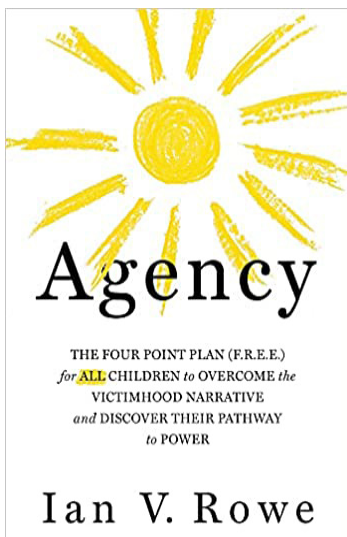


# EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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## Agency

### THE SUMMARY

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#### Introduction

What is agency? My short definition is that it is the force of your free will guided by moral discernment. It is the force that closes the delta between “isness” and “oughtness” in our lives—what *is* and what *ought to be*. It is the conviction that we are active players in our own story and, as Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, not simply “flotsam and jetsam in the river of life.” Agency is learning to see ourselves not as victims of our circumstances, but rather as architects of our own better futures, and do so even in the face of real obstacles.

Agency is a concept, a character force, a mind-set, and an outlook that is threatened in our young people today. In October 2021, the Archbridge Institute think tank released an eye-catching report on existential agency showing that only 39 percent of American adults under age twenty-five think they have the power to live a meaningful life. Compare this to the 63 percent of all American adults who think so. This is despite the fact that social, scientific, and technological progress has given the rising generation greater access to knowledge and more opportunities. Moreover, these findings align with other research showing that young adults are increasingly anxious and afraid.

Indeed, a global UNICEF study released in November 2021 showed that 56 percent of Americans aged fifteen to twenty-four said that children today would be worse off economically than their parents.

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To usher in a new era of American agency in which the rising generation becomes the master of their own fate, we must simultaneously launch a movement that encourages young people of all races to adopt a new cultural norm concerning education, entrepreneurship, hard work, faith, responsible parenthood, and the timing of strong family formation. I call this FREE—a framework based on Family, Religion, Education, and Entrepreneurship that is designed to build agency in all our children, from kids in low-income communities to those in the wealthiest of neighborhoods who nevertheless can find themselves leading lonely, rudderless lives. FREE is built upon four pillars designed to unleash a morally informed free will—agency—in our children so they are not bound by a challenging past nor present and can envision a better future.

One key component of FREE that is particularly important in the formation of strong families is the Success Sequence, a series of life decisions that involves first graduating from high school, then securing full-time work, then getting married, and then having children. Among millennials, evidence shows that following this series of decisions creates a 97 percent chance of avoiding poverty.

But just teaching this information in schools is not enough. The other key component of FREE is the enlistment of society's mediating structures—schools, churches, civic associations, neighborhoods, and, most importantly, the family—in helping our kids to achieve agency.

We must offer a hopeful path forward, a strategy to defeat the debilitating narrative that many kids—who are too often kids of color or from low-income neighborhoods—have no power to exercise their individual agency nor achieve better outcomes in their own lives. I believe we have a moral imperative to help our young people understand the series of life decisions within their control that create the greatest likelihood of success.

In short, this way recognizes that young people do not have to be trapped between the heavy burden of having to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps alone and the immobilizing delay of having to wait for someone else to effect massive “systemic” change. That is a false choice when, in fact, we can be FREE.

I believe we all must abandon the poisonous notion that any disparity we see between certain groups must be due to discrimination of that group as opposed to other factors that transcend that group designation, which are far more determinative (most notably, family structure). My hope here is to help young people learn the ways in which they can bridge the gap between what “is” in their life and what they want it “to be.”

