

"Follow these precepts and you will revolutionize your life. Read this book!"  
—Steven Pressfield, author of *The War of Art* and *Gates of Fire*

# THE OBSTACLE IS THE WAY



**RYAN HOLIDAY**

Bestselling author of *Trust Me, I'm Lying*

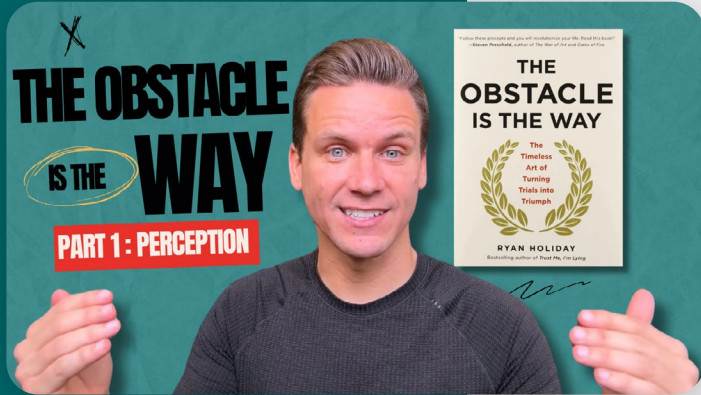
## THE OBSTACLE IS THE WAY

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



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## PART I

# PERCEPTION

### Reflection/Discussion Questions

Marcus Aurelius said, "Our actions may be impeded... but there can be no impeding our intentions or dispositions, because we can accommodate and adapt. The mind adapts and converts to its own purposes the obstacle to our acting. The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way."

**Q:** What are our current blocks that we have a hard time imagining how could advance our cause?

The goal of perception is to get rid of the negative aspects that come with bad or unuseful perceptions. Strip the perception process of passions, bias, fear, and expectations to filter it all out. See things as they are, neither good nor bad.

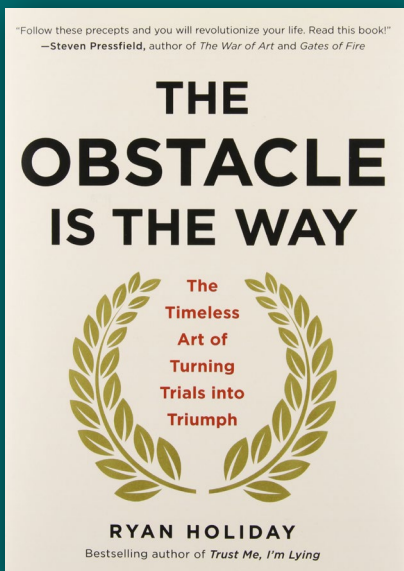
**Q:** Which perceptions get in the way of your personal development and why?

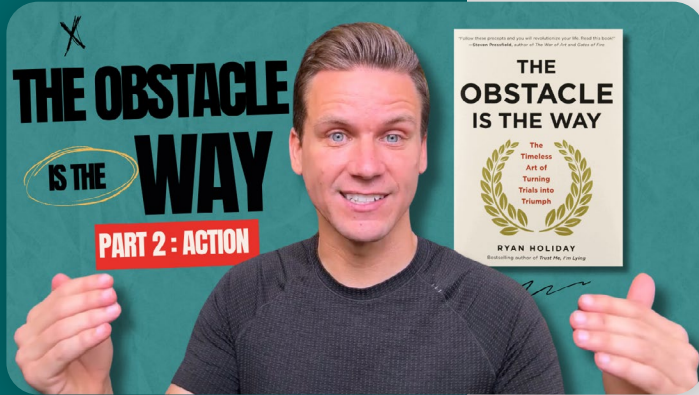
Objectivity means removing you from the equation. Think about your situation as a stranger's situation, pretend it's not happening to you and that whatever ensues doesn't affect you. Notice how it changes your perspective.

**Q:** What is an emotionally charged situation that you can practice seeing from a stranger's perspective?

### Challenge: Practice Objectivity

Write out 3-5 of the "worst" things that have happened to you. Reframe them, stripped of all judgment and associated story, and rewrite them as an objective statement.





## PART 2

# ACTION

### Reflection/Discussion Questions

Thomas Edison is given as an example of persistence, going through 6000 filaments before the lightbulb worked. As well as Ulysses S. Grant's victory in Vicksburg had only come as a result of dozens of failed attempts before finding the successful one.

**Q:** Considering those examples, what value can we glean from Ryan Holiday's quote "Genius often really is just persistence in disguise"?

