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## A Cognitive Semantics analysis of David Goggins' idea of “transforming” mindset

**Analiza zmiany sposobu myślenia opisanego przez Davida Gogginsa w ujęciu semantyki kognitywnej**

### Abstract

The objective of the paper is an analysis of how David Goggins describes his life in his book *Can't Hurt Me*. The analysis was conducted within the methodological framework of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Blending Theory. It has been established that the metaphors LIFE IS A JOURNEY and ASPECTS OF THE SELF ARE INDIVIDUALS AT WAR provide coherence to the story of his life, while conceptual blends are a mental tool used to reframe a situation and himself. As a result of implementing those blends in his thinking, David Goggins has developed a mindset that allowed him to transform from a broken teenager to “the strongest man alive”. This case study reveals how specific conceptual blends may impact not only cognition and language in general, as is argued in Cognitive Semantics, but also one's emotional state, and consequently one's physical performance.

**Keywords:** David Goggins, conceptual blending, conceptual metaphors, mindset

### Abstrakt

Przedmiotem artykułu jest analiza sposobu, w jaki David Goggins opisuje swoje życie w książce *Can't Hurt Me*. W wyniku analizy przeprowadzonej w oparciu o teorię metafor konceptualnych i teorię amalgamatów pojęciowych ustalono, że metafory ŻYCIE TO PODRÓŻ oraz ASPEKTY JA TO UCZESTNICY WOJNY nadają historii jego życia spójność, zaś amalgamaty funkcjonują jako narzędzia mentalne użyte do zmiany sposobu postrzegania sytuacji i samego siebie. Wskutek zastosowania tych amalgamatów David Goggins był w stanie zbudować sposób myślenia, który pozwolił mu na przeobrażenie się z zagubionego nastolatka w „najsilniejszego człowieka na Ziemi”. To studium przypadku pokazuje, jak konkretne amalgamaty pojęciowe mogą wpływać nie tylko na ogólne procesy poznawcze i językowe, co głosi semantyka kognitywna, ale również na stany emocjonalne jednostki i w konsekwencji na jej wydolność fizyczną.

**Słowa kluczowe:** David Goggins, amalgamaty pojęciowe, metafory konceptualne, sposób myślenia

## Introduction

David Goggins' life experience and how he describes it takes Lakoff and Johnsons' idea that we live by metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) to a new level of reality. His book, his talks on You Tube and posts on Facebook profile focus on a "transforming mindset", the "calloused mind" philosophy that he created at one moment of his life and which has made him a different person over the years.

David Goggins is a retired US Navy SEAL, an American ultramarathon runner, an ultra-distance cyclist, triathlete, a former world record holder for the most pull-ups done in 24 hours (4,030 pull-ups in 17 hours), but also a motivational speaker, and an author of the self-help memoir *Can't Hurt Me* released in 2018. His talks available on You Tube typically receive enthusiastic responses from the viewers, who openly say how they managed to change their lives under his influence. All this makes Goggins one of many personalities and inspirational speakers on YouTube who use their own life experience to motivate people. However, unlike other speakers, not only does he draw from his military background to offer his listeners or readers a perspective, which could change their attitude to difficulties and challenges in life, but he also extensively describes his transformation and the "calloused mind" approach which, as he believes, made this transformation possible. In order to describe his mindset and ensuing changes, Goggins resorts to figurative language. Stage by stage, he reveals the model of SELF he has built over the years, which eventually earned him the title of the toughest man alive and which, he hopes, can be adopted by anyone to overcome life's hardships and individual limitations.

In this paper, I want to systematically analyze the key conceptual components of the "transforming" mindset David Goggins described in his book *Can't Hurt Me*. The methodology I use is Cognitive Semantics, especially the Blending Theory, because it offers adequate tools to identify the building blocks of his concept of the mind and self, to track their integration into a coherent whole, and to account for their impact both on his life and on his potential readers/listeners. I believe that due to Goggins' deep introspection, acute sensitivity to his own mental processes coupled with astounding honesty we receive valuable body of data for the study of the interaction between language, thought and emotions. Thanks to his detailed self-analysis, his life appears to be a natural experiment on how conceptualization of the self can impact one's affect, endurance and behaviour.

