



Achieve Your Goals Podcast #115 - Inside the life of a professional cage fighter (UFC fighter, Charlie Brenneman)

Nick: Welcome to the Achieve Your Goals podcast with Hal Elrod. I'm your host Nick Palkowski, and you're listening to the show that is guaranteed to help you take your life to the next level faster than you ever thought possible. In each episode you will learn from someone who has achieved extraordinary goals that most haven't. He's the author of the number one best-selling book *The Miracle Morning*, a Hall of Fame and business achiever, an international keynote speaker, ultra-marathon runner, and the founder of VIPsuccesscoaching.com. Mr. Hal Elrod.

Hal: All right, achieve your goals podcast listeners. For me, you're like, I'm giddy right now. This is a cool episode. Most of you know I am a huge mixed martial arts fan, and specifically the UFC, ultimate fighting championship. Today is my first ever interview with a UFC fighter. Not just a UFC fighter, but somebody whose career I followed. I was there as he had some really big fights in the UFC. He is now a UFC fighter turned motivational speaker, author. Really, really cool. He's taken his, he had an up and down career where he was at the highest of

highs, touted as the next big thing, potentially a future champion.

Man, as a fan I always see how crazy the sport is where you could be at the top of the world and then one fight later you're getting knocked out and you're losing it, and your career can end. I was talking to our guest Charlie "The Spaniard" Brenneman today before we started. I said, "Yeah, there's no other sport where you make it, you get into the big leagues. The UFC is like the NBA of professional mixed martial arts. There's no other sport where you get into the big leagues and you can literally lose a fight or two, the of the equivalent of an NBA game or two, and your cut, you're gone, you're out." NBA, you get in the NBA, you're set for life. You're in the NBA, even if your team loses for a while you can still hang on and have a 5, 10 year career. Mixed martial arts is a really tough sport in that one loss or a couple in a row and you can be gone.

Charlie has experienced fighting some of the best fighters in the world, literally. I'm talking about UFC welterweight champion Johnny Hendricks in his second UFC fight. He's also fought number one ranked light heavyweight, someone who waits a lot more than Charlie, Anthony Johnson. He had an 11 fight career in the world's number one mixed martial arts organization, the UFC. I'm excited to chat with Charlie today about what it is like to be a professional cage fighter. What is it like to step into a cage to fight another man who wants to win just as bad as you do, and the only way for him to win is to beat you up essentially, right?

I know some of you are like, why do you like this sport? It sounds so violent. To me it's really about the mindset of a champion that it takes to step into that environment, which very few human beings, myself included, would have the courage and the mindset that's necessary to put themselves in that type of a position. Charlie Brenneman, the Spaniard, how are you my friend?

Charlie: I'm doing really well. I apologize in advance, I'm battling a cold. I'm going to trade my darnedest not to cough in your listener's ears.

Hal: All right man, That's fair. My listeners, they love authenticity. It's funny, I used to always be anal, I got to lock the door and I text my wife, don't let the kids come in, I'm recording a podcast. Then whenever the kids happen to sneak into my office or I forget to lock the door, it's always listener's favorite episodes. Oh no son, you got to leave, I'm in the middle of a show. They love authenticity. Cough away, it will be all right. Cool man, I've got so much to ask. I'm literally coming as a fan boy through this interview. It's unlike any other interview I've ever done.

Charlie: That's very cool, I welcome it. It's been a while since I've had fan boys or fan fighting, so bring it on.

Hal: Cool man, that's cool. It's mutually beneficial then. You were a high school wrestler, very successful high school wrestler. Achieved a top 12 finish in Division 1 nationals from Lock

haven University. Then you went to teach Spanish. You didn't go from wrestling to I want to be a professional fighter. I'm curious where that dream was born. Was it you knew you wanted to do it but you needed to make money on the way so you took a job as a Spanish teacher, or did you have a different career path? What was it like for you transitioning from college into the professional world?

Charlie:

Yeah, once I finished my time at Lock Haven wrestling, I finished my college career on a pretty high note. I was round of 12. For me that was about as good as I could have done. It was really the first time in my life that I lost, but I came away from St. Louis, that's where nationals were in 04. I came away from St. Louis feeling pretty good about myself. Actually, funny story, I lost to Johnny Hendricks my last collegiate wrestling match. I came away from that thinking, I feel pretty good. At the same time I thought, I'm done with this competition, I'm done. I want to be normal. From here on out I want to be normal.

