

Hi!

This is Brian. 🙌

I appreciate you taking the time to learn more about my book and what we're up to. Let's start with a quick bio...

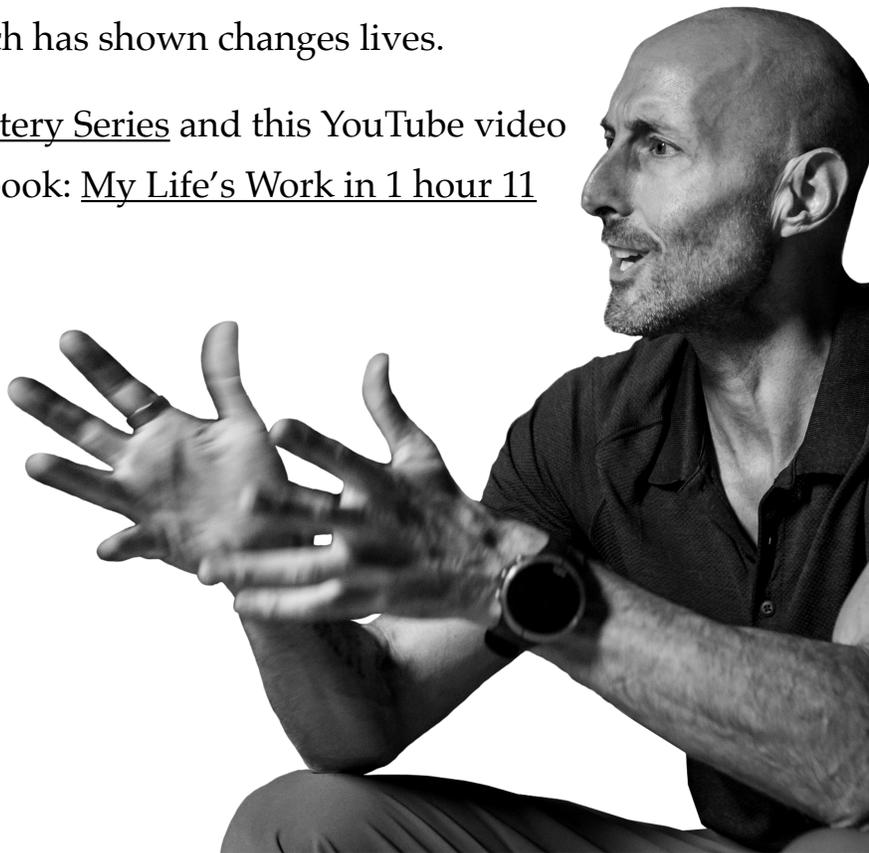
I'm the Founder + CEO of a company called Heroic. I've spent half of the last twenty-five years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher.

As a Founder/CEO, I've raised \$20M+ and built and sold two market-leading social platforms.

As a Philosopher, I've served over 100,000 people from nearly every country in the world with our Heroic membership program and I've trained over 10,000 people from 101+ countries with our Heroic Coach program—which research has shown changes lives.

(Check out [the intro to our Mastery Series](#) and this YouTube video for more on the content of the book: [My Life's Work in 1 hour 11 minutes and 35 seconds.](#))

Plus: My YouTube channel has 225,000+ subscribers and 24 million views while my podcast has nearly 15 million downloads.



And... I was featured in the documentary *Finding Joe* on Joseph Campbell and the modern hero's journey alongside Deepak Chopra, Laird Hamilton, Tony Hawk and the late Sir Ken Robinson. (Check out the Trailer [here](#). Full film [here](#).)

Last year, with the support of 2,400+ Founding Investors from 75 countries around the world, our business, Heroic Public Benefit Corporation, made history as the first company to close a \$5M Reg CF equity crowdfunding as part of our \$10M Seed round.

Heroic is a social training platform that helps people show up as the best, most heroic versions of themselves. We built the platform in partnership with MetaLab, the company that helped create Slack, Uber Eats, and the app for Elon Musk's new business, Neuralink.

We launched the training platform in April 2022 with 10,000+ founding members. We're launching the social side of the platform in 2023. (Check out the site at heroic.us and the app: [iOS](#) + [Android](#).)

We're raising our second crowdfunding now and you can learn more about the business and our mission here: wefunder.com/heroic. (You can also see notes from 1,500 of our investors on why they're excited to be part of our movement [here](#).)

As part of our strategy, we need a book for our movement.

Enter: ***HEROIC***.

This book will be the distillation of my life's work—integrating ancient wisdom, modern science and practical tools to help people show up as the best, most heroic versions of themselves.

Our unapologetically ambitious target is to launch as a #1 *New York Times* bestseller in early 2024 and to stick in the Top 10 for 101+ weeks.

In this document, I'd like to share some kind words from our community about why they're so excited that they've already expressed an interest in purchasing 11,000+ copies of the book.

I'll also share some advance praise from friends along with the Foreword by my coach Phil Stutz—who is the author of *The Tools* and will be featured in an upcoming Netflix documentary (called *Stutz*) by two of his other clients: Jonah Hill and Joaquin Phoenix.

And, I'll share the table of contents, introduction and a sample chapter to get the ball rolling.

Again, I appreciate you taking the time to learn more about what we're up to and I look forward to connecting to discuss further!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the letter 'B' with a flourish.

Brian Johnson

P.S. We worked with renowned book cover designer Chip Kidd to help us design a cover of the book. Here's an early, rough look at a potential design...

“This book will change your life.
And, if enough of us commit, it will change the world.”
—Phil Stutz, MD, author of *The Tools*, featured in Netflix documentary, *Stutz*



HEROIC



HEROIC

A TRAINING MANUAL TO
ACTIVATE YOUR SOUL FORCE

BRIAN JOHNSON

BRIAN
JOHNSON

Kind Words From Heroic Optimizers

We asked our community if they're excited about our upcoming book and if there's anything they'd like to share with prospective partners. From generals, bishops, and CEOs to college professors, school principals and professional moms, here's a (small) sample of what they said as they committed to pre-ordering over 11,000 copies of the book to help us launch as a #1 *New York Times* bestselling book:

"The best time for this book was Yesterday. The next best is Now. I can confidently say that this book will change millions of lives. The word Bestseller would not do justice to this book."

"Let's get this book to #1 for the next decade!"

"If I could only own one book, I have a feeling this would be it."

"This will be the best book in modern history for personal development. Period."

"This book will be a classic handbook such as *7 Habits* and *How To Win Friends*. Timeless principles."

Is This You?

1. Would you like to have more **Wisdom** to know the ultimate game you're playing and how to play it well?
2. Would you like to have more **Self-Mastery** to show up as your best self and do what needs to get done whether you feel like it or not?
3. Would you like to have more **Courage** to be able to act in the presence of fear and do the things you know you're capable of doing?
4. Would you like to have more **Love** to be more present, connected, and encouraging to yourself and to your loved ones?
5. Would you like to have more **Hope** to see a better future, know you can create it and be willing to do whatever it takes to make it happen?
6. Would you like to have more **Gratitude** to see all the amazing things already in your life today?
7. Would you like to have more **Curiosity** to be open to other people's perspectives while seeing what's working and what might need work in your life?
8. Would you like to have more **Zest** to show up powerfully in every aspect of your life today?

(Know this: Ancient Wisdom + Modern Science agree: A joyful, flourishing life is all about putting your virtues in action and those virtues are the ones most-highly correlated with your well-being. We'll help you optimize each of them.)

9. Would you like to be and feel more **Energized** than you've ever been in your life?
10. Would you like to be and feel more **Productive** than you've ever been in your life?
11. Would you like to be and feel more **Connected** (to yourself and others) than you've ever been in your life?
12. Would you like to be able to eat stress like an energy bar and forge **Antifragile Confidence** such that the more life kicks you around the stronger you get?
13. Would you like to create more **Response-Ability** so you can step in between a challenging stimulus and your old response and more consistently choose the best response?
14. Would you like to become a master at creating **Masterpiece Days** to get the most out of every day and feel a deep sense of energized tranquility rather than enervated anxiety?
15. Would you like to learn how to use your willpower wisely to **Install Habits** that run on autopilot?
16. Would you like to learn how to **Delete** your bad **Habits**?
17. Would you like to **Eat** better and, if necessary, reach your optimal weight?
18. Would you like to **Move** more consistently and get in the best shape of your life?
19. Would you like to **Sleep** better than ever and wake up feeling energized and ready for a great day?
20. Would you like to learn how to **Breathe** properly to create a deep sense of calm confidence?

21. Would you like to be able to **Focus** your mind on what's most important whenever you want, for however long you want?
22. Would you like to **Celebrate** your life more—getting rid of toxic shame and cultivating a deep sense of acceptance, self-compassion and joy?
23. Would you like to create a deep level of **Prosperity** in your life?
24. Would you like to integrate **Ancient Wisdom** and **Modern Science** into a practical set of tools that you can use to go to the next level in your life?
25. Are you ready to move from **Theory** to **Practice** to **Mastery** in every aspect of your life to become the best, most **Heroic** version of yourself so we can change the world together, one person at a time, starting with you and us TODAY?!?

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Foreword

Phil Stutz says...

I've been a psychiatrist for 45 years. That's a long time doing the same thing. Many of my colleagues have retired, worn down by the grind. What keeps me going is my patients. I've been fortunate enough to have a practice comprised of unusual people. They are not unusual because they've succeeded in conventional terms—even though most of them have. They're unusual because they refuse to be defined by any single accomplishment. Their identity is based on a process of endless possibility. They don't stop creating. Working with these people can be profound but it's also a lot of fun.

Because I live in L.A., many of them are in show business—which also means they are famous. Eventually that rubbed off on me and I was designated as the “shrink to the stars.” I cringe when I hear that phrase. Yes, I have treated a lot of actors but I've treated a lot of others in business, politics, the arts, medicine etc. They all wanted the same thing: to unleash as much hidden potential as possible.

Just the way a seed holds inside it the potential to become a tree, every human being has a soul that holds inside it a vision of a future self. But that vision won't emerge by itself. Your soul has to be trained until it is strong enough to have an impact on the world. My job is to guide and encourage my patients as they move through this soul training. Rather than being the shrink to the stars it would be more accurate to call me the “shrink to the soul.”

