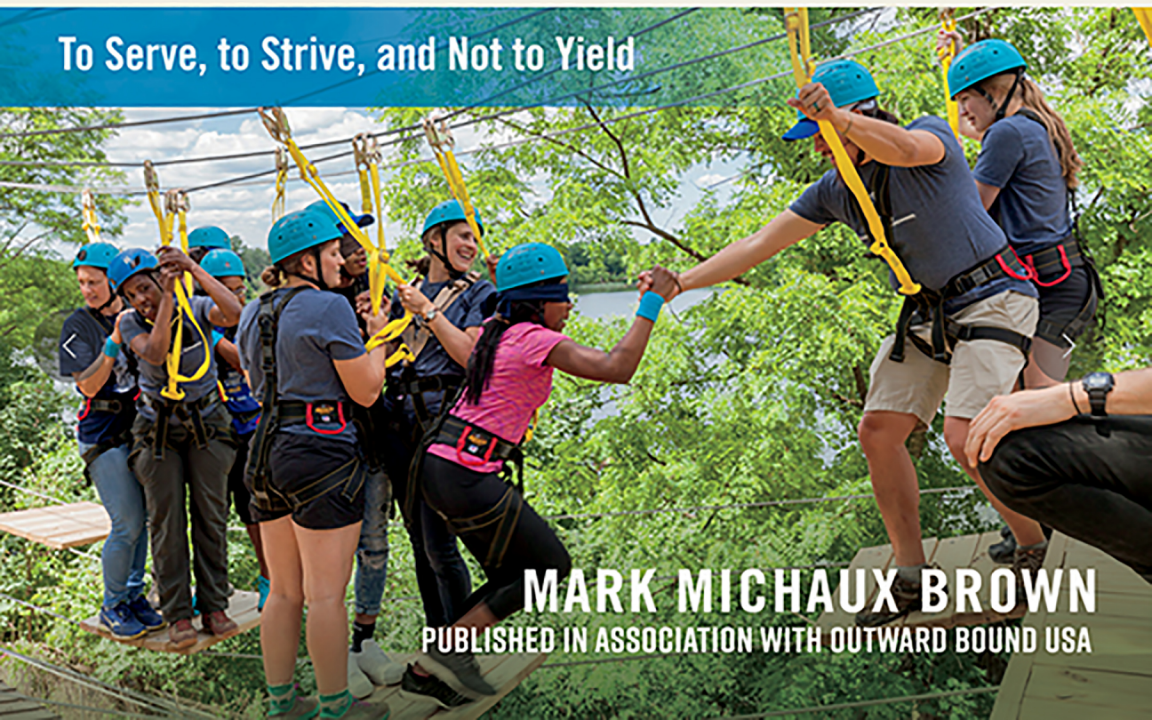


# OUTWARD BOUND LESSONS TO LIVE A LIFE OF LEADERSHIP

FOREWORD BY RICHARD LEIDER,  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF  
*THE POWER OF PURPOSE*

To Serve, to Strive, and Not to Yield



**MARK MICHAUX BROWN**

PUBLISHED IN ASSOCIATION WITH OUTWARD BOUND USA

## **Praise for *Outward Bound Lessons to Live a Life of Leadership***

“Mark provides a vision for the kind of leader that we should each want to be and that our culture desperately needs. This book will leave you inspired and eager to become an Expeditionary Leader!”

—**Ryan Barton, founder and CEO, Mainstay Technologies**

“In this book, Compassionate Leadership is clearly defined as an indispensable approach to removing obstacles that prevent one from achieving one’s full potential. By highlighting the Outward Bound experiences of others, Mark reaffirms the importance of acknowledging how stories matter and how important it is for leaders to take the time to understand the *why* behind the *what* of an individual’s professional and personal endeavors.”

