**CS Lewis Howes: Adversity Advantage**

**Chalene Johnson**: Hey, it’s Chalene. No music this time because I have a very special request for you. I need you to go listen to the episode just prior to this one. The title of that episode is Conquer Your Past. This is a two-part episode. This is the story of lifestyle entrepreneur and former pro athlete, Lewis Howes.

This is the part of the story where you learn exactly how, step by step, how we was able to turn the tragedies of his childhood and his young adult life into the advantages that have allowed him to help millions, to find his purpose, to step into his greatness, and help others do that, too.

First, I have to ask you to listen to Episode Number 1. It’s a pretty serious episode. But you need to go back and listen to that now. If you don’t, you’re going to be wondering why I started out this part of the episode in tears. But this is the turning point in his story.

This is the hero story. It has so much more power, and impact, and inspiration for all of us if you’ve listen to Part 1. So please, please, please, do me that favor. Trust me. You want to listen to Part 1 first. Now, Part 2 with my very special, very courageous, very generous friend, Lewis Howes.

**[START OF INTERVIEW]**

**Chalene:** 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 Howes:** Eight.

**Chalene:** Wow. I mean, hi. Talk about how do you find yourself? How do you become the person that you are today, Lewis? There are other people listening right now, who I’m sure are in tears because they’ve told no one their story, that thing that haunts them. They haven’t shared that with the person that they’re closest to. What would you say to someone who needs to know that you can turn that into a life – a moment where you take back and you take control of your life? How did you do that?

**Lewis:** Yes. Well, I appreciate you for saying those things. You’re making me cry right now. I realize that I probably said it semi nonchalantly that I was sexually abused and things like that. You know this. I’ve been through a lot of work over the last year. Through that I’ve been able to feel comfortable to openly talk about it, but what was your question?

**Chalene:** Well, I guess at what point did you know, “Okay, this can no longer be a secret and I have to deal with this?”

**Lewis:** Here’s what it is. After that, I always was reactive to everything. When I look back at my life, I would like to think that I wasn’t in my 20s but my ego was always reacting. I would say in my core that I’m extremely loving just like everyone in the world is all love. But I allowed my ego to put up a lot of the walls throughout my entire life. I still express love constantly. That’s where I come from was love, but ego and insecurities definitely were…

**Chalene:** Was it ego or were you protecting yourself?

**Lewis:** That’s probably what it is. I don’t know if the ego that I need to protect myself or whatever.

**Chalene:** What do you mean specifically? I’ve only known you in the time since you’ve processed through this. So what were you like before?

**Lewis:** I was still the same way but I was probably more – I was still like this fun loving – want-to-hang-out-with-people, want-to-achieve-great-things type of a guy, attitude and energy. But I think my ego definitely came out a lot more. It was like I tried to show that I was an important person or prove to people that they should connect with me or something. There’s always something to prove.

**Chalene:** Prove your value?

**Lewis:** Yes, prove my value like I mattered.

**Chalene:** Did you feel like as a child you mattered?

**Lewis:** No. I felt like dirt. I pretty much felt like dirt my entire life until I was probably 13 or 14 and things started to turn around when I went to this private school. It was like I had a new beginning. I was starting to develop into my body. In middle school, I was just like enough is enough of being emotionally bullied, I guess let’s say, and put down and made fun of.

So I just trained – every day after school, all I do was play basketball and work out until about nine or 10 o’clock because I was like enough is enough. I’m going to show these people that I’m better than them. It’s something. Sports was my outlet. I took all the frustration from school of not being to read and learning and being made fun of.

I’m going to show the world what I’m made of. I’m going to prove everyone wrong and I’m going to be right. So I had this mentality of “I’m going to be right, you’re going to be wrong and screw you all for ever doubting me that I couldn’t do it and ever making fun of me.”

It was like basically trying to prove all the elementary and middle school kids wrong and show them up where I come from. It was effective in the fact that I was very driven and very focused and was willing to sacrifice anything to achieve what I wanted to do.

In high school or in college, I didn’t have one sip of alcohol because people said I was going to be this jock, this college football, stereotypical drunk, this and that, and womanizer. I was like, “Screw you all. I’m not going to have one sip. I’m going to be focused and I’m going to make it to be a pro athlete.”

