

The Standout

The Standout

Copyright © 2026 Blurt Snodgrass

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means — electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise — without the prior written permission of the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

This is a work of reflection and encouragement. Names and characters are products of the author’s imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

First Edition: 2026

Published by 321Lumina

321Lumina.com

ISBN (paperback): _____-_____-_____-_____

ISBN (ebook): _____-_____-_____-_____

Printed in the United States of America

Cover and interior design by 321Lumina

The Standout

*A Story About
Training Your Mind*

Blurt Snodgrass

a 321Lumina.com book

*For every teenager
who has ever wondered what the ones
who make it have that they don't.*

Where my attention goes, energy flows.

Read that again.

Where my attention goes, energy flows.

It sounds simple. It is simple. And it will change everything if you actually let it.

You already know this in small ways — when you obsess over a crush, a test, or a game, everything else fades into the background. That's not a coincidence. That's your attention doing exactly what it always does: making whatever it lands on feel like the whole world.

Here is what it means in practice: your mind is not a passive thing that just receives whatever life throws at it. It is an active thing — a lens, a searchlight, a muscle — and wherever you point it, that is what grows. Whatever you focus on expands. Whatever you ignore shrinks. Whatever you practice thinking about becomes the way you automatically think.

Most teenagers never figure this out. They drift. They react. They let their attention get pulled by whatever is loudest — the notification, the drama, the fear, the comparison — and then wonder why they feel stuck, tired,

or like everyone else is moving forward while they're standing still.

The ones who stand out aren't smarter. They aren't luckier. They aren't more talented.

They just learned to point their attention on purpose.

That's the whole secret. And that's what this is about.



THE FIRST SHIFT

Perspective



Here is something that will immediately change how you handle hard things:

The situation is never the whole problem. The *story you tell yourself* about the situation is.

When something goes wrong — you fail a test, a friendship breaks, you don't get picked, someone says something that cuts deep — your brain does something automatic. It tells you a story. And that story, more than the event itself, is what determines how you feel and what you do next.

Most of the time, the story your brain tells in the first five minutes is the loudest, not the most useful one. It's the most reactive one. The most scared one. The one built from whatever you were already feeling before it happened.

The perspective mindset is learning to ask: *what's a different way of seeing this?*

Not a fake way. Not a pretend-it-doesn't-hurt way. A genuinely different angle.

You can ask: *how will I see this in five years?* From five years away, most of the things that feel catastrophic right now will look like the thing that taught you something important. That distance — even imagined — changes how much power the moment has over you.

You can ask: *how would someone I respect handle this?* Not to copy them, but to borrow their perspective for a moment. To see the situation through eyes that aren't clouded by your specific fear or your specific history with it.

You can ask: *how would this feel if it all worked out?* If you already knew it was going to be okay — how would you think about it right now?

These aren't tricks. They're redirections. You're choosing where to point your attention. And a different direction gives you a different story. A different story gives you a different feeling. A different feeling gives you a

different choice.



Mia had been passed over for the lead role three times.

Third year in a row. Same director. Same audition room. Same result.

She walked out of the building certain of the story her brain was telling: *not good enough, never going to be, stop trying.*

She sat on the steps outside for a long time.

Then she asked herself a question she'd read somewhere: *how will I think about this in five years?*

And something shifted. Because in five years — if she kept going — this moment would either be the one where she gave up, or the one right before everything changed. The moment itself was the same either way. The story she attached to it wasn't.

She went home. She found a new coach. She worked on the specific things the director had mentioned in her feedback two years ago that she'd never actually fixed.

The following year she got the lead.

Not because the rejection stopped hurting. But because she learned to tell herself a different story about what it meant.

THE SECOND SHIFT

Possibility



Your brain is a prediction machine. It takes what has happened before and uses it to decide what's possible now.

The problem is, your brain is working from a very small sample size. What you've done, what you've seen, what people around you have done or said or believed. And if none of those things include the thing you're reaching for, your brain will quietly conclude: *that's not possible. Not for someone like me. Not from where I'm starting.*

The possibility mindset is the habit of asking: *what if it is possible?*

Not asserting that it definitely is. Just asking. Just pointing your attention at the question rather than the conclusion.

Because here's what's true: almost everything that exists was once considered impossible. Not just the big things. The ordinary things too — the job, the relationship, the skill, the version of yourself you're trying to become — all of it looked impossible from some earlier vantage point.

The four-minute mile was considered a physical impossibility until Roger Bannister ran it. Then, within months, others ran it too. The barrier wasn't physical. It was a shared belief — a collective story about what was possible. When one person broke the story, the barrier dissolved.

Your limiting beliefs work the same way. They feel like facts. They're actually just stories your brain has been telling so long they hardened into certainty.

The question "*What if this is possible?*" is a crowbar. It doesn't force anything open. It just creates a gap. And in that gap, new thinking can start.



Darius had never thought of himself as a writer.

