

THE ROAD TO RESILIENCE



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Positive Pressure Systems

The Road to Resilience believes that meaning and purpose are found in community.

Our program uses clinically proven methods to improve performance by building spiritual resilience.

Our movement makes a space for the spirit in our everyday lives.



About the Author

David Wurtzel is the founder of The First Twenty, a nonprofit dedicated to the health and wellness of America's firefighters and first responders. First Twenty programs serve over 50,000 first responders nationwide and are used by Fire and Police Departments throughout the country including the cities of Baltimore, Detroit, and Philadelphia.

In his almost two decades of on-the-job experience, David served as both a structural and wildland firefighter. He won the gold medal in the Firefighter Combat Challenge World Championships Over 50 Relay in both 2017 and 2018.

The culmination of Dave's decade of programming development and commitment to community is
The Road to Resilience.

A Note from the Author

Our program offers a formalized process which emphasizes a practice of mindfulness, intention, and action around the values of duty, integrity, respect, and courage.

We distinguish ourselves from other high-performance programs by offering a clear and simple path to the transformative power of the human spirit. This power manifests itself at the interface of individual and community.

This book was written as an introduction to the central ideas of The Road to Resilience program.

The Road to Resilience

Powered by Spirit

Rooted in Community

Table of Contents

Fire on the Mountain
7

Where it Begins
10

Process
12

Moonbeam & Shadows
35

Big Ideas
39

Expeditionary Readiness
57

Flagging the Black
80

Traveling Companions
82

Fire on the Mountain

A fire is burning in the Mormon Mountains, out past Caliente and Glendale in the beige and blasted wildlands of southern Nevada. It's a remote part of the state, about 60 miles northeast of Vegas, but a world away from the bright lights and high rollers. This corner of the earth is rugged and unforgiving. Canyons crack deep into badland flats, high cliffs cut through limestone peaks, and the elevation rises to over 7,000 feet. Down in the scrublands, there's Joshua Trees, creosote bushes, and barrel cactus. The occasional cry of a wildcat or coyote calls into the silence. The land is indifferent to your presence, unencumbered by your existence, not the kind of place you want to face alone. As the sun sets and dusk turns to darkness, we approach the fire.

I'm in an old Ford Type 6 Brush Truck with a Boise slip-on, rolling with three

other Firefighters from the US Forest Service crew out of Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. In my pack, there's a map, lamp, medical kit, MRE's, communications radio, and fire shelter. I'm wearing green Nomex pants, a yellow Nomex shirt, a hard hat, leather gloves, and Red Wing boots. Everything on me is government-issued. It's all worn and broken in, but not by me. I'm the new guy in the crew and this is my first job.

A few months earlier I'd packed up my '76 Ford Bronco and left Philadelphia on a cross-country ride. When I got to Nevada, I met up with my cousin and his friend, Bill Fernandez. Wild Bill was a Battalion Chief for The Nevada Division of Forestry and a former rodeo rider. After a couple of beers at the Sit-n-Bull Lounge, Bill asked if I might be interested in a seasonal position as a firefighter out of the Southern Region in Nevada.

It sounded interesting, but I really didn't think I had it in me. Bill told me I'd be the first seasonal firefighter ever hired down in that region. It was a great opportunity and he was confident I could handle it. For some reason, I believed him and I took the job.

That decision would prove to be a pivotal moment for me. I had never once thought about being a firefighter but that chance encounter changed my life. A man reached out to me in a simple but profound way. This action stirred something inside me and I responded. I'd taken my first step on The Road to Resilience.



Where it Begins

Being a firefighter filled a void in me. It gave me meaning and purpose. I found a home and a community of like-minded individuals in the fire service. I also became aware of the challenges and difficulties they were facing.

The American firefighter is five times more likely to have PTSD than the general population, is twice as likely to commit suicide, and is at an inordinate risk of a heart attack. This community had given me so much, I couldn't just stand by and do nothing. So in 2008, I founded The First Twenty to help firefighters manage these challenges.

I surrounded myself with some of the brightest people in the tactical space with a mission to push back against these numbers.

Our goal was to strategically identify the single, most impactful place where firefighters and first responders could dig in and make change. We wanted to find a practical tool that they could use to push through tough times. We worked with:

- Baltimore City FD
- Detroit FD
- Philadelphia FD
- The Department of Defense
- The US Air Force
- The US Forest Service
- FEMA
- The National Institute of Health
- Over 35,0000 Firefighters Nationwide

We found one thing that truly makes a difference at home and on the job, in our minds and bodies, for individuals and communities alike.

Spiritual resilience.

A Foundational Process

The mission of The Road to Resilience is to enable an expeditionary readiness that allows us to step into the unknown with greater meaning, purpose, and performance.

Our program offers a foundational process to navigate complex and dynamic environments by building spiritual resilience.

The three waypoints of The Road to Resilience program are:

Tactical Pause

Lift Our Lamp

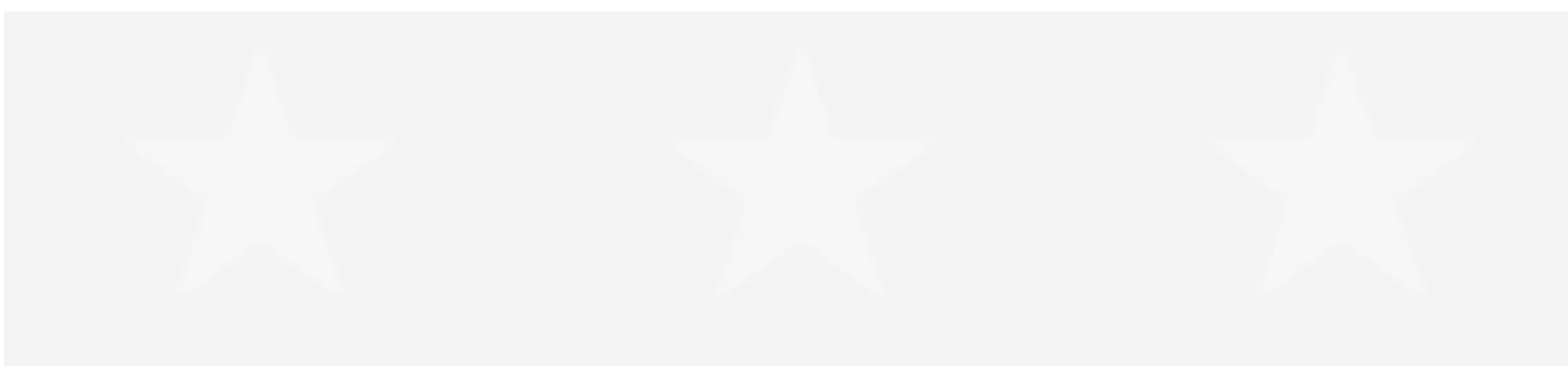
Forward in Faith

Waypoint One

Tactical Pause

Our travels on The Road to Resilience begin by creating a space for the spirit.

