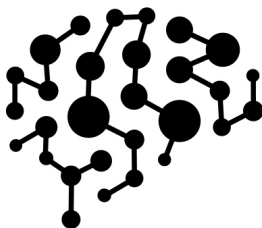


ONE GOLDEN NUGGET



**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



CLAYTON THOMAS

CEO of The Root Brands

As a health entrepreneur married to a brilliant scientist, Clayton struck me as someone with a mind that's always switched on. I'll admit, I wasn't sure at first what kind of conversation would truly capture his interest. But what impressed me most was how easily he connected. Clayton has that rare ability to speak to anyone and make them feel like they're on the same page. So, I was relieved when our chat drifted into a topic I actually know a bit about: sports shoes. "You know what's funny?" he said. "Back in high school, I wore Reeboks. Those big-ass Shaq Pumps when they first dropped? I loved those high tops." He laughed, then added, "My childhood was full of Reebok moments. I just wish I'd kept those shoes. They'd be worth a fortune now." I couldn't help but smile. Sometimes, the most unexpected common ground turns out to be the most meaningful.

After Clayton's father opened a veterinary clinic in the quiet stretch of countryside between Portland and Seattle, Clayton had the rare gift of growing up immersed in prairie life, where nature, wellness, and community are deeply intertwined.

His childhood was as expansive as the landscape around him: riding bikes with friends, fishing in hidden creeks, and playing every sport he could. When he wasn't outside, he was often at his father's clinic, quietly absorbing the rhythms of care, not just for animals, but for the people who brought them in. It was there he began to understand how healing and connection go hand in hand, and where a natural gift for communication first took root.



Clayton also inherited strong values from his parents, who taught him early on that “taking care of people was more important than making money.” Living near the Chehalis Indian Reservation, he saw firsthand the strength of community and the quiet power of mutual support. He remembers how his father would offer veterinary care to members of the tribe throughout the year, often settling bills not with cash, but through barter, sometimes in the form of fireworks for the family’s Fourth of July celebrations.

He watched as his parents built their practice from scratch, eventually leading a team of twenty. But it wasn’t just the business that left an impression; it was the way people were treated. “I learned how to be of service in so many different ways,” Clayton reflects. “Whether it was distracting someone in a moment of stress, coming to terms with the reality of death, or simply showing up with empathy, it all taught me what it means to be fully human.”

Clayton also learned the subtle power of humour, watching how his father used it to ease fear and tension in even the most difficult moments. One of his go-to lines was: “How can you tell the difference between an oral and a rectal thermometer?” He’d pause, then deadpan, “It’s the taste.” The room would break into laughter, and just like that, the atmosphere would shift. That ability to hold seriousness and lightness at once is an approach Clayton has carried into his own life.

In such an isolated rural community, the local vet was often called on to do far more than treat animals. Clayton vividly remembers the day a neighbour suffered a chainsaw injury, blood pouring from his neck. It was Clayton’s mother who saved his life by performing CPR, keeping him alive until the ambulance arrived. On another occasion, after a man shot his wife three times in the head and chest, it was Clayton’s parents who were left to clean up the bloody aftermath. These were clear reminders that care doesn’t always follow job descriptions. Sometimes, it simply means stepping in when no one else will.



“Invest in yourself and others first.”



Diagnosed with ADHD as a child, Clayton was always full of energy and questions. When doctors suggested Ritalin, his mother pushed back. “He’ll stay busy,” she said, choosing movement over medication, and giving him the freedom to run, play sports, study hard, and simply enjoy being a child.

Their home was grounded in warmth and routine. Evenings were spent around the dinner table, where Clayton, his brother, sister, and parents shared stories, laughter, and life lessons over home-cooked meals. It was here that communication was modelled, values were passed down, and a lifelong love of connection began to take root.

Being raised in a close-knit, loving family gave Clayton a strong sense of identity, while life in a tight-knit community instilled in him a deep sense of belonging. But from an early age, Clayton was taught to look outward — to seek value in other cultures, belief systems, and ways of life. He wasn’t raised merely to accept, but to question, reflect, and think critically.

It was perhaps this outward-looking, questioning mindset that led him to the humanities — a discipline rooted in the exploration of what it means to be human. “There are just three letters I live by,” he reflects. “WTH: Walk, Teach, and Heal.” After graduating from Washington State University, Clayton began working in sales for a company that distributed a health and wellness product. Driven and articulate, he quickly rose through the ranks, becoming the youngest top income earner in the company,

bringing in \$40,000 a month. He stood out not just for his results, but for his values. While others chased profits, Clayton was passionate about something deeper: inspiring people to live healthier lives.

But that conviction would come at a cost. When the company changed its product formula, his parents — loyal customers — were the first to notice it had stopped working. Clayton began asking questions. He challenged the changes, raised concerns, and, as a result, lost his job.

This turning point pushed Clayton into new territory: consulting, product development, and, eventually manufacturing. He launched his first manufacturing company and quickly gained traction, landing what was projected to be a \$50 million-a-year contract to produce a detox solution, an early iteration of what would later become Clean Slate by ROOT.

But just as momentum was building, everything unravelled. A business partner in Cleveland, someone he trusted, took a deposit for an order of 150,000 bottles, then disappeared with the money and filed a lawsuit against Clayton in an attempt to force him out. A second, even larger order, this time for one million bottles, was lined up, but never fulfilled due to the fallout.