The structure of the paper is as follows: firstly, I briefly present the main assumptions of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and of the Blending

Theory, and explain the notions relevant in the subsequent analysis; secondly, I analyze in detail the ways Goggins describes himself, his attitude and his thought process in the context of his life events highlighting the impact it had on his mindset; finally, some conclusions and general observations are offered.

## Theoretical background

In this section some aspects of Cognitive Linguistics are outlined. By necessity, the outline is cursory and focuses only on the assumptions and notions relevant for the subsequent analysis. It also relies on the early and established approach to metaphor offered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Johnson (1987) or Kövecses (2002) even though this approach has received substantial extension (e.g. Kövecses 2020) and critique (e.g. see Gibbs 2009 for an overview; Keysar *et al.* 2000), because the paper leans towards practical applications of the theoretical framework rather than development of the theory itself.

One of the foundational commitments of Cognitive Linguistics is the importance ascribed to figurative language as symptomatic of how we think and talk about the world. This view has been made clear very early when in 1980 Lakoff and Johnson wrote in their seminal work *Metaphors We Live By* that “metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action” and that “our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (1980: 3). Thus, Cognitive Linguistics assumes the constructivist approach to the possibility of description of reality through the medium of language. This view, contrasted by Ortony (1993: 1–10) with non-constructivist commitment, assumes that “the objective world is not directly accessible but is constructed on the basis of the constraining influences of human knowledge and language” and cognition itself “is the result of mental construction” (Ortony 1993: 1). Logically, this view makes the study of creativity in language the centre of attention.

Conceptual metaphor defined as “understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain” (Kövecses 2002: 4) is the key term in studies conducted within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, especially in the part called the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Conceptual metaphor is more extensively explained by Johnson who says that it can be

conceived as a pervasive mode of understanding by which we project patterns from one domain of experience in order to structure another domain of a different kind.

So conceived, metaphor is not merely a linguistic mode of expression; rather, it is one of the chief cognitive structures by which we are able to have coherent, ordered experiences that we can reason about and make sense of. Through metaphor, we make use of patterns that obtain in our physical experience to organize our more abstract understanding (1987: xv).

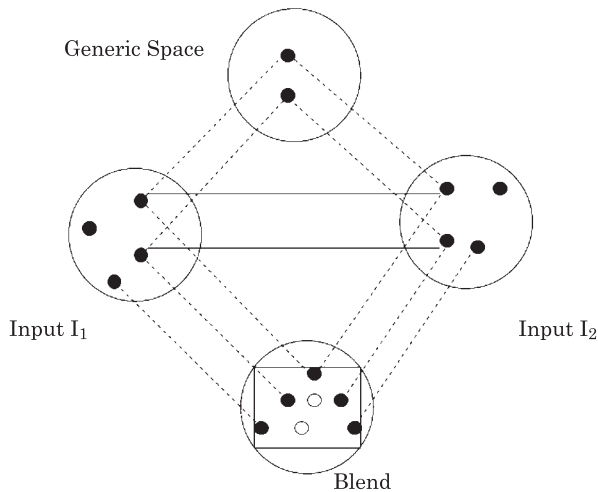
As this approach emphasizes the role of language and mental constructs in how we conceptualize the world, its relevance for my analysis is undeniable.

