

**THRIVE**

in

**C H A  S**

Samples of:

The Wacky, The Zany and The Downright Awkward

Tools to Thrive

At 17

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# The Wacky, The Zany and The Downright Awkward



## Ricky's Milk

In 2007 we had 4 sons. Not because we ever planned on having a big family or only wanted boys - more likely - every time we had another son, we would wait for the allotted amount of time and try again for a girl. After the #4 son, we decided we were done - until 6 years later when we decided together that one more try for a girl was in order.

We were so sure that this one was going to be a girl that we used a Chinese birth chart, ate only girl inducing foods and applied at least 4 other "wacky ways" to ensure a girl would be the result. And can you guess what we got? That's right... Holy Crap!! ... we got TWINS.

Lucky for us??!! – and a few months later we found that at least one of those seeds was a... that's right... a girl. The extra boy was a bonus... I guess?

Erik and Rick were fascinated by the whole event. Especially fascinated by the size the human stomach can grow to when filled with two babies.

When we allowed them to hold the babies for the first time they would gently hold them for about 10 seconds after which they would say something like, "that's enough" and give the babies back – and return to their business of playing.

When Ricky (who had just turned 6) caught site of my wife nursing our new – #5 son (Jack) for the first time, he got a real contorted look on his face. "What's that," he said. My wife simply replied, "I'm feeding Jack some Momma's Milk."

Ricky thought for a moment, lifted his shirt, pinched himself and said, "How bout some Ricky's milk?"



"For my birthday I want a robot. Oh, and an onion."



"Dad, do you have armpit hair?"



After walking up behind a friend of the family on Christmas Eve – it was a man – thank goodness! Ricky said, “Is your butt getting bigger?”



## Night Swim

Camping can be a lot of fun. But not necessarily for us. Case in point is a few years back we went camping with a bunch of families with their promise that the other families going with would help us “keep track” of where Erik and Rick were at all times.

Of course, you know how that works right? Those who don’t have kids with special needs don’t really realize the gravity of NOT keeping track of them. (They can disappear in to the woods in a second) So we can NEVER really leave it up to others to help.

We tried to prepare as best we could and even went out and bought “glow stick necklaces” that we could hang around their necks so we could see them better after it started to get dark. But as we got to the campsite chosen by friends we almost left immediately. No less than 50 yards away there was a lake. Not the choice we would have made for sure.

Things seemed to be okay while the sun was out, but as night fell and the campfire started, things got a little sketchy. First there was the open fire, which we found was a magnet for Erik and Rick. Not that they were going to get so close that they could be burned, but more likely, they would burn someone else as they found sticks, stuck them in to the fire and flicked hot ashes and ambers in to the air.

Then they moved away from the fire. Luckily they were easy to spot with their glow stick necklaces wrapped around their necks. Then the glow sticks - in unison - made a mad dash towards the water and flew in in the blink of an eye.

I was up and in pursuit in a flash and remember fear - and freezing water - coursing through my veins as I hit the water with a splash and started scanning the surface for 2 sweet (and in trouble) kids.

As my eyes got used to the darkness and things started to become a little more clear I looked back to the beach and saw Erik and Rick standing on dry ground looking at me with confused looks on their faces. They had thrown their necklaces in the water and were wondering why daddy had decided to go for a swim in the cold, cold water. Especially after daddy had told them it was too cold and not to go near it.

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# Tools to Thrive



## Discouraging Your Enemy – Discouragement

We see it all the time. People say, “I can’t do this anymore – I’m not capable – I’m DONE.” If you’ve never said this to yourself (at least internally) you may be lying. It’s a reality – we can all fall victim to the power of discouragement. Discouragement can sap your energy, make you much less effective than you are capable of being, and sometimes even drive you in to a state of depression. So, here’s the question. How can we PREVENT ourselves from getting discouraged and stay motivated to perform at our best for others and ourselves?

Not an easy question to answer, but one I’d like to try and help with – since discouragement can be such a powerful ENEMY to your sanity and happiness.

So, what is discouragement? Obviously, it’s not easily defined and covers a variety of concepts, but basically it means this: To deprive of confidence, hope or spirit; dishearten, daunt. If you right click on the word “discourage” and look at some synonyms you may well see – afflict, beat down, demoralize, depress, dismay, distress, frighten, intimidate, irk, and trouble. WHOA! NOT good words to associate with your “state of being”, huh?

