**CS Lewis Howes Part 1**

**Voice Over**: Welcome to The Chalene Show. Chalene has helped thousands with her books, seminars, and online academies. She’s the author of the New York Times Bestselling Push and a mother of two.

**Chalene Johnson**:Hey, there. It’s Chalene. You’re listening to The Chalene Show. This is a very special episode. This is an episode with the man synonymous with the word greatness, Lewis Howes. This is the story that not many know. This is the story of courage. This could be your story.

This is the story of triumph, of success, and our ability to overcome, to find purpose from the most painful moments of our past. Lewis is a fellow lifestyle and success coach. He’s an author, host of the top-rated School of Greatness. He’s been featured in countless business, success, and entrepreneurial publications.

He’s a social media thought leader. He’s taught thousands and thousands how to create a full-time income using LinkedIn, webinars and so many other programs including how to create your own systems online.

What’s really cool about Lewis is he’s a former pro athlete. He’s currently on the Men’s USA Olympic Handball team. He’s like 6’5 and has these GQ good looks with the sweet smile. So not only does he not look like your typical social media dude, he doesn’t act like one either.

He’s soft spoken, low key, just a good guy who likes to connect people. I have never once heard him brag or name drop or try to one-up people. He’s just not that kind of guy. But if we’re really going to tell his story, you need the real story.

I don’t know about you but sometimes, I hear from experts and authors and I hear their stories. I’m like, “Who is this person really? How did they get here? What drives them? What makes them special? Is there something different on the inside of this people who find greatness?”

I know that there is. I just think that very few people have the courage and the confidence to share that story. But my dear friend, Lewis, agreed to open up about some pretty vulnerable stuff, stuff that I even heard too many other people open up and be honest about.

Lifers, today, Lewis shares the gift of his very personal story of triumph with you and I. Now, just a warning, we do deal with some pretty deep topics and stuff that might not be appropriate for little ears. So perhaps, this is one you listen to solo. So take a deep breath. All right, now, relax. I promise you will be inspired by this story. Lewis Howes.

**[START OF INTERVIEW]**

**Chalene:** Lewis Howes, it’s Chalene Johnson.

**Lewis Howes:** Chalene, how are you?

**Chalene:** I’m great, thanks. How are you?

**Lewis:** I’m doing fantastic. It’s always a pleasure when we get to chat.

**Chalene:** It’s a great pleasure when we get to chat, and it’s even more fun when we get to work out together.

**Lewis:** That is true. You and your husband are great. I can’t wait until I come back down to your house and do it.

**Chalene:** The last time we worked out, we were talking about learning a back tuck. You said, “I’m going to learn it. I’m going to learn it.” I said, “Don’t you dare. Don’t you dare because I want to learn it, too.” I guess I know that…

**Lewis:** You watched my Instagram?

**Chalene:** Yes. I feel like you’re a little brother to me, a big little brother. I saw that and I had this admiration and jealousy at the same time. I’m like, “Damn him! How in the world you get that…?” I have no excuse. If you can get that giant body up in the air and around, I have no excuse.

**Lewis:** Yes, exactly.

**Chalene:** It did inspire me. I thought, “I should be able to do this.”

**Lewis:** You can do it. You’re tiny, petite, and powerful. So you should be able to do it.

**Chalene:** Is the key having no fear?

**Lewis:** No because I was afraid the whole time. I’m still afraid. Man, it was trusting the spotter and what he was trying me to do. It was trusting that I was going to make it around because it’s really scary just tucking your knees and going back.

**Chalene:** You have to see this video. It’s pretty awesome. It’s on Lewis Howes’ Instagram. I will put a link to it in the show notes. You just have to see this. How many lessons did it take for you to learn it, not that I’m competitive or anything?

**Lewis:** That was one day. I probably did like four or more attempts. That was like the whole attempts that I did the whole time, and I just went for it. I was like, “What do I need to do?” He goes, “Just jump up and I got you.” I was like, “Uh, okay.”

**Chalene:** Oh my gosh.

**Lewis:** Yes. He’s like, “I’ve done this so many times. You’ll be fine.” I was like, “All right.” So I just went for it and trusted him. Obviously, I tried it in a pit a couple of times. So I jumped off in a mat into a big foam pit. Then I just went for it.

**Chalene:** I love people like you. It’s why you’re here today to talk to us about what it is that drives you and people like you. I have this blessing I feel in my life that I have met people who I find so inspirational because they have this word, this character trait that I think is so beautiful, and it’s resilience especially for people life yourself and just a few other really special friends I have.

