



The Way of the SEAL

Tom McCarthy interviewing
Mark Divine



Tom McCarthy

I am excited to introduce all of you to our next guest, and he's someone that we were just talking earlier. He's someone I've known for a long time, but we couldn't figure out exactly when we met. We've pegged it towards the mid to late 1990s. So we're not exactly sure, but he is an amazing guy and I was always, I've always been impressed with him and I consider him a friend, and I'm glad you're going to get a chance to meet him. His name is Mark Divine, and he had a very interesting career. He came out of a really good university, Colgate University, and became an accountant, and wasn't satisfied with that. And so he heard about this unit called the Navy SEALs and tough guys and he decided he wanted to do that. And that was very hard to go from being an accountant to even get accepted into the qualification program, but this guy did it. And not only did he get accepted in the qualification program, but out of all the Navy SEALs in his class, he was the Honor Man. So he was the one chosen as the leader of that group, and then he went from becoming a Navy SEAL and a lot of success in that as a commander into becoming a coach and a leadership expert and a New York Times bestselling author and somebody who's helping so many people all over the planet, and today's here to help you. So Mark, welcome to the Global Energy Healing Summit.

Mark Divine

Thank you Tom. Thank you for inviting me and for that very generous introduction.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah, it's great to have you here. And some of the people listening might be thinking, okay, how can I learn to heal from a Navy SEAL? But I want you to notice right above Mark's head. It says the "Unbeatable Mind." That was one of his bestselling books. And that's what we're going to talk about today with Mark when we talk about the mind. When you're trying to



heal, when you've got a chronic condition or you've been diagnosed with something, one of the things that happens for a lot of people is their mind immediately goes into fear, fright, and then they start looking up on the internet, you know, all the symptoms and the percentages and this will happen and that will happen, and that's probably some of the worst things you can do. Mark, when you were, let's go back to your Navy SEAL training. What was the biggest thing you got out of the Navy SEAL training in terms of mindset and how to train your mind? What did you learn? And I know you learned a lot of things since then, but go back to that time, however many years it was ago, and teach us a little bit about the Navy SEAL mindset.

Mark Divine

Sure Tom. Of course, when I went through training, they didn't teach what I'm about to tell us, you know, tell the group here, but they do now. They do now fortunately. And what I learned, what's interesting I think or important to state is not only was I a CPA before I was a SEAL, but I was actually got into Zen training when I was 21. When I went down to New York and started my first career at Coopers and Lybrand, now PriceWaterhouse Coopers, I was looking for a way to really engage myself in my, you know, physical training to continue that. I didn't want to see my body going to the long decline like I saw a lot of people on Wall Street, and I was very fortunate to stumble upon a martial art where the Grandmaster was also a Zen master. So I took up mental training at the age of 21, sitting on a little wooden bench in the practice of Zen. That was very transformative, and we can come back to why that was if you care to later.

So I had these fundamental skills when I went into SEAL training. They didn't actually teach me this, but what I noticed is, you know, either you had mental toughness or you didn't in SEAL training, and if you didn't, you didn't make it. We had 119 people in my training class. No I'm sorry, 185 really hardcore young studs in my training class, only 19 of us graduated, right, so about 170 basically did not have what it took. And it was, as you mentioned, all mental, because physically they were qualified or else they wouldn't have been there. So the 19 who had the mental stuff, some of them got it through grit, a gritty lifestyle. They grew up on farms and they were up early in the morning and bailing hay all day and, you know, milking the cows and doing whatever. Some of it were really gritty athletes like wrestlers or water polo players like underwater combat. So a lot of grit can be developed through hard physical labor and hard physical training. So we know that. That's kind of like Mark one motto, basic mental toughness training is do hard stuff. It will kind of forge your



mind to be comfortable with that discomfort. And then it accrues other kinds of skills that allow you to really focus in when you need to do something like heal yourself or others. But I took it a step further because I kind of got that. I was an endurance athlete in high school and college, competitive swimmer, competitive rower, triathlete, but then in the martial arts head, it's physical training too, right, that was really hardcore. But the Zen meditation, sitting down and doing nothing but looking at the quality of my mind, the quality of my thinking, and what ultimately became understanding the quality of awareness itself led to an entirely different type of mental toughness. And I often equate it when I train SEALs is the difference between being a mighty oak and being a reed. A reed's extremely flexible. It can bend and waver, and when the tsunami comes, which is equivalent to a major crisis in your life, would you rather be the mighty oak or would you rather be the reed?

Tom McCarthy

The reed.

