



Secrets to
Profit
from
Adversity



J O E R O B E R T S

Success against all odds

FOREWORD BY PETER LEGGE

7 Secrets to Profit from Adversity

Success Against All Odds

By Joe Roberts

Foreword by Dr. Peter Legge, LL.D. (Hon), CSP, CPAE, HoF

“Joe Roberts’ inspiring story is one of determination, courage and overcoming adversity that reminds us of the power of believing that anything is possible. It is testament to the strength of the human spirit and what you can achieve when you set your mind to it.”

Rick Hansen
Canada's Man In Motion

“Joe, thank you for your courage and vulnerability to share the details of the dark side of your life in this book so others can have hope! Gratefully I am glad your book doesn't stop there but you continue to give the reader a plethora of strategies and tools to go from just plain survival to success. All who read this book, no matter where they are today in life, will benefit greatly from your life experience and your research. Bravo Joe!”

David Sweet
President & CEO Promise Keepers Canada

“Joe’s incredible journey is a testament to human survival, perseverance and success against the odds. By transitioning poverty, addiction and homelessness his story gives us all hope that anything is possible if we have faith and dare to dream.”

Daniel Loney
President, Loney Financial

“Joe Roberts is one of those rare individuals that really walks his talk as you can see the evidence in the life he leads. His real life story and this book will make you look hard at what your true possibilities in life are. Stay tuned as I am sure we are going to be hearing much more from this individual who shares immediately usable tools that will forever change your life if you just accept and adapt them.”

Stuart Ellis Myers
President, Uniquely Speaking

“Few successful people have experienced the depths that Joe Roberts has and lived. He is a man who knows what it is to be truly “down,” and, more importantly, how to “get up.” The lessons he learned on the way to getting his life back provide a great strategy for anyone who wishes to reach higher than where they currently are. This is a story of the triumph of faith and the human spirit that will be a blessing to anyone.”

Ernie Culley
Pastor, Agape Life Center

Foreword by Dr. Peter Legge, LL.D. (Hon), CSP, CPAE, HoF

Experts say we can't rebound until we know we have reached bottom.

Life is a challenge for all of us but for some, life's challenges are truly monumental and one has to have great courage and faith to be an overcomer.

Joe Roberts is one of those people.

His story is truly compelling – a serious one-time cocaine and heroin addict, homeless and living on the seamy side of Vancouver's streets – his life was all but lost.

But the God that created him had new and different plans for his life. He reached down from heaven and reclaimed the miserable life of Joe Roberts. God showed him a new life full of promise and forgiveness.

This book, **7 Secrets to Profit from Adversity – Success Against All Odds**, can show you God's great compassion and love and His purpose for your life.

*John 10:10
I have come that you may have life in all its fullness.*

Joe Robert's story is raw, real, frightening and triumphant. It is a great read about a life lost and reclaimed by God.

Introduction

In 1989 I left the streets of Vancouver, B.C. Canada a broken, homeless drug addict. For over 10 years I lived a substandard life then something changed and my life began to get better. This book is a collection of my beliefs, my stories and most of all, my philosophy for successful living. Nothing happens without a dream. In 1989 all I could do was dream and dream I did. I dreamed of a day I would no longer feel the pain and degradation that had been my life. Today I am living proof that nothing is bigger than the spirit to win and reach for a better life. Despite all the obstacles we face, we **can overcome**, and live the life we imagine. We can truly profit from adversity. I learned that life doesn't give us what we deserve -- it gives us what we negotiate. My mission with this book is to help you negotiate what you want out of life. My hope is that it moves you, in its own way, in its own time, toward the change you want. They say change happens in an instant, a flash, in a moment. As you read this book may you have many such moments as the God in me touches the God in you.

Blessings,

Joe Roberts
Jan, 16th 2003

There is nothing better than adversity. Every defeat, every heartbreak, every loss, contains its own seed, its own lesson on how to improve your performance the next time. – Author unknown

Secret 1

The Secret of Adversity

Just like every summer on this day, I sat on the edge of the gorge and enjoyed the warm summer breeze. I reflected on the many experiences and years that have shaped my life. This is a special time of year for me. This particular day marks a milestone in my life.

I recently saw a movie that described life as a small collection of very good and very bad days. Today was the anniversary of one of my good days. In fact, it was the anniversary of my best day ever.

My custom is to return to this spot in the woods every year and reflect on my life. It has not always been this good. Some might even say it has been cruel and unfair. But as an optimist, I chose to find the good in life's lessons.

