

*Be A S.P.U.D. (Same Person Up or Down) Be selfless; an encourager; a mentor; a superhero; a dream maker; a role model; a difference maker. Love unconditionally and be the right person at the right time in someone's life. Be A S.P.U.D.*

## **BE A S.P.U.D. Same Person Up or Down**

By Todd Howey

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# Be A S.P.U.D.

Same  
Person  
Up *or*  
Down

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*A great piece of advice  
that can make a meaningful difference  
in yourself and others.*

Todd Howey

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## 10.

### Know What Brings You Joy

Hunter had already taken the written test 3 times and failed each time by one or two questions. If the fourth attempt was unsuccessful, he would have to retake the entire course from the beginning, something that would be very challenging and time consuming for us both.

As Hunter stood in line at the Department of Public Safety to take the written test for the fourth time, he looked at me and said, *"I think I want to back out."*

I asked, *'Why would you want to do that? You have come so close to passing.'*

Hunter replied, *"Because I don't want to fail it again."*

Talk about a shot in the gut for me, I just wanted to sit on the floor and lay my head in my hands and cry. I knew this had been a tough deal for him and failing again would be a huge blow to his self-esteem, and that was something he did not need at that time in his life. He had taken dozens of practice tests, and he

even had the test administered to him verbally, but still had not passed.

Hunter had some challenges, so getting him this close to obtaining his driver's license was nothing short of a miracle.

As Hunter sat down at the computer screen to take his test, he looked over his shoulder at me and flashed me the thumbs up sign. I sat across the room and watched him read the questions and select his answers, praying earnestly for supernatural intervention.

When the test ended, Hunter got his result immediately on the screen. I could tell by his body language that he was not quite sure of the results. He looked back at me with a blank face, then turned and read the screen again.

He repeated that process about three times and then I finally shouted, "*Well?*"

Hunter then stood up in front of his computer, turned around and faced a room full of strangers.

Making a fist with his right hand, he raised it to the sky, shook it in the air and yelled, "*I passed! Who's your daddy!*"

The entire room began to laugh and applaud.

One guy even shouted out, “*Way to go dude!*”

\*\*\*\*\*

**It felt like I just watched him hit a game winning  
homerun in a championship game. I was so  
unbelievably proud of Hunter. Life is good, and  
we are here for each other. The best part  
about living is getting to share in the  
accomplishments of others.**

\*\*\*\*\*

We knew something with Hunter was different after his younger brother began to pass him in development around the age of 3. Hunter just seemed to “check out” and enter his own little world, ignoring everyone and everything around him. At first we thought it might be his hearing. Nope, he could hear just fine.

Maybe it was just a phase he was going through? Nope, not that either.

Ultimately at about age 8, we landed on a *High Functioning Autism/Asperger’s Syndrome* diagnosis. So, what did that mean? Not much to his mother and me.

We literally spent thousands of dollars on expert diagnoses and programs for Hunter. Some worked a little, most did not work at all. There was never an “*oh wow*” factor with anything we tried, so we decided to just plow ahead and treat him no differently than our other two boys.

\*\*\*\*\*

**We never used his diagnosis as an excuse for his sometimes-poor behavior. He faced consequences just like his brothers. Nor did we allow it to be a reason for him not to accomplish something or treat people right. We didn't ignore his diagnosis, we just decided to push through it.**

\*\*\*\*\*

We certainly had to reinforce our expectations with him using different tactics, but we never lowered expectations for him.

Although Hunter did not handle some situations in public as parents might like, we did the best we could and everyone else would just have to deal with it.

We even talked about getting t-shirts made up that read;



