

I WILL NOT BE BROKEN



5 Steps to Overcoming a Life Crisis

JERRY WHITE

"Jerry White brings his insight and experience to bear expertly for those facing life's unexpected challenges. He embodies the spirit of survivorship."

Please enjoy the introduction of *I Will Not Be Broken* on us as a way of introducing you to this new book by author and survivor Jerry White and his new organization, [Survivor Corps](#). Feel free to share it with your friends, family, and readers. Be our guest.

About I Will Not Be Broken

The loss of a loved one, a painful divorce, or a serious physical injury---we must all, at one point, face tragedy---unavoidable moments that divide our lives into “before” and “after.” How do we muscle our way through tough times and emerge stronger, wiser---even grateful for our struggle? In 1984, author Jerry White lost his leg---and almost his life---in a landmine accident. He has endured the pain of loss and the challenge of rebuilding. As cofounder of Survivors Corps, White has interviewed thousands of victims of tragedy. With this book, he shares what he has learned.

White outlines a very specific five-step program to coping with disaster; to achieving strength and hope; and to turning tragedy into triumph. In their own words, his survivor friends and colleagues share their stories. It's a group that includes the well known, like Lance Armstrong, Nelson Mandela, and the late Princess Diana, and also everyday survivors. Through their stories and the author's words, the book takes readers step-by-step through the process of not only surviving tragedy and victimhood, but going on to thrive.

INTRODUCTION



My name is Jerry White, and I'm a cofounder of *Survivor Corps*. It's an organization that helps victims of war and terror. Our mission, and my passion, is to help survivors heal and get on with their lives. Sounds simple, but in many places where we work, the idea of overcoming doesn't always resonate.

I came to this work as a result of big and small things that happened to me over the course of my life. One of the biggest happened on April 12, 1984. I was twenty years old, and I stepped on a landmine during a camping trip in Israel. Physically, it took a part of my leg. But, it also divided my life in two—everything became either *before* or *after* the accident. It also taught me important things about resilience and coping that would later be the impetus for my work with survivors. I learned to walk on a fake leg, and then how to live and be happy despite the horror of that minefield. I returned to school, got married, had children, and worked hard to support my family.

Then, in 1996, I took a trip to Cambodia. As I moved around the country, I saw amputees literally on every other corner. This was a country that had been decimated by decades of conflict, leaving behind millions of mines and other explosive military litter. It sounds shallow, perhaps, but I realized then that I was

not the only one with a date when life had exploded. As I walked along the streets of Phnom Penh, a little girl hopped up to me. She couldn't have been more than eight or nine years old, clearly not a former combatant in the wars of Cambodia. She smiled broadly at me, pointed at my \$17,000 prosthetic leg and said, "You are one of us." She leaned on her homemade crutch and I realized she was right. I asked myself what I could do to help support that little girl and the hundreds of thousands like her—people who, through no fault of their own, had slammed into some kind of horrible date with destiny. I had strength; maybe I could give some of it to others and help them on their journey to recovery. So I began to build a support network for survivors. My thought was: We have all been through various struggles, so let's lend our support and strength to each other.

We called this effort the Landmine Survivors Network. Corralling the voices of mine "victims" around the world, we set out to ban the use of landmines and help survivors get legs and find work. This mission has sent me around the world, to the floor of the United Nations, the halls of Congress, foreign embassies, palaces, and local hospitals. Along the way, I've met a great many survivors from all walks of life. We've had very practical conversations about what works, and doesn't work, as we seek to achieve success in our lives...to walk a path of growth and renewal.

With this book, I share what I've learned.

They say what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. It's not quite that simple. I believe you have to *decide* it will make you stronger. Experience has taught me that happy endings can never be taken for granted. They must be chosen. When I was in the hospital for six months in Israel, no one did my physical therapy for me. No one underwent the pain or the fear of six operations for me. I would have liked for someone to, maybe. I confess, the first time I was put in a wheelchair, I sat there and waited for someone to push it for me. I had just had another surgery, I was weak, in pain, exhausted. And when I looked up at my nurse, she looked down at me and laughed. "If you want to move, push." And so, I did. And I continue to do.

