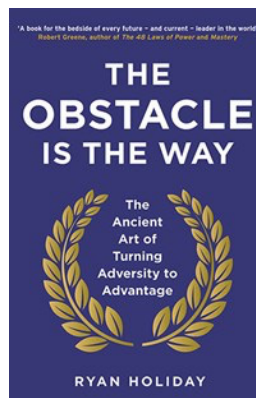




**THE OBSTACLE IS THE WAY**  
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## THE BOOK



## The Obstacle is the Way The Ancient Art of Turning Adversity to Advantage

By Ryan Holiday



## INTRODUCTION

The Obstacle is the Way is the ultimate guide to success in life and whatever you set out to do.

More than a self-help book full of buzz words and empty platitudes, The Obstacle is the Way draws lessons from the ancient philosophy of stoicism. As the famous stoic Marcus Aurelius wrote, “The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way.”

The Obstacle is the Way teaches perseverance and resilience as the way to endure pain and adversity. Its message has never been more relevant.

Ryan Holiday’s book is peppered with the fascinating life stories of famous figures such as Theodore Roosevelt, John D. Rockefeller, Amelia Earhart, Ulysses S. Grant and Steve Jobs. Through the lives of these inspirational figures, Holiday teaches how their willingness to embrace stoic principles mattered more than luck, talent or intelligence.

Taking inspiration from history, this book will help you escape the rut or frustration of our modern times. As entertaining as it is inspirational, The Obstacle is the Way will help you turn your problems into advantages.



## 5 BEST QUOTES

**“There is no good or bad without us, there is only perception. There is the event itself and the story we tell ourselves about what it means.”**

**“We forget: In life, it doesn’t matter what happens to you or where you came from. It matters what you do with what happens and what you’ve been given.”**

**“Where the head goes, the body follows. Perception precedes action. Right action follows the right perspective..”**

**“The obstacle in the path becomes the path. Never forget, within every obstacle is an opportunity to improve our condition.”**

**“Wherever we are, whatever we’re doing and wherever we are going, we owe it to ourselves, to our art, to the world to do it well.”**



## BIG IDEAS

## 1. PERCEPTION

### a/ Discipline

Discipline in the context of Ryan Holiday's book means staying in control, seeing clearly and keeping control of your thoughts and emotions. It does not mean denying your emotion, rather embracing and accepting your emotions and then moving on, not letting them control you. Always strive to keep an even keel as you approach your obstacles. If you are well disciplined in this way, you will be able to see all negative situations as positive ones. With this perspective, disaster is an opportunity to learn and grow stronger.

### b/ Objectivity

The lesson of objectivity is to strip the 'you' or 'I' from every situation. It means not allowing self-pity or wallowing. See situations for what they are and how they can be dealt with. Holiday advises that you imagine an obstacle as happening to a friend. When your friends ask for advice, it is easy to help straight away. If you see your own problems objectively, you avoid the emotional pitfalls and can approach things reasonably and logically.

### c/ Opportunity

Look for opportunity in all adversity. This means looking at things from different angles. Holiday suggests that a long time rival, for instance, provides a great opportunity. He points out that they can:

- Keep you alert
- Raise your stakes
- Motivate you to prove them wrong
- Harden you
- Help you to appreciate true friends
- Provide an example of whom you don't want to become

In this way, even the worst obstacle can be turned to your advantage. The obstacle is the way!





## BIG IDEAS

## 2. ACTION

### a/ Starting

The first lesson of action is just to get started. Don't hesitate whenever the slightest opportunity arises. Holiday talks of Amelia Earhart. In very different times, she wished to be a pilot. The first offer she had was to be aboard a plane that she wouldn't be allowed to pilot, with two men as chaperones. Both of the men would be paid well and she would be paid nothing. She took the job. As bad as it was, this job was still an opportunity for Earhart. She took the first step and got started. Despite the initial flaws in her first job, in time it led to her genuine success. The same applies to you. Take that first step and make a start as soon as you can.

