

NO GRIT, NO GLORY

BY BRIAN SCHWARTZ

DR. PAUL G. STOLTZ has built an impressive career as an international bestselling author, speaker, coach, and corporate trainer. He is the CEO of PEAK Learning, a global firm based in San Luis Obispo that teaches individuals and organizations how to engineer resilience and thrive through adversity.

A self-proclaimed “excavator of the human condition,” Stoltz spent the last forty years of his life revisiting a question he first asked his college professor at UCSB: “How do we know who wins?”

The answer may surprise you and is contained in a single word: Adversity. He considers adversity “the ink” of human history. It is the core of everything that has come before and continues to propel us into the future.

Stoltz discovered that like I.Q., each of us has an A.Q. (Adversity Quotient) number. Now widely referenced, Stoltz was the first to coin the term “A.Q.,” ushering a new acronym into our lexicon.

Whether the challenges we face propel us forward or pull us down is up to each of us. It is through rising up to meet the challenge that we build resilience. When you see your A.Q. number rise, you will have the confidence to take on even more significant challenges. Obstacles are no longer viewed as markers to avoid, but rather seen as opportunities to literally rewire and raise our A.Q.

Stoltz’s book “Adversity Quotient: Turning Obstacles into Opportunities” resonated with Oprah, who herself made the connection that her adversity became the fuel for her success. As a three-time guest on her talk show, A.Q. hit the mainstream.

We cannot improve what we cannot measure and Stoltz’s mission is to show each of us that we have an A.Q. number,



and once we know it, we can work to improve it. Having a “growth mindset” is key to reaching our potential and A.Q. gives us an objective metric to avoid falling into the comparison trap.

Improving your A.Q. is accomplished through his honed A.Q. Tools program, which builds resilience and grit. In fact, “Grit” is the title of a subsequent bestseller for Stoltz. Rather than recoil and retract, those with grit persevere and overcome—building strength to face greater challenges ahead.

Stoltz’s global research reveals that we are experiencing greater amounts of adversity than ever before. While Covid itself has dished out an extra helping of adversity for each of us, what we learn from it will determine our A.Q. and destiny moving forward.

Answering Stoltz’s original question: “Who fails and who prevails?” ultimately comes back to how well we handle adversity. It’s a decision we must each make: to recoil or resist; to assert or endure; to react or respond. At the core of accomplishment lies a bedrock of adversity.

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