—**Donato Tramuto, CEO, Tivity Health; founder and President, Health eVillages; and author of *Life’s Bulldozer Moments***

“I will never forget my Outward Bound experience and Mark Brown. My company at the time was investing in its leaders and provided twelve of us the opportunity to join Mark on a three-day Outward Bound adventure. I was a bit intimidated at the thought of being in the wild with nine men and one other woman, but I learned that there was no reason for that apprehension. Instead, I learned more about myself in those three days than I would have ever imagined. Meeting with Mark on a regular basis after those three days was just as dramatic. He was able to help me with clarity on what I learned and how I could take that life lesson to mold my future. My Outward Bound trip took place seventeen years ago, and it was a turning point for me and my future direction. It significantly impacted my life. The lessons in this book can do the same for you. Thanks, Mark, for being such a huge part of my life journey.”

—**Jen Tolbert, Regional Vice President, Sales, Cornerstone OnDemand**

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# Outward Bound

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# **Outward Bound Lessons** to Live a Life of **Leadership**

**To Serve, to Strive, and Not to Yield**

by **Mark Michaux Brown**

Foreword by **Richard Leider**



Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

# Outward Bound Lessons to Live a Life of Leadership

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# Contents

FOREWORD	
The Expeditionary Leader, <i>by Richard Leider</i>	xi
INTRODUCTION	
The Modern World Needs a New Model for Change	1
1 From the Wilderness to the Workplace	11
SECTION I <b>To Serve</b>	
<hr/> <hr/>	
2 To Serve Others	19
3 To Serve a Higher Calling	27
4 To Serve a Community	35
5 To Serve the Learning Experience	43
SECTION II <b>To Strive</b>	
<hr/> <hr/>	
6 To Strive through Uncertainty	53
7 To Strive through Ambiguity	59
8 To Strive for Your Values	65
	vii



SECTION III	<b>Not to Yield</b>	71
9	Not Yielding to Uncertainty	73
10	Not Yielding to What's Easy	79
11	Not Yielding to Doubt	85
CONCLUSION		
	What Do These Keys Unlock?	91
ABOUT THE EXPEDITIONARY LEADERS		103
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS		113
INDEX		117
ABOUT THE AUTHOR		127

# The Expeditionary Leader

**J**ust two words capture what I would like to say to introduce the book that follows: *Rx: To Serve*. The Outward Bound motto—To Serve, to Strive, and Not to Yield—has always struck a deep chord within me. And, if there is one great secret to becoming an Expeditionary Leader, it is to never give up on giving—to serve.

Life has a way of bringing you back to places that you thought that you had left for good. And I keep coming back to Outward Bound. But my relationship with Outward Bound is a proxy one. I don't claim to have ever been a student on a program (and part of me wishes I really had). But my connection, nevertheless, is deep.

I have served three terms on the Voyageur Outward Bound board of trustees. It was a trustee trek to climb Mount Kilimanjaro that opened up my deep forty-year relationships in Tanzania. And it was after that experience that I was inspired to create Voyageur Outward Bound's inaugural adult course—Life Career Renewal.

The lives of both of my children, Greta and Andrew, have been shaped by their Outward Bound experiences. In fact, Andrew served

as the associate program director for Outward Bound in Montana and today continues to consult with Outward Bound leadership.

When I attend Outward Bound gatherings, I gain a renewed sense of the shared affection and connection that alumni feel. And it gets me reflecting on how their experience could have such an impact, often fifty years later.

My theory for that feeling is “expeditionary leaders.” Enter Mark Brown. As he reflects in the book: “I have so many memories of that experience, but what stood out most of all to me was the demeanor and presence of my leaders. . . . I didn’t know what it was they had. I only knew that I wanted it.” The end of that first course was the beginning of his lifelong quest—the journey to discover what they had.

Mark starts honorably with his own story and challenges. Then he shares the stories of others who are mirrors of serving, striving, and not yielding. This book is a call to discover these possibilities in ourselves to set our own sails “outward bound.”

Courage is the gateway to freedom, to fulfilling your life’s work, and to answering the call to lead. Courage is the choice to do something that frightens you and that stretches your capability and capacity to grow and give. Courage is the constant companion in Outward Bound and in Mark’s writing. Without it, you’ll not take the first step toward your calling. Finding courage is a daily practice. What do you need the companionship of courage for? Read this book as your companion to truly up your courage factor.