That back tuck just speaks volumes because you have no fear. You have no fear of failure. You’re like, “It might work; it might not, but I’m going for it.”

**Lewis:** Thank you. I appreciate it, yes. To speak about it really quickly, I would say that I actually – I still feel the fear. I was nervous right before. There were all these tumblers who were doing double back flips. I’m like I’ve never done, so I was really insecure and nervous. What if I fall on my face?

There was still fear. I think the thing I have is I don’t want to feel the fear of regret, of not trying at least. So I allow myself to go for things because I would hate the feeling of regret.

**Chalene:** So your fear of regret is stronger than your fear of failure.

**Lewis:** Yes.

**Chalene:** Huge.

**Lewis:** Failure is fine. It’s more like I just don’t want to wish that I would to try that one time. I dream right now I’m going for Olympics and I don’t want to wish when I was 40 that I didn’t at least go for it. If I don’t make it, I’m okay. But if I don’t try for it and give everything in my power that I know I can give, if I don’t do that, then I’m going to be beating myself for the rest of my life. I don’t want to feel that way.

**Chalene:** Wow. For those people who are just meeting Lewis for the first time, he’s been a guest of my show Build Your Tribe. He’s been on my Facebook wall. You probably have seen him on Instagram. Just a truly great caring genuine person who’s helped me a lot in business just transitioning to webinars.

I think that maybe people know you or seen you or don’t know the story behind that transition you made from being a professional athlete to what you do today. So can you tell us a little bit about that?

**Lewis:** You know my dream as a child – just like Bret, your husband’s dream was to be a professional football player, professional athlete. I was fortunate enough to achieve it. I was paid to play professional football in the Arena Football League. I never made the ultimate dream, which is the NFL.

But again, I knew that if I didn’t at least go for it and go as far as I could go with it that I would always be beating myself up and regretting it. I did go for it and then it stopped with an injury.

The injury left me feeling very uncertain and very unsure of how I was going to make a name for myself or just have a great life next. I never had a backup plan. I haven’t graduated college yet. I eventually did and finish college a couple of years later.

I kind of relied on my father really growing up as a source of income, I guess. They were paying for school. I went to a private boarding school when I was 13. I lived in the boys’ dorm on a campus in St. Louis Missouri. I’m from a small town called Delaware, Ohio.

I had food taken care of. I was in school. It was like being college as a teenager. I was on the campus and doing that. In the off season and high school and summers, I like worked in the morning in the country club, golf course cutting greens. In the afternoons, I would train. That’s pretty much all I did. It wasn’t like I had to work a lot.

In college summers, my dad knew my dream was to go to the NFL. So he said, “How about you just come home or go where we need to go to train and I’ll make sure you’re taken care of. I’ll pay for food and housing or whatever. As long as you’re training full time, I’ll consider that your job.”

I maybe worked like a couple of weeks here and there, some odd jobs in the weekend like moving things for people or something like that but I really never had a job. I had an internship from school but it was pretty easy back then.

I never knew how to make money. Maybe I made like $1,000 or $2,000 in my entire life before then with these little jobs and things like that. Then I went to go and play football, started making a little bit of money. It was only like $300 a week in the Arena Football League. It wasn’t like we were getting rich.

After that, I was 24 – I think and I was like, “What am I going to do now? I’m injured and I have no clue what I’m going to do.” My dad has got injured the year prior. He had a severe brain injury from a car accident. It was basically like I lost my dad that day during this accident because he was in a coma for three months.

When he woke up, we have to teach him how to walk and talk and write and go to the bathroom. We had to change him, all these things. It was like basically teaching someone how to live from a baby again.

It was like I lost that backup plan, if you will, this source of income, this source of safety like, “Hey, you’re going to be fine. I’ll take care of you.” He had a pretty successful company. He was like, “Whenever you’re done with your dream, if you want to come back and work for me, you’re taken care of.”

I kind of had that at the back of my head. When I was ripped out the rug for me and I didn’t study in school because it was really challenging to learn. At 24 years old with an injury, no degree in 2008, I really didn’t know what was next.

**Chalene:** Did that affect your identity too because…

**Lewis:** Oh my gosh.

**Chalene:** I know that for a lot of kids, you see them struggle with that moment when it’s over. Even this year, Brock playing football, there is this senior who got hurt like midway to the season. I remember seeing him crying on the sidelines. I thought, “He’s not crying because he’s hurt. This could be the last time he’s ever played.”

