

# SUMMARY CAN'T HURT ME

DAVID GOGGINS



# **Summary of “Can’t Hurt Me” by David Goggins**

Written by Lea Schullery

The incredible story of how an overweight man became the fittest man in America by mastering his mind and defying all odds.



# QuickRead

F R E E B O O K S U M M A R I E S

**Go to [QuickRead.com/App](https://QuickRead.com/App) now to download our app and get access to thousands of free book summaries as both text and audiobooks.**

**Get the key insights of non-fiction books in minutes instead of hours. Listen to our free audiobooks while you workout or on your commute to work.**



# Introduction

For Goggins, childhood was far from innocently playing outside without a care in the world. Instead, he experienced trauma from an abusive father and extreme prejudice and poverty in rural America. Statistically, Goggins was going nowhere and was destined for a life of depression and poverty. However, he defied all odds through self-discipline, mental toughness, and hard work. No longer was he a depressed, overweight young man with no future. By committing himself to losing weight and improving his test scores, Goggins became a U.S. Armed Forces icon and one of the world's top endurance athletes. He has become the only man in history to complete elite training as a Navy SEAL, Army Ranger, and Air Force Tactical Air Controller. He didn't stop there, however, and he went on to set records in extreme endurance events and has been named The Fittest (Real) Man in America.

In *Can't Hurt Me*, Goggins shares his incredible story and reveals a path that anyone can follow to push past limits, eliminate fear, and live life to its fullest.

# The Early Life of Goggins

Born in New York in 1975, Goggins didn't have the typical carefree childhood that many people experience. Instead of playing outside with friends and living innocently among his peers, Goggins was a slave to his abusive father. His father, Trunnis, was a self-made businessman who owned a roller-disco rink; however, to make his business run smoothly, Trunnis forced his family to work almost every night of the week at the skating rink.

At the young age of six, Goggins' job was to look after the skating shoes. Meanwhile, his mother would cook dinner over a hot plate in the office, and once the children finally finished working at around midnight, his mother would put Goggins and his brother to bed in the office too. Of course, the dance floor played loud, thumping music into the early hours of the morning, so Goggins hardly slept at night and would frequently fall asleep in class instead.

As if working each night at the skating rink wasn't enough, Goggins also became a punching bag for his abusive father. Both he and his mother fell victim to countless violent beatings, sometimes for even the smallest things. For instance, Goggins once contracted a bad ear infection so, as a responsible parent, his mother took him to the hospital. Trunnis, being the businessman that he is, hated when the family spent money, even when his children's health was at risk. Upon returning, Goggins witnessed his father beat his mother senseless with a belt. When he intervened, his father would beat him too. He went to school too often hiding the bruises and red welts from his father's belt.

At the age of eight, Goggins' mother had had enough and she took him and escaped to Indiana where they started their new lives together. However, as he would soon find out, he and his mother had walked into the center of a racist, rural America. He was the only black kid in town, and he quickly became the target of hatred, often hearing the n-word spat at him by

neighbors who waved guns in his face. Now dealing with bullying and poverty, his life didn't seem to be getting any better.

To make matters worse, Goggins began experiencing the traumatic effects of his early years. Because of the suffering he experienced from his father, he developed a nervous stutter, his hair started to fall out, and patches of his skin lost pigment and turned a different color. At the time, Goggins didn't know why this was happening, but as an adult, he recognized that he was suffering from toxic stress. This is a condition in which young children who have undergone severe abuse experience changes to their brain chemistry, resulting in a permanent state of "fight or flight." Simply put, Goggins had suffered so much trauma that his brain and body were on permanent high-alert for danger.

Children who suffer from toxic stress also exhibit memory loss, and even the most gifted children, will struggle to learn and remember what they've learned in school. By fourth grade, Goggins was placed in a special needs classroom and started cheating his way through school. While his grades improved, his education suffered, and by the time he was heading into his teenage years, Goggins could still barely read.