Time alone is precious; I spend it thanking God for who I am today. This silence allows me a few moments to think about how beautiful my life has become. Looking down into the deep ravine I can see for miles from my mountain perch. The sky is beautiful today – not a cloud in sight. It's summer in the Pacific Northwest, clear, warm, magnificent. The air is sweet with wildflowers; I hear the sounds of whiskey jacks and ravens circling the trees above. Off in the distance, I hear the rushing water of a stream cascading down my favorite mountain.

As I had done many times before, I brought with me my rose-colored prayer box. This "Prayer Box" is a simple, yet very effective tool I use in my professional and private life. It lets me gain clarity and direction on many issues. I started using it as a way to get ideas out of my mind and down on paper. I jot down a thought, a prayer, an uncertain feeling and drop it into the box. Periodically, I read the notes inside and amazingly, I always find the fears and feelings of uncertainty placed there, have passed. My prayers somehow answered.

I come to my special spot each year to reflect on my year's goals. Taking out the contents of my prayer box, I see the kind of progress I have made. Although the weather on this particular day was perfect, inside I felt cloudy. I was filled with indecision, fear and uncertainty. The past year had been particularly hard for me. I was going through yet another massive shift in my business life. The projects I wanted to complete were not even started. The commitment to move on this major change came with a tidal wave of fear. I was holding back even though this was my ultimate dream. Was I doing the right thing? Do I have what it takes? Can I move past those who say it can't be done? My anxiety leads to sleepless nights and my first grey hair.

Another glorious year had past, one filled with victory and many happy moments. Yet in my "prayer box" there was turmoil. There were unresolved fears and false beliefs. I closed my box and decided I wasn't going to worry about my troubles anymore. I was

going to let them all go and just enjoy the day on the mountain. Focusing on the spectacular view there on the craggy edge, I looked down into the valley 300 feet below. Beyond the rock cliffs on the other side of the gorge, off in the distance I could see my beloved Vancouver, British Columbia. It's a beautiful city, especially viewed from 3,000 feet up. I saw the massive sport stadiums nestled among the ultra modern skyscrapers, the famous Lions Gate Bridge and the outline of the world-renowned Stanley Park. The setting sun reflected on the towers of glass, as it sank behind the island mountain range. Something in me stirred. I found myself staring at my prayer box. It was an old shoebox that my wife, Jennifer, had at one time covered with gift paper adorned with soft pink roses. Suddenly I found myself compelled to do something so spontaneous and out of character it surprised me.

I picked up the box. Bending my knees I stood up, and I threw it into the air with all my strength. I watched as my box went up into the dusk-colored sky. It went up, up, up, until I no longer could see it. It disappeared out of my view and I remember thinking that I was going mad. Later that night I thought about my box and how it kept going up, up. Must have been an updraft or something. Whatever it was, my box was gone.

I was cold, homeless, penniless, and full of shame. How did my life end up like this? It was a Tuesday, the day before Welfare. As I stood in the lineup at the Salvation Army's Harbor Light, all I could think of was getting something to eat. I hadn't showered in weeks and I smelled of the street. My clothes were scrounged from friends and dumpsters, and my hair was dirty, long and matted. My teeth were yellow, fuzzy and unbrushed. I remember it like it was yesterday. The feelings of worthlessness and degradation were at the forefront of my every thought. At just 22 years old I had become a living failure. Homeless, jobless and dependent on alcohol and drugs to comfort my soul, I had turned to petty crime to survive.

I was dumping my self-pity and pain on my friend, Tony. He, on the other hand, had become comfortable with his plight. "Stop whining," he said, "better fed than dead Fred." I'm eternally grateful I never became comfortable with the down-and-out lifestyle. I'm thankful that my discomfort pushed me to the point of change. I have seen far too many good people lose their way in life, not because of their situation, but because of their acceptance of these circumstances. Tony eventually hung himself. I guess that was his way of dealing with his tormented world. I had a better idea, I was going to get out. I was going to make it.

It would be impossible to write a book about successful living without first telling you about my failure. In 1989 I was a homeless skid row derelict with a PhD in defeat. I spent 10 years of my life on the street fighting to stay alive until one day everything changed.

Success today is so important only because I have experienced the bitter taste of defeat. Failure came at an early age as a result of a series of poor choices. I started using drugs at the tender age of nine. I continued to use alcohol and drugs through my early teens and into my adult life. My recovery began at age twenty-four.

