

A brief guide to

ACCOMPLISHING

THE

IMPOSSIBLE

What would you do
if you didn't know
you couldn't do it?

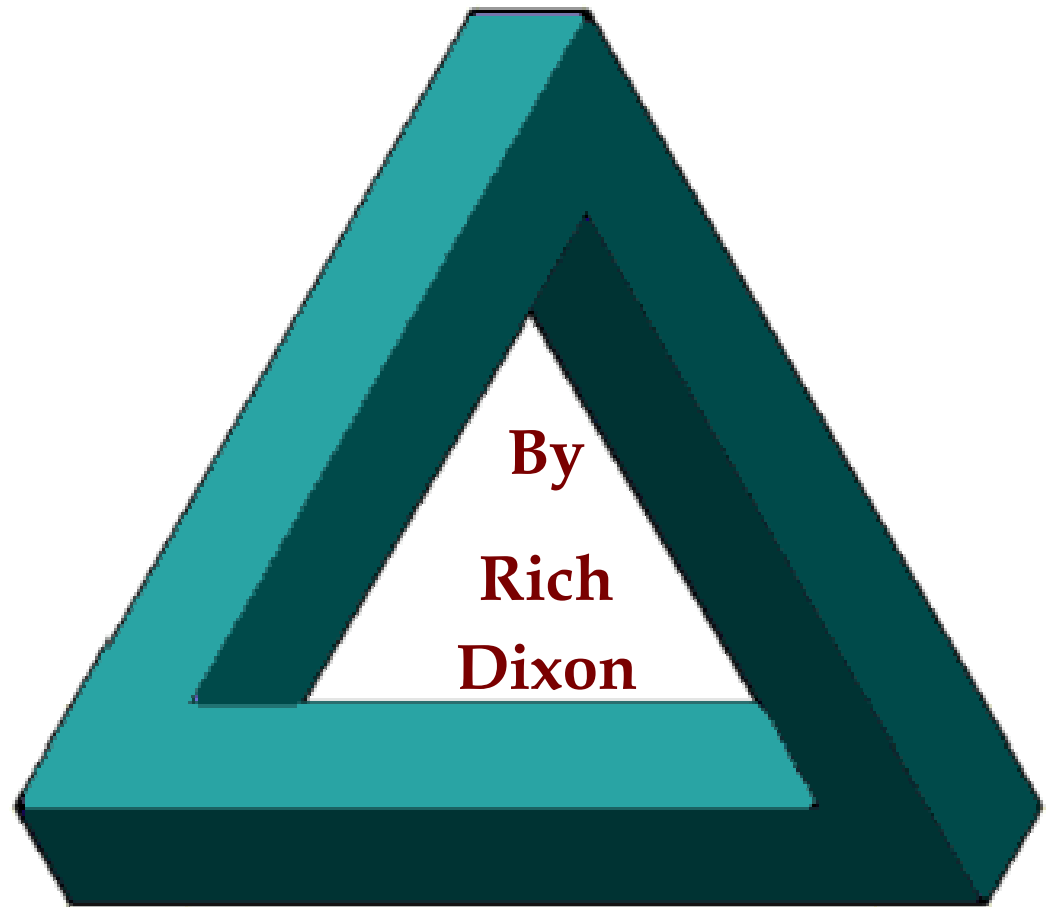


TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
Introduction	3
PART 1: The land of IF ONLY	4
PART 2: Guarding The Border	10
PART 3: WHAT IF...Transformed.....	13
PART 4: Leaving HOPELESS.....	15
PART 5: Accomplishing The Impossible	22
INFO	25

A brief guide to ACCOMPLISHING THE IMPOSSIBLE Copyright © 2009 Rich Dixon All rights reserved

This free e-book includes material from **BOUNCING BACK** (<http://richdixon.net/bouncingback>)

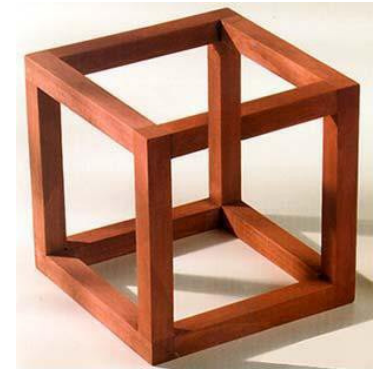
I encourage you to PRINT these pages if possible. You'll absorb more if you're not reading from a monitor. Take it to the beach, the park, or your favorite coffee shop. Sit on the deck with a cold drink. Curl up in a cozy chair. I really believe you'll benefit from reading the material in printed form.

Answer the questions. Write in the margins. Perhaps even keep a journal handy to record thoughts or insights. If you know someone who might like to read this material, please pass it along. You may print this e-book and distribute it electronically (via email, your website, or any other means). I'd appreciate an attribution link back to <http://www.richdixon.net>

Introduction

know what you're thinking. You're thinking that this must be some sort of scam. After all, if something's *IMPOSSIBLE* then it can't be done. That's the definition of "impossible," right?

Did you notice the logo on the front cover (and the watermark on each page of this book)? It's an "impossible" triangle—it can't be constructed, and yet there it is. And if you're thinking it's a simple optical illusion, what do you make of this "impossible" cube? It's not a trick drawing, it's a real photograph of an actual object.



Perhaps "impossible" isn't as cut-and-dried as it appears.

I don't believe in the notion of simplistic resolutions to complex situations, and I'm not a proponent of any sort of generalized, step-by-step formula that'll magically allow anyone to accomplish difficult tasks easily. The only person who gets rich with get-rich-quick programs is the guy selling the program.

