

**The  
Greatness  
Mindset**

**Unlock the  
Power of  
Your Mind  
and Live  
Your Best  
Life Today**

**Lewis  
Howes**

*New York Times  
Bestselling Author*

*Praise for*  
**The Greatness Mindset**

“What Lewis has written is a message so many need to hear right now. In a world overcome with burnout, stress, and anxiety, *The Greatness Mindset* will help readers reconnect with their purpose, unlock their inner strength, and use their gifts to better the communities around them.”

— *Arianna Huffington*, co-founder of The Huffington Post and founder/CEO of Thrive Global

“It’s been so incredible seeing Lewis consistently overcome obstacles to achieve his dreams over the years, and it all starts with his mindset. I’m thrilled that he took the time to document his frameworks into this book so others will be able to break through their own self-doubt and live a fulfilled, rich life.”

— *Jay Shetty*, #1 New York Times best-selling author of *Think Like a Monk* and host of the *On Purpose* podcast

“Whatever you do in life, adopting the right mindset is the most important ingredient to fulfilling your dreams. In this wonderful book, Lewis Howes gives you the practical tools to achieve true greatness.”

— *Dr. Joe Dispenza*, New York Times best-selling author of *You Are the Placebo*

“Lewis has the ability to share difficult truths in a profoundly empowering way. Inside these pages, you will feel seen and supported to bravely face your own truth to return to your best self. I highly recommend *The Greatness Mindset* to anyone ready to elevate their life.”

— *Gabrielle Bernstein*, #1 New York Times best-selling author of *The Universe Has Your Back*

“Your limiting beliefs have held you back for far too long. Lewis Howes is here to help with *The Greatness Mindset*. Change your beliefs and you change your life.”

— **Mel Robbins** , *international best-selling author of The High 5 Habit and The 5 Second Rule*

“Lewis’s practical, science-backed approach to a potentially overwhelming topic is a breath of fresh air. I highly recommend *The Greatness Mindset* for anyone looking to reconnect with their vision, to revitalize their relationships, or to reinvent themselves.”

— **Tara Swart Bieber** , *M.D., Ph.D., neuroscientist and professor at MIT Sloan School of Management*

# **The Greatness Mindset**



**ALSO BY LEWIS HOWES**

*The School of Greatness*

*The Mask of Masculinity*

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*I dedicate this book to my younger self for having the courage to carry me through pain, my current self for facing my shame and learning how to heal, and to my future self, because the journey to greatness has only just begun.*

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## Chapter 1

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# CHASING GREATNESS

I was 23 years old, sleeping on my sister's couch in Columbus, Ohio, and freaking broke as a joke. But it wasn't a joke. It was my life. And it was anything but great.

Up to that point, my life had been defined by sports. I had achieved All-American status in the decathlon, but my real passion was football, where I also was an All-American. I held the world record for most receiving yards in a single football game (all divisions at every level). And I had finally realized my dream of playing football professionally in the Arena Football League as I was pursuing my chance to go to the NFL. But then, in the middle of a game, I broke my wrist. The prognosis? Surgery. They cracked open my hip to take a piece of bone and fused it to my wrist—six months in a cast and another year to heal.

I was only in the first month of that cast-wearing stage in September of 2007 when I found myself wondering if I would ever be able to step on the field again. To make it even worse, my dad had been in an accident the previous year while traveling on the other side of the world in New Zealand. He had suffered severe brain trauma. After being in a coma for months, he had finally regained consciousness, but it was clear his healing journey would be a long one. After he returned to the U.S., I was able to go visit him weekly, but he could remember very little of everyone who had meant so much to him prior to the accident and showed no signs of improving.