Back to the original question – How can we PREVENT ourselves from getting discouraged and stay motivated to perform at our best for others and ourselves?

I’d like to submit a few simple steps that have helped me do a better job of fighting against the enemy that is “discouragement.”

First – Live Consciously: You can read more on that in the book. To discourage “discouragement” you must first realize HOW you are feeling WHILE you are feeling that way. If you can identify that you are feeling discouraged WHILE it is happening, you can immediately step outside of the feelings you are having and DECIDE, “you know what, I refuse to be discouraged. If “to be discouraged” is to express a “lack of courage” or broken down even further; if the prefix “dis” means “not” or “away from” or “reversal” or “apart” then to be “dis”couraged must mean to be “NOT COURAGEOUS.” I don’t know about you but the last thing I’d like to think about myself is that I lack courage. And that leads me right in to the second way to fight discouragement.

Second – Change Your Attitude about Difficulties – In THIS world – the REAL world we live in right now – you don’t get to determine that you won’t face difficulties. I meet a lot of people that have no clear vision of what life’s disappointments can mean to them as part of their natural growth and progression.

We ALL experience disappointment. If this were not true, it would be really hard to explain the joy of personal growth that often results from challenges. If you try to hide from or avoid difficulties by quitting – due to discouragement – you will fail. If you accept those same

difficulties you may just turn your challenges into an element of great strength and a foundation for further growth.

Third – Get Help from Others: If I had a nickel for every time I was “helped” by caregivers, friends, family, a higher power, books, and CD’s I would be a very rich man. Come to think of it, “I already feel rich” because I have been able to rely on those people and things in my life. We ALL need help – and it’s OK to occasionally ask. Keep in mind, I’m not suggesting neediness. I’m just suggesting that there are others who care.

Fourth – Have Patience and Trust in the Process: The problems we may face may take time – nothing good happens overnight. I was reminded of this recently when someone asked me how I was able to keep my two boys affected by autism quiet for more than an hour each Sunday during church. When I answered “almost 5 years of pain and suffering” they were confused. So I explained.

For more than 4 years my two boys would “YELL OUT” in church. That’s right, I CAPITALIZED those letters because they, in fact, would YELL OUT IN CHURCH.

Because this was unacceptable, I got in the habit of taking them out, sitting them on top of a stool in the lobby and quietly explaining to them that yelling was not allowed. Because they both hated that stool, they both learned they had to nod in agreement and whisper back to me, “no yelling in church” before I would take them back in. No kidding, one time I took Ricky out – and brought him back in – 7 times in the first 15 minutes of the meeting.

I’ll never forget in year 5 the first time the meeting was ending and my wife looked at me and then I looked at her and our eyes got big as we realized “WE DIDN’T HAVE TO TAKE EITHER OF THEM OUT AT ALL.” They had both sat quietly the whole time. I’m not kidding when I say we BOTH almost busted in to tears because “It Actually Freakin Worked.” – Sorry about the bad word but I felt it was necessary for emphasis.

If we would have gotten discouraged they would – I’m pretty sure – STILL be yelling out in church. But because we put in the (gulp!) almost 5 years of effort, now they seem like angels – at least to those who only see them in church.

So there you have it – a few ways to discourage your enemy – the enemy called “DISCOURAGEMENT.”

Listen, I realize we will all get discouraged now and then. I also realize that these tips in no way have the ability to make you permanently cheerful. Just so you’ll know: Permanently Cheerful – in my mind – may be very near to DELUSIONAL. Not a “state of mind” I’d suggest. What I DO KNOW is that everyone, to their own degree, can exert their own influence and create their own MEANING to what happens to them in their lives. I also realize that allowing oneself to get too discouraged can limit our ability to perform at our best for others and ourselves.

I say – each of us DECIDES for ourselves if we accept the opportunity to grow and develop from our experiences. I say – boldly move forward – with COURAGE; or the ability to face danger, difficulty, uncertainty, or pain without being overcome by fear or being deflected from a chosen course of action.

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## At 17



### Turning a Liability into an Asset

My son called me a few days ago from college a bit giddy with excitement. Was it a class? Was it new and exciting information? Was it a (gulp!) girl? The answer is... well, it was kinda all of em. Huh? Let me explain.

When my son went to college he was able to reconnect with a childhood friend; a friend he had not had much contact with since he was basically a toddler.