You're about to read an extraordinary book written by an extraordinary person: Brian Johnson.

I say that without hesitation because I have worked with Brian every week for years. At each meeting, I poured into him the totality of everything I had learned over 45 years on any topic. I had done this with many others but no one even approached his ability to absorb information at dizzying speed and then make it his own.

But that's only half the story. Training the soul is mostly a process focused on the individual. Brian is also a genius at connecting people and nurturing a collective soul force.

In short, I know greatness when I see it and Brian's greatness just keeps on growing.

Brian has a profound impact on everyone who crosses his path. In today's digital media world he's considered an "influencer." But when I hear that term I think of someone with a lot of Twitter followers or someone who is plugged into the design and fashion worlds. The driving force for that kind of person is the fear of not being "cool," which is ultimately the fear of being left out.

Brian had no interest in working on this superficial level—it barely scratches the surface of what a human being is capable of. He would accept nothing less than the unlocking of the hidden potential in each human being. And just the way this potential goes unexpressed in each of us, the entire human race has its own hidden potential. Brian's goal was to uncover this collective potential. Without it our survival as a planet is severely compromised.

But to guide our whole species to its highest potential is a daunting task. It requires no less than the ability to inspire every single human being. This may sound grandiose, even impossible, when you read it in the pages of this book. But when you're in Brian's physical presence you can feel a boundless, almost supernatural enthusiasm that makes anything seem possible.

Brian is a dreamer and he dreams big. What sets him apart is that he is disciplined and practical in pursuit of those dreams. Most self-help books are products waiting to be sold. They have little ambition beyond catching the attention of potential readers. We read them to give ourselves a non-specific sense of hope. Brian doesn't criticize others but he would never publish a book with such modest goals. Especially now. Because right now we face a challenge so all-encompassing that it puts our very existence at risk.

The challenge comes from an enemy that wants to destroy us. This enemy is invisible but its effects stare us right in the face. Take a hard look at the institutions that form the foundation of modern society. Government, education, the church, science, finance, media, medicine, the judiciary, etc. In every area there is a lack of discipline, leadership and transparency.

This is a picture of a world that is falling apart. A world of chaos, fear and darkness. And only if we put that world back together again will we be strong enough to defend ourselves. Sounds bleak and overwhelming. Enter Brian Johnson.

He didn't know it, the world didn't know it, but he had been preparing for this moment all his life. The moment when the two

sides of his soul, his two major talents, would work in harmony to defeat the enemy that had turned our world into a living hell. A force that could overcome evil.

Here are the two sides of Brian Johnson.

1. His drive to bring out the HEROIC potential of the individual. The state of functioning you'll need to reach if you want to do anything big and frightening. He presents this as a modern form of the hero. In a war the hero runs toward the battle. The more conflict around him (or her) the more inspired the hero becomes.
2. His drive to UNIFY the human race. As a unified whole the human race is capable of anything. The problem is that evil works to prevent unification. It focuses on the differences between us, not the common ground.

Brian has proven to me (and to his thousands of followers) that you can stay focused on the unique path toward your personal potential and at the same time live within a structure that applies to all human beings. He calls the values and habits that have this universal relevance "Virtues." The cardinal virtues Brian leans on have been present throughout all cultures across all time, including: Love, Courage, Wisdom and Self-Mastery.

This is only the foreword, not the book. I couldn't begin to cover all that you'll find as you read further. But understand the opportunity that you (and I) have been given. We are present at the inception of a new way to work with human beings that is exactly what is needed right now. Its timeliness comes from the extraordinary amount of

conflict, confusion and fear spreading without resistance over our world.

What Brian has developed is much more than a bunch of coping mechanisms for the over-stressed modern person; although that would be an improvement for most of us. He's developed a training program for the soul. Commit to this training and you will gain the ability to transmute your biggest problems, your darkest days, into unstoppable courage, endless enthusiasm and an unshakable faith in the future.

This book will change your life. And, if enough of us commit, it will change the world.

PHIL STUTZ, MD

Los Angeles, California

HEROIC

Nice to Meet You, Hero

Hi. This is Brian. 🙌

Nice to meet you. I appreciate you taking the time to open this book.

I wish we could actually meet so I could learn more about you. What I do know is that you're busy and I strive to deliver more wisdom in less time, so let's jump straight in.

I'd like to start with a question.

Do you happen to know what the word *hero* means?

It's an ancient Greek word. Etymologically, the word *hero* doesn't mean "killer of bad guys" or "tough guy" or anything like that. It means "PROTECTOR."

A hero has strength for two. And, very importantly, a hero is willing to do the HARD work to HAVE that strength for two.

And, do you know what the secret weapon of the ancient hero was?

LOVE.

It's LOVE that fuels our commitment to DO that hard work to HAVE that strength for two. It's LOVE that gives us the Courage to be willing to act in the presence of fear. It's LOVE that gives us the Self-Mastery to do what needs to get done whether we feel like it or not.

I think our world needs heroes Today more than ever before.

To put it directly: We need YOU to be a hero.

To put it *even more* directly: YOU **ARE** A HERO. Welcome to your Training Manual. Consider me your guide for Basic Training.

===

Our ultimate mission with this book is simple: To enable you to be the best, most heroic version of yourself.

To fulfill that mission, we have seven core Objectives. Let's take a quick look at each before we officially get to work.

Objective I: Know the Ultimate Game You're Playing

The first thing we need to do is step back and make sure we're playing the right game. Fact is, in such a profoundly sick society, we're almost certainly not.

We'll invite the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle and leading positive psychologist Martin Seligman to the party as proxies for Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science and ask them about the ultimate meaning of life.

We'll save the details for our discussion in a moment but know this: They'll give us the **exact** same single-word answer.

By the end of our first Objective you'll know the ultimate game you want to be playing and how to play it well.

If your experience is anything like the thousands of people I've personally trained, this will be life changing.

Objective II: Forge Antifragile Confidence

Once we've established the ultimate game we're playing it's time to learn how to play it well. Which leads us to our second Objective. We're going to Forge Antifragile Confidence.

By the time we're done working together, we'll move from being Fragile to Resilient to ANTIFRAGILE such that the more life kicks us around, the stronger we get.

That requires Confidence.

Which leads us to another etymological pop quiz. Do you happen to know what the word *confidence* literally means?

It means "intense trust." Not that everything will go perfectly in your life but that it DOESN'T MATTER how things go because YOU have what it takes to deal with whatever arises.

That's Antifragile Confidence. Cultivating even 10% of your capacity here will change your life.

How do we build "intense trust" in ourselves? The same way we build trust in any relationship: We DO what we say we will do.

More specifically for our Heroic Basic Training purposes, we're going to help you develop a protocol—a set of behaviors that you engage in on a day-to-day basis that keep you plugged in to that best version of yourself.

But... Here's the secret sauce: We're going to help you write a new algorithm for your life. It goes like this: "The WORSE you feel, the MORE committed you are to your protocol."

What do most people do when they feel a little off or overwhelmed? They STOP doing the very things that would have kept them plugged in and capable of showing up powerfully. Not us. The WORSE we feel, the MORE committed we are to our protocols.

This is your ticket to invincibility. You'll still have ups and downs because you're human but... Your highs will be higher AND your lows will be higher. And that's heroically awesome.

Objective III: Optimize Your Big 3

Once we've established the game we're playing and learn Rule #1 on how to play it well, it's time to simplify self-help. That's what we'll do with our third Objective as we optimize your Big 3.

As you've almost certainly experienced if you've spent **any** time in the self-help world, it can *very* quickly get *very* overwhelming. There's SO much we can work on. Where do we begin?

Well, Freud tells us that a good life comes down to two things: Work and Love. This is one of the few things on which I agree with the dear doctor but... If your ENERGY is low because of poor lifestyle choices, you're going to have a **really** hard time showing up powerfully in *either* your Work *or* your Love.

Enter, The Big 3: Energy + Work + Love.

We're going to systematically help you get more Energized than you've ever been such that you can be more Productive than you've ever been and, at the same time, more Loving and connected (to yourself and to your Loved ones) than you've ever been in your life.

That's how to simplify self-help so you can more consistently show up as the best, most heroic version of yourself.

Objective IV: Create Masterpiece Days

From there, it's time to get the fact that TODAY'S THE DAY to move from Theory to Practice to Mastery.

We're going to help you become a master at creating Masterpiece Days. We'll start with your AM and PM Bookends and we'll teach you the fact that, somewhat paradoxically, a great day begins with the END of your prior day.

We'll talk about the simple, key behavioral changes that can literally change your life overnight and then we'll systematically install the highest-leverage behavioral changes that will help you show up powerfully in your Energy, your Work and your Love ALL DAY EVERY DAY.

That, my heroic friend, is how we're going to help you become more Energized, Productive and Loving than you've ever been.

Objective V: Master Yourself

All of which leads us to our fifth Objective in which we'll master the three disciplines of self-mastery: structural discipline, reactive discipline, and expansive discipline. We'll also tap into the art and science of behavioral change so you can become a Heroic ninja in installing and deleting the behaviors that will help you become who you aspire to be.

The #1 thing to know? It's all about using your willpower wisely to install habits that run on autopilot via algorithms.

If you feel so inspired, now might be a good time to pause for a moment and ask yourself: What's the ONE thing you KNOW you could be doing that, if you started doing it TODAY would most change your life?

Seriously.

What is it? What's the ONE thing you could be doing that, if you started doing it consistently, would most positively change your life?

Fantastic. Imagine your life with that habit installed. Then imagine your life with your #1 BAD habit deleted. Then imagine having so much Self-Mastery that you can install and delete habits at will. That's what our fifth Objective is all about.

Objective VI: Dominate the Fundamentals

From there it's time for our sixth Objective. It's time to dominate our fundamentals. We have seven: Eating, Moving, Sleeping, Breathing, Focusing, Celebrating and Prospering. Each fundamental has a core set of behaviors that we'll train together.

Why does this matter?