### b/ The Process

Holiday describes The Process, as taught and practised by the famous University of Alabama football coach, Nick Saban. Saban's Process is simple; focus on the moment. Don't focus on the finals, or next week's game or even tonight game, focus on training right now. Focus on your immediate drill, this play, this moment. The lesson as applied to everyone is to live in the now. Focus on your task one step at a time. Do what needs to be done at this moment and do it to the best of your ability. In time, it will add up to all moments and you will be as prepared as you can be for the big ones.

### c/ Energy

When taking action, it is best to channel your energy where it is best utilised. Using energy to be angry or to argue or fight is mostly fruitless. Use that energy in a positive way. Use it to drive yourself forward. Present a positive demeanour and channel your energy towards your goals. Energy used to make a scene against rivals is wasted compared to energy used to do the work and get ahead. Not only will it get you ahead, channeling your energy will keep you in control of the situation, manage your anxiety and drive your competitors crazy!



## BIG IDEAS

### 3. WILL

#### a/ Discipline

As *The Obstacle is the Way* shares, discipline is a key facet of the stoic philosophy. Will and discipline definitely go hand in hand because having willpower takes discipline. Holiday explains that willpower is not simply about how badly we want things. Rather it is about quiet humility, resilience, and flexibility. Our willpower, through discipline, is what keeps us going despite failure and adversity. It is not about bluster and ambition, it is about acceptance, perseverance and self-control.

#### b/ Anticipation and acquiescence

It may seem like a pessimistic outlook, but being prepared for the worst can put you ahead. The stoics believed in preparation and anticipation. If you have anticipated any possible negative outcome, you will be more likely to be able to overcome them with ease. Anticipate the worst and enjoy the best. As the year 2020 revealed, no matter how much you prepare for, things can still go wrong unexpectedly. And some things are out of our control. If there is nothing you can possibly do, it is time to acquiesce. You don't have to be happy about it but if a situation is truly insurmountable you must accept it and move on. Dwelling on the impossible is fruitless.

#### c/ Perseverance

Perhaps the greatest lesson of stoicism that Holiday has to teach is perseverance. Perseverance ties all the other elements together to keep you moving and succeeding. Without perseverance, the slightest adversity will destroy you. The more you persevere, the more you will succeed. The lesson of almost all of the historic figures in *The Obstacle is the Way* is that they persevered. Despite the odds, despite their physical or mental or environmental challenges, they never gave up. Many faced setbacks and challenges greater than any of us will encounter in our own lives and still went on to achieve incredible success. These historical figures persevered until they found the way and you can too. Stick at it. Keep going no matter what. If you apply these principles of stoicism, you will be able to live your life to the fullest, endure your failures and enjoy your success.

**3 ACTION STEPS**

The Obstacle is the Way teaches how to endure and persevere. These are the three key steps as laid out in the book:

**1. SEE THINGS FOR WHAT THEY ARE**

Saying “this happened” is objective. Saying “this happened and it is bad” is subjective. Your perception of an obstacle shapes the obstacle. See things clearly and objectively before you react.

**2. DO WHAT YOU CAN**

If there is something that can be done, do it to the best of your ability. If there is nothing that can be done, embrace it as a positive and find a way to move forward.

**3. ENDURE AND BEAR WHAT YOU MUST**

Hardships will come. They must be endured with resilience and good humour. Don't let hardships destroy you.

**1 KEY TAKEAWAY**

As we were reminded in 2020, life is difficult! Collectively or as individuals, we will always face adversity. It is how we face such adversity that can make or break us.

By turning any obstacles into learning and growth experiences, we can make the most out of life. Perseverance and resilience lead to the success of many of the greatest figures in history as it can do for anyone.

Change what can be changed and accept what cannot. Move forward and endure what must be endured, and you will find your way. Remember; What blocks the path becomes the path, so let your setbacks motivate action.



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