

FROM GRIP TO GRACE

When Your Success Formula Becomes Your Prison

“My wife looked at me one night and said, ‘You’re here, but you’re not really here.’ She was right. And I had no idea how to fix it.”

- A.R., Director of Operations, U.S. Division, Global Manufacturing Company



THE GRIP

The company was in trouble. Major clients threatening to leave, supply chain falling apart, CEO asking hard questions. My response was the only one I knew: grip tighter, work harder, control more. It wasn’t working. And I was bringing all of it home.

My daughter had started competing with my phone for my attention. My wife and I had stopped having real conversations. I told myself this was temporary, just until we got through this rough patch. But somewhere I knew: this was the pattern. This was how I operated.

Then my wife said the thing I couldn’t unhear. And I realized I was stuck—successful on paper, empty inside, and running a playbook that wasn’t serving anyone. Not the company, not my team, and definitely not my family.



THE MIRROR

I thought coaching would be about time management. Better delegation. Executive presence. Chris went somewhere else entirely.

He kept connecting what was happening in the office to what was happening at home. Same patterns. Same need to control. Same belief that if I let go, everything would fall apart.

“What brought you here won’t take you where you want to be,” he said. And I realized my biggest obstacle wasn’t the business crisis. It was me.

The work got uncomfortable. I had to admit that my *dedication* was partly about needing to feel important.





That my team wasn't stepping up because they knew I'd just take the work back the moment I got anxious. That I'd wrapped my entire identity in being the guy who could hold everything together.

Chris helped me see a different way: responsible and present. Ambitious and grounded. Successful and available to my family.



WHAT CHANGED



It was messy at first. I'd put the phone down at dinner, then pick it up five minutes later. Give my team more room, then micromanage when something went sideways.

But slowly, things shifted. My team started owning their decisions. The company got stronger. My wife and I started talking again, really talking. My daughter stopped fighting for my attention because she knew she had it.

I found my way back to spiritual practices I'd abandoned. That grounding helped me remember what actually mattered.

Then they offered me COO for the Americas. Everything I thought I wanted. Bigger title, bigger scope, bigger demands. I turned it down.

After all the work figuring out what actually motivated me, I realized it would just be more of the same—more travel, less presence, the pattern reasserting itself. So I walked away and started my own consultancy doing work that energizes me instead of depleting me. My wife thought I'd lost my mind. Then she saw I was happier than I'd been in years.





WHAT CHANGED



I make less money. I'm home for dinner most nights. My family knows they can count on me not to be perfect, just reliably present.

When problems come up now, I ask a different question: What would actually serving my family and my clients look like here?

The grip loosened. And what replaced it was something I didn't expect: grace.

If you're working harder but getting diminishing returns—successful by every external measure but feeling hollow inside—that's not a character flaw. It might mean your operating system needs an upgrade.



lead yourself well ... serve your great purpose

TheServingWay — Chris Thyberg

thinking partner | outfitter | coach



Chris.Thyberg@TheServingWay.com



+1 917.535.6832



TheServingWay.com

[LinkedIn](#)

[Newsletter](#)



grow as a
leader