## PART 1: WHAT IS AGENCY AND WHY DO WE NEED IT TODAY?

### 1. What Is Agency and Why Is It So Crucial to Human Flourishing?

The word *agency* is a linking of two Latin roots: *ag*—to “do, act, or drive”—and *ent*—“that which does something.” For me, the essence of *agency* goes beyond one's capacity simply to achieve. The concept also encompasses one's ability to persevere despite adverse conditions or hostile environments while simultaneously following a North Star of righteous behaviors.

However, no human being acts alone. Agency is individually practiced, yet socially empowered. Unique to our species is the way in which early character development determines how those choices are shaped to achieve good or ill. Social forces from a range of morally formative institutions can create the conditions under which young people exercise free will and build the mental muscle of agency.

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Agency is not free will alone. Rather, agency is the force of free will when it is governed by morally discerned choices that dictate its eventual impact. Efficacy, optimism, and imagination give free will a direction. They create the vector of agency.

I run high-performing public charter schools in the heart of the South Bronx in New York City because I believe agency is not some abstract concept. I believe agency metaphorically serves as a shield and a sword to combat helplessness. It is a power that can be conferred on young people that allows them to shape their individual response to a challenging environment or circumstance.

Agency is accessible to everyone. But too often young people's efforts to develop agency are thwarted, sometimes tragically, by the very people and institutions with the power and the moral responsibility to propel their lives forward.

## 2. Two Competing Visions of What Impedes the American Dream and the Effort to Build Agency

Today there seem to be two prevailing answers to the question of what happened to the American Dream, two visions that are at war with one another for the soul of our nation and its rising generations.

One is a bleak vision of individual powerlessness against insurmountable historic and systematic forces. The other is a brighter but still wanting vision of determined individuals of all colors pulling themselves up by their bootstraps and triumphing over any and all adversities. Both, I'm sorry to say, are unequal to the task of making the American Dream more accessible to a rising generation.

One vision posits that the impediments to young people achieving the American Dream are primarily, if not solely, due to insurmountable institutional barriers. This blame-the-system ideology rests on the assumption that structural discrimination based on race, class, gender, and other identity markers forms a fortress of intersectionality that is too imposing for individuals to scale. America's past and present racism, sexism, classism, and other "-isms" (even capitalism) simply rob young people of the ability to be *masters of their own fate*. These vast forces render them powerless as adults to become agents of their own uplift.

Since individual effort is useless, "blame-the-system" advocates—today's enemies of agency—often claim that the only solution is a massive government redistribution scheme. There are many problems with today's "blame-the-system" narrative of individual powerlessness. One is the power it gives to others to somehow rescue black Americans. The danger in all this victim-mongering is that the next generation—black and white—might grow up believing that the entire destiny of one race or class rests in the hands of another—which robs people of personal agency and the belief that they can control their own destiny.

The other school of thought—blame-the-victim—posits that the roadblocks to realizing the American Dream are primarily, if not solely, due to an individual's bad choices or lack of effort. It essentially accuses unsuccessful young people of being the architects of their own shortcomings—never mind the fact that they likely never received the kind of support that would have equipped them to succeed.

Both blame-the-system and blame-the-victim approaches offer superficial, reductionist arguments. Neither supposition offers a full explanation to illuminate the complex factors that drive success or failure for any one individual—much less whole groups of people. Moreover, these two dominant theories also crowd out any other possible explanations for why kids of *all* races do not flourish in life.

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I believe there is, at least, one additional way—a way that keeps the individual at its center but relies on social institutions, families, churches, schools, and work—all of which shape and demand expectations—to help our young people to build agency and make the decisions that will lead to successful lives.

### **3. The Third Way: Revitalizing Mediating Institutions to Strengthen Civil Society and Spark Individual Agency**

Families, neighborhood, religious institutions, and all the other mediating structures within a child's microsystem weave together to shape the civil society that can produce generations of individual citizens capable of self-governance and cognizant of the life-long habits and virtues necessary to lead an independent, fulfilling life.