Mark Divine

Right. Right, there's a time to be the oak, but it's not when the major crisis comes. The time to be the oak is when times are okay and you're just steady and you just keep on doing. The time to be the reed is when there's a major crisis, because you have become really adaptable and flexible and introspective. So I went into SEAL training with that capacity without really understanding exactly what it was, but I very quickly had to go back and say, "What was it about my training and what could I pull from that training to help me navigate this new thing called SEAL training?" And there were four key skills. The first one was when we trained in martial arts and we trained with Zen, we did what's called breath training, breath control. So I can't understate the importance of this as a starting point for any type of healing practice is to get, to begin to get really sensitive and trained and gain an understanding for how to breathe effectively, 'cause cause oxygen is free medicine. And so I learned to breathe.

Tom McCarthy

That's a great term, free medicine.



Mark Divine

Yeah, I learned to breathe through my nose, and nostril breathing is extremely important for mental health and for healing. I learned to slow my breathing down to five counts per inhale and exhale. So five count in, five count out, which leads to about six breaths per minute, which is they now know, years and years later, that's the optimal breathing pattern for you, and it also begins to resonate with your heart rate. And I also learned that you could pause the breathing after the inhale and the exhale and hold your breath, and that would lead to great calmness and clarity, right? And so I developed a practice that I now teach as box breathing, it's where I inhale, hold five, you know, five count in, five count hold, five count out, five count hold. So I was doing this during my SEAL training, and what it does is it puts you in this state where you're constantly massaging the vagus nerve and triggering the parasympathetic nervous system, which is to counteract the sympathetic nervous fight or flight. So when the crisis comes, you're automatically going to go into fight or flight, and obviously there's good reasons for that after you've run away from danger for instance, you want to have that adrenaline and all that stuff running through your body, but it very quickly debilitates your performance as you're aware.

So when you do this slow controlled breathing, it basically counteracts that and begins to bleed off that stress. And you still have, you'll still be able to deal with a crisis because you still had the sympathetic reaction, but you're immediately going into the rest and digest mode and balancing that out. And so what I learned in SEAL training, like we're going into a mission or I'm about ready to jump out of an airplane. It's that slow controlled five coming in, five count hold, five count out, five count hold, and all that fear and anxiety would just turn into calm focused determination. So that's powerful because what you're doing is you're getting your mind and your body to sync up and to be under your control again. This is profound because that kind of breath connection helps you also appreciate just how connected the mind and the body are Tom, as you're well aware, right?

Tom McCarthy

Yep.

Mark Divine

We had a saying in the SEALs, where the mind leads, the body follows, and where the body leads, the mind will follow. So either or, like if you're in a funk, go get yourself a good workout and you'll feel great. So where the body led you through physical training or



exercise, your mind followed, and suddenly you felt much better. You turn that into a habit and suddenly, you know, you've got a lot of healthy mental qualities. Same thing in the flip side, right? If your body is not doing well, it's broken. Well, if you lead your mind to a place of positive energy, a positive self-talk and using imagery to heal, then the body will follow. It'll heal itself through the mind. So that leads me to the second skill.

Tom McCarthy

Before we go off the first one. What, so how do you recommend people use that first skill? You talked about the box breathing.

Mark Divine

Yeah, box breathing.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah, how often during the day should they put that into practice? Like what, I mean, it's going to be hard for someone to do it, you know, every single second of the day, but what's a good cadence to kind of get started? What would you say?

Mark Divine

Well, I believe it should be done every morning when you wake up to start your day, right? It's very powerful as a morning ritual, and minimum five minutes, but up to 20 minutes.

Tom McCarthy

Okay.

Mark Divine

And this can become the foundation for your meditation practice because on top, you know, building on top of the box breathing, then you could add concentration and imagery work and stuff like that. So every morning, and then during the day before every big event or big thing that you have to do. So if you give a speech or if you give a podcast or an important meeting, just take a few moments to box breathe.



Tom McCarthy

Yeah, or if somebody is not healthy, every time they feel worry, maybe they could do it.

Mark Divine

That's right, every time you feel worry or, you know, you could even be a little bit more formulaic and, you know, put a timer on and every hour, you know, when the bell rings, just take a moment and do five rounds, you know, five rounds of five count in, five count hold. It has profound effect. Now there's this when you drop the holds, you're back to the five count in, five count out breathing, and in the SEALs we now call that tactical breathing. When we're going into combat, we're not box breathing 'cause you need the oxygen. You know, it's too slow. That's a sitting down kind of quiet meditative practice. When you drop the holds, the tactical breathing will still keep you really calm and you breathe slowly in through your nose and out through your nose, five count in, five count out, that's six breaths per minute. That still keeps your mind in that beta alpha, you know, high alpha, low beta state. It's not the same as a meditative state, but it's a calm alertness and you can do a lot of deep creative work and it's a great place to do any type of imagery and to do any focus work. So you can train yourself throughout the day to just slow everything down, and the only time you should ever be breathing through your mouth is if you're talking or exercising extremely hard. And we endeavor to breathe through our nose all the time.

