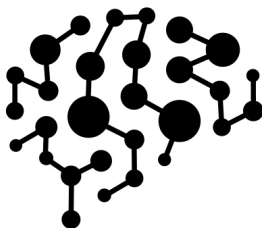


ONE GOLDEN NUGGET



**HOW TO
SURVIVE
AND
THRIVE
VOLUME III**

**JOE FOSTER, FOUNDER OF REEBOK,
RETURNS WITH POWERFUL NEW STORIES OF
RESILIENCE AND INNOVATION, CHANGING THE
WORLD ONE PAGE AT A TIME.**

Joe Foster



CHARLIE CANNON

Specialist in Purposeful Resilience,
International Keynote Speaker, and Performance Psychology Coach

As a passionate sportsman and creator of sports shoes, I have a deep appreciation for how profoundly the world of sport has shaped Charlie Cannon's life. A gifted athlete, Charlie has represented England in rugby, represented the West of England in hockey, and played county-level cricket. Now in his mid-forties, he remains at the top of his game, competing on the International Tennis Federation circuit and recently achieving the remarkable milestone of qualifying for Wimbledon. Yet, while his sporting and coaching accomplishments are undeniably impressive, it is Charlie's remarkable resilience and ability to pivot in pursuit of his dreams that truly set him apart.

Charlie was born in London and raised in the Wirral, Northwest England, in a household shaped by contrasting worlds. His father, a stockbroker, came from an upper-class background, while his mother had working-class roots. This dual perspective gave him "a sensitivity to diversity and the importance of being inclusive" at a young age.

From early childhood, Charlie adored sports. "Chasing, running, hitting, or kicking a ball" was part of his daily ritual, providing a sanctuary to channel his energy and find solace. However, this idyllic childhood took a challenging turn when he was sent to boarding school at the age of nine.

For many, boarding school is a formative experience, but for Charlie, it was a crucible. Being separated from his parents at such a young age was a harrowing experience, and he describes the environment as "toxic," learning quickly to conceal any signs of weakness. From the ages of nine to thirteen, sports became his shield, offering confidence and self-belief in a setting where they were vital for survival.



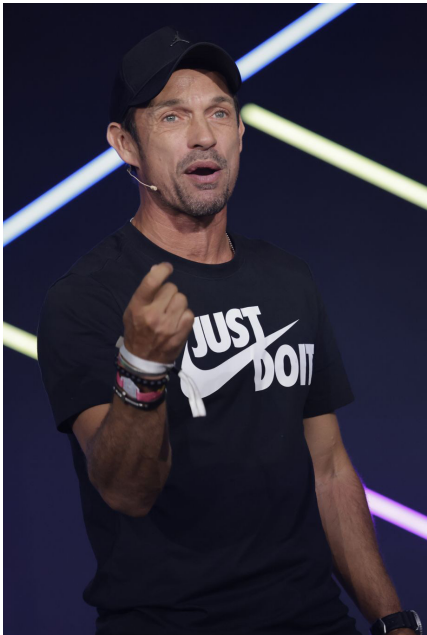
Decades later, Charlie confronted his past, leading to the conviction and imprisonment of two of the masters for sexual abuse. This courageous act was not only a step toward justice but also a crucial milestone in his healing journey. Charlie describes it as essential for “overcoming, understanding, and healing from those formative years.”

Throughout it all, sport remained Charlie’s sanctuary — his “happy place” where he could be absorbed in the moment. As a talented young athlete, he excelled in rugby, hockey, and cricket, earning positions on teams representing England, the West of England, and his county. Leadership came naturally, and captaining teams ignited his passion for coaching, particularly in exploring “how to influence others to perform at their best.” This curiosity around leadership, coaching, and mindset laid the foundation for his future career.

However, at the age of twenty-one, Charlie’s life took a devastating turn. After a late night and neglecting his body’s need for rest, he fell asleep at the wheel, causing a catastrophic car crash that nearly cost his sister her life. The car flipped, rolled down the motorway, and collided with a lorry, which then burst into flames. Miraculously, an off-duty firefighter who witnessed the crash managed to pull Charlie’s sister and then Charlie himself from the wreckage. While Charlie’s injuries were not life-threatening, his eighteen-year-old sister fell into a coma for seven days. Doctors predicted she wouldn’t survive, and the family prepared for the worst, but against all odds, she began a fragile journey to recovery.



**“We have a choice to reinterpret
our life’s difficulties as fuel for
both meaning and resilience.”**



The guilt of nearly causing his sister's death, combined with unresolved emotional scars from childhood and a lack of direction in his life, led Charlie to a dark night of the soul. He coped by masking his pain with drink and drugs, still believing, due to his boarding school experiences, that asking for help was a sign of weakness. Today, he teaches the opposite: "Asking for help is a sign of strength and courage." For Charlie, his extraordinary sister is his beacon of resilience, and he's forever grateful to her for never holding him responsible for the accident. Without her grace, he would have found it much harder to heal.

A life-altering moment came when Charlie's father suggested he run a marathon for charity. He credits exercise as "the saviour of his soul," and the marathon became the catalyst for rediscovering his purpose. Training alongside a friend who wanted to quit midway through the race, Charlie's determination saw them both cross the finish line together. This rewarding experience inspired him to become a personal trainer, marking the beginning of a positive transformation.