My nights were haunted by so many fearful questions: *What if my wrist doesn't heal? What if I can't play football again? What if my dream is over? Who will I be then? What if my dad never remembers me? What if I can't*

*figure out what to do next? What if no one will ever love me? What if I try and fail? What will people think? Even worse, what if I can't live up to my own expectations?*

It felt like all I could do during those dark days was flip through TV reruns and infomercials with the remote as I felt my chance at greatness not just slipping away but sprinting as fast as it could go. I didn't know what to think, how to feel, or how to process my own emotions. And on top of that, I hadn't even finished college at the time. I was financially, physically, emotionally, and spiritually broken. . . . I wondered what to do next, and from my perspective, I was now very much alone.

But I knew this couldn't be how the story of my life went. I knew there had to be more to my story—that there had to be greatness inside of me—but I didn't know where or how to get started. Yet deep down, I knew I would eventually figure it all out.

## **MINDSET MATTERS**

Maybe you've had one of those moments when you realized the awful truth: you're just trying to survive, running out the clock, hoping someday something magical will happen that changes everything for you. You may actually have a dream that has remained just that—a dream, something to be done someday, but someday never seems to come.

As I write these words, the COVID pandemic has left a lot of people paralyzed, stressed out, and depressed. But of course, it doesn't take a pandemic to produce stress as who-knows-what comes our way next. There will always be something. Life happens. Maybe something unexpected happened to you in recent years: you lost your job, experienced a divorce or heartbreak, lost a loved one, or had career-ending surgery—and you just feel stunned and dazed, uncertain about what to do next.

Or maybe you got off the couch of life a long time ago. You've been busy getting things done, chasing your dreams, and looking good doing it. Perhaps you've grown a side hustle or a successful dream-chasing business or career, but inside, you feel like it just isn't enough. Even though you may be pretty good at getting results, you feel like there is something missing, and you are meant for more.

It's good, but not *great!*

One reason many people struggle is that they feel their identity is tied to the results they achieve. Maybe that's you. I've certainly been there, done that. The old adage in golf is that you're only as good as your next shot, but that mindset can leave you feeling pretty unfulfilled, as if you could never quite do or be *enough*.

One of the hardest things to break free from is a "good but not great" life. I hear it so often from people who make what most would consider good money and have what seems to be a good career with kids and family—but they still have an underlying sense of pain or unfulfillment. There's an ache for something *more*.

Does that resonate with you?

Now, don't get me wrong. There's nothing wrong with living a "good" life. No doubt, millions of people in the world would happily trade places with you. But the question is this: Is it the life you want? Is it the story you want your future self to tell?

These are the intentional questions high performers ask, and if that's you, I don't want to leave you out of this conversation. Maybe you're already chasing and achieving your dreams, pursuing greatness at the highest level in business, sports, the arts, politics, charitable work—you name it. You've put a lot of effort into intentionally developing your mindset, but you know no one ever truly arrives. You want that extra edge and are always looking for ways to harness the power of your mind. I get it.

So, whether you feel stuck in neutral or broken down and barely surviving life right now, or you're living what most would call a good life but still feel unfulfilled inside, or you just want to break through to that next level and find any edge you can, you've come to the right place.

**The Greatness Mindset** will help you unlock the power of your mind by showing you how to find your very own Meaningful Mission, overcoming your fears and self-doubt, and finally accomplishing those goals and dreams that may have felt so elusive for so long.

You *can* rewrite the story of your past to propel you forward into a brighter future rather than becoming a story that replays endlessly in your mind and holds you back. But how do you want to write that future story? Who do you want to be? Where do you want to go? Do you even know? And then, how can you exercise the courage to overcome the fears and self-doubt and develop a game plan to pursue your dreams with greater clarity about who you are and who you want to become?

Whatever dreams you may have, or even forgot that you had, I ask you this simple question:

*Would you feel happy or fulfilled if your dream died with you? If not, what are you going to do about it?*

## **MASSIVE, IMPERFECT ACTION**

Fortunately, my story didn't end on my sister's couch. And my sister had made it clear I wouldn't be living with her for the rest of my life. In fact, one of the greatest gifts she gave me was eventually telling me I needed to help pay for rent or find another place to go. So after wallowing in self-pity for a month or two, I got up off the couch and stumbled forward.