Tom McCarthy

In this practice, and so Mark's talking about the box breathing, five seconds in, hold the breath five seconds, breathing into the abdomen, right?

Mark Divine

Right.

Tom McCarthy

And then breathing out, breathing out through the nose?

Mark Divine

I do. It's not as important. The breath in through the nose is really important.



Tom McCarthy

Okay.

Mark Divine

And you can breathe out calmly through the mouth or blow it out, you know, like .

Tom McCarthy

But five seconds.

Mark Divine

Five seconds, right.

Tom McCarthy

Okay five, and then with no breath in your lungs, right, then you're holding another five seconds.

Mark Divine

Right.

Tom McCarthy

And then throughout the day though, you can just do five in, five out.

Mark Divine

That's right.

Tom McCarthy

I mean it feels really great in the moment, but over time you really are training your mind. Your mind will be more relaxed 30 days from now, just by doing what Mark's talking to you about. The mind is unbeatable. Whatever you train it to do, it will go out and create. But a lot of us have not trained our minds to do great things, right. We train them to be mediocre,



average, or be stressed out and sick. And so we can re-engage the mind by using this breathing technique, and it truly is amazing. You might, you'll feel good the first day. You'll feel amazing the 30th day and the 60th day. So hopefully guys will keep up this habit. So that's number one. I just wanted to stop and make sure that people really figured out how to do it. And then number two was what?

Mark Divine

One quick thing on this. Some people say, "Well I have, I struggle with the exhale hold." And if that's the case, fine, just do three count or two count. So it doesn't have to be a perfectly square box.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah, but the ability to hold your breath or to hold when there's no air in really puts you in-

Mark Divine

It scares some people.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah, but once you get it, it really calms your system down too.

Mark Divine

Very much so, yeah. Yeah each aspect, inhale, the hold, the inhale hold, the exhale and the exhale hold, each one has a different mental, emotional quality to them. So the more you get into the practice, the more sensitive you get to this, and you recognize that as you inhale, you feel all this energy filling you up, 'cause this is, you know, this is life force, electricity, consciousness, and so you're breathing through your nose. You're consciously bringing in, you're using it for healing and just you sending that energy throughout your body. And then that whole is just, is a peaceful, energized alert state. And then the exhale is detoxifying. It's grounding. You feel like settling and coming back into your body. And then the exhale hold is sweetness because it's just pure stillness. And that's, you know, the inhale and the inhale hold is akin to life blooming and coming to its fullest expression, and the exhale and the exhale hold is akin to life kind of coming back into, you know, the next phase, right? So it also represents metaphorically life and death and that cycle that we go



through. So the whole practice has quite profound implications, you know, the longer you practice it. And you know, the spiritual traditions say that the breath is the bridge between body, mind, and spirit, and so by doing this practice alone, this could be someone's total practice. It could lead to optimal health and everything else. Well the second skill, as you begin to get more into control of your body mind, and I believe that the body, the whole body is the vessel for the mind. It's just different aspects of it are bring different sensitivities and knowledge to your awareness. And we tend to locate mind in the brain though, but this practice gets you into this feeling of embodied mind where the mind is throughout your body. So as you slow your breathing down and become more embodied, then you become more sensitive to the quality of the thinking that is going on in your actual brain, right? And we recognize that thinking is generally localized, right, in, it's not accurate to say it's like in the left hemisphere of your brain, but it's in that area of your brain which is, you know, the executive function where, you know, I call it the strategic mind where you're, you know, you're thinking, you're a thinker, and the positive uses of the thinking aspect of you are planning, you know, solving problems, decision-making, but the negative aspect can be, which happens in a lot of people with a default mode network is obsessing, spending too much time obsessing about decisions or things you did in the past or things that were done to you in the past, or obsessing about the future that hasn't happened, about what you don't have or what you wish you had. And those states tend to be negative, right? There's a negative quality to them. And research has shown that you're essentially, the thinking mind is five times as negative as it is positive. So and then on top of that Tom, if you grow up in a culture that has a lot of negativity in it, like ours does, or grow up in a family that has a lot of negativity, some of it's very subtle, you know, like remember my family was very sarcastic and you know, I think I just thought that was funny when I grew up, and it took me a long time to look at that and say, "Wow, that's really, really negative humor." It's not funny at all.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah.

Mark Divine

So I had to rout that out. So the second skill is essentially taking control over the internal dialogue and eradicating negative thought streams and promoting or replacing them and promoting positive thought streams. And this takes, it's an intentional practice, right.



Tom McCarthy

Yeah.

