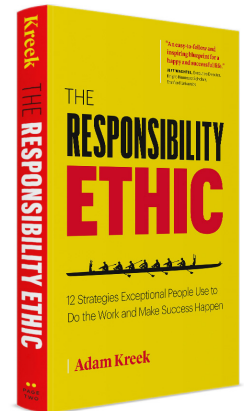


The Responsibility Ethic

12 Strategies Exceptional People Use to Do the Work and Make Success Happen

by **Adam Kreek**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

In *The Responsibility Ethic*, Adam Kreek explores the 12 key ways that a person can take responsibility in their life, in business, and in leadership. These 12 responsibility ethics span a range of areas, from taking responsibility for the fears and failures we all experience to mentorship, stress, leadership, and even safety.

Adam Kreek is a member of the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame for his gold medal-career as a champion rower. With eight Olympic golds to his name (and a host of other world championships), he translates the lessons learned in rowing and athletics to the world of business, leadership, and life.

Areas of focus within the book also include goalsetting, handling stress, professionalism in the workplace, recovering physically and mentally, improved communication, stronger resilience tactics, and others. Readers will come away with a deeper understanding for how they can take greater responsibility for their lives and work. The result is the greater ability to change problem behaviors, achieve real and actionable goals, and increase personal fulfillment in everything you do.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- What it means to take responsibility and how “responsibility ethics” can change the way you see yourself and the world.
- How healthy stress and a confident attitude towards failure can transform your life and career.
- The importance of professionalism, communication, and mentoring in leadership and in your workplace.

Why Responsibility?

The Responsibility Ethic exists to challenge and heal everyone who has been told to follow their dreams. We're sold the dream, but we don't read the fine print: hard work and labored action. We must transform our dreams into a vision and a plan, then move into action.

Take responsibility. Take action. Be a person who makes happiness and success happen.

The first step is to acknowledge that career, family, and life don't just happen to us. We, and only we, create our futures through our choices, actions, and conscious habits. Our daily choices have led us to today, and our choices today will take us in any direction we choose. We must take responsibility for building an environment that pushes us to act effectively. Get a coach. Ask a friend. Seek a mentor. Build a team.

Adopting the strategies in The Responsibility Ethic takes a lot of effort, and that's the point. We generate far more negative stress when our dreams are unaccompanied by hard action, when we shirk into the shadows instead of wading into troubled waters. It's time to stop wishing, hoping, and worrying—three overused excuses for inaction.

Focusing on what we can control gives us the energy and ability to leap when the next opportunity arises. You can either be someone with a strong internal locus of control and make things happen, or you can be a person with a strong external locus of control and let things happen to you.

What kind of person are you? Who do you want to be?

Take Responsibility for Your Fear of Failure

All of us fear failure. We carry regret, shame, and other emotional baggage after any significant failure. But there's a powerful process that can help you or your team overcome that baggage and move forward, free from the fear of failure.

First, explore the facts. Take a step back and decouple the event from your related emotions. Facts and feelings are both important to consider, but they're two distinct beasts. Seek to understand each in full.

Too often, we rush through the step of reflection to avoid the discomfort of negative feelings. Rushing is counterproductive, as these emotions will resurface and hold you back in the future.

Next, it's time to learn. You are often the most creative on the rebound from catastrophe. What did you learn about

your actions that helped or hindered your result? What did you learn from your reaction that served you well or otherwise? What did you do well? What could you change?

This process, in turn, will help you grow as you address how you'll put each learning into daily or situational action—turning fear and doubt into growth and action.

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Take Responsibility for Your Goals

If you set, pursue, and achieve healthy goals, you will enter a satisfying space where hard work is easy—and even enjoyable. If you set, pursue, and achieve toxic goals, you'll end up numbing your emotions with vices. Strive to be your best self. Be clear on your destination. Satisfy your core needs. Set better goals.

In the face of low energy, we paradoxically need to imagine new ways of spending our energy that aligns with our values. We need a new challenge that relights our fire. The appeal of a positive future can be a gift in the present moment. From this platform, we can start small and work up the courage to set bigger and bigger goals. If we imagine too big and bright of a future, the challenge becomes too great, and we struggle to take responsibility. Our will evaporates. Instead, we need to find small wins to rebuild our confidence.

Finding small wins creates a positive feedback loop. You take responsibility for a small step and soon know that leap is possible.

Take Responsibility for Sharing Leadership

The command-and-control model of leadership is dead and buried. Leadership is the ability to turn your vision into reality by enlisting the help and winning the hearts of others. It's time to share leadership. It's time to win together.

In the shared leadership model, instead of one boss at the

top of the hierarchy making all the decisions, vision and influence is distributed to every member of the team. The team has an extreme ownership of group outcomes. Where traditional leadership is static— one person is the leader until they are replaced— shared leadership is remarkably dynamic and powerful.

Shared leadership empowers people within a team to lead one another using their unique areas of expertise. It flows from commitments made at the top. Leadership that holds a strong bias to hierarchy and status is waning. Our modern world is becoming more complex and nuanced, and we need more collaborative leaders who believe in distributing control and direction, sharing it at all levels of an organization.