Well... Do you want to see how tall a building is going to be? Just look at how deeply they're digging the foundation.

We need to really get the fact that greatness (and becoming the best, most heroic versions of ourselves!) is all about consistency on the fundamentals.

We'll have a ton of momentum when we get to this point and, again, if you're like the thousands of people I've trained, you'll find that you're suddenly able to easily change some key behaviors across each of our fundamentals—stuff you may have been struggling with for years. This is exciting, life-changing, and incredibly empowering.

Objective VII: Activate Your Superpower

All of that leads us to our final Objective. It's time to activate your superpower. I call it Soul Force. There's a formula for it.

We'll dive into the details soon. For now, know this: When you can get your Energy Focused on What's Important Now **CONSISTENTLY**, you can tap into the *infinite* power of Soul Force and truly express that best, most heroic version of yourself.

I can't begin to tell you how fiercely committed I am to helping you do exactly that. Why? Because that's precisely how we're going to get you showing up as the best, most heroic version of yourself.

And, that's precisely how we can change the world. One person at a time. Together. Starting with you and me. Today.

All that to say: Nice to meet you, Hero.

Let's get to work.

Research Shows... The Protocol Works

All that sounds nice and warm and fuzzy, doesn't it? But... What if I told you that research shows that the protocol can significantly boost your well-being? Because, it does.

To set some context, I should probably tell you a little bit more about me. Here's the short story...

I'm the Founder + CEO of a company called Heroic. I've spent half of the last twenty-five years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher.

As a Founder/CEO, I've raised \$20M+ and built and sold two market-leading social platforms.

As a Philosopher, I've served over 100,000 people from nearly every country in the world with our Heroic membership program and I've trained over 10,000+ people from 101+ countries with the 300-day Mastery Series that is part of our Heroic Coach program—which research shows can help people change their lives. (We're going to come back to this in a moment.)

And... I was featured in the documentary *Finding Joe* on Joseph Campbell and the modern hero's journey alongside Deepak Chopra, Laird Hamilton, Tony Hawk and the late Sir Ken Robinson. (Check out the Trailer [here](#). Full film [here](#).)

Note: In many ways, this book is all about operationalizing the wisdom from that documentary and all things heroic.

In 2021, with the support of 2,400+ Founding Investors from 75 countries around the world, my business, Heroic Public Benefit Corporation, made history as the first company to close a \$5M Reg CF equity crowdfunding as part of our \$10M+ Seed round.

Now, we're committed to changing the course of history by creating a platform that enables people to be the best, most heroic versions of themselves.

This book is the distillation of my life's work—integrating ancient wisdom and modern science into practical tools to enable you to be the best, most heroic versions of yourself.

More specifically, this book is the distillation of Basic Training on our Heroic training platform and that Mastery Series program that research shows can change people's lives.

Let's talk details.

I'm all about integrating ancient wisdom and modern science into practical tools we can use in our modern lives. I want to know what all the wisdom traditions (across cultures and time) have to say about becoming the best, most heroic versions of ourselves AND I want to know what science says works. So...

Before we launched our inaugural Coach class a few years ago (with 1,000 people from 50+ countries), we reached out to one of my friends and favorite positive psychologists, Sonja Lyubomirsky (who is one of the world's leading researchers on the science of well-being and

the bestselling author of *The How of Happiness* and *The Myths of Happiness*), to ask for help with a study that could validate the effectiveness of our protocol. (Or *not*, if it ISN'T effective!)

We worked with Sonja and one of her top Ph.D. students to TEST whether or not our protocol works. We did a before and after measure (basically checking in on where people were before Day 1 of our program and then where they were on Day 300) on a broad range of areas we hoped to help people optimize.

For example, could we boost confidence in the face of challenges while deepening connections with loved ones and increasing productivity at work?

Could we also help people create better habits—eating better, exercising more, sleeping deeper, managing their tech usage better, along with all the other stuff we know we **could** be doing but often fail to do?!

And, if we *could* do that, would that lead to measurable gains in our Big 3 of Energy + Work + Love and overall well-being?!

We rolled up our sleeves and got to work creating the scientific surveys we'd need.

We got all the "Before" data we needed. Fast-forward to Day 300. All the data is in! We, of course, eagerly anticipated the results.

Based on the hundreds (and hundreds!) of testimonials we received during and after the program, we knew, *qualitatively*, that the program was working. The question was: What would the **quantitative** data show?

In the words of our research lead, the effects were “massively positive.” For the geeks among us: “The effect sizes were huge!! They were all around Pearson correlations of .6 (Cohen’s ds of 1.7), which is unheard of!!” Apparently, the results were so astonishingly positive that if Sonja’s team hadn’t done the research themselves they would have thought the data was fake.

For example, **at the beginning of our program, 29% of our heroes felt connected to the best version of themselves. At the end, 93% (!) felt connected to the best version of themselves.**

At the beginning of the program, 37% exercised for 25+ minutes a day. At the end, that number was 64%. Meditation? Same thing. **43% meditated every day on Day 1** (which is actually a really high number!) **while 89% (!!)** meditated every day on Day 300.

How about Confidence? Well, on Day 1, 37% felt calm and confident and present most of the day. On Day 300 that number was 88%.

Perhaps most inspiring (as this is one of THE central themes of the program and a key ingredient to living happily AND heroically!), on Day 1, only 23% of the people in the program leaned in to challenges (vs. avoiding them). On Day 300, 79% were leaning in to their challenges.

58% felt they could handle any challenge life presents on Day 1. That became 90% on Day 300. 83% felt more excited than anxious at the end, while only 41% could say that in the beginning.

Those same stats repeated themselves in Work, with an overwhelming majority feeling a deeper sense of purpose,

engagement, focus, and productivity at Work. (While learning to manage digital distractions and, as a result, optimizing not only their productivity but their sense of what we call “Energized Tranquility.”)

And, the same stats showed up in their connections with friends / family / colleagues / community and humanity in general.

Then we have the healthy habits. Eating. Moving. Sleeping. Etc. ALL optimized.

Eating-wise: 53% said they followed their nutritional philosophy on Day 1 whereas 84% said that on Day 300. Which is why we also saw a shift from 46% who felt it was easy to maintain their ideal weight to 76% saying that at the end. (I was perhaps most astonished by the number of people who told us they’re back to a weight they NEVER thought they’d see again.)

Sleep-wise: We spend a lot of time helping people a) get the fact that sleep is SUPER important then we spend an equal amount of time helping them b) get great sleep!

Science says that one of the top tips to getting a good night of sleep is to turn off your electronics at least an hour before bed. (We call that a Digital Sunset.) Which is why I was thrilled to see the percentage of people who spent time without screens before bed move from 32% on Day 1 to 87% (!) on Day 300.

Which, of course, all translated into feeling more Energized both in the beginning of the day AND at the end of the day. **Get this: 46% said they started the day Energized on Day 1. On Day 300 that was 85%!**

All of which brings us back to the most important measure. **Did we help people feel more connected to the best version of themselves?**

Yes. That, again, went **from 29% to (a staggering) 93%**. Why is that important?

Well, because that's pretty much what ALL the great wisdom traditions have told us is THE most important thing we can do and what our program and this book is, ultimately, ALL about.

So, I can humbly and confidently say that we KNOW this protocol can help you truly change your life.

How'd you like to take the exact same survey? Rather than a Day 1 and a Day 300 measure, we'll have a Page 1 and a Page X00 measure. Before and after.

Let's start with the before survey now.

The Survey

There are two parts to this scientific survey. First, we're going to take a quick measure of your current *behaviors*. Then we're going to take a quick look at how you currently *feel*. Then we'll tabulate the data as we see what's working and what might need a little work. Ready? Let's go!

Note1: Be honest. We need to embrace reality if we want to change it.

Note2: Get excited. We're going to see some incredible gains between Page 1 and Page X00 as we have fun systematically optimizing some of the key behaviors that enable us to feel great.

Note3: Want to take it online? Perfect. Cruise on over to heroic.us/book

What I'm Currently Doing

Instructions: Look back over the last week and use the 0-4 scale below so we can get a snapshot of your current behaviors.

0	1	2	3	4
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

1. I deliberately tried to act like the best version of myself.
0 1 2 3 4
2. I started my day reflecting on how I will live in integrity with the best version of myself. 0 1 2 3 4
3. I meditated at least once per day. 0 1 2 3 4
4. I walked over 10,000 steps in a day. 0 1 2 3 4
5. I included a self-care activity in my day. 0 1 2 3 4
6. I deliberately acted kind, generous and encouraging to family and friends. 0 1 2 3 4
7. I looked for moments of connection with people I don't know.
0 1 2 3 4
8. I deliberately tried to encourage others and look for the best within them. 0 1 2 3 4
9. I put my phone out of sight and out of touch while at work.
0 1 2 3 4
10. I responded with a "bring it on" mentality (vs. trying to ignore or avoid them) when I faced a challenge. 0 1 2 3 4
11. I put my phone out of sight and out of touch while with friends, family, or colleagues. 0 1 2 3 4
12. I interacted with my phone as a conscious choice vs. in response to an alert or out of habit. 0 1 2 3 4
13. I consciously avoided foods with added sugar.
0 1 2 3 4

14. I followed my nutritional philosophy. 0 1 2 3 4
15. I said "I'm excited" to myself (vs. trying to calm myself down) when I felt nervous or excited energy in my body.
0 1 2 3 4

Now let's focus on a few more questions about your current behavior...

Note: We'll use the same 0-4 scale, but those numbers will mean something slightly different for each of the questions below.

16. For how many minutes before your desired sleep time did you stop using your digital devices (i.e. smartphone, tablet, TV, etc.)?

0	1	2	3	4
0 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	30 minutes	60+ minutes

17. How many minutes did you meditate on average per day?

0	1	2	3	4
0 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	20 minutes	30+ minutes

18. During an average day, what was the longest length of time you spent continuously sitting?

0	1	2	3	4
2+ hours	60 minutes	45 minutes	30 minutes	15 minutes

19. During an average day, not including sleep, how much time did you spend with zero inputs? (No smartphone in sight or

touch, no music, no podcasts, etc. Just you and your thoughts.)