What's the bottom line? We must pursue both individual responsibility *and* institutional support. We cannot confine ourselves—and, ultimately, our children—to the false binary choice of “blame-the-system” or “blame-the-victim.” We can help young people as individuals learn the paths to success taken by millions of their predecessors who have overcome hurdles of their own. To reiterate, young people do not typically find success in isolation. They need social support from vibrant, well-functioning mediating structures—most importantly—from the family. In short, there is a third way.

Addressing this dichotomy between the differing realities of these young people has become the animating obsession of my life. I now run public charter schools because I want kids to know that they can do hard things, that success is within their grasp, and that there are caring adults ready to show them the pathways to the life they want to lead. I want them to know that there are values concerning hard work, entrepreneurship, family and faith—the building blocks of agency—that can carry them toward their dreams.

### **4. How Believing You Live in a Good, If Not Great, Country Helps Build Agency**

My parents, Vincent and Eula, came to the United States from Jamaica in 1968. As black immigrants, they were fully cognizant of the nation's struggle with racial discrimination and its legacy of slavery, nevertheless, they wanted to live and raise their children in a “land of opportunity” where anything was possible.

Their focus on family, religion, education, and entrepreneurship, their model of hard work and marriage over forty-eight years—and, yes, their decision to come to this exceptional country with its many opportunities and possibilities—all contributed to what I have become today.

Yes, our nation has a flawed and tragic history and we have not always lived up to our founding ideals. But our nation also has a beautiful and inspiring past. Just as our founding ideals have allowed America to continue to become a better nation, they also help us as individuals to better ourselves. That is what we need to tell our children—that they also have an inner strength and can learn the tools of self-betterment and self-repair and renewal. That is the mindset and the skills that the mediating institutions of family, religion, and education need to celebrate and cultivate.

Our young people have the power to shape their legacy. It is our responsibility to prepare them to write the next stanza in their own and our country's unfinished symphony. And to teach them that they can make a difference in what is to come.

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## 5. How the Hard Bigotry of “Antiracist” Expectation and the Pursuit of “Equity” Erode Agency for All

Equality is based on the idea that all humans are equal in fundamental worth and individual dignity. Equality means equal treatment. Equity—more precisely, the pursuit of equity—is where things get tricky. Sadly, a definition of equity—equity as equality of *outcome* rather than equality of *opportunity*—has become the unspoken real meaning for many of today’s educators and masks a frontal assault on the ideals of self-determination and agency that empower young people to reach their full potential.

The problem with attempting to guarantee an equity of outcome is that it ignores the individuals. It makes assumptions about group ability and artificially suppresses differences in outcomes that organically emerge from individual differences in attitudes and behaviors. To achieve equity, some authority must necessarily determine what resources a group should receive and who should receive them.

Unfortunately, well-meaning school leaders across the country are taking steps that have the unintended consequences of subverting excellence and fracturing communities—all in the name of racial equity or antiracism. Parents across America need to fully understand what is at stake when the contagion of antiracism or racial equity infects their school and what it means for their child’s pursuit of agency. The pursuit of racial equity is far more likely to result in lowered standards, division, and mediocrity and worse for kids of all races.

## PART 2: HOW MY STORY OF DISCOVERING THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY STRUCTURE OPENED THE DOOR FOR ME TO VIEW AGENCY AS THE PATH FORWARD FOR YOUNG AMERICANS.

### 6. Who’s Your Daddy? The Moment I Realized Schools Were Not Enough to Build Agency.

A study in 2015 of New York City school districts showed the highest risks to child well-being were those in South Bronx. Less than two miles away across the East River was the lowest risk district, on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. It is unconscionable that only 12 percent of the South Bronx students were able to pass a math exam, especially when you consider that nearly six times that many children just two miles away were able to pass that same exam. And this has been the case for decades.

Pursuing the question of why that was put me on a path of no return. The huge differences in family structure—yawning gaps in the percentage of children raised in single-parent households and teen birthrates—suggested that this could explain why education outcomes in the South Bronx and many urban and rural areas across the country had been so poor for so long.

