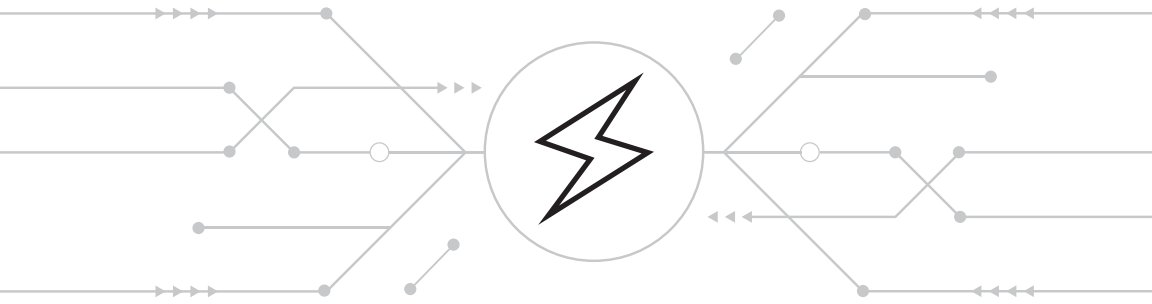


SUPERHERO BY DESIGN



Simple Ways to Transform Your Life
and Change the World

Matthew Ace Hagerty

Copyright © 2022 Matthew Hagerty

Full Control Publishing

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced without permission from the author, except by a reviewer quoting brief passages in a review; nor may any part of this book be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or copied by mechanical photocopying, recording or other means without written permission from the author.

This book is not intended to be a substitute for the medical advice of a licensed physician. The reader should consult with their doctor regarding their health.

Printed in the USA

FLUENCY
TELLING STORIES THAT MATTER

Produced with the assistance of Fluency Organization, Inc.

Cover layout and interior design by Inkwell Creative

Photography by Erica Avi Hart

The Mission of Full Control Publishing (FCP): To provide a collaborative environment and space for people to creatively express themselves and have full control over their ideas and products. FCP creates synergy for people to help and invest in one another, both as leaders and followers, with the goal of transforming ourselves and our products into the most beneficial ways imaginable. Full control requires the trust of giving up all control. Our values are novelty, change, breaking away from the herd, collaboration, and accountability.

To all the people in this world who have yet to find their purpose in life. May this book be a Northern Star to discovering and designing the life you were meant to live.

To the people who have found their mission but are looking for additional tools or a different perspective on further enhancing their lives and the lives of those around them.

To Stan Lee and the many others who filled my mind with fantastic stories of superheroes and superpowers.

Above all, to God—without whom, there would be no book and without whom, I would be nothing.

Remember that with great power, there must also come great responsibility.

Acknowledgements

First, and foremost, I want to acknowledge God for making all things possible. Without Him, there would be no book. Everything I do is because of His guidance, support, and love. I will never be perfect, but I know that no matter what happens in my life, He will be there to pick me up and give me the grace I need to do and be better.

This book would also not have been possible without my mentor, Dr. Keith Waggoner, putting me through the 100-Day Challenge and constantly pushing and supporting me throughout this whole process. You are an angel sent from God to teach, inspire, and help lead me through life.

To another one of my mentors, Mark Garrison. You are the spark that started this whole journey for me. I was a broken person when I met you, and through your love, strength, and grace, you set me down a path of growth, spirituality, and fulfillment. You are the strongest and best man I have ever known and I am truly blessed that God put you into my life.

To my parents, Linda and Michael Hagerty. You did your best to raise Mike and me. You literally gave everything to us to give us a better life than what you had. You are my inspiration and I know you guys are smiling down on me from Heaven. I would give anything to spend one more day with you, but I know one day we will be united. I just hope I have, and will continue, to make you proud.

To my editor, Mary Ann Lackland of Fluency Organization, Inc. Without you, this book would have been just a garbled mess of essays with no sense of fluidity or flow. You have brought my words to life in ways I could never have imagined. Your excitement about the book, and life in general, is contagious. You are knowledgeable, fun to work with, and whether you like it or not, you will be editing my next book. You're stuck with me.