**Lewis:** It’s so emotional with your son and with Bret just – it’s so emotional. When you put your whole life into something and then it’s over. When it’s over not by your terms as you work harder, I think. You’re second guessing. You’re saying, “What if I had done this differently?” It’s really emotional.

**Chalene:** I think everyone can relate to that even if you’re not a professional athlete or didn’t have an identity created from your gift. I think you even see moms struggle this with this when their kids become their lives and then suddenly, their kids are gone. They’ve lost their identity. So what did you do?

**Lewis:** Our relationships and things like that, yes. Luckily, it was a hard time for our entire family because we were really struggling. It’s like our dad, we weren’t sure if he’s going to live or die. He has really kept the family together. He was like this larger than life, so wise and powerful and inspiring human.

We didn’t know what to do because he was alive but he wasn’t – it was like we have to take care of him. He couldn’t work. It was just real challenge because it was like, “What do we do now?” I don’t have my mentor and my father to support me.

Luckily, we bonded together, my siblings and I. My sister said I can come crashing on her couch for a while. For the next year and a half, I started – for the first few months, I was pretty depressed. I was just in denial. I’m going to come back. I’m going to get out of this cast and come back strong and ever and play again, but there was another plan because it took six months for the cast to come off and then another six months of taking to just move it without pain.

I lost all my strength and gained like 30 pounds and all this other stuff. After a year and half, my sister was like, “It’s probably time that you get a job.” I wasn’t paying for anything. I was just eating her food and living there.

During this time, I spent a lot of energy learning. I knew that I had to start developing new skills because I really didn’t have a skill that anyone could pay me for. I played football so maybe I could coach. That was the skill that I could do, but I didn’t want to be coach. I knew I wanted to be financially free. I just had no clue how to make any money.

So I was terrified. I just knew I need to learn new skills. I found a number of mentors who I was just inspired by who are making money and living a life that was inspiring. I said, “How did you do it? How are you doing it? What were the steps you took? What do you think I should do? If you were in my position, what would you do?”

Literally, everything they said I just took a lot of action on like I was playing a sport again. It was like, “Okay, I’m learning a new sport. It’s called the game of life and business and relationships. Here are my coaches. Here are the practice lesson plans and now it’s time for me to take a lot of action.

Practice, practice, practice. Prepare, watch film, and then get ready for game times,” which were big opportunities that came to me. I’ve looked at life just like a sport ever since.

**Chalene:** Well, I think most people hearing your story would assume or wonder if it’s because you just such a confident guy. Have you always been this way?

**Lewis:** Oh no.

**Chalene:** They can imagine themselves doing these things even if they learn them or to learn them from the best coaches. For the average person, they don’t have the confidence to go out and take action and to do these things. Have you always been a confident person?

**Lewis:** I would say the opposite of that. When I was a kid, I never had any friends. I was the youngest of four…

**Chalene:** Why do you think?

**Lewis:** I don’t know. If I really think about it, I was taller than everyone. I was really ugly and goofy looking, and had a lot of acne. I was just not intelligent in school. Obviously, a lot of kids in school are really smart and I was always in the bottom of the class. I couldn’t read out loud in school. I just really struggle with homework.

So when you’re constantly being graded on things and you’re constantly being blast and the worst at everything you do, it always maybe feels like, “I don’t know. I wasn’t intelligent enough, I wasn’t smart enough, and I got made fun of a lot.”

**Chalene:** Would you purposely not connect with people? Would you try to be invisible?

**Lewis:** No. I do the opposite, I was trying to be friends with people, but it was almost like they were pushing me away or they just make fun of me type of thing. I was probably overly obnoxious to my siblings and always try to get attention because I never felt like I had any.

That was then. When I was eight, my brother got sentenced to six to 25 years in prison for selling drugs for an undercover cop.

**Chalene:** That’s your older brother.

**Lewis:** My older brother. He was 18.

**Chalene:** He was 18 and you were how old?

**Lewis:** I was eight.

**Chalene:** So this is your hero?

**Lewis:** Yes, my hero. So when he went to prison, there’s no one else I ever heard of that went to prison and are the small town at Delaware, Ohio. You just heard about it in the movies. So for this happening in like a middle class white suburban neighborhood, it was a shock to the semi friends that I did have, the neighborhood kids.

So I could go ahead to their houses anymore. They couldn’t come over to my place because their parents wouldn’t let them because they thought I was a bad kid, too, or something.

**Chalene:** Did you feel that? Did you think, “I’m bad”? What did you feel about yourself then?

**Lewis:** I just felt like I was stupid. I just felt like I didn’t have the intelligence and that no one was friends with me. I just felt really insecure. I had zero confidence. I was like lashing out a lot. I was like a brat because I was trying to get attention and trying to like being in people’s faces just to get anyone to know that I was alive.

