

Unlocking the Secrets to Inner Strength: Dr. Rainer Zitelmann Discusses ‘Unbreakable Spirit’

by [Emily Manifold](#) — November 29, 2023 in Education

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Dr. Rainer Zitelmann is a distinguished figure whose multifaceted career has left an indelible mark on the realms of business, academia, and literature. Renowned as a German historian, author, and entrepreneur, Dr. Zitelmann has seamlessly blended his academic prowess with real-world success. With a doctorate in history and a keen interest in the intricacies of human behavior, he has explored the depths of success and motivation through various lenses.

As an accomplished author, Dr. Rainer Zitelmann has penned numerous books that delve into the psychology of achievement, wealth, and entrepreneurship. His works, characterized by a deep understanding of historical context and contemporary challenges, offer readers invaluable insights into the mindset and strategies of highly successful individuals. Whether dissecting the lives of self-made millionaires or examining the interplay between success and societal perceptions, Dr. Zitelmann's writings resonate with a diverse audience eager to navigate the complexities of success.

In addition to his literary contributions, Dr. Zitelmann has made significant strides as an entrepreneur, shaping his insights into tangible business success. His practical experience in the business world adds a layer of authenticity to his teachings, making him a sought-after speaker and consultant. Dr. Rainer Zitelmann's journey reflects a harmonious blend of academic rigor, entrepreneurial acumen, and a genuine passion for unraveling the secrets of achievement—an amalgamation that continues to inspire and guide individuals on their paths to success.

How do you respond to common criticisms of capitalism, and what role do you believe it plays in fostering individual success and societal progress?

I wrote a book about this, *In Defense of Capitalism*. I think most people simply know too little about history and about the world in general. 26,000 people in 24 countries were asked for their opinions on the growth of absolute poverty over the last 20 years. Only 13 percent of respondents believed that the poverty rate had decreased. In contrast, 70 percent believed that the poverty rate had increased. Fact is, before capitalism, most people in the world were living in extreme poverty. In 1820 around 90 percent of the global population was living in absolute poverty. Today, the figure is less than 9 percent. And most remarkably, in recent decades, since the end of communism in China and other countries, the decline in poverty has accelerated to a pace unmatched in any previous period of human history. In 1981, the absolute poverty rate was 42.7%; by 2000, it had fallen to 27.8%, and in 2022 it was below 9%. This shows that capitalism is not only good for the rich, but above all for the poor. But of course, capitalism is also the prerequisite for people to become very rich and successful.

In your new book, "Unbreakable Spirit: Rising Above All Odds," you share stories of individuals who have overcome significant challenges. How did you select the stories featured, and what criteria did you use to define an "unbreakable spirit"?

One of the qualities that people in this book share is that they never gave up, even in the face of the greatest possible challenges. This is as true, for example, of the actor Michael J. Fox, who suffers from Parkinson's disease, as it is of the renowned American historian William Hickling Prescott, who battled against a severe eye condition for almost his entire life.

When you analyze the lives of successful people, you will find that most successful people, just like everyone else, experienced setbacks and difficulties that they could have offered up as excuses if they had failed. One person might have grown up in poverty, another is overshadowed by their successful father, one is from an immigrant family and another was deprived of a high-quality education. Some might have felt too young to embark on a great career, others may have felt too old to start something new. In the decades that I have been involved with successful people, I have noticed that none of them has ever cited such real or perceived shortcomings as excuses. And this is exactly the same for the people with disabilities I portray in my book. Today, many people have a victim-mentality – they see themselves as victims of society, disadvantage, or discrimination, and victims of adverse circumstances. The people in this book never saw themselves as victims. Nor did they seek pity. They saw themselves as creators of their own destinies and believed that they could achieve things that even most people without disabilities would never achieve. What do you think you would achieve if you could tap into the same astonishing strength that enabled each of these individuals to do such incredible things?

How can individuals stay resilient in the face of setbacks and challenges, both in their personal and professional lives?

"Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall", said Confucius. And it is true. Everybody experiences setbacks and defeat, no matter how successful they are. The difference between winners and losers is the speed with which they give up as soon as they face any serious obstacles. Failing at something makes everyone feel disappointed or dejected. But some people stay down, while others get back on their feet as fast as they can. Wallowing in self-doubt, feeling frustrated and at a low ebb after a defeat, is only human. The question is how long you allow these negative emotions to persist. How long does it take for your low spirits to pick up and give way to determination and the will to win? How long does it take you to get back up after you've been knocked down?

Is this a temporary setback, or have you failed completely? Have you lost a single battle or an entire war? Your answers to these questions will largely depend on your own attitude. If you give up too quickly, you prematurely accept a temporary defeat as a final outcome. In Mary Stuart, Friedrich Schiller said something similar, "What's not abandoned, is not wholly lost."