1-Page Summary 1-Page Book Summary of Make Your Bed

Military life is often exhausting, terrifying, and emotionally challenging. You have to be strong and disciplined to make it through the rigors of training and war. Admiral William H. McRaven, a retired Navy SEAL with 37 years of experience, faced many challenges during his career. He found strategies along the way that helped him through the difficult times. Many of these strategies resulted from his experiences as a SEAL-in-training and a Navy officer.

In 2014, McRaven organized his strategies into 10 life lessons for his commencement address at his alma mater, the University of Texas at Austin. Make Your Bed provides these lessons to you and expands on the experiences that formed them.

Lesson 1: Start Each Day with an Accomplishment
Start your day with one successful task completed, such as making your bed, and you will find the motivation to tackle others. When you make your bed first thing in the morning, you start the day with purpose and confidence. You will feel a sense of pride, and that same pride will greet you at night when you come to your made bed. This type of satisfaction will wash the day's struggles away and prepare you for tomorrow.

McRaven learned the importance of a made bed during his training as a SEAL cadet. A perfectly made bed represented McRaven's discipline. He started each day receiving acknowledgement from his superiors that he had fulfilled his duties successfully. This acknowledgement greeted him at the end of each day, and he went to bed proud of himself. When McRaven was recovering from a life-changing injury later in life, making his bed became a symbol of his determination to get better and desire to keep leading a productive life.

Lesson 2: Success in Life Requires Teamwork
Life is full of struggles. Going through hard times alone is much more difficult than relying on the help of others to get you through. You need people you can count on to help navigate life's difficult moments. The same is true for achieving success in life. The more others support you, the stronger and more confident you become.

McRaven learned the importance of teamwork as a SEAL-in-training. He and his unit of cadets were required to carry an inflatable raft everywhere they went and row it for miles through the choppy ocean water. When one of them was unable to perform to a high standard, the others pitched in to fill the void. They all remained successful because they helped each other when times were tough. Because of this experience, McRaven was more willing to accept the help of others after his injury and not just recover physically, but emotionally and professionally as well.

Lesson 3: It's What's Inside that Counts
Everyone has more to them than what you're able to see. You must look beyond skin deep to a person's heart. You must reserve judgement and prejudice until you get to know who a person is. Even the meekest person can do great things, so value people for their character, not their appearance.

McRaven made the mistake of judging two men as being less suitable for the SEALS than he was because of how they looked. McRaven was tall and muscular, whereas these men were short and scrawny, respectively. Both men surprised him by showing courage in dangerous situations, and McRaven realized he misjudged the amount of heart they had because of what they looked like.

Lesson 4: A Setback Is Only Permanent if You Let It Be
It's easier to assume the world is against you than it is to admit that sometimes life just isn't fair. But at the end of the day, you are the only person responsible for determining your fate. Don't complain and fall back on misfortune as an excuse for why you can't be happy. When you face disappointment, take the hits and move forward in whatever way you can.

McRaven learned that sometimes life is unfair when one of his training instructors punished him for no reason. The instructor believed that understanding the randomness of misfortune was necessary for McRaven to face the challenges of the Navy. When this same instructor had an accident years later that paralyzed him, McRaven saw how important this lesson really was. The instructor never complained that life was unfair. He accepted what had happened and moved forward with the life he still had.

Lesson 5: Use Failure to Your Advantage
No matter how hard you try to succeed, at some point, you will fail. When you fail, you can cower with defeat and give up, or you can use failure to push yourself harder and grow stronger. Learn from your mistakes. Don't be afraid of trying again. If you can persevere through the consequences of failure, you will be better prepared for other difficult challenges that lie ahead.
One day, McRaven and his swim partner performed poorly on a two-mile swim. As a consequence, they were relegated to the Circus, a two-hour grueling endurance test at the end of the day for all the cadets who'd somehow failed. McRaven and his partner were exhausted the next day and failed again during the regular training. This cycle went on for days, but instead of giving up, they tried harder. The extra exercise made them stronger, and they rose to the top of the class.

**Lesson 6: Be Daring in Life**

If you live in fear of failure, struggle, or humiliation, you will never do what is necessary to achieve your goals or reach your potential. If you play it safe and limit your actions to mitigate failure, you will never know what you're made of. **You must be willing to push yourself to the limit to achieve something great.** Dare greatly in life and receive great rewards.

McRaven couldn't beat the SEALs obstacle course at first because he was afraid of hurting himself on one obstacle. Instead of sliding down a hundred-foot zipline head first, he used the safer but less efficient feet-first technique. He knew the only way to pass the course was to take a risk. When he finally went head first, he crossed the finish line in record time.