My first move was to call Stuart Jenkins, a mentor of mine I looked up to who was the headmaster of my old high school, and just ask the obvious question: *What can I do?* He said he had heard people were finding jobs on some start-up digital platform called LinkedIn. It was the first time I had heard of it, but I figured if he thought it was a good idea, I would check it out. So I went *all in*, obsessing about it and learning everything I could.

Then at Christmas, my brother gave me a gift. Our family had a tradition of drawing names to decide who gave a gift to whom, and he had drawn my name. His gift was a book. He didn't even wrap it. He just handed it to me, still in a plastic bag. The book was *The 4-Hour Workweek* by Timothy Ferris. The subtitle definitely got my attention: *Escape 9–5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich*. I devoured that book in a few days at Christmastime, holding it awkwardly, flipping pages with my one cast-free hand. The book opened me up to a world of possibilities about things like digital business, online marketing, and launching something new. Then I just went deep, reading blogs by all the top leaders at the time, and reaching out to everyone I could think of on LinkedIn to develop relationships over that next year.

Two things really helped me during this time. One was getting serious about learning salsa dancing (a story I'll tell later). The other was choosing to master the skill of public speaking—a fear that held me back my entire life that I felt I needed to overcome. I met a guy who was a professional speaker and told him I wanted to learn how to do what he did, but I couldn't speak in front of anyone to save my life. He treated me to a cup of coffee (no, I still couldn't even afford my own cup of coffee!) and gave me his



best advice: “You’ve got to join Toastmasters and give a speech every week for a year.” *Well*, I thought, *this guy clearly knows what he is doing, so I’m in!*

At a Toastmasters event in Columbus, Ohio, this one guy gave an amazing speech. After the event, I cruised to the back of the room. As I was stuffing snacks in my mouth while wrapping more in napkins, I heard a man ask, “What are you doing?”

I froze, then turned to see who had asked the question. It was the speaker who had just delivered the incredible speech! I gulped and tried to swallow, acting like it was the most natural thing in the world to be cramming free food into every empty pocket I had with only one hand.

“Well, I, uh, really don’t have, um, a lot of money, so I’m taking some of this home for later.” If I could have crawled under the snack table I would have, but I doubted I could have fit my six-foot, four-inch body underneath the tablecloth without him noticing—and besides, I would have crushed the food in my pockets.

“Let me buy you lunch,” he replied, and turned toward the door as if he encountered hungry, pocket-stuffing people after every speech.

His name was Frank Agin, and he began to mentor me in public speaking, but he also had a local business networking company. As our relationship grew, I told him about all the work I had been doing learning about LinkedIn, and I helped him upgrade his profile there. He gave me a check for \$100 and told me this was going to be a game-changer for his business. I was stunned. *Do you mean people will pay money for me to do this?* With his encouragement, I started helping more people who also paid me. Real money!

But he didn’t let me stop there. Before long, he had another challenge for me: “You should write a book about LinkedIn.” *What?* I had no idea how to write a book. I was only 24 years old. Who would listen to me? Besides, I almost flunked out of English class in high school.

He wasn’t deterred. “I’ll help you write it.” He had written a few books before, so we decided he would write a section about offline networking, and I would write about using LinkedIn to network online. It wasn’t a Pulitzer Prize-winning book, but we got it done, and it was offering value to people. Before I knew it, I was an author, making money and moving forward.

Then I went to a Twitter meetup and thought, *Maybe I could do this on LinkedIn*. As far as I knew, no one had ever done a LinkedIn networking event. So I did 20 LinkedIn networking events over the next year, all over the country, using my network, which led to my doing more consulting and ultimately to my first webinar, which launched me into the online and digital business world—and I haven't looked back since.

