



**WHEN YOU GET STUCK,
GIVE**

Alden Mills

In the fall of 1991, with little more than two weeks of liberty left before I had to report to SEAL training in Coronado, my dad and I drove my VW from Massachusetts to San Diego.

He had served in the Air Force during Vietnam in a special photo reconnaissance unit. He loved it. He was out of harm's way, but thrived on the detailed analysis required to find clues in the aerial photos of where POW camps and missile sites might be. I thought our trip across country would be spent discussing his military days, but instead he wanted to talk about anything and everything but his military experience.

On the final day of our road trip, I was driving him to the San Diego airport so he could return to the East Coast when he finally broke his silence.

"Alden, I've been thinking about this day for months. I've racked my brain to think of things that might be helpful for you as you embark on your Navy SEAL journey. The fact is, I can't relate with it—the closest I can come to understanding it is what I saw in the before-and-after pictures of areas where SEALs did their missions. I have no tactical advice for you."

He trailed off for a moment and turned away from me. He was getting choked up, something I had never witnessed before.

He turned back to me and said, "I have one thing I can offer: when you get stuck, give... Give all you have."

As I pulled up to the curb, I didn't quite know what to say, so I just nodded.

He turned to me and repeated with tears in his eyes, “You got it? When stuck, give—just go give, okay?” He hugged me and left.

In true Alden fashion, I did not get what he was talking about until months later when it looked like I was about to be medically dropped from SEAL training. Halfway through second phase, I was pulled out of a three-mile ocean swim because my lungs were bleeding. In the hospital, they discovered an antigen in my blood. The instructors raided my room and found my asthma medication. I had been sneaking it early in the morning and at night—using it as a crutch to help me through training.

While the training gods were deciding my fate, a newly minted SEAL officer friend of mine asked me if I wanted to help him with some volunteer work with the local Easter Seals foundation teaching paraplegics to swim. I had nothing else to do, so I went with him. If you know anything about paraplegics and swimming, the two don’t really work well together. You don’t teach them how to swim so much as you swim them. I loved it, and they clearly loved it too. I went back several times to swim with them.

During that time, I was also put through a battery of other pulmonary tests. It became clear that, should I be allowed to stay in training, I wouldn’t be allowed to take any more asthma medications, since asthmatics are not allowed in the Navy. I was adamant that I wasn’t an asthmatic, and to prove it, I threw out the medicines.

Internally, I wasn’t so sure about this decision. I had a long-term belief that I needed these medicines to perform. I was now faced with a decision of staying put—using the medicines would end my SEAL dream, but moving forward presented me with a major fear about whether I could perform without the medicine.

I never really prayed that much in my life until that moment. I began a nightly routine of praying that my lungs were strong enough without the medicine. I would pray for strength, for clear lungs, for open airways, for anything that would help me overcome my anchor belief that my lungs needed the medicine to stay healthy. I had run out of options, and found strength in practicing faith.

Up until that moment, I had faith in my capabilities, but when I was no longer sure of my capabilities, I found comfort and strength in practicing faith in someone/something other than me—in my case, a higher power that I call God. The point is not to challenge where you put your faith, but instead to help you recognize the importance of faith and serving others.

He turned to me and repeated with tears in his eyes, “You got it? When stuck, give—just go give, okay?”

I have come not to believe in coincidences anymore. Things happen for a reason. I passed the pulmonary tests and was eventually allowed to return to training, albeit I had to repeat many weeks of training (and spend time with Instructor Popeye). At the time, I never linked giving with my medical miracle of passing those lung tests. As the years have gone by and I have found myself stuck so many times I have lost count, I have found a major correlation between giving, serving, volunteering, and success.

There are greater forces at work than you and I or even the scientific community have yet to define. However, several spiritual seekers over the millennia from Buddhists to Tibetan monks have known about this correlation between giving and succeeding, or in my case, getting unstuck. Their formula is called karma. Western philosophy calls it quantum mechanics.

No matter which one you wish to believe, understand that both have come to realize that when you put forth an action, an equal and opposite reaction occurs. In the great loop of life, this holds true: the more you give, the more you receive.

In my experience, not all giving is equal. Giving for the sake of expecting a return will not get you what you want. Giving without expectation of return while giving of your greatest gift can have a force-multiplying effect. The magic of giving comes from giving the best of yourself—your gift.

We all have a gift, something unique and special to us. You will learn this gift as you cross your “ocean” toward your new goals. The gift will present itself as you struggle to overcome obstacles toward your goal. You will come to realize through your various struggles that there are some things that come to you effortlessly. In fact, you will start to look forward to those struggles because you like using your gift.

Your unique talent requires work to refine it. You must practice it—it’s not a perfectly polished, ready-to-go talent. It is raw, rough, and undeveloped, and requires that you face obstacles in order to refine it. This is another reason obstacles are so important to you—they will unlock your gifts, further activating your potential.

You might be asking yourself right about now, “Great, Alden, but I have no idea what my gift is. How do I find it?”

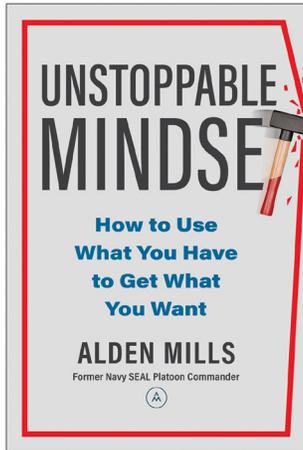
Here is a question for you to ask your closest swim buddies: “If I were going to save your life and I could only save your life using the one thing I’m best at, how would I save you?” Ask those same friends you used to triangulate your limiting belief, and focus on the verbs they provide you. For example, in my case, the gift I uncovered is to inspire. For my business partner Andrew Morrison, his gift is to analyze.

Each of us has a gift, and the best ways to discover it are through the struggle of overcoming challenges and by giving back. These two are linked—the struggle in the face of the obstacles and the struggle to serve others. The obstacle refines your gift, and your service to others helps you practice your gift.

Watch what happens over time when you use your gift not only to overcome obstacles but also to give back to others. **Things will start to unexpectedly happen in miraculous and wonderfully mysterious ways.** 📖



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Alden Mills is on a mission to help 100 million people to be unstoppable. He has over 35 years of leadership experience as a three time #1 ranked Navy SEAL platoon commander and CEO of Perfect Fitness, one of the fastest-growing companies in America. He invented the Perfect Pushup along with over forty patented products and is the author of *Be Unstoppable* and *Unstoppable Teams*. He is a highly sought after speaker and coach; *Entrepreneur* magazine ranked him the #1 virtual speaker. When he is not helping others activate their potential, he is with his wife, four boys and two Labradors in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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