

Foreword

by Michael Aun*

Miracles happen when one chooses to never give up. One of the most inspiring examples I know of this truism is that of Wilma Rudolph, better known by her nickname, Lightning Wilma. She was born premature and with polio. At the age of four, she was stricken with double pneumonia and scarlet fever, which left her with a paralysed and useless left leg. Doctors told her mother, "the child will never walk."

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Her mother's response was a line adapted from a favourite hymn, "Wilma can climb her highest mountain if she'll do it one step at a time."

Wilma took five years just to walk one step without a brace, and another five years to develop that step into a smooth, rhythmic stride. On her 13th birthday, Wilma joined the track team. She came in last in every single race. She would shout above the laughter of her teammates, "I'll never give up. . . I promise you, I'll never give up!"

Slowly but surely, Wilma improved — until in 1960, at age 20, she was chosen to represent the United States in the Rome Olympics. She was an unknown black athlete who walked with a noticeable limp. Many in the Olympic stadium must have wondered what she was doing there. It took exactly 11 seconds to get the answer.

Wilma won her first gold medal in the 100m dash in those 11 seconds, beating the world record. She won her second gold in the 200m race. But the greatest miracle was yet to come. In the finals of the 4 × 100m relay, Wilma was the anchor runner. She dropped her baton. The German team, anchored by former world record

holder Yetta Hynie whom Wilma had previously beaten, looked set for a sure victory. With less than ten seconds to go, Wilma reached down, picked up the baton and pulled up beside her rival. The rest is Olympic history. Wilma led her team to victory. She became the first American woman to win three Olympic sprint golds.

Reading the manuscript of George Tan's book reminds me of Lightning Wilma. George, too, chose never to give up. Among his many achievements, George was a "shortie" to become captain of his school's badminton team. His greatest miracle, however, was his total transformation from being a "gangster kid" who did miserably in school, to twice becoming a top student in his postgraduate studies. And he went on to succeed in career and entrepreneurship.

Like Wilma, George came from a highly disadvantaged background. He grew up in extreme poverty, and had a father who abused him to the point of torture. He also had neighbourhood friends who introduced him to gambling and the 3 V's — vulgarism, vandalism and violence. By the time he was eight years old, George was already a hardened gambling addict. He would throw

down his books and rush off to gamble even on the eve of his school examinations.

The inspiring story of George's journey forms just a small part of this book, but it sends the vital message to all who are struggling with their studies, and with life, that miracles are possible — when one chooses to never give up.

Inspiration is vital because it leads to motivation. And motivation leads to success.

On the subject of motivation, I am happy to note that George and I share a similar view — that motivation is an inside job. My years of observing and studying people have led me to firmly believe that motivation comes purely from within oneself. The people who "motivate" — parents, teachers, sports coaches, employers, religious leaders and others, including motivational speakers like myself — can only draw out whatever motivation that already exists within a person. Or, we might turn "negative motivation" — such as being motivated to laze around — into something more positive. But motivation has to be there to begin with. If a person lacks motivation, no one can help him or her.

Clearly, George recognises the value of motivation and inspiration. There are many “How to...” books about studies, examinations and just about any other endeavour. Most of these focus on the tools and techniques. But, as George rightly points out, tools by themselves cannot produce anything. It is the person using the tools — more specifically, the motivation that dwells within the person — that really matters.

Even though this book focuses on success in studies, the wider focus has to be on success in life. Ultimately, the difference that we make comes from having life skills, particularly the ability to overcome obstacles and rebound from setbacks. For this purpose, readers are referred to George Tan's other book, *SUCCESS Secrets: Real-Life Stories to Inspire and Motivate* — a sequel to *Scholars' Secrets*. Here, George explains in detail his own life skills model called PRAISE, which embodies six key concepts: Prizedream, Rules, Analysis, Invincibility, Strategy and Excellence. The book includes a big, inspiring chapter about people who made it in life, becoming multi-millionaires and billionaires, prime ministers and presidents, Oscar winners and Nobel Prize winners, despite having

little or no education. Thus, there is an important message here. While examinations are important, they are not as crucial as the life skills that a person acquires in the process of getting those results.

With these tools, and the motivation and determination to never give up, it does not matter whether we are born premature and with polio, or born to an abusive father in a poor, gangster neighbourhood. We can overcome whatever disadvantages and obstacles that life presents. This invaluable book is about how we can all work miracles.

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