



VIDEO

These spectacular navy pilots fly 18 inches apart at speeds of up to 700 miles per hour. They are the ultimate example of precision at work. And how they prepare is amazing. They put aside all distractions and direct their minds to their mission and then focus on it so intently that it becomes reality.

It's called chair flying and this is what it looks like.

VIDEO

Can you see in your mind exactly where you wanna go as a leader?

Most people have trouble, because their vision is clouded by too many projects, plans, and tasks. Leadership of precision, That's the goal, but the sheer number of our responsibilities crushes us before we have a chance.

Now the truth is that I teach precision, but like all of us I don't always have precision, and it can make my world go off course.

Before I share the story to illustrate this, a little context: When my book came out in 2021 with HarperCollins, it led to some really spectacular experiences, and my favorites were the people that I got to meet. I had lunch with Simon Sinek. I met Katie Couric, one of my all-time girl crushes. I met the fabulous John Cleese - Adam Grant - it was amazing. Now take that experience and just put it on the shelf for a moment.

We have gotten to know each other a bit so I will tell you something personal, I see a therapist. Its enormously helpful, it's like a workout for your soul. I was a little hesitant at first to go into therapy, but I was living in California at the time, and it's just the law.

My therapist's name is Katie Corrigan, she's terrific in addition to insightful counsel, she allows me to do something unusual. If I'm in between and having a hard day she allows me to vent my feelings into a voice memo to her, and she always listens and responds.





A few months ago, I really needed this, I had way too many plates spinning, too many projects all at the same time, my head was not clear and on top of it I had this huge fight with my husband.

I felt really unhinged so I went for an angry walk, and I let it all out in a voice memo to Katie. It was not pretty, but that's what I love so to appreciate about the privacy of the medium. And I quickly sent it and got back to my life.

In our next session I mentioned to her that unusually she did not respond to my voice memo. She said I did not get a VM from you. I went to my sent file and found that I did send it. But not to Katie C-o-u--r-r-i-g-a-n. I sent it to Katie C-o-u-r-i-c.

To Emmy and Peabody award winning journalist Katie Couric with a subject line reading "Please listen ASAP"

I called her and she was very gracious. She said deleted it, I chose to believe her, and when I told my family the story my middle son said "Momma maybe you should change Katie's contact in your phone to read Katie - capital letters - therapist and then you should change everyone else in your phone to say first name - capital letters - not therapist.

When we try to do too many things, we pay a price. It's from an absence of precision.

Every leader in this room has a plan for the coming year. But on the way there, it's likely they've been seduced into taking on too many different lines of effort.

The temptation to pack the list is intoxicating. That new market expansion, the digital transformation initiative, opening new campuses or locations and customer experience overhauls. Saying "yes" feels like progress—and it's tempting to believe more priorities equal more success.

You can probably think right now of all the plates that you are spinning because leaders tend to be gluttonous at the buffet. We think we're on a cruise ship with our giant planning platters piled high with new initiatives, new products, campaigns and a thousand other tasks and changes to lay upon people.

But in spreading the peanut butter that thin you're gonna rip the bread. You're juggling twelve balls; your competitor is perfecting one throw.





Cautionary tale. In 2003, LEGO, one of the world's most beloved toy brands, stood on the brink of collapse. They were \$800 million in debt and losing \$1 million a day. In their panic the management made a classic mistake -they tried everything at once, hoping something would stick- video games, theme parks, clothing lines and educational materials. They lost sight of what Lego truly stood for: the superb click-and-brick wonder toy that parents around the world hate to step on. The new CEO Jorgen Knudstorp had to spend months systematically dismantling everything that didn't serve LEGO's core purpose. This reductive effort saved the company.

Conversely, a company like SpaceX has a mantra that overrides every mission from the start: "What can we remove?" If you see the progression here of the Raptor 3 engine, you can see that reduction leads to beauty, simplicity, and power.

Whatever your goal is—accelerating growth, driving revenue - your solution will be found in the 3Fs:

Focus, focus focus- and today I'm gonna share my favorite methodology for getting you there.

Since the last time that I was with you, I've had a fascinating turn in my career. I've been spending more than 50% of my time - with the US military: Air Force, Special Operations, Army- helping them drive better operational efficiency. It's been the most thrilling work I've ever done.