To my ex-wife. You were the catalyst of this journey for me. Even though we are not headed down the same path of life, I would not be here without you. You would constantly support and push me to be the best version of myself. You are beautiful, intelligent, funny (even though I did not get most of your jokes), and have the biggest heart of anyone I know.

Our paths will cross again, and I wish you the best on your journey.

To my brother-in-arms, Joshua “The Ultimate Warrior” Gillow. What can I say? Since the day we met, you have always been there for me. You are my brother from another mother. You and I will be fighting together in the battle of good vs. evil for our remaining days and will continue doing so on the other side. You constantly push me to grow, to do better, but at the same time, you love me unconditionally and never judge me. You are my brother soulmate.

To my family. To my twin brother, Mike. No matter what happens, I know you will be there for me. We were born together, grew up best friends, and will always have a connection unlike any other. To my cousin, Tim. You have become one of my closest friends and confidants. I love our Saturday morning talks and the love and wisdom you give me.

To my business partner, Ronnie Lee Booth III, and my assistant, Kristin Indorato. You make coming to work fun and exciting. More often than not, we find ourselves in the trenches, but there is no other team I’d rather go to battle with. Through all the trials and tribulations, you have shown your true colors and they are beautiful. Ronnie, you have helped guide and support me on a personal level like no other. I am blessed to call myself a friend of yours.

To my teachers and mentors who don’t even know who I am. Tony Robbins, Andrew Huberman, John Maxwell, David Goggins, Darren Hardy, Tim Ferriss, Bear Grylls, Malcom Gladwell, and many others who have taught and inspired me over the years. You all inspire me every day and I am grateful for your teachings.

To Operation Rescue Children (ORC). Thank you for taking me in as a part of your family. The work done by the organization to free people from modern slavery is remarkable. In addition, the people in the organization are amazing and inspire me to give more and to be better. I am very excited to be a part of the journey ahead. A portion of the proceeds from every book sold will be donated to ORC.

To my childhood (and adulthood) superheroes: Superman, Spider-Man, Batman, the entire X-Men team, Wonder Woman, the Avengers, Daredevil... even the supervillains like Magneto and Lex Luthor. Without you, there would be no superheroes. To Marvel and DC Comics. You know how to make someone’s imagination run wild.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	1
1. Finding Your Story of Origin & Your Mission	3
2. Your Identity, Supervillains, & Supporting Cast	27
3. A Primer on Your Superpowers	49
4. The Superpower of Sleep	65
5. The Superpower of Neuroplasticity	85
6. The Superpower of Breathing	101
7. The Superpower of Dopamine	115
8. The Superpower of Cold-Water Immersion	129
9. The Superpower of Thoughts	139
10. The Superpower of Anchors	157
11. The Superpower of Healing	167
12. The Superpower of Prayer	181
13. The Superpower of Habits & Rituals	191
Epilogue	211
Ace's 100-Day Challenge	213
About the Author	221

Preface

It took me 38 years to discover who I was truly meant to be. In 100 days I transformed myself from an everyday, middle-of-the-road American to a person who is truly in control of his life and lives it to the fullest. I am committed to a lifetime of giving to others and holding myself accountable for everything I do. Throughout this transformation process, I've had ups and downs, but I've been able to clean up my diet, lose weight, lift more than I ever thought possible, and invest my time and expertise helping people both here in the US and around the world. I'm building better relationships with my family, friends, and community, and so much more. It feels as if I have been reborn. The old, fake me is dead and a new me is rising out of the ashes like the mythical phoenix.

I promise that this book will transform your life forever. I know that because it is happening to me and to other people in my life. I wrote this book to show you how to have more energy, more focus, and finally be able to cross off all the items on those to-do lists that never seem to get completed. You will live a life that is important to you and do the things that mean the most to you. Whether it is climbing a mountain, going whale-watching in the Arctic, helping clean up the ocean, or changing the lives of inner-city youth, the possibilities are endless. You will wish that you killed your old self years ago, and you will never want to stop pushing forward.

Don't be the person who keeps living their life the way it has been because it is comfortable. Don't settle for the hand you feel life has dealt you. Instead, be one who causes others to marvel, the person whom other people respect, revere, and look up to. Be the one to take action immediately and do so with strength and determination. My greatest hope is not only to inspire you, but also to take you on a transformational journey with me. You will not even recognize the person in the mirror because you have evolved and become the superhero you are designed to be.