# The Accountability Mirror

One day during his high school career, Goggins met with an Air Force recruiter. This recruiter was a Pararescue Jumper and Goggins thought he was a badass who could jump after downed pilots and bring them home. He now had a dream of joining the Air Force, but it was simply that - a dream. Joining the Air Force would require talents and education that Goggins didn't think he possessed. To simply pass the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) he would have to re-learn everything he's learned in the past decade.

This realization made Goggins hate himself. He took a long look in the mirror and felt disgusted by who he had become. So he grabbed a razor and shaved his head, refashioned his wardrobe, and grabbed some Post-It notes. On each Post-It, Goggins wrote down the things he needed to do if he ever wanted to pass the ASVAB. He began his notes with small, easily achievable items like "Clean your room every day" and gradually progressed to harder tasks like "Run x miles this week." This is what Goggins calls an *accountability mirror*.

The accountability mirror helped turn his life around. He began a ritual of standing in front of the mirror and reminding himself each day of his mission. Every day he studied and began training, and didn't allow a spare moment to go by without working towards his goals. While Goggins had several limiting factors in his life, he believed that he had the power to change his future. In the end, Goggins passed the ASVAB and was on his way to joining the military.

However, to complete his training, Goggins would have to face one of his toughest tests: swimming. Growing up, Goggins didn't even see a pool until the age of twelve and he was deathly afraid of water. So when he began his military training, he became paralyzed by fear and failed to overcome his swimming challenges. Soon after, a routine medical test revealed that Goggins was predisposed to a blood disease called sickle cell anemia. Using

this as an excuse, Goggins walked away from the military on medical grounds.

# Turning His Life Around

After leaving the military, Goggins was now working as an overnight exterminator in Indianapolis, where he weighed an astounding 300 pounds. At 4 a.m., Goggins recalls entering a dirty restaurant to spray for cockroaches. After approaching a nest of cockroaches, he aimed his cockroach spray in the center of their nest and struck. Suddenly, thousands of cockroaches swarmed out of the woodwork, pouring over him and the room. Sprinting out of the building, swatting at cockroaches and cursing, Goggins started to question how he wound up here, 300 pounds and spraying cockroaches for a living. Where was he headed?

That same morning, Goggins got home and stumbled upon a TV documentary about the Navy SEALs, the most lethal fighting force with the toughest training in the world. To become a SEAL, you had to be among the best. He watched as they struggled through mud, sweat, and tears and was amazed at their mental toughness and determination to keep going. Before the show even ended, Goggins was making calls to recruiters around the country to become admitted to SEALs training, called BUD/S (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL)

Soon, Goggins would learn that he was too heavy to join the Navy and that the BUD/S program was shutting down in just three months. Weighing in at 297 pounds, Goggins would need to lose 107 pounds in less than three months if he wanted a fighting chance at becoming a Navy SEAL. That's more than a pound a day for 90 days. Over the next three months, Goggins implemented a strict fitness regimen. Every day Goggins would wake up at 4:30 a.m. and hit the exercise bike for two hours. After that, he would drive to the nearest pool and swim for another two hours. Then, he would head to the gym for some intense circuit training that included at least five sets of 200 reps for all major muscle groups. His day was still not over, however, and he'd spend the rest of his day on the exercise bike, both before and after dinner.

Additionally, he created a new accountability mirror and fought through the depression and negativity that told him that he couldn't do it. Believe it or not, Goggins lost the weight and joined the BUD/S 6-month program aimed at choosing 30 of the toughest 120 candidates. Most of the dropouts occur during the third week, referred to as "Hell Week." Throughout the week, candidates are exposed to extreme life-threatening conditions at sea and are incredibly sleep-deprived. In fact, it is so hard that people often die during this week.