**Lesson 7: Keep Courage Close**

Courage is a powerful emotion. With courage, you can surmount any obstacle. With courage, you can stand up to any bully. Without it, you place yourself at the mercy of life and the actions of others. You have the courage inside of you to stand up to forces of oppression. **If you want to accomplish your dreams, you must look inside and call up your courage.**

McRaven had to find his courage when he was required to complete a four-mile ocean swim in the dark. He was afraid of the sharks that lived off the coast, but becoming a SEAL was too important. He dug deep and found the courage to keep swimming and face whatever challenge he faced in the water.

**Lesson 8: Stand Tall in the Midst of Darkness**

There will be many moments in life when your spirit gets crushed and you lose hope for the future. These are the moments in which you must search for the best version of yourself. You must rise to the challenge of moving forward with strength and dignity. **In the darkest moments, do what must be done to show the world your best, and you can survive anything.**

McRaven experienced plenty of opportunities to find strength during dark times. But witnessing the behaviors of various soldiers after losing a member of their units taught him the most about integrity. After paying their respects, service members must push past their pain and grief and remain firm during combat. McRaven was always inspired by the way these soldiers were able to keep fighting after tragedy....

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**Make Your Bed Summary Preface**

In 2014, Admiral William H. McRaven, a retired Navy SEAL with 37 years of experience, gave the commencement speech at his alma mater, the University of Texas at Austin. In his speech, McRaven provided guidance to the graduates on how to manage life's challenges and lead a meaningful life. **His advice comprised 10 lessons he'd learned during his tenure with the Navy SEALs that helped him deal with the trials of training and combat.**

For years following that speech, people reached out seeking more information about those lessons. In response, McRaven wrote this...

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Make Your Bed Summary Lesson 1: Start Each Day with an Accomplishment

Each day, you’re likely required to manage various tasks. These tasks may include working, raising children, cleaning your home, or completing a project. When faced with this long list of responsibilities, you may often feel overwhelmed. But if you can start your day with one successful task completed, such as making your bed, you can find the motivation to tackle others.

When you make your bed first thing in the morning, you start the day with purpose and confidence. You have accomplished something, and regardless of what else happens during the day, you will feel a sense of pride. In addition, the pride you feel when you come to your made bed at night provides satisfaction that washes the day’s struggles away and prepares you for tomorrow. Start each day by making your bed, and set yourself up for success.

The Backstory

While training to be a Navy SEAL, McRaven lived in the barracks off the coast of Coronado, California. Each morning, his commanding officer inspected his uniform and bed. The officer started at the top, ensuring his green uniform hat was starched, and descended until he reached the boots. The boots needed to be polished to the point of reflection, like a mirror.

After inspecting the uniform, the officer moved to the bed. The proper way to make a bed in the Navy was to tuck the sheets and top blanket tightly under the single mattress. Another blanket was folded and placed at the foot of the bed. And a pillow was placed at the top, perfectly centered. Every layer had to be stretched tight with squared corners.

The officer pulled out a quarter and flipped it in the air. The quarter landed on the bed and sprung back up high enough for the officer to catch it. This was a sign of a well-made bed. McRaven received the customary nod of approval.

A perfectly made bed represented McRaven’s discipline. He started each day receiving acknowledgement...

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Shortform Exercise: Start Your Day with Purpose

Making the bed is a simple task that everyone could do to start their day right. What are some other ways you can start your day feeling accomplished?

Do you make your bed first thing in the morning? If so, how do you feel after the bed is made? If not, what stops you from doing it?

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Make Your Bed Summary Lesson 2: Success in Life Requires Teamwork

No one is guaranteed a life without pain. You will eventually experience painful and tragic moments, and you may have already. Going through these hard times alone is much more difficult than relying on the help of others to get you through. You need people you can count on to help navigate life’s difficult moments.

The same is true for achieving success in life. If you try to navigate the choppy waters toward your goals or dreams alone, you expend more energy than is necessary. You may also find yourself off course without another person to help you paddle. Find people to love and who love you back. Your ability to have a positive life depends on it.

The Backstory

McRaven and the other SEAL candidates were required to carry a ten-foot rubber raft everywhere they went. Seven men carried it to the chow hall and up and down sand dunes during training drills. They paddled it through rough waters along the coast for miles at a time.

It took all seven men to make sure the boat stayed aloft or afloat at all times. But sometimes, all seven men weren’t up to the task. One of the men might be sick or too exhausted to pull their weight. At those times, the other six candidates pitched in with
extra effort. McRaven sometimes needed this support, and throughout training, he found plenty of opportunities to repay the favor. The raft taught McRaven a valuable lesson about teamwork and supporting those who require assistance that never left him.

