SECRETS of a STRONG Mind

LEADER’S GUIDE

For Small Groups

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“The Secret to A Strong Mind is to learn from your experiences so you are stronger than when you started.”

LaRae Quy
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Introduction

We are our stories. Each life compresses years of experience, thought, and emotion into a few narratives that we tell both ourselves and others. Stories are important because they are a pathway to understanding ourselves in a deeper and more meaningful way. Mental toughness is the ability to claim our stories, learn from them, and become stronger because of them.

Not all of our stories are about our strengths. Many of them show our weaknesses and vulnerabilities, but a strong mind understands the need to embrace the entire package, both strengths and weaknesses. This is why: Do not focus on what was left out; instead, concentrate on what was left in.

We cannot ignore our weaknesses, but do not try to turn a weakness into a strength. Strong minds can identify, isolate, and minimize their weaknesses so they can be managed, not changed. This leaves room to grow our strengths so we can lean into them when confronted with risk, uncertainty, and discomfort.

Not everyone understands how to interpret their stories. We all have memories of experiences that bring pain, and because of this, we tend to push negative memories into the shadows and forget about them. As a group facilitator or leader, there may be those who resist touching upon the pain of childhood. Everyone makes the individual choice of how deep to probe and the leader can only encourage group members to draw out positive lessons learned from their experiences.
How to Use This Guide

Each chapter of the book, *Secrets of a Strong Mind*, is introduced with an overview of the topic and then broken down into three sections. Leaders are encouraged to begin each session by asking group members to share their thoughts on the chapter or chapter sub-section.

The exercises in the “Thinking About” summary are the primary talking points for group discussion:

1. Points to Ponder
2. Inspiration
3. Reflection

The Leader’s Guide provides additional questions in each of these sections to help elicit comments and observations. It also contains an additional exercise for the group to do together as well as books the leader can recommend for further reading on the topic.

The Tactics section at the end of each chapter is meant to create more self-awareness for each individual about the topic, and they should be shared with the group only if members feel comfortable.
Group Guidelines

1. Not everyone is comfortable sharing in a group situation at first. At times it might be appropriate to go around the room and ask everyone to answer one of the questions chosen by the leader. Other times, it might be beneficial to specifically direct one of the questions to an individual to encourage their participation.

2. If one person dominates the conversation, it’s not healthy or conducive for learning for the others. It may be necessary to place a maximum on the number of minutes one person speaks at a time so that everyone has a chance to voice their opinions.

3. Cross-talking, or interrupting another while they are speaking to make their own point, is also common among group discussions. It can be efficacious for a “politeness policy” to be enforced at the very beginning, thereby allowing people to make their contribution without interruption by others. If everyone is interested in sharing their opinions, it often works for the discussion to go around the room, without interruption or comment, until everyone has spoken and then the cross-talking, questions, and additional input can generate additional conversation.

4. People do not like to be told what to think. They prefer to make up their minds after examining their own life or the examples of others. The Leader’s material encourages the leader to keep asking questions as the group probes more deeply into the book and applies the truth to their lives.
CHAPTER ONE: AUTHENTICITY

Point to Ponder: In a world where you can be anything, be yourself.

Why is being yourself so difficult in today's world?
Why are people afraid to be themselves?

Inspiration: “Hard times arouse an instinctive desire for authenticity.” Coco Chanel

How would you define authenticity?
Why are we drawn toward inward reflection when times are tough?

Reflection Question: How can I be the best version of me?

How would you define the best version of you?
How are you getting better with time and experience?

AUTHENTICITY: PERSONAL VALUES

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Point to Ponder: The direction of my life is controlled by my values.

How do values control your life?
What direction are your values taking you?

Inspiration: “It’s not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are.” Roy Disney

How do your values influence your decisions?
When is it hard to make decisions based on your values?
Reflection Question: How have your personal values helped you to make the best decisions and wise moral choices for yourself?

How did you know they were the best decisions and choices?
What does a good decision look like?