Seize the day!

Matthew Ace Hagerty



1

FINDING YOUR STORY OF ORIGIN & YOUR MISSION

The longest five minutes of my life I spent toe-to-toe in a boxing ring with a professional fighter weighing 250 pounds of solid muscle. Maximus is a six-foot, six-inch MMA Hall of Fame giant aptly named after Maximus Aurelius from the movie, *The Gladiator*. My athletic ability at that time was average at best, and he could easily crush a man like me. Whereas Maximus had bravely fought some of the biggest and baddest fighters in the history of the sport, I was the guy who'd spent his first-grade school dance in the backseat of my mom's car with my twin brother because I was too shy to dance with the girl who'd asked *me* to the dance.

As I climbed through the ropes and made my way into the ring with Maximus, my legs began to buckle. Heart pounding, I knew that getting through this challenge was going to take everything I had, plus more. So I pumped my chest and took a couple of deep breaths. The next thing I knew, the bell rang.

My memories of the first three minutes of the fight are a blur. I recall drawing on the boxing techniques I'd learned earlier, having spent the past few days at a men's event training in a boxing gym alongside a group of average guys like me in Las Vegas. We'd been awakened early every day for a hike up a nearby mountain in the dark, followed by a full day of exercising and training in the boxing gym. Several professional fighters taught us how to throw jabs and hooks, along with the footwork necessary to adequately move around the ring with an opponent. The leaders constantly pushed us beyond both our mental and physical limits. After a few days, I felt as if I were being transformed from a lump of clay

into a block of steel (both physically and mentally).

Throughout the week, our group was told that there would be a championship round at the end to bring together everything we had learned in some sort of battle of glory. I had no clue what this meant, but in my mushy brain I imagined we'd be strutting around, celebrating all the hard work we put in. After a final day of sweating profusely and pounding water between short breaks where I could barely catch my breath, it was time for the much-anticipated championship round. And that's when it was my turn to enter the ring with Maximus.

In those first three minutes, I threw a few combinations—all easily blocked by my worthy opponent. With my hands down at my sides, I then took a surprise hook and jab to the face. I knew he was holding back on us, but even a half-force punch from Maximus felt like being walloped with a sandbag. Exhausted, my arms were heavy and tired, and I was completely out of breath. Just when I couldn't go another second, Maximus did something to me that I'd not seen him do to any other participant in the ring with him that day. All week, he had been quietly observing me. He knew that I had just separated from my wife, and the fact that I had no self-confidence at the time was no secret.

However, he'd also seen me push myself during each training session. It was now his job to solicit something meaningful deep inside of me, but his method in that moment shocked me. When I was about to give up, he came at me with a left hook right into my soft gut! Any remaining air in my lungs suddenly evaporated and I dropped to my knees, desperately gasping for one tiny breath. This was it. Every part of my body told me to go down and stay down if I wanted to survive.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO VEGAS

My life didn't flash in front of me then, but if it had, it would have been a short, forgettable film. I was just your average (or so I thought) guy with a wife, a busy work schedule, and two Australian Shepherd rescue dogs. For the most part, life was going as it should. I'd recently moved cross-country from Northern California to Nashville a few years ago, bought a house, got married, and launched three businesses. My plan was to get to a good place in my career, start a family, take my place in the American dream and coast to retirement. Then the pandemic hit. Tennessee was one of the first states to relinquish mask mandates and Covid protocols, and life quickly seemed to resume a sense of normalcy.

My fledgling businesses didn't skip a beat. In fact, they continued to grow. I realize looking back that I worked too much. When it came to expressing my feelings, I was a closed book. Growing up in a family with substance abuse issues, the notion of talking about emotions and feelings was not allowed. God forbid you ever brought up the topic of addiction. Holding it all in was just something I thought men were supposed to do. As an adult, I'd have the occasional drink, or drinks, whenever I traveled for work. My wife didn't want me to drink because she thought I was an alcoholic. So I hid my drinking for fear of disappointing and upsetting her. Besides, calling myself an alcoholic would be admitting that I was weak and unable to control my urges. There were deep-rooted issues going on in several departments, but in my mind it was just what people go through in life.

