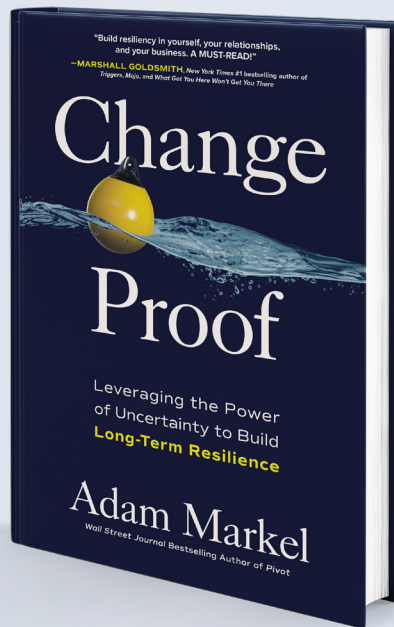


# BOOK SNAPS™

Zooming In On Your Next Read



## Change Proof

By Adam Markel

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## How to Thrive On Uncertainty

In Adam Markel's previous book, *Pivot*, he mentions the importance of sticking things out at least 50 pages. "Because when you read 50 pages and move on, you're not just giving up on a book, you're giving up on yourself." He asks for readers to think about what else they could be giving up on after 50 pages of their own lives. However, the world around us looks different from the way it did back when *Pivot* was written. Now that we, as a collective, have gone through major changes in short periods of time and continue to experience changes, Markel has found that there is a new goal we should set ourselves before we consider quitting on anything: 100 pages.

Getting through at least 100 pages (of a book, of life, of family, work, etc) allows you to develop the skills and habits to not only stick through the changes, but become resilient to them. Enough resilience and you become change proof. No matter what change comes your way, you'll be able to pivot through it and leverage the change for your personal and/or professional benefit.

## The Suck & Lifeguard Lessons

Change is like the suck - a term used by beach lifeguards to describe the water that pulls people out with the tide and threatens to drown them. If there is one thing we have all learned, especially from the last couple of years, it's that change is going to happen. That is non negotiable. Change will come into our lives and sweep us away from what we know: the way we live, our relationships, our business and work - change will happen to all of it. But once you enter the suck of change, you have a choice to make: You can either choose to fight it off or you can choose to be resilient. Our entire lives, we're told to fight through the storm, fight through what's hard, fight through change. But if you fight through the suck, you're only going to use up the limited resources you have, exhaust yourself, and end up drowning it in. You can't fight change because change is going to happen.

Markel talks about one of his first jobs, as a lifeguard. At the time, he took on the job thinking it was going to be a great way to get tan and meet some girls. But it was also a job that taught him some hard lessons that he carries with him through today.



One of those lessons happened when the lifeguard team lost a swimmer. With only a month of experience, Markel and his team mates dove into the water, more than 10 feet into the current, searching for the missing swimmer. They never found him. As they were all called back in, no one wanted to admit defeat. Their crew leader, Bob, pulled them aside. Everyone's head hung low, "he told us we had to learn something from this horrible experience. To make sure no one went down on our watch again...was if we had each other's backs." He followed his speech with "No one goes down on our watch."

The thing is, when we're faced with change, especially a tragedy, it has a tendency to shake our confidence. We feel stuck, unsure, out in our own sucks and flailing. Sometimes it even feels like failure. Sometimes, it really is failure. Bob saw that in this team and had to make sure they understood. "Just because something tragic happened, just because the unthinkable happened, we still had a job to do. If we were going to do it to the best of our ability, we had to choose to move forward together."

That's the key. You have to choose to move forward as a team. You have to face the failures, ride the suck, and become resilient to be change proof. And you have to rest. Rest is how you build muscle and build resilience.

## Pause, Ask, Choose

A large portion of Markel's book references what he called "the change-proof model." And that model is to pause, ask, and then choose. If you're swimming in a current that brings you into the suck, (experiencing change) then this is the one tool that can at least bring you back to shore. It's a natural impulse to want to fight what's happening. As Markel says, "The thing about the rip current is there's nothing you can do about it. Literally.... You do not, I promise you, have the swimming ability to fight the movement of the ocean."

The only thing to do is to pause. Stop fighting and have an awareness of what's happening and how much energy you're expending. Pausing gives you a moment to reflect, understand what you might have lost in the change, and learn from that experience as a team so you can move forward.

Pausing yourself pauses the struggle. This gives you the moment to do the next step, which is the ask. As Markel states, "This is where we find purpose. Or to be more specific, this is where you frame the meaning of what you're experiencing."

Regardless if we're stuck in the suck or going through a pandemic, no matter how bad it is, our resilience is about coming to terms with what the universe has given us. The question isn't about why it's happening to us. The question is "what are we going to do about it?"

The last step is to choose. Imagine you're out in the rip current. You've paused to reflect where you are and what's happening. You're letting the water take you where it will because there is no fighting it. You've asked yourself "what am I going to do about it?" and made the decision: You're going to move with

the current rather than make it move you. So you choose to recover the energy you saved by pausing and swim parallel to the beach, all the way to safety.

This is what we must do in business and in life: choose to ritualize our recovery no matter what change happens to us so we can have a higher performance in the future.

