



The Power of Possibility

Rob Hartnett

‘Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they’ve been given than to explore the power they have to change it.’

Muhammad Ali

Since childhood, I have believed in possibilities. At times when I have been in a dark place, as a teenager, an adult and a father with seemingly no way out, I have been able to change my mind-set to get curious and search for another way.

Early in my working life, I was struck by the thought that there had to be something better in life. I was doing okay – I had an accounting degree, had worked for some great brands and was now in enterprise computer sales – but something was telling me there was more to achieve. I decided to take action, and thought I might find the answer in a bookstore. The problem was, I really didn't know what I was looking for. It wasn't a business book; it definitely wasn't a motorsport or sailing book, which were areas of the store I knew well. After a while, an assistant asked if he could help me. I admit I struggled for words. I recall saying something like, 'I am looking for a book or a resource to help me get better'. 'Get better at what?' he asked. After a bit of back-and-forth, he took me to the personal development section and pulled out Tony Robbins' book, *Awaken the Giant Within*. 'Have a go at this one', he said. 'It seems to be selling well.'

From that moment on I was hooked on personal development. I am forever grateful to that assistant for helping me out. A few years later, I met Tony and corresponded with him on a couple of business ideas, and it was also that book that inspired my world championship in sailing. (For those of you wondering: yes, I did walk on hot coals at one of Tony's 'Awaken the Giant' live sessions, and it was a mind-blowing experience.)

MY LIFE MANTRA

Around the time I found Tony Robbins I also developed my life mantra, and I have stayed true to it for 20 years. It might work for you, too (or you could develop your own):

1. **Live:** Participate in life; don't be a spectator.
2. **Love:** Give love and accept love.
3. **Laugh:** Have a sense of humour.
4. **Learn:** Always be open to learning from anyone.
5. **Legacy:** Give back. Coach others. Be a connector, not a climber.

Live

How good is living? By this, I mean really participating in life, not just watching everyone else do it. I know I live in Australia, and it's a pretty good place to be. However, suicide remains the leading cause of death for Australians aged between 15 and 44, and there are more than eight deaths by suicide in Australia each day.¹ This is something that astounds and saddens me, and that I hope this book might address.

Living is not about how much you have. Wealth is a measure of success for some people, but there are plenty of rich unhappy people. Someone once said to me, 'Given the choice I would rather cry in a Porsche than a Pontiac!'. I believe the reason you are crying is the critical question, when there is so much to be happy about. If you are crying because you can't really afford the Porsche, then sell it. Assets are fine to own, as long as they don't own you. I have sold several Porsches over the years to use my money in different ways. I admit there were times when I was with business colleagues who all had expensive cars that I thought to myself, 'Maybe I should have kept it'. One time, my host introduced me to the others by saying, 'This is Rob; he is between Porsches right now'. That was so empowering! Yes, there will be another one coming if that's what I want. Life is about swings and roundabouts, changing seasons and adjusting your

sail to suit the wind. I don't believe assets should ever prevent you from living your life.

Very few of us know how long we have to live. Too many people, especially small business owners, put off going overseas or pursuing a dream assuming they will be as healthy and fit at 70 as they are at 40. It's not necessarily true. Take risks when your body and mind are in the right place to enjoy them. For example, my good friend Phil wanted to have a fast cruising yacht in Europe so he could spend the European summer on it. When he bought it he named it *Kids' Inheritance*. Nice work Phil. He does invite his kids to go cruising with him, though!

Bronnie Ware, an Australian palliative nurse and author of *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*, recorded the biggest regrets of patients she worked with over a period of eight years. The number one regret from both men and women was this:

I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.

Bronnie explains:

When people realise that their life is almost over and look back clearly on it, it is easy to see how many dreams have gone unfulfilled. Most people had not honoured even a half of their dreams and had to die knowing that it was due to choices they had made, or not made.²

Pursue your dreams and your goals. Don't bail out early. Be an inspiration for those around you – and that includes me, because I want to see you happy.

