

Emily Hatseras

Professor Shull

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Make Your Bed

Sometimes dwelling on the difficulties of life and allowing a negative attitude to surface may seem the easier route in the moment. However, there is a lot to be gained by improving mental strength and seeking out success, even in the face of adversity. More specifically, people have shared their experiences about the many approaches used and the emotional benefits realized of remaining optimistic and continuing to move forward when confronted with hardship and resistance. *Make Your Bed*, by Admiral William H. McRaven, touches on the plethora of efforts one can take in order to achieve success and improve the environment around them, even when faced with difficult circumstances. Admiral William H. McRaven teaches us that overcoming the small obstacles life presents, seeking out others with a good heart, and overcoming fears can all improve mental strength to endure overwhelmingly difficult times and reach personal goals.

McRaven illustrates the importance of completing the small hurdles in life in achieving personal success. For example, he deeply emphasizes the value of making one's bed every single morning because it provides a sense of accomplishment. He talks about each day of his SEAL training being full of the difficulties of uniform inspections, long swims, longer runs, obstacle courses, and constant harassment from the SEAL instructors. However, knowing that he had a long day in front of him filled to the brim with difficult tasks, he would still roll out of bed every

morning and start making his bed. He states that he chose to make his bed regularly because life is full of difficulties, and people cannot face the bigger challenges if they cannot successfully face the smaller ones. Returning to a made bed provided him with a sense of comfort and reward among difficult times. He writes, “Nothing can replace the strength and comfort of one’s faith, but sometimes the simple act of making your bed can give you the lift you need to go start the day and provide satisfaction to end your day” (McRaven 11). This quote explains that when he came back to his bed each night from his rigorous day of training, he was impacted by the importance of making his bed. By making his bed in the morning, he was guaranteed to come “home” to something positive. There are many unfortunate events in life. However, through his story about bed-making, McRaven illustrates to us that we must act on these unfortunate minor burdens and complete them, because they make the more difficult responsibilities easier to bear.

Next, McRaven demonstrates the importance of surrounding oneself with people with good hearts when trying to improve mental resilience. He mentions that the hope one person has is powerful and can inspire others. He recalls a story in training camp when it was Hell Week, which is a week where trainees survive six days of a lot of work and no sleep. One of the hardest days specifically was Wednesday, where trainees would spend all day in freezing cold mudflats while enduring pressure from instructors to quit the program. McRaven said that all the men were getting ready to walk away until they heard this one raspy voice of a trainee who had started singing. Then, all of a sudden, all the trainees began to sing as well. The singing eased some of the pain, inspired the men to finish their mission, and caused them to remain out in the mud. In describing the episode of singing, McRaven writes, “Once again, we learned an important lesson: the power of one person to unite the group, the power of one person to inspire those around him, to give them hope. If that one person could sing while neck deep in mud, then

so could we” (McRaven 46). This quote shows how people with a good heart and displays of optimism can positively impact others around them. Hope is contagious, and it can make the sting of life less sour. McRaven’s lesson teaches us that when surrounded by the right people, we can turn the darkest of circumstances into aspiration to create positive results.

McRaven not only implies that completing small hurdles and surrounding oneself with supportive people is important in the development of mental fortitude, but overcoming the fear of failure and fear of others is also vital. He mentions how failure makes us stronger. He tells the story that in camp, one of the punishments the men would endure if they did not pass the physical tests was called the Circus. The Circus was two extra hours of calisthenics, something that everyone in camp dreaded. McRaven and his swim partner finished last in their swim test, which resulted in them having to go through the Circus. After McRaven and his partner underwent the extra conditioning and the time came for another swim test, McRaven and his partner finished first. They were able to come in first place because their initial failure led them to the work they were put through during the Circus. The Circus benefitted them in the end, when it mattered most, and helped them achieve a first place swim test. Lastly, in his book, McRaven also touches on the importance of conquering the fear of others in building one’s self esteem. He recalls well-known U.S. prisoner Saddam Hussein. Even as a prisoner, Hussein would find a way to instill fear in his captors and practice intimidation. McRaven felt as if he had to stand up to this bully and take away the power that Hussein instilled in himself. To overcome Hussein, McRaven entered his cell each day for one month to show that he was not frightened. McRaven writes, “If you don’t find the courage to stand your ground, they will strike. In life, to achieve your goals, to compete in the highest swim, you will need to have men and women of great courage. That courage is all within us. Dig deep and you will find it in abundance”

(McRaven 38). Through the story of the Circus and Saddam Hussein, McRaven once again exemplifies how important it is for individuals to find courage within and conquer their fears. . He instructs us that fear can knock us down, but it can also drive us and provide motivation to reach the end of a mission.

The book *Make Your Bed* is a nice reminder that sometimes simple actions can lead to profound life changes. It can be seen as providing a practical roadmap for cultivating discipline, resilience and leadership during difficult times. Whatever hurdles one has to overcome, Admiral William H. McRaven teaches us that conquering the small obstacles life presents, seeking out others with a good heart, and defeating life's fears can all improve both mental strength and a person's ability to follow his dreams. McRaven enlightens us with the message that one must not dwell in the past or present but must quickly move on and work towards the potential of a positive future.

Citations:

MCRAVEN, W. H. (2023). *Make your bed*. MANJUL PUBLISHING HOUSE.