Mark Divine

So the practice begins like this, you know, your mind, like you said, you train your mind, it'll do anything. So what you train your mind to do is just to create a metacognitive partition, almost like you would partition a hard drive, and on one side of the partition is you the watcher, watching the context of the quality of your thinking and where your focus is, and what's coming up both, and this works for emotions as well as cognitive thought. And then the other side is the aspect of you that is having those thoughts. And so this metacognitive awareness then, once you bring that online through a little bit of training, and it's not that hard, then you can always be aware of the thought streams that are entering your consciousness, whether you deliberately create them, which is the what we want to do is be creative with our thoughts, or whether they're part of that default mode and coming from either your subconscious or, you know, just picking up on someone else's thought streams or just whatever. And so when you recognize that you're out of creative mode and some negative thought stream has just entered your consciousness, then you, you're like a sniper. You know, you're like a Navy SEAL sniper. You look at that and you say no. You kind of shoot it out of your mind and you replace it with something positive.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah.

Mark Divine

We have an acronym for this practice and we call it witness. So you witness from the metacognitive witnessing perspective, and I like to situate that in my right hemisphere to associate it with right hemisphere thinking, even again, now research is showing that that's not, that's kind of loose, that whole right hemisphere, left hemisphere, but it still works as a metaphor. So the witness is sitting up in almost like a chair at a high level and looking down at the thinker, which is left hemisphere, and watching those thoughts, and any time a negative, anytime you witness a negative thought or emotion, you interdict it and you can interdict it with like, you know, an internal like nope, not now, or, you know, or like a lightning bolt or a sniper round, and then you redirect it to where you want it to go. You probably teach something very similar.



Tom McCarthy

Yeah.

Mark Divine

It's positive psychology, but it works. Over time it works. Now there's other aspects that you need to work on, of course, around belief systems and whatnot, but this is really like surface level, let's change the content of our mind, begin to bleed off the energy that we give to all that negative stuff, and then give energy to the positive stuff. And as you know where attention goes, energy flows. So the positive becomes more reinforced. It starts to show up more in your life, the negative you're bleeding off that energy and slowly goes away. When I teach this to SEAL trainings, I have to dumb it down right. So I use the metaphor of the fear wolf and the courage wolf, which is the ancient native, you know, metaphor, native Apache metaphor, like.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah, which one you feed, right?

Mark Divine

It's two wolves, yeah. Which one's going to win? It's the one you feed. So if you're always feeding fear wolf who lives in your head, then fear wolf is going to win, but if you feed courage wolf who resides in your heart, then you're starving the fear wolf and the courage wolf will win. That's the second skill.

Tom McCarthy

Well, one thing too on that, this is where I find the body very, very useful, because the body, the feeling that you have in the body or the stress or the tension or something not feeling right is to me the signal that the mind is trying to let you know, hey, you know, check this out, check this out. So if we're not paying attention, if we're not that ever present witness, which sometimes we get busy, and I wasn't as good at it a long time ago. Probably when I first met you, I know I wasn't near as good at it, but now I'm much more in tune with my body and feelings and things like that. And those allow me to, and I might not even know what the exact challenge is, but I just don't feel right. One of my friends is a medical doctor and really, really great doctor, one of the first wellness doctors on the planet, he's probably



80 years old now, but he had this saying, if it doesn't feel right, or something has got to feel right, like it doesn't feel right, time out, you gotta stop, you gotta figure out what is it that's in there, you've gotta work to get it out and then replace it with the good, and that became kind of a motto of mine. You know, it feels so good it can't be wrong. And if you're not feeling that way, then something's not right. You gotta go in there. A lot of people, they've heard about things we're talking about. You know, they tried breathing for, you know, five years ago for a day, or you know, they tried to program their mind for a couple days and they didn't, you know, didn't get a miracle right away. These are miracle producing things that Mark's sharing with you, but they take time, just like whatever illness you had took time to develop, it takes time. It doesn't have to take as long if you do it well and things are in your favor, but one thing I think people don't realize, 'cause we all want it right now, right away, you know, everything served on a platter, and that's the other thing you learned as a Navy SEAL, right? You know, you took time to train and train and then you became like this amazing force, and the same thing with healing. It takes as long as it takes, right? So these practices Mark is sharing with you, don't test it for a day, don't test it for five minutes, like give it 30 days, give it 60 days, and that's tough for most people, they get distracted, but if your health and wellness is important to you, this is what you gotta be doing.