True I can't stop giggling about the AF call signs. Every night my husband asks me for the names of my newest friends- Donk, Refund, Mako, Cruiser, (these are all real) Bonzai, Bandit and Scorch.

I even had one guy in Special Ops working on getting me a security clearance. But this might be a very bad idea for the nation since given my history I might end up sending state secrets to Katie Couric.

Here's what we discovered. The military has very similar problems in keeping the mission in its sights. There is always a creep of too many other things to do. AF calls this all thrust and no vector.

So, I developed a one-day leadership experience to help their top commanders. Turns out it's incredibly helpful process for any team of corporate or organizational professionals.





This picture is from the ACC, Air Combat Command's headquarters office, 30 minutes before this, my favorite session. You're looking at a table where leaders are about to make the hardest decisions in command: what to stop doing.

The objective of the day is called strategic choice—the narrowing of priorities. Whether it is military or corporate, we spend an entire day cutting, stripping away, letting go and vanquishing misguided effort—and it's glorious.

Today, my time with you is going to be spent teaching you to do exactly the same process with your team. You will learn to make room.

- Make room for precision
- Make room for innovation
- And Make room for people to take a minute to think

And you know why this is so perfect for this very moment. Because it's GLS you're about to get a bunch more great ideas that you will want to implement, so you're going to need the habit and skill of making room.

There are going to be a lot of tools and terms. Don't worry, just take the ones that hit you in the forehead.

Seth Godin said, "You do not need more time. You simply need to decide.

" A strategic choice day gives you the scaffolding to do just that.

It's built upon one framework: the reductive mindset. Reductive has another meaning in the English language, but here we're talking about math: to reduce the load, reduce the pile, reduce the rocks in the rucksack.

It is very different from other strategies of making work better.

There's prioritization — that's putting all the rocks in the right order, valuable, but different. There's improvement, making the pile better—again, relevant, but different. Only reduction is reduction — to make the pile smaller.

And it's gonna to be a fight, because this is not how people think.

There is an organization whose name you would know that has 184 active dashboards. They even have a dashboard to monitor how many people are using the dashboards.

Follow me here—it gets twisty. Even though the dashboard-monitoring dashboard shows that very few people are utilizing the dashboards, they still do not kill any of the dashboards. Why? Because it is a custom of our people to add and never subtract.





Another thing that makes this work hard is a bias called the IKEA effect. (IKEA is a Swedish retailer known for affordable furniture that customers assemble themselves.) The IKEA effect says that people have a disproportionate affection for anything that they have helped build even if. So, everyone wants to protect their “thing”, and that’s very normal.

Along the way, you’re going to have to drop some gold, because it isn’t hard to cut bad projects and bad plans. What’s hard to cut good ones in favor of great. Dropping gold is scary, but sometimes you have to do it to get where you’re heading.

My Jewish grandparents in the pogroms had to flee Russia. They were wealthy but they didn’t keep their money in a bank or in a mattress. They kept their money in gold, in bags in the basement. When they had to run, they couldn’t carry it, and had to leave it behind. Hard as it may be, you’re may to have to drop some gold to get where you are going.

And if you ever feel guilty about cutting just say this to yourself: “We are not infinite, but the work is.”

Here, too, as Craig said, we need to embrace boring. Newness has dopamine. Variety has dopamine. But sticking with the core tasks that are actually central and seeing them through with focus, that’s the boring work that leads to success.

You only win when you push through all of those discomforts. But push we MUST, because reduction is the ticket to liberating talent and gaining altitude in our work. The camaraderie and the structure I’m about to lay out for you will make it much easier.

For a little inspiration, let me tell you how possible this is.

Chick-fil-A did some reductive work that we helped on. They saved 15 hours per person per month by just installing this lens.

Salesforce streamlined their ways of working and gained a 19% increase in time for meaningful work.

The 552nd Air Force Wing at Tinker in Oklahoma reclaimed 6,000 airman hours of just from adopting these habits.





There's fat everywhere. In our diagnostic work in our company that us as JFG, we see 10-30% of people's time going toward what we call wasted payroll. It's a tragic use of talent and money. Being reductive gets after that problem. and bonus, if you make people's job easier, they will work harder for you.