Richard Leider

Bestselling author, *The Power of Purpose*

# The Modern World Needs a New Model for Change

*If you do not change direction,  
you may end up where you are heading.*

—Lao-Tzu

**R**apid change defines our modern culture and lives. Technological advances occur at a lightning pace, rendering much of what we learn obsolete nearly as quickly as we learn it. We struggle to keep up with the ever-changing landscape, often leaving us in a state of disequilibrium. Some scientists have proposed that our activity has actually issued in a new geologic epoch called the Anthropocene, the time of humans. Our success as a species is altering the very landscape in which we live.

All our institutions, from small businesses and nonprofits to large multinational corporations and governments, are under tremendous stress. The advances that have fueled “the time of humans” have also created unintended and unpredictable consequences. The founders of our social media companies and the manufacturers of our handheld devices did not plan on the Arab Spring, terrorist-encrypted messages, or screen addiction. Our transportation and fuel industries didn’t anticipate or intend that downtown Miami and scores of other coastal cities would be

underwater at high tide as a result of rising seas caused by our energy consumption. And as we continue to embrace advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning, we will undoubtedly face unforeseeable side effects. At a recent conference I attended, a leader on the IBM Watson project declared that the next five years would have a greater impact on our world than the past ninety-five. How can we thrive in such turbulence?

The skills and knowledge that once meant a stable career now leave many people ill equipped for an ever-changing present. Many people feel left behind. It is like being on a roller coaster that never ends.

The truth is, we are still much like the explorers of early human history, in that we can see little of what lies beyond the horizon. But like those courageous adventurers, we are taking a look at the big unknown before us and setting our sails “outward bound.” We are leaving the safety of our harbor and sailing into a future with no map. Safe passage requires skills, leadership, and action. The ship we sail is our only home, and our future depends on our navigation. The horizon line is behind us. We cannot go back.

How can we safely journey through this perilous time without clear knowledge of what we will face? Put into a modern context: How can we allow the tremendous creativity and advancement that capitalism fosters without exploiting our world and the people who inhabit it? How can we balance the tremendous freedom that our democratic experiment has created with a deeper sense of inclusion for all members of our society? How can we create a future where humanity can thrive and all of us can share in the advances of this new era?

The answers to these questions lie in the qualities of those who lead us. Today’s leaders need vastly different abilities and approaches to guide tomorrow’s institutions. Skills once deemed “soft” are now seen as crucial to success in the modern workplace. Once

left to the fringes of social science and human resources, these people skills are now at the forefront of what is necessary to succeed as a leader and an employee. If in fact we have moved into the “age of humans,” it follows that to thrive, we need leaders who are experts in unleashing human potential.

It makes sense then to turn to a leadership approach that was born in adversity and that recognizes disequilibrium and uncertainty as an integral part of business, personal, and political life. This approach is modeled by the Expeditionary Leader who sets sail “outward bound”—and who is willing and able to step outside conventional wisdom and use a deeply held set of core values and an understanding of human psychology to navigate uncharted waters and make a positive impact in the world.

## **Where Does Outward Bound Fit In?**

Outward Bound is an international network of experience-based learning and leadership programs for youth and adults. An Outward Bound wilderness expedition begins with a small group leaving the safety of their world for the unknown wilderness, inevitably encountering difficulty and challenges. No one knows exactly what will happen, and all who participate must learn to navigate the uncertainty and the rapidly changing circumstances that nature presents. Along the way participants gain wisdom and are transformed. These expeditioners then bring that wisdom to their communities, uplifting and teaching those around them what they themselves have learned. It is this experience that creates Expeditionary Leaders.

Although Outward Bound as an educational organization began by leading groups into the wilderness, in the decades since its inception it has incorporated its principles and methods into

everything from public school reform to leadership development at some of the world's leading corporations.