I went home back to Central Pennsylvania, got a job teaching Spanish. That's where my nickname comes from, Spaniard. I got a job teaching and coaching wrestling. I thought, this is it, this is where I'm going to be. Then after about, I don't know, probably about a year, I was gung ho, I want to eat pizza and drink soda and get fat and be lazy. That's what I thought I wanted to do. After about a year I started to get unrest. A friend of mine and I ran a marathon, and that's something I never thought I'd do. As funny and as awkward as it sounds, to a wrestler it won't sound awkward at all. I really miss grabbing a hold of someone and throwing them down and wrestling them. Yeah, it sounds weird and awkward but that's what I missed. I

miss that primal thing that I had had since I was an 8 year old kid.

About that time, about midway through my second year, a friend of mine from college wrestling Frankie Edgar had at that time just signed on to the UFC. This was maybe 2 months before he fought Tyson Griffin in the UFC. I was sitting my classroom in between classes. I saw an article and then I emailed Frank and said, "Woah, congrats, that's great". Then I sat there and I thought, wait a minute, maybe I could do that. It's really, I don't know what it is. I have 27 professional fights, and I hesitate to call myself a fighter. I align myself, I find myself as someone who has a set of skills and just worked really hard to transfer those skills into another area. I'm a really good wrestler. I used that skill set to become a really good fighter. It was that day, that moment that I sat there and thought, I think I'm going to do this. That's where the seed was planted.

Hal: Wow. Then you went into some amateur fights. How long before that moment of the dream being born or the seed being planted into you actually stepping into an arena or an octagon?

Charlie: That was the middle of my first year. I taught for a full 3 years. By the time I actually left home to move to eastern Pennsylvania, then New York and New Jersey to train and become a UFC fighter, it was probably about another 6, 8 months until I had my first amateur fight. From my last year of teaching, I was fighting amateur. A lot of people joke and a lot

of people reference the movies, I forget the one with Kevin James, I forget what it's called.

Hal: Here comes the boom.

Charlie: Yeah, that was literally my life. I would come in Monday morning, I would stand in front of class. The kids would say, "Did you fight senior, did you fight?" I said, "Yeah." Then they'd bring up the clips on YouTube and they'd watch my fight. Another little side bar in my second year of teaching, I was also on a reality show on Spike TV, Pros versus Joes. That was a neat thing for my students and my community to see as well. That further planted, all right man, you can do this, you can still compete, let's go.

Hal: Wow. How did you get on Pros versus Joes?

Charlie: Just a random story, I was coaching wrestling and we went to a coaches conference. We had to fill out some people work. I guess they passed, as they do, they shared addresses and everything. I just got a piece of junk mail, caught my eye. I thought, maybe I'll fill this thing out. I sent the people an email and boom, boom, boom, I was in Los Angeles filming and winning my episode.

Hal: You won Pros versus Joes?

Charlie: Yeah, I won. I won my episode, so I won \$20,000. Then I got invited back for the finale, brought my brother with me, and we won the finale episode as well. We won a car.

Hal: Really? That's incredible, man. Pros versus Joes, for those people that don't know, is it in terms of each episode, wasn't it various sports just depending on the episode?

Charlie: Yeah, they had different sports. They had 4 seasons I believe. Each season was a little different. My season, what I did was I sprinted against Justin Gatlin who was an Olympic gold medalist, I played soccer against Brandi Chastain, I played basketball against Xavier McDaniel, Clyde Drexler. I hit it off with John Rocker. I got to play against all these professional athletes a variety of sports. Then for the finale it was the same idea, except I had a partner. That partner was my brother.

Hal: Right on man, right on. Has your brother done any fighting, or what does he do?

Charlie: No, but that experience really, we always had a close relationship. That experience solidified his future role as an advisor of mine. He played a very big role and still does in my life and career in terms of advising. We call him Chad for chief advisor. That's what I refer to him as.