The Strategic Choice day follows a model called the Spin Launcher, a five-step Reductive Journey: Generate, Separate, Evaluate, Eliminate, Liberate.

Let's start with Generate.

I'm going to give you the menu of options that we use to generate ideas. Again, don't worry about remembering all of them - just note the ones that really get you.

To start the day, you're going to give everybody a couple pads of Post-its and a sharpie, and you set them free with this beautiful pump primer: "I wish we could stop blank."

I can stand in front of a C-suite or a military group; we work this slide for hours because once you unlock people's permission to talk about the things they wish they could stop doing, they just flow and flow.

Ask them to put one idea on each Post-it and put them on the table in front of them.

You can also use other prompts as you sit together. Take a look at battle rhythm reduction or cadence. Where can daily things move to weekly? Where can weekly move to monthly, monthly to quarterly, quarterly to yearly?

You should be looking around the room, and the Post-it notes are beginning to accumulate.

You can try the seasonal sweep. It is another idea for getting inputs. Start in January, open up everybody's calendars, and you start going month by month, let the calendar remind you of which areas of the year have overwhelming projects and plans. Busy season, annual conference season, major holidays.

You might even have an insight in the people area. You know that one person in your team who your gut is screaming that you need to let go of. Is it time? Put them on a post it.





As you proceed you will see that there are two main types of reductive targets -tuna or krill. The Atlantic tuna is a ginormous fish. If you were to catch this beauty, you'd eat well for a long time. Conversely, you could go for a small but mighty protein source like krill. These are teeny-beeny crustaceans so abundant that their biomass on this planet is larger than all of mankind.

Most enthusiastic newcomers to the reductive mindset are looking for tuna. They want to cancel a three-day off-site, pull out of an international market, or drop a multiyear project. They want the hearty thwap of a big tuna of corporate waste hitting the deck.

But I like the krill. It's a better place for most of you to begin. Shaving off 5 minutes of a meeting, cutting bullet points in a report, or cutting word count in an email. And krill won't rip out your shoulder as you try to reel it in.

You can also try subtask reduction. This is to take pieces of a task and remove components instead of removing the task or project entirely. I needed this. I did this session for the C-suite of a major cosmetic firm in New York City. All glass fancy-schmancy office with a non-stop espresso machine, execs ready to go. The CEO comes in and said, "I have 240 projects slated for this year, and I'm not cutting any of them." Now that's what I call modeling. What did we do? We did eight hours of subtask reduction. We pulled out the reporting, components, and approval processes layered within those 240 projects, and we found plenty of goodness to cut.

If you want to walk into the session with a really rich menu, consider doing pre-work.

Conduct a diagnostic. We are so passionate about doing diagnostics because far too many organizations change happens from a catalyst of executive opinion and instinct.

A diagnostic makes the real truth stand still.

Or you could create what we call a HATE map. You send out a survey asking your teams for the most frustrating aspect of work and grade the responses by color as you would temperature or weather. Extra credit if you're brave enough to post it publicly.

These assets can really get the reductive conversation going.

What's next? Separate. We're going to separate the Post-its into things that we can control and things we can't.





This is a can't-control board from a military group that was working with us, and there are numerous reasons for having a can't-control board in every session - and by the way every single office.

The many things that you can't control can become a spectacular rationalization ignoring the things you can. By separating the Post-its into two piles—can and can't control—we do a few things.

One, we contain the can't-control items. We make them sort of sit still so that we can take our time, talent, and energy and put it to the things that we can control. Secondly, we create a repository that can then be transcribed and touched back to every three months or six months.

Now, we evaluate. It's going to get a little grueling. You're going to go through the Post-its, and you won't get through all of them, but someone will be brave and start, and you begin debating: Should we let it go? Should we keep it? Should we shrink it? The number one lens that you want to be orienting yourself toward is mission proximity.

How close is this task to the reason we are here?

I'll give you an orientation to play with next: the R's and P's.

The four R's of high-value work are revenue, reputation, reward, and readiness. If you're working on making money, getting your brand to be known and loved, giving people a sense of accomplishment in their work, or training development, readiness, prep, then you're probably doing high-value work.