I was just willing to sacrifice anything to prove people wrong. It didn’t matter. I was willing to sacrifice having fun to prove people wrong. That didn’t serve me. For 25 years, to answer your question, I didn’t tell anyone. I actually told one person. I went to Minnesota State for a year to play football in my freshman year. The Sociology professor, it was like 500 students in the class like Sociology 101 – he was talking about rape and sexual abuse in one of the classes. It was the only time I listened probably because I didn’t care about class.

But something sparked in me right then and said, “I need to tell this guy.” I didn’t know him. I never met him. He didn’t know who I was, but I went to his office after class and just said, “Hey, I just want to talk to you about something. Here’s what happened to me when I was a kid.” He said, “I’m really sorry this happened to you. I can probably tell you that you’re not the first person that he did this to you and he’s probably done it again. It’s really sad and I’m sorry that this happened to you.” I don’t remember the rest of the conversation but I remembered feeling good to tell one person. He was like a stranger.

**Chalene:** Did it feel good that he normalized it?

**Lewis:** Yes. It’s really messed up.

**Chalene:** It’s not you and you weren’t the only one.

**Lewis:** Yes. He was like, “I can guarantee you, he’s done that before.” So that was good but I didn’t know this guy. It was too safe.

**Chalene:** So you didn’t get therapy then? You’re still dealing with all these rage inside?

**Lewis:** Exactly. I was like I need to prove the world wrong that I’m going to be right. So for the next decade, 12 years, it wasn’t until I was 29 where I did an emotional intelligence workshop. I remember at one point during the workshop, people are sharing some crazy things about their experiences in their life.

The trainer was like, “Okay, we’re moving forward in this experience in this workshop. We’re taking into the next phase of this workshop. In order to do that, you need to let go of everything that you’ve been holding that hasn’t been serving you in your life – anything from your past that you haven’t talked about it, if you haven’t said it, if you haven’t expressed it in the way you need to.”

“If there’s something you’ve been holding on to, holding you down, and weighing you down, whatever it is, if you do not at least talk about it and bring it to the forefront right now, it’s going to be holding you down for the rest of your life.” I remember he was like, “Does anyone want to share? This is the last chance.”

I remember thinking like – I started sweating, my heart started pounding. I felt like I had said everything I needed to do. I was fine. My life is great. I’m achieving success.

**Chalene:** I don’t know why my heart is racing.

**Lewis:** Right. My life is on fire. I’ve got a great business. I’ve got friends. I’m like this, this, this. But I said, “Crap, if I really want to discover what is possible for me in my life and my relationships and everything, then I think I need to tell this to this room of 50 people or whatever.”

I remember just walking up and I don’t think I’ve ever been scared in my life to say anything. I remember walking up, I calmly walked through – I couldn’t look anyone in the eye. I did not look anyone in the eyes during this process. I looked down in the ground in complete shame, guilt, and humiliation. But I knew that it was necessary to at least discover and see what came up for me.

I started walking through the whole process but I described in detail. I want to explain everything that happened. I described it very graphically.

**Chalene:** When you look into the audience, do you remember people’s faces?

**Lewis:** I looked down the whole time.

**Chalene:** Wow.

**Lewis:** I couldn’t look anyone in the eye.

**Chalene:** You just want to get through it, just knuckle through it.

**Lewis:** Yes and I was trying to be calm and not cry and show that I was strong or whatever. I remember walking back to my chair and right when I sat down, I don’t think I’ve ever bolted my heart my entire life. It was like 30 years of tears came out.

**Chalene:** Yes, just pushing it down.

**Lewis:** My body – I couldn’t control it. I couldn’t stop it. I couldn’t control it. I remember running out of the room in shame and humiliation because I just felt like everyone knew my secret and what are they going to think of me now?

I remember I was outside of the hotel conference room in the alley by the street. I had my head against the fence by the alley. I was bawling and sobbing into this fence like leaning against it with my head down. I just didn’t want anyone to look at me. I felt like a really bad human being.

**Chalene:** Did anyone follow you?

**Lewis:** It was almost like I never felt this much love in my life like so many people – women – came out to me and we’re just crying and hugging me. The manliest men in the group who were father figures came up to me and looked to me in the eyes, bawling and telling me I was the most courageous man they’ve ever met.

When people are expressing these things and telling me, it slowly allowed me to let it go and heal. I don’t need to be humiliated. I don’t need to feel shamed and I don’t need to hold on to this.

**Chalene:** No, it’s not your shame.

**Lewis:** Yes. I think it was that confirmation from other people saying, “Hey, we still love you. We still want to be your friend.” That’s what I was afraid of my whole life was not having friends and not having people love me.