The other commitment of Cognitive Linguistics important for my analysis is the embodiment hypothesis. The notion of embodiment has received much attention and it can have more than one meaning (for an overview see Rohrer 2007 and Wilson 2002), but in this paper I follow its general understanding as “the claim that human physical, cognitive, and social embodiment ground our conceptual and linguistic systems” (Rohrer 2007: 27). This hypothesis gives prominence to human bodily experience, interaction with the physical world, and cultural experience as sources of conceptual systems, knowledge, and rationality by means of which we make sense of the world. While Johnson (1987) and Lakoff and Johnson (1999) highlight the ramifications of embodiment for human reason, science, religion, or philosophy, in this analysis I want to show its significance in a very private enterprise of reframing a life of one man.

The framework called the Blending Theory (BT), propagated by Giles Fauconnier and Mark Turner in numerous publications (e.g. Fauconnier 1997; Fauconnier and Turner 2002; Turner 2007) is an important complement to the study of figurative language proposed by CMT. Unlike conceptual metaphors which involve projections between two domains: from source domain to target domain, conceptual blends result from an integration of multiple domains or mental spaces. Mental spaces are defined as “small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action [...] which are connected to long-term schematic knowledge called ‘frames’ [...], and to long-term specific knowledge” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 40). Using mental spaces as operational units BT attempts to model dynamic mappings in thought and language.

The BT model assumes the creation of conceptual blends integrating input mental spaces in accordance to principles of conceptual integration. In the first place, counterpart elements in the input spaces are connected by cross-space mappings. Secondly, there is a generic space which maps onto each of the inputs. It “reflects some common, usually more abstract, structure and organization shared by the inputs and defines the core cross-space mapping between them” (Fauconnier 1997: 149; for complications with establishing

generic space see Libura 2010: 74ff). Then there is the blended space (or the blend) containing elements selectively projected from the inputs as well as emergent structure, a new structure not copied from the inputs. Following Fauconnier (1997), Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 42) and Turner (2007: 379), this new emergent structure is developed in three ways: i) composition of elements from the inputs; ii) completion, in which what is projected from the input spaces becomes adjusted to fit knowledge of background frames, cognitive and cultural models triggered by the inherited structures; iii) elaboration of the blend by running it imaginatively and arriving at a new structure. Consequently, “the blend *inherits partial structure* from the input spaces and *has emergent structure* of its own” (Fauconnier 1997: 149, italics in original). BT has adopted the convention to graphically represent processes of blending and the whole structure of an integration network as in Fig.1, in this paper, however, for practical reasons, I use tables to show blends I analyze.



**Fig. 1.** An Integration Network – a minimal template  
(adapted from Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 46)

In the following sections I apply the framework of both CMT and BT to systematically reveal how David Goggins constructs a mindset that has helped him change his life, which methodologically is in line with the Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Kövecses 2020, Ch. 6).

## David Goggins' "transforming" mindset

The basic metaphorical makeup of the way David Goggins tells his story is best summarized in one of the opening paragraphs of his book:

Human beings change through study, habit, and stories. Through my story you will learn what the body and mind are capable of when they're driven to maximum capacity, and **how to get there**. Because when you're **driven**, whatever is **in front of you**, whether it's racism, sexism, injuries, divorce, depression, obesity, tragedy, or poverty, becomes **fuel** for your **metamorphosis**. The **steps** laid out here amount to the evolutionary algorithm, one that obliterates barriers, glimmers with glory, and delivers lasting peace. I hope you're ready. It's time to go to **war** with yourself.<sup>1</sup>

Two dominating metaphors easily noticed here are LIFE IS A JOURNEY and ASPECTS OF THE SELF ARE INDIVIDUALS AT WAR. They have a very important function of providing coherence to the story of Goggins' life. The domain of the JOURNEY allows one to organize life into discernible stages, identify progress, encourage others to join him in the enterprise of personal improvement. The metaphor of WAR between aspects of his self makes his struggle more directed, a victory possible, and the whole process of change dynamic and engaging. Both metaphors provide a conceptual frame, in which elements of his personal life and transformation can be located in a logical sequence leading to desired goals, an algorithm, as he puts it using the phrase coming from computer science, which in turn can be implemented by others, who also want to change their lives.

