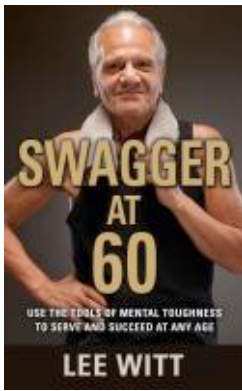


**SWAGGER  
AT  
60**

**USE THE TOOLS OF MENTAL TOUGHNESS  
TO SERVE AND SUCCEED AT ANY AGE**

**LEE WITT**



***SWAGGER AT 60: Use the Tools of Mental Toughness to Serve and Succeed at Any Age** outlines the tools of mental toughness that will enable the reader to move past their perceived limitations and achieve extraordinary success. Although anyone of any age will benefit, the book is written with a "senior" demographic in mind - and challenges them to continue to serve throughout their remaining days. For those who incorporate these tools, they might well be able to make the last thing they ever do their greatest and most rewarding.*

## **Swagger at 60**

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# **Swagger at 60**

*Use the Tools of Mental  
Toughness to Serve and  
Succeed at Any Age*

**Lee Witt**

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## INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, best-selling author, media personality and former Navy SEAL, Richard Machowicz, was doing a radio interview. The host asked Mack, “What’s in the future for you?” After giving a few details of his many projects, Mack said, “I want to make the last thing I ever do, the greatest thing I ever do.”

Isn’t that terrific? How many of us have the stones to say such a thing?

Now that I’m 60 years old, I’m taking Mack’s statement to heart. I’m taking it as a personal challenge. But taking this ultimate challenge requires a certain mental toughness. And this toughness must be continually developed. I can’t slack off or slow down. If anything, as we age, we need to work towards even greater strength. As such, I’ve written this book as a manual for myself moving forward. Now that it’s published, I have to hold myself accountable or be branded a hypocrite. My hope is that all of us can live with the idea that the last thing we ever do can be our greatest. And no matter how old we are, we can use the tools outlined in this book to be successful.

Most of us are familiar with the high-level principles of being successful. But sometimes the day-to-day grind

beats the greatness out of us. It happens to all of us. And it's in those times that we need to dig into our mental toolkit and come up with a strategy. This book will give us the toolkit to do just that.

At its base, this book is about service. In order to stay significant and relevant, we must be able to, as Bob Dylan said a half century ago, "Serve somebody." The mental toughness tools in this book will give us the means to carry on in service when it's uncomfortable and we just don't feel like it. We often believe that we need to be inspired. Inspiration helps but in reality, we simply need to be disciplined. *We need to be able to get up and do the things we don't feel like doing when they most need to be done.* That's what mental toughness enables us to do.

Service is also an incredibly important concept because it implies that we don't live in a vacuum. Service prioritizes the well-being of other people, which is not always easy. And sometimes, prioritizing others doesn't make sense. But if you have the stones to attempt making the last thing you do your greatest, there's an even chance that you will be providing a service to someone.

In addition to service, this book is also about being superior. It's not about having a superiority complex. I'm talking about *actually becoming superior*. Yes, this implies comparison with others. If that is distasteful to you, I would ask you to consider this. It is superior

people, products and services that have made our life what it is today. Advancements in medicine, travel, business and communication are only available to us because superior human beings invented superior products and made them accessible.

Mental toughness enables us to work towards both service and superiority at any age. It enables us to build strong, daily habits that propel us forward. It's those habits that kick in when we're not inspired and motivated. Because let's face it, we're not always motivated to get up early. We're not always motivated to go to the gym. And we're not always inspired to do what we know is in everyone's best interests.

So what's the actual definition of mental toughness? Many books will tell us that mental toughness is made up of grit, perseverance and a never-quit spirit. They tell us that we need to exercise such concepts as control, commitment, challenge and confidence. But often that's as far as they go. There are rarely any tools as to how to put those qualities into action. They just say, "This is what you need. So go out there and be confident and tough!"

For some people, that's enough. But I've found it useful to describe specific behaviors that can help you "act out" those qualities and "be confident and tough" in practice. What does it actually look like to be confident and tough? And how do I do it?

For our purposes, we'll define mental toughness very simply. Mental toughness is the ability and willingness to call forth the necessary energy, skills and capacities we need in order to accomplish our goals, particularly when things are difficult. And it's those very skills and capacities that we'll address in this book.

People who are mentally tough keep their minds in the game when others panic or check out. I've watched people in difficult business situations throw their hands up and say, "It's too much, it's too overwhelming! I can't deal with this right now." Then they storm out of the room. They prefer to run away and avoid the issues.

In fact, *right now is the best time to deal with the issues because it's the only time we have.* Right now is where life is lived. Mentally tough people stop and take control of their minds the very moment they hear themselves use the word "overwhelmed." They do not panic. Nor do they explode in a useless angry tirade that serves no purpose. Tough people handle and take charge of their minds in the midst of pressure. They catch themselves when they're about to panic and they slow down their thought process. They might even ask themselves, "Am I okay right now? The answer is almost always yes. Then they ask, "What is the one thing I could immediately do to improve this situation?"