**Chalene:** Was there a relief in that moment?

**Lewis:** Yes. I was still terrified and I was hesitant of the next few hours but it was definitely a huge release. I was like, “What do I do now? Now, these people know, still my family doesn’t know. My friends don’t know. So the people that are important in my life, they have no clue about me still.”

**Chalene:** So if someone is listening to this and they’re considering going to someone safe and sharing this for the first time, which I really think people should. After you tell that person, what’s the next step?

**Lewis:** Well, I think when you tell someone – I was lucky to be in a safe container to share, where other people were opening up about things as well. It was safer. It wasn’t like no one else was vulnerable. Everyone was vulnerable.

Since I opened up about this in my podcast and I’ve just had an article came out recently as well, so many people have gone through similar experiences. If you’re listening and you’ve gone through a similar experience, feel free to reach out to me if you want. I’m happy to listen. I’m not an expert and I’m not a psychiatrist or anything, so I can’t really give you any advice.

I can tell you what I would recommend from me is if you’ve experienced something like this, you know someone has, just love on people. If you know someone who’s done this, just show them your love and show them you love them no matter what. I remember asking my brother. I was telling my family members one by one.

**Chalene:** Who are you he most fearful or nervous to tell?

**Lewis:** My brother and my mom – my brother – because he’s my hero. My father, I can’t really talk to that way anymore because his brain. I remember asking my brother, I said, “I want to tell you something but before I do, is there anything that I could ever do in my life that would make you not love me?” I was afraid that maybe he would stop loving me. I asked this to all my siblings, but he was the one I was scared of the most.

Right away, he said, “No, absolutely not. It does not matter what you ever do in your life. I will always love you and still love you.” I think it might have been a lot easier for him to say that because he’d been to prison and he felt so much shame from letting down the family and having his own experiences…

**Chalene:** I can only imagine.

**Lewis:** …the baggage, the weight that he carried during and after and probably still carries to some degree. So when I told him, it was just this connection with my brother, this intimacy that I’ve never experienced before, it was so incredible and so freeing.

**Chalene:** What a relief, yes.

**Lewis:** It was amazing, yes. But I think asking the question is there anything I could ever do that would make you not love me is a great question for someone to start with when they wouldn’t want to share something that they’re really shameful of or humiliated by.

**Chalene:** That’s great advice. It makes you go into a place that’s logical. We all have logic but when emotion overtakes us, we don’t think logically. We assume that someone’s going to think it’s a five-year-old little boy’s doing which isn’t logical. But yes, when we’re consumed by emotion, it’s hard to have those thoughts. So I think a question like that pulls you back into thinking logically.

**Lewis:** Yes, exactly.

**Chalene:** So you’ve told your family, you spoke your truth for the first time.

**Lewis:** I told my family and then I started a lot of my friends like my close friends. I was like, “What are they going to think of me? What if I don’t have any friends after this? My family was sticking by my side, but what if my friends are like, ‘Who are you?’” Maybe they’re not as open-minded.

I started telling them one by one. Actually, one of the things that inspired me to even open up about it in the first place was my good friend, Robbie Rogers, who is the first openly male gay athlete, professional athlete to play sports. He plays with the LA Galaxy and play for the United States national soccer team.

He opened up about this and then came back and played again. I just remember by just being so inspired by his courage. If he can do this publicly, then I knew, “Hey, I can do this as well.” So I started telling my friends and they started – it was all the same type of positive love and energy and amazing connection that we all created.

For about six months, I felt great. I felt like I was healing. I was going through it. I was letting go of this anxiety. Just before this experience actually, I got in this really bad fight on a basketball court where I let my ego overtake me. I basically put this guy in a hospital.

**Chalene:** Like a fist fight, you’re saying?

**Lewis:** Fist fight.

**Chalene:** Like your anger got the best of you.

**Lewis:** Oh my god. My anger got the best of me. The last fight I had was when I was 12. I actually just told a story recently because I’m writing a book right now and I think the story might be in the book. I remember I was 12 years old and I was on the golf course, cutting the greens, the putting greens. One day in the summer, after cutting the greens, where all the ground crew people were together. There were a lot of teenagers.

We were flicking grass with rakes. We’re raking up grass and flicking it at each other. There’s this other guy I cornered, I circled one guy and flicked it on at the same time. When I turned around, he punched me at the back of the neck really hard. It’s like my ego flared out because I always felt defensive. If I ever felt attacked, I was going to attack you back.