I am convinced that our schools are necessary, but not sufficient, to fully empower kids to reach their potential. If we truly want our students to break the cycle of poverty, we need to do more. In addition to educating our students in science, math, history, literature, and the arts, it is equally important to educate our middle- and high-school students in the proper timing, sequencing, and effects of key life events during the transition to adulthood.

### 7. Robbing Our Young People of Agency: Silence or Denial about the Importance of Family Structure

Those of us who are committed to achieving better outcomes for the next generation cannot succeed unless we confront the decline in family stability—a decline that is an equal opportunity tsunami. From 2004 to 2016, nearly 4 million babies were born to unwed teenage mothers, and about 12 million babies were born out of wedlock to

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women of all races aged 24 and under. An estimated 70 to 90 percent of these pregnancies were unplanned by these unmarried young people, many of whom already were poor (or became poor).

These staggering numbers of children born outside marriage—and the increased likelihood of negative consequences—are precisely why the education reform community must construct a curriculum and culture that teaches the next generation about family formation and the sequence of personal choices that gives students (and their children) the best shot at life fulfillment. These 12 million boys and girls are in our K-12 schools today, five days a week. They are at great risk of repeating the same cycle of family instability they have experienced, despite the best efforts of their young single parent or their guardian.

Granted, there are no guarantees in life. Being born into a stable, two-parent home does not assure success, and being raised in a low-income, single-parent household does not lock in failure. Some troubled children come from the most well-resourced, married households. Other children thrive despite chaotic homes. But we know, however, that having children while young and unprepared is a far more challenging path, especially when it comes to achieving the best outcomes for children.

## **8. How America Has Changed Young Hearts and Minds in the Past: Teen Pregnancy**

While delivering his State of the Union address on January 24, 1995, first-term president William Jefferson Clinton seized on the soaring rate of teen pregnancy and made an unprecedented call to action on the crisis of children having children. This became a campaign that produced quantifiable positive change, that changed hearts and minds—and that showed what can be done when we work intelligently to address a social crisis.

The campaign's initial goal was to reduce the teen-pregnancy rate by one third between 1996 and 2005. To achieve this goal, the National Campaign launched a multipronged effort with an emphasis on states and communities, research, faith-based organizations, public policy, and the media. It incorporated teen-pregnancy reduction messages into newspapers and magazines and on radio and television—especially those programs most viewed by teens as well as the parents of teens. Altogether, the campaign reached hundreds of millions of people.

The effort was so successful in its first ten years that it helped reduce the rate of teen pregnancy by one third. It was possible to change young hearts and minds—the metrics made this clear. Now our country needs another call to action, to finish the business President Clinton inspired almost three decades ago and address the social epidemic of rampant out-of-wedlock births to young women and men under 25.

## **9. Dan Quayle Was Right, But His Strategy Was Wrong**

What if Vice President Dan Quayle hadn't shamed fictional television character "Murphy Brown" for having a baby out of wedlock? What if he had instead expressed admiration for her decision to choose life and face the challenges of raising a child? What if he had instead criticized Murphy's ex-husband Jake Lowenstein for failing to live up to his responsibilities as Avery's father?

What if the vice president had pointed out that the forty-something fictionalized TV anchor—who was well-educated, mature, affluent, and professionally successful—hardly represented the typical twenty-four-and-under single mothers of all races in our nation's most challenged neighborhoods?

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Finally, what if Quayle had expressed empathy for the children of these all-too-real adults—if he had emphasized these kids' greatly reduced life chances because they lived in households headed by more typical single moms—rather than condemning the choices the adults in their lives had made?

On the twentieth anniversary of the Dan Quayle—Murphy Brown culture clash, the Washington Post asked Isabel Sawhill of the Brookings Institute and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy to write an essay on how the vice president's criticism of Murphy Brown had altered the cultural landscape. To the chagrin of many who had castigated Quayle as an insensitive and out-of-touch ideologue, Sawhill's piece was entitled "Twenty Years Later, It Turns Out Dan Quayle Was Right About Murphy Brown and Unmarried Moms."