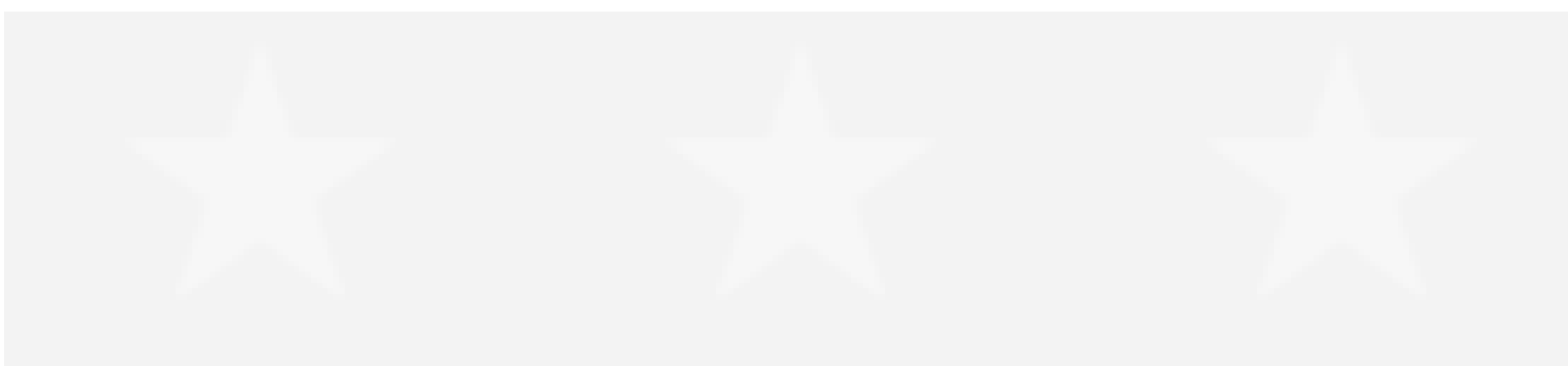
We use the Tactical Pause to create a moment of mindfulness. This enables us to read our situation, assess our mindset, and separate action from reaction.



Meet the Moment

By creating a strategic pause, we allow ourselves the opportunity to contextualize our circumstance, make an intentional choice, and build community.

The tactical pause is key for optimal performance. It allows us to rise up and meet the moment with the best of ourselves.



Separate Action from Reaction

Action is the result of a conscious decision.

Reaction is an unreflective response to circumstance.

When we make a decision, we choose to take responsibility for our actions.

Reaction surrenders our agency to the decisions of others.

In order to create a space for the spirit, we need to make a conscious decision to separate action from reaction.

Intentional Choice vs. Unintentional Circumstance

An unintentional circumstance is any unanticipated difficulty or challenge we face during the course of the day.

On The Road to Resilience we understand unintentional circumstance to be an opportunity to build spiritual resilience.

We make an intentional choice to find meaning and purpose in the reciprocal relationship between individual and community. When we face unintentional circumstance we use the tactical pause to make a space for the spirit.

Into this space we bring a moment of reflection in which we make an action choice based on the values of duty, integrity, respect and courage.

The Power of Ordinary

The great thing about intentional choice is that anyone can do it. We call this the power of ordinary.

The power of ordinary is available to all of us.

We all have access to it any time we want to use it.

It's up to us to make the decision to manage our moments, build meaning and purpose, and create community through character.

God must love ordinary people because he made so many of us.

- Jim Valvano

Lexicon

By their nature, the meaning of words like principle, virtue, community, resilience, and spirit seem to push beyond a singular summation.

So, before continuing any further, I'd like to take a few pages to introduce and define some of the key words and concepts we use on The Road to Resilience.

Spiritual Resilience

An animating force that is strengthened through hardship, flourishes amidst adversity, and drives us to meaning and purpose.

After years of working on wellness programs with The First Twenty, I realized this:

Resilience is a spiritual construct.

We use physical and mental benchmarks to measure resilience because spirit itself is ineffable.

When we put action to decisions rooted in character, we strengthen our spirit we manifest spiritual resilience.

Spiritual resilience is a joint venture, a collaboration between material and spirit.

Spirit

An animating force that drives individuals and communities to meaning and purpose.

Resilience

The ability to persevere through difficulty, recover from adversity, and maintain mindfulness amidst hardship.

Community

Two or more people united through common values.

Character

The manifestation of our values through action.

Gratitude

Peace, hope, and love found in an upward inclination of spirit that's rooted in meaning and purpose.

Intention

Reflection and mindfulness surrounding our thoughts, words, and actions.

Action

The expression of our intent through energy, effort, and exertion.

Compassion

Sharing in the hardship, suffering, and aspirations of our community.

Faith

Stepping into the unknown with meaning and purpose.

Obligation

Aspirations and responsibilities which drive our thoughts, words, and actions.

Principles

Our core beliefs.

Values

The expression of our principles.

Process

The three steps we use to build spiritual resilience and create communities of character.

Tactical Pause

A moment of mindfulness that allows us to create a space for the spirit.

Lift Our Lamp

The actions through which we create character and build community.

Forward in Faith

Advancing into the unknown with meaning and purpose.

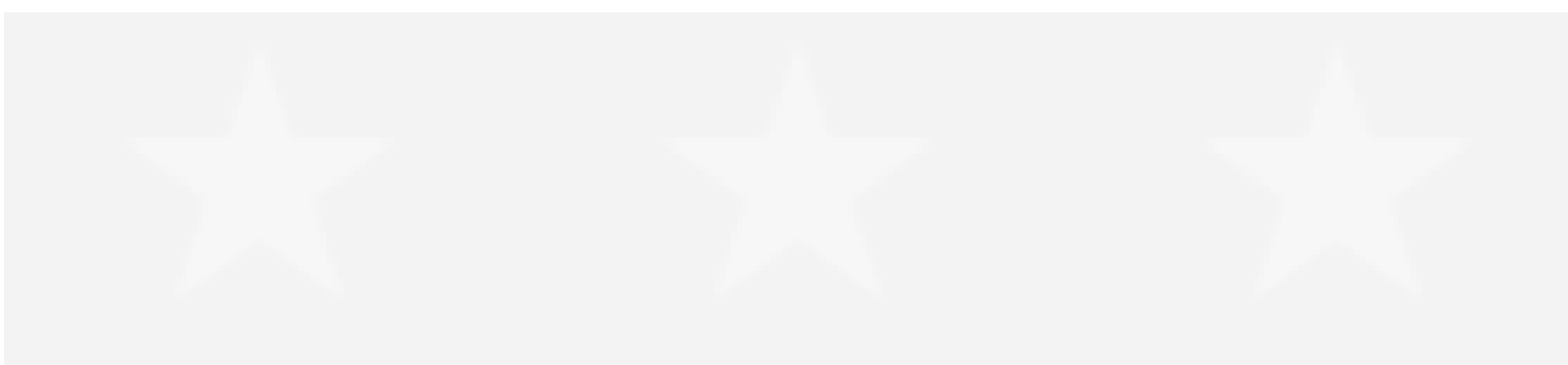
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Waypoint Two

Lift Our Lamp

We lift our lamp In gratitude for those who came before us, with compassion for those who travel beside us, and in hope for those who will follow us on The Road to Resilience.

Lift Our Lamp means we take action to create, strengthen, and build meaning and purpose wherever and whenever possible.



Obligation

The motivation and strength to lift our lamp is rooted in obligation.

It is in our obligation to a friend, family member, institution, or country that we are inspired to take action, build meaning and purpose, and create communities through character.



Bearing and Distance

This is a navigational term I learned when I was in the fire service. Bearing and distance are used to calculate both our destination and our orientation.

I thought it was a great concept to use on The Road to Resilience. We need to keep our destination in sight but also be aware of the shape and movement of the world around us as well as our relationship and orientation to other travelers.

Expeditionary Readiness

On The Road to Resilience we refer to the daily execution, intentional choices, and tactical strategies of spiritual resilience as expeditionary readiness.

Expeditionary readiness equips us to build the mindfulness, situational awareness, and teamwork necessary to power our performance on the job, at home, and in our neighborhoods.