Mark Divine

Two things came to mind when you said that, and I agree with you 100%. One is, if you're not training yourself, then someone else is training you. The world's training you and the world wants something out of you that you don't want for yourself, right? You do not want to be trained by the world any longer, right? It's just filling you full of negativity and someone else's programming. So at what point are you going to start training yourself? That should be a big motivation to say, "How about now? And how about every day for the rest of my life, so that I'm not a victim or I'm not enslaved in someone else's mental control program," right? I know it sounds kind of harsh, but in a sense that's really what it is. So if you're not training yourself then someone else is training you. The second thing is, if not now, when? When I was contemplating becoming a Navy SEAL, I was already well on my way to getting my MBA at NYU and my CPA certificate and had this great job, and I knew that I wasn't gonna earn any money in the SEALs, and then I had the six year commitment, even if I didn't make it through Navy SEAL training, which I had like an 85% chance of not making it through. And I met through my brother's boss, my brother's boss happened to be a former UDT guy, Navy SEAL UDT, underwater demolition team, and I called him up just to help him, you know, get some mentoring from him. You know, I was struggling with making the decision and I was almost leaning toward not doing it because of all those



factors I just mentioned. And this guy's name was Jeff. I really bless him for this advice. And he looked at me, well he didn't look at me 'cause we didn't have Zoom back then, it was over the phone. He said to me, "Mark," he said, "How old will you be if you joined the Navy and you've got a six-year commitment, right?" I said, "Yeah." He goes, "Good, well how old will you be when that commitment's over?" And I said, "I think I'll be 31-ish." He goes, "Great." He goes, "Great." He goes, "How old will you be in six years if you don't join the Navy?" And I said, "Well, I'll be 31." He goes, "Great." He goes, "Would you rather be a 31 year old Navy SEAL or a 31 year old accountant? Because either way you're going to be 31."

Tom McCarthy

Yeah, yeah.

Mark Divine

And I was like, "Well, I want to be a 31 year old Navy SEAL, of course." He goes, "Well, you'll never be one if you don't try."

Tom McCarthy

Yeah. Yeah.

Mark Divine

And so, and that taught me, like, if not now, when? You kick the can down the road, you kick it down the road, oh I'll get to it someday, I'll start that box breathing someday. And guess what? Down the road always comes and you haven't started the training and you could have been training all this time. You could have already transformed yourself. You could have already healed yourself. The key is to start. The first key is to start, and the second key is to continue. Those are the two secrets to mental toughness right there. Start training your mind. Step two, continue training your mind, day in and day out.

Tom McCarthy

How do you teach people to continue? I think to start, you know, pretty much a lot of people do, the continue part, you're so good at it. Not everybody, and you've probably always been good at it. I think, you know, even sounds like from the work and athletics you



did at an early age, that was just part of your DNA. I'm pretty good at it. Probably, maybe not your level, but I've always been good at, you know, just following through, following through. How do you teach someone that hasn't been good at that to train their brain to get good at it? 'Cause it really is a brain training, or not brain, you know, it's a mind training. A mind that's trained to do that, it's easy to follow through. Like it's crazy not to do it, but a mind that's never been trained to do that, there's always that next excuse or it's a little too hard. How do they make the shift?

Mark Divine

Well, this ties into the third skill.

Tom McCarthy

Okay.

Mark Divine

Because this is a skill.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah.

Mark Divine

So the skill is to learn to see yourself as worthy of being that which you want, right, and so I, when I decided I wanted to be a Navy SEAL, at first I was like, , am I worthy? I don't even know. Like, I didn't have a lot of confidence. I had like a false bravado. I grew up in a kind of pretty rocky family, a lot of abuse and alcoholism, and that stuff can, you know, really wreak havoc on self-esteem, and so even though I had a physical, I had some physical skills and I overcame a lot of that with my intellect and my physical body, I suffered still from lack of confidence. So when I decided after the conversation with Jeff and I said, "Okay, I'm definitely gonna go for this thing, to be a Navy SEAL." I reflected back on like things that had really had a profound impact that changed my sense of self, and one of the things that kept coming, because I knew I would have to change who I was in order to even have a chance, a prayer. Well, in college I had a swim coach who was at the forefront of sports



psychology. So in 1983 he taught me to visualize my swim strokes or my event, which was the 200 meter breaststroke, and he gave me a stopwatch. He said, "I want you to swim this your event in your mind. You know, when you jump off the block in your mind, click go, and when you've touched the pad at the end, you click stop on the stopwatch." And you know, I started doing this, and about a week later I tried to hang up my virtual bathing suit. You know, I was like, this is really hard. I can't even, coach, I can't even make it to the end of one lap. And he's laughing and he says, "Stick with it, Mark. You know, your mind is a muscle and you're teaching it a new skill." And I was like, okay well, because I respected him, I stuck with it. And so about, it took me several months, but eventually was able to swim the entire race in my mind, and as I got good at that, the time that I would get was about three seconds faster than the fastest time I'd ever swum, and I thought that was puzzling. Anyways, fast forward. I finished that year, no miraculous improvements that year. This is sophomore year. Junior fall, it turns out I got accepted to go to London as a part of a study group. And then I came home in the spring, great experience, came home in the spring, and I wasn't expecting to swim because the season was almost over, but I ran into the coach Bob and he said hi to me and asked me how my experience was, and I said great, and he said, "Oh, by the way, we have our championship meet coming up next weekend. Would you like to join us?"

