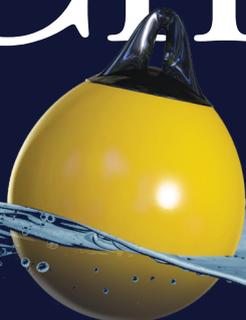


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and your business. A MUST READ!”

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# Change



# Proof

Leveraging the Power  
of Uncertainty to Build  
**Long-Term Resilience**

# Adam Markel

*Wall Street Journal* Bestselling Author of *Pivot*

# Change



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Pre-Launch Excerpt - Not for Sale or Distribution



New York Chicago San Francisco Athens London Madrid  
Mexico City Milan New Delhi Singapore Sydney Toronto

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*To all those courageous enough  
to embrace the unknown.*

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# Preface

## *The Suck*

*Life changes in the instant. The ordinary instant.*

—JOAN DIDION

Imagine it's 1981. You're on a bus out of Queens, headed east on the Long Island Expressway. It's smack dab in the middle of a heat wave in the hottest week of the summer. The air-conditioning of this rolling crate gave up years ago, and the windows are forever stuck closed. You're only 10 minutes into the ride, and you'd give your right arm to feel even the slightest bit of a breeze. If the neighborhood pool were ever open you'd be there, but it's been closed all summer.

As you leave the city and careen into tree-lined suburbia, you sit still and quiet, breathing through your nose, trying not to be carsick from the rocking of the bus and the exhaust fumes snaking through the vents. In spite of the heat, your family makes each other laugh arguing about breakfast or Star Wars or baseball or whatever will keep their hearts excited about your destination.

Finally, just when you can't take anymore, the bus skids to a stop on a spit of land on Long Island called Jones Beach. You wade through the other city-dwellers, dodging suburban station wagons in the parking lot until you burst onto the sand and are greeted by the thunderous blue surf slamming into a shoreline filled with a screaming wall of humanity.

Literally, it's as if a Yankees game ended, the final notes of Frank Sinatra singing "New York, New York" echoing into the sky, and the entire stadium decided, as one, to go to the same half-mile section of beach. Actually, two Yankee Stadiums full of people.

Imagine the sensory overload! One hundred thousand people! Every skin tone imaginable, slathered in oil and lotions; footballs, handballs, baseballs whizzing by your face; the crack of a thousand beers and sodas being opened at once; all five New York boroughs crammed together on towels and blankets; the smell of charcoal grills and sizzling meat mixes with the salt in the air; and the lifeguard whistles that pierce through the symphony of the senses.

Exuding calm, cool confidence, these lifeguards are the lords of the beach sitting on their thrones. They all sport mirrored shades, tans as perfect as the bodies, forever twirling whistles lazily around their fingers. They're watchful, alert, ready for anything.

In the lifeguard code, a single whistle says, "Hey, you there, get away from that spot." Two whistles say, "I'm going in the water." And three whistles say, "All hands on deck, we're going to lose someone."

In a few short minutes that someone is going to be you.

For now, the whistles are silent. At last, you find a spot near the lifeguard tower that's too small, but it'll have to do. You get your towels down, fighting the family behind you for space while your own family continues to bicker. Everybody gets a snack. And a drink.

You whip your shorts and shirt off. You step out of your sweaty shoes. It feels amazing, so good, in fact, that you don't even mind that the sand feels like the surface of the sun. Hoping as quick as you're able, you leave your family behind and navigate the labyrinth of towels, blankets, and umbrellas between you and the sweet coolness of the water.

Your feet hit the water line, you feel air and the sun hit your skin, and for the first time in weeks, you realize you've been

holding your breath. You exhale. For a moment, the entire odyssey feels worthwhile. You close your eyes and feel something that feels like relief.

Then when you open them, the water around you that moments ago was bright blue, is now blue-green around your shins. You don't give it another thought as you wade out, feeling the tide pulling on you like an excited child. "Come on! Come on! Further out!" You don't notice it at the time, but you'll remember later, an odd sound, fizzy, like someone's opening a seltzer bottle in slow motion.

Without a thought, you dive under, into the waves, into the spin cycle of another universe, pulling yourself out with your hands in the sandy bottom until you emerge, exhilarated, into the sun. Turning, you look back, to wave to your family.

But hang on a moment: You can't find them. Scanning the shore, you bounce on your toes and realize you've drifted away from the lifeguard tower by almost 40 yards to the right and even farther from the shore. What's more, the water that was once brilliant blue is now almost brown.