What followed was nearly a decade marked by legal battles, reputational attacks, and a two-year non-compete agreement that barred Clayton from working in the field he knew best. He honoured it, even though it meant staying silent about a subject he was deeply passionate about. But the non-compete agreement ended, Clayton returned with purpose. He launched a new venture and began to succeed once again.

While his childhood had equipped him with the tools to work hard and think differently, it was the trials of the business world that taught him something even more valuable: how to overcome betrayal, rebuild from nothing, and emerge stronger than before. It was



**“Find your soulmate, don’t compromise
or waste your energy on anything else.”**

during that survival chapter that Clayton met Christina. Her partnership would soon become central to everything that came next, both personally and professionally.

Christina, an internationally recognised scientific leader whom Clayton refers to as “a biotech savant,” partnered with him just as his interest in environmental toxicology was deepening. Together, they founded Root Wellness, a brand dedicated to supplements that support detoxification, immune health, and cellular vitality.

Their vision was clear: to build an alternative ecosystem that challenges the traditional pharmaceutical model. That bold, disruptive approach earned Clayton recognition as an Inc. 5000 CEO — a prestigious benchmark celebrating entrepreneurial growth, innovation, and visionary leadership.

And Clayton doesn’t stop at wellness. As a futurist thinker, he’s deeply attuned to how emerging technologies will reshape business and life. Sounding almost like something out of a science fiction novel, he describes a new development within the Root Wellness ecosystem: “self-sovereign digital identities.” Also known as a “digital twin,” this technology creates a secure, decentralised version of a person’s personality and information. The goal is to ensure individuals fully own and control their data, no longer reliant on a centralised company or authority.



When connected globally — potentially linking billions of people — each person's AI digital twin will act as their representative, reflecting their personality and even helping solve problems on their behalf. Because the data and its value will be managed in a decentralised way, rather than controlled by a handful of large corporations, this innovation has the potential to fundamentally shift how we interact with technology, protect privacy, and structure society itself.

This groundbreaking vision has been over a decade in the making and, according to Clayton, is now on the brink of launch, poised to redefine how humanity engages with digital identity and data ownership. Still, he's clear on one point: "AI is complementary. It will never take over, because humans remain more adaptable and capable than any computer processing system."

"What's fascinating about intelligent design," Clayton explains, "especially in the context of AI, is how it reflects patterns already found in nature." He describes how AI is now being used to isolate specific peptides within systems or ingredients, honing in on microscopic detail. But he also offers a word of caution: "If you focus solely on a single element without considering the broader network of cofactors, you risk missing the bigger picture. That's where intelligent design shines," he continues. "It integrates complexity."





**“You are infinitely valuable as
you are an imperfect piece to a
perfect puzzle. Act accordingly.”**



Clayton is a strong advocate for the thoughtful use of AI. “When used properly and directed by the right minds, it can help us uncover extraordinary innovations,” he says. “But many scientists may get lost in the minutiae, excited to discover a new molecule without thinking about how that actually applies.”

Ultimately, he believes, the value of AI and computing power, whether in large language models or biotech, depends entirely on who’s holding the reins. Technology will continue to evolve, but the real power, he suggests, is human. That’s where true innovation lives.

Clayton proudly distances himself from mainstream systems, even citing his ban as social media as a personal badge of honour. He jokes, “Social media hates me, I’ve got six followers and four of them don’t like me.” His unapologetic advocacy for decentralisation may help explain why his voice is often considered too outspoken for traditional platforms and why he’s so intent on building his own professional and personal ecosystem, free from gatekeepers.

Reflecting on humanity’s future, Clayton doesn’t hold back. “We’re living in a time where younger generations are being steered toward a path of extinction,” he warns. “In the end, it’s the strong who will endure, not just physically, but the psychologically, spiritually, and emotionally strong, because nature has its way of filtering out weakness in all its forms.”

There's a sense of urgency in Clayton's voice when he speaks about the system today. "Each of us is innately unique, and that uniqueness is our strength," he says. But in his view, the system is intrinsically flawed, designed not to nurture individuality but to enforce uniformity. "The more we embrace our individual roles," he says, "Our so-called imperfections, the more meaningfully we contribute to the whole." And when that happens, he suggests, "That's when the true change begins. Because if those in control can keep everyone in line, they win. But if humanity wakes up and recognises that every person, regardless of background or belief, holds value, then the system begins to unravel. That's the path we're on. And if we don't make significant progress in the next five years, it's game over."

For the last sixteen years, Clayton has channelled that same sense of mission into one focus: detoxification. "We live in a polluted, toxic world," he says. And while many focus on cleaning up their external environment, Clayton believes the real starting point is internal, clearing the toxins that silently accumulate within our bodies.

The science backs his urgency. Today, we are exposed to a growing cocktail of environmental toxins: heavy metals like mercury, lead, aluminium, cadmium, arsenic, and synthetic chemicals such as glyphosate, PFAs, and PBDEs. Many of these substances only became widespread in the decades following the 1970s. And while our bodies have innate detoxification systems, Clayton warns that the growing toxic burden may be outpacing our ability to keep up.

Supporting the body's ability to eliminate these harmful substances, he argues, is not just preventative, it's essential. "We don't need to focus first on what we put in," he claims. "We need to focus on what we take out." For Clayton, this journey has never been just about business; it's about awakening. Awakening to our own resilience, our responsibility, and our right to live with clarity, vitality, and truth. In a world clouded by noise and conformity, he remains firmly rooted in one belief: the future belongs to those willing to detoxify not just their bodies, but their thinking, and to lead, fiercely and fearlessly, from within.



"Outcomes create income."



“Always look to create value.”



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