Apart from these two framing metaphors there are a number of very elaborate blends, which are embedded in specific events in Goggins' life and described in detail in his book. They are presented in the order in which they appear in *Can't Hurt Me*, which is also the order in which he created them in his life. Since they are tightly connected with a specific situation in his life, such background is also provided with their analysis.

The first blend I want to analyze is the Accountability Mirror. I believe that this blend is the most important of all the blends he presents and the moment he constructed it for the first time was the turning point in his life. There are two reasons why I find this blend so vital. One is that, following his account, for the first time in his life, he consciously created an integration network which modified his perception of himself. Thus, he realized that such a mental feat can be done. He learned how to do it, and he used that skill later in life in extreme situations. The other reason why it is the most

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations come from an e-book file format of *Can't Hurt Me*, which has no page numbering.

important blend was that it worked, that is, it produced results which gave him the sense of agency and encouraged to use the technique again some time later.

Goggins describes in detail the moment he constructed the concept of Accountability Mirror. When he was 17, he faced dropping out of school due to high absence and low grades. He dreamed of joining the Air Force but failed the Vocational Aptitude test. The moment of shifting the perspective takes place in the evening, after his mother handed him the letter from school:

That night, after taking a shower, I wiped the steam away from our corroded bathroom mirror and took a good look. **I didn't like who I saw staring back.** I was a low-budget thug with no purpose and no future. I felt so disgusted **I wanted to punch that motherfucker in the face** and shatter glass. Instead, **I lectured him.** It was time to get real.

**"Look at you," I said.** "Why do you think the Air Force wants your punk ass? You stand for nothing. You are an embarrassment."

I reached for the shaving cream, smoothed a thin coat over my face, unwrapped a fresh razor and kept talking as I shaved.

"You are one dumb motherfucker. You read like a third grader. You're a fucking joke! You've never tried hard at anything in your life besides basketball, and you have goals? That's fucking hilarious."

After shaving peach fuzz from my cheeks and chin, I lathered up my scalp. **I was desperate for a change. I wanted to become someone new.**

"You don't see people in the military sagging their pants. You need to stop talking like a wanna-be-gangster. None of this shit is gonna cut it! No more taking the easy way out! **It's time to grow the fuck up!**"

Steam billowed all around me. It rippled off my skin and poured from my soul. **What started as a spontaneous venting session had become a solo intervention.**

**"It's on you,"** I said. "Yeah, I know shit is fucked up. **I know what you've been through. I was there, bitch!** Merry fucking Christmas. Nobody is coming to save your ass! Not your mommy, not Wilmoth. Nobody! It's up to you!"

By the time I was done talking, I was shaved clean. Water pearled on my scalp, streamed from my forehead, and dripped down the bridge of my nose. **I looked different, and for the first time, I'd held myself accountable.** A new ritual was born, one that stayed with me for years. It would help me get my grades up, whip my sorry ass into shape, and see me through graduation and into the Air Force. The ritual was simple. I'd shave my face and scalp every night, get loud, and get real. **I set goals, wrote them on Post-It notes, and tagged them to what I now call the Accountability Mirror, because each day I'd hold myself accountable to the goals I'd set.** At first my goals involved shaping up my appearance and accomplishing all my chores without having to be asked.

This is a description of a transformation of a lazy, clueless teenager into an adult responsible for his actions. A transformation that results from changing the perspective of how he sees himself, especially the role he plays in his life and responsibility he takes. I want to demonstrate how the act of

talking to himself in the mirror triggered the construction of a conceptual blend which put young David Goggins in a completely different life position.