Hal:

Got it, got it, okay. I want to take our listeners behind the scenes a little bit of what it is like to make that walk and to step into the cage against someone who wants to cause you harm, who wants to beat you. When I talk to people, and actually I guess I'll share this real quick, but when people ask me why do you like fighting, I don't get it. It's violent, it's this, it's that. You can't deny that there is a violent element, but that's not what it is about. To me it's the athleticism and the mindset and it's the skills. For me, number one is the mindset. I don't have it, I don't know that I could step into a cage and I could fight someone. It's probably because I don't have a background in wrestling, I don't have any skills in that regard.

The other component that I think is really fascinating is that mixed martial arts, it's very much at least 5 different disciplines. Wrestling is very different from boxing, as you know. Then boxing very different from jujitsu. You've got to master 5 or more different disciplines that are completely different. To fight in the UFC as you've done, you've got to be world-class in really all of them. If you're a phenomenal striker but you can't wrestle, then the wrestler Charlie Brenneman is going to take you down and hold you down, and vice versa.

To me it's like, you'd have to be as good as an NBA player at basketball and simultaneously as good as an NFL player at football and simultaneously as good as an NHL player at hockey. At any moment your opponent could go, no, I'm going to shift to basketball on you. Oh, I'm going to pivot and go right into a football move. All these different sports all combined into one. To me that's what's fascinating. When you're a basketball player you don't have to train 5 different sports. You just train one. I'd love to hear your thoughts on the mindset first

and foremost around the training and the skills and what's involved in being a mixed martial artist for our listeners that don't appreciate the sport or understand the sport.

Charlie: What you're saying, you're hitting the mark. That's why it's such a tough, tough sport and lifestyle. Wrestling is easy. Just training to be a wrestler, every day I wrestle, wrestle, wrestle. You have to divide it up. It takes strategy, it takes philosophy. How do we approach it? There's so much to do. You got to worry about not driving yourself into the ground out of exhaustion. The goal is yes, that we all aim for being world-class in every one of those aspects. The truth is when you break us down, maybe, maybe, maybe the elite top, top, top dogs are.

Hal: The George St-Pierres.

Charlie: Yeah, or John Jones, those guys. That's our goal, that's what we're after. It's extremely hard, extremely difficult to get there. For someone like me, it's like, I had that mindset. Then in order to come the closest that I can come to have that happen, I put myself around the best. That's a big, big guiding principle of mine is surround yourself with the best. I was training with the Miller brothers and I was training with Frank Jaeger and I was training with Ricardo Almeida and Henzo Gracie and George St-Pierre and all these muay thai world champions because I thought, if I'm ever going to be the best, there's only one way I'm going to get there. That's by learning from the best.

That has always been my default in all of my training is okay, how do I put myself around the best guys on a consistent basis? That's my mindset in terms of training. In terms of mental aspect of fighting, it's a really unique thing. We touched on it before. You're walking into an arena of, the biggest fight I had in an arena that I was the top billing or the main guy was probably 15,000 people. You're going against another well-trained animal. This is what I explain to people. Whenever you see or whenever you're in junior high school or high school or college and you hear of the tough guys because they got in a fight and knocked so and so out, one, they're untrained. Tough is just a thing. Tough is an abstract thing. When you're well-trained, that's a whole other ballgame.

When you know 2 months out that you have to go against another well-trained dangerous man, I don't know what makes me okay with it but it takes a lot to become okay with it. So much that when it's about to happen, I give the analogy, it's like getting in an airplane. Whenever I buckle up in an airplane, it's like I say my prayers and I know that it's up to fate now. It's out of my hands. I really truly felt that way when the door closed and they said my name and his name and let's fight because I thought, I've done everything I can do. It's autopilot. Let's go.

Hal: When is the most nervous part or the fear leading up to a fight, when is that for you? Is it in the dressing room? Is it a minute before? When is that?

Charlie: You know what, if you've ever seen the movie Southpaw with Jake Gyllenhaal ...

Hal: I haven't seen that yet.

Charlie: I'd recommend it, and to the listeners as well.

Hal: I've heard it's great, yeah.

Charlie: The most lonely time, and they do a great job portraying the in the movie. The most lonely time is in the locker room prior to the fight. Generally there's 3 fighters that share a locker room, so you're in there with your 2 or 3 corner men. It's quiet and nobody's really talking. If you are talking it's generally a little bit of forced feel goodness because you're so at that point freaked out. That's a really hollow time.