### **10. The Success Sequence: The Empowering Alternative and the Other Building Blocks of Agency**

In 2009, research by scholars Isabel Sawhill and Ron Haskins found that only 2 percent of U.S. adults who graduated from high school, maintained a full-time job (or had a partner who did), and delayed having children until after they were twenty-one and married—in that order—lived below the poverty line. Roughly 71 percent ended up in the middle class or above.

This Success Sequence has attracted many admirers because of the simplicity of the three steps that young people, even if born into disadvantaged circumstances or raised by a young single parent, can themselves control and take in their lives. Yet the Success Sequence is not without its detractors. Some believe the steps are too simple or it stigmatizes teen parenthood. Others believe they mask a moralistic, conservative agenda to revitalize marriage—a worthy goal—especially in hard-hit communities in which family breakdown is an undeniable factor in perpetuating disadvantage.

In 2017 I visited a ninth-grade class at a high school in a low-income community in New Orleans. I asked the students, "If I were to tell you there is a series of decisions that, when followed by millions of young people, have resulted in 97% of those young people and their kids avoiding poverty and having economic success, would you want to know?"

There was, as you might imagine, a lot of interest. Even the teacher said, "Really?"

I then told them that I couldn't share the information with them because there are people who fear they might be insulted if I did. They looked at me as if I were crazy. They demanded to know. They were, in effect, saying, "Tell us!"

So I did. I felt a moral obligation to share the information. What ensued was a rich, twenty-five minute discussion about the Success Sequence. We do our children no favors in withholding from them the very knowledge that can unleash their ability to lead a complete life of their choosing.

### **11. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Foundation of Family**

One of the lessons I learned working at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on the postsecondary success team was that as a country we are failing in our efforts to improve educational outcomes partly because we spend billions of dollars way too late to help high school and college students who never learned the basics in preschool and elementary and middle school. Another was that not enough children in utero and aged birth to five receive the kinds of nurturing support necessary for healthy development. In the years since leaving the Foundation, I have come to believe that our schools and our philanthropy were not investing early enough.

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In their 2020 annual letter, on the Gates Foundation's twentieth anniversary, Bill and Melinda Gates expressed their ongoing frustration: "When it comes to U.S. education, though, we're not seeing the kind of bottom-line impact we expected. The status quo is still failing American students. . . it is hard to isolate any single intervention and say it made all the difference. . . Getting a child through high school requires at least 13 years of instruction enabled by hundreds of teachers, administrators, and local, state, and national policymakers. The process is so cumulative that changing the ultimate outcome requires intervention at so many different stages."

In fact, there is a single intervention that exists over the thirteen-year span of a child's K-12 education, and it can make all the difference to that child: a loving and stable family, which is most reliably found in a married, two-parent household.

## PART 3: HOW FREE CAN USHER IN A NEW "AGE OF AGENCY" FOR YOUNG AMERICANS

### 12. The FREE Framework to Build Agency

Life will be hard; life will be a struggle; and life will present hurdles. But life is also a series of opportunities. There are pathways and partners you can choose that will make all the difference in increasing your odds of personal fulfillment. And there's the point: you have the power to choose. That is why I have written this book: to help a rising generation realize they have the power to shape their own destiny, even in the face of life's inevitable obstacles. They have the ability to put their own lives in motion, in the direction they seek, if they so choose. This is agency—the force of one's free will guided by moral discernment.

Of course, young people do not cultivate personal agency on their own. To develop the capacity for moral discernment and their ability to create good or bad outcomes in their lives, they must engage what I call the four building blocks of agency. It is a forward-looking framework I call FREE, which encompasses the four pillars of Family, Religion, Education, and Entrepreneurship.

