### Running Down a Dream - Intro - Take 92

#runningdownadream

I remember it was dark out.

It was late fall which means the sun was setting earlier and earlier every day. I always hate this time of year. It’s sad. You get up and go to work when it’s dark and it’s already dark by the time you get home.

I took a deep breath and continued staring at the check in my hand. The more I looked at it, the more despair settled over me. I tossed it on the table next to the torn open envelope with my parent’s return address and stood up from the chair. I took the handful of steps through the small house that I couldn’t afford to join my small family in our tiny kitchen.

Candace was standing at one of the counters, her back to me, preparing dinner. Conner, our first son, was nine months old and bopping around in his jumperoo while his mom worked.

I didn’t say anything. I just stood there, watching, wondering if I was going to lose it all.

It didn’t seem like so long ago that everything was perfect. I had turned down that well paying job at the big company because I couldn’t work on my side projects while I was there. I had built up my side business to a place where it was bringing in enough money. Then, two months after Conner was born I had done the thing that everyone else was scared to do. I had turned in my two week’s notice at my full-time job so I could spend those forty hours a week working on my own projects.

I had been so proud of myself. All my friends were talking about starting their own businesses and pursuing their dreams, but I was the only one with the guts to do it.

And then I found myself here.

I was out of money. We had barely enough money in our bank account to pay for food, much less a car payment, mortgage payment, water bill, electric bill, gas bill, and everything else that went into surviving. I pictured us having to move into my in-law’s house. Every morning I’d have to have coffee with the man who’s daughter I was too much of a failure to provide for. It had gotten so bad that I was forced to call my parents to ask for help.

I left the kitchen, went upstairs into our little bathroom, closed the door, sat on the toilet, and cried.

What was wrong with me? Why couldn’t I do this? Why was I so broken?

It wasn’t even that something big had gone wrong. I didn’t lose my biggest client. There wasn’t some big, unexpected bill that came along. No, this was on me. Every day I would get up, go into my office, then waste most of the day playing video games, talking with friends, and avoiding my work.

Usually as the day neared it’s in, I’d panic and start trying to get a bunch of work done, but it would soon be time to go home. The entire drive back to my house I’d feel the shame of wasting another day and make bold, audacious promises to myself that tomorrow would be different.

But then it wasn’t. And stack up enough of those useless days and you have a bunch of clients that are mad because their work isn’t done and you don’t have any money coming in and your bank account runs dry and you have to call your parents to ask them to send you a check because you’re going to miss a mortgage payment if they don’t.

In Steven Pressfield’s book *The War of Art* he calls this force I was fighting Resistance. He says, “[Resistance] is a repelling force. It is negative. Its aim is to shove us away, distract us, prevent us from doing our work.”

I was so deep in this Resistance and stuck. And it seemed like the harder I fought, the deeper I sank.

The most devastating line for me in *The War of Art* is the fourth sentence on the last page of the book. In speaking on the artist’s life Pressfield says, “Do it or don’t do it.”

I stared at that line and the only thought in my head was “I can’t.”

I had so many things inside of me that I wanted to let out. I wanted to write. I wanted to build a business. I wanted to speak. I wanted to teach. I wanted to use what was inside of me to make this world a better place. I desperately wanted to “do it,” but I just couldn’t. I was stuck. And I felt so much shame and jealousy when I looked at the world around me. Every book or article I read seemed to be filled with people making big leaps to pursue their dreams and succeeding. Why couldn’t I do that? What was wrong with me?

As I sat there crying, alone on the toilet, I was facing down a decision.

I knew I was broken. There was something about me that just couldn’t let me do all these things I wanted to do. And I had an out. I had a degree in Computer Science and was a pretty good software developer. I could go back to that job I had turned down and see if they would hire me on. If that didn’t work out, I could maybe go back to my old job and see if they would take me back. Either way, I’m sure I could find a job that would give me a paycheck every two weeks, a couple weeks of vacation a year, a 401k, and decent insurance for my growing family.

My other option was to double down on my failure and try to figure out how to fix myself. I could go deeper into this thing and see if there was a way to get myself out of this hole and start achieving some of those dreams I had.

It’s been over a decade since I stood up from that toilet, wiped my eyes, and decided to either make this work or ride it all the way to hell. What I didn’t realize at the time is that I wasn’t starting on a journey that would be solved over the next few weeks or even years. Looking back, I was taking my first shaky steps in a marathon that I was woefully unprepared to run. But the decision was made. I was going to run down this dream or collapse in the pursuit.

I made some quick progress in the days after that decision. I never had to use that money my parents had sent me and I was able to catch up and pay our bills. But of course, that didn’t mean the troubles were over. In my future was still a nervous breakdown, a sheriff showing up at my house with a subpoena from the IRS, a marriage that teetered towards divorce, and too many other failures to count.

But also in my future was becoming one of the most successful marketing professionals in my industry, publishing a book that sold tens of thousands of copies, working with my heroes, speaking in front of thousands of people, and making more money off my creativity than I ever thought possible.

It culminated into a moment where I woke up one morning, thought about the dream I had decided to chase over a decade before and realized that I had done it. I had caught that dream that I had decided to run down so many years before.

In this book I want to share with you my journey. I want to share with you what I did to fix myself. How I was able to move from desperately wanting to do all of the things but not being able to, to a place where I consistently set out my goals and dreams and achieve them.

This isn’t going to be some high-minded, philosophical journey. I’m going to make this practical. When you go to the doctor with a broken leg you’re not interested in him talking about the history and philosophy behind the practice of medicine. You want him to fix your leg.

So if you’re like me and you feel broken because no matter how much you want to pursue your dreams, you just can’t ever seem to get there, this is the book for you.

I’ve come to believe two simple things about achieving success in creative pursuits:

1. Every single problem is fixable. There is nothing unique about your brokenness. No matter how or why you are broken, there is a way to overcome it.
2. Success is inevitable if you keep moving. The only thing that matters is that you keep going. The only way to truly fail at a marathon is to stop taking the next step. Sometimes you’re running, sometimes you’re walking, and sometime’s you’re crawling. It doesn’t matter. If you’re moving forward, you will succeed.

Now, once you reach that success, you’ll discover something truly unexpected, but we’ll address that once we get there. For now, your only job is to decide to keep moving in your marathon and commit to going on this journey with me. I’m going to ask you to do some hard, uncomfortable, and, occasionally, weird things, but I promise that if you commit to this journey you can beat Resistance and achieve your dreams. I can show you how to do it.

Let’s get started.