When they DID reconnect it was prior to them hitting the campus and his friend (it just so happens) has parents that both attended the same college and helped her – and subsequently, Alek – learn the ins-and-outs of getting in and getting situated for campus life, and they were even able to get some classes together. His friend was very helpful in getting him all set up for college life.

However, once they got on campus and in class Alek come to a realization. This girl, a sweet enough (and very importantly to him, attractive girl) was a bit, well, whiney. Let's say, for instance, she had an assignment due sooner than she'd like. It was not unusual for her to exclaim, "I think I'm gonna cry." Or let's say she had to do something she didn't want to do at all. She'd often say in a whiny way, "I don't think I can get all this done. I don't have the time. What am I gonna do?"

Needless to say, internally, this didn't go over too well with Alek since Alek was working at a job that was 5 miles away from campus (and riding his bike to and from each day) putting in 20 hours a week simply to pay his own way through college – and watching as the only bike his friend was riding was the "parents paying all bills so she could hit all the games and parties" bike.

But because Alek has a Mom... and has learned well that "sometimes it's better to keep your mouth shut" he was simply enduring the incessant whining. Alek didn't want to be a bad friend and "ditch" the girl (that's what I was recommending) but surely knew that the more he hung out with her, the more annoyed he became, and heaven forbid she starts to rub off on him – which is usually what happens when you spend a lot of time with someone.

So, why did my son call so giddy, you may ask? Nope, he didn't ditch her. He created a plan – a plan I might add that lead to his giddiness.

When he called me he told me he had decided to do (with her) what he does with Erik and Ricky, his two little brothers affected by autism, which was this. When THEY melt down or flip out, he's not surprised by it, because that's who they are and that's what they do. He manages HIMSELF more effectively and does the most productive things he can FOR THEM, instead of getting agitated and frustrated. THAT'S what he decided to do with her.

The next time she said, "I think I'm gonna cry" instead of getting a bit annoyed, he smiled, because that's who she is and that's what she does. He wasn't frustrated or agitated. That, in itself made it easier for him to stop being so internally irritated.

THEN he decided to take it one step further and allow the things she did, to trigger a more positive response – kind of like he did with Erik and Ricky. It wasn't enough to just accept who she is and manage himself, rather, he decided to also try and do what was best FOR HER. In this case, he decided that maybe – what would be best for her – was to help her RE-FOCUS on something more positive.

The example he gave me of this was great. As they were walking across campus one day, frustrated, she said, "I just have too much to do. I think I'm gonna cry." He replied by stopping, looking up at the mountains and saying, "Look at the mountains and how beautiful they are. It's so beautiful it doesn't even look real, huh? Can you believe how lucky we are to be here right now having all the fun we're having at college?" Then he started walking again.

Alek said she stopped walking, listened to him, and then ran to catch up with him again after he started walking and starting smiling and laughing and immediately snapped herself out of her whiney state.

Since then, every time she lapses in to a whiney state, Alek replies with a statement that identifies a specific example of happiness and joy. The real cool part for Alek is that now – he says – that every time she fusses, he is reminded of how GREAT his life is because he's forced to find something good to say and smile about. Her complaining has changed from a LIABILITY to an ASSET. And he is reaping the benefits of spending time with her.

Whether or not SHE ever gets ANY benefit from Alek's new strategy, HE had become happier, less frustrated and more cheerful than ever to spend time with her. Of course, we all know that Alek will, at some point, rub off on her whether she likes it or not. It's what happens when you spend a lot of time with someone.

When Alek was at home before he went off to college, because of Erik and Ricky and the dynamic THEY brought to our family, we frequently discussed how we couldn't necessarily change them and the way they did things, but WE COULD change the way we thought and acted and responded to them. We could REFRAME our experiences so that we could BENEFIT from even difficult happenings.

It seems the message stuck.

Well, what do you know?

You know, sometimes I hesitate to share these types of experiences because I worry that others will see me as arrogant or braggadocios. But then I have to say, "I don't care because that's not the point." Yes, I am proud of my kids, yes, I am excited when I see their success, but believe me when I say, "This is not about me or them, rather it's about the experience and applying techniques that lead to happier, more fulfilling more productive lives."

No matter what circumstances you find yourself in, you can help yourself and help others by deciding to change the way you react and view you situation. Just ask Alek.