AUTHENTICITY: INNER VISION

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Point to Ponder: The filters through which you see yourself in the world will shape your response to it.

How have childhood experiences shaped the filters through which you see yourself?
How do you respond to those filters?

Inspiration: “Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.”
Proverbs 4:23

How have your thoughts shaped your life?
How have you reshaped your thoughts as you’ve gotten older?

Reflection Question: What trends in my behavior have I noticed in myself?

How has your behavior changed over the years?
How would you like to see your behavior change in the future?
AUTHENTICITY: SELF AWARENESS

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Point to Ponder: As you strive to be more authentic in the way you live your life, you must also cultivate a high degree of self-awareness.

How has your self-awareness grown over the years?
When are you most authentic in the way you live your life?

Inspiration: “Leaders with self-awareness understand they don’t just exchange information, they influence people’s moods and emotions.” Steve Gutzler

What qualities do good leaders reflect?
How do others affect your moods and emotions?

Reflection Question: What has shaped me into the person I am today?

Who has been most instrumental in shaping your personality?
To whom would you like to say “thank you” for their positive influence in your life?

Additional Authenticity Exercise

Leader, ask group member to recall a situation when they knew they acted out of their true nature. Ask them: how they sensed they were tapping into their true nature? Then ask them to relive that situation. What was said and done? How did they feel? How did things work out? Were they aware of any increased sense of empowerment?
Recommend these Books on Authenticity

*The Wisdom of the Enneagram* by Don Riso and Russ Hudson

*The Gift Of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovering* by David Brenner

Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman

*Man’s Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl
CHAPTER TWO: PURPOSE

Point to Ponder: A great life responds to a higher calling and purpose.

What is your higher calling and purpose?  
How has that higher calling and purpose revealed itself to you?

Inspiration: “Put your ear down close to your heart and listen hard.” Anne Sexton

Which is easier, listening to your mind or listening with your heart?  
Why?  
What has your heart told you to do that differs from what your mind has told you?

Reflection Question: What is your highest calling?

What does that higher calling look like?  
How will you know when you’ve reached it?

PURPOSE: DREAMS

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Point to Ponder: Give yourself permission to be the person that you choose to be.

What does that person look like?  
What keeps you from giving yourself permission to follow your dream?

Inspiration: “The only difference between a rut and a coffin are the dimensions.” Ellen Glasgow
How do you know when you’re in a rut?
What is a rut in which you’ve found yourself?

**Reflection Question:** If you don’t have a dream, how can a dream come true?

What is one of your dreams?
How can it come true?

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**PURPOSE:**

**GOALS**

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

**Point to Ponder:** Live each day with goals in alignment with your purpose, dreams, and values.

What keeps you from living your life in alignment?
How have life’s obligations affected your dreams, goals, and purpose?

**Inspiration:** “If you aim at nothing, you hit it every time.” B.J. Marshall

When have you clearly defined your goals?
How are your goals incorporated into your day?

**Reflection Question:** Over the next five years, what do you really want to do?

Where do you want to be in five years?
How will you know when you’ve gotten there?
PURPOSE:
MISSION

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Points to Ponder: Never ask, Can I do this? Instead ask, How can I do this?

How have self-limiting barriers held you back in life?
How have you broken through those barriers?

Inspiration: “Let others lead small lives, but not you. Let others argue over small things, but not you. Let others cry over small hurts, but not you. Let others leave their future in someone else’s hands, but not you.” —Jim Rohn

What does a small life look like?
How do you keep your future controlled by your hands?

Reflection Question: What would my life look like if I were fully living out my mission?

What changes would you make in your life if you were living out your mission?
What things would you continue to do as before?