**HE'S AUTISTIC,  
SO MIND YOUR OWN  
DAMN BUSINESS!**

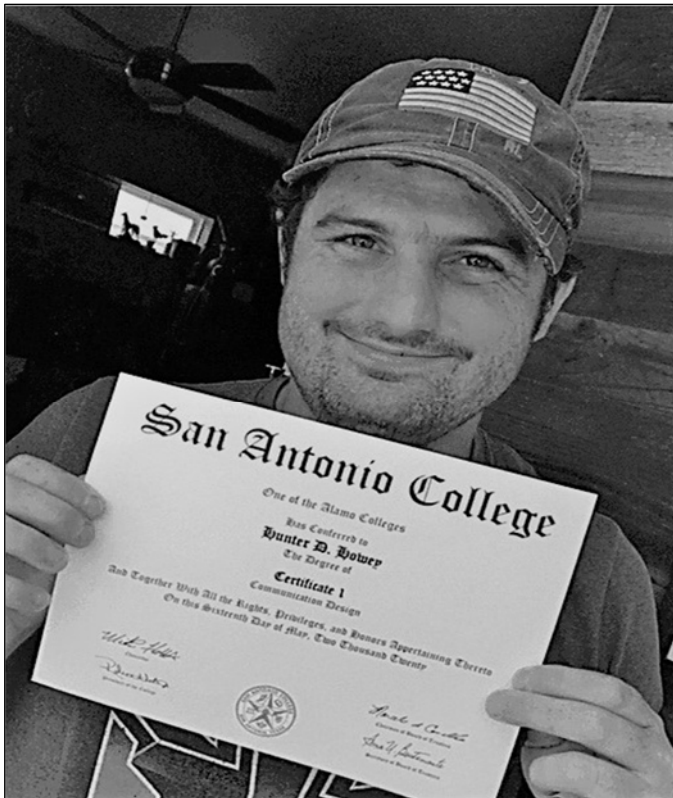
Please understand, this is how we decided to raise Hunter, and when you have a special needs child, I know firsthand there can be no greater burden, but also no greater blessing.

However, I can honestly say that his mother and I did everything we could for him, as did his grandparents, and we still are to this day, and it has been nothing but inspiring.

There was a point and time in Hunter's life when I did not think he would be able to ride a bike without training wheels.

As you are aware, he did obtain his driver's license, and has even driven to Austin from San Antonio on I -35 by himself! Fighting that traffic is no small task for any driver!

Hunter has exceeded expectations in every area of his life. I have often questioned myself if I had set expectations for him too low. Maybe he would be doing even more if I had not assumed his limitations. I guess that is just being a parent though, we always feel like we should have done more for our children.



*Hunter earned a Certificate in Computer Design.*

Throughout this entire life, Hunter has always provided those around him perspective and balance. I have always called him my “equalizer” because he always reminds me of the simplicity of life and what is really important.

\*\*\*\*\*

**If there ever was a S.P.U.D. it is  
Hunter Don Howey. His sense of humor is  
constant and his positive outlook on life is  
refreshing. There has been multiple times when  
my day was going poorly, and out of nowhere  
Hunter would send a text to his entire family  
of a 3-Stooges video that made him laugh.**

\*\*\*\*\*

He'd text "*Thought you might need a laugh today.*"

I will never forget one time when he and I were driving to Austin for the day. The traffic was barely moving, and I could not stop complaining about it. Hunter was playing a game on his phone with his headphones on, completely ignoring my rant, at least so I thought.

As we crept down the highway, we came upon a wreck that was causing the backup. There was a badly damaged car rolled on its side smoldering, and a group of paramedics loading a person into the back of an ambulance.

As we rolled by the car, Hunter looked up from his game and said, “*At least you’re not that guy.*” Then went back to playing his game.

I felt pretty selfish after he said that. Someone had been badly hurt in that accident, and all I cared about was that it was putting me behind schedule. Hunter will tell you like it is, and not see a problem with it, snapping things back into proper perspective quickly.

On another occasion, Hunter attended a summer camp called Camp Barnabas for about 8 years in a row. He loved that camp, and it was some of the best times of his life. Each camper was assigned their own counselor, and the counselor would focus solely on their camper all week, playing games, doing activities, and giving them 100 % attention.

When we picked up Hunter one summer, each camper was instructed to introduce their counselor to their parents. Hunter’s counselor had lost both his legs below the knees in a freak accident several years before and was in a wheelchair.

When his mother and I walked up to meet them both, Hunter promptly said, “*Hey mom, hey dad, this is my counselor David, and he has no legs.*”

His mother and I just gasped. We did not know what to say other than “*Hello David*”

David laughed out loud, looked at us and said, “*Well, he’s right, I don’t have any legs. You can count on Hunter to tell it like it is.*”

*DESTRUCTIVE CHILD OF TWO*

*He climbs on the cabinets, knocks the phone off the hook, rips the pages out of his brother’s favorite book.*

*He won’t eat his vegetables, impossible to get him in bed. All of his white t-shirts are stained kool – aid red.*

*He takes off his clothes, runs naked through the house. Empties the fridge on the floor, being quiet as a mouse.*

*He smashes his fingers at least three times a day, wakes you at 5:00 a.m. wanting outside to play.*

*He melts your heart when he reaches for a hug, then kicks over your coffee and stains the rug.*

*He climbs out of bed at least 10 times a night, the battle we have is like a heavyweight fight.*

Todd Howey

*He does little things intentionally to make you mad,  
then runs off for mercy to either mom or dad.*

*He'll drive you crazy and there ain't much you can  
do. I wouldn't trade him for the world, my destructive  
child of two.*

I wrote this poem about Hunter when he was going through his “Terrible Twos.” I am pretty certain it is no different than any other child at that age. At least it was not for our three boys.

