

TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 49

# The Obstacle Is the Way

Full episode script · English

481 lines

Your English Toolbox

Imagine you are standing in front of a giant mountain.

It is cold.

It is dark.

And you are terrified.

You want to go home, but you cannot turn back.

The path behind you is gone.

The only way is forward, but the mountain is blocking your path.

This is not just a story about a mountain.

This is a story about your life.

We all have mountains.

Maybe your mountain is a difficult boss who yells at you every day.

Maybe it is a bank account that is empty.

Maybe it is a broken heart.

Or maybe it is the English language itself, which feels like a wall you cannot climb.

Most people, when they see the mountain, they freeze.

They cry.

They wait for someone to save them.

But there is a secret group of people who do not freeze.

They look at the mountain and they smile.

Why?

Because they know something you don't know.

They know

that the mountain is not the problem.

The mountain is the solution.

Welcome to your English toolbox.

I am Martin.

And I am Julia.

Today, we are going to give you the map to climb any mountain.

We are exploring the incredible book *The Obstacle is the Way* by Ryan Holiday.

This is not just a book summary.

This is a training session for your character.

By the end of this episode, you will learn how to turn your

worst days into your best advantages.

We are going to cover 50 powerful ideas, organized into three disciplines.

Perception, action, and will.

Are you ready to change how you see the world?

Let's climb.

Part Two The Discipline of Perception, The Story We Tell Julia, let's start with the first discipline, perception.

This is the most important part because it happens in your head.

Ryan Holiday starts with a quote from the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius.

Marcus said, The impediment

to action advances action.

What stands in the way becomes the way.

This sounds like a riddle.

It does.

But the meaning is simple.

An obstacle is not a stop sign.

It is a directional arrow.

It tells you where you need to go next.

But to see this arrow, you need objectivity.

This is our first major concept.

Objectivity means seeing things exactly as they are, not as you fear them to be.

Martin, let's give a real-life example.

Okay, imagine you send an important email to a client.

And they do not reply.

One day passes.

Two days pass.

What happens in your brain, Julia?

Oh, my brain goes crazy.

I start thinking.

They hate me.

I made a mistake in the email.

I am going to get fired.

I will lose my house.

Exactly.

That is the story you tell yourself.

But what is the objective reality?

The reality is you sent an email.

You have not

received a reply.

That is it.

That is the only fact.

Everything else is your imagination.

The book teaches us to separate the event from the interpretation.

Ryan Holiday says, There is no good or bad without us.

Events are neutral.

A rainstorm is not bad.

It is just water.

If you are a farmer, the rain is good.

If you are having a picnic, the rain is bad.

The rain didn't change.

You changed.

So the first step is

to control your emotions.

You have to stop the panic.

Panic is natural, but it is not helpful.

When we panic, we make mistakes.

We lose our breath.

We stop thinking clearly.

You must be like a rock.

The waves crash against the rock, but the rock does not move.

This requires nerve.

Nerve is the ability to keep your pulse slow when everyone else is running around screaming.

It is a superpower.

And you can practice it.

Next time

something breaks or you miss a bus or someone is rude to you, freeze.

Take a breath.

Ask yourself, what is the fact and what is my story?

Cut the story.

Keep the fact.

Part 3, the perspective shift and the present moment.

Once you are calm, you can do the next magic trick.

The perspective shift.

This is where you choose how to look at the problem.

We often look at problems with tunnel vision.

We only see the

darkness.

We only see what we have lost.

But you can choose to look at what you still have.

Or what you might gain.

Let's talk about Steve Jobs.

Everyone knows he was fired from Apple, the company he created.

Most people would see that as a tragedy.

It was a public humiliation.

But Jobs shifted his perspective.

He realized that being fired freed him.

He didn't have the pressure of running a giant company anymore.

He could be creative

again.

He started Pixar.

He started Next.

He became a better leader.

When he returned to Apple, he took it to the moon.

The obstacle, getting fired, was the necessary step for his greatest success.

He didn't just survive it.

He used it.

This brings us to the idea.

Every negative situation contains a hidden advantage.

This is hard to believe sometimes.

Especially when you are in pain.

But it is a law of nature.

If you lose your job,

you gain time.

If you get sick, you gain a new appreciation for health.

If an enemy attacks you, you gain a chance to test your defense.

You have to hunt for the good.

It is like a treasure hunt.

The gold is buried under the mud.

You have to dig for it.

Another crucial part of perception is focusing on what you can control.

This is the central pillar of Stoicism.

Draw a circle in your mind.

Inside the

circle is your actions, your words, your attitude, your decisions.

Outside the circle is the economy, the weather, the traffic, the past, the future, and other people's opinions.

Most of us spend 90% of our energy worrying about things outside the circle.

We scream at the traffic.

Does the traffic care?

We worry about the future.

Does worrying change the future?

It just ruins the present.

Speaking of the present, that is our next point.

The present moment.