Hal: Wow, got it. Like you said, me vicariously through you guys just imagining, it's such an extreme physical, mental, and emotional position to be in, circumstance to be in. You won your first fight of professional fights. You lost your sixth to a UFC fighter John Howard. That was outside of the UFC though, correct?

Charlie: Yeah. Excuse me, that was down in New Jersey. The rumor going into that fight was whoever won is going to get signed to the UFC.

Hal: John got signed and he went on to have a good career. Then you went on, after that loss, after your first loss you went on a 7 fight win streak including your first fight in the UFC against Jason High, correct?

Charlie: Yeah, yeah.

Hal: That was before you fought Johnny Hendricks who would go on to be UFC champion. That was at UFC 18 Sonnen versus Silva, which is just a huge, so much media around that fight card. Huge night, huge event if you will. What was the first, actually, I'd love to see both emotional swings. Your first fight in the UFC against Jason High, you made it to the big leagues. Real quick, what was the call like? Who called you into say dude, you're in the UFC?

Charlie: I've been speaking to a lot of young people this past year. I just realized the other day I don't tell this story. I was driving, my career has been such that I've had to drive and travel a lot. I'll travel 5 hours to train for 90 minutes. I want to put myself around the best. I put in all that time on the road. I remember I was on route 80 in Pennsylvania and I got a call from my manager. This had been going back and forth, maybe we're close, maybe we're not. I just picked up the phone and he said, "Spaniard." I said, "What's up?" He said, "Congratulations, you're a UFC fighter." That's really the first time I've repeated that story in a long time. I almost got choked up because that was it. I left my community, I left my full-time job, I left my family, my friends, everything for this one in a million chance. To have it happen, it was just, I'll never forget that moment.

Hal: Yeah, I can imagine. You get in, you're fighting Jason High. Where was that fight?

Charlie: That was down in Charlotte. I'll add a little tidbit in here too, asked about the lonely times. I was ready. I knew I was good enough. I had thought John Howard. I think I beat him.

Hal: I thought you beat him, right.

Charlie: I knew I was ready. There was no doubt about that. I knew I was better than Jason. That afternoon, it hit me. My wife and I went for a walk, I'll tell you another lonely time too. My wife and I went for a walk. I was just walking through Charlotte and the sunshine. I was like, "Oh my gosh, honey. What is going on? What am I doing and what is going on?" Another extremely lonely, for the listeners, even if you're not into fighting, try to visualize this. 4 o'clock, anywhere between 2 and 3 o'clock, we leave on fight day and we go to the arena. They load up the buses. At 2 or 3 o'clock in the hotel room you have to say goodbye to the people you love. I'm getting a little choked up now. It's a very, very intense, just emotional movement. Fingers crossed, you're going to be fine long term. You just never know what's going to happen. It's a very, very, very, that last hug that I gave my wife is a long powerful hug. She knows what I'm in for and I know the toll it takes on her.

Hal: There's that fear of worst-case scenario, right? Especially for a wife. I can't imagine watching, yeah. Your family member, your spouse get into a fight. All right, hugging your wife goodbye. You go in to fight Jason High. When you were coming out of the locker room, I can't remember seeing what your face looked like. Were you smiling? What's your thought? That's one thing that is really fascinating for me. I love to watch the walk from the dressing room to the locker room to the arena. I love to watch. They get close on the fighter's face.

You see some fighters that are like, you see Urijah Faber who's pointing and smiling. He's dancing. Then you see Ronda Rousey who, she is so focused, she does not break character. She doesn't smile. She doesn't look around until the fight's over. They're just different approaches, right? Relax, have fun, be super focused. You see some fighters that you're like, that person is scared to death right now. That is not where you want to be going into the fight. What was your walking out? What's that like for you, your first fight?

Charlie: I've been through the gamut with this. My first fight, I do remember, I don't remember exactly but I do remember I was very relaxed and I felt very comfortable and I wanted to be there and I know I should be there. That was a very natural feel good happy excited. Do you want me to go through the other two?

Hal: Yeah, go ahead. Please, go ahead.