OK, time to head back in, you think. Except now, your feet can't find the bottom. You strain your toes to find even a grain of sand. Nothing.

Fine, this is fine, you're going to be fine, but you're going to have to swim, so you put your head down and do your best version of the front crawl, making 10 or 12 strong strokes back to safety.

Then you raise your head, your arms heavy, chest heaving with the effort to realize you're even further out than when you started. A bronze lifeguard stands at the shore waving you in, blowing her whistle. But you can only see her like you're looking the wrong way through binoculars. Her bright blue and gold swimsuit seems a mile away and getting farther. Desperately, you're trying not to panic, but your body feels like a stone and no matter what you do, no matter how hard you swim, you're

headed out to sea. You gasp for breath, but splutter out a mouth full of seawater.

Then there they are—Tweet! Tweet! Oh goodness, there are the two whistles! The beach version of DEFCON 1. People are running, yelling, pointing in your direction. You try to wave, but you can't raise your arm. Each stroke, each movement, sapping what little strength you have left. To make matters worse, you're getting a little bit of water with every breath.

When you woke up today, not any part of you thought this was going to happen. A minute ago, you were on the shore! Now you're breathing salt water. You're now in it. For real. Full-blown panic. Every part of your brain is screaming, flashing red lights, like a submarine in a deep-sea dogfight. Every single molecule of your being, your mind, your body, your heart, and your spirit is dedicated to fighting like hell to get back to shore, to get your feet on solid ground, but the people on the beach are getting so small now, no matter how hard you struggle, it seems like help, if it does come, will be too late.

Still, even though you know it's pointless and the water is almost above your head, you keep struggling to get back to shore, to safe ground, your arms and legs kicking uselessly as you're carried out to sea. As you slip beneath the waves, the deepest part of your panicked brain is telling you, "Keep swimming. Don't give up. Whatever you do, don't give up. Don't ever give up. Keep fighting. . . ."

• • •

That's what it feels like to get caught in what lifeguards call "the Suck" otherwise known as a rip current; a powerful water flow that arises seemingly out of nowhere, pulling sand and water and anything in its path out into deeper water. They usually come in the period between high and low tide, they're the number-one cause of lifeguard rescues, and they kill close to 50 swimmers in the United

States every year. The unlucky ones perish because they panic and fight like hell to survive, which is a normal, human reaction. The lucky ones not only survive, but they thrive in the current.

In our lives, “the Suck” can happen at any time, in a variety of ways, and usually when we least expect it.

## 100 Pages of Your Life

On August 6, 1926, a 21-year old American swimmer named Gertrude Ederle set out from the coast of France to swim the 21 miles across the English Channel. She learned how to swim in Highlands in central New Jersey.

On her first attempt to swim the English Channel, she was nearly halfway through the journey, when she was abruptly taken out of the water by her coach who saw her floating face down in the water and wrongly assumed that, because she was a woman, she was in distress and thereby not capable of making the swim across.

Gertrude Ederle was furious. She wasn't in distress, she was merely resting in the water. She hadn't come all that way to swim to the middle of the English Channel. She declared that if she ever set foot in French water, she wasn't going to give up until she stepped out of English water.

A year after she was pulled out of the English Channel, Gertrude Ederle returned and in 14 1/2 hours, she was the first woman to swim the English Channel. In the twelfth hour of her swim, in a nearby support boat, her new coach saw that the winds were becoming unmanageable and called out to Ederle that she should abandon her quest for greatness. She simply raised her head out of the water and asked, “What for?”

Two simple words expressed that resilient young woman's spirit. She was asking, "I've come this far. Why would I stop now?" She didn't yell. She didn't scream. She didn't need an inspiring speech. She just decided *not to quit*.

I wrote my last book, *Pivot*, in 2016. Back then, the world looked completely different than it does today. At the beginning of the book, I set out a marker that was a 50-page challenge. The reason why? Here's what I wrote at the time,

*Because when you read 50 pages and move on, you're not just giving up on a book; you're giving up on yourself. You may not realize it, but your 50-page habit is rearing its head elsewhere. What else are you "50-paging" in your life? Are you 50-paging your relationship? Your parenting? Your health? Your finances? If you're only going two chapters deep in your life, you're only going to get two-chapter results. "Fifty-page syndrome" is just another way of saying quitting. Don't do it.*

The book you're reading now is about using your resilience to become change proof through all of life's uncertainties so you can leverage them for their creative opportunities. Change-proof resilience is about using change rather than change using you. So with that in mind, I'm setting down a new marker: 100 pages.