Obstacles often feel huge because we add the weight of the past and the future to them.

Imagine you have to wash a mountain of dirty dishes.

If you look at the whole pile, you feel tired instantly.

You think, this will take forever.

But if you just pick up one plate.

Just one.

And you focus on washing that one plate perfectly.

It is easy.

Then you pick up the next one.

Life is just a series of present

moments.

If you stay in the now, the obstacle is manageable.

It is only when you mentally travel to the scary future that you get overwhelmed.

Martin, I think this applies to English learning perfectly.

Oh, 100%.

Students worry about, will I ever be fluent?

Will I pass the exam next year?

That is future thinking.

It creates anxiety.

The stoic student thinks, I cannot control the exam next year.

I can control this sentence I am reading right now.

I can control this podcast I am listening to.

Focus your energy like a laser beam on the present moment.

A laser can cut through steel because it is focused.

Light that is spread out like a lamp cannot cut anything.

Be a laser, not a lamp.

Part 4.

Flip the script and prepare for the worst.

Before we move to action, we need to talk about two advanced perception techniques.

The first is thinking differently.

Sometimes the front door

is locked.

And we bang on it for hours.

We get bloody hands.

But we forget to look sideways.

Maybe the window is open.

Maybe the back door is unlocked.

Maybe we can climb onto the roof.

Or maybe we don't need to go inside the house at all.

This is about creativity.

Don't just look at the problem.

Look around it.

Look through it.

And finally prepare for the worst.

This sounds pessimistic, but it is actually a defense mechanism.

If you are surprised by a problem, you are weak.

You are shocked.

But if you expect the problem, you are ready.

Before you start a project, ask yourself, what could go wrong?

What if the computer crashes?

What if I get sick?

What if the money runs out?

Don't be afraid of these questions.

Answer them.

Make a plan B.

And a plan C.

Then, when the bad thing happens, and it will happen, you can smile.

can say, I knew you were coming and I am ready for you.

You flip the script.

You turn the tables.

The obstacle thought it would crush you.

But instead you use it to show how prepared you are.

Perception is the foundation.

If your mind is weak, your actions will be weak.

But if your mind is strong, clear, objective, focused, then you are ready to move.

You are ready for the second discipline.

The discipline of action.

remember, perception is not passive.

It is an active choice you make every second.

You are the director of your own movie.

You decide if this is a tragedy or an adventure story.

So, Martin, we have set the scene.

Our mind is clear.

Our emotions are under control.

We see the opportunity.

Now, what do we do?

We move.

Let's talk about action.

Part five.

The discipline of action.

Moving forward.

So, you have the right mindset.

But a

mindset without movement is just a daydream.

Now we enter the discipline of action.

Ryan Holiday is very clear here.

It does not matter how you feel.

It matters what you do.

The first rule of action is start moving.

Just start.

Action is the cure for fear.

Imagine you are standing on a high diving board at a swimming pool.

The longer you look down at the water, the scarier it gets.

Your legs start to shake.

Your heart

pounds.

But the moment you jump, the moment you take action, the fear disappears.

You are in the air.

You are dealing with reality, not imagination.

Many of us are waiting for the perfect conditions.

We say, I will start my diet when work is less stressful.

I will start speaking English when I know more grammar.

I will launch my business when the economy is better.

Martin, tell them the hard truth.

The conditions will never be perfect.

Never.

If you wait for perfect, you will wait forever.

You must practice pragmatism.

Pragmatism means do what works.

Don't worry about being elegant.

Don't worry about the correct way.

If you need to cross a river and there is no bridge, you swim.

If you can't swim, you build a raft.

If you can't build a raft, you walk until you find a shallow part.

You just solve the problem with whatever tools you have.

This leads us to the

concept of persistence.

But be careful.

Persistence does not mean doing the same thing over and over again if it isn't working.

That is just stubbornness.

True persistence involves iteration.

Think of a startup company in Silicon Valley.

They release a product.

It has bugs.

It fails.

Do they close the company?

They look at the data.

They say, Okay, users didn't like the red button.

Let's try a blue button.

They try again.

Fail.

Learn.

Adjust.

Try again.

This is the scientific method applied to life.

Failure is just feedback.

This is a huge idea, Julia.

If you stop calling it failure and start calling it data, you become fearless.

A scientist isn't sad when an experiment fails.

She is interested.

She says, Now I know one way that doesn't work.

I am closer to the answer.

You must treat your English like this.

You tried to say a sentence and the other person didn't understand.

That is

not a personal failure.

That is data.

It means pronunciation needs adjustment.

Adjust and try again.

Another key to action is the process.

We talked about this briefly, but let's go deeper.

The process is about breaking big things into tiny things.

Nick Sabin is a famous American football coach.

He tells his players, Don't think about winning the championship.

Don't even think about winning this game.

Just think about this one play.

Just do your job for these five

seconds.

If you do that perfectly and then do the next one perfectly, the score takes care of itself.