**Family** does not mean the family that you were born into. Rather, it is the family you will form in the future.

**Religion** may be declining among young Americans, but it is still the case that a personal faith commitment can be a force for good in one's own life and strengthens the family.

**Education** requires young people to take ownership of their own learning and habits—study, attendance, homework completion, self-discipline—that are the foundations of learning.

**Entrepreneurship** calls on students to cultivate an entrepreneurial mind-set about their own lives—as someone who owns his or her own future.

### 13. Family

There are choices in life and those choices have consequences for adults and their children—all of which brings us to the role of the Family in FREE.

As we have seen, the family our students will form matters monumentally to their ultimate success and personal agency—and the type of family that has been found to be most beneficial for the prospects of young adults and their



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future children is an intact, married, two-parent household.

It bears repeating that millennials are taking divergent paths toward adulthood and family formation, paths associated with markedly different economic outcomes. Millennials are much more likely to flourish financially if they first earn at least a high school degree, then find full-time work, and then marry before having any children. 97 percent of millennials who make this ordered series of decisions—the Success Sequence—are not poor by the time they reach their prime young-adult years (ages twenty-eight through thirty-four).

If we want to inspire the rising generations to have more children born into stable, married, two-parent households—one of the best predictors of a life of agency—I recommend four steps:

1. Re-create or revitalize a social norm concerning work, marriage, responsible family formation, and parenthood.
2. Make family structure a standard measurement category of child outcomes.
3. Implement family-friendly policies that do not penalize marriage.
4. Declare a reduction in nonmarital births to women aged twenty-four and under to be a “winnable battle.”

## 14. Religion

When it comes to family life, religious couples report the highest levels of marital satisfaction. Studies have also shown that religious attendance is associated with a lower likelihood of divorce and family disruption among married couples. Beyond the fulfillment usually experienced when individuals make a powerful faith commitment in their own life, embracing religion can be an important step in leading a self-determined life of human flourishing, forging stronger family bonds, and enjoying better social connectedness.

Despite these benefits, religious practice in the United States is declining. About one quarter of Americans now identify as “nones,” having no religious preference in particular. Millennials and other young Americans consistently show the lowest rates of religious affiliation and the lowest frequency of attendance at religious services. The challenge, of course, is that human beings of all ages have to believe in *something*.

In the absence of traditional religion, a new form of identity politics has risen to fill this spiritual vacuum. Professor John McWhorter describes how a well-meaning but pernicious form of “antiracism” has become, not simply a progressive theology, but a religion—one that’s illogical, unreachable, and unintentionally neo-racist. He argues that this illiberal neo-racism is actually hurting black communities and weakening the American social fabric. And he’s right.

And here’s the greatest tragedy of our new religion of woke racism. Black men who attended traditional religious services regularly at a young age were 10 percentage points more likely to make it into the middle class when they reached adulthood than peers who did not. Real religion—not faux religions like the new church of “Wokeness” matters in black lives and, indeed, all lives.

We need to increase the reach of all our faith communities and leverage their inherent strengths to address the nation’s most painful social ailments in order to shape the hearts and minds of the next generation. This is “sacred action” indeed.

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## 15. Education

The first “E” in FREE calls on each young person to commit to study hard and meet the highest educational expectations. It is therefore essential that these students and their families have a wide range of high-quality education options to choose from—kindergarten through Grade 12 institutions that promote the academic and character development required to empower young people to make reasoned and morally uplifting decisions in their own lives.

If we want the rising generation to usher in a new age of agency, we must make the following changes in K-12 and higher education:

1. Eliminate barriers to school choice nationwide;
2. Teach the Success Sequence as a probabilities class in middle, high, and post-secondary schools;
3. Focus on the “Distance-to-100 percent proficiency” gap rather than the racial achievement gap;
4. Expand content-rich curricula, with a particular focus on civics and historical content;
5. Replace race-based affirmative action with class-based preferences in higher education.