After rigorous study and travelling the world to learn from experts in health and fitness, Charlie launched his personal training business in London. He quickly attracted high-profile clients, including Oscar-winning actors, athletes, and business leaders. Helping stressed executives build resilience and energy led to a life-changing opportunity: designing a leadership programme for a major supermarket chain with 400,000 employees. The "Fit to Lead"

programme was groundbreaking, addressing workplace wellbeing and leadership, but it also presented an unexpected challenge: public speaking.

Public speaking had long been a source of anxiety for Charlie, rooted in his school days when public humiliation was a frequent punishment. Confronting this fear was a necessary step toward achieving his goals. Through practice and determination, Charlie transformed his fear into strength, becoming a confident and compelling speaker. This milestone marked the beginning of a successful career as a mindset coach, wellbeing consultant, and motivational speaker for some of the UK's most successful people performance consultancies, using the power of psychology and behavioural change to transform both leaders and teams.

For Charlie, resilience is a dynamic interplay between challenges and resources, whether physical, emotional, relational, or spiritual. He emphasises the importance of proactive resilience training, noting that “we shouldn’t wait for adversity to grow our resilience.” During the COVID-19 pandemic, Charlie worked closely with businesses to foster resilience, consulting on a wellbeing project for a leading drinks brand that coincided with their most profitable year to date.

One of his most unforgettable moments as a speaker occurred at a Nike annual conference, where he addressed an audience of seven hundred people. As an athlete, Nike was a brand he idolised growing up, making the experience deeply personal. Leading a session titled “Being Your Resilient Best,” Charlie guided participants through a powerful visualisation exercise to help them achieve their goals. He describes this as a “goosebump moment” — the realisation that his dream of inspiring and influencing others on a global scale had become a reality and that he had truly conquered one of his deepest fears.



**“Life is 10% what happens to us, and
90% how we choose to respond.”**

Charlie's coaching philosophy centres on the "inner game" — the ability to manage one's mental and emotional state under pressure. He teaches leaders to achieve coherence, a state in which the heart, brain, and nervous system are optimally aligned. By mastering their inner game, leaders can build trust and inspire others, and it's a philosophy that Charlie applies to his own personal life.

After an amicable divorce and subsequent remarriage, Charlie and his ex-wife have nurtured a harmonious relationship, with both families getting along well and even going on holidays together. He attributes this unconventional yet successful arrangement to their shared ability to play the 'inner game' during times of significant stress. By prioritising their daughter's well-being they have modelled resilience and unity, a legacy Charlie considers his greatest success.

This mindset has also helped him navigate personal challenges, such as a severe hand injury that doctors warned would end his ability to play sport. Refusing to give up, Charlie adapted by learning to play tennis with double-handed strokes on both sides. At forty, inspired by a coach who recognised his potential, he began competing in tennis, a sport he describes as psychologically demanding. Tennis provided a new arena for him to develop his ability to perform under pressure and improve his relationship with failure. His dedication paid off, leading



to his qualification for Wimbledon in his age group, ranking in the top twelve in Great Britain, and captaining the Sussex county team.

Charlie uses these personal experiences to inform his coaching and mentorship. Competing at a high level allows him to empathise with the pressures faced by leaders, while overcoming childhood trauma and life-altering events has deepened his understanding of resilience. These insights enable him to provide valuable guidance to those he mentors.

Charlie believes it is crucial not to wait for adversity to grow resilience. “If COVID-19 has taught us anything,” he says, “it’s the importance of proactively developing resilience skills rather than waiting for life’s inevitable challenges.” He views resilience as a dynamic interplay between challenges and the resources we can draw upon, whether physical, mental, emotional, relational, environmental, or spiritual.





**“It is more important
to find purpose than
happiness in our lives.”**



Having completed thousands of hours of mental training, Charlie is convinced that “the root of personal resilience lies in our relationship with what we think and feel when faced with challenges.” His journey led him to seek wisdom from teachers in Tibet, which he aptly describes as the “Silicon Valley of the mind.” Training with lineage holders of ancient teachings, Charlie embraces a consistent meditative practice, which he believes is key to human flourishing and sustainable happiness.

Yet Charlie acknowledges that managing one’s mind is impossible without managing one’s energy. “Resilience is as much about recharging and recovering as it is about enduring,” he says. Highlighting what he refers to as a “human energy crisis,” Charlie notes that many professionals are exhausted and on the verge of burnout. Using his understanding of sports science, he teaches individuals to become “corporate athletes” by maintaining energy and focus even in the most demanding environments.

Charlie also looks at the concept of “the shadow” with his clients — a Jungian psychological term for the unconscious aspects of our personality that the ego rejects. He explains that understanding and integrating these repressed instincts and emotions can transform them into powerful forces for growth. For example, anger, when acknowledged and channelled constructively, can provide the agency and strength to act effectively.

Lastly, Charlie emphasises the critical role of personal and professional networks in resilience. “Our relationships can be our greatest resources during difficult times,” he says. Charlie credits therapists, friends, and various different communities for supporting him through his darkest moments. But most of all, he expresses deep gratitude for his wife, Danni, whose humour and care are among his greatest sources of strength.

For Charlie, resilience is more than just a concept; it is a skill that can be trained and practised. He believes it is foundational to effective leadership and emphasises self-awareness as a cornerstone of its development. Having overcome significant personal challenges and carved his own path, Charlie shows the power of resilience. Through dedication, effort, and energy, he has built credibility on the speaking circuit, fulfilling his dream of helping others to truly thrive.



**“Our self-worth drives
our self-belief.”**



**“We cannot truly connect with
others or lead an authentic life if we
don’t embrace vulnerability.”**



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