Expeditionary readiness prepares us to leverage the strength, power, and capacity needed to overcome the bad habits, unintentional circumstances, and the survival instincts which keep us repeating the same unwanted behaviors.

Agile and Adaptive

The Road to Resilience builds agile and adaptive leaders with the requisite values and personal character required to meet the challenges of present and future operating conditions.

The Road to Resilience drives these five outcomes:

Attention

Our ability to direct and maintain intention, tolerate sustained action, and engage in thoughtful awareness of our situation.

•

Adaptability

To become more consistent in our ability to respond to actual or anticipated challenges.

Metacognition

Thinking about our own thinking; using cognitive strategies to monitor and self-regulate learning and other mental processes.

Problem Solving

Understanding and identifying the conflict space, generating possible solutions, and moving toward a specific goal.

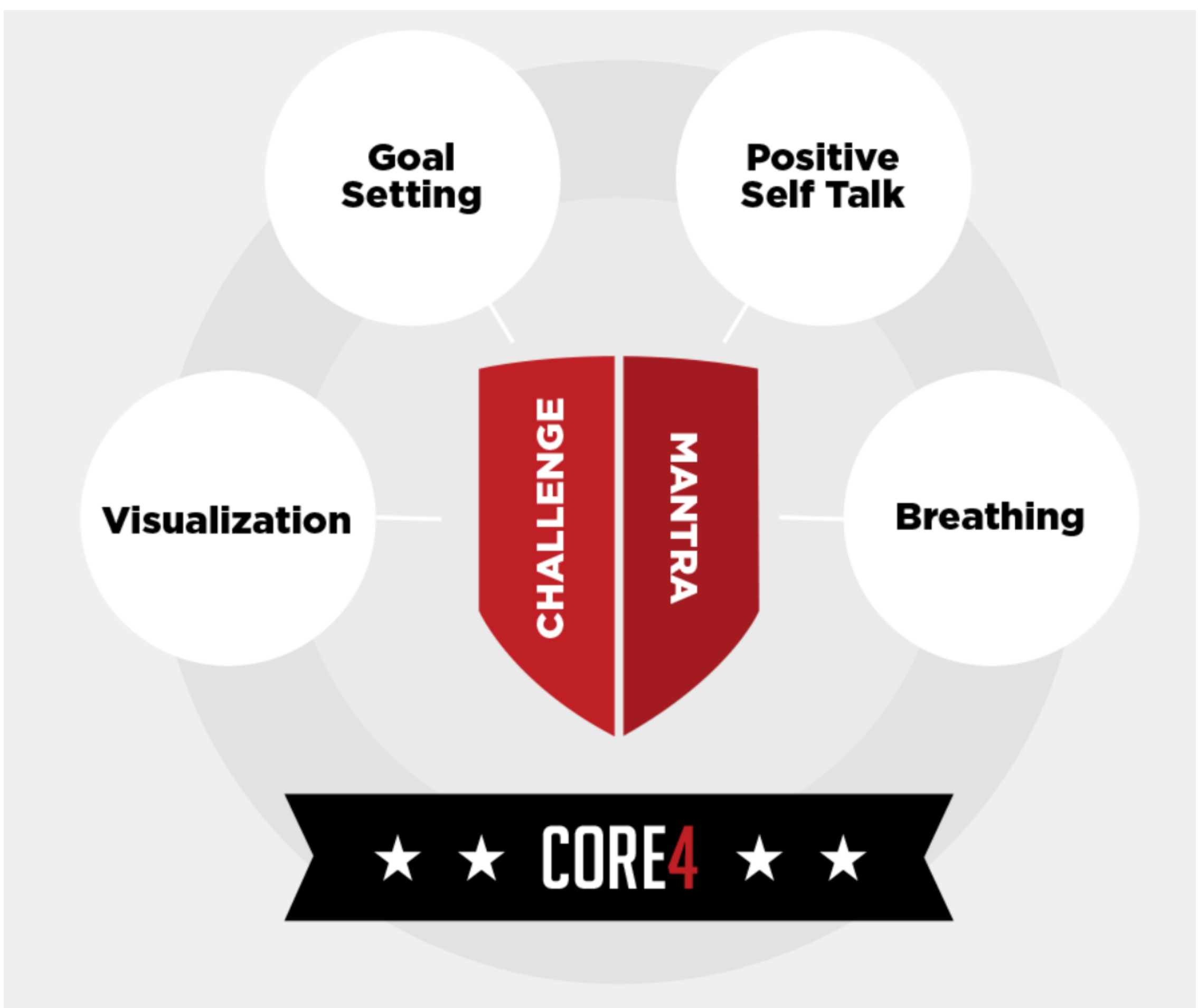
Sense-making

Understanding connections among people, places, and events in order to anticipate their trajectories, estimate the overall situation, and act effectively.

The Core 4

We use the Core 4 techniques, developed by British Special Forces, to enhance the power of our challenges and mantras.

These techniques are: Goal Setting, Positive Self Talk, Visualization, and Breathing.



Expeditionary Readiness Challenge and Mantra

In our challenges and mantras, we identify opportunities to create moments of mindfulness and employ our three waypoints.

These weekly expeditionary readiness challenges offer specific tactics that enable us to build, strengthen, and create community.

The weekly mantra allows us to create a personalized obligation to our mindset.

Here is an example of an expeditionary readiness challenge.

Later on, in the book, I've included several more.

REFLECTION

A goal is a dream with a finish line.

-Duke Ellington

In the workplace, we use after-action reviews to measure how effectively we manage projects and respond to problems. We want to use a similar process when working with groups and teams in our communities. In doing so, we allow ourselves the opportunity to reflect on how the project went, how the group worked together, and what was most effective or ineffective about our communications.

THE CHALLENGE

Select a recent project in your community. Think about how the project went and how everyone participated.

The following are some simple reflection questions:

- How effective was my communication?
- Was success clearly defined for the group?
- How effective was the process of gaining input, prior to launching the project and as it went along?
- How clear was I about my role and the role of others?
- What could make the process more effective next time?

WAYPOINTS

A tactical pause allows us to reflect on how we work in community.

In this challenge, we learn that a successful project is about duty, team building, communication, and effort—not just results.

VISUALIZATION & POSITIVE SELF TALK:

Take a moment to reflect upon and visualize your process of collaborating. You might experience a sense of effectiveness in some areas and regret in others. The purpose of reflection is learning and growth—not a conclusion about whether you are an effective, good, or valued person. Make sure to engage your growth mindset by using affirmations. The purpose of the reflection is to learn.

MANTRA

I will set an example for my team and community.

Waypoint Three

Forward in Faith

Our mission to build spiritual resilience continues as we move forward with expeditionary readiness and step into the unknown together.

The outcome of most of our decisions is unknown. We do not have 100% certainty on how anything will turn out. Faith allows us to believe that our lives, actions, and choices have meaning and purpose.

Forward in faith is a movement beyond certainty. Through faith we find the strength, power, and capacity to venture through unknowns in both ourselves and the world around us.

Moonbeam and Shadows

We pull up to the staging area and everyone pours out of the truck. My Engine Captain is Lee Nelson. Lee would become a mentor to me in the Fire Service and a lifelong friend, but today, I'm just the new guy and he needs to get me ready for the job.

Lee turns to me and says,

"Remember, you're a fighter, just like they are."

He pauses and gives me a little smile.

"Now, let's go get some dirt on that shirt."

He hops out of the cab. His words resonate in my head.