However, I've seen people accomplish the impossible. I've actually done it myself. It's not quick or easy, but it can be done. In this e-book I'll raise some questions and hopefully offer some fresh perspective that may help you take a new look at your assumptions about what's possible.

I'd love to hear from you. Please send me a comment via email (rich@richdixon.net) and stop by my blog at <http://richdixon.net/bouncingback>.

What we imagine as "possible" doesn't even scratch the surface of our potential. I wish you well as you challenge your perceived limits and reach farther than you ever dreamed.

Rich

PART 1: The land of IF ONLY

What would you do if you didn't know you couldn't do it?

That's not an idle question. Many people waste a lot of time wishing they could accomplish some particular something. They lament the missed opportunities, dysfunctional families, or unfair circumstances that prevent them from accomplishing their goal. They curse lack of talent, lack of resources, or lack of support. Something beyond their control always stands firmly between them and their desires.

These folks dwell in the land of IF ONLY.

Something beyond their control always stands firmly between them and their desires.

I speak from experience of this terrible place, because I've memorized the terrain. I've traveled its major freeways and seldom seen back roads. I've carved my own personal trails through previously unexplored wilderness. I think I might be one of the world's foremost experts on the land of IF ONLY. If you're seeking a tour guide who knows those out-of-the-way spots frequented by locals, I'm your guy.

I've always been a pretty committed resident of *IF ONLY*. For some reason I learned to live there even as a kid, but in my mid-30's an accident made me a tax-paying, card-carrying citizen, a patriot, zealous advocate, and favorite son of the state of impossibility.

You can read a longer version here (<http://richdixon.net/RelentlessGrace.htm>) if you wish, but here's the Cliff-Notes version. In December of 1987, I fell about ten feet from a roof while installing Christmas decorations. Ten feet isn't a huge distance, and I might have broken a bone or even walked away with a few bruises. Instead, I landed awkwardly, shattered three vertebrae in my neck, and damaged my spinal cord. *IF ONLY* I'd twisted a bit; *IF ONLY* I'd put out a hand at the right moment; *IF ONLY* the ground hadn't been so hard in that particular spot. Everything might have been different, but *IF ONLY* was my new home.

Exploring the terrain

Permanently paralyzed below my chest, I explored every landmark of *IF ONLY*. Possibilities no longer existed. In the land of *IF ONLY*, all roads lead to *I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO*. I established a seemingly permanent home the densely populated territory of *IT AIN'T EVER GONNA HAPPEN*.

*In IF ONLY,
“impossible
dream is
redundant.
Every foe is
unbeatable,
every star
unreachable.*

Citizens of *IF ONLY* dismiss dreams and dreamers with practical pragmatism. *IF ONLY-ites* live in a no-nonsense real world constrained by limitations, responsibilities, and expectations. They disdain so-called visionaries as Quixotic romantics, and they're much too busy following the rules to waste time tilting at windmills. In *IF ONLY*, “impossible dream” is unnecessarily redundant. Every foe is unbeatable, every sorrow unbearable, every star unreachable.

I established deep roots in *I CAN'T*. Every time a friend suggested a new possibility, I pointed to the sign: *I CAN'T*. Whenever I was tempted to try, the warning flashed in brightly colored neon: *I CAN'T*. Everywhere I looked, *I CAN'T* reminded me to give up before I began.

I was trapped in a wheelchair, helpless and pitiful and alone. *I CAN'T* drove away friends and isolated me in an armored shell protected by *WHY BOTHER?* There's no point in trying if you can't succeed, and why would any sane person want to be around a helpless loser? So I spiraled deeper into depression and despair, afraid to even try, immobilized by certain failure, trapped within *WHAT'S THE POINT?*

I wasn't alone in the land of *IF ONLY*. *I CAN'T* and *I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO* are bustling centers of activity. In fact, I suspect that most folks live quietly in some version of *IT AIN'T EVER GONNA HAPPEN*. They may not be quite as blatant about it as I was after my injury, but I think that most of us inhabit those places, in one form or another, in some hidden aspect of our lives.

Hopeless

The scariest, lowest, darkest place in the land of *IF ONLY* is the valley of *HOPELESS*. In the shadows of *HOPELESS*, all of the other roads, signs, and milestones assume a twisted, ominous appearance. *HOPELESS* knots every struggle into an irresolvable tangle and casts every adversary as a sinister specter of evil.

You begin to believe you're so lost that not even God can find you.

I'm especially familiar with *HOPELESS*; I explored its dark corners for ten long years. In the darkness of *HOPELESS*, *I CAN'T* blots out the sun until even the memory of light fades into obscurity. Silence screams from every nook until the darkness comes alive and threatens to suck you into its nothingness.

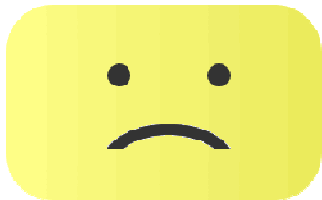
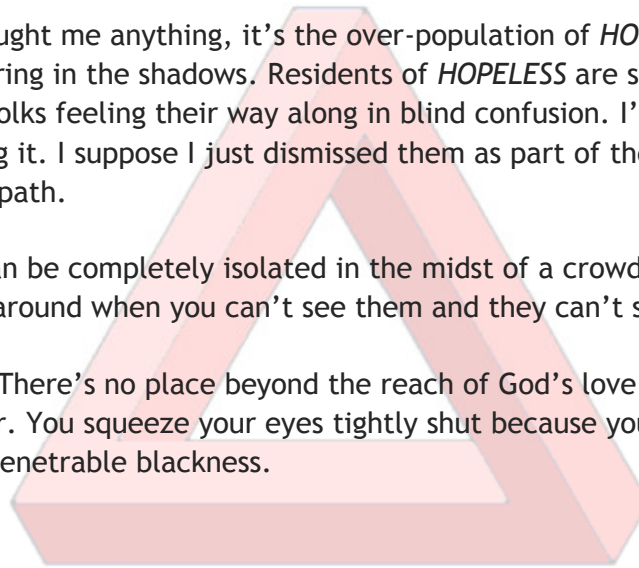
In *HOPELESS*, you begin to believe you're so lost that not even God can find you.