Tom McCarthy

And you had not been training?

Mark Divine

I hadn't been training at all, and every fiber of my being was like, no, no, no way, you know, but my head started nodding yes, you know, because I respected him. So there I am. I jump off the block in my race and I'm in the water and I'm swimming this race, the 200 meter breaststroke, and I'm just having this uncanny feeling that I've swum this race before, and I touched the pad and I looked up and I had got the time that I visualized.

Tom McCarthy

Faster than you'd ever done before.

Mark Divine

Three seconds faster than I've ever done before.



Tom McCarthy

Without training, that's crazy, yeah.

Mark Divine

So anyways, that came to me when I said, "How am I going to train?" You know, I'm in New York, I've got my martial arts. I've got, I can run, I can go to the gym, but I don't think that's going to make any real difference about whether I'm going to be a SEAL or not be a SEAL when I go to SEAL training in nine months or a year. But I remembered that, and I said, "Oh, I think visualization is a really important skill based upon that experience." And so I started to visualize myself going through Navy SEAL training. And I got, there was one video I had from the recruiting office called "Be Someone Special," and it had images of Navy SEAL training, you know, guys going through doing all these cool things. I watched it like 20 times to give me kind of grist for my internal movie. I inserted myself into that movie and I played it over and I became that. And I know you teach this, Tony Robbins teaches this. I became that movie emotionally, viscerally. And I became, over time I started to become the person who was worthy of doing that. And it just like we were talking about with the first two skills, with box breathing and with positive internal dialogue, it has to be practiced and it takes time and patience, but the more I saw myself doing that, the more I believed I could do that, the more motivated I was to continue the training every day, 'cause I just wanted to feel like, wow, I want to, this is really interesting. Like it's all started to coming together. And so I got really, really motivated to practice. And nine months into this practice, I had this overwhelming sense that it had already happened. Right, I went from desire to certainty.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah.

Mark Divine

And it was that week that my recruiter called and said, "Congratulations Mark, you actually got accepted." All this time I hadn't been accepted. I was just gunning for it.

Tom McCarthy

There were two spots, right? Was there only two spots?



Mark Divine

Two spots for the civilian, you know, for civilians.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah.

Mark Divine

So this third skill is to create an image of who you want to be in the future and to practice it. And to begin to believe it until it becomes a certainty. And then all you have to do is remember it to motivate your practice or remember it in a crisis, right. Like when I teach SEALs this and you're going through hell week and in the middle of hell week, you haven't for three days, what's going to get you through, right? Not thinking about wishing you were at Friday when it's Wednesday. What you can get through is that memory of why you're doing this and that belief that you're meant to be a SEAL. And that there's nothing that can take you off track but you.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah, yeah.

Mark Divine

It's profoundly valuable, and so when you practice this third skill, the training of that internal state, you know, the training of the internal states, which starts with breath control and then mentally developing awareness of mindfulness over your internal states, your dialogue and your emotions, and then the imagery, it becomes as important as eating and sleeping to you.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah, yeah. And when you're visualizing this desired state and it gets to feel like certainty, you're actually changing your body. Your body is shifting, cells are doing things differently. Healing components are coming in. I think most people, what they do when they have an illness, is they, again, they go to the internet, they look it up, they see what happens, you know, all the statistics are what happens to the average person. When I had chronic fatigue back in 2015, I didn't look at what happened to the average person 'cause people are



already telling me, "Oh yeah, you have it for like, you know, the rest of your life." I'm like, screw that, right. Not me.

Mark Divine

Not you.

Tom McCarthy

I know I did some things like to wear myself down. I got a little virus, stuff like that. But I looked at who had it and who got better really quick. And those are the people I literally, and they're harder to find, right? Because most people just kind of settle in for what it's going to be like for everybody else. But I found, I found a person that had it, got over it, figured out what to do, and it was all about training your mind, by the way, it wasn't any physical thing to or medicine or things like that, and I just, you know, talked with him, learned from him, and was over it, you know, pretty quickly. So I love what you're saying. This is so powerful. If you, and when I did your podcast, we talked about this, if you don't have a clear picture in your mind and a belief of you being healthy, it's going to be, I'm not going to say impossible, but it's going to be very difficult to heal.

Mark Divine

Right.

Tom McCarthy

The person that is holding on to who they are in their illness and their sickness, their unwellness, will be training the mind to hold on to that too where it's going to be really, really hard to heal, and there, you know, maybe there's a miracle cure out there, but even people that have had those, the cures from cancer by surgery or chemo, if they don't heal the mind, there's a tendency for the body to recreate either that same cancer or something similar. It's the mind that we have to heal, which is why I'm so excited having you on.