Love

A seminar audience member once asked me what I thought the most important thing in life was. I said love. Love comes in many

forms: you can have love for a partner and love for your children. I have three boys with my wife Leisa. Sometimes we get asked if we have a favourite son. The question has always been strange to me. I have always felt an equal love for all three at all times. Trust me, they have tested my resolve on this but still the love is equal.

To give love though, you must first have it. The most important love is the one you have for yourself. Later in the book, I talk about Lance Picioane, founder of the charity Love Me Love You. It's a perfect name for Lance's organisation, and it has to be in that order because you can't give what you don't have.

To be loved is another thing altogether. Stephen Colbert once asked Keanu Reeves what he thought happens when we die. Keanu replied: 'When it happens, the people who love us will miss us.' What a wonderful answer.

Laugh

Laughing is so important for your health and happiness. According to entrepreneur James Altucher, kids laugh around 300 times a day whereas adults only laugh five times a day. Life is simple; we grow up and make it complicated. Remember: you can be successful and still have fun. Three times road cycling world champion Peter Sagan has a saying: 'Why so serious?'. Peter is known for his antics and sense of humour, and also for his sprinting speed. Nice guys do win.

In 2005 I created a book called *What Marketing People Know about Sales*. On the back cover, it read 'What Sales People Know about Marketing'. The inside pages of the book were completely blank. It was a direct mail piece designed to raise awareness of the issues in having separate sales and marketing departments. The book ended being picked up by Brolga Publishing and distributed by Penguin Books. I could not believe it when I saw it retailing in a major bookstore for \$9.00! After we sold out the

first print run I created a second edition, which included a bonus CD (blank, of course). I still discover people across the world who remember that book; the creative director of one of the world's largest advertising agencies even told me it cracked him up. You have to make your own fun; you never know where it might lead.

Don't take yourself so seriously; lighten up, laugh a little more. Having fun doesn't mean you need to be the life of the party or a stand-up comedian, but do open your eyes and ears and try to see the funny side. It will help you mentally and physically.

Learn

I always make an effort to connect with smart people who I can learn from. I had the pleasure of meeting Tony Robbins' mentor Jim Rohn on his Australia tour; I interviewed Brian Tracy for SkyNews with Robert Gottlieb and, more recently, I spent time with Dr John C Maxwell, which led me to the Godfather of Influence Dr Robert Cialdini. All these people and many more have something you can learn. The internet gives you access to TED Talks, YouTube, Instagram and micro-learning programs from some of the most prestigious universities in the world. But you will only learn if you take action: people won't come to you.

I am constantly amazed by how few people in the audience at my speaking engagements say they have spent their own money on self-development. This is especially the case when I speak at large corporate organisations; hardly any hands go up. These people are clearly not good investors, because the best investment you will ever make is in yourself. Don't expect your employer, the government or your parents to provide you with all the learning opportunities. As Australian Football League legend Ron Barassi says, 'If it's to be, it's up to me'.

Legacy

What will you be remembered for? I believe that for the first part of our life we are building our résumé of awesomeness. After 50, I believe we build our legacy – by this I mean the nice things people say about us in our eulogy for example. However, you don't have to wait for 50 years – you can start building your legacy at any age. What are the things you really want to be remembered for?

Writing this book is a legacy. There are things in this book I hope will help people in many years to come. I will probably need to go back to it myself, too, from time to time. My legacy to my family is to build a cohesive unit of love and respect. I didn't have an especially close relationship with my father growing up and, for most of my adult life, it was respectful but not close. He didn't have a close relationship with his father either, from what I can tell, and I know he and his siblings do not have much of a relationship with each other either, which is a shame. These distant relationships seemed normal growing up: we never had family gatherings, and that was okay. However, with a family of your own, you start to take a different view. My legacy is to break a couple of generations of non-communication. So, my most important legacy is to raise my three boys to be men who love each other and will always be there for each other. I know my sister, Susan, is also passionate about raising her daughters in a spirit of friendship and connection with their cousins.