It was during this week that Goggins developed the concept of the *armored mind*. He had failed Hell week twice already, and his third attempt would be his last. He realized that if he wanted to reach his goal, he would have to penetrate the minds of the instructors standing in his way. When tasked with one of their toughest challenges of lifting a boat above their heads and marching across the beach with it, Goggins encouraged his team. He shouted at them to keep going, and they began to chant and show their instructors that they were relentless, they would never give up. Goggins refers to this as *taking souls*, which refers to the act of demoralizing your competition and showing them that their attacks are ineffective.

# The Forty Percent Rule

Goggins achieved his ultimate goal and became a Navy SEAL, but soon he found himself craving the challenge that training and Hell Week once gave him. How could he push himself further? In 2005, Goggins discovered the answer he was seeking through extreme long-distance running, also known as ultra running. For Goggins, he simply woke up one morning and began running and continued running for one hundred miles.

If you were to wake up tomorrow and decide to run one hundred miles, do you think you could do it? We would immediately say “no, that’s impossible.” But Goggins was determined and he knew that his mind was the only thing stopping him. He became interested in ultra running when several of his fellow Navy SEALs were killed in a military operation in Afghanistan. To raise money for their families, Goggins chose to combine charity with running the toughest foot race in the world, the Badwater 135.

Of course, you can’t just simply enter the Badwater 135, you have to qualify. So he set out to run the San Diego One Day, a one hundred mile race in the heart of the city. His only training? Twenty minutes a week on a cross-trainer in the gym. Before this, he had never run farther than 26 miles of a marathon and at his 70-mile mark, Goggins was *not* looking good. At this point, he had lost control of his bladder and bowel movements due to sheer exhaustion. He was experiencing double vision and was running on broken bones in his feet. The average person would’ve stopped long before getting to this point, but Goggins is no average person.

To explain how Goggins pushed through and completed the 100-mile race, simply imagine that feeling that you get at the end of a long workout when you feel like you just can’t do anymore. Well, according to Goggins, you still have 60 percent left to give! He calls this the *40 percent rule*. According to this rule, we as humans tend to give up after exerting 40 percent of our maximum power. For instance, if you think the max number of miles you can run right now is four, it’s actually closer to about ten. That’s why, even

though Goggins had only ever run 26 miles, he believed 100 miles was possible because he had only ever given 40 percent of his effort.

Once you feel as if you've given all you've got, keep going. It's when you push past this point that you grow and break down those limitations and barriers that are holding you back. In the end, Goggins completed his race in just 19 hours, he even ran an extra mile to make sure he had truly finished. This qualified him for the 2006 Badwater 135 ultramarathon. This time he would be running through California's Death Valley and finishing the race at an elevation of 8,374 feet. Even worse, the race is in July, when Death Valley is at its hottest.

This time, Goggins trained by carefully studying the terrain and running in the extreme conditions that he would experience on race day. When he finished, Goggins completed Badwater 135 in just thirty hours and finished in fifth place. Because of the forty percent rule, he was able to push his limits and accomplish something incredible.

# Uncommon Against Uncommon

After completing the Badwater 135, Goggins was thriving, entering himself into multiple races a month for months on end. However, as life does, he was thrown a curveball that changed his love for running forever. During one of his races, Goggins noticed an irregular heart rate and a trip to the hospital revealed a lifelong condition: a hole in his heart. The condition is a serious one and deprives the body of oxygen and can lead to sudden death, the risks increase if you are a regular diver. For the past decade, Goggins had been training as a Navy SEAL, putting his body through the impossible and, of course, diving. Miraculously, his condition hadn't killed him.

Life will inevitably throw us curveballs and things will fall apart, but it's your responses to these situations that are important. Goggins had achieved being just one of 36 African-Americans to become a Navy SEAL and was the United States' *only* African-American prolific ultra runner. As he puts it, he became *uncommon amongst uncommon*. In other words, he had put himself in the top one percent of performers and had become one of few "onlys."

But now that his running career was over, how would he continue to push himself? Once the Navy found out about his success in marathoning, they quickly turned Goggins into one of their top recruiters. His job was to make becoming a Navy SEAL more appealing to young black men. Of course, Goggins took on the role with pride and focused on developing his recruiting, public speaking and promoting skills, but he needed more. How could he continue to push himself and become another top performer? He certainly couldn't continue running with a heart made of Swiss Cheese.