The process can be divided into two stages. Stage one is creating a blend integrating the act of looking at himself in the mirror (input 1) with a situation of talking to another person (input 2). In input space 1, we have actual David Goggins looking at his own reflection in a bathroom mirror. The presence of the reflection creates an illusion of another human being staring back and maintaining the eye contact, which prompted Goggins to lecture his own reflection. As a result, the actual situation of seeing himself in the mirror is integrated with a conventional situation of talking to someone else thus yielding a blend (blend 1), in which real David Goggins is lecturing reflected David Goggins, who is humbly listening. Reflected David Goggins in the blend has the passive nature of a mirror image projected from input 1, while the capacity to listen and understand comes from input 2.

The second, more consequential stage, involves an integration of the blend 1 (which becomes an input space 3) with a scenario, in which a person in a superior position (an adult, a parent, a coach, or a teacher) is talking with power and authority but also with criticism to a person in an inferior position (a child, an athlete, a student), which is input 4. This scenario activates the frame of coaching or training with such elements as a critical assessment of a situation, setting goals, implementing solutions and taking responsibility for the outcome. Importantly, in this scenario both the coach and a training athlete have a feeling of agency and control, and it is this feeling which is projected to the new blended space. Thus, in the blend 2, Goggins becomes a new person, which is overtly manifested in a different look (shaved head), and psychologically by taking account of his life and power to do so. What is projected from input space 3 is real David Goggins, but the input 4 endowed him with the mindset of a coach or an adult. The act of talking to his own mirror reflection split him into two parts and prompted an integration with the scenario of coaching, creating oppositions between real and unreal, superior and inferior, superordinate and subordinate, active and passive. In blend 2, these two parts become reintegrated into a new David Goggins, in a different role and ensuing mindset: that of a responsible person, who is ready to work hard to achieve the goals he set for himself. The two integration networks presenting the blended elements are outlined in Table 1.



**Table 1.** The Accountability Mirror blend

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Generic space</b><br>A person talking to another person<br>The person talking is a figure of authority  |  |
| <b>Input 1</b><br><b>David Goggins and the mirror</b>  | <b>Input 2</b><br><b>A person talking to another person</b>  |
| Physical David Goggins   | Person A   |
| David Goggins' reflection  | Person B   |
|  | Person A talking to person B   |
| <b>Blended space 1</b>   |  |
| Physical David Goggins talking to his reflection in the mirror as if it were a separate person<br>David Goggins has the role of the speaker and his reflection has the role of the listener  |  |
| <b>Input space 3 (=blended space 1)</b><br><b>David Goggins talking to his reflection in the mirror</b>  | <b>Input space 4</b><br><b>Superior to inferior situation</b>  |
| David Goggins (speaker)  | A teacher/parent/coach (speaker)   |
| Goggins' reflection in the mirror (listener)   | A student/child/athlete (listener)   |
| David Goggins lecturing his reflection   | A teacher/parent/coach lecturing a student/child/athlete   |
|  | Intention of the lecture: improvement of the listener  |
|  | A teacher/parent/coach has control over a student/child/athlete  |
|  | A teacher/parent/coach is responsible (to a certain extent) for the behavior and achievements of a student/child/athlete |
|  | A teacher/parent/coach sets goals and checks their accomplishment  |
| <b>Blended space 2</b>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goggins in the role of a coach, lecturing himself, with the mindset of an adult person, in control, responsible, setting goals and assessing progress.</li> <li>• Emergent: Goggins is a different person, in a different mindset and with different appearance.</li> </ul> |  |

Goggins informs his readers that talking to himself turned into a ritual repeated every night for some time, and practiced later in his life when he needed to make important decisions. He refers to the ritual as “facing the Accountability Mirror”, which suggests that the mirror itself becomes an important trigger for the blend, a material anchor in the sense of Fauconnier and Turner (2002: Ch. 10), facilitating the activation of the goal-oriented mindset of agency. He also challenges his readers and listeners to use a mirror for themselves to recreate his strategy of self-improvement.