I am super lucky in this respect to have a mentor in this area in my wife, Leisa. Leisa comes from a large, loving family who always get together. Times may get tough, but they always have each others' back. I have been able to see my nephews and nieces grow up, and witness how well it can work. The good news is: if you are intentional about it, you can repair some of the earlier issues that were not yours as a child. Through the magic of social media, I am now more connected to my side of the family than

ever. (This includes my Auntie Margie, who is a social media whiz in her late eighties – she’s crushing Facebook and Messenger.)

ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

I want to make a point early on about this book’s title, *It’s All Possible*. My intention is to provide you with a guide, using real examples, that illustrates not that *everything* is possible, but that *anything* is possible. You might not be able to achieve everything you have always wanted at the same time, but many dreams and goals are possible during your life if you have a big enough ‘why’. Most importantly, you must take action and be intentional about achieving your goals. This won’t happen all at once, but strategically over time.

I truly believe that it *is* all possible for you if you are intentional. The problem is, most people are not intentional. The leadership guru Dr John C Maxwell, who I am now proud to call a mentor, was challenged as a young leader with the question: ‘John, how are you intentionally growing?’. When I read this question, it challenged me like I hope it is challenging you. I thought, ‘Well, I want to grow; I believe I am growing; I learn from my mistakes; and I hope I am growing through my daily experiences. But, am I intentional about it?’ Given that hope is not a strategy, I had to admit that, frankly, I was not intentional about my growth: I just assumed it would happen. Well, good luck with that strategy, Rob!

To intentionally grow you need the three Ds of intentionality:

1. **Desire:** You have to really want it.
2. **Discipline:** You have to be prepared to do the work.
3. **Determination:** You have to be prepared to push through when challenged.

Sound easy? It isn’t. Worth it? From my experience, totally.

It's All Possible, the name for this book, came to me after doing some speaking engagements on the topic 'The Art of the Possible' to various leaders, entrepreneurs and businesspeople. So many of them, especially the Millennials, told me their leaders simply did not inspire them or encourage innovative and creative thinking. This made me sad, as I am passionate about possibility and giving people a chance to shine. It makes me think that most leaders are not leading: they are managing, keeping below the radar to survive the next restructure.

So why this book now? Because we need more Possibility Seekers who can become Possibility Leaders and adopt the Art of the Possible by asking 'How might we?' as opposed to 'Why would we?'. 'How might we?' is aspirational, inspirational, hopeful and positive. By asking 'Why would we?' you are being limiting, sticking to old beliefs, excuses and negativity.

INTRODUCING THE 4-STEP POSSIBILITY SYSTEM®

Throughout my business and sporting life, I have observed the habits, routines, visions, processes and skills of the world's best. I have always set my benchmark in line with the top achievers – no matter their gender, race, country or religion. I have studied the best in business, from corporate CEOs, entrepreneurs, faith leaders, salespeople, marketers and C-suite leaders. In sport, I have studied the best in motorsport, motorcycling, cycling, yachting, all codes of football, ice hockey and many others. More importantly, I have applied the principles these leaders endorse countless times, and I am doing so right now. My 4-Step Possibility System® has been designed so you can use it to live your purpose, crush your goals and achieve your aspirations. (By the way, feel free to improve it to suit your needs. I am just the son of a motor mechanic from Moonee Ponds, Australia who wants to see what is possible.)

The 4 Steps are as follows:



1. **Attitude and mindset:** Your *will* – your passion, resilience and desire
2. **Vision:** Your *why* – your dream, goal or purpose
3. **Strategy:** Your *what* – the keys to achieve your vision
4. **Action:** Your *how* – knowledge, process and skills

POSSIBILITY VERSUS TRUTH

‘Possibility’ is such a positive, uplifting word. It inspires hope, even when you are in a tight spot. It can make you feel empowered and like there is a way forward and a light ahead. What I like about possibility is that it’s contrarian; it flies in the face of facts, or the truth as we currently see it. One of my mentors, entrepreneur Paul Martinelli, says ‘Possibility is the flipside of truth’. It sounds controversial, doesn’t it?

In Australia, we are seeing some positive changes in financial services and wealth management. Some people in these industries are clinging to facts, while others have embraced possibility.

