

TOUGHEN YOUR MIND

HOW TO VANQUISH NEGATIVITY WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH...

ADVICE

KEEP YOUR HEAD IN THE RIGHT PLACE™

Ex-British Army officer Chris Moon left the forces to clear landmines in Cambodia for a charity called the Halo Trust – a dangerous enough job made ten times worse when he was kidnapped by genocidal Communist rulers the Khmer Rouge. He was one of the few Westerners ever to be released by the regime, but fate had more horrors in store and in 1995 Chris lost an arm and a leg when a landmine exploded...

What was going through your head when you were kidnapped?

So many things. First I was trying to understand how it happened because we had a guarantee of security from the United Nations who told us it was safe to be in that area. But something had changed and I kept trying to work out what it was. Your mind races.

Knowing hostages don't come back can't help.

I was very aware of the record of the Khmer. Immediately I started asking myself, "How can I deal with this?" but the worst feeling in the world was knowing that there was nothing I could do for my blokes who had been taken with me, apart from keep them calm.

What did you do that made them let you go?

It's difficult to explain, it's a combination of things. I had three years in the army and that required independent thought. Working for the charity also required a certain mindset. It was about thinking and behaving in the right way. Do you have a specific tip you can share?

I controlled how I was thinking and how I behaved. It's easy to start thinking there's no hope. You must focus, and don't give up. As we were held for longer I knew it was less likely we were going to get out, but you have to keep your head in the right place.

Tell us about the landmine.

I was in Mozambique and was walking back up a safe lane where all the landmines had been cleared. Something felt wrong, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up, and then bang, it happened. I had my leg blown off and lost my hand.

What happened in the immediate aftermath?

You have to understand the reality of the situation and see things accurately and objectively. So that meant I needed to assess my injuries, see how bad they were, understand what had happened, keep the blokes down the lane and try and



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Chris became the first amputee to complete the Marathon Des Sables across the Sahara (left)

carry on doing my job.

Since then you've done almost every hellish ultra-marathon – how did you get so damn hard?

I never allowed what happened to give me a down moment. I worked on making a choice, focusing on what I had and not what I had lost. It required a great deal of mental discipline.

Do most people have this capacity to turn a negative into a positive?

Yes, but only if they have a mind to. I ran the length of Cambodia and there was a guy that joined me who'd been working for the UN. He wanted to know if I was the same me who woke up in the morning: did I feel happy until I remembered I'd lost my hand and my leg and then I wished I was dead? For many people the default setting is to see it that way.

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