If you can't make it to a 100 pages, how are you going to keep yourself, your family, and your business afloat in the relentless current of the history in which we're all living? Blow past the 50 pages. Don't even think about it. Give it 100 pages. If you're willing to stick it out to the hundredth page of our story, you will find yourself becoming resilient.

### **CHANGE-PROOF POINT**

- ▶ If you think about quitting, just ask yourself, What for?



PART I

# Choose Change Before It Chooses You

*The only way to make sense out of change is to  
plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance.*

—ALAN WATTS

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## CHAPTER 1

---

# How Change Changes Things—and What to Do About It

## *Making Friends with Change*

*We have to make friends with change.*

—RAM DASS

Like the rip current, everything in life isn't always going to go according to plan. No matter how well-manicured your plans, they are going to change.

The Tao says it perfectly, "Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them; that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like." That's a painful lesson I had to learn after one of the foundational success stories of my entire life.

In 2016 I wrote a book called *Pivot*, which became a bestseller. The book was about reinvention, a guide to transforming your life when your life no longer fulfills you. If you were unhappy in your work, your body, or your relationships, *Pivot* defined a path

you could follow—a way to bridge the gap from where you were to where you wanted to be.

The book also described my own successful pivot from miserable and burned-out attorney to the engaged CEO of one of the world's largest personal development training companies. That was where I found myself when *Pivot* hit the shelves that spring. They were heady times, and I was on a roll. There were book signings and sold-out keynotes. Speaking engagements to thousands of people. I lectured to the Fortune 500 and shared the stage with people like Michael J. Fox, Jack Canfield, and Larry King.

And then the wind changed.

• • •

The summer after *Pivot* launched, I was in Paris for my wife Randi's fiftieth birthday. It was a beautiful place to celebrate a milestone, and we were delighted to be joined by our four adult "kids."

While we were ostensibly there to celebrate, I had a secret agenda of my own. I was coming off the end of an exhausting round of book promotions, piled on top of my ongoing job as CEO, a role in which I also ran many of the company's most critical training events. I was spent—deeply tired and desperately needing a break from work and some restorative time with my wife and kids. My secret plan was simple: enthusiastically spend magical time with my loved ones, while at the same time sleeping as much as possible to emerge rested, recharged, and restored. All without really revealing to anyone that I was teetering on the brink of burnout. Again.

• • •

Of course, it was a ridiculous plan, and I wasn't fooling anyone. Our second-born daughter Lindsay, who had just reached a

milestone of her own by graduating from UCLA, called me out as we sat in a café on a beautiful Parisian street.

“Dad,” she said, “I’m really worried about you. You were this miserable workaholic lawyer. You left that, and now you help people see the damage they’re doing to themselves and those around them when they try to make things work that just aren’t working.” Lindsay is never one for beating around the bush. “Now, look at you,” she continued. “You’re a workaholic again. You’re miserable. You’re ignoring a lot of signs that this is all tougher than it ought to be. And you’re the one that’s oblivious to the damage.”

Ouch. Lindsay’s worries weren’t entirely unfounded. The incident that had kick-started my pivot from lawyer to CEO had been a trip to the hospital with chest pains. (A day, I realized as I sat across from Lindsay, that was a lot like the very one we were experiencing at that moment.)

I fessed up. I told Lindsay she was right. I was working too much. My health was deteriorating again. I was becoming unhappy. “But the good news,” I told her, “is that I’m an expert on reinvention. I’ll sort it out.”

Then I did nothing of the sort. What I did do, instead, was what I’d done as a discontented lawyer. I circled the wagons. I put my head down. I went back to working harder. Again.

A few weeks later, my wife and I were at a work retreat, and the issue came up again. We both knew things weren’t working with my business partners, who didn’t see eye-to-eye with me on the direction of the company. Randi and I agreed: we needed a pivot plan to exit the company.

“The good thing,” I told her, “is that I’m a pivot expert. I’ll sort it out.” In that moment, I really believed it.

And then I immediately went back to work, doubled down, and ignored everything we’d just discussed. Again.