If no solution is readily apparent, the answer might be to just simply breathe. Deep breathing is a mental toughness tool that slows us down. It puts us into a



better state, and that's a place where better decisions can be made. It provides an opportunity to step back and consider the situation. We often discount breathing because it's so natural. Yet try doing anything without it.

It's the tools of mental toughness that allow the most successful people to catch themselves and make productive choices in real time. Once we begin to approach what I call "mental toughness mastery," we begin to choose personal fulfillment in circumstances where others fall apart. This is a difficult place to get to, but it is a place that's available to all of us. It's a constant struggle for me. But I remind myself that I get to choose how to manage my own mind. No one can take control of my mind without my consent.

### *The 7<sup>th</sup> Inning Stretch*

At 60, most of us are in the last third of our life. I call it the 7<sup>th</sup> inning of a nine-inning game. Even if we've reached the bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup>, we still want to feel significant. And there is still more game to play! The tools of mental toughness can keep us relevant to the very end, no matter how young or old we are. But yes, there are times when all of us feel small, weak, and insignificant.

I remember my father at sixty-three, just a few years older than I am now. He had spent his life as a teacher and a coach. While coaching football and basketball,

his life had been characterized by robust physical challenge and active sports. Now he was lying in a hospital bed, having undergone a quintuple bypass operation on his heart. For good reason, he was feeling weak and helpless.

The doctors were not overly optimistic about his recovery. It was maybe fifty-fifty.

Shortly after his surgery, I noticed that around his bed were flowers and little stuffed animals brought by well-meaning friends and family. While very thoughtful, these gifts did not create an environment conducive to what an adult male of the World War II generation would have considered masculine. In my early thirties at the time, I decided to try something.

As opposed to tiptoeing into his room like everyone else, I strutted in with some swagger. With a voice louder than it needed to be, I said, “My God, Dad, you sure are a tough old son-of-a-bitch! But you didn’t have to go this far to prove it!”

His demeanor changed almost instantly. All of a sudden, he had an identity to live up to. He was still a man in someone’s eyes who could demonstrate toughness. He could use his circumstance to see himself as a tough guy, hanging in against the odds. Even from his hospital bed, he could show others how to deal with difficult circumstances. I could feel his energy shift.

I tossed a couple of stuffed animals into the corner and said, “Jesus, let’s get this crap out of here and put the game on.”

It was a chilly October evening in 1986. I turned on the World Series above his hospital bed. Together, we watched the Mets battle the Red Sox. The Mets rallied. So did my dad.

He lived another nine years after doctors were talking in terms of days. I’m not saying that my strategy was the reason he carried on. But feeling significant and that you still have something to teach or do can sometimes keep the motor running past its expiration date.

It’s our ability to be of service and add value that keeps that motor running. That’s our challenge as we age. Armed with the tools outlined in this book, we can all stay relevant and strive to make the last things we do the greatest. That’s my plan, anyway. I hope you’ll join me.



**SECTION I:**

**SWAGGER AND  
SERVICE**



## CHAPTER ONE – *Serve with Humility but Act with Swagger!*

*“What would you do if you were besieged in a place entirely destitute of provisions?” asked the examiner, when Napoleon was a cadet.*

*Without hesitation Napoleon replied, “If there were anything to eat in the enemy’s camp, I should not be concerned.”*

What? We’re supposed to have swagger at 60?

No. *We’re supposed to be humble at 60.* We’re supposed to have taken so much punishment that the sheer absence of pain equals pleasure. We’re supposed to be grateful that we still have the energy to watch television. We’re supposed to shuffle through life with our humble heads bowed hoping that no one runs into us and knocks us over.

Well, screw that. We already know plenty about humility. Humility comes with age as part of the natural process. If you’re keeping score, humility is undefeated. It’s built in. And if we’re lucky to live long enough, we’ll get to put that diaper back on. We’ll all be humbled in due time.

Don't get me wrong. Humility has its place. I'm all about *servng* with humility. There is no job beneath me. We do whatever needs doing. There is dignity in every kind of human labor.

But here's where I draw the line. I'm not a fan of humility as an attitude or a lifestyle. By the time we're 60 years old, we know all about humility. And while we've won a few battles, we've also been beaten many times in business, relationships, and sports. We've taken just about every kind of punishment you can think of. Individually and collectively, we've been excoriated in public and on social media. And we've no doubt been somebody's punch line more than once along the way.

We've worked twelve hour days that turned into 84 hour weeks. We've gone through bankruptcies, divorces, heart attacks, angioplasties, bypass operations, mammograms, prostate exams and more colonoscopies than you can count. We've battled to put ourselves and our kids through college. Now our grandkids are looking at us like we're ATM machines. And if we're fortunate enough to have parents who are still living, they probably need our assistance as well. For many of us, retirement isn't even an option.