He was the math kid. The quiet one. Writing was for other people — the ones who read a lot, who had things to say, who weren't afraid of being seen.

His English teacher assigned a personal essay in October. He wrote it fast, carelessly, just to get it done.

She handed it back with a note at the top: “This is really good. Have you thought about writing more?”

He almost dismissed it. His brain moved quickly to: *she says that to everyone. It wasn't that good. I'm not a writer.*

But something made him pause at that word: *writer.*

What if that was possible?

He didn't answer the question. He just let it sit. He wrote another essay. Then another. He started keeping a journal. He entered a writing competition — not expecting to win, just to see what happened.

He didn't win. But he got feedback that told him specifically what was good and what needed work. And he realized he wanted to know. He wanted to get better.

Two years later, writing was the thing he was most known for.

It started with one question he almost didn't ask.

THE THIRD SHIFT

Purpose



Here is a question most teenagers have never been asked:

Why does what you're doing matter to you?

Not *what* are you doing. Not *how* are you going to do it. *Why* does it matter?

Most people start with *what*. This is the goal. This is the plan. This is the thing I'm working toward. Then they figure out *how*. And somewhere at the end, if they think about it at all, they get to *why*.

But *why* is the engine. *Why* is what keeps you going when the *how* gets hard and the *what* starts to feel impossible.

When you know why something matters to you — not why it should matter, not why someone else thinks it matters, but why it actually matters to *you* — you have

something that can outlast almost any setback.

Purpose doesn't have to be grand. It doesn't have to be *save the world* or *change everything*. It just has to be real. Something that connects the thing you're doing to something you actually care about at your core.

Ask yourself: *what am I trying to accomplish?* Then ask: *why does that matter?* Then ask why again. And again — until you get to something that feels like the floor. The thing under everything else. The real reason.

That's your why. And once you find it, it becomes a compass. When you're lost, when you're tired, when nothing seems to be working — the why points you back.

THE FOURTH SHIFT

Progress



Your brain is wired to notice what's wrong, what's missing, what's not there yet.

It is not naturally wired to notice what's better.

This is not a flaw. It's a survival mechanism — your ancestors needed to spot threats faster than opportunities. But it means that without deliberate effort, you will always feel further from where you're going than you actually are.

The progress mindset is the habit of asking: *how far have I come?*

Not instead of asking how far you have to go. But alongside it. Because the distance behind you is real evidence that you are capable of moving forward. And your brain needs evidence.

When you track your progress — even casually, even just noticing it for a moment — something changes. Dopamine releases. Motivation rises. The goal that felt impossibly far away becomes something you can believe in, because you have proof that you're the kind of person who moves toward it.

Compare yourself to who you were last month. Last year. The version of you that didn't know what you know now. Didn't have what you have now. Couldn't do what you can do now.

That's the only comparison that tells you anything useful.



Nadia had been learning guitar for eight months.

She was not good. She knew she wasn't good. Every time she played she could hear how far she was from sounding like the people she admired online. She almost quit in month three. Month five. Month seven.

In month eight her older brother found a video on her phone — a recording she'd made of herself playing in

month one.

She listened to it with him.

She sounded terrible. She stopped on every chord. She couldn't keep a rhythm. She winced listening to it.

“That's you eight months ago,” her brother said. “Play something now.”

She played the same song. All the way through. Without stopping.

She sat quietly for a moment.

She hadn't noticed. She'd been so focused on how far she still had to go that she'd completely missed how far she'd come.

She didn't quit in month eight.

THE FIFTH SHIFT

Presence



You are here. Right now. Reading this.

But how much of your attention is actually here?

Some of it is probably on something that happened earlier today. Some of it is on something that might happen later. Some of it is on a conversation you're half-replaying, or a worry you're half-building, or a version of yourself in some imagined future moment where things are different.

Your body is here. Your attention is scattered across time.

The presence mindset is the practice of bringing it back. Not permanently — your brain will wander again thirty seconds later. But bringing it back. Again. And again.

This matters for one very practical reason: you cannot do anything with time you're not actually in. The conversation you're half-having isn't one you're really having. The work you're half-doing isn't your best work. The moment you're half-present for is one you'll barely remember.

The most magnetic people — the ones who make you feel like you're the only person in the room — are not doing anything mysterious. They're just actually *there*. Fully. Completely. Their attention is on you, not on what they're going to say next or what happened before you arrived.

That kind of presence is rare. It is also learnable.

The question is simple: *what is happening right now?*
What can I notice right now that I haven't noticed yet?

That question is a return flight. It brings you back.

THE SIXTH SHIFT

Prioritization



You will never have enough time to do everything.

You will always have enough time to do what matters most.

The prioritization mindset is not about being more productive. It's about being honest — with yourself, regularly — about what actually matters most *right now*. Not in general. Not in theory. Right now.