My hope is that the five steps outlined here will make it more possible for young people to receive a solid foundation in education that enhances their ability to exercise individual freedom and agency.

## 16. Entrepreneurship

My primary concern, as someone who runs schools, is that both the “blame-the-system” and “blame-the-victim” narratives in tandem suppress the countervailing steps young people can take to help them achieve agency and shape their own futures. Without an intervention, more young people may take on a persona of a victimized soul and adopt a mindset of “yes, I can’t” versus “yes, I can.”

This is where the second “E” in FREE comes in: Entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur is usually viewed as someone who creates a for-profit business. My definition of an entrepreneur includes that idea, but is broader to encompass one who takes ownership of all facets of their life to create financial, social, and other forms of wealth.

While a baby or young person’s naturally occurring sense of helplessness or dependency can be negatively reinforced, it can also be counteracted by strategies that instill hope and a sense of control and ownership. Helplessness can be unlearned. Learned optimism can be the empowering alternative to the default habit and overcome a victimhood narrative that depresses human motivation.

Entrepreneurship is the exact opposite of learned helplessness. It is the force that enables young people to become problem solvers when obstacles arise. By embracing the concept of entrepreneurship, you can better envision yourself as an owner, a steward, a curator of your own life: someone who has the ability to handle temporary setbacks and who can leverage the factors within your control to reshape outcomes, even when conditions may suggest otherwise.

Individual choices do make a difference. Industriousness, self-discipline and a strong work ethic matter—and they carry with them an undeniable dignity. Imagine if, instead of the “no matter what, you are disadvantaged” message, young people of all races understood that nothing is predetermined in their lives and that they themselves have the greatest influence over their own futures.

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## 17. A New Age of Agency

I wrote this book so that the rising generation—those aged twenty-four and under—will have a decision-making framework to help them lead productive lives of their own choosing. My hope is that years from now the United States will be in the middle of a sustained awakening in which continuously rising generations of people of all backgrounds have learned to embrace the ideals of family, religion, education, and entrepreneurship. That is how we will know that our work today has ushered in a new age of agency. Our young people and the institutions of civil society that surround and nurture them will have created a powerful social norm around FREE as a passageway into young adulthood:

**F** is the healthy family you *form* by understanding the power of the Success Sequence, not necessarily the family you are *from*.

**R** is the personal faith commitment you make to one of the world's great religions, whether it is following the four noble truths of Buddhism or the principles Jesus espoused in the Sermon on the Mount; it's also the support and encouragement you receive from faith-based institutions as you learn how to master your own destiny.

**E** is the education you earn—the learning you yourself are responsible for—the knowledge and skills you accrue that can never be taken away.

**E** is the entrepreneurial spirit you embrace to experience the dignity and discipline of work as well as to create opportunity and wealth for yourself and others who seek to lead a FREE life.

If more young people adopted a FREE life that incorporated the wisdom of the Success Sequence on when to start their own family, *their* children and their children's children would be more likely to be born into stable, married, two-parent households and to break the sad cycle of despair we have seen for generations.

In this book, I have defined agency as the force of one's free will, guided by moral discernment. My hope is that our young people experience agency by embracing the ideals of a FREE life. But they cannot do so on their own. They need our help and guidance. FREE institutions must embrace them. It is a reciprocal relationship. Different supports will come from each institution in the FREE framework. Combined with their own actions, these supports should offer each young person the equality of opportunity, individual dignity, and common humanity necessary to lead a self-determined life.

It is Aristotle who is credited with the quote: "Our problem is not that we aim too high and miss. Our problem is that we aim too low and hit." You have within your grasp the ability to lead the life you want. If we are really able to usher in an age of agency, then children of all backgrounds will be able to aim high and be ready to help achieve the ambitious new goals being set for America's future.

Now it is your turn. Freedom unexercised may become freedom forfeited. Do not throw away your shot. You can be the master of your own fate, the captain of your own soul.

Live.

Be Free.