The experience with the Accountability Mirror that night has had a broad transforming effect on young Goggins. First, the act of talking to himself has become a foundation for his further development. As he states in *Can't Hurt Me*: "The most important conversations you'll ever have are the ones you'll have with yourself". Second, it marks the split of his person into a stronger but demanding "supervisor" self, and a weaker self, one that is prone to an easy life and is ready to quit in the face of serious difficulties. The constant struggle between these two selves has led Goggins to develop the remaining blends which I discuss below.

Thanks to hard work and determination he improved his school record. At the age of 19 he passed entry tests and joined the Air Force but was later released on medical grounds. Four years later, at the age of 23, he worked as a sanitation worker, was hugely overweight, and miserable in his marriage. One day he saw on TV the brutal training of the SEALs, was impressed and decided to join them. As a reservist he was enlisted, but had to lose 106 pounds in less than three months to qualify, and later he had to endure a series of physical tests called Hell Week as well as several months of training and testing. It was during that SEAL training that he created the idea of quitting mind and calloused mind which made his success possible.

His observation during those tests was that when faced with extreme physical challenge he wanted to quit to avoid pain and suffering, a sound human reaction, yet his success depended on staying power, so he also wanted to be able to withstand suffering. These two conflicting desires correspond to two mindsets Goggins has identified. One mindset, depicted in terms of personification, is an internal voice that urges him to withdraw, to stop suffering, and which sees quitting as a solution to the problem. It is the part of the self that cannot comprehend why he persists in freezing and physically exhausting himself, that keeps asking the question Why am I here? and sees no reasonable point in the SEAL endurance test, making quitting very probable. What is more, as this part of self is heavy with memories of his past failures and abuse, it is weak and victim-like. The other mindset, on the other hand, has the empowering and transforming effect, and this is the one I would like to analyze in greater detail. As with the Accountability Mirror, Goggins describes the exact moment of its emergence, which took place during demanding underwater evolutions under the supervision of one of the instructors, whose nickname – Psycho Pete – reflected his attitude towards recruits.

Time stood still as I realized for the first time that I'd always looked at my entire life, everything I'd been through, from the wrong perspective. Yes, all the abuse I'd experienced and the negativity I had to push through challenged me to the core, but in that moment I stopped seeing myself as the victim of bad circumstance, and **saw my life as the ultimate training ground instead. My disadvantages had been callousing my mind** all along and had prepared me for that moment in that pool with Psycho Pete.

I remember **my very first day in the gym back in Indiana. My palms were soft and quickly got torn up on the bars because they weren't accustomed to gripping steel. But over time, after thousands of reps, my palms built up a thick callous as protection. The same principle works when it comes to mindset.** Until you experience hardships like abuse and bullying, failures and disappointments, your mind will remain soft and exposed. **Life experience, especially negative experiences, help callous the mind.** [...] My ability to stay open represented a willingness to fight for my own life, which allowed me to withstand hail storms of pain and **use it to callous over my victim's mentality.** That shit was gone, buried under layers of sweat and hard fucking flesh, **and I was starting to callous over my fears too.** That realization gave me the mental edge I needed to outlast Psycho Pete one more time.

What stands behind this change in perspective acknowledged by Goggins is blending two domains of experience: abusing life situations and physical training, both grounded in his personal history, which constitute two input spaces. Specifically, in input 1, there are elements such as abuse and negativity, and their victimizing effect evoked by Goggins' words. Readers can also add to this input space their knowledge that such "bad circumstances" did not arise as a result of his personal choices, especially in his childhood and adolescence. In input 2, we have Goggins' gym experience, involving workouts and voluntary physical effort aimed at making the body stronger. Goggins highlights the effect that prolonged contact with hard surfaces, such as steel bars, has on skin: initially the skin is hurt but over time it becomes calloused and insensitive, and makes intense workouts possible. Both the difficult life experiences and gym training share the feature of being repetitive (the generic space), however, they differ in how the experience is valued: in input 1, the experience is seen as negative and to be avoided, while in input 2, it is positively valued and should be repeated many times if training is to bring desired results. The two domains are linked by cross-domain mappings, the most important one connecting the mind with hands calloused with long training. The remaining correspondences are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The Calloused Mind blend

