



YOU ARE AWESOME

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THE BOOK



You Are Awesome

Find your confidence to be brilliant at (almost) anything

By Matthew Syed



INTRODUCTION

Positive and empowering, this guide from mindset writer Matthew Syed is written to help children and teens overcome personal and emotional obstacles, reach their goals and become positive, productive adults.

So many kids judge themselves on the things they are not good at. And because they believe they can't do things, they don't try.

You Are Awesome teaches young teens and upper primary children what many fail to realise; that natural talent is not the secret to success. Instead, it is hard work, determination, conviction and a refusal to believe the words "I can't...".

Straightforward, helpful and inspiring, this book shows students not to give up when things go wrong but to embrace their mistakes and keep on trying.

As a teacher or youth leader, you can use the messages in You Are Awesome to help the young people you work with to feel positive about their potential, take action and achieve more.



5 BEST QUOTES

"Take a risk, dare to fail, and give it your all."

"Getting good at something takes time, it doesn't happen overnight. (In fact especially not overnight - I'm usually asleep)."

"You don't improve if you pull out of the race when you see the competition."

"Practice built my confidence, I wasn't born with it."

"Whatever journey you pick, it doesn't matter how you get there. Just make a start."



7 BIG IDEAS

1. YOU CAN BE AWESOME

Everyone has the potential to be great. No one is born an expert and even the best of the best only got there through hard work and perseverance. You Are Awesome shares inspirational examples and practical advice, and reminds kids that if they want to be awesome, the main thing is to work hard and not give up. Awesome people aren't necessarily talented from the start. Instead, they aren't afraid of failure or taking risks to achieve their goals.

2. YOUR BRAIN CAN CHANGE AND ADAPT

The human brain is plastic and elastic. It can adapt and learn and can be trained. Neural pathways can be formed, strengthened or weakened, depending on how often you practice certain tasks. London taxi drivers have different brains to most of us because of their incredible knowledge of London streets. They have changed and trained their brains, thanks to endless practice and revision. The more you work on a task, the more your brain will create and strengthen neural pathways. As your brain adapts and strengthens, you will get better and better and find things less challenging.

3. PERSEVERANCE AND PRACTICE

The only way to get better at something is to practice. In order to really excel, you also need to push yourself. There is no point in practising by doing the same thing that you are already good at over and over. You must push a little further every time you practice. Take a shot at the goal from further away, practice a harder scale or rehearse your speech in front of your sister. You will notice improvements after you have pushed your own limits. And you must continue to push your limits. Practice and practice and practice... and then practice some more.

4. GROWTH MINDSET

There are two types of mindset; fixed mindset and growth mindset. A fixed mindset tends to be negative and inflexible. It says, "I'm not good at maths", "He was born special", "I'm just not awesome at that". A growth mindset is much more positive. It says, "I can improve my maths", "He worked very hard to be as good as he is", and "I can be awesome at that if I try". People with a growth mindset are far more likely to succeed and achieve their goals. If you can switch to and maintain a growth mindset, you are already on the path to being awesome.



7 BIG IDEAS

5. AIM FOR MARGINAL GAINS

You can not expect to succeed overnight. Becoming awesome happens one step at a time. By setting realistic, incremental goals you can work towards your ultimate dream. For example, before you can run around the block in under three minutes, you need to be able to do it in under three minutes and thirty seconds. This approach is called marginal gains. Set clear goals and work through them in order. Be smart, practical and positive. Each marginal gain is a step closer to the ultimate goal.

6. LEARN FROM FAILURE

Failure need not be defeat. A failure may be a setback but it does not have to stop you from reaching your goals. Many successful people experienced failure after failure before they became the success stories that they are today. Failure will not stop you from reaching your goals. Only giving in to failure will do that. Brush yourself off and try again. Successful modern icons such as Jay-Z and Steve Jobs didn't let failure stop them, even though they experienced it on a large scale. Failure is an opportunity to learn and to grow. It provides the opportunity to set firmer goals and keep moving forward.

7. TAKE RISKS

You will never succeed if you don't try. If you are so afraid to feel foolish, to fall over, to fail that you won't even try, you will never achieve anything. Take a chance and put yourself out there, even if it means you might make a fool out of yourself. In time things will get better. Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone falls over or fumbles at some point. It is how you handle your fumbles that makes you awesome. Take a chance and just keep trying! You'll be awesome in no time (in fact, you already are).

**3 ACTION STEPS**

Want to encourage the kids you work with to be awesome? There are three major steps they must take.

1. SET GOALS

To make it to your dream, you need to set incremental goals. Write down what you intend to achieve and the steps you will need to take to get there, then start working through them.

2. PUSH YOURSELF

As you work through your incremental goals, make sure to push yourself. Practice often and hard... and keep at it!

3. GIVE IT YOUR ALL

A half-hearted effort is worth next to nothing. Always give it your all. Face failure with grace and try again.

**1 KEY TAKEAWAY**

You Are Awesome reminds kids that everyone can succeed if they stay positive and work hard.

This first step is having a growth mindset, that is open and accepts your own potential. Being positive and not limiting your self-belief is one of the best ways to help achieve your goals.

Just because you don't succeed at first doesn't mean you never will. By staying positive and setting achievable small goals on your way to achieving big ones, you can become awesome at just about anything you put your mind to.

Take it from Matthew: He was very bad at table tennis at his first attempt. Through a growth mindset and a lot of work, he went on to represent England at the Olympics. How awesome is that?

The key message of the book is that success comes through taking risks, giving your all and not being afraid to fail. Anyone can succeed in their goals if they always try their best and don't give in to setbacks. With positivity, perseverance and self-belief, you are sure to be Awesome!



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visit thehopefullinstitute.com

email hello@thehopefullinstitute.com

call +61 2 9943 0350



You Are Awesome

by Matthew Syed

Syed writes for young people what most adults wish they had learned early: talent is built, not given, and setbacks are how you get better if you let them.

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