0	1	2	3	4
0 minutes	30 minutes	1 hour	2 hours	4+ hours

20. During an average day, how many hours did you sleep?

0	1	2	3	4
0-5 hours	6 hours	7 hours	8 hours	9+ hours

21. How many times did you engage in physical exercise for 30 or more straight minutes?

0	1	2	3	4
0 times	1-2 times	3-4 times	5-6 times	7 or more

22. During an average day, how many technology-free breaks did you take that were longer than 5 minutes?

0	1	2	3	4
1 time	2 times	3 times	4 times	5 or more

How I'm Currently Feeling

Now, we want to ask you some questions about how you FEEL.

Instructions: Look back over the last week and use the 0-4 scale below to get a snapshot of how you have been feeling recently.

0	1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Please rate your agreement with following statements:

1. I felt connected to the best version of myself.
0 1 2 3 4
2. I felt confident in my ability to handle any challenge life
throws at me. 0 1 2 3 4
3. I felt my life has deep meaning and purpose.
0 1 2 3 4
4. I felt that it's easy to fall asleep. 0 1 2 3 4
5. I felt calm, confident, connected, and present for most of the
day. 0 1 2 3 4
6. I felt energized at the end of the afternoon.
0 1 2 3 4
7. I felt that I can maintain a high level of focus for as long as I
need. 0 1 2 3 4
8. I felt satisfied with my body and physical capabilities.
0 1 2 3 4
9. I felt productive with my work. 0 1 2 3 4
10. I felt "in-tune" with my inner self. 0 1 2 3 4
11. I felt loving toward myself. 0 1 2 3 4
12. I felt connected with family and friends. 0 1 2 3 4
13. I felt connected with my community. 0 1 2 3 4
14. I felt connected with humanity in general. 0 1 2 3 4
15. I felt engaged in my work. 0 1 2 3 4

16. I felt engaged during interactions with friends, family, or colleagues. 0 1 2 3 4
17. I felt that my phone does not distract me from the tasks at hand. 0 1 2 3 4
18. I felt it's easy to maintain a healthy weight.
0 1 2 3 4
19. I felt nourished and energized from the foods I consume.
0 1 2 3 4
20. I felt energized when I started my day. 0 1 2 3 4
21. I felt excited more frequently than anxious. 0 1 2 3 4

Survey Scoring

Add up your responses to the questions in the **What I'm Currently Doing** section to come up with a single number and write it below. Your number should be somewhere between 0 and 88.

Behaviors Total (Before): _____

Then, add up your responses to the questions in the **How I'm Currently Feeling** section to come up with a single number and write it below. Your number should be somewhere between 0 and 84.

Feeling Total (Before): _____

Now, add those two numbers together to get your overall total.

Overall Total (Before): _____

====

A quick note on how to interpret your results above.

First, no matter where your numbers fall, they're perfect. What we're most interested in is what we can do together to increase them over the coming days/weeks/months/etc.

Second, the average total combined score for participants who are starting our Coach program is around 70 (out of a potential max of 172). If you're near 70, you're in good company. If your score is less than 70, that just means you've got an even greater opportunity for improvement. And if you're higher than 70, you have a strong foundation on which we'll build as we have fun going to the next level together.

**Now, let's take a
quick look at a sample
chapter...**

Objective I: Know the Ultimate Game & How to Play It Well

Eudaimon-ology: The Study of a Good Soul and How to High Five Yours (Here's the Book in a Single Word)

Welcome to Objective I. It's time to get to work.

Let's invite Aristotle (no last name necessary) and Martin Seligman (founder of the positive psychology movement) to the party for their wisdom on the ultimate meaning of life. They'll serve as proxies for Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science.

Us: "Gentlemen. Thanks for joining us. Let's jump straight in. What's the meaning of life?"

We notice Aristotle and Seligman share a knowing glance with one another. They both seem to have a twinkle in their eyes.

Aristotle speaks first.

He tells us that the *summum bonum* (or "highest good") of life is to live with what the ancient Greeks (and Stoics) called *eudaimonia*. That beautiful word literally means "good soul." We weakly translate it into English as "happiness" but it has a deeper meaning—something closer to "flourish."

We thank Aristotle and ask Professor Seligman for his thoughts. He smiles, nods his head in approval, and holds up a copy of his most recent book. It's called *Flourish*.

Fascinating.

Our next question for our two sages is simple: *How* do we flourish/live with eudaimonia?! Once again, they give the exact same answer.

Aristotle answers in a single word: *Areté*. (Pronounced "are-uh-tay.")

(Important note: If we wanted to summarize this *entire* book (and my entire philosophy) into a single word, THAT word is it.)

Areté.

We translate *areté* as "excellence" or "virtue" but it also has a deeper meaning—something closer to "expressing the best version of yourself moment to moment to moment."

When we live with *areté*, we're closing the gap between who we're *capable* of being and who we're *actually* being.

You know how that feels? REALLY REALLY REALLY good.

It's almost as if we're high-fiving our inner soul/that best version of ourselves and... Voilà! We get to experience a deep sense of eudaimonic joy.

We've ALL experienced this. Let's take a moment and reflect on a time in our lives when we showed up as that best, most heroic version ourselves.

Think back to a time when you made yourself proud. Feel the wisdom and self-mastery and courage and love with which you showed up to meet an important challenge.

Now, look forward and imagine a life in which you show up as THAT version of yourself.

To be very clear: Empowering you to more and more consistently be that best, most heroic version of yourself is what this book is all about. Literally everything we do together will be with THAT ultimate goal in mind.

Here's another way to think about it.

Let's draw two parallel, horizontal lines. Say about an inch apart. Kinda like this:



That top line represents who you're CAPABLE of being in any given moment. And, let's say that bottom line represents who you're ACTUALLY being in any given moment.

That gap?

That's where your regret, anxiety, disillusionment and all the other ick exists.

Close the gap such that who you are *actually* being is who you are *capable* of being and there's simply NO ROOM for the negative stuff.

How does that feel? It feels G R E A T.

Which, again, is why the Greeks told us we needed to live with *areté*. Moment to moment to moment. When we close that gap and express the best version of ourselves more and more consistently? We feel the ineffable sense of joy they called *eudaimonia*.

Again: Helping you do THAT is what this book is all about.

Back to Professor Seligman.

Seligman would, once again, nod vigorously in Aristotle's direction then he would tell us that, when he and his colleagues launched the positive psychology movement, they STARTED by studying all the ancient wisdom traditions across all cultures—from Judaism, Christianity and Islam to the ancient Greek philosophers, Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

And... You know what they all said? Live with virtue. P E R I O D.

Seligman would tell us that he and his colleagues built their entire movement on the foundation of putting our "virtues in action."

At this precise moment, a choir of angels descends from the heavens and sings. (Can you hear them?)

Ancient Wisdom + Modern Science are clear: The ultimate meaning of life is to flourish by putting our virtues in action. Or, if you prefer to go old school, to live with *eudaimonia* via *areté*.

Hercules and Arjuna Tell Us: This Is a 2,500-Year Old Challenge (WARNING!)

If it's so obvious that the ultimate purpose of life is to express the best version of ourselves (in service to the world) by putting our virtues in action, then why isn't that the ultimate aim of all of us living today?

That, my friends, is a VERY good question.

Alas, this challenge is NOT a new one. In fact, it's (at least) a 2,500-year-old dilemma that ALL the great teachers across ALL the great wisdom traditions have tried to address across ALL time. We could spend the rest of our time unpacking the parallels across various wisdom traditions. For now, let's look at a couple examples.

Open the *Bhagavad Gita*, the sacred text of Hinduism and Gandhi's bible. What you'll see is a reluctant warrior (Arjuna) on a battlefield being counseled by his God (Krishna) to go play his role (heroically!) well.

That *external* battle is a metaphor for the *internal* war waging within ALL of us—that battle between the best version of ourselves and the not-so-awesome version of ourselves. It's *vice* vs. *virtue*. Your *daimon* vs. your *demon*. (Note: *demon* is just the diminutive of *daimon*.)

Winning THAT civil war is ALWAYS the most important thing we can do. And, for the record, when Gandhi encouraged us to "be the change we want to see in the world," he wasn't saying that in some woo-woo "oh that sounds nice" kinda way—he was saying it in a fiercely practical, HEROIC kinda way in which each of us needs to do the hard work to win the civil war raging within so we have the

strength to meet life's challenges head on and lead our families and communities and world to a better place.

Now, the *Gita* was written sometime between 400 BCE and 200 CE. Let's head a little west and back in time a bit. We're going to spend some time with Socrates in Athens.

One of the ancient Greek (and Stoic) philosophers' heroes was Hercules. They loved to tell a story about Hercules BEFORE he was Hercules that captures the essence of the dilemma we face in the twenty-first century.

Let's imagine young Hercules. He's cruising by himself on a path in a forest when he comes to a fork in the road. Two goddesses approach him.

One rushes in front of the other. Socrates tells us that this goddess is overly made up and walking a little too fancy-like, preening and looking around to see if anyone notices her. (He told the story 2,500 years ago, but you can almost see her ready to snap a selfie and post it to Instagram.)

She tells Hercules that her friends call her Happiness (or *Eudaimonia*). But... Her real name is Vice (or *Kakia*). She promises Hercules a life of pure pleasure and luxury with no effort. If only he'll follow her, he'll have it all!

The other goddess listens patiently then steps forward. Socrates tells us that she has an understated, radiant beauty. She tells Hercules that there's no such thing as a good life that is centered on easy luxury. This goddess tells him that, if he chooses to follow *her*, his life will be

extraordinarily challenging and demand the best from him. For this, the gods will favor him with a true sense of meaning and deep joy as he reflects on his noble deeds.

You know what that second goddess was called? *Areté*.

Hercules, of course, chose wisely.

Wondering how that ancient wisdom applies to our modern lives? Well, let's chat about the two forms of happiness: hedonic vs. eudaimonic. Here's a fun story to bring the point home.