Whether we like it or not, personal determination is required to build resilience—to become fit for whatever the future may hold. We have to tap inner resources and develop some emotional muscle. It's both a discipline and our responsibility. No one can do it for us.

The good news is we are not alone. We are surrounded by survivors who have gone before us, and their examples will help mark the way forward. Their experiences show us that, with the right support, *everyone* can recover and thrive. As we overcome hardship, there is laughter and hope and love waiting for each of us. But it is crucial for us to *want* those things. Frankly, I have always craved those things. And life has treated me pretty well.

It started with one of the all-time greatest childhoods. Born the fifth of six children, I grew up in a small picturesque coastal town about twenty miles south of Boston. Imagine an ocean, rocky coastline, and lots of neighborhood friends who played tennis in the spring, raced sailboats and practiced diving in summer, and played hockey on frozen backyard ponds in the winter. Ours was an Irish-American immigrant story. My great grandmother bought a milk cow, which led to another, and another, and voilà: a milk business—*White Brothers, Inc.*—was born, and within twenty years became the largest dairy in New England. I am now fifth-generation American, one of nearly three dozen cousins. We all went to decent schools and had summer jobs. I was lucky and I knew it.

But even into this idyllic small-town life, pain and sadness intruded. I grew up seeing plenty of evidence that bad things happen to good people. My friend's father shot himself. Two high school classmates died in a car crash. Another was paralyzed in an accident. Two friends almost died of starvation; another cut his wrists; and one hung himself. My siblings and I went to a lot of Irish wakes and funerals. It was all part of the fabric of life, but I wondered: Why so much tragedy? Inside our home, my immediate family wrestled with the effects of alcoholism and a broken marriage. Both my grandfathers died before I was born. I remember watching my grandmothers fade to early deaths, one from Parkinson's, and the other from drinking and heart failure. There always seemed to be some

relative or neighbor fighting diabetes or cancer. How strange, I thought, that no matter how great life was, it was peppered with death and loss.

Even as a kid, I asked why? Why do bad, sad things have to happen? Silence answered. So, I thought, I guess life is unfair; bad stuff just happens. This was a very unsatisfying conclusion. I simply couldn't answer the toughest of life's questions—the *why* of it all.

So I began to ask a different question. *How?* Given that bad things happen, *how* did people absorb the blows and move through them? It's a question I have been asking for a long time, and I think I've discovered some answers. They've emerged from knowing and working with remarkable human beings around the world, hundreds of survivors and friends who have muscled their way through tough times and emerged stronger, wiser, and even grateful for their struggle.

We all admire individuals who do more than just “get through” tough times. We are awed by those who somehow emerge stronger from crisis, with their dignity and grace intact. These people somehow seem *more* at peace in their crisis aftermath. Can that be you or me? Can we put ourselves onto that list of people who have come through suffering and found a way to really live again? The question becomes how do we not only survive but *thrive*?

Is there really a way to grow *stronger* in crisis? You bet there is. I am convinced we not only can toughen under pressure, but also soar. Why? Because I

did. And I have watched thousands of others transform tragedy into growth. Over the past twelve years, I have made a global study of survivors. I've seen evidence that, regardless of misfortune and injury, individuals come out the other side full of life, love and ambition to *do* something with their lives. I am inspired to know people all around the world picking up the pieces, rebuilding their lives, and learning to thrive.

So, how do they do it?

In the pages that follow, you'll learn. You will read, in their own words, just how they manage to thrive in the face of catastrophe. And as you'll see, it *is* something they choose to do. Just as you can choose to do it. Success has more to do with how you think than with how you feel.

