



JIM HARSHAW JR.

Revealing Failure as the Path to Success

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #256

Steven Pressfield

Steven Pressfield was an advertising copywriter, schoolteacher, truck driver, bartender, oilfield roustabout, attendant in a mental hospital, fruit-picker, and screenwriter. He wrote for 27 years before publishing his first novel. His struggles to make a living as an author, including the period when he was homeless and living out of the back of his car, are detailed in his book *The War of Art*.

Pressfield's first book, *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, was published in 1995, and was made into a 2000 film of the same name directed by Robert Redford and starring Will Smith, Charlize Theron, and Matt Damon.

His second novel, *Gates of Fire* (1998), is about the Spartans and the battle at Thermopylae. It is taught at the U.S. Military Academy, the United States Naval Academy, and the Marine Corps Basic School at Quantico.

Quotes

"Put your ass where your heart wants to be. Meaning, if you want to write, sit down at the typewriter. If you want to paint, put your body in front of an easel."

"An amateur has amateur habits, and a professional has professional habits."

"The great thing about writing is that the pages that you do on Tuesday are still there Wednesday morning. You can revise them. You can make them better. You can throw them out."

About Our Small Voice 09:43 - 11:54

"I do think that most people know what their real calling is. But as my idea of this thing called "Resistance," their negative force of self-sabotage that's out there is

working against you all the time so you might say to yourself, "I know I should start a non-profit. I've always wanted to help the homeless or help healthcare professionals. I've wanted to dance. I've wanted to be a concert pianist." But immediately, the voice comes into your head that says, "You're not worthy. Who do you think you are that you could possibly do that? You've got a wife, children, a mortgage. These ideas that you think are so great, they've been done a million times before, much better than you." So that voice comes up and we give that voice credence. A lot of times, it makes tremendous sense. Why would Herman Melville think, "I'm going to write Moby Dick"? But I think that "small voice" you hear when you are silent, that kind of tells you what you should be doing. I think everybody has it but we've sort of allowed the background noise to drown it out a lot of times. I always knew this (writing) was what I should be doing. When I think back on that, I would say rather than courage, it was like stupidity. People always say, 'To be an entrepreneur, you have to be arrogant and ignorant; arrogant enough to think you can do it and ignorant enough to have no clue how difficult it is.' I don't want to give myself credit for courage. I was just too dumb to know better."

About Making That Switch From Amateur to Pro 18:52 - 23:10

"I was living in a halfway house in Durham, North Carolina where people came out of mental institutions, on their way back into the real world. I think I was paying \$20 a month, living in this basement room, just totally down for the count. I had a dream. In the dream, I woke up and my shirts were all folded neatly in the drawer. This is the dream, not real life. The room was all put in order. I even had my cowboy boots that I wore and they were set like you would set them in the military, at a 45-degree angle and shined. I woke up from this dream. What I took from the dream was, I had ambition. I'm not just a bum who's going down the drain here. I actually want to succeed. I never really thought about that before. I sort of adopted the hippie ethos of 'If I succeed, it's at the expense of somebody else and I want to have solidarity with my brothers and sisters. I would be an egomaniac if I said I was ambitious and I wanted to succeed.' After this dream, I said to myself that I do want to succeed. I don't want to be a bum for the rest of my life. That was one of many pro turning moments for me. When we're struggling and lost and Resistance is beating the hell out of us, we just can't get together and we're going from defeat to defeat to defeat, we ask ourselves, 'Why? What's wrong with me? Am I sick? Am I crazy? Do I have bad genes or I was born under a bad sign?' The way that kind of worked for me was I thought what my real problem, is I am thinking like an amateur. I am not in this for real. I'm dabbling at this. When adversity comes along, I fold. When it feels like a rough day, I just throw in the towel. My thinking is short-term, it's instant gratification,

I'm not in it for the long haul, I don't have a plan, etc. I thought if I could just change my mindset, instead of thinking like an amateur, start thinking like a pro. The example I use these days is Kobe Bryant. He was like a consummate pro, in a sense that he was up at the crack of dawn. He had a family, he loved his family, he spent time with his family. But when it was time to go to the gym, he was there ahead of anybody else. If Kobe was hurt, he was the most famous guy of all for playing through injuries. They had to tear his Achilles before they could finally get him out of the game. I think that's the professional attitude. When adversity strikes, you work through the adversity. You don't fold like an amateur. It's possible to flip that switch in your head and say, 'I'm not an amateur, I'm a professional.' An amateur has amateur habits and a professional has professional habits. Part of turning pro in your mind is identifying first, and then adopting the habits that a professional has, even if it's a simple thing like getting up early every morning, doing some kind of physical exercise, establishing a plan of the day, and then adhering to it."

About Self-Validation 29:58 - 31:20

"You know, we all do need the validation from the outside. You were saying you interviewed my partner, Shawn Coyne a few weeks ago. He calls it 3PV, third party validation. We all need somebody to pat us on the head. But I think the professional self-validates and really makes a point to do that. If you're a golf pro and you lost on the 70-second hole, you have to go back to your hotel or wherever it is, and say, 'I screwed up here and I screwed up there, but goddamn it, I put four really good rounds together. There was a certain point when I could have fallen apart in the final round and I didn't. I've got to give myself props for that.' In other words, what you hope your coach or the media is going to tell you, you have to sort of train yourself to tell yourself that. Right now, while we're kind of sequestering, my girlfriend, Diana and I take hikes up some really steep hills in the morning. I always make it a point on the way back to validate her and validate the two of us. 'We did it! We got up. We really did it.' I think it really does help."

About the Muse 34:05 -35:09

My goal when I sit down for a day of work at the keyboard, I'm not holding myself to any standard of quality. All I want to do is put in the time and do the best I can. I believe in the Muse, I believe in the Goddess that flies overhead and gives artists inspiration. I think when She's flying overhead, kind of like Santa Claus, looking down on us, all She wants to see is that you're hard at work. She sees you in the dance studio, She sees you on the meditation cushion, She sees you in the wrestling gym, that's all She can ask of us. It warms Her heart to see you hard at work. At some

point, she will give her gifts to you. You can't force them. That's all I really try to do, is just put in the time. At the end of the day, I don't judge anything. All I say is, 'Did I put in the time and effort?' If I did that, then that's good enough."

Action Item

1. Don't quit your day job. Don't do anything radical because that can be a form of Resistance too.
2. If you do feel that you know what your calling is, take the first step, whatever it is. Put your ass where your heart wants to be.
3. I'm a believer in starting before you're ready. Don't feel like you've got to get all your ducks in a row or you've got to plan this and that, you've got to research, etc. Just start.

Recommended Books

[The War of Art](#) by Steven Pressfield

[Turning Pro](#) by Steven Pressfield

Gates of Fire by Steven Pressfield

Episodes Referred

Mark McLaughlin: <https://jimharshawjr.com/223/>

18 Tactics to Staying Focused at Work

<https://jimharshawjr.net/insider-secrets19300394>

Website and Social

Website: <https://stevenpressfield.com/>

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Books: <https://www.amazon.com/Steven-Pressfield/e/B000AQ8R8Q>