I once believed I was the only resident of *HOPELESS*, certain that no one could possibly know the fear and pain I experienced as I peered into the blackness lurking at every turn. I wallowed in self-pity, absolutely certain that I'd sunk deeper into the abyss than anyone else.

If *RELENTLESS GRACE* has taught me anything, it's the over-population of *HOPELESS*. The valley is littered with equally lost souls wandering in the shadows. Residents of *HOPELESS* are so intent on our own pain that we're oblivious to the other folks feeling their way along in blind confusion. I'm sure I bumped into lots of these people without realizing it. I suppose I just dismissed them as part of the landscape, more obstacles and barriers that blocked my path.

HOPELESS is proof that you can be completely isolated in the midst of a crowd. It really doesn't matter whether there's anyone else around when you can't see them and they can't see you.

Of course, *HOPELESS* is a lie. There's no place beyond the reach of God's love and Jesus' light, but when you're there it doesn't matter. You squeeze your eyes tightly shut because you're afraid of what you might see. You create your own impenetrable blackness.



The land of *IF ONLY* is, in its own way, quite highly developed. For example, there's a territorial flag. If you don't believe it, just look around at the inhabitants. They're all quite loyal and patriotic—in fact, they usually wear the national symbol on their own faces.

As an *IF ONLY-ite*, I might as well have tattooed the symbol on my forehead. It served as a constant reminder of *I CAN'T* and *I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO*. Any time I even considered the possibility of escape, all I had to do was look in the mirror. Because, in *HOPELESS*, there's no such thing as “possibility.”

The national pastime

IF ONLY-ites also have a highly advanced set of national excuses masquerading as patriotic mottos. Many are so revered that places like *I CAN'T* are permanently named for them, but there are many others, such as:

I don't have time.
I've got responsibilities.
I'm not smart enough.
Somebody's gotta do the real work.
We can't afford it.

QUESTION: Which mottos/excuses are your favorites?

The most effective mottos incorporate both wisdom and excuse. My favorite was *IT'S NOT FAIR*.

Of course it isn't fair. That's an obvious fact, and there's great wisdom in accepting life's inherent unfairness. Bad things happen to good people, and evil too frequently inherits great reward. Children hide behind *IT'S NOT FAIR* but adults know better than to expect fairness.

But the *IF ONLY-ites* carry *IT'S NOT FAIR* into *WHAT'S THE POINT* to create a foolproof rationale for impossibility. *WHY EVEN TRY* to do the right thing when *IT PROBABLY WON'T WORK OUT ANYWAY?*

IF ONLY-ites are expert excuse makers, and I was their undisputed champion. I proudly proclaim that I elevated logical-sounding excuse creation to an art form. I think I rightfully claim credit for an entirely new excuse medium that combined the territorial symbol and the national mottos with two ingenious tactics: complaining and worrying.

IF ONLY-ites are expert excuse makers, and I was their undisputed champion.

National champion

Allow me to illustrate. Suppose it's about eight weeks after the accident. I've survived the initial physical trauma and significant health concerns following surgery and recovery. I'm past the immediate dangers

posed by a spinal cord injury, and I'm reasonably medically stable. I've been fitted for a wheelchair, and it's time to begin physical therapy. It's not going to be easy.

Eight weeks of inactivity and inability to eat properly have taken a toll. My weight's plummeted from a healthy 185 lbs to a sickly, anemic 135 lbs. Many other physical and mental obstacles lie ahead, but unless I intend to lie in bed until I die I need to begin moving.

There's no need to view this situation through rose-colored lenses. By any objective measure, I'm facing a difficult path littered with challenges I can't even imagine. Even with the best, most optimistic outlook, this is going to be a tough process with no guarantees of even marginal success.

But eight weeks have also afforded ample opportunity to establish citizenship in the land of *IF ONLY*. So while I'm not prepared for the physical and emotional challenges, I'm ready to plunge headlong into my developing form of artistic expression.

So the physical therapist places me on a smooth tile floor and instructs me to push the chair ten feet. That may not seem like much of a goal (ironically about the same distance I fell in less than a second) but in my physical condition ten feet was an enormous challenge. As a naturalized citizen of *IF ONLY*, I was eager to prove my commitment. I jumped into action.

First, I complained. It's not fair. This shouldn't have happened to me. My arms hurt. The wheelchair's uncomfortable. My back hurts. If you think this is so easy, you try it.

Notice the intricate artistry, the careful choice of old, general standards mixed with a few new complaints uniquely crafted for the occasion. Undeniably irrefutable individual protests skillfully woven to invoke commiseration while diverting attention from the real issue.

Note also that none addressed the challenge before me in any meaningful manner, but that wasn't my intent. After all, I could do it *IF ONLY* my back didn't hurt or the wheelchair was more comfortable or whatever.

Complaints make workmanlike excuses, but I wasn't settling for mediocrity. As the veneer of sympathy dissipated under my repetitive complaints, I beefed up my inventive efforts.