Charlie: That was a feel good, yes, this is awesome, cool, happy smiley.

Hal: That was fight number one?

Charlie: That was fight number one. That happened for a couple fights. This is the other end of it. If you watch my fight against Rick Story, and you might be able to find some clips online or something because it was a pretty big fight. That fight I remember as the most amped, and I write about it in my book. I could have been fighting John Jones and I would have been excited to beat up John Jones. I probably couldn't have, but I would have thought, I would have truly believed that I was going to. You could have put anyone or any thing in front of me at that moment. I believe that I was going to destroy whatever was in front of me. That was the Rick Story side of it.

Hal: Let me pause, because I want to dive into that. Okay, for the audience, everybody listening so you understand, Rick Story was ranked number 6 in the world. Charlie was on that fight card, supposed to fight somebody else who was not even ranked. Rick Story's opponent gets injured or whatever, can't make it. With 24 hours notice, Charlie gets a call. You thought you weren't fighting at all because your opponent had bailed, is that it?

Charlie: Correct. I found out Tuesday that my opponent had bailed. What they said to me was, you have to make weight on Saturday to get half of your money. I thought, this really stinks. Then there were 2 ways, I tell this to young people when I talk

to them. I could have gone 2 ways. I could have said screw this, I'm going to stuff my face, eat like crap, and then just literally sit in the sauna and make myself throw up to lose weight. Or I'm going to stay the course and I'm going to go through my rituals and my workouts and my proper diet just in case. 24 hours before the fight, that just in case, which was one in a million came to fruition. There I was thrust into the spotlight.

Hal: I remember that. I specifically remember it was UFC fight night number 4 I think on versus?

Charlie: Yeah, versus 4. Dang, that was good.

Hal: Yeah. I was trying to remember the details. I'm not a details guy, so I have to be transparent. I did a little research trying to remember all the details. I remember that night. I remember that fight. Yeah, Nate Marquardt was supposed to fight Rick. By the way, his nickname for all of our listeners, Rick "The Horror" Story. This is the guy that, that's why I'm so curious, Charlie. I want to bring it back to some context that you were going out all confident. 24 hours notice and you get the call to take Nate's place, fight Rick Story in the co-main event by the way of this event. Rick was supposed to just destroy you. You were a filler. You were being handed to Rick Story because he needed a replacement to beat up to earn a title shot eventually essentially.

Here's a spoiler alert, you won the fight. You pretty handily beat him. It was a really impressive performance. That's when Joe Rogan started saying, "Wow, this Charlie Brenneman, this

guy could be the future." Why were you walking out to the cage to fight a guy who was ranked so much higher than you, the odds maker thought he was definitely gonna beat you, you only had 24 hours notice. Why did you feel like you could beat anybody in the world at night? Our listeners, I want them to know. This is a mindset that every single one of us need to adopt and can adopt in every day and anytime we're approaching any of our goals. I think that you're facing such an extreme challenge. That's what I really want to bring this to our listeners.

Charlie:

Yeah, you had touched on something I was going to mention. You said, how can you bring it to you every day and every one of your goals? A motto and a creed that I live by is, I try to prepare myself for anything that will come my way. Whether it's a job offer, whether it's an athletic competition, whether it's an emergency, whether it's an impromptu presentation, no matter what it is, a conversation I want to be prepared. I want to be a well-rounded person. I live my life. To that point I had lived my life in preparation of receiving an opportunity like that. Luck is when preparation meets opportunity.

From the time I was a 6 year old infatuated with Rocky Balboa, I lived my life for that moment to happen. Whenever that happened, I knew. I knew more than anything in the world that whenever they said you're fighting Rick Story, I knew my life was now different. I knew I was going to beat him because I knew, Charlie, you've lived your life this way. You're however old, I don't remember, 31, 30ish around that time. You've not take advantage of opportunities in the past. I wasn't mentally tough enough, I wasn't mentally evolved enough. Here is your second, maybe third, fourth, fifth chance to make it happen. I

just knew it. It could've been Rick Story, It could have been Nate Marquardt, you could have put anyone there that night and I would have beat them.

Hal: You go and you beat Rick Story. What was that post fight, what's that like? You're standing in the cage, Joe Rogan, or I don't know if Joe Rogan interviewed it. Who interviewed you that night? Was it Rogan?

