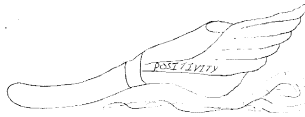


Chapter IV

My 48-Hour Rule

Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.

—Dale Carnegie



Human beings are complex and unique creatures with sophisticated abilities to protect themselves and adapt to the challenges of new environments. However, specific tools and techniques can speed the recovery from emotional injury and lead to a healthier life. Wrapped in that belief is the *48-Hour Rule*.

The 48-Hour Rule dictates an allowance of no more than forty-eight hours following an incident. During that time, you can react however you want (within the law) to deal with the situation at hand. You can scream for hours; you can cry like a baby, go into a jealous rage, or be angry and vengeful. For forty-eight hours, you can allow yourself to take on those emotions and an array of others without feeling guilty. You can even allow yourself to succumb to self-pity or to digress into a state of depression or even as far as to operate in a state of denial or to booze it up to numb the pain as long as you don't risk harming others. *But* when the clock strikes that forty-eighth hour, it's time to *move on*.

Beyond the forty-eight-hour allotment, it is time to change perspective on the situation. Whether that's a job you didn't get, a love you lost, distressing news about your health, or a friend that betrayed you in the worst way—it's all history. My 48-hour rule mandates that there is no longer an

excuse to just vent and self-destruct to the point of not moving on with a productive life. Faced with the inability to change the past or relive it, we must instead put behind us hurtful and tragic incidents in their proper places and times. I cannot overemphasize how crucial it is to separate the past and the future from the present. We cannot predict or control the future no matter how much we stress over it. However, we can live in the moment and enjoy the present while working hard to take small steps each day toward a brighter future.

The 48-Hour Rule is all about living in the present! It's about drawing your focus away from the incident and directing it toward healing. Keep in mind that you shouldn't spend too much time focusing on the future either. Don't start worrying about the next relationship or the next job or next semester or next tour of duty. The profound work *The Precious Present* by Spencer Johnson wholly captures the need to enjoy the gift of "the present." The present is the gift that you are here, alive and still breathing. The gift is today, right now. The "precious present" is the notion that no matter what happened in the past, and no matter the uncertainty of the future, you still can celebrate the gift of life today. I believe in this notion with all my heart; and after mentoring and life coaching for over twenty years, one of my signature platforms is helping people to appreciate the present. I am quick to blast my friends with one of my favorite quotes (adapted from Ernestine Ulmer's): "Life is often short and unpredictable so I'm going to have dessert first." Like the 48-Hour Rule, this quote urges us to live in the present. Life was meant to be enjoyed as we go along rather than waiting for some past memory to come back to life or delaying self-gratification until you achieve all your goals at some distant point in the future.

I have employed the 48-Hour Rule for almost twenty years now, and it has served me well. It is uncanny how many times my family and friends question me as to how I maintain my resilience and positive attitude in the face of numerous challenges. My answer even today is—MY 48-HOUR RULE! Even though you may still feel the hurt, sadness, or abandonment, these emotions are no longer your primary focus. You have the power to implement this rule into your life. Stand up to the past and proclaim victory by refusing to become or remain a victim of your past. Hold your head up, reject the victim mentality, and adopt a state of mind that is positive and hopeful. "Fake it until you make it" is how you get there. You have to visualize yourself as the person you are striving to be and take steps toward building a life free of baggage from your past to help facilitate the

transformation from victim to survivor. The next chapter on *The Man in the Mirror Exercise* will help you do just that.

During my quarter of a century of life coaching and mentoring children, teens, and adults, I have met many people whose lives are dominated by the victim mentality. The victim mentality influences or controls how people emotionally respond to different events and incidents in their lives. For the purposes of this book, the victim mentality characterizes someone who regularly assumes the role of victim or constantly refers to themselves as a victim. The focus here is to understand that you are not automatically a victim just because an individual or group has victimized you.

Steve reached his eleventh birthday two summers ago, around the same time his parents finalized a divorce. He had several friends from school whose parents divorced, leading to family instability and instilling feelings of abandonment in the children. Steve's friends acted out and got into trouble—they felt they were victims of their parents' divorce. However, Steve chose to see his parents' divorce as a chance for his mother and father to find true happiness and for him to have two different homes and sets of toys and friends. Now, Steve maintains the stance that he is much better off compared to living in a home filled with tension and anger.

You can always choose not to be a victim. This holds true no matter how big or small the injustice may be.

My overall point here is to help move people forward in this journey called life. Even in the most severe cases—domestic violence, sexual abuse, or the loss of a loved one—the implementation of the 48-Hour Rule provides tools and techniques of how to move swiftly from victim to *survivor*. Many people go through life thinking somehow they are the only ones dealing with serious issues—it's a lonely place to be. But the reality is so many others feel the same way you do. Sometimes the person you admire the most is looking back at you and thinking you have got it made. Honestly, that happens quite often because people don't realize just how blessed or admired they are. Boys, teens, young men and adult males have a difficult time communicating real emotions and thoughts to other males, creating a major barrier to being supportive and helpful. I challenge, all you real men, to drop your guard and start being much more open and in-tune to your friends, family, comrades and peers.