In my 15 years of abuse and self-degradation, there were a series of events that I permitted to happen out of poor decisions. I bought IPO stock to a second rate lifestyle. I paid premium for mediocrity and was given a default return on my investment. It was not until I took responsibility for my actions that my world began to change.

One of my presentations is titled, "One Day to Change Your Life Forever." That day for me was July 26, 1991. The day my life changed forever. I wanted more from life but I was so scared of the unknown. Sadly, I was becoming more and more comfortable with the pain and misery I knew. I was so afraid of change I was willing to endure my current state of hopelessness.

One day something finally stirred in me. Something deep down that said, "no more!" Over the years I've talked with many friends about "hitting bottom," I guess I finally hit mine. I did something that day that was remarkable, considering my mental, physical and emotional condition. I promised myself that life was going to change. There must be a better life out there. Surely I wasn't here only to suffer. I vowed I would make my life count for something, and would break free from my self-imposed imprisonment. I made my own declaration of independence and have spent the rest of my life fighting to stay true to it.

Immediately after my decision, life began to change. I found myself living with others who were on the same road. We began to share our experiences, our fears and our

suffering. Something happened when I shared my life with others who had felt this kind of pain. We began to identify with each other. Not through our individual circumstance, as our lives and paths were very different, but through our feelings, our emotions and mental anguish.

Today, as a professional speaker, I meet people from all walks of life and I have discovered something all people share. Every one of us has had to deal with adversity in our lives. Marriages dissolve, careers change, people get ill, loved ones die, and money is lost. We're all given our share of life to live and no one is exempt from the bumps and bruises. What I have today is a choice in how I will deal with the adversity I face.

I can choose to escape like I did for years or I can face today's challenges head-on. I know that no matter what life throws my way, the first defense I will always have is my choice of attitude. This simple, yet universal concept, is what I live by today. When life's storms come my way, I tell myself that nothing lasts forever, that this too shall pass, and I will be a better person with another experience behind me. I'm a strong believer in Winston Churchill's mantra, "Never, never, never, never, never, never give up!"

I don't presume to know what struggles you face, but I do know that we all have roadblocks. My message is simple. You are infinitely stronger than anything life sends your way. If you put all of your life challenges together in a pile and stood yourself beside them, you would see clearly that you are bigger than the sum of adversity. You are greater than any challenge, holding the power needed to overcome anything and everything life throws your way. If you don't believe me, ask me again. You are strong, you are powerful, and you have the strength and endurance to surpass any and all problems.

Why? Because your life proves it. Your pile of struggles hasn't conquered you yet! You're still here, and your adversity has made you stronger. I'm so thankful I learned life the hard way. I'm so grateful for the adversity and pain that I have faced. My experiences have shaped me into the man I am today. I wouldn't trade that for anything.

If you're in a place today where you are unable to fully buy into this concept, I want you to meet me half way. Believe that I believe. Know that others have been where you are now, going through something that feels like it has no end. Know that you are not walking this road alone, that many others have forged ahead and completed their personal journeys. These people are now your cheering section, waiting to welcome you on the side of victory once you've made it through.

For those of you who have made it, I welcome you home. For those on the journey, I shine my light your way and look forward to seeing you soon.

What challenges in your life have helped to shape your character?
What good lessons have you learned from a tragic life experience?

At the age of 24, I went back to school. As a high school drop out with no real career experience or skills, I was ready to prove myself with study and hard work. There was an advantage being a mature student, I wasn't interested in the social aspects of college. I was there to learn, get my diploma and tackle my dream. This focus helped me to eliminate things that were not going to help me achieve my goals. I also found out that I

was a pretty sharp guy. For years I thought I wasn't that bright, but when I applied myself I was astonished with the results.

As my studies progressed I discovered something interesting about life. I felt good when I accomplished something worthwhile; I enjoyed what I used to refer to as "work." I really liked each task and each project at school. I was gaining energy and momentum. With each success I began to feel that I could really do something constructive with my life. As the weeks and months passed, I felt myself growing stronger and each win brought more confidence. I became assured that my goals and dreams were attainable. When days were tough, I was able to remind myself from whence I had come. Even if I stopped progressing at that point, I knew I already had accomplished more than I ever expected or wished for. Having lived the last 10 years in extreme adversity, I knew I could handle anything that college or life could throw my way. I was leveraging my life's experiences and it was working for me. I had learned how to profit from my failure. I knew how to use these experiences to motivate and serve me well, instead of dragging my spirit down.