Charlie: It was Rogan. I have the video, I DVR'd it and put it on a DVD.

Hal: Of course, of course.

Charlie: I'll show my daughter and my other children and their friends and their friends' friends.

Hal: It's going to be your daughter going, "Dad, stop, yes. Stop showing the video."

Charlie: During the post fight interview with Joe Rogan, I have my arm around him. I said, you can see me lip, "s this real, is this even happening?" It was the most surreal feeling in the world. It was truly the realization of a lifetime of work. After that, I don't remember a sweeter moment, a sweeter time, a sweeter anything. It was so much of my life that went into something

that I was able to live out on live TV in front of almost a million people.

Hal: Yeah. What a rare opportunity, right? How many people get that opportunity to live the dream in front of millions of people and have it DVR'd?

Charlie: Yeah. Literally when I was 6 years old I used to work out. When Rocky would do push-ups, I would do push-ups. I wanted to be Rocky. Then that night, the next day on MMA junkie, Dan White says a real-life Rocky story. It was like, oh my gosh. For your listeners, you want practical, it's the power of positive thought. I saw it. I knew. I'm a spiritual person and I just knew that it was there for me to take. I didn't deserve it. I think we get what we are earn, but it was there for me to earn. I wasn't about to let it go.

Hal: I think that's that whole saying that when you stay ready, you don't need to get ready. You're so right. Another philosophy that ties into is how you do anything is how you do everything. I love that. You just got to decide, how are you going to show up in life? It's how you show up in everything. Charlie, you're a champion. You have been since a young age. I'm not trying to feed your ego or anything. I think that for our listeners, that's the approach. I'm going to treat everything I do with a champion mindset.

I'm doing a call for my group coaching members tomorrow on, it's called holistic productivity. It's the idea that most people

think productivity and they think work and their to-do list. It's like, no, productivity is you've got to thrive and be productive with your health and with relationships and with your happiness, you know what I mean? productivity, it's holistic. It's about every area of your life and producing. You treat one thing like that. Like you said, that's why you're able to be at the biggest stage in your life, in your career, and be ready to go. You're like, dude, I've been working my life. I've been preparing this whole moment for my whole life.

Charlie:

I love that approach, that holistic, and you don't mind I'll use that in the future. I love it. That's what I'm saying, the holistic preparation is what I was trying to say a few minutes ago. I'll say also for your listeners that I'm a very goal oriented person and this is a goal oriented podcast. I've set 8 major goals in my life that range from winning an elementary state championship to a high school state champion to straight A's in high school, college, graduate school. I've set 8 major goals. I've only accomplished 3 of those goals. When I lay my head down at night, I sleep peacefully because I have peace of mind which I have realized is success to me equals peace of mind. Knowing that I've done everything that I can in the pursuit of attaining those goals. Some have happened, some haven't happened. I'm a better person because of different variables. It's setting those goals and giving a holistic approach to those goals. That really to me is success.

Hal:

I love it, I love it. Actually, that's a great transition here. I want to transition, you have a book that is doing really well. It's called Driven. The subtitle is my unlikely journey from classroom to cage. I encourage everybody to check it out on Amazon. Read the reviews, 4.9 out of 5 stars. There's not too

many books that are averaging 4.9 out of 5 stars on their Amazon reviews. People just love the book, they're raving on it. Here's what I'd love to transition here a little bit about what that book is and how that's going to help our listeners if they want to go further with you and go further into your journey.

You've won a lot in life and you've achieved a lot of major accomplishments, but you just said it yourself. You've had 8 major goals that you've set, you've achieved 3 of them. For most people looking, they go, gosh, most people won't set a goal unless they know they can achieve it. If they knew going ahead I'm going to work towards 8 goals, give it everything I have, and I'm only going to achieve 3, they probably wouldn't even try. You have had the highest of highs, winning against Rick Story for example, and then you've had the lowest of lows. I believe you lost 3 fights in a row in the UFC. Your third fight was your final fight, and then you lost the opportunity in the UFC. That was in Brazil, to me losing in another country where you got to fly home, that seems like that just adds that much more of that loneliness. You're in a foreign land, foreign language, et cetera.