As my wife reminds me, "We can't change what's happened, but we can change our minds about it." The main challenge is always inside us. We can't change the facts—I'm sick, I'm betrayed, whatever—but, we can change what we think about these facts. But only if we want to. Unfortunately, too many people are embracing victimhood these days, because it's easier to sit back and be inert. Life is just too short and beautiful for us to stay victims...to stay catatonic.

Because life will happen to all of us. Violence and terror can be visited upon just about anybody these days. Life explodes, and nothing is ever quite the same. I'm not just referring to a personal injury or illness, but also to the world

where headlines of terrorism, violence, and natural disaster assault us with increasing frequency. Some of us seek consolation in the belief that tragedy is happening *somewhere else*, far away. But, eventually, the bell tolls for you.

I have spent my entire working life focused on issues of Middle East peace, arms control, security and humanitarian aid. As I've crisscrossed the world, visiting community after community ravaged by war, I've come to see that conflict has a face. It's not about the statistics of suffering, it's about the individuals who have been blown up, raped and tortured. I've also come to see that "collateral damage" has a body—a body in constant pain that survives with scars, disfigurement and missing limbs. I have worked with thousands of individuals who suffer the dual injustice of not only being gravely injured in the first place, but all too often becoming outcasts in their own families and communities.

All the while, I have been searching for that magic pill—some miracle cure that would help wounded people pick up the pieces, move forward, and rediscover life's fullness.

So how can we respond, in a *positive* way, to life's shocks and suffering? What's our goal when suffering comes? Because it *will* come.

Our goal is *life!*

The survivors I work with share a determination to live and a commitment not just to survive, but to thrive. *Survivor Corps* is working with people who have

been the most affected by man's inhumanity to man. And we are seeing the communities most affected by war and civil strife learning a better way to be. I believe there is no one better equipped to change the world than those most impacted by what's wrong with it.

My hope is that this book will both encourage and motivate—an invitation to get up and out the door. Far too many people respond to catastrophe by withdrawing. I understand that. It's normal and self-protective. Like snails, we pull back into our shells. But withdrawing, staying in isolation, will kill you.

No one survives alone. We need each other.

I hope my story, and those of friends I've met around the world, will flicker light in the dark tunnel where too many people feel trapped in pain. Even better, the survivor stories in these pages can teach all of us about moving forward. All of us need to learn to manage life's explosive moments. Life may change in an instant, like mine did in Israel, but instead of dreading them, I want to encourage all of us to honor our toughest dates—the tragedies that bind us—in an effort to transform victimhood into survivorship. Everyone feels vulnerability in the face of cataclysmic loss. But I will share what my survivor friends and I have learned, and maybe your own survivorship path will begin.

Over the past twenty years, I have met and talked 'survival' with everyone from the famous—Diana, Princess of Wales, Elie Wiesel, King Hussein and Queen

Noor of Jordan, John McCain, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lance Armstrong— and the not so famous but equally strong—Katie, Ken, Elizabeth, Colleen and others. Each has something to teach us. They don't just get by. They thrive.

That's what I aspire to do.

Someday, if not today, you will need to understand this journey of survivorship, either for your own survival or that of a friend or family member. All of us will face trauma in our lifetime, whether it's the death of loved ones or another of life's unpredictable turns. It is a given that life will shock us.

This book offers the guidance you will need to recover and thrive after the worst happens.

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“In *I Will Not Be Broken*, Jerry White brings his insight and experience to bear expertly for those facing life's unexpected challenges. He embodies the spirit of survivorship.”

—**Lance Armstrong**

“[White’s] courageous personal experience is a beacon for all who are searching to recover and reclaim life.”

—**Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan, bestselling author of *Leap of Faith***

“An excellent guide to navigating and overcoming the traumas we face in our lives.”

—**Deepak Chopra, author of *Buddha: A Story of Enlightenment***

“Offers wise, practical, and inspiring steps to come back from life’s worst setbacks.”