This book explores the process of becoming an Expeditionary Leader through the stories of people whose lives were touched by Outward Bound and who then went on to make a positive difference in the world. Some were leaders in Outward Bound; others were participants in its programs. Some names you may recognize. All share a zeal for making the world a better place and the grit to believe that they can. All have wisdom to impart gleaned from their years at Outward Bound and the years since, when they've had the opportunity to implement that wisdom.

## To Serve, to Strive, and Not to Yield

Outward Bound's motto—To Serve, to Strive, and Not to Yield—is adapted from the final lines of Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem *Ulysses*:

Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'  
We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Time and again, those whom I interviewed for this book referenced that motto: To Serve, to Strive, and Not to Yield. To me, it represents the key that unlocks the Expeditionary Leader in all of us.

**To Serve** Imagine workplaces focused on the well-being of their employees, their customers, their communities, and the greater world above all else. Imagine elected officials and civil servants who approach governing with compassion and a servant's heart, and who share a set of operating principles that include an ever-widening range of diversity.

**To Strive** Imagine communities filled with people who see challenges as opportunities to grow, who value their own learning and mastery of skills as ways to contribute to the greater good. Imagine leaders at all levels and in all organizations who are willing to step out on a limb to do the right thing, who go the extra mile to ensure a better outcome.

**Not to Yield** Imagine people who model compassion, integrity, and excellence despite the adversity they face at every turn. Imagine corporate leaders who take on the risks of putting people and planet first, knowing that a successful business is about playing the long game, not quarterly profits. Imagine if moral courage and integrity were taught as the expectation of society.

What would the world look like if we built all our institutions on such a foundation? This possibility is what Expeditionary Leadership unlocks.

I structured this book around these three keys of Expeditionary Leadership, based on the Outward Bound motto. Section 1 is about service, the idea that the strength of leadership is measured by a deep sense of purpose and aligning that call with a positive impact on others. Section 2 is about striving—that constant yearning to learn more, to do better, and to be better. Section 3 is about never yielding, knowing that the finish line is forever in the distance and that the best part of the expedition is always yet to come—just beyond the next challenge. It's also about standing true to your principles regardless of external pressures.

Those are the lessons I have had the privilege of learning in my years with Outward Bound. They have served me well in my professional and personal life. I have taken them with me into the various adventures of my life, and although I never knew where I would end up, I felt confident I had the key to unlock the door of transformation and positive impact wherever I went.



These lessons are told in this book through the stories of other Expeditionary Leaders—former Outward Bound leaders and participants who have left their mark on the world.

I have also included a critical component of experiential learning at the end of each chapter: pausing and reflecting on a situation, drawing out the learning, and then applying it. What I ask is that you reflect on each lesson and how it applies to your life, how you can use these learnings to unlock the Expeditionary Leader inside of you, just as the other leaders in this book have.

## **What Can These Keys Unlock?**

“I liken it to carrying a magical key in your pocket,” said the author and conservationist Liz Cunningham of all that she learned from Outward Bound. (Liz’s great-uncle was Outward Bound founder Kurt Hahn.) She mused:

At first something appears impossible. But now you have this key, and you have a sense for its remarkable potential to open doors. I feel very much that I have that in common with other Outward Bounders. I meet them, and we share that powerful feeling of possibility. What could that key unlock? What could I do? It just doesn’t go away.

“Uncle Kurt” urged Liz to participate in Outward Bound, and after he passed away in the mid-1970s, she attended a course in North Carolina. That experience infused her with a sense of possibility that has fueled a lifetime of passionate work in nature.

When I got to Outward Bound, I was just so overwhelmed. I was a really scrawny kid. I was not healthy. My experience at Outward Bound was about staying precisely in the moment. I told myself, “If I can take the next step, then I’m good. I *can* take the next step.” At the end I was absolutely astonished that I’d come through it.

What she discovered in herself—that magical key—lies at the heart of Expeditionary Leadership.

