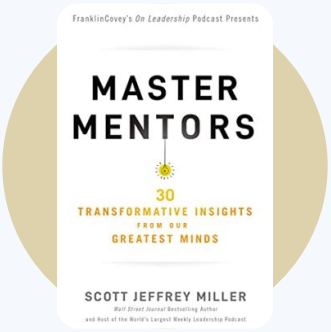


BOOK

Master Mentors

30 Transformative Insights from Our Greatest Minds

Scott Jeffrey Miller | HarperCollins Leadership © 2021 | 256 pages

Buy the book

getAbstract Rating

★ 9 | Concrete Examples | Inspiring | Applicable

What You Will Learn

- How mindfulness transforms adversity into strength.
- Why extreme ownership leads to true leadership.
- How introverts contribute in an extroverted world.
- Why self-discipline is key to personal success.

Supported Skills

Understand Yourself | Practice Servant Leadership | Lead Ethically

About the Author

Scott Jeffrey Miller hosts FranklinCovey's podcast *On Leadership*.

Recommendation

As host of the popular *On Leadership* podcast, Scott Miller regularly spends time chatting with thought leaders and top business minds. In this collection of essays, he distills the most profound insights he's gained from 30 renowned leaders – from military generals and sports stars to best-selling authors – on how to transform your mind-set, life and career. His deep familiarity with the topics, and love for them, comes through – as does the easy, conversational style of his best podcasts. Assembling them in one place multiplies their power.

Take-Aways

- Great mentors appreciate life.
- Don't project blame; own your failures.
- Value those who differ from and disagree with you.
- Know when to break with common beliefs, habits and assumptions.
- Know yourself deeply and cultivate your identity consciously.
- Good leaders are vulnerable, straightforward and present.
- Connect with people and develop your brand.
- Do one thing well.

Summary

Great mentors appreciate life.

Perhaps no one projects more appreciation for life than Nick Vujicic, although few people would have more reason to disparage it. Vujicic was born without limbs, and cannot do things most people take for granted, like feed himself. However, the perspective Vujicic brings to his life experiences demonstrates the transformative power of mindfulness and positive thinking.

> *"Imagine the courage it takes to live your life in public – especially for the purpose of teaching others."*

Growing up, Trent Shelton dreamed of playing professional sports. He attended Baylor University on a football scholarship, but he wasn't drafted into professional football. He made the Colts as a free agent, but was let go. He played for the Washington Football Team and in the Arena League. His biggest disappointments – and lessons – came from a back-and-forth relationship with the Seattle Seahawks. Shelton played on their practice team; they let him go, then asked him to come back from his home in Texas. He was en route when the Seahawks called him at the airport to say they changed their mind. This taught Shelton that no matter what you're going through, it isn't your "final destination." You can make the future better.

Don't project blame; own your failures.

Leif Babin attended the Naval Academy, and wanted to become a Navy SEAL. However, the SEALs did not select him initially. He persisted, and only got to go through SEAL training years later. Most who train to be SEALs don't make it. Babin did, and served three tours in Iraq. He approaches life and leadership through the principle of "extreme ownership."

> *"There are no excuses." (Leif Babin)*

He believes you must own your life fully – everything you do and don't do. This can be difficult. Many people look for others to blame.

Value those who differ from and disagree with you.

The world of business features many extroverts, people who love to talk and who process things in public. In her book, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Won't Stop Talking*, Susan Cain explains the extraordinary contributions introverts quietly make, and how an extroverted culture too often overlooks them. She argues that society must actively value those who encounter the world differently.

Some leaders diminish those around them, in order to elevate themselves. In her book *Multipliers*, Liz Wiseman argues that instead of being a "diminisher," a leader should work to be a "multiplier." Be aware that you can diminish people inadvertently and work consciously to multiply the power and success of those around you.

> *"People like people like themselves. And leaders can fall into that trap."*

Leaders like to think they are bold. However, prolific, best-selling author Seth Godin argues that too often, people are reckless when they should be fearless. Recklessness carries selfishness within it, while being fearless demands selflessness and compassion. You can measure which quality your actions contain by considering the effect you have on others.

Writer M.J. Fievre reminds leaders of another important distinction: between efficiency and effectiveness. Efficiency can be addictive. Working harder and faster and getting more done than other people carries rewards. However, when you work with people, being efficient can work against you. Ideally, a leader balances efficiency and effectiveness: churning through commitments when that's what's needed; slowing down to listen when people need attention.

Know when to break with common beliefs, habits and assumptions.

Psychologist Susan David helps people become more mindful and aware of their inner thoughts and when those thoughts and emotions differ from facts. Recognizing the distinction between being angry and having angry thoughts creates a space in which people can choose and act more freely.

> *"It is human nature to confuse our emotions, opinions and feelings with facts."*

Anne Chow is CEO of AT&T Business and co-wrote *The Leader's Guide to Unconscious Bias*. Chow addresses how something as seemingly simple as asking someone where they are from carries weight, depending on context and motive. The questioner might think they are trying to get to know another person, while that person may feel quizzed or excluded. Asking where someone came from implies they aren't from "here." Thoughtful leaders examine their motives and find a different question to ask.

Ryan Holiday, author of *Stillness Is The Key*, emphasizes the primacy of self-discipline. Holiday starts his mornings intentionally: with exercise and reflection. His quiet time underscores a meaningful reality about business and life: Contemplation is essential. Holiday's work on focus teaches another lesson: Often self-discipline is about what we don't do, as much as what we do.