Additional Purpose Exercise

Leader, ask one person in the group to lend a briefcase, backpack, or handbag to you. Ask that person to remove any item which would identify them. Gather the rest of the group and review the contents, without anyone knowing who the person is, to try and determine what kind of life—emotional, professional, personal—the person leads. Is the bag stuffed full of items or is it lean and spare? Are there photos? Money? Pick through the contents of the bag like an investigator and the group will begin to imagine what it’s like to be that person and what is important to them.
Recommend These Books on Purpose

A *New Earth: Awakening to Your Life’s Purpose* by Eckart Tolle

*Transition: Making Sense of Life’s Changes* by William Bridges

*Awaken The Giant Within* by Anthony Robbins
CHAPTER THREE: COURAGE

Point to Ponder: To live the life of faith, you must first stop making excuses for your fears.

What is your biggest fear?
How does that fear prevent you from living the life you want?

Inspiration: “If you’re not living on the edge, you’re taking up too much space.”—Will Willis

What does living on the edge look like?
How would you describe the term “living on the edge?”

Reflection Question: What does overcoming your fears look like?

What is the difference between fear and healthy skepticism?
How have you dealt with a fear that stood in the way of attaining one of your goals?

COURAGE: HEART

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Points to Ponder: Chose a path that has your heart as well as your head.

How would you describe “heart” in your own words?
How do you combine both heart and head when moving toward a goal?
Inspiration: “Beware what you set your heart upon, for it surely shall be yours.”—Ralph Waldo Emerson.

How has heart given you courage to keep moving forward in difficult circumstances?
How has heart sustained you when you’ve met with failure?

Reflection Question: When have you needed courage to follow your heart?

How do you know something has “heart” for you?
How does heart give you courage?

COURAGE:
ADVENTURE

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Points to Ponder: Most people don’t aim too high and miss. They aim too low and hit.

How have you aimed too low?
Where would you aim higher?

Inspiration: “Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.”—Helen Keller

What does adventure mean to you?
Who are your heroes and how do they inspire you with their sense of adventure?

Reflection Question: When is the last time you did something you’ve never done before—something that made you feel a bit uncomfortable?

How do you inject adventure into your life?
What is your biggest concern when venturing into the unknown?
COURAGE:
TRUST

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Points to Ponder: Learn to trust the wisdom of your heart.

How does your heart speak to you?
What does wisdom sound like?

Inspiration: “To be trusted is a greater compliment than being loved.” — George MacDonald

What is the relationship between trust and vulnerability?
What characteristics are essential when trusting another?

Reflection Question: How do you know when you can trust someone?

When can you trust someone you fear?
How can you trust someone you do not respect?

Additional Courage Exercise

Jim Collins, author of Good to Great, encourages people to look at their lives — particularly their work — and ask whether they would continue to do what they’re doing now if they had $20 million in the bank. If the answer is no, that should tell them something about their current job.

Leader, pose the same question to group members. And then ask: do they have the courage to move from their current job and find something that is more fulfilling? This test alone can’t determine whether they are heading in the right direction in life. But the approach is smart and the answers can be clarifying. Many times it’s simply a matter of whether they have the courage to step out and follow their heart.
Recommend These Books on Courage

*Daring Greatly: How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* by Brene Brown

*The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini

*The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business* by Charles Duhigg
CHAPTER FOUR: CONFIDENCE

Points to Ponder: People will avoid the hard challenges in life because they have self-limiting beliefs about themselves.

How do self-limiting beliefs keep you from breaking through barriers? How is it possible to break through barriers without breaking through self-limiting beliefs?

Inspiration: “Confidence is contagious. So is lack of confidence.”—Vince Lombardi

What does confidence look like? How have you been impacted by the confidence of others?

Reflection Question: How have you felt confident in yourself?

When are you most confident? How does confidence change the way you approach an obstacle?

CONFIDENCE: SMALL STEPS

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Point to Ponder: Small steps can lead to big changes.

How do you use small steps to move forward? How do you know when small steps can move you forward faster than giant leaps?

Inspiration: “I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character.”—Oscar Wilde (from his prison cell).
What little actions by others impact your decisions?

How do you know which little actions are making the biggest impression?

**Reflection Question:** What small steps have made a difference for you?
- What is the hardest small step you’ve ever taken?
- How do small steps give you confidence?