## **My Leadership Journey**

In 2012 I was invited to join the leadership team of a ninety-five-year-old, fourth-generation-owned auto dealer group, despite having no experience in the auto industry. My position was called director of corporate potential, and my job was to help transform the company from a traditional business to one that would, if you pardon the pun, become a vehicle for good in the world. In the years since, the Grappone Automotive Group has become an entirely different type of business: one that puts people and relationships at the forefront of everything it does. We have received recognition for our unique approach from business leaders and social scientists such as Edward Deci, who developed some of the most groundbreaking research on human motivation.

Even though I had no experience with the industry, this organizational journey followed a pattern I had come to know well during my time at Outward Bound: leaving the comfort of the familiar and leading a group of people into the unknown. Both those around me and I had moments of doubt and uncertainty. We were challenged and tested, finding skills and strengths that we didn't know we had. We failed multiple times, and our experience was defined by what we learned and applied from those failures as much as anything else. We had to depend on each other, and in the process we discovered what we were capable of, individually and collectively. We served each other, we strived for the greater good, and we did not yield when faced with adversity. Succeeding at such an undertaking would have been impossible without my experience as a participant, instructor, and leader with Outward Bound. Even though I had earned a bachelor's in communications and a master's

in business, it was my experiences at Outward Bound that taught me how to lead.

My time at Outward Bound began as a participant on a twenty-three-day mountaineering, desert hiking, and whitewater course in Utah. It then moved to leading wilderness trips in northern Minnesota and on the border in south Texas, followed by helping to manage Homeplace (the Minnesota base camp) and running a twenty-eight-day at-risk youth program.

After several years I moved to Minneapolis to open the sales department, working with corporations and schools to bring their groups to Outward Bound. After a decade I left full-time work with the Voyageur Outward Bound School and moved to Asheville, North Carolina. There, my work shifted to leading mostly professional development and team-building programs with the North Carolina Outward Bound School and, a bit later, the National Outward Bound Professional team.

Along the way I trained to become an organizational coach, enabling me to help develop some of the leadership programs that were being launched by organizations such as The Home Depot, Cox Enterprises, and Charlotte Pipe and Foundry (where I spent six years supporting organizational change efforts). I returned to school for a master's in business and entrepreneurship, where I wrote the first rough sketch of what is now this book. Over many years of working as an organizational coach and consultant, I began codifying what I had observed and the lessons I had learned. Eventually, they filled in the pieces for the framework of this book.

It has long been clear to me that people who have experience with Outward Bound have a different perspective of and approach to the world. Through Outward Bound, I found my own inner strength and resolve, and my values, compassion, and empathy. I met my wife and ultimately ended in the leadership role I now inhabit. Through Outward Bound I learned how to lead. And maybe

more importantly, I learned who I am and how to contribute to my community.

I was taught, mentored, coached, and supported by great Expeditionary Leaders, and I have taught, mentored, coached, and supported those whom I have since led. You will meet some of them in the pages of this book. Some have passed away, leaving their legacy in the organizations and people whom they impacted. Others continue the Outward Bound work. They are educators and doctors and industry leaders. They are nonprofit executives and authors and social entrepreneurs. They are consultants and business coaches and yoga instructors. They are in communities across the globe. They are generally not the headline grabbers and attention seekers; in most cases they have led in anonymity. They are all Expeditionary Leaders.

There are tens of thousands of us around the world who have shared this experience in our schools, at our workplaces, or in wilderness expeditions. I would posit that Outward Bound has reached more people and had a larger positive impact on people in the world than perhaps any other organization. It's just that most of us have never examined what people have done with the lessons they learned on their journey with Outward Bound.

I am immensely grateful to Outward Bound for the lessons it taught and the values it fostered in me. As a business leader I constantly draw on these. Outward Bound helped mold the ways I learned to think and respond. It gave me a model to apply to every aspect of my life. Those simple words, "to serve, to strive, and not to yield," have been the backbone of everything I have done in my life.

It is my hope that through this book, you too will gain the tools to deal with the uncertainty and rapid change of modern life and to find the key to unlock the door to the best version of yourself and your own extraordinary impact.