It was a Tuesday when I graduated. The sun was shining bright on our campus. The air was filled with excitement and I was the second proudest person in that auditorium. The first was my mom. As they called the names, each student paraded across the auditorium stage. My name was called next over the crackled PA system. They said, "Joe Roberts, Business Marketing, DEAN'S LIST!" There was a roar from my little section of the auditorium as my mom and some friends gave me a standing 'O.' What everyone else didn't know was that three years earlier I was living under a bridge as a skid row bum.

After college I decided I needed to look for work in a larger market. I considered Toronto or Vancouver. Toronto was familiar and it definitely had room for me to grow, but there was the whole winter thing. My second choice was Vancouver, the weather was certainly better and of course the winters were milder. You may think I was crazy making my choice based on climate but have you ever been in Ontario in January? Nothing fun about 20 below don't ya' know. I grew up shoveling snow and if I get my way, I'll never have to do it again.

I eventually made the decision to leave the East and make Vancouver my new home. With one more bold decision made, I packed up everything into a U-Haul truck, attached my 1982 Honda Civic and headed west for fame and fortune. I had estimated the amount of fuel needed, which I could put on my gas card. I could sleep in the truck cab to save money on hotels. And when I arrived, I could withdraw enough cash using credit card advances to last me approximately two months. My plan and new life was in motion. I was truly on my way. Life is most exciting when we are in a place of transition. It would seem that most of life is either on our way to something or on our way from something. For me it was both. As I enjoyed my drive across this wonderful country, I was excited and full of enthusiasm. I had dreamed about becoming successful and now my dream was only four days and 3,000 miles away.

As I drove over the bridge connecting Vancouver's Lower Mainland and the Trans Canada highway, I remember feeling overwhelmed with joy at the completion of my journey across Canada. I was so optimistic and filled with energy that I began pounding

my horn in jubilation! I knew things were going to be hard. But I was up for the challenge and looked forward to my new adventure. There was no turning back.

One advantage to my move out West was that I had my brother Jeff to lean on for a few days. I pulled into his driveway and parked the U-Haul. Within my first week, I got a lead from my sister-in-law Janine who told me her company, Minolta Canada, was always hiring new salespeople. I called up and got an interview the very next day. Not even unpacked, I crawled inside my U-haul truck to the back where my one suit was boxed. I dragged it out, pressed it as best I could and prepared for my interview.

The next morning I waited nervously before I was escorted into the sales manager's office. The gentleman I was about to meet was Lanny Flores, a man to whom I owe a great debt. He looked me up and down and then asked me a few questions about what I had been doing with myself. The one thing I had learned to do quite creatively, was adjust my resume to account for "lost" time. Lanny asked me all sorts of questions, ones that were irrelevant in my opinion. He asked me about life and family. He asked me what I wanted out of my career and where I wanted to go in the future. I looked him straight in the eye and said: "I want to be the best darn sales representative that I can be for Minolta Canada!"

I'm not sure if it was my determination, enthusiasm or the bad suit I was wearing. Whatever it was – it worked. Lanny hired me on the spot. He walked me into the General Manager's office and announced that I was Minolta's latest hire. I found out later that there was usually a two-stage interview process before being hired, but because Lanny liked me so much, he had decided to hire me on the spot. I would not disappoint him.

After the interview, I bolted back to my brother's place to tell him the good news. In less than five days I had located an apartment, hooked up my phone and cable, moved into my new pad and landed my first solid sales position. Life was new; life was good and all because of the action taken.

After two weeks of intense training, (the same amount of time it takes to create business cards), I was sent to the mean streets of Vancouver to earn my keep. I initiated my sales career in the downtown core. This was the scariest place for a new sales rep to be. This is where competition was its fiercest. As sales reps ascended in the elevators, their competitors would be descending. They would actually follow their competitor's delivery trucks to find out where the latest machines were being delivered and attempt to upset an active deal. I knew I was in a different league and I was scared.

Each office tower loomed above me, housing thousands of potential new prospects that would reject both me, and my product. I had to find a way to summon the courage to begin "cold-calling." I looked at the first tower and it was too big so I walked a little further down the street. The next building was too small. I continued down the row of office buildings until I was standing facing a vacant lot in Vancouver's notorious east side ghetto. There was old fencing and trash strewn about. There was graffiti and a little shanty village in the back corner of the lot, held together with an old blue tarp and orange pallets. I said to myself, "People on skid row don't buy photocopiers and I ought to know." I lived on skid row for a number of years and not one of my friends, cronies or buddies had ever owned or negotiated the sale of a copier or fax machine. I stood there

speechless for a brief moment and then decided that I had to bust a move soon or my whole day would be wasted.