Consider the following statements regarding failure:

- "Failure can become the source of breakthroughs"
- "Anticipated, temporary failure hurts LESS than catastrophic permanent failure"
- "Failure is the best school, but tuition ain't free, be glad to pay the cost"
- "Only way to not benefit from failure is to not learn from it."
- "Failure is the world (universe) giving you feedback, its revelation"
- "Failure shows us the way, by showing us what isn't the way"

**Q:** What is your relationship with failure like? When has failure turned out to work out for you in the long run?

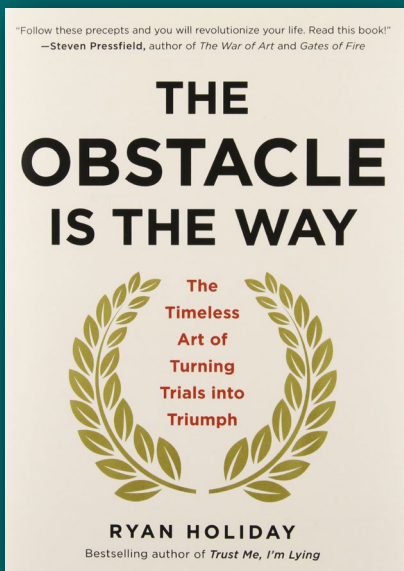
Consider Amelia Earhart's example of taking the "offensive offer" initially that eventually led her to build momentum toward landing a permanent place in the history books.

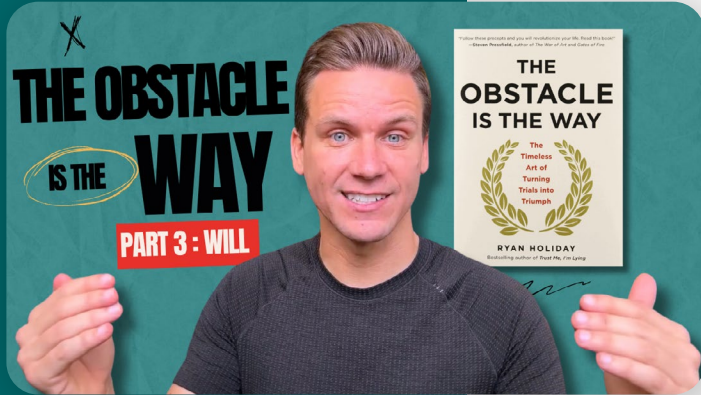
**Q:** What might have happened had she waited for a better offer? What are other ways people fail to get moving by "holding out" for the best opportunity?

### Challenge: How you do anything is how you do everything

Infuse intention into 3 everyday routine things. Example:

- Instead of just making your bed; make your bed as a metaphor for putting your life into order
- Instead of just brushing your teeth, brush your teeth while thinking about how you should always speak the truth
- Instead of just driving to work, think about how you can use that same driving time to listen to a podcast or uplifting music





## PART 3

# WILL

### Reflection/Discussion Questions

Nietzsche said, "My formula for greatness in a human being is amor fati: that one wasn't nothing to be different, not forwarded, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it... but love it."

**Q:** How can you cheerfully accept and love 'bad' circumstances without coming across annoyingly optimistic, naive, or in denial?

Discuss the Art of Acquiescence... accepting certain things that we are unable to change and seeing constraints as guides.

**Q:** When do you know when you should try to change something vs when you should accept it?

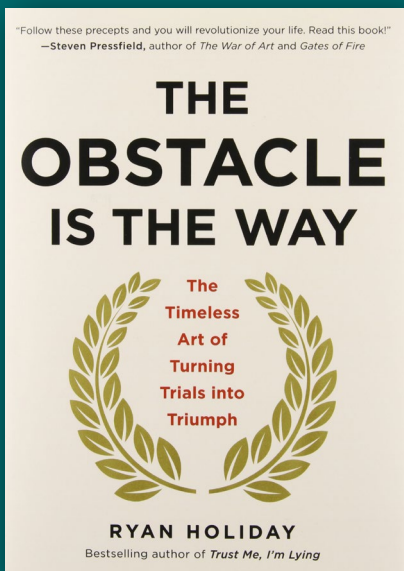
Consider Abraham Lincoln's life full of tragedy and setbacks and his "This too shall pass" mentality.


**Q:** When has there been something that seemed like it would never end, that has? Where is the value in knowing the ephemeral nature of all things?

### Challenge: Finding gratitude in challenges

Write about a challenging experience and find ways that it has altered your course or otherwise how you can be grateful for it in hindsight. Write out ten or more things you are grateful for now coming as a result from those experiences and where they have led your life.

Next, use that gratitude to experience amor fati from the beginning next time something happens to you. Harness your future self's wisdom who sees the whole picture and borrow that happiness to feel like you wouldn't change anything about what has happened.





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