| <b>Generic space</b>  |  |
|---|--|
| An experience which requires effort and endurance, tends to repeat itself, and triggers a response  |  |
| <b>Input 1. Difficult life experience</b>   | <b>Input 2. Gym experience</b>                     |
| difficult situations, hardships, abuse, misfortunes   | workout  |
| the mind  | body and body parts involved in physical effort    |
| emotional/psychological pain  | physical pain                                      |
| experiencing difficult life situations has an impact on our emotional state   | exposing skin to hard surfaces makes it calloused  |
|   | workout makes the body stronger and is good for us |
|   | stronger body makes upcoming tasks easier          |
| typically, difficult life situations happen to us caused by other people or circumstances   | voluntary  |
| Blended space   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exposure of the mind/self to difficult situations makes the mind more resilient/calloused</li> <li>• when the mind is resilient, we can better cope with hardships in the future</li> <li>• we can choose to expose ourselves to a difficult situation and see them as an opportunity to grow</li> </ul> |  |

The elements of the two input spaces are selectively projected to the blended space. What is projected from input 1 is the focus on mental state: the blended space is about difficult life situations and mental strength not about physical prowess. Input 2, on the other hand, contributes the concept of voluntary training and its positive effects. Accepting that training involves pain and exhaustion, knowing that training must be regular and powerful if it is to bring desired results, and experience that if skin is exposed regularly to hard surfaces it will callous and become less sensitive, are all projected from the gym input space. When these elements are integrated in the blend, we have a real-life difficult situation evaluated as if it were a kind of conscious training aimed at improving mental and physical strength, making the mind less sensitive to pain and thus making a person more willing to stay in a challenging situation. In other words, the idea of the calloused mind emerges in the blend. The way how hardships are evaluated in the blend constitutes the fundamental difference between the quitting mind and the calloused mind. Firstly, as it was mentioned, in the quitting mindset, a physically and mentally challenging situation is seen

as a threat, so withdrawing from it is a reasonable action, an act of self-protection. In the calloused mindset, however, a physically and mentally challenging situation is recognized as an opportunity to train, thus it is not to be rejected but embraced. Secondly, the quitting mind grows from the memory of negative experience which had a traumatizing long-lasting effect, and thus it activates the flee reaction to any new negative experience as potentially traumatic. The calloused mind perspective, on the other hand, is grounded in the memory of growing strength and insensitivity resulting from regular exposure to hardships. Choosing to withstand suffering or abuse becomes a conscious act directed at self-improvement, and pain and even danger are seen as necessary components of growth, which in the long term makes a person strong. As avoiding such difficult situations leads to weakness and vulnerability, the quitting mind must be silenced. Consequently, as we can see from the quoted passage, the blend not only changes the outlook on the current situation but also has the potential to overwrite the past. Because the connection between the blend and the inputs remains active, the negative, victim storyline of Goggins' past becomes reinterpreted in terms of a storyline of endurance and constant training in mental strength. This in turn makes him feel strong and ready to complete the task that seemed overwhelming, as from that moment on he sees himself as a strong person eager to prove himself.

This analysis reveals that projections from the domain of gym training together with emotions it involves could change the course of events for Goggins in a real-life situation. What is more, the emergent emotional state proved to be stable and made completing his SEAL training possible as well as made him aware of the power of this mindset:

Once, I was so focused on failing, I was afraid to even try. Now I would take on any challenge. All my life, I was terrified of water, and especially cold water, but standing there in the final hour, I wished the ocean, wind, and mud were even colder! I was completely transformed physically, which was a big part of my success in BUD/S, but what saw me through Hell Week was my mind, and I was just starting to tap into its power.