I open the door, swing my boots out, and step into a new adventure.

I'm struck by how dark it is. There's no ambient flare from the electric grid, just the light of the heavens, shining down from eternity, into a world of moonbeam and shadows. I'm pulled into the controlled chaos of bodies moving with urgency and purpose.

As my crew dispatches to their duty, I move toward a group of men staring down toward a truck hood. Their bearded faces are etched in the light rising up from a flashlight on the hood.

A group of engine captains and crew bosses putting together a plan. They're staring down at a map. Not staring, but reading it, talking about the geography, the weather, where the fire had run, saying things I'd never heard.

They're multi-tasking, absorbing bits of information from multiple sources, a glow of faces speaking secrets, a breed of humans I'd only seen in the movies, exponentially cooler than anything I'd ever known.

The dirt on their shirts was earned by the blaze of the seasons. I stand reverently in their presence. I'm a part of their story now. I'm in their world.

Then one of them speaks to me. I realize I'm standing there with my mouth hanging open. They want to know who I am. I don't know what to say, so I tell them everything. My name, my call sign, my station, any bit of information I can think of at the moment. There's a moment of silence, then they all laugh at me at once.

"The new seasonal guy from the southern region," one of them says.

They know who I am. I can't believe it. An orange flag snatched from the hood of the truck is thrown at me.

"Ok. Dave Wurtzel, 355, Mt. Charleston, NDF. Hike up that ridge and flag off that spot fire."

They're not speaking in secrets. I know exactly what this means. They want me to mark off an area on the mountain that has already burned. The flags will allow them to get a visual of the area and make a plan to deploy resources. My first step is more of a leap as I propel myself toward the ridge.

I move with a purpose and stride I can't remember ever having.

"You're a firefighter like they are." I replay these words in my head. I feel alive, and vital, and full.

Big Ideas

These are some of the big ideas and foundational concepts that inform our perspective and mindset on The Road to Resilience.



Department of Defense Directive 1010.10

This directive acknowledges individual health status is greatly dependent upon family and community health and family and community health is intensely affected by the collective behaviors, attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs of community members.

I came across this study when I was working as a health coach and subject matter expert for the Fire Service. I figured if the DoD is saying this about community there must be something here.

What they're saying is that our health is affected by our community, and the health of our community is affected by us.

This foundational concept of community can move the needle for us in everything.

The Science of Community

There is a fundamental, connected way in which we are intended to function.

A coupled systems approach that is vital for optimal performance.

The more aligned we can be with this flow, this natural order of things, the better we can perform.

Our brain reflects this system of interdependence. Its operating system emerged during natural selection because it enhanced our chance of survival.

Put most simply, we work best when connected in community.

Without positive community engagement, people and neurons wither and die. In neurons this process is called apoptosis; in humans it is called depression, grief, and suicide.

From birth until death, it's important to seek each other out and engage in community in order to feel connected and for our lives to have meaning and purpose.

This is a fundamental environment for optimal performance and requires understanding that a healthy, thriving brain is embedded within positive community engagement:

Relationships are our natural habitat, and those who make more positive connections with others perform the best.

We need each other and our stories to discover ourselves, regulate our emotions, and heal from traumatic experiences.

Engaging others through community helps to heal past injustices, provide us with new ideas, and get in touch with feelings that we may be unable to access ourselves.

When we link ourselves to others through positive community interaction, the result is a transformative connection that builds Spiritual Resilience and drives meaning and purpose in our lives.

This may be why so many of life's most gratifying experiences are those that are shared. Creating connected community enhances performance and allows our brains to develop, integrate, and remain flexible.

This connectivity is so impactful we can actually regulate each other's brain chemistry, sense of well-being, and immunological functioning.

Conversely, when that connection is obstructed — when we feel anger, grief, depression, or abuse — our mental health is compromised.

Connecting to community disables the defenses we use to protect ourselves from feelings of rejection and abandonment.

Put another way, when we engage our community with compassion and gratitude we have the power to increase performance in both ourselves and others.

In community, we find the strength of spirit that fuels our expeditionary readiness, creates meaning, and drives our performance on The Road to Resilience.

Community is Redemptive

AJ Mustie was a social activist during the Vietnam War. A reporter once asked him if he really thought he could change the country by standing outside the White House every night with a candle.

This was Mustie's reply:

*I don't do this to change the country.
I do this so the country won't change me.
When I am willing to cross the line of how
much I think I can love, I am changed.
When I am more in touch with what I love
than what I fear, I take a stand.*

Community allows us to cross boundaries
within ourselves.

Community is redemptive.

A Light in the Darkness

The truth is, your past cannot be changed,
you cannot outrun your shadow.

You cannot outdistance your darkness.

You can care for the light inside you,
stoke its flames, and shine it on those still
trapped in the shadows.

In doing so, this shared light outshines any
darkness.

This is The Road to Resilience

The Golden Door

I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

I love this line. It is the last line of poem that resides on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. I am asking you to lift your lamp, join The Road to Resilience movement, and shine your light beside the golden door of community.

In these times of great unknowns, we must push back against the darkness that is creeping in, one that threatens to dim our spirit, and darken the path ahead.

Shine your light on the affirmation that we are joined in a shared dream.

Shine your light on the conviction that by caring for one another we can move our country and our communities forward, and step into the unknown with resilience and strength.

The answers to our problems won't come from the White House, but from every house in America.

Now is the time to lift our lamps and shine, my friends.

This is your invitation to come with us on an adventure of the spirit. It will be rocky, it will be rough, and it isn't for the faint of heart. It is frontier living, friends.

On the other side waits the promise of community, where together we find meaning and purpose.

The Road to Resilience awaits.
Onward, upward, and into the spiritual frontier.

The Spiritual Frontier

In the movement to the spiritual frontier,
we pause to see each other differently.

With gratitude for the moment we have
been given, embracing the obligation to
those who have gone before, those who
are with us now, and those who will pick
up our mantle and come after us.

We choose to engage in community.

We believe that the greatest gift we can
give somebody is to believe in them.
As individuals, we all suffer, but together
through community we can rise up and
free ourselves from those malevolent
forces.

On the other side of darkness there is
freedom, there is redemption.

The Road to Resilience is a journey to the spiritual frontier. A journey of the spirit and a journey to the spirit.

We call it a journey because we do not know what we will find or what will find us. We don't know what we will discover about ourselves or the world around us.

We don't know how the person who completes the journey will differ from the one who began it.

We are stepping into the unknown together. Although we face much that is unknown, we are guided by a redemptive ideology which leads us to a realm of limitless possibility,

The realm where the spirit and the earth connect, the spiritual frontier.

Presupposition of Spirit

It's not necessary for us to agree on a definition of spirit in order for us to walk The Road to Resilience together.

No matter what we believe about the unseen and intangible, we work better when we understand and live in community, when we take action to improve ourselves and those around us, when we view ourselves and others with compassion, when we actively practice gratitude, and look toward the future with a disposition of faith.

There's something about this which suits us well. It helps us stick to our principles, flourish through hard times, and find meaning and purpose.

Meaning and Purpose

Spirituality is expansive, nuanced, and eternally malleable.

It's just as impossible to institutionalize it, as it is to individualize it. But, it does have basic, universal principles.

We use these principles on
The Road to Resilience
to get our arms
around this idea of the spirit.

The word spirit is derived from the Latin spiritus, which means to "breathe life into." In this way we understand the spirit to be an animating force that lifts us up beyond the perceived limitations of ourselves.

