



Austin Hatch

My story is one of tragedy, incomprehensible loss and triumph.

On Labor Day of 2003, my family and I were flying from northern Michigan to Ft. Wayne, Indiana. As we were preparing to land, the aircraft crashed and burst into flames. My dad threw me out of the plane to save my life. He went back into the flames to get my mom, Julie, my sister, Lindsay, and brother, Ian, but tragically, was unable to. My mom, sister and brother did not survive.

My dad and I grieved the loss of our family members but we found ways to keep living in the midst of the incomprehensible pain. We pushed each other to overcome, as we knew my mom, sister and brother would've wanted.

Eventually, my dad met a lovely woman named Kimberley, who had three kids of her own. They got married and together, we formed a wonderful blended family. I worked hard on my basketball skills and began to have success on the court. My dream was to play for The University of Michigan. On June 15, 2011, Coach Beilein offered me a full scholarship to play basketball for The University of Michigan, which I accepted. It was a dream come true.

Nine days later, on June 24th, 2011, my dad and "second mom" were flying to Northern Michigan to have a weekend of celebration. As we were preparing to land, the aircraft crashed, and my dad and second mom were killed on impact. I suffered severe injuries and was nearly killed myself. After being in a coma for over two months, I had to relearn how to walk, talk and basically how to live my life. With the help of many incredible doctors, therapists, my family and friends, I found a way to make it to Michigan.

Eleven years later, I am a graduate of The University of Michigan and am a full time motivational speaker with a message about Grit & Thriving in the midst of adversity. I feel very blessed to be in a position to add value to organizations across the country.

My message is about my journey from a coma, to a wheelchair to playing for Michigan. Yes a lot of things had to happen to overcome the adversity and achieve my goal, and I'm so grateful for everyone who helped me along the way. But, more than anything, it took some Grit.

It has been said that Grit is working hard for a long period of time. Grit is about consistency over the long term, not just intensity in the short term. That's true, but I think Grit is more specific than working hard for the long term goal. It takes Grit every day to put our ourselves in position to achieve our goal.

There are four key components to Grit, but I believe Grit is driven by having a Greater Purpose for why we do what we do. If we are working just for ourselves, it is very likely that we will eventually face some form of adversity that

will cause us to give up because we don't have a driving force for why we do what we do. We need to find something that we're willing to sacrifice for. If we are working for something bigger than ourselves, I believe we will always do what it takes to get the job done, no matter the task and no matter the circumstances. Our Purpose drives Grit.

Growth Mindset, the first component of Grit. The Growth Mindset believes every setback, every failure every adversity, is an opportunity. Adversity is opportunity in disguise. Even when we inevitably fall short of a goal, the Growth Mindset does not believe that is a permanent condition. Adversity can help us get better if we approach it with the Growth Mindset. The event will not be a source of growth, but I believe we can grow from how we choose to respond.

Resilience, the second component of Grit. If we make the decision to be Resilient, we take Massive Action in the face of adversity. It took Massive Action to go from a coma to playing for Michigan. I believe achieving our goals in the midst of challenges is the result of making the decision to be resilient, the result of taking Massive Action. Massive Action alone does not guarantee we'll overcome our challenges, but not taking action will guarantee that we don't.

Integrity, the third component of Grit. In the context of overcoming adversity, or working to achieve any goal, I believe Integrity is about following through on our commitments, especially when our circumstances change. We owe it to our teammates to always deliver on what we commit to. A lot of people set goals, but I think it's more effective to set commitments that will make it possible to achieve our goals though. If we have integrity, we'll always follow through on our commitments.

The Team First Mentality is the final component of Grit. We won't achieve anything significant without a great team. Every person on every team has a role and that role is very important. There is no "I" in team, but I believe a team will be better if it is made up of individuals who are personally driven to be the best they can be. Every person on the team has a role and their role is extremely important.

We all face challenges every day, and I believe part of my purpose in life to help others find ways to thrive in the midst of them.