*Be A S.P.U.D.*



*Cyber Man*

*One of Hunter's many creations using his computer graphic design skills. He sees the world from a different perspective than me, and I could not be luckier.*

Happiness is based on emotions and is short term, whereas joy is based on your beliefs and is long term.

While raising Hunter, his mother and I came to realize that there truly is a difference between joy and happiness. When our other two sons got their driver's license, it certainly was a happy occasion for us all, but in many ways it was just not that big of a deal. But, when Hunter eventually received his driver's license, it was accompanied with a sense of joy because it warmed the hearts of so many. We all knew how difficult it was for him to even get to that point in his life, so it was shared.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Hunter taught us that joy in life comes from things that are real, from within, and not based on emotion or luck like happiness is.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Joy is a long-term outlook on life, happiness may be part of it, but joy is there regardless of your luck or emotions. Up or down, your joy remains because you know there are better things ahead and everything will be alright no matter what might come your way.



***Asking Hunter to help me with cleaning the house -***

**Dad:** *“Hunter, I could use some help cleaning the house today”*

**Hunter:** *“Ok Dad, I’ll see if I can’t find you some.”*

***Asking Hunter what he thought of my new spaghetti sauce recipe -***

**Dad:** *How did you like my new recipe H- man?*

**Hunter:** *“Ehhhh, it’s not your best effort.”*

Nothing brings Hunter’s mother and I more joy than seeing his two brothers, Preston, and Colt, involve and engage Hunter into their busy lives.

Our three sons are gifts from God, and they are what we are most proud of. Watching them stick together and protect each other warms our hearts, gifting us eternal joy. I know that when we are both gone one day, Hunter will never be alone because his brothers, and their families, will fill the gap unconditionally, as they should.

\*\*\*\*\*

**I have learned in life that my source of joy  
comes from a totally different spout  
than my source of happiness.**

\*\*\*\*\*

I get happy when I find a twenty-dollar bill in my coat pocket, but that happiness quickly fades because that money will be spent within the hour.

The sad part about it is whenever I reach my hand into that coat pocket, I come up empty, unhappy, and disappointed, hoping for a twenty!

I find joy when I take that twenty-dollar bill I found in my pocket and buy lunch for a friend with it, or hand it out the window to a homeless person.

A selfless act like that warms the heart, and sacrificing for others, regardless how big or small, deposits joy into your tank.

It is important to note that you can maintain joy for your life, and still be unhappy about things in your life.

Being unhappy is something we all deal with at certain times in our life because we are emotional creatures and life happens to us all.

You may not be happy at your job, or happy in your relationship, or happy with your finances, or happy with your weight, or happy with the government.

Even still, don't allow that to steal your belief within that assures you things will work out for the best. That is joy, let it remain constant and do not allow your emotions to determine your outlook in life.

You may be unhappy about a few things in your life right now, everybody is. Tap into your sources of joy and know that you will overcome, and life is good.

Happiness happens to us and is just passing through life:

- *You find a great parking spot.*
- *You find your lost keys.*
- *You win a raffle.*
- *You land a big job.*

Joy happens within us and brings meaning to life:

- *You are grateful.*
- *You are at peace.*
- *You feel connected to others.*
- *You know you will overcome.*

Joy takes work, and often joy comes to us through suffering. The greatest struggles that we face in life can ultimately provide us with the greatest amount of joy.

Through difficulty, joy becomes constant, and nothing anyone can say or do can steal it away. Joy is present, and in the moment forevermore because we have transformed difficult circumstances into blessings and turned heartache into gratitude.

*“Those who cannot feel pain are not capable, either, of feeling joy.”*

*- Kartini*

Hunter Howey is a blessing. I am jealous at times of his ability to speak the truth when asked and his capacity to be so authentic.

He does not even have to think about it, it is just who he is. It appears to me that I could have avoided a great deal of stress and unhappiness in my life if I would have handled situations more like a person that is diagnosed with Asperger's.

I wish I was more like Hunter in so many ways.

- Not afraid to speak the honest truth.