Irrefutable protests were skillfully woven to invoke commiseration while diverting attention from the real issue.

What if I can't get any stronger? What if I fall and hurt myself? What if the chair breaks down? Even if I manage this measly ten feet, what if I can't go any farther?

WHAT IF is a special neighborhood in the land of *IF ONLY*. When you move into *WHAT IF*, you enhance your invulnerability to objections. Since most of the eventualities you worry about either already happened or won't ever happen, it's difficult to challenge them. The proper blend of complaints and worries, bonded with a healthy dose of *I CAN'T*, creates a world-class excuse.

Question: Which *WHAT IF*'s are your personal favorites?

Toss in a bit of *I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO* and you're well on your way to *WHAT'S THE POINT*. From there, it's a short downhill slide to *HOPELESS*. You've completely removed any focus on the immediate challenge and any possibility of even small successes.

My excuse-making artistry was pure creative genius. I converted a difficult but manageable task into an unfair, impossible demand. I destroyed any reason to even try and magically converted sitting still into a perfectly rational choice. I obliterated any chance of achievement by making failure inevitable.

And, amazingly enough, this all made perfect sense in the land of *IF ONLY*.

Like I said, I lived in *IF ONLY* for about a decade. It's tempting to look back and regret those years, mourning wasted time and lost opportunity, but *REGRET* is a shortcut back to *IF ONLY*.

I still return occasionally to *IF ONLY*. I suspect everyone does. I'm always one excuse, one complaint, one worry away. But I'm not a permanent resident any more, and I try to limit the number and duration of my visits.

I managed an escape from *IF ONLY*, and that's really what I want to talk about. With a good deal of help, I discovered a road to a better place. I'll talk about that road later, but first I need to describe another important characteristic of the land of *IF ONLY*.

Copyright © 2009 Rich Dixon All rights reserved

*I converted a
difficult but
manageable task
into an
impossible
demand.*

PART 2: Guarding The Border

Life is full of obstacle illusions. Grant Frazier

I *F ONLY* feels like an impenetrable fortress from which there's no escape. Heavily armed guards protect every border crossing, scrutinizing paperwork, inspecting cargo, and denying passage to nearly everyone. Doesn't matter how badly you want to leave, everything about *IF ONLY* is designed to contain its residents.

The most heavily fortified borders defend the impenetrable boundary around *HOPELESS*. Leaving any portion of *IF ONLY* is difficult, but *HOPELESS* is surrounded by double-layered chain link topped with spirals of razor wire and patrolled by vicious attack dogs. Towers and searchlights scan for any sign of a breakout, and unassailable cliffs repel rare escape efforts. While this bristling security intimidates would-be fugitives, the sad fact is that almost nobody ever tests the borders of *HOPELESS*. *WHY BOTHER?* It's *HOPELESS*.

All of this protection is ingeniously designed to provide one-way security. Ease of entry is afforded to all; in fact, the borders are nearly invisible from the outside. No problem getting in, welcome signs everywhere, friendly staff to facilitate and guide.

The most carefully guarded aspect of this elaborate security mechanism: the whole thing is an illusion.

The secret

The most carefully guarded aspect of this elaborate security mechanism, the top-secret, eyes-only, password-encrypted, classified hush-hush bombshell, concerns its most clever design feature: the whole thing is an **illusion**.

The fences are holograms, the weapons are fakes. The guards shout, "Nobody leaves!" but they meekly step aside whenever they're challenged. It's all a crafty but very effective ruse, completely dependent on fear and conformity. As long as inhabitants obey the commanding signs and accept the flimsy façade as formidable reality, they're trapped within their own imaginary prison.

Touch the razor wire and it disintegrates like cotton candy. Push the gate and it swings wide. Ignore the signs and they disappear. The whole system operates with smoke and mirrors, and it's nearly 100% effective because it's almost never challenged.

The sign tells me *I CAN'T*, so why even try? After all, *I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO*.

Iron bars and armed guards could never confine as effectively as fear.

The designer of this elaborate, illusory containment scheme understood the residents of *IF ONLY*. He knew that bars and armed guards could never confine as effectively as fear. The thickest walls can be breached, but a simple imaginary line can stop anyone who believes it cannot be crossed. One who refuses to step through an open door lives in an impenetrable, self-constructed prison.

That's the nasty little secret of citizenship in the land of *IF ONLY*. Residence is entirely voluntary. Nobody's ever required to enter, and you can leave whenever you wish. But the population doesn't dwindle, and most of the inhabitants argue passionately that they're imprisoned against their will by forces beyond their control.

Fear

As a former flag-waving patriot of *HOPELESS*, I can testify to the effectiveness of this simple border security strategy. *HOPELESS* is dark and eerie, a perfect environment in which to plant and cultivate fear. Everything is cast in grotesque shadows. Even simple objects assume bizarre proportions, deformed by twisted perceptions like the gruesome camera angles in a horror film.

You don't confront fears easily under any circumstances, but in *HOPELESS* those fears are distorted and magnified. And after you wander in *HOPELESS* for a while you become certain only of failure. *IT'LL NEVER WORK OUT* becomes a permanent address, and from that place those twisted fears become iron bars and cells without doors. There's no escape; after all, it's *HOPELESS*.

I'd like to offer a magic strategy for escape, five quick steps to elude the imaginary guards, bust the nonexistent fences, and blast through the invisible barriers of fear. I wish I could provide a road map through the wilderness that surrounds *IF ONLY*, but I'm convinced that no such map can exist.

Everyone's prison is unique, constructed from the bricks of individual terror and staffed by self-created demons and ghosts. *HOPELESS* is a very real place with a very real population, but there's no universal formula for escape.