A few months later, I travelled to Los Angeles for a six-day business training in front of a sold-out audience. These almost weeklong events are an exhausting and adrenaline-inducing roller-coaster ride. Six days on a stage requires you to be “on” for hours at a time and that’s just the time on stage. The moment you step off the stage you’re in demand. Evenings are a combination of dealing with the demands of running a multimillion-dollar company, socializing with event attendees, and prepping for the next day, which usually starts before dawn with more prepping and work.

In contrast to the exhaustion, of course, is the sheer power of what’s happening: people transforming right before your eyes. It’s a blessing to be a part of it—a priceless gift to know that you played a small part in someone’s pivot toward a life that holds true meaning for them. It was those transformations, those reinventions, that kept me going.

About halfway through the week, I got a message: my business partners from Asia were flying in to meet with me at the end of the event. When they arrived, we arranged to have lunch, and as I sat there I realized exactly why we were meeting. I remember closing my eyes for just a few seconds before the scene unfolded. I was calm and the voice inside my head just said “embrace the pivot.” It took just a few minutes to clarify the details. We disagreed on the direction of the company. I was being replaced as CEO. And just like that, it was over.

I left the hotel, overwhelmed with emotion and spiritual dejection. Facing a long and lonely drive back home, I called a close friend. It turned out he was driving, too, winding his way down a mountain road in northern California. The cell service was terrible, and his voice faded in and out. I didn’t even get a chance to tell him what had just happened—I could barely hear him. Abruptly, the static ended and there was a brief moment of clarity. Then, completely unprompted, he uttered the words I’d said to myself earlier that day. “Adam,” I heard him say, “Embrace the pivot.”

And then, like a mystery movie that suddenly goes to a commercial, the call cut out. I tried to call him back, but voicemail was all I got. I finished the long drive alone, with those now familiar words ringing in my ears. Embrace the pivot.

By the time I got home, however, I'd forgotten both the call and those words; reality had begun to set in. I walked into the house and sat alone in the dark. I thought, I'm 51. I'm getting fired. We have a mortgage. Bills. We still have kids to go through college.

What the hell am I going to do?

• • •

It was Groundhog Day, all over again. The months that followed were trying. There was the discomfort of continuing to show up at work for a time to keep the company stable and the team focused while my "exit" was sorted. Then there was the constant uncertainty of when things would officially end, what would happen next, and how we'd manage in the interim.

Strangely, the most difficult part of those months wasn't the stress of the mortgage, or the bills, or even keeping the refrigerator full. That was all very real, but it was like a surface layer of concern; underneath was a deeper anxiety that I couldn't put my finger on.

One morning it hit me. That sick feeling in my stomach wasn't really the worry about being able to provide for my family. It was the fact that I was right back where I'd started.

The more I thought about it, the crazier it seemed. I'd been an angry, overworked, unhappy attorney. Then I'd left that to become, in the end, an angry, overworked, unhappy CEO—just as my daughter had pointed out. Not only that, but during my time as CEO, I'd been ousted from the job by my so-called partners, not once, but twice.

Time and time again, it felt like I'd pivoted, reinvented myself, and then somehow wound up right back where I started.

I was on repeat. I was living in my own personal purgatory. Change. Stress. Change. Stress. Repeat.

That, I realized, was the nagging anxiety. It was that whispered voice in my head saying, why bother? You're just going to end up in the same place again.

To make things worse, I was supposed to be the "pivot guy." I was the reinvention expert. I actually wrote the book on the subject. And yet here I was, a failed example of how to do just that. It was awful. Was everything I stood for just a sham?

I spent a few miserable days in that vortex. I began to think, maybe it's true. And if so, why fight it? Why go through all the effort if the end result is the same? Why not just go back to being an attorney?

Maybe that's just how life is, I thought. You can't count on anything. Everything is transitional, like so much ethereal dust. Nothing stays the same. I was discouraged, overwhelmed, and losing hope by the day. And then things changed again.



Earlier in the year, I'd spent several days in the studio recording the audiobook version of *Pivot*. Now, I walked out the front door of my house, pressed play on my phone, and listened as my own voice said, "*Pivot: The Art and Science of Reinventing Your Career and Life*, by Adam Markel."

I nearly dropped my phone. For an author, revisiting your own words on the page can be strange. But to listen to yourself read your own book? Ugh. Moreover, there was a surreal irony to the experience. Here I was, in the middle of a pivot of my own, listening to me giving pivot advice to . . . myself.