I turned tail and headed for the first building within walking distance. It was a modest 12-story building with business offices on every floor. The elevator moved slowly from floor to floor. I had committed myself to cold call the entire building. The seemingly ancient elevator creaked its way even closer to my destination in professional sales. I felt my stomach flip once and then flip back again. "DING," the elevator opened. I charged out and headed for the end of the long hallway. I swung open the first door I set my eyes on and my life dream became a reality. This was the day I became a professional salesman.

I didn't call on the entire 12 floors that day, but I did make a gallant effort. I gathered about 25 business cards and called it a day. It would later turn out that within 90 days, I would convert and close three sales, from that first group of 25 calls.

I would love to tell you that my wins continued so easily but they didn't. I struggled many days just working up the nerve to sell the product I represented. I suffered from "cold call reluctance" and every call I made was a challenge. There was one time I left an office and on the way out, I heard the guy make fun of my pitch. He was mocking what I had said to the rest of the office. I'm sure he didn't mean to hurt my feelings as much as he did and I don't think he realized that the door was left open for me to hear his mockery. I left the building immediately and quit for the day. I vowed to myself that one day I would become a millionaire and the joke would be on him. Whoever you are and wherever you may be today, I want to thank you sir, for the fuel that pushed me further that day.

Lanny used to joke with me on days I would call in "sick." I just didn't want to cold call. He would say to me, "Do you want to die now or later?" Through his thick Filipino accent, the only thing I heard was, "Do you want to dine out later?" He was a great leader. He knew when to push and when to just be a friend. I wish everyone could have the pleasure of working with a great leader like Lanny. Lanny is from the "old school." He came to Canada in the late 1960s and earned his way to the top of one of Vancouver's largest copier companies. Really, he sold his way to the top. His performance was hard to beat and it was all done with integrity and hard work. No sneaky games for Lanny, he was the real article. I was learning a lot, just by observing how Lanny went about his work.

In the beginning, I had no money to spare. I was busy paying off credit card debts I had accumulated from my move out West. Because of this I bought my clothes second-hand at the Salvation Army. I thought no one would notice but they did. Lanny would buy me lunch, sometimes twice a week. He told me that once I earned my first big paycheck then I could buy lunch. He introduced me to sushi and he also introduced me to a kind of leadership that begins in the heart. Not something well explained in books. He introduced me to three ideas. Most importantly, always be kind. Second, always remember that everything you do should be done for someone else. For example, always buy lunch for the new guy! Today I buy lunch everyday and encourage every sales manager out there to buy your people lunch. Last but not least, get to know your people and remember to show them how much you appreciate them. I can't tell you who won the World Series in 1995. I can't remember last year's Noble Peace prize winner. I can't even tell you who won an Oscar last year. I can, however, tell you the names of

the men and women who have taught and guided me. I remember each teacher and hero that touched my life. Lanny is one of them.

Within a very short time, I mastered my selling skills at Minolta and left to move into a sales management role, selling audio-visual business equipment for an American-based company. It was here I met my future business partner. We connected immediately and I knew our friendship and careers were somehow going to be aligned.

Many years have passed since my faith-driven beginnings with Mindware Design Communications and I am so grateful for what I have been blessed with.

Today, I am married to the most beautiful woman in the world. I am debt-free and hold two honor degrees from college. I made my first million in sales before I was 35 years old. By society's standards, I have all the trappings of success. So how did this all come about? Simple. I learned how to profit from failure. Today, I enjoy a life like no other. I learned how to take my life from skid row to profit from adversity and to become the leader I am today.

The lessons I have learned along my journey I wish to share with you in this book. The ideas are universal and can be applied to any struggle or challenge you may be experiencing. If you have found this book and have experienced challenges in your life, give yourself a break and read the next few pages. My hope is to show you that failure is never final and that **you don't have to be up to look up!**

Have you ever been faced with such a dilemma or problem that you felt there was no solution? Have you ever felt like giving up? Have you ever been faced with something that seemed so much bigger than the resources you have? I know I have! Everyone I meet and talk with has admitted that at some point in their lives they have faced an obstacle that seemed overwhelming. These same people have admitted that everything did work out fine in the end. For some, it was illness or the death of a loved one. For others, it was their career or a financial situation. For some, it was a family dilemma or domestic concern. Whatever your crisis, there is a solution, even though it is hard to see at times.