This lesson was important after a fellow soldier drifted underneath him during a routine training jump from an airplane 12,000 feet in the air. McRaven had reached the altitude when he was meant to deploy his parachute, but before he could, the other soldier deployed his. It hit McRaven like an airbag traveling at 120 miles per hour.

McRaven was sent into a spin and continued to plummet toward the ground. He tried to deploy his parachute to straighten out, but the ropes were tangled around both legs. The parachute caught air and ballooned above him, pulling his legs rapidly in different directions. His pelvis...

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Shortform Exercise: Who Are Your Allies?

We've all experienced times when we needed assistance in one form or another. Let's look at how others have supported you when you needed it.

Name one recent moment in which you were struggling? Did you ask for help? Why or why not?

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Make Your Bed Summary Lesson 3: It's What's Inside that Counts

There's more to you than meets the eye. You have talents, determination, and courage that aren't visible to the naked eye. There have been times when someone has doubted or judged you based on what you look like. You had to prove yourself to this person to be accepted or believed in.

You are not alone in this scenario. Everyone has more to them than what you're able to see. You must look beyond skin deep to a person's heart. More than anything else, it is the size of their heart that matters. You must allow for people to surprise you. You must reserve judgement and prejudice until you get to know who a person is. Even the smallest person can do great things, so value someone based on their heart, not their appearance.

The Backstory

Proving yourself was a way of life for McRaven and his fellow SEAL cadets. Each day brought new tests meant to determine their toughness and capability of living up to the rigors of SEAL life. McRaven, a tall and strapping young man, fit the ideal mold of a strong and worthy Navy SEAL. But there were others who were not physically compatible. For these men, the act of proving their worth was ten times harder.

McRaven had two experiences in which men who looked ill-equipped to manage the tough and demanding life of a Navy SEAL defied expectations. The first was during a two-mile swim training. The trainees lined up on the edge of the surf waiting to be inspected. One of the men was 5'4" and scrawny. The inspecting officer chided him for his small stature and, looking at the eight-foot waves rolling in, asked the man if he wanted to quit. The young man took the abuse and said he wasn't a quitter.

An hour later, McRaven finished his swim and crawled back to the sand. Standing on the beach was the small man. He'd finished
before nearly everyone else. McRaven was astonished. **The inspector had challenged this man's ability to keep up and perform, and the young man found the heart to prove him wrong....

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**Shortform Exercise: Do You Judge a Book by Its Cover?**

We all tend to make split-second decisions about other people. How have McRaven's experiences made you think differently about making assumptions about people?

Have you ever been proven wrong about someone you made an assumption about? Who was it?

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**Make Your Bed Summary Lesson 4: A Setback Is Only Permanent if You Let It Be**

When things don't go your way or you suffer a setback, you may want to blame external sources. It's easier to assume the world is against you than it is to admit that sometimes life just isn't fair. You may even look back over your past and find fault with your upbringing, your lot in life, or your lack of opportunities as the culprits for your current disappointment. But at the end of the day, you are the only person responsible for determining your fate.

Many great historical figures overcame adversity to reach great heights, such as Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., and Stephen Hawking. Like these people, you must accept that sometimes, even if you try your best and have all the skill and talent in the world, you will face challenges. You must face these challenges with the same determination you bring to your successes. Don't complain and fall back on misfortune as an excuse for why you can't be happy. Take the hits and move forward in whatever way you can.

**The Backstory**

SEAL Lieutenant Martin, known as Moki, was one of the instructors during McRaven's SEAL training. Moki was a decorated and highly respected officer. He was skilled in combat and had survived Vietnam. He was a competitive triathlete and could outperform any competitor.

McRaven remembered a morning when he and his fellow cadets were running sand dunes. They were dressed in full fatigues and had to jump into the ocean after their descent down the dune, combat boots and all. When McRaven emerged from the water, Moki gave him the signal to drop and roll in the sand. This action turned a person into what was called a “sugar cookie” because you were covered head to toe with sand.

The sugar cookie order was punishment for some infringement made during the course of training. Many soldiers had a hard time with the sugar cookie punishment because the order was often arbitrary. They felt insulted. They worked hard and were skilled and thought it unfair to have to live with the discomfort of sand in every crevice for the day.

When McRaven was fully covered with sand, including...

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Shortform Exercise: What Really Happened?

When you're frustrated with life, it's easy to want to find something or someone to blame. How has this tendency shown up in your life?