From my personal experiences, I can only offer this guidance:

Escape is possible. I know, because I did it.

Escape is extremely difficult. Your fears will do everything to keep you trapped.

Escape takes a long time, multiple attempts, and persistence. You're likely to get some cuts and bruises along the way.

Escape requires believing that the barriers are self-created. As long as you believe they belong to someone else, you're stuck.

Escape is worth whatever it costs.

Nobody has to live in *IF ONLY* or *HOPELESS*.

One final thought before we move on. Our culture's built around the illusion of quick, easy, and instant. And if I've learned one thing on this journey, it's this—there ain't no "easy" button for the important tasks in life. Worthwhile things like escaping from *HOPELESS* are rarely effortless, but the obstacles can serve a valuable purpose.

Obstacles don't exist to confine us, but rather to show us how much we want to get out.

Obstacles

If we learn to look at them the right way, obstacles don't exist to confine us, but rather to show us how much we want to get out. If it were easy, everyone would do it. The obstacles make the triumph sweeter.

I didn't enjoy my decade in *HOPELESS*. But I learned a great deal from my escape. My goal, at which I still frequently fail, is to avoid wasting the experience and to share what I learned.

PART 3: WHAT IF...Transformed

If I had my life to live over, I would perhaps have more actual troubles but I'd have fewer imaginary ones. Don Herold

Earlier I described *WHAT IF* as one of the neighborhoods in the land of *IF ONLY*, a place dedicated especially to the national pastime of worrying and concocting excuses. And it's certainly a fact that *WHAT IF* is an integral component of the elaborate illusion that maintains border security.

However, *WHAT IF* involves a special sort of power. The rulers of *IF ONLY* work especially hard to reveal only the part of *WHAT IF* that suits their purposes.

When you're wandering in darkness, it's easy to see things that aren't really present. Imaginary monsters lurk in every secluded corner, ready to pounce and become the fears and excuses that reinforce the boundary.

But the shadows serve another, more subtle purpose. They hide things that ARE present, like grace and mercy and forgiveness. The designer of *IF ONLY* works hard to carefully conceal anything that might expose his complicated ruse. It's not really that difficult, because those who wander *IF ONLY* are already receptive to the message of fear and despair. A few creative camera angles and scary noises do the trick.

WHAT IF incorporates an especially ingenious use of smoke and mirrors to expose almost the entire truth while subtly blurring a small but important piece. When I established myself as the gold medalist in excuse creation, I based my training on the sign that dominated the landscape, a giant billboard that was somehow present wherever I looked. I couldn't turn a corner without seeing that ubiquitous reminder of danger:



WHAT IF...?

However, in my depression I failed to notice the small cloud that always seemed to hang in front of the sign. That cloud wasn't an accident; like everything else in *IF ONLY* it was part of the disguise, strategically placed to alter the message. The designer knew that this seemingly insignificant omission transformed truth into a lie.

One day, the cloud shifted a little. It wasn't much, and I almost missed it. But for just the briefest of moments I caught a glimpse of the entire sign. The cloud reappeared quickly, but the damage was done.



I realized that *WHAT IF* wasn't intended as a breeding ground for worry and fear. Its original creator intended a workshop of wonder and imagination and endless possibility. *WHAT IF* wasn't planned to prompt despair about the worst that might happen, but to inspire hopes and dreams about unlimited opportunity.

The arrow on the sign pointed toward freedom from *IF ONLY*. Following its guidance, I encountered a completely new perspective on *WHAT IF*. The questions changed, the lie was exposed.

What if Jesus walks beside you every moment?
What if God really does work for good in all circumstances?
What if *LOVE* is the true name of this place?
What if *HOPELESS* and *I CAN'T* and all the rest of it is a lie?

*What if fear's a
lie and hope is
truth?*

And the most important of all, the question the rulers of *IF ONLY* never wanted me to see: What if fear's a lie and hope is truth?

What if the border's a fake? What if the fences melt when you touch them? What if the gate's a mirage and all you have to do is walk through it to freedom?

PART 4: Leaving HOPELESS

*There are no hopeless situations.
There are only people who have grown hopeless about them.
Claire Booth Luce*

If something happens, it must be possible. Escape from *HOPELESS* and *IF ONLY* is possible. I know this, because I escaped.

Escape definitely wasn't easy. That's not because *HOPELESS* is heavily fortified. Anyone can simply leave, any time they choose.

Perhaps that sounds crazy. Why would anyone choose to live in *HOPELESS* if they really can simply leave whenever they wish?

Why would anyone choose to live in HOPELESS if they can leave whenever they wish?

HUGGING A POST

Picture a man walking along an unfamiliar street. Suddenly a group of large, angry-looking guys appear from an alley and surround him. They push him around, hit him a few times, and knock him to the ground.

Then, when he's convinced that he's in real danger, he's dragged to his feet and told to hug a post. When he refuses, he's punched again. Finally, he wraps his arms around the post. After a few minutes his arms get tired and he starts to drop them, but a kick to his ribs reminds him to keep hugging the post.

In loud, threatening voices, they tell him that he'd better not let go of the post. They'll be watching, and he won't be able to see them. And if he stops hugging the post, they'll come back and hurt him even worse.

Then they leave, and the man is alone, hugging his post. After a few minutes he relaxes his grip and wonders if the threat has passed. Perhaps he can let go and move on from this terrible experience. But just as he thinks it might be safe, he feels a slap from behind. An evil, terrifying voice reminds him that hugging the post is his only assurance of safety.