## Resilient Bodies, Hearts, and Minds

So what does change and uncertainty mean for us? It's simple, really: change = uncertainty = stress

Plato says, "All learning is remembering." However, Markel suggests it's a little different. "All learning is pain." By that he means that there is no way to learn without experiencing some kind of suffering. Through the stress and pain and traumatic experiences, we learn how to pause, reflect, and choose to move with the change to change ourselves. From the rapid growth of technology to the rapid changes in the pandemic, the problem is it creates a lot of stress. However, we can choose to believe that stress isn't necessarily bad. Our response to stress can propel us to understand what needs to be done and how to move with it. It can drive us into new action, to pivot in a positive and creative approach to handle the stress with resilience.

Markel says, "Dennis Charney of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai New York and Steven Southwick at the Yale School of Medicine performed an analysis of resilience by talking to people who had experienced traumatic events." While several people suffered from PTSD, others had no symptoms of psychological distress. They found a few main factors that mark resilience. A sample of those factors are taken in verbatim below:

- Attention to health and good cardiovascular fitness
- Capacity to rapidly recover from stress
- A history of mastering challenges
- High coping self-efficacy - our belief in our own ability to succeed.
- Disciplined focus on skill development
- Cognitive flexibility
- Capacity to extract meaning from adverse situations
- Support (social and spiritual)

In other words, it's allowing the change to change you. Sometimes, it's easy to think we need to practice resilience. However, that is not the case. We're not practicing resilience. We can't. We have to perform it in order to become it.

As stated earlier, uncertainty equals stress. And to be resilient, we need to work through the stress. For our bodies, "exercise mimics the stress response. Active passivity. Calmly active and actively calm." Markel swims in the ocean to burn away the things that are no longer serving him and create new challenges that will. It makes him excited and nervous at the same time.



## We have the ability to train our minds to be comfortable with the things that make our thoughts uncomfortable.”

He is putting himself in a situation that's outside of his control (the ocean, the rip current, the waves and possible suck) and doesn't turn his back on it. He looks into it. By putting his body under this kind of stress, he is actively creating resilience to face more situations outside of his control.

How about our minds? Are we able to create resilient thoughts? Yes. We have the ability to train our minds to be comfortable with the things that make our thoughts uncomfortable. The thing is, we cannot pause our thoughts. Even if you try to sit without them for thirty seconds, they still come. And as much as we'd sometimes like to go through electroshock rather than sit with our own thoughts, mental resilience has nothing to do with avoiding those thoughts altogether.

As a business leader, there will be times when you will need to calm yourself fast and effectively. That's where a ritual comes into play to pause and reflect:

- Inhale: breathe in
- Hold that breath for 10 complete seconds
- Exhale, breathe out

As you breathe in and out, imagine your emotions are pouring out of you and reaching other people. Imagine those same emotions radiating wonderfully to any part of your body. The practice of this kind of meditation daily helps to take the edge off your emotions and creates emotional flexibility. Spend time with yourself and your emotions. Learn to feel the wonderful ones to their highest points. Meditate daily and feel the difference on how you choose to allow your emotions to affect you.

Markel suggests as you do the breathing exercise to then ask yourself four questions:

- Do I like feeling this way?
- Do I want to let it go?
- Am I willing to let it go?
- When am I willing to let it go?

This way, you can take away some of the emotional power, even if it stays with you. Emotionally resilient people are actively calm and present. They know emotion has real weight. And emotionally resilient leaders know how to take away the power of the feelings that hinder them from moving forward.

People talk about having balance, that the balance of your mind body and soul is what will create happiness. However, it's

not about the balance. Balance isn't the right word at all. You can't have equal weight in all areas of yourself. It just doesn't work that way. It's not about balance. It's about harmony. It's about all the pieces of yourself working together fluidly. So your mind can support your body. Your body can support your emotions and your emotions can drive your thoughts. When you are in harmony with all the pieces of yourself, you have more capability to not only choose to be resilient but actually become resilient, swim out of the suck of change, and pivot into a better future. You move with the change rather than fighting it.

### Change-Proof

As humans, we have the ability to imagine the future. As a leader in your business, you have the ability to imagine a future where your business grows, no matter who is in charge, if you lose that business, grow out of it, or sell it to someone else. Markel says, "No one can predict the future nor can anyone control it, but to be a change-proof person and leader, a healthy, thriving imagination is the tool that will help you survive any rip current you may face."

We no longer have the choice to be resilient. We have to be. Change is coming. It will forever come our way. We must choose to be change proof leaders so we don't end up in our own versions of the suck, drowning ourselves and those within our teams and business.

Being a change proof leader is the biggest and most complicated tool to have in your back pocket. Honing in on the change proof model is the practice we must perform in the face of any change: pause and reflect, ask yourself how to respond, and choose to recover your energy and move forward to the future.

Then we must create resilience in our minds, bodies, hearts and spirits. Use them as the vessel to be change-proof beings. Every day, we have a new opportunity to create whatever it is we have dreamed about. And moving with the changes that happen to us and around us rather than fighting against them is the path we need to take to get there.

Be a change proof human, a change proof leader, to create a change proof team that will build a change proof organization.