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**CONFIDENCE: QUESTIONS**

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

**Point to Ponder:** Great questions have powerful answers.

- What is your favorite question to ask of others?
- What question has had the greatest impact on you?

**Inspiration:** “At the end of the day, the questions we ask of ourselves determine the type of people we will become.”—Leo Babauta

- What are the most difficult questions to ask of yourself?
- Why is it easier to have others pose the hard questions?

**Reflection Question:** What is the most powerful question you’ve ever been asked?

- How do you use questions when summing up others?
- What does a person’s questions tell you about them?
CONFIDENCE:  
MASTERY

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Point to Ponder: Mastery demands all from a person.

What does “demanding all” look like?  
How do you know when you’ve given it all there is to give?

Inspiration: “If people knew how hard I worked to get my mastery, it wouldn’t seem so wonderful at all.”—Michelangelo

How can you relate to Michelangelo’s comment?  
How do you recognize mastery in others? In yourself?

Reflection Question: How do you know when you’ve mastered something?

What area(s) beckon you to become a master?  
How has your motivation to become a master changed over the years?

Additional Confidence Exercise

Leaders, ask members of the group this question: How do they know their limits?

Follow up by asking group members to write down 5 barriers that keep them separated from success. Then ask them to prioritize those barriers.

1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  
5.  

Leaders, ask group members if they were surprised by any of the answers? Can they explain?
Recommend These Books on Confidence

Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion by Robert Cialdini

One Small Step Can Change Your Life by Robert Maurer

Mastery: The Key to Success and Long-term Fulfillment by George Leonard
CHAPTER FIVE: DETERMINATION

Point to Ponder: Determination dictates how you deal with upsets and challenges.

When are you most determined?
How has your determination impacted the direction of your life?

Inspiration: “Determination is the wake-up call to the human will.”—Anthony Robbins

How has determination been your wake-up call in life?
What role has determination played in your successes?

Reflection Question: What is your best example of being determined?

What other qualities compliment determination?
How do you use your determination to overcome obstacles?

DETERMINATION: WILLPOWER

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Point to Ponder: Willpower is short bursts of energy to break through a barrier.

How do you find short bursts of energy to break through barriers?

What have been the results when you expected willpower to last for an extended period of time?
Inspiration: “The will to win is not nearly as important as the will to prepare to win.” —Bobby Knight

How do you call upon willpower to get through tough times? How can willpower help “psyche” you up to prepare for the win?

Reflection Question: How can willpower make a difference in the way you approach a fierce obstacle?

How do you activate your willpower? What is the difference between persistence and willpower?

**DETERMINATION:**

**FLEXIBILITY**

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section. Point to Ponder: It’s OK to make plans; just make them in pencil.

Would you try harder if your plan was written in pen? How have you erased a life plan and started over?

Inspiration: “Running water never goes stale.” —Bruce Lee

How does being flexible keep you moving forward in life? When have you felt staleness from being “in place” for too long?

Reflection Question: When have you demonstrated the greatest flexibility?

How does flexibility increase your confidence? When is your determination a measure of your flexibility?
DETERMINATION:
PERSISTENCE

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Point to Ponder: Persistence is not stubbornness.

When does persistence cross the line and become stubbornness? How can you recognize the difference between the two in yourself?

Inspiration: “That which we persist in doing becomes easier—not because the nature of the task has changed, but our ability to do it has changed.”—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Does persistence always make the task easier? Why or why not? What is the difference between practice and persistence?

Reflection Question: How has persistence helped you achieve an important goal in your life?

How have you broken through barriers using persistence? How has persistence helped you change a negative behavior pattern?

Additional Determination Exercise

Leader, ask each group member to identify an area in their life or a project that requires determination on their part. Ask them to create an inspiration board—each time they see something that they find compelling, and related to their determination project, tack it to the board. The items could be photos, words, phrases, magazine covers, etc. Before long, they will connections between the images that enliven and inspire them to move forward with determination. Is the board primarily made up of words and sayings? Spiritual quotes? Photos of athletes? Images?
Inspiration boards are reactions to what each member sees, hears, and feels from their environment, and they can help members expand their understanding of what motivates them to be determined.