When we feel anger, fear, or sadness, we are thoroughly trapped inside the walls of ourselves. During these times, a conversation or a simple connection with another person can help move us forward in our day. Through this connection to others, we are animated, we rise above ourselves, and throw off our chains. An inspiring life has been breathed into us.

This is the animating force and uplifting power where we find spiritual resilience.

Spiritual resilience is empowered and comes to life through community.

This movement towards community becomes our fundamental and critical set point for the spirit.

Through our engagement with others, we are driven towards greater meaning and purpose.

A Space for the Spirit

The realm of the spirit needs to be made and remade on a daily basis. To do this we must be present in its mystery and step into a space with no limits or boundaries.

This is a small step but a life-changing leap, profoundly deep, and rich with possibility. On The Road to Resilience, we choose to make a space for the Spirit to be experienced.

Creating an experiential relationship with the spirit comes from meeting others in community.

When we are mindful of this relationship, we separate action from reaction and offer the spirit an opportunity to render its transformative power.

When we fill this space with healing and humanization we revitalize the spirit in ourselves and others and move up The Road to Resilience together.

By putting this pause in our daily actions we create a mindfulness which empowers us to construct our own narrative.

We are not caught in the unintentional circumstance of the cultural narratives imposed upon us. In doing this, we create a visceral awareness of the spirit's moving.

In creating a space for the spirit we are granted the freedom to craft our own narrative and to remake the world through community.

This space forges a connection in the spiritual frontier that powers all parties ever upward on The Road to Resilience.

Spirit and Community

Spiritual Resilience is rooted in
community.

Community is completed through the
participation of the individual.

Spirit exists in each of us as individuals
and between all of us in community.

*We are tied together in the single garment of
destiny, caught in an inescapable network of
mutuality. And whatever affects one directly
affects all indirectly. I can never be what I
ought to be until you are what you ought to
be. And you can never be what you ought to
be until I am what I ought to be.*

This is the way God's universe is made.

- Martin Luther King Jr.

Expeditionary Readiness Challenge and Mantras

These are some of the challenges and mantras we use to build spiritual resilience, create community, and improve performance.



COMMUNICATION

The purpose of life is not to be happy, it is to be useful, honorable, and compassionate.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

CHALLENGE

Ask a person or group for feedback about your communication.

Some useful questions are:

- How effective was my communication?
- Was success clearly defined for the group?
- How effective was the process of gaining input and ideas?
- Were the roles clearly defined?
- What could make the process more effective next time?
- How did your contribution impact the project?

CHARACTER & WAYPOINTS

We fulfill our duty and responsibility by ensuring that efforts in our community are effective and collaborative. Use a tactical pause and take a moment to receive feedback.

VISUALIZATION

Here are some growth mindset affirmations to use when receiving feedback:

- I learn from my mistakes.
- Feedback is an opportunity to improve.
- Meaning and purpose are found in community.

MANTRA

I will know myself and seek improvement.

COMMITMENT

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them.

-John F. Kennedy

CHALLENGE

Think about a loved one, friend, or co-worker in your community. Is there any commitment you've made to them that deserves more follow-through? We are not looking for something that requires multiple, major changes in your life. What's important here is the opportunity to create communities of character by putting action to our words.

Take a moment to identify a very simple commitment that's gotten lost in the shuffle. Make a plan to do it this week.

CHARACTER & WAYPOINTS

Following through on our commitments shows respect for the team and builds integrity. Reliable execution allows us to move forward in faith with our team.

VISUALIZATION

Visualize a simple commitment in your community. Think about how you will feel once you have accomplished it. Move your thoughts away from why you haven't done it and toward the specific steps and actions you'll take to achieve it.

MANTRA

I will build meaning and purpose in my team.

ACTION

If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do, keep moving forward.

-Martin Luther King Jr.

CHALLENGE

Identify a priority in your life and create an action around it. Ask yourself what is important to you. How can you demonstrate your priorities through your actions? Make a plan, put it on your calendar, and take action. Remember, keep it simple. The action you attach to your priority should only take a few minutes to accomplish.

CHARACTER & WAYPOINTS

Acting on our priorities allows us to make meaningful change. Use a tactical pause to identify an opportunity for you to take action on a duty-based decision.

VISUALIZATION

How can you act in alignment with your priorities? What would this look like in your everyday life? It's important for us to maintain an awareness of our priorities not just when we are reflecting on them, but in our daily actions as well.

MANTRA

I will be mindful of my priorities and intentional in my actions.

RESPECT

*Triumph cannot be had
without the struggle.*

-Wilma Rudolph

CHALLENGE

Spend 10 minutes thinking about a handful of people that you will encounter throughout the day. Make a plan to show them respect. Demonstrate it in the following ways:

- State your respect directly
- Listen intently without interrupting
- Demonstrate courtesy and kindness
- Express gratitude

CHARACTER & WAYPOINTS

Respect shows admiration and regard for others and is demonstrated through courageous words and actions. Use a tactical pause to identify an opportunity to bring a spirit of respect to your community.

VISUALIZATION

Think about how it feels to be respected. What opportunity do you have to instill this feeling in others?

MANTRA

I will build meaning and purpose in my team and community.

CONFLICT

The warrior is one who sacrifices themselves for the good of others. Their task is to take care of the elderly, defenseless...and above all the children, those who cannot take care of themselves.

-Sitting Bull

CHALLENGE

How do you handle conflict with:

- A person who you report to?
- A person under your supervision?
- A person who is your peer?

Does your disposition change depending on who you're talking to? Do you notice anything that you would like to improve or adjust? Make a note on how you deal with different power scenarios.

CHARACTER & WAYPOINTS

Make a space for the spirit to create community through actions which demonstrate character. Move forward in faith as both a resilient leader and courageous follower.

REFLECTION

Visualize a situation in which you handled conflict with success. Identify specific actions in which you demonstrated respect and dignity. Coach yourself to repeat and develop these actions in the future.

MANTRA

I will demonstrate character in my community through thoughtful and compassionate conflict resolution.

LEADERSHIP

*Each person must live their lives
as a model for others.*

- Rosa Parks

CHALLENGE

Think about a person you are mentoring. Is there something you can offer them to help them achieve the vision they have for their life? Reach out to this person. Ask them about their vision for their life. Find out what is important to them. What gives them a sense of purpose? Give them the opportunity to be thoughtful and clear with you and themselves.

A true mentor helps people craft their own vision, find their own path, and live out their potential.

CHARACTER & WAYPOINTS

Leaders build meaning and purpose in their community by helping others become the best version of themselves.

Use a tactical pause to step back from your daily tasks and help someone else.

VISUALIZATION

Are there any preconceptions you should set aside before engaging as a leader? Are you focused on serving and building character or on your own personal agenda? What insight or support can you offer which will build meaning and purpose?

MANTRA

I will demonstrate duty, integrity, respect, and courage as I lead and mentor in my community.

RELATIONSHIPS

*Individually, we are a drop.
Together, we are an ocean.*

- Ryunosuke Satoro

CHALLENGE

Identify a member of your community who you would like to know better. Try to understand some aspect of their life that is not apparent to you. Ask them about their hobbies, their plans for their future, their friends, their last vacation, etc. Learn about them apart from your typical engagement with each other. This strengthens our social ties, makes people feel appreciated, and offers an opportunity to grow.

CHARACTER & WAYPOINTS

Communities are built through relationships based on shared values. A tactical pause allows us to look beyond ourselves and find a connection with others.

VISUALIZATION

Asking someone about themselves is an authentic and genuine way to build community. If getting to know someone is out of the ordinary for you, visualize a thoughtful conversation which humanizes and dignifies a member of your community.