I remember actually telling the principal whenever I get in trouble in school, in elementary school, for some reason, I remember saying this: I wish I were dead right now. I wish I were dead. I would say that over and over like it was nothing. Obviously, it was really a serious thing for them to hear that or to say that. For me, I was like…

**Chalene:** Did they do anything? I mean if I had a child say that…

**Lewis:** I don’t remember them doing anything. I think maybe they called my parents or something. They probably talked to me. I just remember never feeling like anyone gave me the attention that I really wanted. I knew my parents love me. I knew my siblings love me. My dad would tuck me in bed every night before sleep. He’d be there for me in that way.

As a kid, I never felt like anyone dropped in their knees and just connected with me and said, “What’s going on? Let’s play together. Let’s do what you want to do.” Whatever a kid needs, I just didn’t feel like I got it.

It translated. In middle school, I was terrified to speak to girls. No girls would talk to me because I was the tall ugly kid. I remember when I was 16, I went into this boarding school in high school but I was still scared to talk to girls.

When I came back for summer in 16, I said, “I’m sick and tired of having zero confidence with girls.” Obviously, as a teenager, you want to talk to girls. I made a game for myself. I said everyday in the summer, when I was 16, I’m going to – when I roam out, I’m going to go find a girl that I’m attracted to. If it scares me to talk to her, I’m going to go talk to her and ask for her number.

I did this every single day for the summer. I’ll tell you what. Just like doing what I was afraid of and just giving myself a little game or exercise to move into. It was so powerful for me to see that it’s not that hard and it’s not that scary. If someone just blows me off, it’s not that big of a deal.

I was so afraid of rejection that I allow myself to just experience rejection over and over and learn how to just be playful and let it go. Those were some great experiences.

**Chalene:** Wow.

**Lewis:** Whenever I felt the fear, I was like, “What can I do to overcome this because it sucks having it?”

**Chalene:** For so many people, it’s just your first simple experiment to figure out. I’m just going to do this. I know it’s going to be a little bit painful but I’ll survive it. It just keeps getting easier.

**Lewis:** Exactly. I was actually coaching someone the other day, who – it’s part of one of my online programs and she – I was like, “What’s your dreams?” She was like, “I would love to have $3,000 a month coming in from six clients.”

I was like, “Okay. What are you going to do about it?” She said, “Well, I think I need to create some more content online. I think I need to get a certification so I can have more confidence so that people hire me.”

I go, “I don’t have a certification. I don’t have this. I just went out and just asked people to give me money. Why don’t you just go call someone who you’ve all ready worked with and say, ‘Hey, I’m going to put together this program’”? I’m going to be coaching every month on your health and your fitness and here’s the price.”

She was like, “There’s no way I could do that. I’d be terrified if they say no.” I was like, “Listen. I do webinars and nine of out 10 people say no and I’m still a millionaire.”

**Chalene:** Right.

**Lewis:** Nine out of 10 people say no and I still make seven figures a year. So they’re going to say no and you’re going to get rejected and you got to learn how to find the people that are going to say yes and work with them.

**Chalene:** Do you think that that comes from the adversity that you face in just figuring out that you can get over that? How do you think your childhood has shaped who you are today?

**Lewis:** It’s everything. I would say that my childhood has shaped me in a way that it gave me a lot of – I went through a lot of pain in my own inner world. Obviously, other people in the world have experienced a lot of different types of pain. But emotionally, I was experiencing a lot of pain every day.

What shaped me were those moments when I said, “I’m sick and tired of feeling this pain. What are the things that I can do to get to next level?” Those were the moments that shaped me when I was like, “Okay, enough is enough of feeling worthless.”

“Enough is enough of feeling like I can’t read. Enough is enough like I’m broke and I have no more money, or I’m the last picked person on the sports teams in elementary school. Enough is enough.”

Each one of those moments I was sick and tired of feeling the pain and not having what I want. So I just committed to creating whatever I wanted next and doing whatever it took to make it happen.

**Chalene:** Wow. You have shared with me that you’re comfortable with me asking you about this because you shared it in your own podcast. If I can I love to link to that show because I think it’s one of your best shows ever, the one where you shared a really traumatic childhood experience that happened when you were six.

**Lewis:** Yes. It was actually when I was five. It was interesting. After my parents, my dad worked constantly in his business, my mom was working to try to just feed us when we were younger – we didn’t have a lot of money when we were younger – I would go to a baby sitter every day after kindergarten and first grade right across the school.