When you focus on the process, the pressure drops.

You can breathe.

You just have to do the next right thing.

Sometimes the right thing is to use the obstacle against itself.

This is the judo metaphor.

In judo, you don't block a punch.

You pull the person who is punching you.

You use their own momentum to throw them on  
the floor.

Gandhi used this strategy.

He faced the British Empire, a massive military power.

He didn't have guns.

He didn't have an army.

If he had tried to fight them with force, he would have been crushed in one day.

So what did he do?

He used nonviolence.

He used civil disobedience.

He made the British look like bullies.

He used their own power to shame them and eventually defeat them.

He turned their strength into a weakness.

Whatever

is blocking you has energy.

Can you use that energy?

If your boss is aggressive, don't fight him.

Use his aggression to show how calm and professional you are.

Let him tire himself out.

Action requires creativity and focus.

Distraction is the enemy.

You cannot solve a difficult problem if you are checking your phone every five minutes.

You need deep work.

You need to attack the problem with all your mental resources.

And remember, do your job.

Sometimes action

is not exciting.

Sometimes it is boring.

Sometimes it is cleaning the floor.

Sometimes it is memorizing irregular verbs.

It is not glamorous.

But it is necessary.

Just do it.

Write action right now.

Part 6 The Discipline of Will The Inner Fortress Okay, Martin.

We have seen clearly.

Perception.

We have acted bravely.

Action.

But what happens when the problem is still there?

What happens when you do everything right and you still fail?

What happens when you are

in prison or you have a terminal illness?

This is where we need the third and final discipline.

The Discipline of Will.

Will is not just willpower, like saying no to a cookie.

It is something deeper.

It is resilience.

It is endurance.

It is the ability to accept what you cannot change.

We need to build an inner citadel.

This is a fortress inside your soul.

The world can take your money.

It can take your freedom.

It can

even hurt your body.

But it cannot enter your inner citadel unless you open the gate.

This is where your values live.

This is where your character lives.

Abraham Lincoln suffered from terrible depression.

He had a difficult marriage.

He lost elections.

He presided over a country that was tearing itself apart in a civil war.

But he had an inner citadel.

He had a quiet strength that allowed him to endure when others collapsed.

He learned the art of

acquiescence.

That is a fancy word.

It means acceptance.

But not passive acceptance.

Active acceptance.

The Stoics have a phrase, amor fati.

Love your fate.

Don't just tolerate it.

Love it.

Imagine you are a boxer.

You are in the ring.

You get hit in the face.

You can complain, hey, that's not fair.

I didn't want to get hit.

Or you can say, I am a boxer.

Getting hit is part of the game.

I love the game.

I love this hit.

Everything that happens to you is fuel.

If your life is easy, you become soft.

If your life is hard, you become strong.

So love the hardship.

It is making you into a masterpiece.

Another powerful tool for the will is memento mori.

Remember death.

Why should we think about death, Martin?

Because it creates urgency and humility.

When you realize you could die tomorrow, you stop caring about petty arguments.

You stop being afraid of

embarrassment.

Who cares if you make a grammar mistake?

You are alive.

It clarifies what is important.

And it reminds us that our time is short.

We must use it well.

We must also realize we are part of something bigger.

You are not alone.

When you suffer, you feel isolated.

But suffering is the most common human experience.

Everyone suffers.

By suffering, you are connecting with every human who has ever lived.

And your struggle can help others.

This

is turning weakness into strength.

If you overcome an addiction, you can help other addicts.

If you survive a tragedy, you can comfort others who are grieving.

Your pain becomes your credential.

It gives you empathy.

It gives you wisdom.

So don't waste your pain.

Use it to leave a legacy.

Finally, we must be ready to start again.

The cycle of perception, action, and will is a circle.

You overcome one obstacle.

You feel good.

And then a new

obstacle appears.

That is life.

We don't solve life.

We live it.

We just get better at playing the game.

We get faster at correcting our perception.

We get bolder in our actions.

And we get stronger in our will.

The obstacle never goes away.

But neither do we.

Part 7.

Conclusion Martin, this has been a deep journey.

We have climbed the mountain.

We learn to see clearly with perception.

To act correctly with action.

And to endure willingly

with will.

Stoicism is not a religion.

It is an operating system for your mind.

And like any software, you have to install it.

You have to practice it.

This week, when something goes wrong, and it will, remember this episode.

Don't say, why me?

Say, the obstacle is the way.

Smile at the problem.

And then attack it.

If you found value in this episode, please write a small comment before you go.

Your comments show the platforms that

our community is real, active, and growing.

This support is crucial for us to continue creating new episodes every week.

Tell us which of the three disciplines, perception, action, or will, is the hardest for you.

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Do you want to be part of our slow English community?

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We need your comments because your voice is more important than ours.

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Your voice and comments will show us the right path.

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Thank you for listening.

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Stay strong.

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And keep climbing.

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