When have you blamed someone or something in your past for your inability to accomplish a goal? Describe the situation.

Make Your Bed Summary Lesson 5: Use Failure to Your Advantage

Failure is part of life. No matter how hard you try to succeed or how much you try to avoid failure, at some point, you will fail. The law of averages dictates it. **When you fail, you can cower with defeat and give up, or you can use failure to push yourself harder and grow stronger.**

Accept that everyone makes mistakes. Learn from those mistakes. Don't be afraid of trying again. If you can persevere through the consequences of failure, you will be better prepared for other difficult challenges that lie ahead.

The Backstory

In SEAL training, everyone has a swim buddy. These buddies are attached at the hip, figuratively and literally at times. If one buddy fails, both buddies suffer the consequences. McRaven learned this lesson after a particularly grueling training swim one day. He and Marc, his swim buddy, were well behind the other cadets when they crawled out of the water.

The training instructor ordered them to fall into the plank position and began berating them for their poor performance. **He questioned whether they had what it took to be a SEAL and added their names to the Circus list.** The Circus was an event at the end of the afternoon of training. All those who'd failed during one of the day's events had to do another two hours of calisthenics.

The Circus created a nasty cycle of failure. The extra exertion left those in the Circus more fatigued than usual the next day. And because of that extra fatigue, it was likely a cadet would fall behind or fail again during that day's training. Of course, this failure earned him another spot in the Circus. The Circus was meant to separate the strong from the weak. And many men quit after falling into the Circus cycle. McRaven and Marc got caught up in this cycle for days.

The last test for SEAL trainees was a 5-mile swim off the coast. You had to finish the swim in a certain time to graduate. After four hours, McRaven and Marc dragged out of the water. Just like before, the instructor ordered them into the plank position. And just like...

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Make Your Bed Summary Lesson 6: Be Daring in Life

As you learned in the previous lesson, failure is an eventual certainty in your life. More than learning from your mistakes, you first have to be willing to make them. If you live in fear of failure, struggle, or humiliation, you will never do what is necessary to achieve your goals or reach your potential.

Much of life is a struggle. In difficult times, you’ll feel fear. If you play it safe and limit your actions to mitigate failure, you will never know what you’re made of. You must learn to have faith in yourself and push past your anxieties to accomplish your goals. You must be willing to push yourself to the limit to achieve something great. Dare greatly in life and receive great rewards.

The Backstory

SEALs-in-training must complete a strenuous obstacle course every now and then. Their times are recorded, and a poor time can mean joining the day’s Circus or suffering embarrassment in front of the other trainees. McRaven performed well on every aspect of the obstacle course except for the “Slide for Life.” This particular obstacle required the trainees to slide 100 feet down a rope that started 30 feet above ground. The optimal way to slide was headfirst on top of the rope, but it was also the riskiest technique.

McRaven was scared to slide headfirst. Instead, he hung below the rope feet first and inched his way down. After finishing with a dismal time one day, the instructor told him he was never going to beat the course if he didn’t start taking risks. McRaven knew he was right. The next week, he went headfirst down the Slide for Life and finished with a personal best. From this lesson, he learned that trusting in his abilities was required to push past what he thought was possible.

This lesson served him well in 2004 when he...

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Shortform Exercise: Are You a Risk-Taker?

It's not easy to be daring in life. But sometimes it is necessary to get what you want.

Do you push yourself beyond your limits when faced with a challenge, or do you tend to play it safe? Why?

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Make Your Bed Summary Lesson 7: Keep Courage Close

Courage is a powerful emotion. With courage, you can surmount any obstacle. With courage, you can stand up to any bully. Without it, you place yourself at the mercy of life and the actions of others. Just like a society rises up to defeat a nefarious dictator, you must find the courage to rise up and defeat whatever stands in the way of your success.

Every bully is the same. They feed on the fear of those they oppress to grow stronger. They are like sharks in the water, circling their prey and waiting for weakness. These sharks are everywhere in life, including work, society, and social circles. If you give in and cower, they will attack you. The consequences could be deadly either physically or spiritually. You have the courage inside of you to stand up to forces of oppression. If you want to accomplish your dreams, you must look inside and call up your courage.

The Backstory

SEAL training swims often took place at night. Night swims were scary endeavors. There were several shark species that lived in waters off the coast of San Clemente Island near Coronado. But the most dangerous species was the great white shark, a notorious hunter with a particular taste for human flesh.