Mark Divine

And a lot of people will say, "Well yeah, just you know, having a picture or looking at a picture like vision board, it doesn't work." I said, "Well, that's true because that's just part of the equation." So you create an image of who you desire to be, and if you still don't feel like



that, it doesn't mean you don't practice it, right? So you start practicing that in your mind and you're starting to condition, right, your mind to accept that as a reality. But simultaneously there's a couple other things that are really helpful. One is that practice becomes a meditative practice. And the more you learn to turn inward, the more you begin to see your natural state of perfection or goodness. And so you start to touch base with that feeling in you that, oh wow, I actually am a really good person. And maybe you never were taught to believe that you were, but you start to feel it for yourself. And secondarily it begins to surface trauma patterns. And then you can take those trauma patterns, like this you and I also talked about.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah.

Mark Divine

You can take those trauma patterns and say, literally pull it outside of yourself and objectify it and look at that and say, "You know what? That's not me." And you know, the work of a really a good therapist is helpful there.

Tom McCarthy

Sure.

Mark Divine

But those three things begin to work together because now you're seeing it, and now you're beginning to believe it by practicing what you're seeing, as well as connecting in with your innate goodness, right? The Buddhist believe that we have all this innate goodness. Like, we're not like, we don't have to learn goodness. We learn badness.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah.

Mark Divine

So by touching in with your innate goodness, sometimes the badness just falls away. But if it's really, really deeply rooted because of childhood trauma, then we can also



simultaneously take a look at that. So we hit it from all these angles to see it, believe it, feel it, and then it becomes who you are.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah, you said something too, you said in becoming a Navy SEAL, you said you knew you had to change who you were. And that's the other thing that everybody that's looking for an improvement in any area of your life, I like to say improve who I am, 'cause change sometimes makes people feel like, oh I'm not good, or you know, I'm bad, but you know, improve who you are, but who you are today got you to where you are today, right? So it won't, the version of you, anybody listening, the version of you, of who you are today, if you want to heal, that this version won't get you there.

Mark Divine

That's right.

Tom McCarthy

You need the upgraded version, and that's what Mark's talking about. When he was, even with his swimming, he was training himself to be an upgraded version. And the interesting thing was, you said during that season your time didn't get any better. It was like a year later or two years later. But the mind didn't forget it, right. As a matter of fact, it's probably good it got you out of the pool for a little while where you weren't training and you weren't remembering, you know, okay, this is my normal time, but the brain remembered that optimal time. And that's a really cool story. I love that story.

Mark Divine

Right. I love that too, and you're right. So there's a good rationale for doing things differently because just like Einstein said, "You can't solve the problem from the same paradigm that created it." You can't heal your body from the same paradigm that created the illness or the injury. You have to create an entirely new paradigm. And so that's scary for people because people resist change because they get comfortable. And then the discomfort is too, you know, it's too hard to go into. So this ties into the fourth skill. We have to get comfortable with the discomfort of transformation, but you don't do it by eating the entire elephant in one bite, right. You have to chunk it down into really, really bite-sized tasks that you can get some immediate positive feedback on. And then you, you know, that



feedback becomes a self-reinforcing mechanism. I call it the ratchet, right. And so you think of the smallest thing that I can do today to move toward my health goals. Well, just do that and note that, and then lock that in as a victory. And then tomorrow what's the smallest thing I can do today, now that it's tomorrow, and then I locked it in. Now I've got two victories, two days of consecutive training, two days of consecutive imagery work or whatever it is. So just take it one chunk, one bite, one notch at a time, but lock those in. You know what a ratchet is. You turn it, but it doesn't go back.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah, yeah.

Mark Divine

You just keep ratcheting your way forward. In that way, you are almost guaranteed success about 40% of the way toward your goal, because you've got so many victories lined up. Let's say each one of those was one task. You've got 40 victories under your belt. No failures, boom, right. The rest is, you know, it just happens.

Tom McCarthy

I love that. And that's a huge lesson in the Navy SEAL training, but also just a huge lesson in any area of life. I say, you know, winners do what they hate or dislike to get what they want. I didn't grow up liking green smoothies for instance, right? You know, I was like, what the heck? But you know, if it's going to be good for me, I'll drink it, right. I just have that mentality. Same thing with breathing. I used to be a mouth breather. I was always congested. You know, it wasn't comfortable to exercise or breathe with just my nose, but I'm like, if it's going to make me better, I'll do it. And so that philosophy is it's worked wonders for me. And I think that is, that's a sticking point for a lot of people, like, you know, they don't want to, you know, they have some disease, they don't want to stop smoking. It's like why? 'Cause I'm more comfortable smoking. Okay, but do you really want it? Do you want to be healthy or eating better or practicing breathing or practicing the mental exercises. Mental exercise is like you said. You're like, man, I don't want to do this anymore, but you kept doing it. And you got to the point where you made a huge improvement in your time. Three seconds, by the way, in a swimming race is a big deal. Like that's-



Mark Divine

It's a big deal, yeah.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah, that's a really big deal, especially at the caliber you were at.

