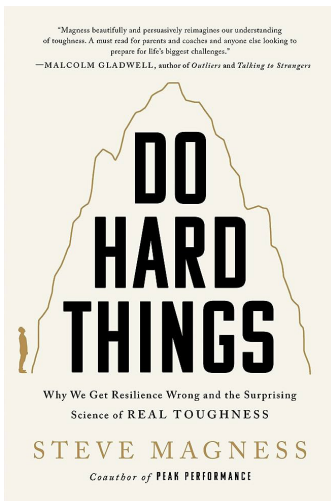


# EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Steve Magness

Steve Magness is a world-renowned performance expert, co-author of *Peak Performance* and *The Passion Paradox*, and the author of *The Science of Running*. He has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and *The New Yorker*. As a performance coach, Magness works with executives, entrepreneurs, and athletes.

# Do Hard Things

## THE NUTSHELL

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For a long time, we've had a skewed definition of toughness in our society. We've preached an unrealistic framework to our children, athletes, and workers, and it has resulted in disaster. It's time we learned what true toughness is about and how to develop it in ourselves and empower it in others.

Most people compare toughness development with the military's difficult training. However, the teaching phase of that training is often overlooked. True toughness is about enabling people to handle adversity, not pushing them to failure in hopes they'll learn something.

**There are four pillars of real toughness, the first one is to embrace Reality.** Accepting what we're capable of and understanding our strengths and weaknesses is a big part of toughness. Only when we have a good idea of our abilities can we perform to the best of them.

Despite being capable, it's natural to still have doubts and insecurities. To counter them, we need to develop confidence and self-esteem. Instead of focusing on appearing confident, we need to make sure our confidence is rooted in our reality.

A problem with traditional toughness is that it aims to instill toughness by using control and constraint on people, by taking away their choice. However, this approach results in helplessness. When we lack control and choice, our ability

# Do Hard Things

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to respond to stress decreases. Hence it is important to actively train for hopefulness, and in parenting or leadership roles, make sure we're not the ones taking control away.

**The second pillar of toughness is to Listen to your Body.** First, we need to understand that our feelings and emotions are messengers, not dictators. Their job is to simply provide us with information, not control our behavior. We need to make sure we don't completely ignore this valuable information but we also need to make sure our response isn't based completely off of them.

Next, we need to own the voice in our head. In any stressful situation, different voices erupt in our heads, often with contradicting opinions. We can use this to our advantage because just like emotions, they are simply conveying information that can help us make better decisions in tough circumstances.

**The third pillar of toughness is to Respond instead of react.** Real toughness is all about learning to deal with pain and discomfort in a better way. Instead of trying to ignore it or fight it, we want to accept it and respond to it appropriately. We want to learn the strategies for coping with negative incidents so that when they inevitably happen to us, we don't spiral out of control.

**Lastly, the fourth pillar of toughness is Transcending Discomfort.** We want to develop the ability to persist within discomfort, and this can be done by finding our inner drive. We need to find meaning in the discomfort and suffering; only then will we be able to endure it and thrive. We also need to enable other people to find their inner drive. That's our responsibility as parents, coaches, teachers, and bosses because the inner drive directly affects our persistence, our toughness, and our ability to do hard things.