**Recommend These Books on Determination**

*The Willpower Instinct: How Self-Control Works, Why it Matters, and What You Can Do To Get More of It* by Kelly McGonigal

*Unstoppable: 45 Powerful Stories of Perseverance and Triumph from People Just Like You* by Cynthia Kersey

*Thinking, Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman
CHAPTER SIX: RESILIENCE

Point to Ponder: The human spirit is woven from tough and resilient fabric.

What does resilience look like?
How do you recognize it in yourself?

Inspiration: “Inside of a ring or out, ain’t nothing wrong with going down. It’s staying down that’s wrong.”—Mohammed Ali

How do you pick yourself up after being knocked down?
When does it take more resilience to stay down than continue fighting?

Reflection Question: What does it mean to you to be resilient?

How have you survived tough times?
Who are your heroes that have survived because of their resilience?

RESILIENCE: ADVERSITY

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Point to Ponder: Adversity allows you to become acquainted with yourself.

Why does adversity encourage self-awareness?
When are you most motivated to look inward?

Inspiration: “Adversity reveals genius; prosperity conceals it.”—Horace

What does prosperity look like?
How do you recognize prosperity in yourself?
Reflection Question: How has adversity shaped you into a better person today?

How can you look at your adversities as experience?
What latent force or strength has adversity developed in you?

RESILIENCE: FAILURE

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Point to Ponder: Success and failure are both temporary conditions.

What does failure look like?
When has a failure actually turned into a success?

Inspiration: “When you’re going through Hell, by all means, keep going.”—Winston Churchill

What have you learned from failure?
How do you keep going in the midst of failure?

Reflection Question: How do you visualize success?

How do you define success?
How do you measure success?
RESILIENCE: POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Ask group members to discuss what got their attention in this section.

Point to Ponder: A positive attitude is a choice you make every day.

How do you maintain a positive attitude in the midst of failure?
How would you define a positive attitude?

Inspiration: “Expect the best and get it.”—Norman Vincent Peale

What does hope feel like?
How does hope change your approach to obstacles?

Reflection Question: How has a positive attitude helped you bounce back after failure?

How has a positive attitude affected your success?
When has a negative attitude adversely affected your performance?

Additional Resilience Exercise

Many times you know what direction you want to take in life but find yourself blocked by obstacles standing in your way. This is one way to break through barriers:

Leaders, have the group compile a list of some of the important changes they’d like to make in their life and what is keeping them from overcoming the obstacles in their way.
Examples:

I’d like to change careers, but I can’t make all my payments if I start at the bottom of the pay scale in a new job.

I’d like to move up the corporate ladder, but I’d have to travel more and be away from my family.

I’d like to eat better, but I have a busy schedule and rely on fast foods.

Leader, now go back and have group members replace the word but with the word and. Follow with another statement that begins with the phrase so I need to... The new statement is an action statement that summarizes what they will need to do to make the first statement a reality.

Examples:

I’d like to change careers, and I can’t make all my payments if I start at the bottom of the pay scale in a new job. So I need to find ways to save more money and pay off bills now so when I do change jobs, I’ll have enough to get by.

I’d like to move up the corporate ladder, and I’d have to travel more and be away from my family. So I need to find ways to bring my family along on some of my travels.

I’d like to eat better, and I have a busy schedule and rely on fast foods. So I need to bring healthy snacks and meals with me before I leave home in the morning.

Exchanging but for and can move them out of an excuse-making mode and allows them to move into a problem-solving mode that begins the follow up statement with so I need to...
Recommend These Books on Resilience

*Mindset: The New Psychology Of Success* by Carol Dweck

*The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale
EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

(copy and give to each member of your group)

1. What did you like best about the materials? Did the format work for the group? Comment?

2. What suggestions do you have for improving this material?

3. What was the experience of the group?

4. How can we help you in the future?

5. Other comments?