Quick context: A few years ago, I was driving to the venue where we were hosting the graduation for our inaugural Coach program. It was a Saturday morning. I planned to tell that story about the choice of Hercules right before 500+ of us hopped onto a fleet of buses to go do a Spartan Race together.

So... I'm driving to the hotel to give my pre-Spartan Race pep talk. I'm chatting with my wife, Alexandra, about what I plan to talk about when a huge bus cruises by us. The entire side of the bus is covered by a sign that says, "WELCOME TO FREEDOM."

I say to myself, "Wow. That's awesome."

Then I look a little closer and I see that the bus is taking people to a CASINO.

I laughed. The heroic optimizing gods just blessed me with THE PERFECT modern take on the ancient dilemma.

Vice dressed up as virtue.

Gambling is my ticket to freedom? Really?

Know this: You can boil this whole discussion down to the two forms of “happiness”: *hedonic* vs. *eudaimonic*.

Hedonic pleasure is, basically, what you feel when you do what “feels” good. Of course, a good life includes a certain amount of hedonic pleasure but...

If you haven't noticed, society is CONSTANTLY (!!!) selling us on the *hedonic* side of things while dressing up *vice* as *virtue*.

We need to have enough Wisdom + Self-Mastery to SEE THAT and then, following the lead of our beloved hero Hercules, choose wisely.

The true rewards of life are found by following *Areté* on her path to eudaimonic joy.

P.S. The ancient Stoic philosopher Epictetus is my favorite teacher. He also revered the heroic power of Hercules.

I shared this passage (from his *Discourses*) with our Coaches as part of our pre-Race pep talk: “What would have become of Hercules, do you think, if there had been no lion, hydra, stag or boar? — and no savage criminals to rid the world of? What would he have done in the absence of such challenges? Obviously he would have just rolled over in bed and gone back to sleep. So by snoring his life away in luxury and comfort he never would have developed into the mighty Hercules. And even if he had, what good would it have done him? What would have been the use of those arms, that physique, and that noble soul, without crises or conditions to stir him into action?”

Note: All those crises we are currently facing as a society? THAT's what we, as heroes with noble souls, train for.

Meet Your New BFF (“Hi, Heroic You!”)

Alright. We’re making some good progress. To review: Ancient Wisdom + Modern Science agree. The ultimate game of life is to flourish (*eudaimonia!*) by living with virtue (*areté*). Got it.

To operationalize that wisdom, we need to get REALLY good at high fiving our inner souls. With that in mind, it’s time to officially and formally introduce you to your inner daimon. It’s time for you to meet your new BFF.

You guys have actually *already* spent a lot of timing hanging out. We just need to make sure you’re spending a LOT more time together. And, we need to figure out how to invite that heroic-best version of ourselves to the party when we need it most.

Here’s a fun way to think about it.

You know those montage scenes in a movie where they flash a bunch of pictures and there’s someone in those pictures who’s always kinda off to the side or behind the hero?

Well, think back to all the times YOU were at your absolute best. Those moments in your life when you just CRUSHED IT.

You know who was *always* right there with you during those highlight-reel moments? Your inner daimon.

And you know WHY you were such a superstar in those all-time best moments? In short, your best self took over.

Here are a couple more fun ways to think about it.

Imagine that you've entered a tennis tournament. It's a doubles tournament. Only, there's a wrinkle. You don't get to pick your partner. The tournament director assigns a playing partner to you.

But... Lucky for you!! Somehow you were lucky enough to get THE BEST PLAYER IN THE WORLD AS YOUR PLAYING PARTNER. (How epic would that be?)

Now... Let's imagine that God (or whatever you want to call that Infinitely Powerful Force of the Universe) has given YOU the ABSOLUTE BEST PLAYER IN THE WORLD AS YOUR PLAYING PARTNER IN LIFE.

Because he/she/it HAS done exactly that.

You just need to quit playing with your DEMON and start playing with your DAIMON more and more consistently!!!

Here's another fun historical fact.

As we've discussed, the Greeks called that best part of ourselves our "daimon." You know what their Roman friends called it? Your "genius."

And, back in the day, when you did something amazing, they liked to say that YOU didn't do it. Your GENIUS did.

Everyone was said to have their own inner genius. A guiding spirit. Kinda like a little mini-me only a SUPER-ME.

Our job? To create the conditions such that we can more and more consistently connect with and express that best version of ourselves—which (echo!) is, of course, precisely what we're going to do together.

The One Thing All Wisdom Traditions Agree On (Operationalize the Cardinal Virtues: Wisdom + Self-Mastery + Courage + Love)

If the ultimate game is won by putting our virtues in action, we better figure out how to get REALLY good at doing that, eh? (Answer: YES!)

With that in mind, it's time to become virtue connoisseurs. Here's a quick master class on virtue.

We'll start with a quick review of what the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers had to say about their *four* cardinal virtues, then we'll look at what modern scientists have to say about their *six* cardinal virtues then we'll boil all that down into the *four* modern Heroic cardinal virtues.

4 + 6 + 4. Here we go.

First, the ancient Greek and Stoic philosophers. Think: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Plus: Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.

They all agreed on their four cardinal virtues: Wisdom + Temperance + Courage + Justice. We'll talk about them more in a moment when we modernize them.

Now, for the modern scientists. As we discussed, when Martin Seligman and his colleagues kicked off the positive psychology movement, they started by cataloging all the virtues of all the ancient wisdom and spiritual traditions. Think: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, plus the ancient Greek philosophers, Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Of course, those traditions differed on some cultural details, but the researchers found an *astounding* coherence among all of them.

So, they took the four cardinal virtues we just discussed (Wisdom + Courage + Temperance + Justice) that showed up in ALL traditions and they added two more virtues to the mix: what they called “Transcendence” and “Humanity.” (Then they split those 6 core virtues into 24 sub-virtues that we’ll talk about in a moment.)

Now, I love all that Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science virtue goodness. And... I think we can simplify things as we figure out how to APPLY this wisdom to our modern lives.

Here’s how we’re going to approach it.

First, we definitely start with *Wisdom*. The ancient Stoics told us that Wisdom is, in fact, THE virtue of which all the other virtues are simply expressions.

Then we have *Temperance*. That’s a REALLY weak word for what all the ancient wisdom teachers were REALLY getting at. It’s not so much that we don’t *drink too much* or *eat too much* per se, it’s that we have SELF-MASTERY. So, that’s our second virtue.

Then we have *Courage*. We’ll keep that one as is and talk about it a LOT. (Btw: Did you know the word *courage* comes from the word that means “heart”? Yep. Just as your heart pumps blood to your arms and legs and all your other vital organs, courage is the virtue that vitalizes all the other virtues—which is why Aristotle considered this THE most important virtue.)

Then we go to *Justice*. Now... If you study the Stoics, you know that their sense of "justice" is more appropriately called LOVE. These guys were ALL IN on serving humanity as profoundly as they could.

For example, here's the great emperor-Philosopher Marcus Aurelius in his notes to himself: "Let your one delight and refreshment be to pass from one service to the community to another, with God ever in mind." (← If that isn't heroic love I don't know what is.)

Circling back to the positive psychologists, I think we can (and should) mash up their (kinda weird / sterile) word "Humanity" with "Justice" and just call it what it is: LOVE.

Now, we have our four core Heroic virtues:

WISDOM + SELF-MASTERY + COURAGE + LOVE.

By the time we're done playing together, we will have the WISDOM to know the game we're playing and how to play it well. We will have the SELF-MASTERY to *actually* play that game well today. We will have the COURAGE to be willing to act in the presence of fear. And, we will have the LOVE to stay connected, present and encouraging.

WISDOM + SELF-MASTERY + COURAGE + LOVE.

Operationalizing *those* virtues is, ultimately, what it's all about.

Science Says These Two Sets of Five Virtues Are Most Highly Correlated With Your Flourishing

Now that we've discussed the four cardinal virtues of ancient wisdom and modern heroism, let's head back to the lab to learn more about what SCIENCE has to say.

There are two sets of five virtues we're going to discuss: The UNIVERSAL Top 5 most-highly-correlated-to-flourishing virtues AND the Top 5 virtues that are (pretty much) UNIQUE to you.

We'll start with the virtues unique to you.

Remember how I mentioned the fact that positive psychologists identified 6 core virtues THEN they extrapolated them out to 24 sub-virtues? Well, here are those 24 virtues:

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence + Bravery + Creativity + Curiosity + Fairness + Forgiveness + Gratitude + Hope + Humility + Humor + Integrity + Kindness + Leadership + Love + Love of Learning + Open-Mindedness + Persistence + Perspective + Prudence + Self-Regulation + Social Intelligence + Spirituality + Teamwork + Zest.

Positive psychologists call those 24 sub-virtues "Character Strengths." They've found that people who use their top strengths often in their day-to-day lives are happier. They also created a powerful little survey to help us get more clarity on our Top 5 virtue-strengths—which they call "signature strengths."

Cruise on over to www.viacharacter.org and join 11 million people who have taken the survey. It'll only take you 10 minutes and I

promise (!) it will be some of the best time you've ever invested in yourself.

Here's a fun fact via Ryan Niemiec, who is the Education Director of the VIA Institute of Character (that created the survey) and one of the world's leading authorities on the science of virtue. He wrote a great book called *The Power of Character Strengths* in which he tells us that there are over 5.1 million possible combinations in your top five strengths. When you take the test, you'll get a list of your strengths rank ordered from 1 to 24. There are 600 sextillion possible combinations. <- That's a 6 followed by 23 zeroes!

So... Take the test and, if you feel so inspired, write down your Top 5 signature strengths here.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

(For curious souls, here are my Top 5 Signature Strengths: Creativity + Hope + Zest + Courage + Wisdom.)

Once we KNOW our top virtues according to their survey, we want to see how we're *already* using them when we're at our best *and* we want to figure out how to more deliberately and consistently express them in our day-to-day lives.

So, if you feel so inspired, take a moment to reflect on how you've embodied those virtues in the past. And, think about how you can more and more consistently embody them TODAY.

Science says: You'll be happier.

In addition to those UNIQUE Top 5 Virtues, science also says that there's a UNIVERSAL Top 5 set of virtues.