But sadly, that's not where we spend a lot of our time.

We spend it in the P's: panicking, pandering, procedure, and padding. Panicking is any work that is chosen in haste, projects out of impulse without forethought. Pandering means some big shot wants something, you know it's a diversion, but you're too scared to say no. Procedure, we all understand that, and it's absolutely rampant. Padding is all those extra word counts, extra people, extra emails.

One of our Air force wings knew their reports were so padded that they put in one report that an Asteroid hit the base. No one ever noticed.

Alright time to eliminate. Exciting. Eliminate is where we have to move from conversation to action. If you don't do this purposely, if you don't do this proactively as a phase, people will just continue to talk and talk and discuss.





So, we have to step over the line. Stepping over the line means that someone in the room says the phrase,

"I suggest" or "I propose." We are now going to move to actually eliminating things.

I now will introduce to you the second whiteboard that sits at the front of the room, which is the WINS board. Whenever we decide on something to eliminate, it goes on the WINS board.

Nothing goes on the WINS board without having an owner (who is actually going to take action) and a deadline (by which date.)

Someone in the room, ideally an e.a. is taking notes and creates an accountability document for these critical follow-up activities.

I just want to throw in a little bit of caution here to say sometimes we can get up in a minimalistic lather in these sessions and overcut. You know that moment when you've watched too many minimalism documentaries and you suddenly realize that you've thrown away your favorite pair of pants? Sometimes that's not the worst thing in the world, and you can put things back, but just pace yourself and realize that you don't have to make decisions in the room about everything.

All of this focus on the reductive mindset is to do one thing, and that is the fifth step: to liberate your people, to take every single beautiful spark of their talents and energy and make sure that it is firing on valuable, important work.

A lot of people think, "Oh, this is going to be great, and it's going to be like plastic surgery. We're going to cut and cut and cut, and then everything will be beautiful forever."

Sadly, that is not true.

The correct metaphor for the work I've described is a haircut. Cut a little, and waste grows back; cut a little, and it grows back again.

The haircut prescription: you should have an individual reductive trim, about an hour a month. That means you schedule one hour every month just to take things away from your schedule. Then, maybe a team trim, three hours per quarter.

Even more exciting is to take this process of strategic choice and cascade it down into your organization. If you take my tutelage today and you do this session with your direct reports, then they can do it with their direct reports, and onward.





It's wonderful to make what's called a Kanban board after you're done, where you put all the stuff up somewhere public. You have everything on the left in the reductive to-do column, and then as you go into the working section, you move to the right, and in the done section, you can see a visual confirmation of all that you've cut.

What does this provide for your team? More and more and more altitude because the Spin Launcher ascent path just keeps people going upward and upward as you liberate and liberate.

There are a couple of executive maintenance behaviors that it will be very important for you to employ after you do this session, in between all of your haircuts.

Number one: executives, buy a big freezer. Every executive is a wonderful yet annoying fountain of endless great ideas. Me If you continue to put them directly from your brain - to your lips - to your people for action, your employees will become continuously overloaded between haircuts.

Ideas will come from other places besides you, and you will feel as if they have been ordained. Just because one church member says you should have a daycare for dogs doesn't mean you need to do it. Put them in the freezer, wait till the right time, sleep on it, until make sure it's right to share with others.

Next, share publicly your don't do list. A lot of executives keep a Not to do list- a list of things that they're disciplining themselves not to start yet. When you share it, you're trapping yourself into a public promise, and it's much, much harder to sneak back in and cheat.

Lastly, consider one of the favorite things that I've ever done in our work, called The Year of No New Things. This was 2022 for us, and we realized, you know, we have plenty of core objectives we could dedicate ourselves to getting better and better at. Why don't we focus on those before we add any new things? In 2022, we did just that. We took new clients, but we didn't do any new projects, any new plans, any new initiatives, and it was so fabulous.

Lots of bosses get mad at me if I mention the "Year of No New Things" in front of their people because as soon as employees hear about this, they are just dying for this golden ticket.





Speaking of those employees, it's August, so very soon, strategic planning season will come, and you'll be designing the agenda for 2026. I want to remind you you're going to be handing every single one of your wonderful team a backpack, and you get to decide how many rocks to put in it. If you want them to climb, you might want to be really, really mindful about every one.

