell” (1) Adm McRaven recounts.

“Ring the bell and you no longer have to wake up at 5 o'clock. Ring the bell and you no longer have to do the freezing cold swims. Ring the bell and you no longer have to do the runs, the obstacle course, the PT —

and you no longer have to endure the hardships of training. Just ring the bell. If you want to change **your** world don't ever, ever ring the bell" (1).

During and after this lockdown there will be many times when you feel like just ringing the bell. Giving up. Don't. Keep fighting. Things will work out and will get better. It might not be now, or in the next two weeks or in the next couple of months, but they will get better.

Keep your boat afloat.

References:

(1) Adm. McRaven Urges Graduates to Find Courage to Change the World. Commencement speech, 2017. Retrieved from <https://news.utexas.edu/2014/05/16/mcraven-urges-graduates-to-find-courage-to-change-the-world/>