Through rain and snow, blistering heat and freezing cold, he continues to hug the post. He's miserable, thirsty, and tired. He wants more than anything to let go of the stupid post and just rest, but he can't. He's sure they're still out there, watching and waiting.

Can you picture what this would look like? Here's a guy hugging a post for no apparent reason. To anyone passing on the sidewalk he'd seem crazy, hugging a silly post and making himself miserable.

A concerned friend might ask him why he's hugging the post, and perhaps he'd explain what happened. "I have to hug the post. I got beat up, and this is the only way I can stay safe."

The friend might point out that there's no one nearby. The threat's gone, and there's no need to hug the post. But the memory of the kicks and punches linger. He refuses to let go.

A police officer may appear and assure the man that this has happened before. He'd explain that the attackers have always left, and that folks who've stopped hugging the post have not been harmed any further. Still, he won't let go.

Why?

This probably sounds somewhat silly to you, but let's analyze my imaginary situation.

Did the man have a good reason to begin hugging the post? Of course. He acted rationally to protect himself. Nothing wrong with that; most of us would do the same.

Does he have a good reason to continue his behavior? Is he crazy to continue hugging the post? Well, that depends on your perspective.

To a stranger passing by, he certainly looks a little nutty. Not only is he hugging a post for no apparent reason, but he's making himself miserable doing it. The stranger doesn't know the background. All he sees is a guy choosing to do something self-destructive. Clearly, he's nuts. There's no reason for a guy to stand around hugging a post.

Or maybe he's just lazy. Maybe the post's his excuse for not taking responsibility for his own welfare. The stranger might think, "Well, that's his choice. He's free to hug the post if he wants, but it's not my problem if he gets sick or hungry. If he wants to get better, he can just let go of the post and take care of himself."

To the friend who knows the background, the situation looks a bit different. He knows why his buddy began this bizarre behavior and why he's reluctant to let go. But he's walked the neighborhood, checked all the parked cars and the windows overlooking the street. The bullies are gone, but his buddy's still stuck, and nothing he can say seems to matter.

This guy probably feels frustrated. He cares, wants to help, and he knows his friend is hurting himself unnecessarily. He tries talking, reasoning, even getting angry, hoping in vain to improve a sad situation. But nothing makes any difference; the guy just won't let go. In fact, the more he talks the tighter the grip becomes.

The cop has seen this before; it's part of the job. He offers protection, experience, and expert advice. But a strange thing happens. The more the cop tries to inspire, reassure, and coerce, the crazier the hugger feels. How come everyone else can see it and he can't? Why does everyone else seem to know with absolute certainty that he ought to just let go? What's wrong with him?

Trapped

All their attempts to help just make him feel more isolated. He's now pretty certain that hugging the post makes little logical sense. Everybody else is probably right. There's no reason to keep struggling—but he still can't let go. He vacillates in self-doubt between anger and despair, and suddenly he's clinging to the post because it's his only point of certainty. So he clutches even tighter because at least the post is familiar.

What's going on? At the risk of stretching a metaphor beyond its usefulness, the hugger's paralyzed by fear. The fact that his fear is irrational makes no difference. At first he was afraid of the bullies and the physical pain, but now it's much worse.

Now he's afraid of being afraid, fearful that something's wrong with him, certain that some invisible, indefinable evil will drop from the sky if he stops hugging the post. And he knows it doesn't make sense, and that makes the fear even worse.

*Now he's afraid
of being afraid,
certain that
some indefinable
evil will drop
from the sky.*

In his terror he continues what is obviously, even to him, a senseless, self-destructive behavior.

Question: What's the post you're clinging to?

Have you ever been in a similar place? I have, and I think a lot of others have as well.

I've stared at an imaginary line in invisible sand, absolutely convinced that I couldn't cross to the other side. I turned that line into a fence, then a wall, then a fortified barrier guarded by a monster-filled moat. And all the time I knew intellectually that the line wasn't real.

And it didn't matter, because the fear was real.

That's why people live in *HOPELESS*. At some level, in some way, I think it's about fear.

So how do you leave? How do you overcome the fear? Well, like I said before, I don't believe in quick, magical, five-step programs. I don't have an automatic, guaranteed formula to offer. But since I was there and managed somehow to escape, I'll offer my experience. Perhaps others can find something in my journey that helps.

Looking back, my path to freedom seems to involve three elements: body, mind, and spirit. I'm not precisely certain how those elements interacted, but I'm convinced the escape wouldn't have materialized without all three.

Physical

For more than a decade, I wallowed in self-pity, convinced that I'd never be able to do anything physically. What could a weak, paralyzed guy possibly do that would be fun and rewarding? I was sick of physical therapy, dragging myself around in useless circles with a bunch of other cripples, so I did nothing.

I dismissed every potential opportunity. Living in Colorado placed me within two hours of the National Center For Disabled Sports in Winter Park, but I had no interest in their specialized skiing programs. Cold

That's why people live in HOPELESS. It's about fear.

weather sports weren't fun before my accident, and the thought of falling down a mountain wasn't appealing.

I rejected wheelchair tennis, basketball, and rugby. I just wasn't interested.

Then a friend introduced me to hand cycling, and it felt like a door to a new world opened.

I'm not exactly certain what the attraction was, what made this the perfect activity for me, and maybe that doesn't really matter. All I know is that from the very first frustrating attempts to ride I knew I wanted to do this more than I'd wanted anything since my accident.



If you're plotting an escape from hopeless right now, I think physical activity might be a key. I don't think it has to be a sport, but part of the escape involves health and movement, maybe some effort and sweat.