One day, the baby sitter’s son was there. I never actually remember seeing the son any other time. But he was there and his room was open and he was playing Nintendo in his room. For me at the time, this was back in 1988 or something – that’s just when Nintendo came out. It was a big deal.

I was like, “Hey, can I play Nintendo?” He and I are brothers or something like that. He said, “Yes but you got to do something for me first.” He took me in the bathroom…

**Chalene:** Do you remember feeling scared in that moment or do you yet not know?

**Lewis:** I can’t remember every aspect of it but I remember feeling like, “Okay, cool. I just want to play Nintendo.” I remember being so nonchalant.

**Chalene:** So that wouldn’t spark fear on you.

**Lewis:** Yes, he wasn’t necessarily weird. I didn’t sense that until we were in the bathroom and the door was shut and locked. Then there was an experience of sexual abuse. I remember in that moment when these things were happening, I remember thinking something is off.

But the end result for me as a five-year-old was like, “I just want to play Nintendo. I guess this is what I’m supposed to do to get what I want or something.” I didn’t even know. But it was definitely…

**Chalene:** When that happened, did you tell anyone?

**Lewis:** I didn’t tell anyone. It was like I knew a few years later, “Holy crap! I can’t believe this actually happened.” It was almost like it was a dream or something that I try to let go off or it kept reoccurring in my mind.

**Chalene:** So you’d say it didn’t happen. It didn’t happen or what?

**Lewis:** I was like, “Did it happen?” I was talking to myself back.

**Chalene:** The brain is pretty powerful, isn’t it?

**Lewis:** Yes. I try to block it but it would always keep coming up. Even now I could vividly remember the bathroom, the way it looks. I can’t remember the way his face looks. I can’t remember that but I remember the smell, the taste, everything. It wasn’t a funny experience, that’s for sure.

**Chalene:** No. I just want to wrap my arms around you and tell you I love you and say I’m so sorry that it happened.

**Lewis:** Thank you.

**Chalene:** I think it’s so courageous especially for a man. I know this is more prevalent than what people are willing to share. But it’s stories like this that will help so many other people and to see what you’ve done with your life and how much more lovable and really become when you’re vulnerable enough to say, “This happened to me as a child and it wasn’t my fault.”

It doesn’t define me but I have been able to turn that into something that’s changed a lot of other people’s lives. To think then that you’re five and you’re thinking, “Gosh, everything’s unsafe. The whole world is unsafe.” You have all these other things, all these other messages in your head and you have to deal with all that. Then your hero, which who I’m assuming felt like a protector, goes away to prison. You’re how old when that happens?

**Lewis:** Eight.

**Chalene:** Wow. I mean, hi. Talk about how do you find yourself? How do you become the person that you are today?

**[END OF INTERVIEW]**

**Chalene:** Whew! Some pretty heavy stuff. I know that was heavy but my friend, you have your own story. All of us have experience our own heartache, defeat, and challenge.

What does it take to go from feeling like you’re worthless and stupid and nobody cares about you to being someone like Lewis, the foster child for greatness, someone with that kind of confidence and courage to be able to open up and share the most personal details and the belief that are going to help others? What does it take to get there? What does it take not just to survive but to conquer?

We’re not talking about a guy who’s gotten past his past. He’s turned his tragedies into a way to help other people. It’s fueled his passion and his purpose. Lewis’ story is your story. You are on the path to greatness. Anyone can survive and be good. You don’t want to be just good. You want to be great.

So find out what that takes because the real story, the hero story is in Part 2. Please, do me a favor and download it now especially if there was a part of this interview when we got into that story, if you really felt upset and triggered some things in yourself, I want you to hear Part 2. There’s so much inspiration, motivation. You’re going to hear that it’s possible for you too.

But don’t be afraid to ask for help. You’ve got somebody in your life who loves you, who cares about you and when you open up about something like this, something that right now, you’re carrying around as your own secret. It just makes you sick inside. It does.

The first time you open up and share that with someone, someone who has the confidence and the knowledge to be able to say, “It wasn’t your fault. I still love you,” and can encourage you to get the help that you need, you’re going to feel the weight of the world lifted from your shoulders.

I’ve met hundreds of individuals who’ve shared that exact same story. I’ve never met someone, never in my life met somebody who finally let go of their secret and regretted it. Get the help that you need. Get the help that you deserve. Listen to Part 2.

Lifers, I love you.

**[END OF RECORDING]**