In 1991, succeeding in the business world seemed like such an unattainable goal. Today it is my reality. I had every legitimate reason in the world to tell you why I could not succeed. I was a high school drop out, I had no connections, I was unemployable, and I was homeless. There was one voice, however, that I could not silence. It was the still, quiet voice in my heart that said, "YES, YOU CAN!" I could not deny this voice. I tried to shake it and ignore it, but it wouldn't cease until I finally agreed that yes, I really could succeed **if I wanted to**. This choice for success was the beginning of the greatest adventure and set of victories in my life. It was also the beginning of an enormous amount of hard work.

Nothing worth going after in life is easy, especially when you see yourself as an underdog. Many days and nights I wanted to quit. I felt I couldn't go another step. I did, and today I'm glad I did. I also learned that I am not alone in my journey. Many before me have overcome their perceived limitations and succeeded beyond their wildest dreams. Many more will go further than me. I am just a humble journeyman on the road of life. A road with a few extra twists and turns. I just took the long way home.

Another interesting thing I've learned is that tremendous success and glory can often be born of what we perceive as failure. I once had the pleasure of reading about a man in America who was born in a log cabin, experienced poverty as a child, received less than one year of formal education in his life, lost his mother when he was 10, three of his four children died very young, and he had failed at many career attempts. He finally did succeed at something. His name was Abraham Lincoln. He will always be remembered for accomplishments that followed many earlier setbacks. His failure helped build his character, his resolve and his faith.

What setbacks have you experienced in your life? Do you think they have made you stronger? How have they strengthened your faith? Are they keeping you from living your dreams? Are they worse than Abe's? If they are, then get excited for the glory you will undoubtedly experience in the days to come. Nothing is sweeter than victory over a personal demon. Holding your head up high and saying "YES! I made it through that, and I am stronger for the experience."

What if I told you that your past does not define you at all? What if I told you that every mistake you have made will have no bearing on what your future holds? What if I told you that you could not fail at anything you believe you can achieve? What if your future dreams and hopes, are a reality waiting for you to experience? Well, it's true! I may not have every answer in this book to explain the nature of positive thinking or successful living but I can tell you this, I went from being a street person to a CEO. I transcended a life of degradation, hopelessness and pain to a life of success, privilege and happiness.

I learned that no matter what has happened *from this moment forward, your future is spotless*. Let me say it again because this is the most important idea in this chapter: **"From this moment forward your future is spotless!"** Whatever mistakes or shortcomings you have experienced in your life up until now no longer will need to define where you go from here. For years I let my past define me. Ironically, the title of this very book highlights where I have been. The fact is we can choose to do, be, or experience anything we want in life regardless of what we have done in the past. Ultimately, the one thing no one can take from us is our thoughts, our dreams and goals.

So what's stopping you from really going for it? What's preventing you from breaking out and living your dream? Is it fear? Is it false beliefs? Fear was probably my greatest enemy. I used to worry about everything. I worried about money, rejection, health and a multitude of other issues. I guess that makes me human. I think most people struggle with some kind of apprehension. It would seem that fear is the biggest inhibitor on the road to success.

As a business leader and professional speaker, the last thing I wanted to do was to tell people about my life's failures. These are details I would have liked to keep private. My hesitation almost prevented me from being a speaker. I am so grateful I pushed through my fears. I also recognize that I spend way too much energy worrying about issues that never materialize. I once read that 92% of the things we worry about never happen.

Let me ask you a question. Could you list five major concerns you had on this day exactly one year ago? When this question was posed to me it was hard to come up with a single one. The fact is that most things we worry about are minor in the grand scheme of things. Most of what drives us nuts or worries us does not deserve the kind of

attention we give it. Where do you want to focus your attention and energy today, on the problem or on the solution?

Everyday I meet extraordinary people, people like you. People who have gifts, talents and noble goals and dreams. I have been blessed with one of the greatest gifts -- the ability to take part in the success of others. To play even a small role and see someone take a risk and make it, is a joy I can't express.

The other side of this is that I also meet many who I know have the resources to achieve success, never manage to get their ideas off the ground. Whether they've wanted to improve their sales or be an entrepreneur, there seems to be something holding them back. I think more folks are as equally afraid of success as they are of failure. I don't know all the factors but have managed to narrow down a few key ideas.

The inspiration I had to change my life came from outside of me. They say that a problem cannot be solved by the mind that created it. Well, I can attest to that. This is why I need other people to set examples for me. People's stories of redemption and triumph stay with me. If they could do it, I could do it. I still feed on this basic idea and sustain hope from others. It is only through the help of others that I have made it this far.