Unfortunately, I was soon justifying more bad habits, including watching pornography—which I told myself wasn't the worst thing someone could be doing. I'd rationalize a lot of my behaviors this way since I was the breadwinner in the family and provided a great home and a comfortable lifestyle. That was the theme of my life during that time. To me, the luxury of being comfortable was a huge part of the American dream.

Other parts of my life were taking a similar path as my deteriorating marriage. In addition to drinking, I was inconsistent with my physical health. I was going to the gym, but it was hit or miss. When I did go, I went long and hard, but I was getting frustrated with my lack of progress. I somehow reached a weight of 180 pounds, which for a guy of my body size and type, is pretty heavy. My diet was all over the place. I tried cooking at home as much as possible, and I knew how to count macro calories and what my targets should be. But once again, I was falling short of my own expectations.

In the quiet moments I dreamed of helping other people, volunteering in my community, and growing a stronger relationship with God. But everything I did in real life was inconsistent or half-baked. Rationalizations and justifications eased my mind (that and the comfort food of the South that I tucked into as often as possible).

I wanted to change my life but didn't fully understand why it was *not* changing. I hired a life coach and mentor named Veritas (his superhero name) and talked with him every other week, but I was powerless to put much of what I was learning into practice. I busted my butt every day at

work and tried to be the best person I could be. Despite all this effort, every part of my life was getting progressively worse. Voices in my head constantly criticized me and told me that I was not enough for my wife or anyone else. There were cracks in my armor, but I willfully ignored them.

THE VIEW FROM ROCK BOTTOM

“I found these in your pocket when I was doing laundry,” my wife calmly said one afternoon as she looked at me with a stare that I had never seen before. She handed me some receipts. Her eyes were angry, yet her tone was direct and cold.

“What are these for?” she continued.

A lump started to form in my throat. I knew exactly what those receipts were for. They were for alcohol purchases I made both before and after my business flight to Texas. Instead of delving into my usual schtick of trying to get out of the predicament (either by acting oblivious or directly lying to her), I decided to tell the truth.

I figured this was the opening scene of a movie I’d seen many times before. In the past, whenever I drank, I hid it from her. Somehow, somehow she would eventually find out what I did, and we would go through this familiar dance. I would feel guilty and remorseful about my actions, apologize, and vow that I would seek help and never drink again. Eventually, I would fall off the wagon and find myself in the exact same circumstances, specific details altered.

This time, however, was different. There was nothing I could say and nothing I could do that would remedy the situation. I had messed up big time. She put separation on the table. A dagger struck my heart, my hands went numb, and I felt as if I had just left my body and was staring down at us from a birdseye view. I was completely stunned and couldn’t believe what I was hearing.

My wife had had enough. You know what? I would have probably done the same thing if the roles were reversed—and much sooner than the time she gave me. Everything we had together as a couple was gone in an instant. All the happy memories and crazy adventures were gone, just like that. Frantic, I tried pleading my case, but it was no use. She had made up her mind, and no clumsy sales pitch could save me.

With this conversation tattooed on my brain, I knew that if I didn’t act quickly, I’d find myself starring in a one-man show. What do I do? How do I fix this? I didn’t know the answers. Initially, I was angry at

myself. Then I was angry at her. Then I was sad, which transitioned into feeling sorry for myself. I was completely lost in dark, bone-chilling waters I'd never navigated before. The one person I loved more than anything in the world had become apathetic towards me. When I would speak to her, I'd get pierced by one-word answers and resentful looks. Our interactions were dark and icy. I felt as if a curse had descended on us, like some demonic force had wormed its way into our marriage and cast eternal doom.

Everything seemed hopeless, but one thing on my calendar gave me hope. In a few days' time, I was supposed to be on a flight to Las Vegas to attend a men's event Veritas was hosting. I didn't know much about the agenda, other than it had apparently transformed many men's lives. A large part of me considered blowing it off so that I could focus on fixing my marriage. What I didn't realize then was that I was considering canceling the very thing that might save me and might even save my marriage.