Yet, in almost no time, the awkwardness fell away. What was at first my own voice reading a book, quickly became the words of a close advisor, a consigliere who knew me better than anyone. And so I started to walk. And I listened.

I did a lot of walking that week. I walked by myself. I walked with the dogs. I walked the beach, the trails, the streets. And through it all, I heard my own voice in my ear. By the end of the audiobook, I knew two things for sure.

The first was that, despite what my anxiety-fueled brain had been telling me, *Pivot* was something I was proud of. The book's model for change was effective. It worked. And I knew it worked because by the end of the book, I had a plan in place. I wasn't a sham, a fake, or a snake oil salesman. This approach to change was something I really, truly believed.

The second thing I knew was that I needed to write another book. One that would deal not with planned, predictable, and infrequent change, but one that would help people build resilience in the face of rapid, near-constant change. One that could help inoculate them against what I was beginning to think of as a whole new kind of pivot.

As 2019 drew to a close, I did not fully realize how true that would be.

## On Guard: The Problem with Chronic Change

I'm far from the only one to feel the winds of change. You've almost certainly felt them too. If you're "normal," which is to say you're human, you've probably experienced a few of these feelings lately:

- Anxiety about the future of your job or business
- A feeling of increasing workload and/or decreasing time
- Worry for the future of your children or other loved ones
- Difficulty sleeping, relaxing, or enjoying downtime
- A lack of purpose or drive
- Inability to "keep up" with new tech and social changes

With rare exception, almost everyone I speak to experiences feelings of unease or anxiety in one form or another. In my work with thousands of people around the world, however, I've noted a singular, significant change in those feelings. Rather than occurring during periods of significant change—a job change, a divorce, or a new business—those feelings now seem to be a near-daily part of life. Once upon a time, for example, it was typical to hold one career your entire life. In recent decades, we began to come to terms with the fact that we might pivot once, or even twice. Now? Career and business pivots are becoming less an event and more a steady state. Remember the old saying, “the only certainties in life are death and taxes”? You can now add “change” to the list. Uncertainty has become the new certainty.

Change has become chronic. That poses a dilemma for good ol' *Homo sapiens* like us. As you'll see in the pages that follow, chronic uncertainty is something that we don't tolerate well. We're wired to seek certainty—to fill gaps, understand, and predict. And when we can't, there are consequences—in particular, stress. From stress, as night follows the day, comes sickness.

Now, stress and its associated challenges are piling up all around us. We're neck deep in change, and the tide is heading the wrong way.

## Embracing Change

*Pivot* offered a solution for part of this problem. It was about how to make big changes, and it focused on creating a deliberate “plan B” for the seismic shifts in life—the things that we might experience only a handful of times. The pivot when you change jobs. The pivot when you emerge from the ruins of an old relationship and begin something new. The pivot when your startup runs out of runway and you need to reinvent your business for a new market before the next payroll.

Those pivots are not always predictable, but they do tend to share some common traits:

1. They're often a big deal. They're a significant sea-change in business and life. They have epic consequences. They're job changes, partner changes, business changes, health changes.
2. They're highly visible. As a result of their relative impact, you can see them. You can't always predict them, but there's a tangibility to the cancer, the firing, the failure, the divorce, and the corresponding recovery, job search, reinvention, and new relationship.
3. They happen infrequently. There are only so many monumental career changes, partner changes, and business changes in life. They're pivot points in our path that send us off on a new phase in life.

They are, in short, big, loud life and business changes. They're what I think of as macro pivots—large, loud, and less common.

But I was beginning to discover this other type of pivot, the micro pivots, and they shared their own set of common, yet nearly opposite traits:

1. They're often small. Micro pivots are made of things that were often unnoticeable. Tiny things. Minor slights, bits and pieces of negative news, unexpected expenses or obligations. Small things that send a day or a week in an unpredictable direction.
2. They can be hard to identify. Often, these things were hard to pin down. "I might lose my job in the restructuring next month" is a tangible, real uncertainty. A vague but persistent sense of anxiety, on the other hand, is abstract and hard to diagnose.
3. They happen all the time. These tiny micro pivots weren't occasional. They happened every day, often many times. They were frequent and chronic.

Don't let their size fool you. These little pivots—the constant demands to make decisions and take action in the face of change—stack up big. They can compound into one long infinite pivot—a state of what feels like near constant, uncontrollable change that can erode your health, wealth, and happiness.