There was one particular man I met in the southwestern United States in my early years of recovery that did just that for me. To this day he is one of my heroes. His name is Reg. He was an incredible example of courage and hope. At the tender age of 18, he made a mistake that would alter his life forever. He was drinking one night and decided to drive his pick-up truck home, despite his drunken state. He tells the story of how he woke up in the hospital two days later and could not remember anything that had happened. He remembers looking down the bed at his feet and seeing only one. Reg had crashed his truck and banged himself up very badly. The accident was so severe his right leg had been amputated. If you knew Reg before the crash, you knew he was an active guy. He played sports, enjoyed skiing and swimming. He loved life and played hard. This was devastating for him. What happened over the next few years is not uncommon, he slipped into depression. He drank heavily and withdrew from the world. In deep despair and wallowing in self-pity, he moved to Denver, Colorado.

On arrival in Denver, he stayed with a guy named Tiny Texas Tom. Funny though, Tiny Texas Tom was from New Jersey. He was 6 foot, 7 inches tall and weighed 300 pounds. He was this larger than life "character" you might expect in a Disney movie. One thing was certain, he had a heart of gold, a surplus of positive energy and he believed in people. Tom saw no limitations or obstacles, only opportunity. As the days went by, the Texan from New Jersey tried to encourage Reg to get active again. He saw beyond Reg's disability and included him in everything. He didn't see Reg as disabled and he tried hard to get Reg to share his view.

One sunny Sunday afternoon they were sitting on the porch looking down their little tree-lined street and Tom said, "Hey Reg, you see that mountain bike at the far end of the porch? I think you can ride that!"

Reg replied, "I hate to break the news to you Tom, but I only have one leg." At this, Tom erupted into a belly laugh that could be heard in three states. He persisted by going over and picking up the bicycle. He grabbed Reg, who at this point had very little choice in the matter, and sat him on the bike. Reg protested that he could not ride this bicycle

because his only foot kept slipping off the low spot on the sprocket cycle. “Don’t move,” Tom bellowed as he ran into the house. In a moment, he was back with a roll of gray duct tape. Quickly he wrapped Reg’s foot securely to the pedal and pushed him on his way.

Reg described what happen next. He glided down the street with the wind in his face and for the first time since his accident, Reg was mobile. He began to weave and feel the motion of the bike and it felt good. There was only one obstacle left to conquer – the stop sign at the end of the street. Needless to say, Reg’s first bike ride was not without its bumps and bruises. However, with a few modifications, Reg now was riding his bike all over Denver’s city streets. If you saw Reg, you would also see his red mountain bike underneath him.

As time went on, Reg’s love for cycling increased. He competed at city and regional levels and won. What was amazing is that he was racing against two-legged competitors and beating their pants off. He recalled to me the day he knew his life had been completely transformed. He was invited to compete in the U.S. National competition hosted in Ohio. The starter’s pistol sounded and he felt a surge of energy. Within the first mile of the race, he pulled away from the pack, leaving behind some of the best cyclists in America. By the end of the race, Reg had beaten his closest competitor by more than four minutes. Reg had become the best cyclist the country had ever seen and he did it with just one leg.

After winning the Nationals, Reg was approached by an agent who told him that he had a special gift and that if he didn’t train professionally he was a fool. He needed no time to decide. Immediately, with a full sponsorship, Reg began training for the Olympics in Barcelona, Spain.

One particularly cold but crisp sunny fall morning outside of Denver, Reg was climbing along a steep mountain road and passed two other experienced cyclists. As he went by, he overheard the one man say, “Let’s go Ernie, I’m not going to let no one-legged guy beat me up this mountain.” Reg’s competitive spirit kicked in. He smiled and decided to give these bikers a ride they wouldn’t soon forget. He sped ahead, never letting the pair behind him get too far away. He was secretly enjoying the labored and exasperated breathing noises coming out of the two stragglers. Of course Reg beat them to the top but what happened next was special. The man who made the ugly comment walked up to Reg and said, “Sir, I want to shake your hand, I’ve been climbing this mountain for 15 years and I have never climbed as fast as I did chasing you today. You are an inspiration to me.”

With tears in his eyes, Reg stood atop this great hill looking over the snow-capped Rocky Mountains that surround Denver, he began to think back to a time in his life when things were bad. Hindsight being 20/20, he now could see clearly that his path in life needed to take this twist in order for him to be molded into the person he is today. He said a little prayer of thanks and continued on his ride.