I have clients on both sides. The key difference is the approach of their leaders.

One of my clients operates in the packaging business and manages two big accounts. One day, he met with his first key account and heard that its leadership team was nervous about the potential economic downturn (apparently economists have a pretty poor record in accurately forecasting recessions, by the way), so his client needed to halve its orders for branded packaging for the next six months. Later that day he visited his second key account. Walking into the meeting he sensed a similar theme, and sure enough, the marketing manager opened the meeting by saying, 'Our leadership team has seen an economic downturn on the horizon'. My client's shoulders slumped. However, he was quickly revived when the manager went on to say, 'Given this, we think it is a unique opportunity to gain market share as we can buy in-store advertising for the lowest cost we have seen, so we want to double our usual orders for the next six months'. Same city, same day, same market; the difference was in attitude and mindset.

Clinging to 'facts' can cause us to miss many great opportunities. Often, supposed 'truths' are backed up by research that proves to be incorrect when it is examined from a different angle or approached later with the benefits of time and technology. Sometimes all it takes is for people to move past their self-imposed limitations. Here are some examples:

Before the early 16th century, it was thought the sun and planets revolved around Earth. We now understand Earth and the planets orbit instead around the sun, thanks to the theories of Copernicus who challenged the prevailing theory of his time.

Until the 1950s, experts and evidence had shown humans could not run a mile faster than four minutes (this was disproven by Englishman Roger Bannister, who asked 'How might I?' and famously did it).

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Speaking broadly, Isaac Newton's theories were superseded by Albert Einstein, who was then superseded by Stephen Hawking.

It was believed a monohulled yacht could not sail faster than 600 nautical miles in 24 hours (in 2015 my friend Ken Read and his crew on Comanche did 618 nautical miles in 24 hours).

In 2009 I competed in the World Masters Games in sailing, coming 6th overall in the Laser Radial Class. In 2017, I competed in the World Masters Games in Auckland in road cycling. If you had suggested to me in 2015 when I bought my first road bike that I would swap my lifejacket for lycra I would have laughed at you. But if it's possible for me, it's possible for you to shift gears too (pun intended!).

Am I saying that anyone can be anything they want if they just try hard enough and have a strategy? No. But I am saying that anyone can *be better* at what they want if they are willing to put in the time and effort it takes to do so. Certainly, there are physical and mental problems that can act as constraints, but many have shown that problems can be overcome with determination and perseverance:

Doug Flutie, star NFL quarterback, was told he was too short to play pro football.

Tom Dempsey, born without toes on his right foot and missing four fingers on his right hand, kicked the longest field goal in NFL history.

Quentin Kenihan was born with a rare bone disease and was confined to a wheelchair, yet he went on to star in his own TV show and in movies including Mad Max: Fury Road.

Ludwig van Beethoven overcame deafness and depression to become one of the world's greatest composers.

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Bethany Hamilton lost her left arm in a shark attack and still became a national champion surfer in the US.

Jessica Cox, born without arms, flies planes, drives cars, and holds a black belt in taekwondo.

Be very cautious about setting limits on people – including yourself.

BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF POSSIBILITY

In his book *Mentors*, Russell Brand outlines the 12 Steps he took to break his drug addiction. The first three are:

1. Admit you have a problem
2. Believe in the possibility of change
3. Ask for help and follow suggestions.

The second one is vital. We must genuinely believe in the possibility of something better, and we need to see and experience the possibilities that are open to us – even if it is only through visualisation. I still find this part hard, and it takes real concentration, focus and intentionality to seek out the possible. I know it can be done, and so do you. How many times have you heard yourself or someone else say, ‘I didn’t think that was possible, yet I have achieved it’? I am told drug rehabilitation programs that are run by people with lived experience of addiction are much more successful, because it is much easier to believe in possibility when you see someone like you achieve success.

That is the underlying reason I wrote this book. I am not a celebrity, I don’t have superpowers and I am not from a wealthy background. I am a dad from the suburbs in Australia having a go and seeing what is possible.

To order *It's All Possible* go to www.robhartnett.com/shop