Intellectual

About the same time I started cycling, I began to write as part of my counseling process. At first the writing was gibberish, simply dumping the garbage over and over again.

But gradually, almost imperceptibly, something more purposeful began to occur. Writing led to thinking and reading, which prompted a different sort of writing. Rather than just flushing the junk, I was probing, analyzing, trying to figure out the mess I'd created.

I was no longer surviving at a minimal level. I was taking an active role in choosing my direction. I wasn't just drifting toward disaster, I was steering the boat on purpose.

Spiritual

I also began to seriously develop my relationship with God. I'd like to claim that this was the catalyst for all that happened, because that seems like the way it ought to happen. But I'm not sure about that.

I only know that I felt connected to God in a new, exciting, and meaningful way.

The Principle

*Somehow there's
a connection
between mind,
body, and spirit.*

I really don't think I discovered some radical new innovation here, though it certainly was a revelation for me. Somehow there's a connection between mind, body, and spirit, and it's easier to grow when all three are engaged.

Somehow, a cycle developed that stopped and then reversed the death spiral of *HOPELESS*. Exercise fed my desire to think and write. My growing relationship with God energized me and made me want to ride more. Each piece interacted with the others, and the result was a balance of mental, physical, and spiritual energy that gradually banished the darkness.

Some will say that the spirit must come first, that getting in touch with God is the catalyst for emotional, intellectual, and physical health. While I agree that God is the first priority, I don't think it's that simple. In my experience, mind-body-spirit was an inseparable triad. Each was essential for the others to make the entire system function.

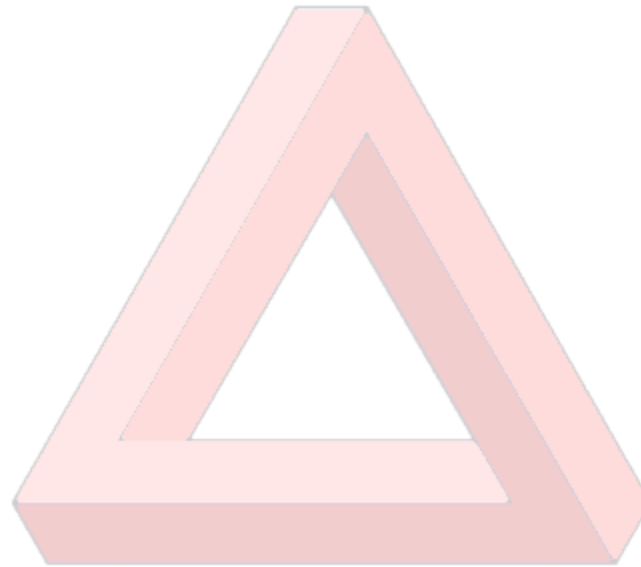
As I said, this isn't a new idea. Traditional martial arts have centered on the mind-body-spirit link for centuries. Masters in these ancient cultures wouldn't consider teaching only the fighting techniques without the spiritual and intellectual components. All three are essential, they have to occur simultaneously, and the process requires some discipline. It doesn't just happen.

So what's the point? For me, the escape from *HOPELESS* was both easy and the hardest thing I've ever done. It was as easy as simply refusing to hug the post any longer, and as hard as staring into the face of fear, deciding I was tired of being terrified, and letting go without knowing what would happen.

You can't know the difficulty unless you're the one trying to cross a barrier you've been trapped behind for so long that you can't imagine that it's not really there. You have to become so tired of hugging the post that anything, even another beating, has to be better than what you've been doing.

A warning: when you hug a post for a long time, your arms may hurt when you let go. It'll be tempting to grab on again, and you may even do that. But with time and repeated efforts you'll discover that the pain subsides, and that whatever awaits is better than hugging the silly post.

And you'll discover something else: you're free!



PART 5: Accomplishing The Impossible

Those who say it's impossible are frequently interrupted—by those who are doing it.

So by now you're thinking, "Wait a minute. You promised a guide to accomplishing the impossible, but so far all you've done is tell stories about imaginary landscapes and hugging posts. When do we get to the point?"

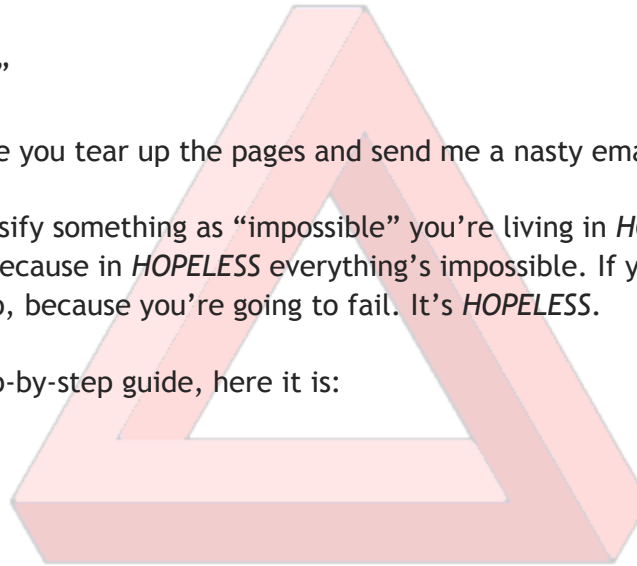
And I reply, "We already did."

Perhaps I should clarify before you tear up the pages and send me a nasty email.

As I see it, as long as you classify something as "impossible" you're living in *HOPELESS*. There's no point in trying to accomplish a task, because in *HOPELESS* everything's impossible. If you don't get out of *HOPELESS* it doesn't matter what you do, because you're going to fail. It's *HOPELESS*.