These two types of pivots—the micro and the macro—require a shift in how we tackle changes, one that mirrors a shift in how change is happening in the real world. We're now faced with not just pivoting by design, by creating an intentional, deliberately created plan B for our personal and professional lives, but also pivoting by default: learning to manage near-constant change in a sort of moment-to-moment ongoing pivot.

Those two pivots are very different. One requires deliberate and well-executed planning, and the type of clarity and momentum I described in *Pivot*—a skill set that we still need and always will.

The second, however, requires something different altogether. It requires that we develop an awareness and mindset not just for tackling constant and unexpected change, but as Ram Dass says, for making friends with it.

As true as “embrace the pivot” is, it's not complete, not nearly complete. Why? Because 2020 happened. A global, macro pivot for humanity that required daily micro pivots of us all. The most uncertain year in decades. The year the uncertainty wasn't selective about who it touched. The year everything we knew or thought we knew got sucked out to sea. As 2019 gave way to 2020, none of us had any awareness of what was about to happen to our global community. I know that I didn't.

A friend of mine has an eight-year-old son and one day, not long ago, he asked his son how he would remember this year and how he will someday describe it to his children. His son thought for a moment and then he said, “I won't. I'm going to forget about 2020 as soon as I can.”

*It's your reaction to adversity, not adversity itself  
that determines how your life's story will develop.*

—DIETER F. UCHTDORF

Every New Year's Eve, if we're able to, we host an intimate party at our house. It's our ritual for ending one year and beginning another. It grounds us as a family but also lets us express our gratitude for the people in our lives who make us who we are. New Year's Eve 2019 was a magical time. Remember how you felt that night? Do you remember where you were? Who you were with? What you were eating? Drinking? What music were you listening to? Whom did you kiss at midnight? Given all that's happened since then, it's hard to remember, isn't it?

On December 31, 2019, Randi and I were gathered with a group of family and close friends. As we do every year, we were indoors, and telling stories, playing music, singing, and laughing into the night. On occasions like this, we hug, we kiss, and dance. Maybe we pray together or cry, if someone's experienced a uniquely painful year.

The point is, no matter what we do, the guiding principle is loved ones together indoors touching and breathing together. It's a simple but necessary expression of joy that most of us, if we're lucky, participate in every year with our communities. We commune together. We share a spiritual experience just by being together.

That New Year's Eve night at the end of 2019, as the clock struck midnight, Randi and I, in our own way, lit a candle to curse the darkness. We celebrated the fact that we get to be souls in human bodies having this amazing journey together.

Little did we know that this would be the last time for a long time that we would be able to do this simple act. Little did we know how much we were taking it for granted at the time. It feels like it happened a decade ago.

For Dr. Peter Nieman, the turning of the year from 2019 to 2020 would be worse than everything that would follow. On January 1, 2020, he and his wife discovered the body of their son, Ben, who ended his life after a long battle with depression. I was blessed to be able to speak to Peter at length about how he and his wife, Corrine, were able to move on after such a tragic loss.

This is what he said:

*When we lose a spouse, a child, or a leg, or whatever we may lose, can we grow from it? Can we let it develop? Can we make that choice? I often think of how I would define resilience.*

*I got it one morning again when I was running. It was such a beautiful day. The birds were singing. Where I live, if I look to the west, I look at the Canadian Rockies. I was running next to a body of water. I looked up, there was the moon setting toward the east. I thought about this. Here I am training for my next marathon, and this is a mental marathon we're going through. The definition for me of resilience is to train our mind. We have that choice to train our mind, to have the capacity, almost like fitness. Do I have the capacity to stay strong and to continue this thing, and to move forward? When life gives us what we didn't want or didn't choose?*

I can't get over how beautifully Peter phrased this. Here I was, complaining about this or that, falling down bad news rabbit holes, bemoaning yet another Zoom call, and this man faced the worst nightmare a parent can imagine. Every child is a miracle. I have four children. Until 2020, so did Peter. Now he had lost one to depression. What if that happened to me? How would I survive?

I honestly didn't know. But then, it occurred to me: despite the abyss of pain he was sitting on top of, he found a way to

make meaning out of it. In the short term, Peter and Corinne had experienced the kind of short-term tragedy and upheaval that exists only in our worst dreams. And yet, they could see their loss within a long-term context. They could find their way because they fixed their eyes on the horizon and allowed the loss of their child to find meaning in their lives and in their hearts.