MANTRA

I will develop leaders for the future and create communities of character.

COHESION

Individual commitment to a group effort is what makes a team, a company, a society, a civilization work.

- Vince Lombardi

CHALLENGE

Promote positivity and neutralize negativity. Compliment a team member.

Let them know they are appreciated, valued, and a vital part of the team. Share this perspective with others.

If conversation turns negative, offer a compassionate perspective. Seek opportunity to create cohesion within your community through words and action.

CHARACTER & WAYPOINTS

A shared perspective of compassion and gratitude allows us an opportunity to create community and move forward in faith. We Lift our Lamp when we share in the suffering and success of others.

VISUALIZATION

You have the power to influence and change your community by the words you speak and the actions you take. Cultivate an awareness of your contribution to the culture of your community.

MANTRA

I will act on the principles of duty, integrity, respect, and courage.

RESOURCES

Realizing that my emotions are both positive and negative, I will form daily habits which will encourage the development of the positive emotions and aid me in converting the negative emotions into some form of useful action.

- Bruce Lee

CHALLENGE

Equip your team with the necessary support, expertise, and resources they need to get the job done. Let them know they can count on you when they are struggling or facing adversity. Cultivate an environment of success in your community by being a leader of character. Build confidence in your community by assigning tasks which can be successfully accomplished. Give your team the resources they need to be their best.

CHARACTER & WAYPOINTS

A tactical pause allows us to identify a community member who is under-resourced. We lift our lamp when we help them find the resources they need to be successful. Reinforce your support by recognizing accomplishments and leading through character.

VISUALIZATION

Think about a time when someone helped you succeed or meet a challenge. How did they support you? What was most important about how they talked with you? What did they help you overcome?

MANTRA

I will dispatch subordinates in accordance with their capabilities.

SUPPORT

Everything that is tearing us down today will become a memory, and this memory will be shared as an anecdote or a story or a poem or a play or a warning. It will be shared with another human being, who will then understand that he is not alone in his sadness. This is why we tell our tales and listen to others.

- Tennessee Williams

CHALLENGE

Think about someone in your community who is struggling. Help them see action opportunities which may not be apparent to them. Get their input and feedback.

Find out what they need. Is there something you are not doing that could be helpful?

CHARACTER & WAYPOINTS

Identify a community member who is struggling. Offer support or encouragement. Join them in their struggle and move forward in faith together.

VISUALIZATION

Being interested in someone else's struggle is helpful even when the problem can't be fixed. Listening is a powerful tool to keep people from feeling isolated and alone.

MANTRA

I will ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished.

INCLUSION

I've never regretted my mistakes because they have all added to my understanding of other human beings.

- Eleanor Roosevelt

CHALLENGE

Identify opportunities to be more inclusive. Get feedback and input from your community. Identify a specific action you can take to include everyone.

Reinforce the value of individual contributions. Get multiple perspectives.

Give the people around you an opportunity to be their best.

CHARACTER & WAYPOINTS

Identify situations of crisis or urgency in your life. Be mindful of the difference in your thoughts, actions, and behaviors in these situations. Include your community in your decision-making process.

VISUALIZATION

Mistakes are an opportunity to learn.

Feedback offers an opportunity to improve.

Strength is found in community and connection.

MANTRA

I will be technically proficient in all aspects of my job.

Flagging the Black

The smoke is pushed close to the ground by the cold air and humidity. It hovers around my knees as I stride the burned side of the mountain. Smoldering shrubs and grasses make a sooty black moonscape beneath my boots.

My senses are alive. The desert fire smells like an old cigar. I move upward and feel bursts of air, alternately hot then cold as I move through "the black." Each step in this foreign land moves me deeper inside of myself. Each step is filled with meaning and purpose.

As I hit the ridge and begin flagging the black I hear the low chatter of voices on my radio. I look back down a few hundred yards to where the trucks are gathered, covered in a thin veil of smoke.

All I see are the pulsing strobes of red and white flashing underneath, looking like a brewing cauldron. I'm overcome by emotion. I've entered the world of the Spirit.

A world with no ceiling, no walls, and no guideposts. I am completely plugged into the moment, yet I feel completely unplugged from myself, and plugged into something bigger.

I feel transformed. For the first time in my life, I feel empowered. The elusive power that comes not from the dominion of others, but from the dominion over self. Where I move through my inner fears, my years of darkness, and into my own light.

The place where my heart, mind, and soul feel aligned and set free. In the face of chaos, confusion, and destruction I've found community on The Road to Resilience.

Traveling Companions

These are some of the ideas, initiatives, and scenic routes which have accompanied me on my travels and contributed to the construction of The Road to Resilience.



SPIRITUAL SOBRIETY

My ambition in life is to be a useful, compassionate member of the global community. But sometimes that practice becomes elusive and gets lost in my daily living. You see, my struggle is not between good and evil, it's between spiritual fortitude and spiritual indifference.

It is what I call my fight for spiritual sobriety.

All too often I lose sight of my spirituality and become intoxicated by the heady brew of apathy and anger that society seems so ready to serve up to me on a daily basis and, in my malaise, I drink it up. Will I stay true to my own principles? Am I going to rise up and meet my moments with spiritual audacity or will I shrink back and show a lack of compassion and responsibility for my fellow man?

The Horizon of Self

It's time to wipe the steam from the mirror and get a clearer, more definitive look at ourselves. Are we moving closer to the promise of our nation or along a path that takes us further away?

Are we pulling together as a community, or are we minimizing, dehumanizing, and vilifying each other over our differences?

We need to rise above the multiple narratives that have created the finite and limited horizon of self, break free from a life of requirements, closed communities, and measuring up to cultural norms.

We need to surpass the bonds and the fictional stories that have empowered this illusion, giving it a false license to reign over us.

We need to lift our eyes a little higher, above the conditioned perspective of our personal ego and free ourselves from the chains of fear, anger, depression, self-doubt and self-absorption.

We need to rise from our slumber, wipe the sleep from our eyes, beat the dust from our boots, and begin the great walk forward.

The place of this vision, this freedom, this fusion of horizons, is called the spiritual frontier.

A frontier not of physical distance, but one traversed by our hearts and minds. It lies within us, and around us, anxiously awaiting our arrival.

It is a frontier where our spirituality meets daily living. A sacred space that we bring to life by meeting those around us in community.

HUMAN EVENTS

It is right there at the start of the Declaration of Independence. We are human and make mistakes. Jefferson made it a point to start perhaps the single greatest document of our nation, with this line. It begs the question straight away:

What does it mean to be human?

To me, it means we are imperfect, mortal beings, striving to make ourselves better, in spite of those flaws.

As we move forward into the unexpected and unknown, we might fall a bit. It happens. Fall down four times, get up five, right? But we need to have compassion on ourselves because, like Jefferson knew, we are all human.

What can help is reframing.

AMERICAN HERITAGE

Community is our heritage as Americans.

E Pluribus Unum, out of many, One, was the original promise of our great nation. It was made manifest by the opening salvo of the constitution, We The People. An obligation to each other that burns bright and has continually demanded we strive to its higher calling.

This life-changing power is the sum of our history and the obstacles and injustice we've overcome. It's that train that's been running since the birth of our nation, and that power that is roaring inside of us all right now. America is an idea, never finished and never final. We have the opportunity to make We The People manifest. We need to plug into our meaning and purpose, plug into community.