Here's the question that I have. This is the question to set the stage. You can answer it any way that you want, you can give any context you want, you can pull from your book. I'll leave that up to you. The question is, when you have a dream of being a UFC champion, whatever that dream is. For anybody listening, whatever their dream is, and that dream gets deferred, you don't achieve that dream, that goal. Things in life don't pan out the way that you expected them to and you have to pivot, you have to shift. You've got to find a new dream. What is it like dealing with that loss, that challenge? Now you're pursuing

a new dream, you're impacting on people, you're speaking at high schools and colleges and to youth. You've got a new dream that's radically different from your old. It's obviously the adversity of experience is feeding that new dream, as it so often it does. What is that like to deal with having your dream derailed and how do you start over, how do you re-create a new dream?

Charlie:

To touch on the book real quick, on April 26, 2014 I was knocked out cold on live television. That was my lowest of lows. When I got home from that trip, it was down Baltimore, when I got home I was concussed. I couldn't watch my daughters. My in-laws had to come pick her up. They saw me writhing on the couch. I got hundreds of hate messages from social media just telling me how terrible and pathetic I was. I thought to myself, where am I going with my life? it was around that time I started writing my book. My book is my journey, my unlikely journey from being in middle school. I laugh when I say it, but it's true. I was a middle school Spanish teacher and I said I want to be a UFC fighter. That's my book. That's not the story of it.

You'll see in the book and through our conversation that yeah, there's a lot of achieving goals, not achieving goals, falling short, pivoting, et cetera. I think that the biggest, biggest helper for me is I've always known what I stand for. I've always known from a very young age what my values are. I think a lot of people as we get older, especially as we get busy into life with jobs and careers and families, et cetera, responsibilities, you either one, never clearly identified who you are and what you value. Or two, if you did, it gets so caught up in the jumble of your life. For me keeping those values front and center is

what has always kept me focused on those goals and focused on that standard of excellence that I try to live by.

One, it's the values, and two, another thing that I have personally done is I've identified my success principles. I've developed a curriculum of things and I took notes from the time I was a kid up until after that last fight in Brazil of principles that I live by. I use that as a checklist every day of my life. If I'm arguing with my wife and I'm not holding myself accountable, I'll say, oh, Charlie, live an accountable life. Boom, there it is. If I have a bad attitude and we're going somewhere, I check myself and say Charlie, control your attitude. It's like I keep myself in check by living those principles on a daily basis.

Whether you develop your own, whether you get yours from whomever, there's tons of guys like yourself and John Lee Dumas and Vaynerchuk, all these really knowledgeable people, Anthony Robbins, that you can get this stuff from. When you live by a system, it then becomes that much easier. You have your system of living, you have your values. Whenever these curve balls hit you, it's like, you just apply those values in that system to the new route. The thinking is done for you.

Hal:

Awesome. I'm sure these are in your book, but I'd love for you to share what are your top 1 to 3 core, I think it's a great way to close out the interview today, the episode. What are your top 1 to 3 core values and what are your top 1 to 3 success principles?

Charlie:

I do my values in order. I don't know why they're in this order. I always start with integrity, family, and fitness. Integrity because I think having a strict moral code and a moral uprightness is first and foremost in everything I do. If I don't maintain my integrity as a person, then I'm not the best family person. The reason I put that first. Family and fitness, I'm a fitness buff man. If I don't get fitness in in a day, then I'm a bear. It's just something that I have to do. Integrity, family, and fitness are probably my top 3.

In terms of my principles, I have 12 of them. One of the ones my dad taught me when I was a kid, and I made a note to say it on the show, is control controllables. What that means is this. Whenever you strive to attain goals, whenever you have any sort of problem or obstacle in front of you, if you made a list of all the problems, then out of that list of problems you identified what is controllable and what is non-controllable, then you took the not controllables, wrote them on another piece of paper, threw that piece of paper in the trash and then focus your time and energy on the controllables, then you're maximizing your energy. You're focusing on things that you can control. That's been a big one for me. That's been extremely helpful.