Fast-forward 14 years, and not only did I return to playing sports, but I also played on the U.S.A. men's national handball team for nine years at the Olympic competitive level. Meanwhile, in the business world, I built a growing business with a sevenfigure annual revenue stream. Out of millions of podcasts in the world, my podcast, *The School of Greatness*, is consistently near the top of the list and features some of the most successful people in the world, with more than 1,200 episodes and half a billion downloads. Plus, I have the number one personal development show on YouTube and have written multiple books, including a *New York Times* bestseller. I've been featured on shows such as *Ellen*, the *Today* show, and *Good Morning America* and have been able to build a following of more than eight million on social media.

All of it has made it possible to make an impact in the world by serving on many nonprofit advisory boards and serving causes I care about for the last decade. I've been able to leverage my personal network to bring in many millions in donations to help Pencils of Promise and other causes like Charity: Water and Operation Underground Railroad, freeing children from sex slavery.

I've been able to figure out a lot on this journey and have learned directly from some of the greatest minds in the world, people who have devoted themselves to the pursuit of greatness in their respective fields. But at the end of the day, I knew I needed to write this book about finding meaning, overcoming fears, and creating a game plan for significance and fulfillment in life because of what I feel inside on a daily basis.

## **THE PATH AHEAD**

As we journey together, I'll share more about how I've grown, even in recent years. Greatness is what I've been studying and trying to apply my entire adult life. Across different seasons, I've had to overcome physical, emotional, and mental challenges in the three big areas of life: health,

relationships, and in my businesses and finances. And it has not been easy. I've encountered fears and insecurities at all levels, but I have overcome so many of them with help from some of the greatest minds in the world. As an interviewer of—and learner from—these great minds, I've been able to tap into their expertise to see how they've overcome their pain, challenges, and traumas to accomplish the most incredible things.

But you may be asking, what do I mean when I say *greatness*?

From the time I took that initial massive, imperfect action to today, I've developed a working definition of what greatness is:

**Greatness is discovering your unique gifts and talents to pursue your Meaningful Mission and make the maximum positive impact on the people around you.**

It's not complicated. It's all about figuring out who you are and how you can make an authentic and unique contribution that makes the people around you better and the world a better place. It sounds simple. So what keeps so many of us from living it out?

One key reason people do not pursue greatness is that they quickly encounter the Enemy of Greatness: **the lack of a clear Meaningful Mission.**

When you don't know what you really want to do, it's pretty difficult to do it. So, Step 1 is figuring out your purpose. As Viktor Frankl, Holocaust survivor and author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, said, "The first thing that gives life meaning is a project that demands your attention."<sup>1</sup> Apart from that, you're simply wandering aimlessly. I'll equip you with practical guidance on how to get clear on your mission.

Not having direction or purpose creates a vacuum in your soul, a vacuum that fears, sadness, and mental health challenges rush to fill. That's why Step 2 is critical: I'll show you how to overcome the most common barriers to greatness. I'll walk you through each one of the debilitating fears—fear of failure, fear of success, the fear of what others think about you, and finally the fear of what you think about yourself. The truth is that, left unaddressed, these fears all lead you to the same place: self-doubt and the belief that you are not enough. The only way to overcome and convert those fears is to tackle them head on. In these chapters, I'll show you how and give you a practical Fear Conversion Tool Kit.

Step 3 is where you will actually learn how to develop the Greatness Mindset. At the heart of this mindset is the unwavering belief that “I am enough!” That doesn’t mean you have arrived, achieved perfection, or done all the good you could possibly do in the world. It means you are still a work in progress, for sure, but you’re still moving forward, trying, failing, learning, and growing while helping other people do the same.

The Greatness Mindset begins to take shape when you begin the journey to heal the pain and trauma in your past. Until you do that, you may often find yourself at the mercy of past pain without ever realizing how or why. We’ll explore the psychology and brain science behind how our past shapes our present responses and how to choose to listen to your inner coach rather than your inner critic.