That's what we all need. Meaning. But where do we find it? And once we find it, how do we keep it so that it's a light for us in our darkest moments? How can Peter's experience inspire and challenge us to make meaning out of this terrible time when we've faced so much uncertainty? How can we look beyond the short-term problems and challenges that drag us down every single day and instead see ourselves and our lives in a long-term way? How do we run marathons in a culture that constantly demands that we sprint? How do we survive the rip current?

And then a word Peter used jumped out at me there in the context of his loss and the losses we've all faced in the past year—*resilience*. Resilience is what we mean when we speak about being change proof in our lives and in our business. In *Pivot*, the word that kept coming up again and again, without me realizing it, was *resilience*. For me, resilience is about how to take all the uncertainty, the pain, the loss, and the upheaval and turn that into something better. To make it mean something. That's when I realized what book I needed to write. In effect, I was already writing it, I just didn't know it yet.

Peter Nieman and the events of 2020 taught me that resilience is the energy that fuels the “big P” pivots and our micro pivots as well. It's where the literal rip current becomes the metaphor that can bring us to the moment where we truly become change proof.

For most of the last year, it's as though we've been swimming our lungs out, but the safety of the beach just gets farther and farther away. We feel like we're losing contact with who we used to be. We feel exhausted, burned-out, and worst of all, isolated,

from our communities and ourselves. With our faces covered, we're lonely and anonymous in familiar neighborhood streets.

We've been terrified that we're a danger to our families and our friends. Friends and strangers alike might be carrying a deadly airborne disease. The world feels like it's changing fast, too fast, for us to keep up. Every day, reading the onslaught of news is like drinking water from a fire hose.

We've had the global pandemic that changed *every* aspect of all of our lives; we've been through a summer of racial unrest unlike anything we've seen since the 1960s; we've lost people close to us and even if we haven't, we've had a running tally of the sick and the dead in the bottom corner of the newscast; food lines stretch for miles; we've had to work from home on Zoom calls while our children go to class on their own computers; we can't even leave the house without a mask; then when we do, we have to pass the boarded-up businesses of folks who've lost everything. As normalized as these things have become, it seems like we're living in a surreal kind of dream.

We want to wake up. We want the strange distortion of reality to be over so we can just get back to normal. We want to be back on the beach. We want things to be the way they used to be.

But they're not. Over the course of 2020, the strangest year of our lives, we've seen suicidal ideation go up among the young; alcohol consumption has spiked, along with recreational drug use; our social support systems have gone dormant; and there's almost no difference between our work lives and our home lives. Dividing us from each other, our leaders have failed to keep us informed, safe, and alive. On and on, the current keeps swirling.

That's why we need to discover what resilience is and how to discover it within our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits so that it doesn't just get us through this time, but through the rest of time.

I've felt battered by what's come at us. I'll bet you have too. That's why you're holding this book. Physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, we're running on empty and the engine lights are blinking red. It's like we've had to survive a rip current in a hurricane.

And yet that's not the end of the story. Not even close. In spite of what we've lost, we're finding grace and hope in the unlikeliest places. Now, as the storm clouds dissipate and the sun begins to shine again, we feel the faint stirrings of hope. Hope that we're finally through the worst of it. We hope we are resilient.

But even though the storm has moved off, we're left with the damage. We have to pick up the pieces of our lives and we know we have to put them back together again, we just don't know where to start.

Canadian philosopher and author Matshona Dhliwayo writes, "The storm only comes to teach you how to skillfully sail your ship." If the present has taught us anything, it's that we're all facing the same storm, but we're all in a different boat. Some are in huge, indestructible aircraft carriers, some are in luxury yachts, some are in elegant sailboats, some are in leaky rowboats, while still others are adrift on a floating piece of wreckage. We know what the storm looks like now. The question for us is not, "How do I survive the storm?" The question is, "How do I thrive?"

Make no mistake, 2020 was a difficult year for every single person on the planet, but it's not the last challenging year we'll face. We need to be seaworthy. We need to leverage uncertainty and find the creative opportunity within it. We need to be resilient.

That's the resilience journey we're going to take in this book. You may be reading this by yourself, but we're going to take that journey together.

### **CHANGE-PROOF POINT**

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- ▶ To make friends with change, you must learn how to identify and manage the small, often hard-to-see micro pivots that occur every day.

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