The Invitation of America

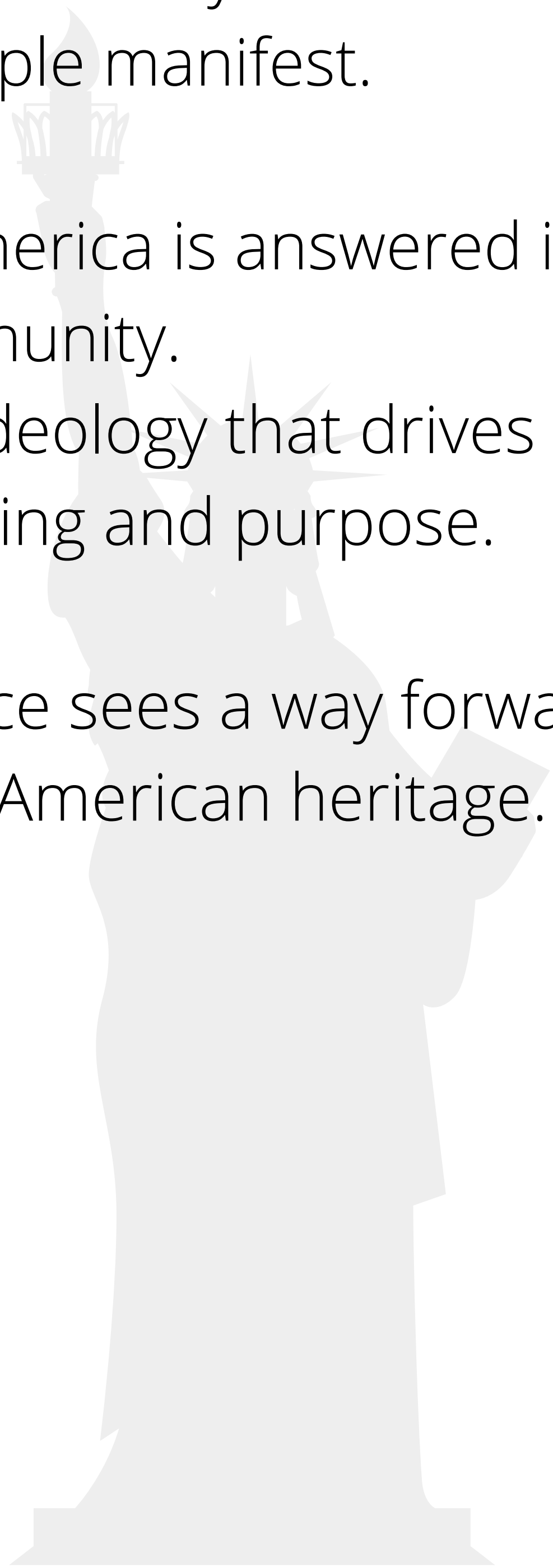
Our movement is rooted in an American idea that's never finished and never final.

We have the opportunity to make
We The People manifest.

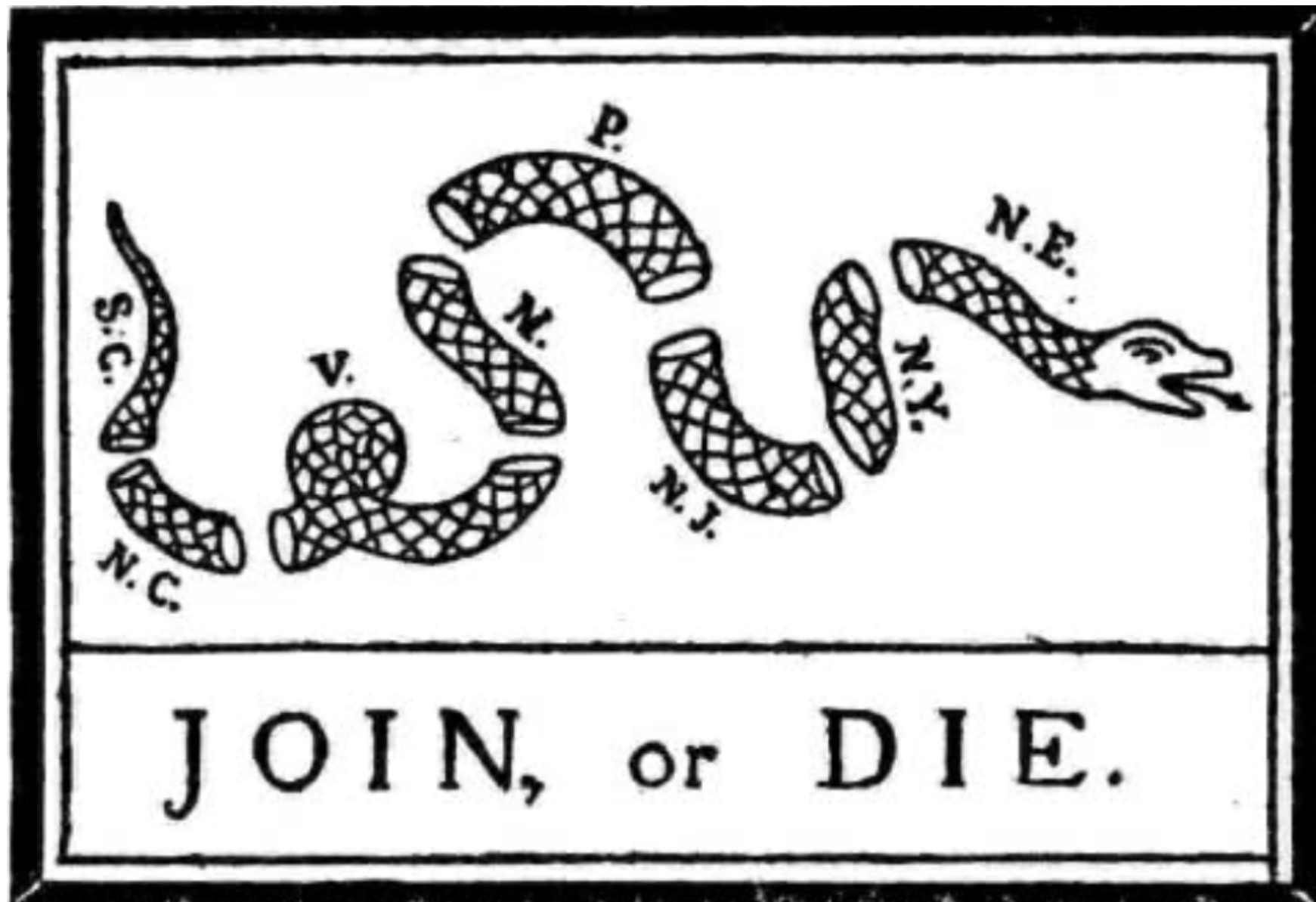
The invitation to America is answered in
community.

A transformational ideology that drives us
to greater meaning and purpose.

The Road to Resilience sees a way forward
in a return to our American heritage.



Join or Die



This campaign was started by Ben Franklin on May 9th, 1754 to bring together the colonies against a common enemy in the French and Indian War.

He would use it again in 1774 to galvanize the colonies into one united force to throw off the chains of servitude to the British in the American Revolution.

Franklin understood the power of community.

The American Spirit

The United States of America is one of the most incredible ideas ever. It is a system that is founded on giving everyone equal opportunity to participate in the creation of community.

Franklin said, "...the Constitution only guarantees the American people the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it yourself."

The idea is never finished and never final. Together we can facilitate that growth and change.

Or, as JFK put it:

There is nothing wrong with America which cannot be fixed with what's right with America.