Whitney Johnson would agree, because in *Disrupt Yourself*, she argues that many people let others shape their careers. Some people don't choose their path and let circumstances choose for them. Instead, you should "self-disrupt." Johnson suggests following the "S-curve of disruption" to career development. When you are new in a career, you learn a lot, and advance

slowly. The curve is almost flat. As you integrate requisite skills, everything comes together. The line turns upward. Then you plateau. At that moment you might become bored and need a change.

Know yourself deeply and cultivate your identity consciously.

Best-selling author Daniel Pink's books address complex topics such as sales and motivation. Most recently, he's turned his attention to time and timing, specifically to the "circadian rhythms" governing human activity. In his recent work, *When,* he explains human energy follows a pattern of "peak, trough and recovery." People get the most benefit from scheduling key activities during their times of peak energy.

> *"Have you identified the rhythm that leads your day?"*

Neuroscientist and psychiatrist Daniel Amen helps people care for their physical brains. Unless you suffered a brain illness or injury, you probably haven't paid your brain much attention, so Amen elucidates how to protect it.

Stedman Graham argues you should think of your identity as your personal brand – and that you can choose that identity. Realize that your identity is more complex and interwoven than you might think. People who meet you for a brief time are likely to know only a limited fragment of your identity. People often think in terms of finding themselves, and discovering their identities, but you can choose and build yours with self-knowledge and creativity.

Good leaders are vulnerable, straightforward and present.

Leadership takes strength, and demands that leaders see the big picture. However, as Dave Hollis demonstrates, leaders can have more than one kind of strength. Someone can lead through being vulnerable and completely present to others around them.

Kim Scott, in her book *Radical Candor*, thinks many leaders misunderstand what their position demands of them. They try to be nice to avoid hurting their employees' feelings. As a result, they fail to exercise the straightforwardness their leadership positions demand; they don't face difficult situations directly. By doing so, they let people continue dysfunctional behaviors and don't enable them to do their best. Directly address what's really going on to show you genuinely care, rather than take the easy way out.

> *"Too many leaders want to be 'nice' to their employees and ensure they don't 'hurt their feelings'."*

Best-selling author Stephen M. R. Covey has had many successes in business. However, one of his best lessons comes from a different kind of business experience: When FranklinCovey was about to launch a new leadership program, he cancelled the launch because he decided the program wasn't good enough. He insisted on taking eight more months to bring it up to the standard he envisioned. Doing this took bravery, and awareness of what quality means and requires.

In his book *Barking Up the Wrong Tree*, Eric Barker argues that what most people believe about success is a combination of myths, inaccuracies and lies. To truly lead, he says, ask yourself what flawed stories you've been told, and figure out the truth. You must look at the story others tell about you, and retell it in your own words, so you own it. Take the time to describe the story of your life as you want it to be.

Connect with people and develop your brand.

Bob Whitman, who has held several high-profile management positions, embodies the servant leader. His actions at a 2004 regional sales meeting of FranklinCovey demonstrate this. When a fire disrupted the event, Whitman pitched in to help get the 120 attendees food and a new place to stay. He never stopped until everyone was taken care of.

Chief people officer Todd Davis would likely applaud these actions, because he focuses on building relationships above all else. You often hear companies say their people are their most important asset, but Todd disagrees. It isn't the people, he says. It is the culture built through the connections among people. And leaders are leaders because of what they can do "with and through" their people.

Marketing expert Donald Miller helps people connect by making them aware of their own stories. As he works with people to help them develop their brands, he inspires each to polish those stories into a "simple message" that reaches others easily.

Do one thing well.

People try to do too many different things. Jay Papasan, for example, knows better. He preaches the value of *The ONE Thing*: the importance of having a single priority you focus on above all else. This is difficult, but you're more likely to succeed because honing in on one thing helps eliminate distractions.

Brendon Burchard is a coach, trainer and best-selling author whose books include *High Performance Habits*. He argues for creating a "prolific quality output." Focus on what you do best and what matters most, and eliminate everything else.

Today's business world demands that leaders innovate, but that can be daunting. Dorie Clark offers a new perspective on innovation: Rather than coming up with something completely new, take something that exists and give it a "twist" to meet different needs or audiences.

Chris McChesney brings seemingly endless energy to his leadership roles at FranklinCovey. He also brings tremendous focus on a single area: strategy execution. McChesney wants to know how companies act on their plans and help them do a better job at it. He worked with companies in different markets, and explores his conclusions about their practices in his book *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*. Leadership plays a major role in each discipline and is especially critical for "Discipline 3: Keep a Compelling Scoreboard." Scoreboards help people focus and maintain motivation.

When *Rolling Stone* published an article in which General Stanley McChrystal mocked American civilian leaders, McChrystal took responsibility for his poor judgment and resigned. Years later, McChrystal took down a print of Confederate General Robert E. Lee that his wife had given him after political protests drew heightened attention to racial discrimination in the United States. Both decisions reflect his desire to stick to his moral principles.

> *"Be on the right side of history."*

This goal gives you a perspective on the decisions you make. Rather than worrying about what it looks like to change positions, weigh your options to see which one helps make social progress. That's the decision to take: It will make you a model to others.

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