Take Responsibility for Your Stress

Channeled properly, stress can be a positive and powerful force. Whether it's the nervousness we feel before going on stage to perform or the stress of a fast-approaching deadline, the anxiety that drives us to do more in less time can be one of our best friends. Many of us think of stress as negative, or something to be avoided. Rethink it. Harness the power of stress as performance energy.

Stress is something each of us must deal with on the job, but it's what we do under that pressure that defines the outcome for our organizations and for ourselves. We can build drive and energy to move through stress by reviewing our past. Look at your calendar week by week for one year and make a list of everything you've done in your life and business. We can look back at our year with regret or we can look back and see how far we've come. From there, you can track and stack your wins.

While some allow stress to overwhelm them, others use stress to motivate and push them forward.

Take Responsibility for Your Professionalism

How can you be a Pro? A Pro delivers results. Amateurs can pursue an activity simply for the love of it and not necessarily for fame, fortune, or vocation. But when the stakes are high and we want to get something done right, it's time to call in the professionals. A Pro performs at the very highest level. In your key area of focus, do you behave like a professional or an amateur?

The professional has learned that success, like happiness,

comes as a by-product of work. The professional concentrates on the work. The Pros do the work and, because of their ethic, have more influence over their results. Professionalism is a choice and its traits can be learned.

When you dedicate yourself to routinely doing your best work, you will find invaluable fulfillment. You'll be motivated to continue and take responsibility for your own professional dedication.

Take Responsibility for Your Recovery

Effective recovery builds a store of energy and determination to power us through our next peak performance. Effective recovery opens our hearts to the softer, sweeter, and subtler side of life, which can be just as delicious as our achievements. Without adequate recovery, you will experience life-altering injuries, mental breakdowns, and broken relationships. Recover intelligently. Ensure your downtime allows for consistent uptime.

The best prescription for feeling awful is to sweat an hour every day for a month. Move. Sit in a sauna. Go somewhere hot. Eat right, move right, sleep right, get outside, meditate. Make sure you are coping with the right strategies. Start now. You will feel much better a month from now.

In the great outdoors, families are more cohesive, tough decisions become clearer, and the risk of heart disease and depression is markedly lower. It doesn't just sound nice— it's a scientific fact.

Take Responsibility for Your Coaching and Mentoring

Mentors provide perspective, guidance, and inspiration. Coaches ask great questions that help us lead from within. You'd be foolish to think that your challenges and feelings are unique. They've been experienced by others before you, and others will have similar experiences after you. That's why mentors matter and coaches change lives. Get a coach, get a mentor, and be both for those you lead.

Research says it only takes on consistent year of action by a coach, leader, or mentor to make a significant change in someone's life. And when you or your team make the right kind of change, you gain an ethic that propels you faster toward your goals.

Take Responsibility for the People in Your Boat

You can get far more done— faster and better and smarter— when you have a talented team aligned under a com-

mon goal. Working together with the right people brings joy in effort and top-shelf results. But this means recruiting and retaining great people and working with those who need help to get up to speed. Do that, and you'll create a team that's hard to beat.

Our limits are often imaginary. We find our real limits if we have the courage to break through. We find our limits if we have the courage to seek failure. We grow our limits if we seek failure with the support of a world-class team.

A great team needs a great leader on top and great leaders within. Choose your team wisely and be the kind of leader whom others will choose.

Take Responsibility for Your Safety (and the Safety of Others)

Safety performance is not a priority; priorities change. Safety is non-negotiable. It's a core value. Every day, we eat, sleep, get dressed, work hard, get paid, and are safe. We lead safe teams because we care. We build safe cultures because we care. Bring your best self and remember that boring, mundane safety plans are not to be left on the dock.

What small actions and behaviors can you keep sharp to save lives? How can you tweak your on-site safety meetings to be more effective? How can you empower all employees to better use the lines of communication? How can you take better advantage of near misses and other safety moments?

These are the questions that will lead to a strong, robust safety plan.

Take Responsibility for Your Communication

Communication is a key skill for any leader. We must be clear, frank, and transparent with our people, and our people need to respond in kind. Communication needs to take place the moment an opportunity or problem arises, not long after the fact. After all, the best communication is a two-way street, where team members carry on a dialogue as they work together—constantly sharing plans and exploring issues.

Take Responsibility for Your Resilience

Change is motivated by two things: the pursuit of pleasure or the avoidance of pain. In pursuing a brighter future, we create the pain of challenge, self-doubt, uncertainty. When pain prompts change, we often resent the push and can wallow in self-pity. But what's worse than change? Staying still. Stagnation. Challenges of the mind. Facing ourselves, suffering as we move toward a brighter future, and being grateful for the motivation of pain strengthens resilience.

Conclusion

Courage is the sum of fear and purposeful action. It's the courage to continue that will lead us to more peaks in our lives and more moments of peace. Success is not final. Failure is not fatal. Finding the courage to continue is what counts.



Adam Kreek is one of North America's top Management Consultants, and Executive Coaches. Adam has coached, trained, and taught hundreds of thousands of people including teams at Microsoft, General Electric, Mercedes-Benz, L'Oréal, Shell, YPO, EO, TedX, but most importantly, Adam walks the talk. Kreek runs two corporations—KreekSpeak Business Solutions and Ergo Sustainable Solutions, a low carbon initiative that connects small businesses with small governments. A two-time Olympian, Adam holds sixty international medals, including Olympic gold, and multiple hall of fame inductions.

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