Reg went on to compete at the Barcelona Olympic Games. He didn’t get a Gold Medal, but by then he was already a winner, because he had learned how to profit from adversity. I live my life trying to be more like him each day. Reg is one of my heroes.

God gave me the wonderful gift of adversity. He gave me enormous strength to see me through my experiences. He gave me a way to love and reach people who may struggle in life. He gave me a story that can help young people make better decisions in life. He gave me the gift of succeeding beyond adversity, which allows me to connect with business people on topics of sales, leadership and motivation. He gave me a life filled with pain and sadness, and then showed me the way out. I am so glad I had a hard life!! It's really true. What better way to talk about positive thinking and choosing an attitude of success than to know life from both sides?

I also know that today, my experience on skid row is more of a metaphor than anything for most people. There are days that I still end up on skid row in my mind. It's a place of desperation and fear of the unknown. I know many people whose lives and circumstances have not physically taken them to a ghetto, but mentally and emotionally they have experienced it. Our challenge is to face each day's reality as we search for meaning and purpose.

The fact that I have experienced much pain and adversity in my life is what truly makes me effective today. To omit the greatest failures in my life is to ignore the source of my success. We are molded and shaped by our experiences. Who we are today usually is a direct reflection of our past experiences, but it doesn't have to define our future.

I was a homeless street person living in doorways and under bridges in Vancouver's notorious drug-infested East End. My life was a series of let downs, disappointments, painful experiences, suffering circumstances, and very bad choices. I finally was confronted with an ultimatum. Face the fear, pain and uncertainty of changing the course of my life or face death.

On July 26, 1991, I chose to live. Since that day I have made a conscious choice to live each day. I chose life over death. I chose sobriety over drugs. I chose dreams over nightmares. I chose to make life count, one day at a time. I now choose to share my experience with others in hopes that my wisdom and experience will help to move others closer to their dreams and goals.

I stand proud today and I also stand naked for all to judge. I have combined my story along with a map for successful living. My goal is to fill your mind with the idea that anything is possible from this day forward. That you, yes *you*, can become all you dream and hope to be. All your dreams, aspirations and life goals can be accomplished if you set your mind to it. You can overcome any obstacle, see past any challenge and turn your failures into your greatest assets. Listen closely to what is written next, it is what my success is built on. No matter how bad things may look today, no matter what beliefs you may have about yourself or the world around you, no matter how grand or humble your specific dreams may be, they are possible. Not because I say so. Not because someone told me, but because after enormous personal change in my own life, I am part of the evidence.

What challenges have you had to overcome?

It's the bottom of the ninth, bases are loaded with two out. It's a full count. You're down to the last pitch. Your fans are cheering you on...what's it going to be?

Life begins now. Here and now! What are you going to do?

Seven Questions

1. What are the greatest challenges facing you today?
2. How have they changed your view of the world and life?
3. How will these experiences shaped your family, your community, and your career?
4. How can you help yourself and others through your experience?
5. How will you continue to thrive, despite your problem and perceived disadvantage?
6. What do you use to inspire and motivate your success?
How can you turn you greatest failure into your greatest asset?

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The remaining chapters are titled as follows:

Secret 2	If It's Going to Be, It's Up to Me
Secret 3	Building Your Life Manifesto
Secret 4	Your Declaration of Independence
Secret 5	On Your Mark, Get Set, Grow
Secret 6	Who's Driving Your Bus?
Secret 7	Becoming a Hero in the Age of Celebrities

If you are interested in ordering “7 Secrets to Profit from Adversity – Success Against All Odds”, you can reach us at:

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About the Author

Joe Roberts is an expert on personal development and inspirational change. In 1989 he was living on the streets of Vancouver as a homeless skid row derelict. Today he is the CEO of Mindware Design Communications. He is a dramatic example of courage and determination.

When he speaks of improving lives, he speaks from personal experience. From his days on the streets of Vancouver to the stress and challenges of running a business during tough times, he draws on his real-life experience and teaches how anyone can tap into the unconquerable power of the human spirit and rise above adversity.

He is an internationally sought after professional speaker who motivates and inspires audiences with his “YES I CAN” attitude.

In his spare time he supports The Courage to Change Foundation, a society dedicated to youth drug prevention and education.

He is both a husband and father of one and enjoys his new home with Jennifer and Sarah in Coquitlam, BC.

Walk in the shoes of a former penniless drug addict. Learn the attitude and philosophy that changed one man’s living hell into a classic Rags-to-Riches story of success. Enriched your next conference or convention with one of the most unique professional speakers on the circuit today.

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