- Not afraid to laugh out loud at the 3-Stooges
- Not afraid to put himself first at times with no problem in doing so.
- Not afraid to tell a guy who was out walking his cat on a leash, *“Well, that’s not something you see every day Mister!”*
- Not afraid of what other people think because it makes sense to him.

**S.P.U.D. Quality: Hunter is always joyful, and it rubs off on those around him. Although at times he can get a bit unhappy, as we all do, you can depend on Hunter to light up the room with a dry sense of humor and no-nonsense approach to the truth.**

*Todd Howey*



*There is no gray area with Hunter, it is what it is, so be careful what you ask!*

## **S.P.U.D TIPS:**

1. Everyone has a purpose in life. Be good at reminding others of that.
2. Sincerity is refreshing and rare. If they ask you for the truth, then give it to them, with a kind heart of course.
3. Identify your sources of happiness and joy. I just bet they come from different places.
4. A happy family is a unit with one purpose. And that purpose should be to take care of one another, regardless of the cost, without any complaining.



*Hunter, Jane't (mom) Preston, Colt*

*You can pursue happiness, but you choose joy. Joy is rooted in hope for yourself and others. Joy blossoms when shared with those you love. Happiness comes and goes, joy remains. Family first, Howey boys know that because it has been modeled to them.*



**JOY HAS ROOM FOR  
OTHER EMOTIONS.**

**HAPPINESS DOES NOT.**



## **About the Author**

**Todd Allen Howey**  
**Dog named Cash**

### **ATHLETICS**

Played baseball/football, Spring Woods  
High School, Houston, Tx. Class 1982

Played baseball at Texas Tech University 1983-1985

Drafted by Philadelphia Phillies in 1985.

Curveball drove me into coaching

### **EDUCATION**

B.S. from Howard Payne University, Brownwood, Texas

*Todd Howey*

M.E. from Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas

Certified Athletic Administrator (CAA)  
National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association

### **COACHING EXPERIENCE**

One-year coaching everything at Early High School,  
Early, Texas 1989-1990

Head Baseball Coach. Howard Payne University,  
Brownwood, Texas 1990-1995

Head Baseball Coach. West Texas A&M University,  
Canyon, Texas 1995 - 2000

### **ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE**

Athletic Director, Canyon ISD, Canyon, Texas 2000 – 2007

Executive Director of Athletics, Midland ISD,  
Midland, Texas 2007 – 2014

Senior Executive Director of Athletics, SAISD,  
San Antonio, Texas 2014 – 2022

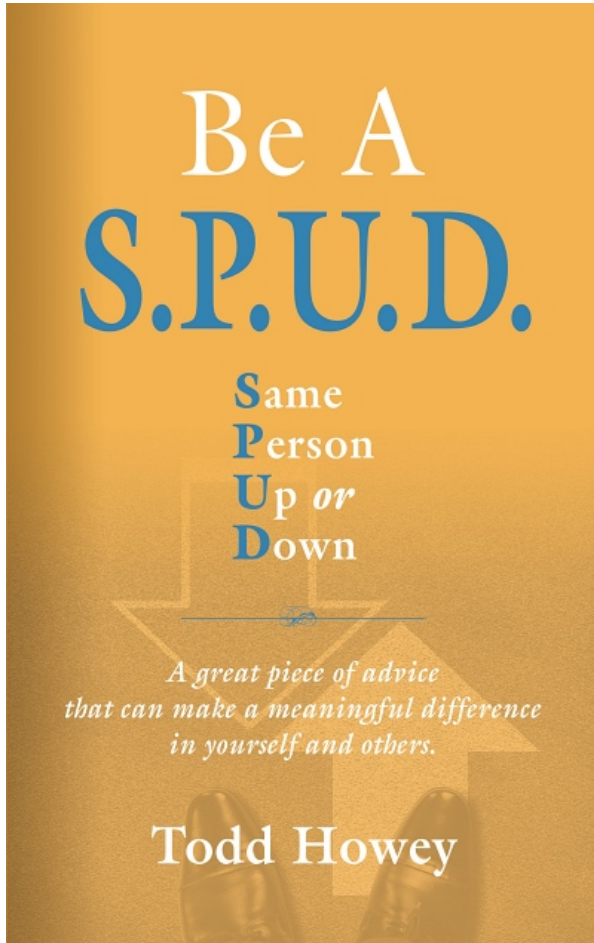
### **Other books written by Todd Howey:**

Winning Created

Unconditional Coaching

5 Things Coaches Want Parents to Know

**I would love your feedback - *thowey63@gmail.com***



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