Goggins took to the internet to find that the World Record for the most pull-ups in 24 hours was only 4,021. He discovered that he would need to complete five pull-ups a minute for more than 12 hours to break this record. After two failed attempts, one of which was nationally broadcast, he went

back to the drawing board. He came up with a new strategy and on January 20, 2013, Goggins broke the World Record for pull-ups.

So how can you become uncommon amongst uncommon? What is your goal and what sets you apart from the rest? Perhaps you're the first person in your family to go to college, or the first female at your school to be valedictorian, or the first immigrant from your country to hold public office in the U.S. Get specific and become amongst the top performers.

# The Power of Our Minds

Goggins defied all odds. Statistically, Goggins was doomed for a life of depression, violence, and unfulfilled potential. Those raised in abusive households like Goggins have higher rates of depression, chronic pain, PTSD, and more. Additionally, many turn to smoking, drinking, drugs, and other unsafe behaviors that lead to addiction, legal trouble, and even death. So how did he do it? Goggins will tell you it was his daily decisions that allowed him to overcome his obstacles and live a successful life despite being dealt a bad deal in life.

So how can you harness your true potential? There's no secret to success, you simply need to work hard and commit yourself to achieve your goals. At one point Goggins could hardly read, he was working as a cockroach exterminator, and he weighed 300 pounds. He lost the weight and studied hard to get into the BUD/S training program simply by waking up in the morning and getting it done.

Many of us have our excuses. You have a family that you need to spend time with and a job that you need to pay the bills and put food on the table. That's a part of life but not an excuse. If you want to accomplish something, you need to win the morning. A typical day for Goggins begins at 4 a.m. when he wakes up and goes for a six-to-ten mile run. He can then be home by 5:15 where he showers, eats breakfast and gets ready for work. He then bikes 25 miles to work and arrives at his desk by 7:30. During his lunch break, he will either complete a gym session or go for another six-mile run on a beach. He then cycles the 25 miles back home after work. By 7:00 p.m., Goggins has cycled at least 50 miles, run at least ten miles, and worked his nine-to-five job.

Everyone has 24 hours in a day, so it's up to you to use them wisely. You'll find once you own your mornings, you'll be more likely to achieve your goals. But it shouldn't stop after you've achieved it. Let's say your goal is to run a marathon, once you've accomplished that, don't stop! You should

always be looking forward to the next achievement. Perhaps look to improve your time or run a few marathons a month. When you become satisfied with something, you stay in the moment and never move forward. By pushing your limits and looking for your next achievement, you'll not only crush your goals but find peace and happiness knowing that you've lived life to its fullest.

## Final Summary

Despite growing up in an abusive home, Goggins overcame his traumatic, impoverished childhood by simply working hard and committing himself to his goals. He started with his accountability mirror when he placed his goals in plain sight on Post-It notes. From there, he was able to pass the ASVAB and join the military. However, Goggins didn't stop there. After failing to overcome his fear of swimming and then gaining weight, he realized his life was heading nowhere and committed himself to join the Navy SEALs. In just three months, he lost over 100 pounds and was accepted into the training program. There, Goggins learned the power of his mind. Even when his body was shutting down, he could keep going if he blocked the pain and told himself anything was possible. This mindset allowed Goggins to accomplish the seemingly impossible and become a successful ultramarathon runner. Of course, you don't need to run 100 miles, instead, you can crush your goals through simple hard work and getting up early.



# QuickRead

F R E E B O O K S U M M A R I E S

**Go to [QuickRead.com/App](https://QuickRead.com/App) now to download our app and get access to thousands of free book summaries as both text and audiobooks.**

**Get the key insights of non-fiction books in minutes instead of hours. Listen to our free audiobooks while you workout or on your commute to work.**