—**Daniel Goleman, author of *Social Intelligence***

From a co-recipient of the **Nobel Prize for Peace** and founder of [Survivor Corps](#) comes an astoundingly effective guide to recreating a happy and fulfilling life after catastrophe strikes—a book that Bob and Lee Woodruff call “a road map for the individual and their family to re-enter the land of the living.” In **I WILL NOT BE BROKEN**, Jerry White reframes the question “why do bad things happen to good people?” and asks, *given that bad things do happen, how do people absorb the blows and move through them?*

Tragedy happens to everyone. Whether it’s the loss of a loved one, a painful divorce, or a serious injury, we all face unavoidable moments that divide our lives into “before” and “after.”

These events take a heavy toll on everyone, but there are those who have muscled their way through tough times and emerged stronger, wiser—even grateful for their struggle. Jerry White is one such example. In 1984, he lost his leg—and almost his life—in a tragic accident, and has personally endured the pain of loss and the challenge of rebuilding.

As cofounder of Survivor Corps, White has connected with thousands of victims of tragedy, and in **I WILL NOT BE BROKEN**, he shares their collective wisdom, which he distills into an effective five-step program for turning tragedy into triumph:

- **Face facts**
- **Choose life**
- **Reach out**
- **Get moving**
- **Give back**

In their own words, his fellow survivors share their stories—a group that includes the well known like Lance Armstrong, Elie Wiesel, and the late Princess Diana, but also everyday people including soldiers and veterans of the military. With compassion, White takes readers through the process of not only enduring tragedy and victimhood, but going on to thrive.

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JERRY WHITE is a global survivor activist who has dedicated his life to helping victims of violent conflict. While camping in Northern Israel in 1984, he stepped on a landmine, and he spent nearly six months in Israeli hospitals learning to walk on an artificial leg. Since then, he has become a recognized leader of the historic International Campaign to Ban Landmines, co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Prize for Peace; and a cofounder of Survivor Corps. He has testified before the US Congress and the United Nations and appeared in hundreds of media interviews and profiles.

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Jerry White is a recognized leader of the historic International Campaign to Ban Landmines, co-recipient of the Nobel Prize for Peace; as well as co-founder of [Survivor Corps](#). Jerry White lives in Maryland and Malta with his wife Kelly and four kids.

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For more information about *I Will Not Be Broken*, visit: iwillnotbebroken.smnr.us

For more information about Survivor Corps, visit: survivorcorps.smnr.us

To purchase this book click [here](#)



About Survivor Corps

Around the globe, people are inflicting harm on one another on an alarming scale with alarming ease. There were approximately 250 wars throughout the 20th century. Today, there are more than 39 conflicts raging in the world –from armed conflicts in Latin America to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to genocide in Darfur.

More than 35 million people have been displaced from these conflicts—innocent people who have been robbed of their dignity, their homes and their livelihoods. With no hope or tools to rise above their circumstances, far too many victims lash out, seeking revenge for their plight and perpetuating the cycle of violence and suffering. Something has to be done to break this downward spiral.

Survivor Corps operates under the credo that no one is better equipped to change the world than those who have been most scarred by what’s wrong with it. There is a way to break the cycle of violence, and it begins with showing survivors a new, more hopeful way forward.

What is the Survivor Corps philosophy? No one is better equipped to change the world than those most scarred by what’s wrong with it.

Whom does Survivor Corps serve? We serve people who have been injured by global conflict, primarily through training and support of the organizations that serve conflict survivors at the local level.

Where does Survivor Corps work? Wherever communities are experiencing or recovering from conflict – currently in over 50 countries.

Why should I support Survivor Corps? Survivor Corps (formerly Landmine Survivors Network) has a ten-year track record of results, improving health, creating economic opportunity, and changing laws & policies for survivors of conflict.

How does Survivor Corp work? We work across the spectrum of issues and organizations that affect the lives of survivors.

Can Survivor Corps really solve this problem? Yes. We believe that by showing survivors a new, more hopeful way forward, we can help break the cycle of violence.

Survivor Corps provides the tools and support survivors need to rise above their injuries and give back to their communities. Learn more at www.survivorcorps.org.