One that I have mentioned before is surrounding yourself with the best. I equate that to everything. Your friends, your mentors, your role model. If you're an athlete, the people around you. I'm getting into professional speaking. I hope it's okay, Hal, but I'm going to start picking your brain. You're where I want to be. Hopefully we can cultivate a relationship. You're someone that I look to and I say, I want to surround myself with him. If I have to pick another one, there's some good ones. I would say a practical one for people to take a look

at is hone your habits. Take a look at your habits. Look at the things you do on a daily basis that you might not even know that you're doing them. I read a book called The Power of Habit. It was pretty tremendous. It really made me think, holy cow, I do all these things. I look at my cell phone 150 times a day out of habit and I don't even know it. Those 3 things would be very beneficial.

Before we close, I want to say a personal thank you to you in front of your listeners. This wasn't planned. It is one of the reasons I reached out to him. When I lost that third fight in Brazil about a year and a half ago, on that lonely, lonely plane ride home, and this is not a setup, but he nailed it. I was at my wits end. I didn't know where to go. I had bought your book The Miracle Morning. I read it cover to cover on my way home from Brazil. That really put me on, that skyrocketed this journey that I'm on into speaking and influencing people. I want you to know that your book had a huge impact on me 2 years before this conversation ever took place.

Hal: All right, we can be in each other's circle of influence, Charlie.

Charlie: Thanks, yes.

Hal: No man, seriously, I'm happy to help you and support you. You have my contact info. We'll stay in touch. Yeah, thank you for this. Normally I try to keep my interviews to a certain time. I'm like, dude, I just want to talk to Charlie. I'm curious, I'm interested. Yeah, fascinating. I really honor you and

acknowledge you for turning everything that you've done in not only the personal accomplishments that have led to this point but now really turning it back on youth and finding a way to share your experience and the adversity you've overcome and the winds that you've had and really share that with other people. Thank you for that.

Charlie: It's my pleasure, man. Likewise, hey, you're more than welcome to have my cell phone number and call me or text me. You want to know some weight cutting questions, I'll tell you all the crazy weight cutting questions. Whatever you want to know, I'm your guy.

Hal: Nice, I love it. All right. Your book, by the way everybody, goal achievers, the book is called Driven, my unlikely journey from classroom to cage. Go grab your copy on Amazon. Just read a few of the reviews and you'll see it's a book that can really have a positive impact in your life. I'm assuming, Charlie, that you share the other 9 of your 12 success principles in that book?

Charlie: That's going to be my next book. This book is just my journey as an autobiography. The next book and those seeds are in the works. For anyone curious of any of that stuff, you can find all my information on my social media links at Charlie-Brenneman.com. I house everything there.

Hal: I'm going to spell that out. Charlie, I think there's only one way to tell it, C-H-A-R-L-I-E. That's dash, and then Brenneman is

B-R-E-N-N-E-M-A-N. B-R-E-N-N-E man, M-A-N. Charlie, pleasure my friend, thanks for coming on the show.

Charlie: I really appreciate it, Hal. Thanks to all the listeners.

Hal: Yeah. Achieve your goals, podcast listeners, I will echo that. Thank you for tuning in. I really appreciate you. I'm excited for what we got to come. Exciting guests coming up, exciting solo episodes in the works. Make it a great day. I'll talk to everybody next week. Take care.

Nick: Thank you for tuning into this episode of the podcast. Now we want to know, what were your favorite parts about Charlie's story? What really inspired you? What really resonated with you? Simply head on over to HalElrod.com/115 for episode 115. Just leave a comment there on the [showrunner's 00:42:33] page letting us know what your big takeaways were. Also, if you haven't done so yet, please go subscribe to the podcast on iTunes by going to HalElrod.com/iTunes, clicking the little subscribe button, then if you would and if you haven't done so yet, please leave a rating and review. Rating and reviews truly are the best way for you to help spread the word about the show because they help more people find out about the podcast and then decide if this is the one for them. Now it's time for you to go out there, take action, and achieve your goals.

Advertisement: If you're looking to grow your business using podcasting but don't have the time to edit the audio, insert the intro and outro, write up the show notes, post the episodes to all the different

sites, and do all of the reduced ridiculous backend work that's required, then you need YourPodcastGuru.com. Where you bring the content and we take care of the rest. We'll even cohost the show for you. Visit YourPodcastGuru.com right now to explode your audience and crush it in the podcasting world.