FROM MY CONVERSATION WITH AKSHAY NANAVATI

Turn your wall into a door

for when you feel stuck

Akshay Nanavati is the author of Fearvana, about using fear and struggle as fuel. When he came on my show, we talked about one of the most common pieces of advice there is: be positive.

Akshay told me about a woman who came up to him after a talk in India. She had left a painful, abusive marriage, read all the personal development books, and was confused. Was he saying she should just be positive all the time?

> *The idea is not just, life is great, all is good, let me focus on the positive. You want to use the negative. Don't run away from it. Don't try to sugarcoat it. Life is hard.*
>
> AKSHAY

Being positive, he explained, isn't pretending the hard thing isn't there. It's going into it, and using it to find what you can do next.

The tool: walls and doors

> *A really simple way to do that is to turn barriers into questions. A barrier statement is like a wall. But a question is a door.*
>
> AKSHAY

He gave the example of a teenager he worked with, living in extreme poverty, who said: "I don't have money for college." Akshay didn't argue with him. "It's real. But we're not going to make ourselves victims." Instead they asked: how can I pay for college? Are there scholarships available?

1 Write the wall

The sentence that keeps stopping you.

"I don't have the money." "I don't have the time." "I'm not that kind of person." Write it exactly as it sounds in your head.

2 Turn it into a question

"How could I...?" "What would make this possible?" "Who could help?"

You're not denying the wall. Akshay's teenager really was in poverty. The question simply stops the wall from having the final word.

3 Ask what's within reach

What could I learn, try or ask for that would open this door a little?

Not the whole answer. One small opening.

4 Take the first step

One small, real action this week.

Small counts. A door only needs to open a crack before you can see what's on the other side.

Why it works

When Akshay described this, I told him what I think sits underneath it:

> *All change happens by first recognising some sort of discomfort. The people who are really good at making positive change are really good at channelling that discomfort into positive action. Others feel the same discomfort, but they get lost in it, and so they never take the action needed to bring about change.*
>
> WHAT I TOLD AKSHAY

"That's the essence," he said. The wall is the discomfort. The question is what turns it into movement.

Where most of us get stuck

Sometimes no question feels possible, however hard we try. When that happens, the wall usually isn't really the situation. It's an older belief about what's possible for us, and the same wall keeps turning up in different places: money, time, work, love.

Beliefs like that are hard to see from the inside. We just experience them as "how things are".

> To help with exactly that, we made the Inner Map: a free, in-depth reflection of 75 questions that ends with your own personalised report, including the protective patterns you may rely on and what they may be trying to do for you. Write your wall, take the Inner Map, then hold the two side by side and ask: is this wall connected to one of those patterns?

Take the Inner Map (free, with your own report) ›

Your page

My wall:

The question that turns it into a door:

One thing I could learn, try or ask for:

My first small step this week:

Write a new wall each week on the same page. After a month, read them together. Walls that look different often share the same root.