Only when you have begun the journey to heal your past can you engage in an authentic evaluation of the four key elements of the Greatness Mindset in what I call the Mindset-in-Motion Cycle:

1. **Identity.** You are the hero of your own adventure, but heroes are only made by confronting and overcoming challenges.
2. **Thoughts.** Your thoughts shape your reality, especially the chatter inside your own head. We’ll take a closer look at how the latest brain science can help us understand what goes on inside our heads.
3. **Emotions.** Your feelings are intimately connected to your thoughts and your body. Once again, the latest brain science and psychology offer critical insights. Paul Conti, author of the excellent book *Trauma: The Invisible Epidemic*, warns us to invest time in healing the pains in our past because “trauma changes our emotions; changed emotions determine our decisions.”<sup>2</sup>
4. **Behaviors.** Your actions bring the internal mindset to life as you live it out in the physical universe. We’ll examine the role habits and routines play in fueling the Greatness Mindset.

Finally, Step 4—you need a Game Plan for Greatness. These seven actions give you a proven plan drawn from my own experience and the considerable expertise of so many experts from whom I’ve had the privilege of learning:

1. **Ask courageous questions.** When you dare to ask yourself courageous questions, you begin to make the impossible possible.
2. **Give yourself permission.** Once the door is open, you must give yourself permission to wake up every single day and walk through it.
3. **Accept the challenge.** If you want to become fearless, you need to go *all in* on the fears until they disappear. I'll show you how to use a 30-, 60-, or 90-day challenge to make it happen.
4. **Define your greatness goals.** I'll share my own proven process for goal-setting and achievement that will empower but not overwhelm you.
5. **Enlist support.** You cannot get there by yourself. You'll need internal help via habits and routines as well as external support from peers, coaches, and other voices to help you stay the course.
6. **Get stuff done.** Now it's time for action. I'll share the keys for actually getting stuff done and engaging in meaningful activity to keep moving forward no matter what.
7. **Celebrate!** It all comes down to resting in the reality that you are enough, being your authentic self, no matter the result.

## DO YOU REALLY WANT THIS?

In the pages ahead, I'll draw from the many experts who've been my teachers over the last decade and share insights of my own. I don't have all the answers. None of us do. But together we can achieve something more, something greater, hopefully even greatness itself.

I'm not saying I have arrived. Not at all. The journey continues. But . . . I. Am. Enough. I've learned to love and accept myself, and every day I'm learning and growing. I have come to realize there is a path forward to a place where I can live out my Meaningful Mission and feel deep fulfillment and life significance.

Now, chasing greatness may mean you'll stumble and fall a few times along the way. Are you willing to take that risk? You were once, back in the day when you were first learning to walk. You fell. A lot. But you kept getting back up and trying again. And again. And again. Until you did it.

Now you don't even think about it. That's the attitude you'll need now. You'll need to become comfortable with trying, failing, and learning, knowing that failure is the only path to success.

It will mean tuning out the critics and the opinions of all the people who choose to sit in the stands instead of taking the field (including tuning out the loudest critic in your head). One thing I've learned on this journey: criticism happens no matter what. It is the price of admission to life. You can't let that decide how your story will be told.

It will mean finding and listening to coaches who can help you see past your fears and raise your vision of what's possible in your life. It may mean enlisting the help of trained professionals or therapists who can help you heal your past so you can move forward. I don't claim to know the details of the particular support you will need, but I know leadership expert John C. Maxwell is right: "One is too small a number to achieve greatness."<sup>3</sup>

It will mean giving it your all, taking courageous action, but then letting go of the results. The results may not be what you expect them to be. They may be better. Or they may just be different. And that's okay. If you continue to act on your Meaningful Mission, the things you know you will one day be proud to have done, the results will take care of themselves.

So, my question to you is this—and be gut-level honest with yourself here because no one else's opinion matters: Are you ready to discover your unique gifts and talents, going *all in* on pursuing those gifts and talents, and, in that pursuit, making the maximum impact on the people around you?

If you are, you can master the Greatness Mindset and adjust your life story so that instead of you chasing greatness, greatness will chase you.