I've given you a huge amount in a small time, so I do not want you to miss your take-home resources. This is so important. If you go to the GLS online guide and click my picture, you can get not only my full deck but also the script of my speech and a facilitator guide for you to go home and do strategic choice with your leadership team. Make a note right now somewhere prominent to make sure that you do that.

And I absolutely love to hear from you and hear your reduction stories. Please contact me on LinkedIn to share those.

We've talked a lot about flying and the Air Force, but I've never told you just exactly what kind of spectacular experiences they've brought into my life. Now I'm going to tell you.

This is a story I've never told in public—not in a speech, not at a dinner party, never. You are the first.

My Air Force friends thought that my ultimate initiation would be for me to suit up and take a flight in a fighter plane. The T-38 Talon, a twin-engine supersonic fighter that can climb more than 30,000 feet per minute. And riding in one - I have to tell you - has never been on my bucket list. But how could I say no.

You are greeted by 5 hours of preparation to take a flight in such a plane: First is Fitting: flight suit, G-suit, helmet, boots.

They teach you a specific kind of breathing and muscle contraction. And it sounds like ch-ch. And then you kind of do this legs and butt thing where you tighten from the bottom starting with your legs and pushing up to muscles of your butt. It pushes the blood up so that you don't pass out.

And finally, they send you to the disaster preparedness training where for 3 hours you are taught how to narrowly avoid endless forms of death. Your host in this anxiety provoking experience is a member of the team called acronym S E R E (Survival, Evasion, Resistance & Escape). My SEER guide had a completely humorless demeanor and a fascinating grammatical tic.





(They are actually taught to do this.) While going through all of the terrifying scenarios, they use definitive grammar because apparently it makes the brain pay attention, meaning they say, "when you deploy the escape raft" and "when the pilot passes out," not "if."

It was a never-ending progression of terror. When the engine catches on fire. When you catch on fire. When you are blinded by. On and on.

They gave me amazing verbatim gems as well, such as:

- When descending by parachute through trees, put your thumbs over your jugular to prevent it being slashed by the branches.
- And, the topper, if it's clear you are going to fall through the power lines, think skinny thoughts.

I get in (slide) and I'm finally ready to go. Off we soar. And because no fighter jet ever flies without a wingman plane, we also had a teammate who could look back and take this picture of us.

My pilot, whose name was Cheech, says, "You ready for three Gs? Off we go!" I'm ready. We go to three Gs. It's uncomfortable, but I do CH CH legs and butt. And we go to 4 G's. I'm good. I'm good. I do CH CH legs and butt. CH CH legs and butt.

At 5.2 G's, I did nothing.

The top of my head descended through my lungs past my diaphragm and met my feet.

And I rethought every decision of my life that had led me to this point.

But I did not pass out.

And we begin to land - now - I haven't been sick the whole time. They suggested a pre-flight snack of bananas and peanut butter because quote "they are as good coming up as going down."

But what they don't say is that the landing is always the worst and now I'm getting queasy, and I have my face in the bag they give you. Peeking over the top, I notice upon landing that the 4-star general has driven his black Mercedes onto the tarmac to greet my arrival. I crawled out to greet him swallowing hard.





This is an impressive man. His chest was decorated with rows of medals but lucky for me, on that day, it was not additionally decorated with bananas and peanut butter.

When I got home, my family asked my favorite part. I told them, hands down it was when we went supersonic. 900 miles per hour and nothing but joy.

The four forces of flight are:

1. Power
2. Drag
3. Lift
4. Weight

Power and lift move you forward and upward, while drag and weight keep you motionless or sinking.

The T-38 achieves something remarkable - it breaks the sound barrier with two compact engines producing under 11,000 pounds of thrust. Similar jets need 30,000 pounds to go supersonic. How does the Talon achieve this unique feat? Everything non-essential has been stripped away.

The designers reduced weight by skipping radar systems, hydraulics and more.

A lighter aircraft needs less engine power to accelerate.
it is responsive, making quicker, crisper turns.
Less fuel is needed for the same performance.

All that's left is effortless speed and climb.

And that is my wish for you.

Shrink the pile.
Take back focus.
And go supersonic.