Mark Divine

Talk about, you know, goals here for a second. I think it's difficult if someone has a habit like smoking or, you know, compulsive eating or something, or comfort eating, and they start to, you know, that habit is like deeply ingrained in them. And so to try to just stop that habit is like meeting force with force, right? It's like it's complete take-away creates this serious resistance. So it rarely works. You know, the amount of people who back to smoking after, you know, extreme just quitting, I'm quitting, is significant. Same thing with alcohol and whatnot. So what I like to say is, back to what we were talking about earlier, is who's the person that I want to become? Develop that image, and the image is likely not to include addictive smoking or addictive drinking or addictive eating behaviors, right. It's likely to be free of those. So then you begin to practice the attributes that are going to allow you to become that. Don't worry about the smoking or the drinking or eating. You know, you can bring a little bit of attention to it, but don't try to do the all stop because it's going to, it'll blow up in your face, but focus on the positive qualities of who you want to become and then begin practicing that every day. So that means you're going to start exercising more and you're going to start paying attention to your sleep and you're going to be meditating every day and using that vision of who you are, you know, becoming that person. And then what you find is that, wow, I want to exercise more because I've got more energy. And because you have more energy, you're more sensitive to the foods that you put in your body. Some give you energy, some take energy away. So you start to eat the things that give you energy and you start to avoid the things that take energy away. And then you start to notice that smoking really depletes your energy and it's kind of disgusting. And so maybe, whereas you're smoking a pack a day after a year of this practice, suddenly you're down to like four or five cigarettes a day. And then eventually you notice that you just stopped.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah.



Mark Divine

That's been to me, everyone who's succeeded in a transformation away from addictive tendencies toward wholeness, that's what worked for them. Not by battling the addictive tendencies head-on.

Tom McCarthy

Yeah, when you battle it, you always come back because you're holding yourself back in that space. You're saying I'm a smoker who's trying not to smoke. I'm an overeater who's trying not to overeat, but by having that picture of who you want to be, like a non-smoker or, you know, a healthy, a person who eats like, you know, right sized portions and holding onto that, then you don't go back. Like my mother, when I grew up, my mother, when I was young, my mother smoked. She became a non-smoker, like she was so firmly planted in the new image of who she was of being a non-smoker. She was one of those kind of like, you know, whenever somebody was around, like you know, she didn't mind like making herself like really, almost like turn the person off, but she used to be a smoker, but she didn't hold onto that image moving forward because she had a better image in her head. So I love it, and the thing I love about you and why I wanted to have you on here Mark, you are, you know, you're a tough guy. Like, you know, when you need to, or if the cause called for it, you are a warrior, you're a martial artist, you know that, but you created a new paradigm, I think, and there's probably, you know, more of you out there that Navy SEALs that know the hard edge, but also have that soft edge to them too, which is true strength. The hard edge is good, like you said, the oak tree, your example there, that's good to be sometimes, but it doesn't work in every situation. And it doesn't work in a lot of situations outside of the military when you're dealing with real, you know, real life. So you've mastered both, which is so amazing. And I'm just very proud to have you as a friend and so excited that I could share your wisdom with so many people. Now, the big question is how do they get more of you? Where can people find more avenues? I know you've got books and courses. Where can people find more of you?

Mark Divine

Well, my website markdivine.com, it's kind of a comprehensive, you know, sort of like yours, where people can find about my books and about some of our training programs and coaching as well.



Tom McCarthy

Yeah.

Mark Divine

We have an outstanding kind of 30 day challenge program coming up for SEALFIT, which is another one of my business, called the performance coaching challenge. So we can learn more about that at sealfit.com. And then we have a mental training around "Unbeatable Mind," which is a more introductory mental training that's framed as a challenge, but it's really more of a 30 day course, 15 minutes a day. And I lead that training, and that's found at unbeatablemind.com/challenge.

Tom McCarthy

Okay so unbeatablemind.com/challenge, sealfit.com.

Mark Divine

Right, and the website markdivine.com.

Tom McCarthy

And then Mark Divine, D-I-V-I-N-E, .com, awesome. Yeah, I know you, listen, you've helped a lot of people here today Mark, and you know, he's the real deal. You know, I've known this guy for a long time, so he's not just talking it, he lives it every day, and practices it in everything he does. And I hope people will go and take advantage of the resources that you provided them with. And Mark, thanks again for being part of this summit with us.

Mark Divine

Yeah it's been an honor. Thank you very much, Tom. Appreciate it.