These virtues have been most-robustly correlated to our eudaimonic flourishing: Gratitude + Hope + Zest + Curiosity + Love.

They're so important that we're going to spend the rest of our time in this Objective chatting about them.

We will briefly discuss what science says about each virtue's power then we'll talk about a practical tool we can use to move from theory to practice.

Virtues vs. Vice (Deficiency vs. Excess)

A discussion of virtue is not complete without a discussion of Aristotle's concepts regarding the vice of excess and the vice of deficiency.

The short story: Virtue is found at the "golden mean" between two extremes.

Of course, you can have too LITTLE of a virtue. Aristotle called that a "vice of deficiency."

And (very important AND), you can *also* have TOO MUCH of a virtue. Aristotle called *that* a "vice of excess." Too much of a good

thing, no matter how good that thing is, is typically NOT a good thing.

For example, too little Courage is Cowardice. That's a vice of deficiency. But... Too much Courage is Rashness. That's a vice of excess. All that to say: Here's to the virtuous, golden mean!

And now, let's explore Gratitude + Hope + Zest + Curiosity + Love...

Gratitude: How to Boost Your Well-Being by 25% (Are You Taking Life *for* Granted or *as* Granted?)

Robert Emmons is the world's leading scholar on the science of gratitude. He's written some great books on the subject including *Thanks!* and *Gratitude Works!*

Short story here? Gratitude is an *extraordinarily* powerful virtue.

Professor Emmons shares some "eye-popping" (his words) stats in his books, including the data from his seminal research that established the fact that simply keeping a journal in which you write down five things for which you're grateful once a week for ten weeks leads to a 25% (!!) boost in your happiness.

Pause and think about that for a moment longer: Simply writing down five things for which you're grateful once a week for ten weeks can boost your happiness by 25%!

He tells us that grateful people sleep 30 minutes more and exercise 33% more. And, well, they experience a boost in pretty much every other measure as well.

He also tells us that it's *really* difficult to be SUPER grateful *and* SUPER depressed at the same time. (Don't believe me/him? Try it.)

Grateful people have a different way of seeing things and use a different vocabulary. They often talk about "blessings" and "gifts" in their lives. And, rather than taking things "*for granted*," they take things "*as granted*." (That's a big distinction.)

The #1 obstacle to living with more gratitude? Entitlement.

Ungrateful people think the world owes them something/ everything. Grateful people have the humility to know that NOTHING is guaranteed and that EVERYTHING is a blessing.

We're going to come back to Gratitude in more depth in Objective VI when we talk about our fundamental on Celebrating life.

For now, if you feel so inspired, write down five things things for which you're grateful:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Hope: The Three Things Researchers Say You Need to Know (Think: Goal + Agency + Pathways)

HOPE!! This is one of my favorite virtues. And, not just because it's in my own Top 5.

First, let's pause and think about the *opposite* of hope.

What is it? *Hopelessness*.

Of course, it's REALLY hard to live with eudaimonic, heroic joy if we feel *hopeless*—which is why understanding and mastering the SCIENCE of how to cultivate a grounded, resilient sort of hope is so important.

We have Rick Snyder to thank for pioneering the scientific exploration of Hope. In his great book *The Psychology of Hope*, Professor Snyder walks us through the THREE key aspects of cultivating a grounded, resilient kind of Hope.

1. We need a **Goal**.
2. We need a sense of **Agency**.
3. We need **Pathways**.

It all (always!) starts with a Goal. We need a vision of a better future.

Aristotle tells us that we are teleological beings. *Telos* means “target.” He tells us that we need to have goals or targets at which we're directing our life force. Modern positive psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky echoes that wisdom. She tells us that happy people have projects—whether that's cultivating a garden or raising your children or launching a rocket to Mars.

So... How about you?

What's YOUR #1 most-inspiring Target-Goal right now?

(Seriously. What goal makes you want to get out of bed and have an awesome day?)

It all starts with seeing a better future and having a specific goal that fires you up. But... Having a Goal isn't enough. We need to believe we can actually turn that dreamt-for vision into reality.

That requires what scientists call "Agency." It is, essentially, a belief in our ability to make things happen. A sense of self-efficacy or self-confidence. We're going to talk about THIS a lot as well.

Then we need to create a "Pathway" (or a plan!) to achieve that Goal. And, very importantly, we need to know that, as they say in the military, no plan survives first contact with the enemy.

In other words, we need to EXPECT to hit obstacles and be willing to explore MULTIPLE PATHWAYS.

Plan A doesn't work? Perfect. Alchemize the lessons into Plan B. That doesn't work? Perfect. Repeat. That's Pathways thinking and THAT's a quick look at the three key aspects of grounded, resilient Hope.

Of course, the vice of deficiency with Hope is hopelessness—when we can't see a better future and/or don't think we can make it happen. (Note: Hopelessness is a one-way ticket to depression which is another reason learning how to cultivate hope is so important and so highly correlated to your flourishing).

What's the vice of excess? An ungrounded sense of hope where we fail to embrace the constraints of our reality.

Let's take a quick look at my favorite scientific tool to optimize our Hope. It's called WOOP and was created by Gabrielle Oettingen, another world-class researcher who has spent her career studying the science of making your dreams come to life.

In her book *Rethinking Positive Thinking*, Professor Oettingen tells us that it's simply not enough to visualize our ideal life vision-board style. Although it's super important to *start* with a vision of our ideal lives, we then need to "rub it up against reality."

She created something called "WOOP" to help us make our dreams a reality. Here's the quick take:

W is for Wish

O is for Outcome (or benefits—kinda like the "why")

O is for Obstacles

P is for Plan

So, start with the **Wish**. What do you want in life? If you could wave a wand and create anything (in general or specific to particular goal/project) what would you see?

Seriously. If you're feeling it, do it right now. Think of *the* most important goal in your life right now. What is it?

Wave a wand. Everything goes perfectly. What do you achieve? Capture that in a few words. That's your Wish.

Now, think about the **Outcome** you will experience when that Wish is present. (Technically, I think “Benefits” would be a better word here but WBOP isn’t quite as cool as WOOP, eh?)

Think of all the benefits achieving that wish will bring to you. See it. FEEL IT. It’s super important to get really fired up about it.

Once we have that dialed in, it’s time to rub that vision up against reality. Which leads us to the second half of our process...

What **Obstacles** will you face? You’ve gotta KNOW you’re going to face obstacles and you need to KNOW you have what it takes to get over/under/across/thru/whatever them. Embrace reality so you can properly prepare for it and create the reality you want.

Once we’ve identified the Obstacles we need to create our **Plan**.

The heart of this is something called “implementation intentions”—which is a genius way to anticipate challenges and deal with them in advance. Basically: If x happens, then I will do y.

What’s your Plan to deal with the obstacles so you can experience the benefits of bringing your wish to life?

Wish. Outcome. Obstacles. Plan. That’s how we create a grounded, empowered sense of Hope for our Hero’s journey.

Science says: WOOP! There it is.

Zest: Somewhat Surprisingly, It's the #1 Virtue (Remember: *Physiology Drives Psychology*)

Positive psychologists arm wrestle a bit on which of the virtues is the #2 most-powerful virtue. Is it Hope or is it Gratitude?

But they agree that ZEST is the #1 virtue most highly correlated with our eudaimonic flourishing.

"Zest" is a kinda weird word for what we're going to call "Energy." And, I repeat, THIS IS THE #1 PREDICTOR of your psychological well-being.

We're going to spend a LOT of time getting our Energy to heroic levels so we can show up most powerfully in our Work and our Love.

Of course, there's a growing body of research on the powerful effects of eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, and focusing.

For example, we know that, as leading neuroscientist and sleep researcher Matthew Walker says in his GREAT book *Why We Sleep*, getting a good night of sleep is like walking over a bridge from despair to hope.

Imagine that for a moment. Get a *bad* night of sleep and you risk going from hope to despair. Get a *great* night of sleep, and you give yourself a chance to walk over the bridge the other way from despair to hope.

We also know that our gut produces something like 80-90% of your body's serotonin. Think about *that* for a moment as well. Your GUT (!) produces more serotonin than your brain! Which is why optimizing our *nutrition* is one of the fastest ways to boost our mood.

And, we know that, as Harvard MD Psychiatrist John Ratey puts it in *Spark*, movement is like taking a little bit of Ritalin and a little bit of Prozac. Or, as Kelly McGonigal tells us in *The Joy of Movement*, when we exercise we release what scientists call “hope molecules.”

And, did you know there’s even a threshold daily step count under which you’re more likely to be anxious and depressed? Yep.

As Kelly puts it: “The average daily step count required to induce feelings of anxiety and depression and decrease satisfaction with life is 5,649. The typical American takes 4,774 steps per day. Across the globe, the average is 4,961.”

That begs the question: How many steps are YOU getting these days?

Again, this is all part of a longer chat we’ll have throughout our time together. For now, know this: Your PHYSIOLOGY is driving a LOT MORE of your PSYCHOLOGY than you may realize.

Which is why the wisest psychiatrists out there, like Harvard MD psychiatrist Dan Siegel talk about “brain hygiene” and the importance of focusing on your nutrition, movement and sleep.

Remember: Science says that your Energy is the #1 predictor of your psychological well-being!

So... What’s the #1 thing you KNOW you could be doing to boost your Zest-Energy? Today a good day to get to work on that?

Curiosity: Let There Be Light! (Are You Using a Flashlight or a Hammer?)

Next up: Curiosity. It might have killed the cat but it actualizes the heroic optimizer.

At this stage in our work together, the key distinction we want to make with this virtue is the fact that, as David Brooks puts it in his great book, *The Second Mountain*, we want to analyze the data in our lives by bringing a *flashlight* to the process NOT a *hammer*.

What do YOU do when you make a mistake or things aren't quite working in your life? Do you beat yourself up with a metaphorical hammer or do you grab a flashlight and look into what might need a little bit of work?

The vice of deficiency with Curiosity as it relates to our heroic optimizing? We avoid looking at the reality of our lives and numb ourselves with distractions. ("Hi, Netflix and Instagram and liquor store!!")