The impact that the Calloused Mind blend had onto his physical performance and the sheer power to continue despite suffering was a stepping stone to new blends which he created while taking part in marathons. Both were intended to help him to go beyond what he believed was his physical and psychological limit: if he wanted to complete a marathon, he had to continue running even though he was completely exhausted. For the lack of space I only mention them briefly. One blend can be called the Cookie Jar blend and it makes an analogy between cookies he enjoyed eating when

he was a kid, which his mother kept in a jar and distributed to her sons to lighten especially dark moments, and the good and uplifting memories of his past victories. As a result of blending, the memories of past victories and achievements become an emotional nourishment providing strength to endure just a little bit more. The other blend is the Governor blend and it relies on an integration of the input space of car mechanics (with a car's potential speed, engine power but also with a preinstalled speed limiter) with the input space of a human being (with some self-limiting stories, beliefs and inhibitions). As a result of blending Goggins could view himself as a machine with an imposed controller preventing him from more effort for safety reasons but also keeping him from better performance. In the blend, these limiting thoughts can and should be removed to achieve the full potential of one's mind and body. As with the previous blends, the reframing offered by the blend contributed to his success.

David Goggins writes a lot about the mind and the mindset, as is well visible from the analysis above. Even the subtitle of his book – *Master Your Mind and Defy the Odds* – highlights this topic. However, it must be remembered that he is not a psychologist or a philosopher aiming to create a new theory on how the mind works. Instead, he shares his personal ideas and strategies that can help to deal with life challenges. These strategies do not create a coherent picture of the mind-body interactions, but they are to be seen as tools or weapons of choice to be selected depending on a situation. What is more, they entail the constant two-way traffic between the body and the mind: the mind driving the body to greater efforts, and physical training of the body helping to achieve mental discipline.

## Conclusions

Goggins' life and his introspective account of it document the power of figurative thought and language. This analysis was an attempt to reveal why such an impact was actually possible and how metaphors and blends jointly build the “transforming” mindset that he offers to his readers and listeners as a tool to change their lives.

The general narrative coherence of the story of his life is provided by the conventional metaphors LIFE IS A JOURNEY and PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL CHANGE ARE WAR because they offer predictable scenarios: journeys have a beginning, stages, obstacles, guides or signposts, progress towards the goal and ends; wars involve a conflict, sides of the conflict, winning and losing. However, they do more than just structure life events according

to conventionalized patterns of journey and war. Due to their entailments, these metaphors partake in reframing a difficult life situation by activating positive and pro-active associations. For example, journeys entail stages which have to be covered on the way to a destination and which are necessary and yet temporary. When the domain of journey is projected onto the domain of life, a difficult moment in one's life becomes just a stage that has to be endured before a goal is reached. The domain of war involves a fight between the sides of a conflict, winning and losing. At the same time it entails that the winner must have been somehow superior and that training for combat can significantly increase the chances of winning. Therefore, Goggins' message is that it is very important to view oneself as a warrior not as a victim.

While the general frame of war comes from the conventional metaphor, blending offers specific strategies of how to remain a warrior in that war and how to win. With great sincerity, Goggins tells about rather dark moments in his life because he believes that he has discovered ways to consciously put oneself in the mindset of a warrior and maintain it for a time long enough to achieve one's goals. The strategies involve the ability to split one's self into two antagonistic sides (as in the Accountability Mirror blend and the Calloused Mind blend), and to identify oneself with the superior side to discipline the inferior (more lazy or quitting) side. They also involve the ability to break a situation into components, integrate them with elements coming from other domains, and generate a different (positive) emotional load, which is best visible in the Calloused Mind blend. He clearly does not want to keep these strategies for himself. His aim is to instruct his readers and listeners how to construct and live in the blends that can allow them to abandon victim mentality and grow stronger, replicating his achievements but in their own life situations. Positive comments from his readers and viewers seem to confirm that it can work for other people as well. In this way, his life story and testimony of his followers give a very real meaning to Fauconnier and Turner's statement that "we live in the blend" (2002: 83).

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