So I say, "Serve with humility, but act with swagger." Yes, I'm looking for people with swagger – or who want to get some. With so many people still counting



on us, and our paycheck, why wouldn't we have a little swagger? *We have earned it!*

I'm looking for people who are giving the middle finger to the limitations that come with age and finding ways to beat those limitations. That's what this book is all about; *making our capabilities triumph over our limitations so that we can continue to serve and contribute*. And if we want to stay relevant, we need to contribute.

This isn't a new concept. But it's one worth revisiting. Why? *Because we've normalized limitations*. We've normalized comfort. And in the process of normalizing these things, we've also normalized obesity, depression, addiction and attention deficit. Whatever you've got, we've normalized it. In the process, we've gotten fat. We've gotten impatient. We've gotten rude, lazy, whiny and too weak to handle the smallest inconvenience. Heck, it's too much trouble for most people to flip on their turn signal while driving!

In short, we've gone soft.

Now I completely understand if you don't like my attitude. I'm sure I sound preachy, smug and perhaps even intolerant. I get that. But in fact, I'm none of those things. (Well, maybe a little smug.) But that doesn't and shouldn't diminish the quality of the message. If we continue to argue on behalf of our limitations, we will continually justify our weakness. The normalization of

limitations has broken our willpower, which a certain part of academia seems to believe doesn't even exist anymore. (Yes, I've read all of the studies around glucose and willpower. I understand the data and we'll get to that.)

So what's the answer to all of the above-mentioned afflictions?

Swagger. Yes, swagger. Now I'm not suggesting that you be obnoxious – although if you can back up your swagger with results – good for you. I'm simply suggesting that if you've experienced any or all of the adversities I mentioned above; if you've gotten through the bankruptcies and the illnesses et cetera, and you're still breathing, you deserve to strut a little bit. You get big points for just hanging in there.

In the Introduction, I mentioned former Navy SEAL, Richard Machowicz, who is actually a very humble, but dangerous guy. He believes that the difference between success and failure comes down to your ability to focus on a target. Mack says that things like fear, self-doubt, hesitation, second-guessing, fatigue, and pain are typically what get in the way of our ability to focus. As such, those things keep us from succeeding. I contend that putting a little swagger into your step can help you overcome the kinds of doubt and second-guessing that he's talking about. We'll get into the physiology and energy of just how that works and the science behind it

in later chapters. It's by no means the entire answer, but it's a start.

*The very fact that you have a pulse means you're still in the game. And if you are still in the game, you can get things done!* You can get healthier. You can still make things happen. And if you're 60 years old and you're awesome? Don't apologize for it. Never dumb down or apologize for being outstanding. Don't shrink to make other people feel better. Seriously, stop it! Inspire them and challenge them to want to elevate their game so that they can play at your level.

Last year, at age 59, I overheard a woman a few folks behind me talking in a grocery line. She was talking about me. She whispered to her friend, "What's with that guy? Wearing a tank top and showing off his muscles like that. I don't understand people like that."

Well, for one thing, it was ninety degrees outside. But that wasn't the point. I got out of line and pleasantly walked back to her which, of course, shocked her. With a big smile I said, "Hi, my name is Lee. I'm 59 years old." (She looked appropriately surprised to hear my age, which was gratifying.) "I wanted to address your comment in order to perhaps share a different perspective."

I continued. "Here's the deal. You want me to apologize. You want me to apologize for wearing a tank top and being in great physical condition. Yes, I have

muscles. I deliberately worked my ass off to get them. And I'm never going to apologize for having had the discipline to be in the gym four days a week for 42 years running. I'm also not going to apologize for having the discipline to have spent another 25 years avoiding the kinds of pseudo-foods that are in *your* shopping cart. In other words, I'm not going to apologize for looking really good and being as fit and healthy as my gene pool allows. Is there some unseemly vanity in that? Probably. But I'm human and every now and then, I like to bring the Ferrari, that is, my body, out of the garage. So, having shared this perspective, I hope that you have a wonderful day."

As I walked away, I couldn't resist turning around and saying, "Oh yeah, I'm also available for personal training whenever you're ready."

Then, being a gentleman, I walked to the back of the line that I had voluntarily left.

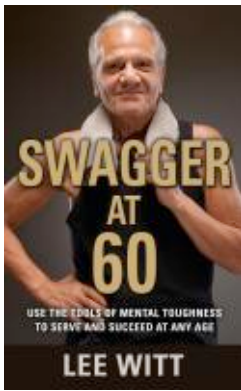
I share this because I want all of you to have a story like that one. Essentially, that gal made my day. The rewards of discipline and willpower far outweigh the rewards of the cheesecake she would no doubt be eating later. (There's that smugness again.) But nothing tastes as good as a great body and terrific health feels. And while I'm writing this primarily to document my own progress and to catalog the tools of mental toughness, I'd love to have anyone, of any age, join me in the quest for greater awesomeness.

*Swagger at 60*

It's never too late – and it's never too soon to begin.

It's all about right now.

*Okay, where'd I leave my swag...*



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