McRaven and his swim buddy set off from the Naval ship floating off the island's coast and headed for shore. They were in the middle of the open ocean in the dark. The only thing they could see was each other. They were scared of the sharks they might encounter, but their desire to be a SEAL was greater than their fear. Their determination to achieve this goal gave them the courage to keep swimming and face whatever...
Life encompasses many tragedies. You may lose a loved one, a job, or a dream. Terrorists may fly planes into buildings, and viruses may ravage a nation. There will be many moments in which your spirit gets crushed and makes you lose hope for the future.

These are the moments in which you must search for the best version of yourself. You must rise to the challenge of moving forward with strength and dignity. In the darkest moments, do what must be done to show the world your best, and you can survive anything.

The Backstory

One of the most difficult tests the SEAL trainees had to pass was the final dive training mission. They were required to swim underwater for 2,000 meters and attach a practice mine to the bottom of a target vessel in San Diego Bay. They had to use a bubbleless SCUBA tool called the Emerson closed-circuit diving rig. This rig was known to malfunction, and rumor had it that some trainees had lost their lives during previous missions.

As McRaven and his fellow trainees stood on the beach awaiting orders for this mission, a thick fog rolled in, obscuring their already reduced line of sight. The commanding instructor seemed to sense the increased danger when he delivered the orders to the trainees. He warned the men that they would be in complete darkness and may become disoriented or separated from the group. He told them they would have to perform to the best of their abilities. They could not let fear, exhaustion, or a lack of confidence stop them. **In the darkness, they had to...**

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Shortform Exercise: Be a Paragon of Strength

Finding strength when faced with tragedy is not always easy. But often it is the only way to keep moving forward.

Name one time you found strength in the midst of darkness in your life. What attitudes or beliefs allowed you to find and maintain this strength?

The Backstory

Hell Week in SEALs training was the ultimate test of whether the trainees had what it took to be in the toughest branch of the military. For six days, cadets did not sleep, suffered constant harassment from the instructors, and moved through endless endurance activities. More cadets quit their training during this week than at any other moment. One of the most grueling activities of this week took place in the Tijuana mudflats.
After McRaven and his group arrived at the mudflats, they were ordered into the mud. They ran calisthenic drills and competed in races and other competitions. The mud was wet and cold, and moving through it was like running with anvils attached to your legs. After the drills, they had to sit in the mud until morning.

McRaven and the others were chest-deep in the mud their third night of Hell Week. The ocean breeze was cold and blowing hard. They were drenched, filthy, freezing, and bone tired. **With three more days of Hell Week left, many of the men started to lose their resolve.**

One of the instructors told the men they could come out of the mud and sit with the officers by a fire pit. They would be served coffee and chicken soup. They could relax for the night. The temptation was strong, but if you chose to quit, it meant quitting the SEALs.

A trainee next to McRaven started climbing out of the mud. McRaven tried to stop him, but the pull of warmth and rest was too strong....

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**Make Your Bed Summary Lesson 10: No Matter What, Never Give Up**

When life gets tough or things don't go your way, it is much easier to give in and quit than continue forward. Life is full of moments in which the odds of success seem so small, you can't imagine ever winning. Throwing in the towel seems like the most logical thing to do. You can do that. You can feel pity for yourself, blame others, and complain about how unfair the world is. If you do these things, your life will be a long and uncomfortable journey.

**When you reach the precipice between quitting and continuing, hold steady and take another step forward.** Refuse to back down. Stand your ground and work despite the odds. As long as you keep moving forward, your life will be in your control. No one can stop you from doing what you love. Only you can quit, and you will likely regret it forever. Never, ever, under any circumstances quit. If life is going to beat you, make sure you go down fighting.

**The Backstory**

McRaven stood at attention with 150 other SEAL hopefuls the first day of training. A commanding officer strode across the courtyard and stood next to a bell. He told the men what they could expect from the next six months. He would push them to their limits. He would make sure they understood pain. He would make them feel worthless and humiliated in front of each other. He would do everything in his power to get them to quit.

Then, the officer rang the bell. He said if any of them ever decided the training was too much, they could ring the bell three times. Ringing the bell would release them from all their pain. However, he said, if they rang the bell, they would likely regret it for the rest of their lives. **Quitting was easy, but it didn't make life easier.**

On graduation day, only 33 of the original 150 trainees remained. Of all the lessons McRaven learned during his training, "never ring the bell" was the most significant. This lesson stayed with him during his career and helped him through difficult times. He also witnessed countless other service members refuse to quit, which inspired others to do the same.

One of the most...

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**Shortform Exercise: Stand Your Ground**

There is no shame in opting for the easy way out sometimes. Everyone has done it at least once. The key is to finish what you've started more times than not.

Think of a time when you quit something when the going got rough? Describe the situation.

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