



JIM HARSHAW JR.

Revealing Failure as the Path to Success

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #325

Leidy Klotz

What if, through a simple shift in thinking, you could shrink your to-do list, shorten your work hours, and be happier?

University of Virginia professor and author of **SUBTRACT: The Untapped Science of Less**, Leidy Klotz, reveals how in this episode of the Success Through Failure podcast.

He talks about how we systematically overlook the concept of subtracting when trying to improve elements of life, work, and the world— as opposed to our default of fixing through adding.

SUBTRACT builds on Leidy's pioneering behavioral research, pinpointing how and why we underutilize this fundamental approach to problem-solving and offering tools for readers to put the minus sign to use in their lives, both professional and private.

Leidy directs the University of Virginia's Convergent Behavioral Science Initiative. His research on the science of problem-solving has appeared in both *Nature* and *Science* and has been covered in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post* among national newspapers on five continents.

Top Quotes From This Episode

"We're systematically biased to think of adding and therefore we overlook subtraction. That's a big deal because we do it a lot and it affects our lives."

"Adding and subtracting are complementary ways to make things better."

"You need to understand the problem before addressing it."

"If you find yourself thinking, 'Okay. I'm thinking about adding something. Oh, I'm also going to think about subtracting.' That would be a really good way to overcome this bias."

"You don't have to be a professional to make a big change in the physical world."

Show Notes

This episode touches on the following key topics and ideas:

- **Why is studying subtraction worthwhile? (4:52):** Our systematic bias to “adding” affects our lives, productivity, happiness, and the world
- **The search for adding (6:44):** Leidy talks about the thinking behind our bias towards adding things into our lives
- **Evolutionary reasons (8:16):** Leidy discusses the biological forces that pull us toward adding and our desire to display competence
- **Cultural reasons (14:04):** The influence of monumental architecture and the beginning of civilizations in our default to adding
- **Economic reasons (19:34):** To pursue economic growth after the devastating effects of World War II, the US government implemented additive measures with impacts we continue to see today
- **Subtraction works! (26:21):** Leidy shares how subtraction helped with the innovation of balanced bikes
- **Stop Doing List (30:30):** Aside from doing your routines and to-do list, also consider what you're going to stop doing
- **The power of subtraction (32:49):** How subtraction made improvements in the city of San Francisco
- **Success through subtraction (39:08):** Leidy shares how his college soccer coach utilized subtraction, which led to a victory

What's an action item the listener can take in the next 24-48 hours? (44:56)

- Listen to the audiobook version of ["Subtract"](#)
- Put in place a reminder for yourself to consider subtraction as an option for your actions and activities

Want to talk to a personal performance coach?

Want to consider executive life coaching? Claim a spot on Jim's calendar for your free one-time clarity call: JimHarshawJr.com/APPLY

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Other Episodes Referenced

[#291 Logically Override the Default: How to Stop Procrastinating, Scrolling, and Getting Distracted](#)

Guest Website and Social

Leidy Klotz

[Website](#) | [Twitter](#)

"Subtract: The Untapped Science of Less":

[Hardcover](#) | [Audible Audiobook](#)