The vice of excess? We beat ourselves up with that metaphorical hammer and perfectionistic tendencies, obsessively ruminating about all the things that are wrong with our lives. (Then we go numb ourselves with distractions!)

To be clear: Shame has no place in our heroic optimizing journey—which is why we're going to talk about the science of self-compassion in our next Objective and why we will constantly encourage you to have an experimenter's mindset.

In short: See what's working. Celebrate that. See what needs work. Get on that. Repeat.

Here's a simple practice inspired by a chat I had with Lanny Bassham—the gold-medal winning author of *With Winning in Mind*.

At the end of the day (or after a project or a conversation or a night of sleep or whatever) that didn't quite go the way you had intended, ask yourself three questions:

1. What was awesome?
2. What needs a little work?
3. What will I do differently next time?

Start by celebrating what's working. Always.

Then, rather than beat yourself up about what *isn't* working, just ask yourself the simple question, "What needs a little work?"

Identify what you could have done a little differently. Then commit to getting a little better next time.

Boom. Repeat. 1-2-3 OPTIMIZE!

Love: Let's Redefine It (Introducing Love 0.0 + 1.0 + 2.0 + 3.0 + 8.0 + ∞.0)

Ah, love. Some scientists make a VERY strong case that LOVE is, in fact, THE most important virtue to cultivate.

In fact, Harvard psychiatrist and researcher George Vaillant (see *Spiritual Evolution*) puts it succinctly when he tells us: "Happiness equals love—full stop."

We're going to have fun redefining Love by extending some ideas from Barbara Fredrickson and her great book *Love 2.0*.

Barbara is another one of the world's leading positive psychologists. She tells us that Love 1.0 is, basically, love for our family and most intimate others. This is, of course, a critical aspect of love but...

Professor Fredrickson tells us that it's just *one* facet of our potential for Love.

She encourages us to find "micro moments of positivity resonance" with people all day every day and describes the underlying neuro-psychological benefits of exiting our "cocoon of self-absorption" long enough to make authentic connections. She calls this Love 2.0.

I love it. And, I say, why stop there?

Let's start by loving ourselves via Love 0.0—remembering the fact that, as Ayn Rand once said, "One cannot say 'I love you' without first saying the 'I.'"

How do we do that? Well, we'll talk about it a lot but two key ways are via self-compassion and practicing your #1 self-care habit. (On that front: What's the #1 thing YOU do when you're at your best? Got it? Awesome. Now... How about we love ourselves enough to make that a non-negotiable?!)

Then we have Love 1.0 which is Love for our family. How can we optimize that? Again, we'll talk about this a LOT as well. For now, know that your greatest gift to your family is your PRESENCE. Want soul connections? Put away your smartphones.

Then we have those Love 2.0 micro moments of positivity resonance we get by exiting our cocoons of self-absorption. Again, show up. Be present. Put away your smartphone and do simple things like make eye contact and smile.

Then we're going to throw in Love 3.0 which, for us, will capture the power of ENCOURAGING others. Aristotle said that Courage is the #1 virtue. Therefore, if we want to love people, what better way than to *encourage* them? (The word literally means to "inject someone with courage." How cool is that?!)

Then we have Love 8.0. We need to bring Love to our Work. We'll talk about how to do THAT as well and bring more meaning and engagement to the Work we do by making the connection to the people we're *already* serving with what we *already* do.

Then we have Love ∞.0. The practicing lover of wisdom? We love it ALL. The "good" and the "not so good." It's all fuel for our heroic fires.

Love.

Redefined.

Practiced all day, every day.

Advance Praise From Heroic Friends

We're blessed to have relationships with and support from many thought leaders in the self-development space. It will be fun to have their support when we launch the book. I also already shared an early manuscript with a few friends. Here's what they had to say...

"I have known of the sage Brian Johnson for over a decade. After first discovering his epic *Philosopher's Notes* and delving into the glorious mountains of wisdom found within his brainchild of *Optimize.me*, I was overjoyed to discover that he was finally distilling his depth of knowledge, insight and experience into *Heroic*. This book threatens to be one of the best and most timeless masterpieces of personal productivity and self-development that has existed for all time. From ancient wisdom to modern science, training the body to training the mind and soul, optimizing energy, love, sleep, work and beyond, it is a profoundly thorough treatise on everything you need to live as a full and complete human. Shove aside any books you've been planning to read, and move *Heroic* to the front of the line. You'll thank yourself forever if you do."

Ben Greenfield

Founder of Kion and bestselling author of *Boundless*

“I have interviewed a lot of great teachers in my career and Brian Johnson is the best of the best. His ability to take complex ideas and distill them down into tasty, fun-size bites is what makes him such a treasure. I still read his amazing *Philosopher’s Notes* and I am constantly blown away by the never-ending nuggets that I mine from its depths. Now, and once again, he is taking his vast expanse of wisdom of the mind, body and spirit and shaping it into a new book: *Heroic*. No doubt this book will be an inspirational game changer on many a “must-read” list. I simply can’t wait for its release!”

Patrick Takaya Solomon

Producer/Director of *Finding Joe*

“This book is your next read AND your training template for a life well-lived. Philosophy, ethics and morality in our modern world have devolved into relativism and opinion, with little action to back up the blather. It wasn’t always this way. In ancient Greece and Rome, the Stoics understood that a personal philosophy not backed by powerful action, and habituation of virtues, simply displayed a lack of character. Brian Johnson is a Stoic reincarnate. Not only does he have a deep love for marrying ancient with modern wisdom, but also has a passion for embodying such wisdom in his own life—through daily discipline and effort. In short, he is willing to do the work of self-examination and character refinement espoused by the Stoics, Yogis, Taoists and other philosopher-practitioners of the past. In *Heroic*, Brian shares this wisdom with us so that we, too, can be men and women of character and deep integrity. It is a message that is both timely and urgent. Thank you Brian for this important work.”

Mark Divine

Founder SEALFIT and Unbeatable; *New York Times* bestselling author *Unbeatable Mind*, *The Way of the SEAL* and *Staring Down the Wolf*

This book will be the distillation of my life's work. It will emphasize the same thematic content and serve as THE core asset for our Heroic social training platform and Coach certification program.

About Heroic

The platform that trains heroes

In addition to our newsletter (150,000+) and social media reach (as discussed, we have 225,000+ YouTube subscribers (with 24 million views) and 13 million podcast downloads), there are two facets to the Heroic business platform that we intend to leverage with our book launch and perennial promotion: our core Heroic platform and our Heroic Coach certification program. Let's take a quick look at each.

Heroic

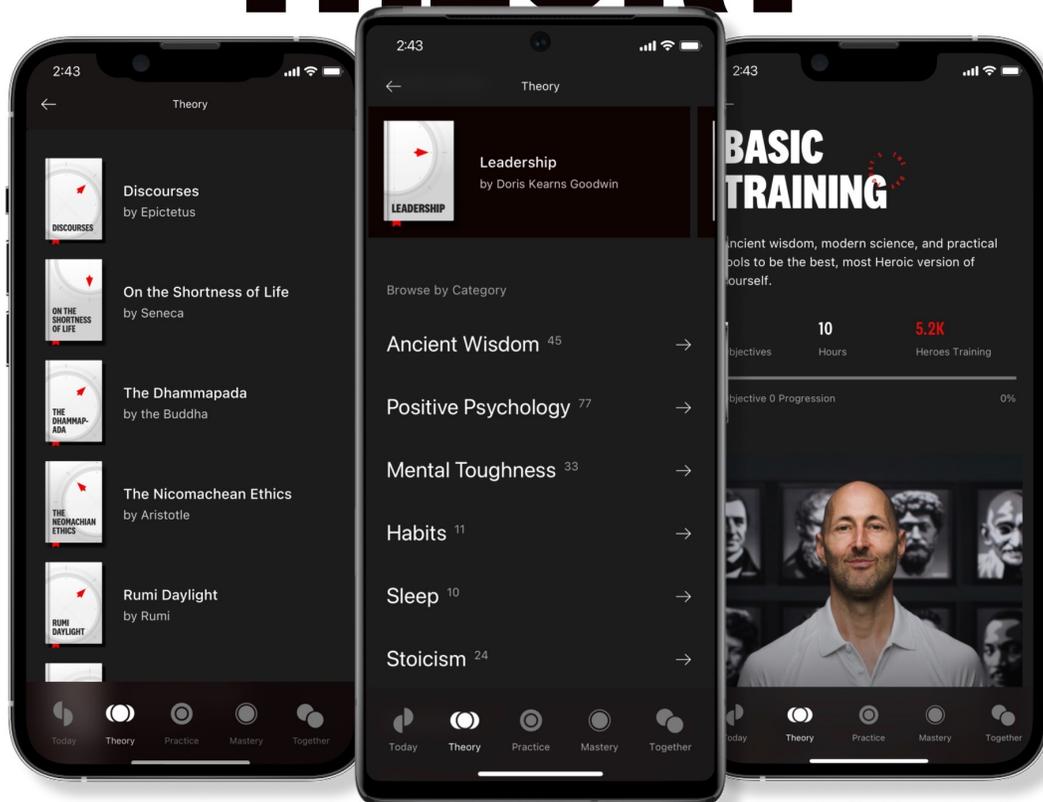
Heroic is a social training platform that enables people to be the best, most heroic versions of themselves.

Imagine combining Calm or Headspace with a Facebook or Instagram.

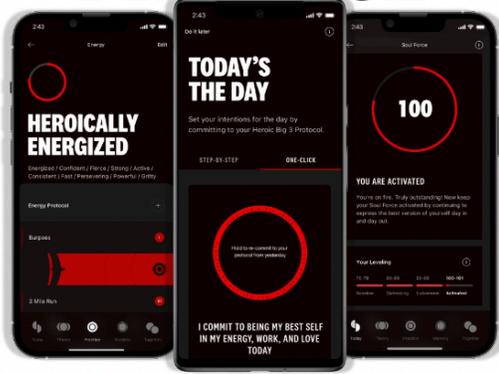
Only instead of trying to get rid of your stress, we want to help you learn how to use it as fuel to become the best, most heroic version of yourself.