Because what matters most in general and what matters most right now are not always the same thing. And if you don't make the distinction, you'll spend your life doing things that feel urgent but aren't actually important, while the things that *are* genuinely important keep getting pushed to later.

Later is where important things go to disappear.

The question is: *what is the one thing that, if I did it today, would make everything else easier or less necessary?*

(Finishing that assignment. Apologizing to that friend. Finally starting that thing you keep saying you'll start.)

That's it. Find that thing. Do that thing first.

Everything else can wait.

THE SEVENTH SHIFT

Adaptive



Plans fall apart. Always.

Not sometimes. Not occasionally. Always. Something will be different from what you expected. Something will take longer, or go wrong, or not work the way you thought it would. Murphy's Law is not a pessimistic outlook. It's just an accurate description of how things go.

The question isn't whether things will go wrong. It's whether you've decided in advance that you can handle it when they do.

The adaptive mindset is not rigidity about goals and flexibility about everything else. It's flexibility about three things: the goal itself, the deadline, and the approach. Sometimes you need to change all three. Sometimes just one. But the willingness to change any of them — without treating it as failure — is what separates people who keep

moving from people who get stuck.

Getting stuck almost always looks like one thing: insisting that reality should be different from what it is.

Adapting always looks like one thing: accepting what is, then asking *what now?*

THE EIGHTH SHIFT

Wonder



You've felt it before.

You're so locked into something — a game, a song, a conversation, a problem you're trying to solve — that time disappears. An hour passes and it felt like ten minutes. You weren't thinking about anything else. You weren't performing or worrying or comparing. You were just — in it.

That's flow. And your brain loves it.

When you're genuinely amazed — by a performance, a place, a story, a person doing something extraordinary — your brain releases dopamine. It marks the moment: *this matters. Remember this.* Wonder isn't a distraction from serious thinking. It's fuel for it.

The standout doesn't wait for wonder to happen accidentally. They seek it deliberately. They put their attention on things that expand what they think is possible — performers playing at an extraordinary level, people who did something that shouldn't have been possible, places and stories that make them feel the edges of the world get wider.

Because what amazes you raises your ceiling. And a higher ceiling changes what you're willing to attempt.

Seek the things that stop you mid-step. Let your brain mark them as important. Let them remind you what's possible.

That's not soft thinking. That's how a standout gets fueled.

THE NINTH SHIFT

Attention



Your attention is the most valuable thing you own.

Not your time. Not your talent. Not your connections or your resources or your opportunities.

Your *attention*. Because everything else follows it. Your energy goes where your attention goes. Your emotions follow your attention. Your skills grow in the direction of your attention. Your life, slowly and then all at once, becomes whatever you've been consistently paying attention to.

And right now, hundreds of companies with billions of dollars and the smartest engineers in the world are competing — every minute of every day — for your attention. They are not competing for it to give you something. They are competing for it to convert it into money. Your attention is their product.

Which means the most important decision you make every day is not what to do. It's where to look.

Audit your attention the way you'd audit anything that matters. What are you giving it to? What feelings does that create? What does a steady diet of that attention produce in you over weeks and months?

Then ask: *What do I want to feel? What do I want to know? What do I want to get better at? What kind of person do I want to become?*

And put your attention there.

Where your attention goes, energy flows.

You get to choose where it goes.

That is not a small thing. That is everything.

So here you are.

Nine shifts. Nine ways of training your mind to point in a direction you actually chose.

None of this is about being positive. It's not about pretending things are fine when they aren't, or believing you can do anything just by thinking hard enough about it.

It's about something simpler and more powerful than that.

It's about the fact that two people can face the exact same situation and experience it completely differently — not because the situation is different, but because of where they're pointing their attention. What story they're telling. What they believe is possible. What they're tracking. Whether they're actually here.

The ones who stand out aren't the ones who got dealt a better hand.

They're the ones who learned to play theirs differently.

Not all at once. Not perfectly. Just — differently. One shift at a time. One question at a time. One deliberate

decision about where to point their attention, and then another, and then another.

That's how a mind gets trained.

That's how a standout gets made.

THE ACTION

Bet on yourself



You've read nine shifts. You understand the ideas.

Now comes the only part that actually matters.

What are you going to *do* today? Not someday. Not when things get easier or when you feel more ready or when the situation improves. Today. Right now. With exactly what you have and exactly where you are.

Because here's the thing about everything you just read: it only works if you decide to bet on yourself.

Not because your situation is easy. It might not be. It might be harder than most people's. That's real and it's fair to say so.

But the story you tell yourself about that situation — whether you're the person it happens to or the person who decides what happens next — that part is yours. It has

always been yours.

You are the hero of this story. Not a supporting character. Not a victim of the plot. The hero. The one who faces the adversity and decides, today, to step up.

That decision doesn't require perfect conditions. It doesn't require anyone's permission. It doesn't require you to feel ready.

It just requires you to make it.

So make it.

...

The End

Make it.

Discover more books at
321Lumina.com