Revelation on the Road

On The Road to Resilience, we name ordinary spaces as sacred. The places we encounter in our daily lives; our homes, workplace, and neighborhoods.

We name the faces, the individuals we encounter in the spiritual frontier, our fellow travelers, as sacred as well. In this act, our community is transformed, and we are transformed with it.

We rise up to meet our moments, humanize others, and discover the humanity in ourselves. This is the revelation that comes on The Road To Resilience.

When we live in community, we not only draw power from others, but we give power to others as well.

We are afforded the transcendent opportunity to co-build and rebuild ourselves. We remake the world around us and advance our communities upward and into the spiritual frontier. We step forward with the expeditionary readiness needed for the complex and dynamic environments which we face.

On *The Road to Resilience*, we are transformed by creating an experiential relationship with the spirit. This transformative ideology frees us, enables us to separate action and reaction, and bring the best of ourselves to each moment.

Our obligation to the spirit animates others when we step into the spiritual frontier and name the ordinary places and faces as sacred. We breathe life into community, empower the spirit, and transport ourselves up *The Road to Resilience*.

Redemptive Ideology

A redemptive ideology allows us to break free from a life of requirements, closed communities, and measuring up to cultural norms.

A life-long relationship with the spirit releases us from fear, anger, and depression, and leads to a path of peace and fulfillment.

We are emancipated from the bondage of self-doubt and self-absorption. We experience the galvanizing freedom of meaning and purpose. The Road to Resilience delivers us to a most important inflection point in our journey, redemption.

When we live a life that finds meaning and purpose in community, we are practicing a redemptive ideology, through which the spirit is empowered.

This is the reciprocal flow of spirit from Individual to community, and back again.

The spirit that is in me is also in you.

Both are sacred, and the ground we walk together is made sacred as well. We create meaning and purpose with every step we take throughout our day. We don't need to travel new paths. We just need to open our hearts and minds to The Road to Resilience.

The spiritual frontier is everywhere we travel. Our calling is to see it differently; to meet each other as a collective whole, rather than smash each other into pieces. We need to change the daily narrative in our minds.

The revelation is that we are all sojourners in this land, moving through the spiritual frontier together. We are all brothers and sisters living in the community. We are all travelers on The Road to Resilience.

ROAD WARRIOR

Out on The Road to Resilience, we call our fellow travelers road warriors.

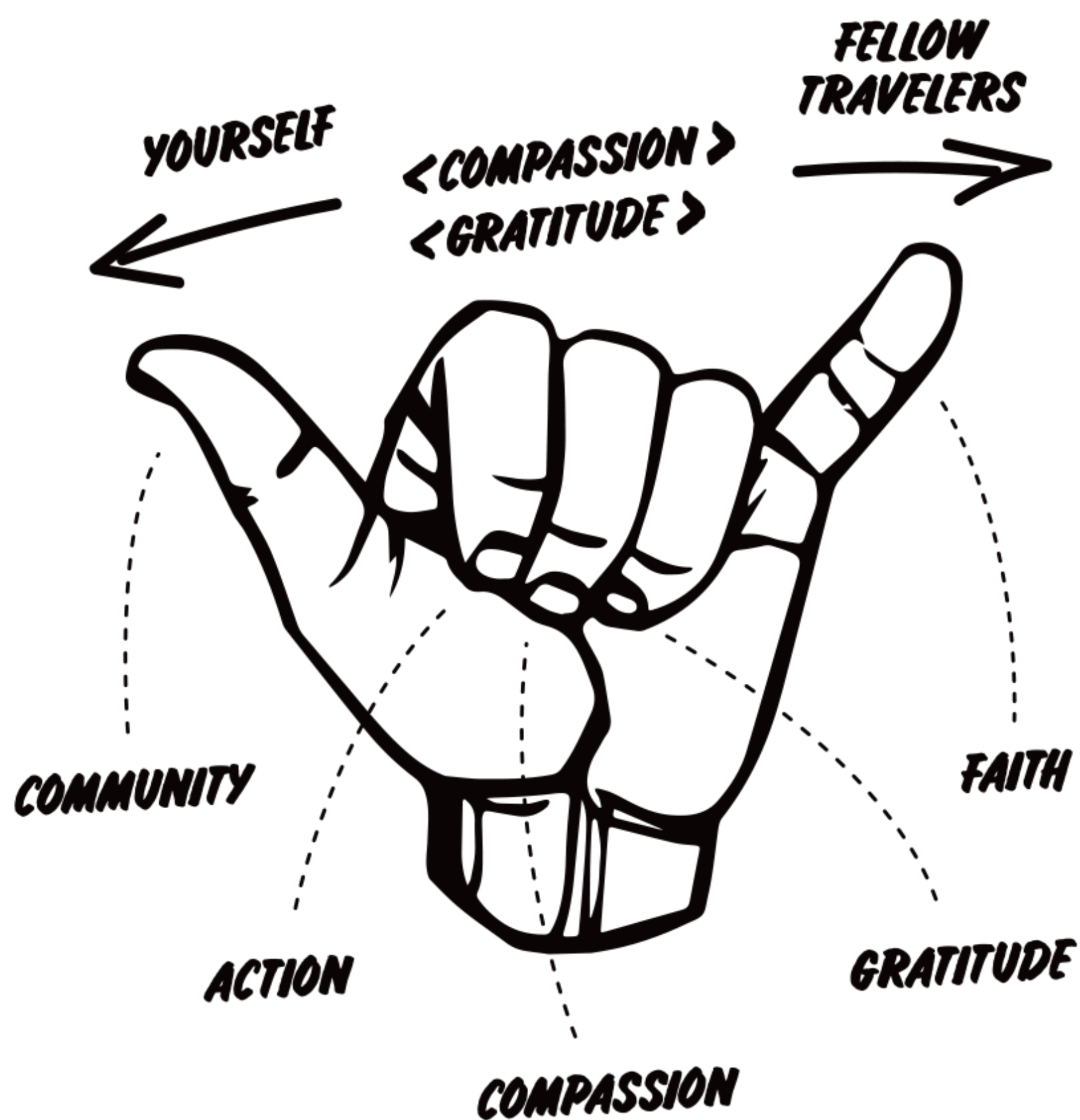
A road warrior finds meaning and purpose in community and is out there every day reclaiming the spiritual frontier.

Anyone making the intentional choice to engage in community and bring spiritual resilience to ordinary spaces is a road warrior.

Some of our favorite road warriors are Abraham Heschel, Rosa Parks, and Tecumseh.

THE ROADSIGN

When you throw up the road sign, it means you're committed to the principles of community, action, compassion, gratitude, and faith. The road sign lets fellow travelers know you've got their back, that you support them, and that you're lifting your lamp in ordinary places.



THE ROAD SIGN

The journey continues at:

theroadtoresilience.com

STEP INTO THE UNKNOWN WITH GREATER MEANING, PURPOSE, AND PERFORMANCE

The Road to Resilience program is a formalized process that powers our Spiritual Resilience, helps us move through tough times, and bring the best of ourselves to every situation.



About the Author



David Wurtzel is founder of The First Twenty, a nonprofit dedicated to the health and wellness of America's firefighters and first responders. First Twenty programs have served over 50,000 first responders nationwide and have been implemented by Fire and Police Departments throughout the country including the cities of Baltimore, Detroit, and Philadelphia. They have also been utilized by government agencies such as the U.S. Air Force Fire Emergency Services and the U.S. Forest Service. David served as both a structural and wildland firefighter and won the gold medal in the Firefighter Combat Challenge World Championships Over 50 Relay.