And, unlike most social platforms that are designed to increase user engagement (so they can make more money via advertising), Heroic is designed to effectively and measurably change people's lives. We aim to leverage the best of social technology and leave the worst behind. (Think: An answer to *The Social Dilemma*.)

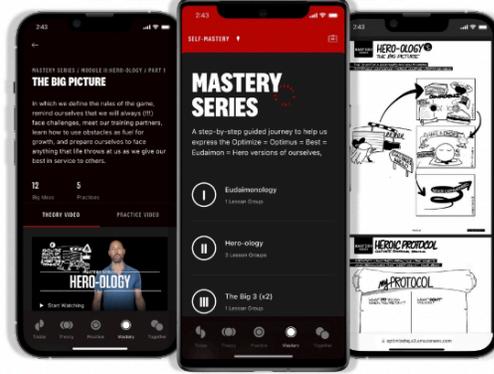
THEORY



PRACTICE

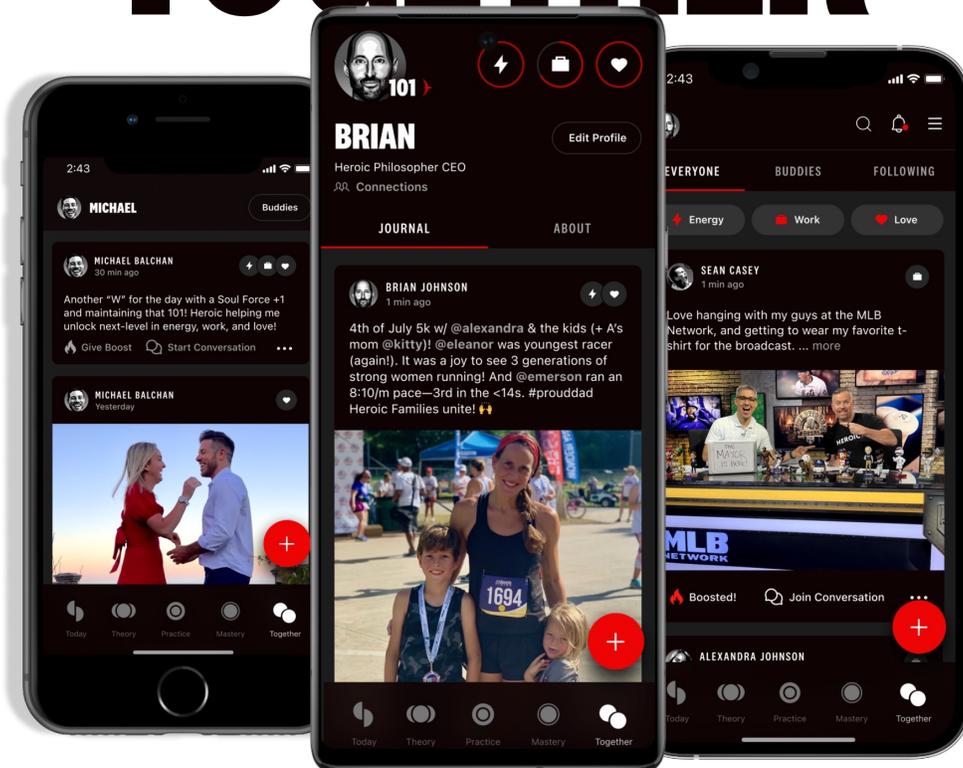


MASTERY

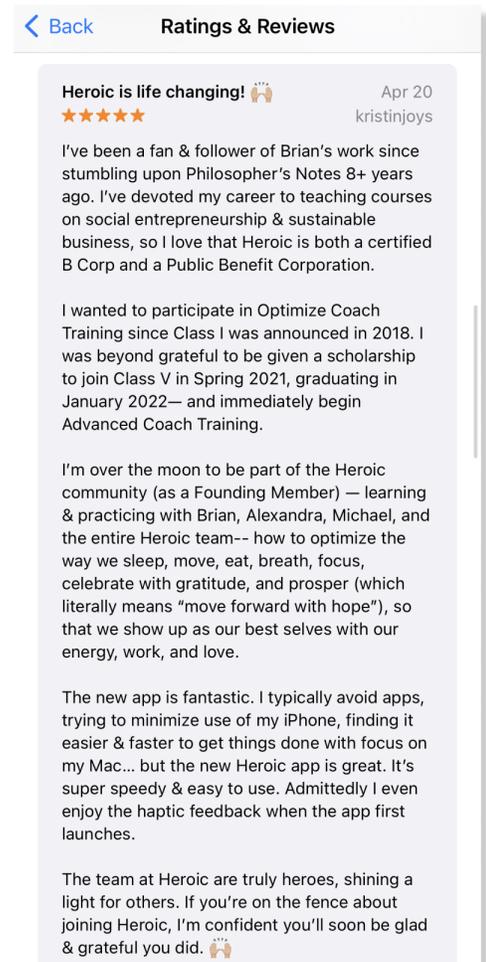
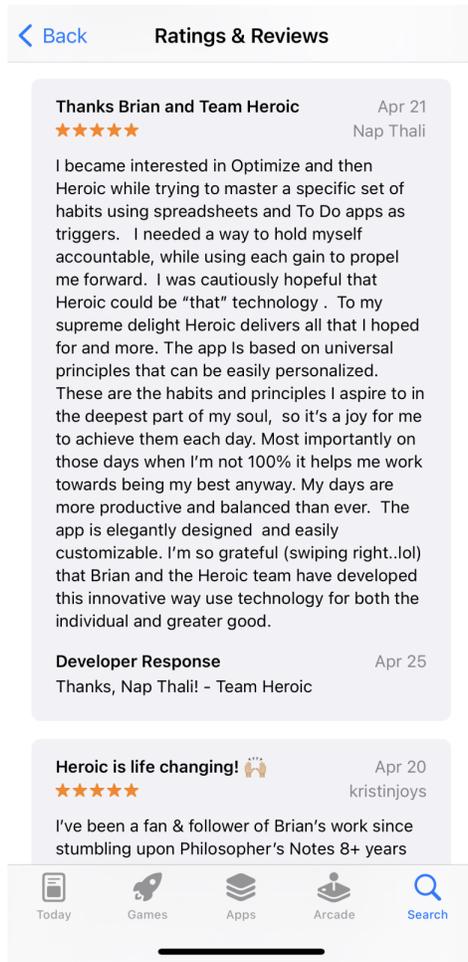
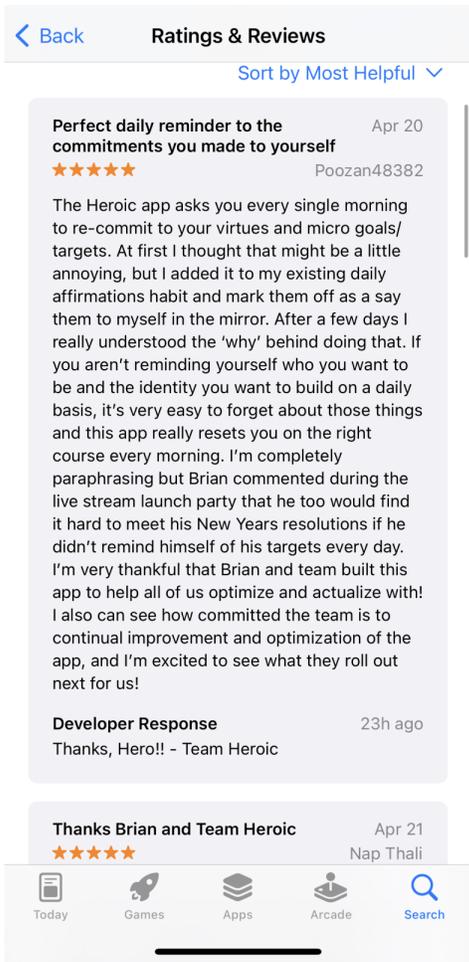


Further, and very importantly, our platform integrates a “training” component to help people move from Theory to Practice to Mastery Together TODAY.

TOGETHER



👉 Being the best in the world at helping people do that is how we believe we can change the world—one person at a time, together, starting with you and me and us today.



As discussed, we partnered with MetaLab (Slack, Tinder, Uber Eats) to build it. We launched the training side of our platform in April 2022 and plan to launch the social aspect in 2023.

Here's a look at what we've created so far:

Note: I am the primary guide for the platform. (Think: Andy from Headspace or Tamara from Calm.) This book will be the “training manual” that complements the “training platform.”

And here’s a look at what our social platform will look like when we launch it in 2023:

Our current average iOS App Store rating is 4.8 stars while our current Android App Store rating is 5.0. Here’s [a link](#) to check out all the reviews on iOS and here’s [a link](#) for Android. And, here are the three “Most Helpful” reviews on iOS:

We’re committed to serving 1 million+ people from around the world in the years ahead and our book launch in 2024 will play a key role in our growth strategy.

We'll be ALL IN on leveraging our Heroic brand and community to make this book a #1 *NYT* bestseller that is *also* a Top 10 perennial seller.

Heroic Coach

Over 10,000 people from 101+ countries have joined our Heroic Coach certification program since we launched it three years ago.

By the time we launch the book, we plan to have 25,000+ Heroic Coaches. And, our target is to have 100,000 people go through our program over the next decade.

(Check out [the intro video to our Mastery Series](#) and this YouTube video for more: [My Life’s Work in 1 hour 11 minutes and 35 seconds.](#))

Again: This book will be their training manual. Plus, our Coaches are influencers and our book will be an integrated part of their coaching practices, leading to significant immediate and long-term sales.

Further, we believe that there are significant corporate opportunities for the book. Our first major corporate client was one of the world's most-respected companies with 500,000+ employees worldwide.

"I already had two coaching certifications, but Heroic Coach was indisputably the most valuable I have taken."

"The program kicked my ass - in a good way! Being an experienced coach, I thought Heroic Coach would be a nice addition to my coach resources, but not 'rock my world' kinda thing. Instead, I've found that I'm being rocked at a very foundational level, and noticed big shifts in my life and my coaching."

"By far the best self development investment I have ever made at any price."