Veritas warned me a few weeks earlier about how when you want to do something incredible with your life, the devil will try to derail you. What devil? What was he talking about? I didn't really understand what he meant, but I eventually concluded that I needed to get to Vegas no matter what and needed to give it everything I had. A few days later, I was settling into seat 12G on a flight from Nashville to Las Vegas with several hours to think about nothing except how I had possibly screwed up my life forever.

MY STORY OF ORIGIN

This marks the beginning of my origin story with the goal of permanently changing myself for the better. Every superhero has an origin story, you know. Where would superheroes be without that? It gives us a basic understanding of who the character is and how they transitioned into a superhero.

Superman, you may or may not know, is an alien whose home planet was destroyed. In an effort to save him, his parents managed to send him to our planet in a spaceship. After crashing to Earth, the baby boy is discovered and raised by small town farmers named Jonathan and Martha Kent. Clark Kent's origin story not only explains why Superman has extraordinary powers, but it also forms the backbone of his mission.

Similarly, Bruce Wayne (also known as Batman) was orphaned as a

child after the brutal murder of his parents, sparking Batman's lifelong dedication to seeking justice. Would Superman be as super without his parents saving his life? Would we have a good grasp of why Batman fights so hard for justice if we didn't know his personal back story? The simple answer is no. Here's why. Origin stories give us the background of how these heroes came to be. They explain the inner workings of our heroes.

Part of your origin story is whatever made you pick up this book. Your story describes what your life has been up to this very moment where you're ready to change your life for the good once and for all. When I began my journey that week in Vegas, I didn't *hope* to be better; I wanted a proven way to total personal transformation. What I discovered is a simple, yet effective approach to changing one's life from zero to superhero—and one that could be duplicated by anyone.

The tools I use today are what I describe as superpowers—there's no better word. Superpowers, as I refer to them in this book, are transformative techniques and strategies imbued with incredible power that anyone can learn to harness and completely transform their life and others.

Superheroes have filled our imagination and intrigued us since the dawn of the comic book era in 1938 with the debut of Action Comic's *Superman* series. Since then, superheroes of every variety have been smashing the barriers of ordinary human limitations and leaving us with a sense of amazement. They look like us in many ways, but these super humans are able to fly, leap tall buildings, and effortlessly engage mortal enemies endowed with the power to destroy the world in the blink of an eye. Within the unique narrative of a superhero, spider bites haven't become annoying bumps but instead have given people uncanny senses and abilities. These spandex-clad, costumed individuals have captivated people of every age throughout the world with their heroic missions and fearless devotion to the good of all humankind.

As you will see throughout the rest of this book, it took time, commitment, grit, and determination to transform myself into a superhero. There were ups and downs for sure, and not everything went according to plan. However, I am not the same person today that I was for the first 38 years of my life, and I will continue to grow and give to others for my remaining time here on Earth. I have crafted a life that I never would have thought possible and now live the way I always wanted to: as an example of what is possible and a testament to the fact that people can change.

What if I told you that you also have the ability to find the superhero you were meant to be? What would happen if you believed you could learn to influence the world with superpowers that are right at your fingertips? Well, you are in luck. This book is devoted to teaching and implementing what it takes to transform into a real-life superhero. I am not going to teach you magic tricks but valuable principles that have been and are currently being used by some of the most amazing and successful people in the world. The best part is that they are all free and can be implemented immediately so you can start seeing results right away.

DEALING WITH THE PAST

To understand someone fully in the present, we need to understand their past. This is the role the origin story plays in the comic book genre, and your origin story is no different. Your origin, your personal story, is shaping you in one of two ways. It's empowering you and bringing out the good in you. Or the opposite is true. Our past can dictate a negative view of life and actually turn us into supervillains by default, instead of a superhero by design. In other words, someone's past (and how it affects them) plays a huge role in how they perceive themselves in the present and what they plan on doing in the future.

How you choose to view the past events in your life is up to you. You can look at life as a meaningless series of events, and consequently, your life will probably have very little meaning. However, take those exact same events and look at them in a different way. What if, like author Tony Robbins suggests, instead of thinking that life happens *to* you, you believed life happens *for* you? This is a subtle, but powerful, difference. What if everything in your life that has happened so far is purposefully designed to take you to the very place you are right now? What if there really is a superhero inside of you just waiting to be discovered?