If you're still expecting a step-by-step guide, here it is:

Take a risk.
Work hard.
Don't give up.
Never give up.
Never, ever give up.



There's no such thing as a guarantee of success.

"But," you reply, "that won't guarantee success."

You're right. There's no such thing as a guarantee of success. If you still believe there's a sure-fire path to easy wealth, permanent beauty, or never-ending good health, there are plenty of folks out there who are willing to take advantage of you. Or, better yet, send me a pile of money and I'll send back some mumbo-jumbo that looks impressive but doesn't work.

The “secret” of success isn’t secret at all, and there’s no short cut. It’s as simple and cold as that. Don’t want to take a risk? Don’t want to work hard with no assurance that it’ll pay off? I don’t blame you—I didn’t either.

What if...?

That’s why I stayed in *HOPELESS* for so long, hugging that stupid post far past the point where it made any sense. What if I let go and got hurt? What if I tried and failed? *WHAT IF...?*

But then I caught that glimpse of God’s version of *WHAT IF...?* What if it’s really okay to make a fresh start and I’m not a prisoner of my past? What if all the expectations and rules are illusions? What if He really wants me to be free, to let go of the post and trust Him? *WHAT IF...?*

That’s the question we each must answer. If trying and failing isn’t worth it, then it’s impossible. We’re right back in *HOPELESS*, trapped behind those self-created bars and unlocked doors.

I can’t possibly tell you how to achieve your impossible dream, and neither can anyone else. Others can help, mentor, and counsel, but in the final analysis it’s YOUR dream. You’ll try your best, or you won’t. You’ll succeed or fail, based on talent, hard work, luck, and a thousand variables you can and cannot control. If you don’t like that, I’m sorry, but it’s the truth as I see it.

I also can’t tell you that it’s worth the risk, and I think you should be suspicious of anyone who advises otherwise. Change itself is difficult and often painful, and I’d never suggest that you ought to simply throw caution to the wind and go for it without regard for consequences. Risk and reward are companions. Only you can decide whether the potential reward justifies stepping out in faith.

You’ll never know if it was possible if you don’t try.

The Bottom Line

Here’s the one guarantee I can make: you’ll never know whether it was possible if you don’t try. As long as you maintain your residence in *HOPELESS*, your dream is indeed impossible.

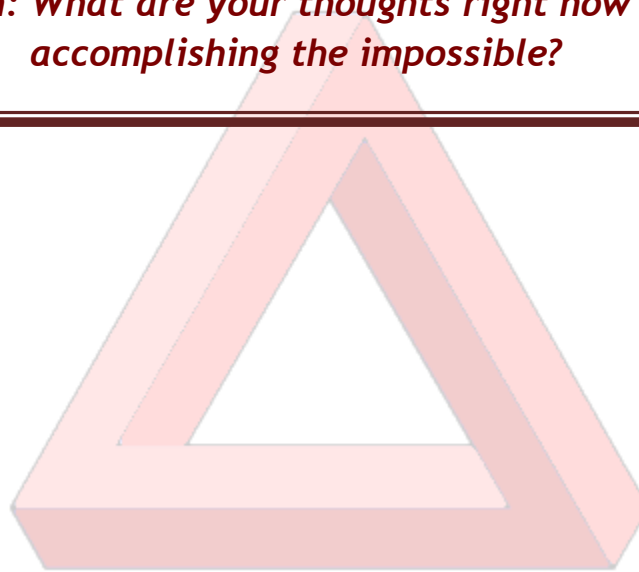
For me, it was most definitely worth it. I still visit *HOPELESS* occasionally via regret and depression. I still lament that my dreams seem impossibly distant. I’m still tempted to hug that old post and seek the safety

of familiar pain to supplant the terror of unknown, potential failure. But each return to *IF ONLY* reminds me that there's something better, so my return visits are mostly brief. That's not home any longer.

I've seen the territory beyond *HOPELESS*, and I like what I've discovered. I may or may not achieve those dreams that once seemed impossible, but I'm determined to try my best.

Because, in the end, that's the *ONLY* way to accomplish the impossible.

Question: What are your thoughts right now about accomplishing the impossible?



INFO

Did you enjoy this e-book? I'd love to hear from you with comments and feedback. Please [visit my website](#), and/or send me an email at rich@richdixon.net.

If you liked this material, please spread the word to your circles of influence and consider purchasing a copy of my new book, **RELENTLESS GRACE** at <http://richdixon.net/RelentlessGrace.htm>.

About the Author

Rich Dixon writes and speaks about overcoming adversity, moving forward in hope and faith, and accomplishing dreams. He's published more than two dozen articles in both Christian and general-market periodicals. He blogs at www.richdixon.net/bouncingback

Rich is also the author of **RELENTLESS GRACE: God's Invitation To Give Hope Another Chance** (<http://richdixon.net/RelentlessGrace.htm>)

PERMISSIONS

You may print this e-book and distribute it electronically (via email, your website, or any other means). I'd appreciate an attribution link back to <http://www.richdixon.net>.

Please pass along a copy of this e-book to others. You may print out pages and leave a copy in your favorite coffee shop or your doctor's waiting room. You may hand out copies to everyone you meet.

You may not alter this material in any way and you may not charge for it.

Hear Rich Live ...

Rich speaks to a broad spectrum of audiences with his unique blend of self-deprecating humor, personal experience, and practical application.

Whether it's a keynote, workshop, or retreat, Rich conveys a message of faith, hope, and grace in a compelling presentation that will inspire, motivate, entertain, and encourage.

Tell me more!

Contact us today about having him speak at your event.