**Chalene:** You’re going to die.

**Lewis:** You’re going to die. I basically straddled him with his arms down and just pump him like a UFC fighter style until one of the guys took me off. I remember running back to the clubhouse to wash my hands because my knuckles were all bloody and hurting.

He walked back and goes, “Lewis, what did you do? What the heck did you do?” I couldn’t recognize his face because it was like a softball sticking on the side of his head. His eyes were swollen and there’s blood everywhere. I couldn’t believe what my ego and anger was capable of.

**Chalene:** You’d completely lost control.

**Lewis:** Completely lost it, no control. My anger just took over. My ego of needing to protect myself and beat the world down for beating me or whatever took over. I told myself, “I’m never going to get into a fight again.” I never did until about a couple of years ago before I did this experience, this workshop. I let my ego get the best of me.

This guy was getting in my face in a basketball court. He head butted me actually. It was like the same thing. It’s like he hit me and this lion came out. I remember doing pretty much the same thing. I put him in a head lock and throwing him down, being on the top, beating him.

I remember getting up and he just had this huge gash over his whole forehead and the blood coming everywhere. I was just terrified like, “What did I do? What is wrong with me? I live a great life, things were going well, but why do I react? Why do I not have control over my ego or whatever?” Then I went to this experience and realized, “Wow, this might be a part of it.” It’s been incredible ever since.

**Chalene:** It’s amazing. Your story is amazing. Your podcast is called The School of Greatness. For me, I love listening to your podcast because you can tell that you are a student and that you are coachable. You’re listening for those things that are going to make you better in your life. Because of that, you have these so many people who you have coached personally.

I know one of your practices that I love is not the perfect day but the ideal perfect day. I think a lot of people do this perfect day where they picture themselves on a beach, drinking a cocktail. That’s not ideal. So I love the way you do this ideal perfect day. Can you walk us through that exercise?

**Lewis:** Yes. So anyone that wants to – whenever I work with people, they try to get into the next level. They have a dream or something. I always start off with this. I say, “Let’s visualize and I want you to express to me what your perfect day looks like or what your ideal day looks like.”

Obviously, every day is different. If you do the same thing every day, it would be boring because the spice of life is what keeps us happy. But express in detail and write down what it looks like. So from the moment you wake up, I would say that I wake up next to the woman of my dreams. I’m crying because I’m so happy she’s with me and she’s in love with me.

I snuggle and we kissed and we’re playful. When we wake up, we open up the blinds and the sun is just beating on us and giving us energy and life. We make breakfast then I do my work out and then I go on to about three to four hour window period where I’m connecting with my team and we’re creating and inspiring information to change the world. I’m meeting with leaders of the world and talk to them about ideas on how to impact people in a positive way and walking through the entire day of how this looks and where you are.

**Chalene:** That rich detail just like even you’re describing your emotion like how you feel, that’s really cool.

**Lewis:** Yes. So express how you feel, write it down. Be a creative writer. Be a dreamer. Where are you? What does your house look like, your environment? Who are the people you’re spending time with? Write it out. You can write this out on a half a page or a page or you can express it to someone that you’re listening to with this right now. You guys can practice this together.

**Chalene:** So do you work three or four hours a day? Is that in max?

**Lewis:** Here’s the thing. I feel like my life is always a play. Some people might say that right now we’re working, but I don’t really consider that. I feel like we’re creating and inspiring information for people. For me, that doesn’t feel like work.

**Chalene:** You have to imagine, it was possible or it wouldn’t be here. Isn’t it just exciting to think that this is your life and it is possible for anyone who’s listening?

**Lewis:** I imagined it when I was a kid to have a life like this to have freedom of worrying about money and being to be where I want to be and spending time with inspiring people. I imagined it but I didn’t know how it would become possible. It’s like so far away and so unrealistic that I just had no clue that it was possible, but I imagined it. I would dream about it.

**Chalene:** I love that you just said that because I think people get caught up because they’re not sure of the exact path. They don’t see it crystal clear. They can see it off in a distance and it’s fuzzy and I’m not exactly sure what it looks like. But I know what it should feel like.

I often say that about myself. I didn’t know exactly know how I would get here, but I knew what I would feel like. I could see it fuzzy off in a distance, and that’s all you need. Even if you just have a fuzzy vision of what you want it to look like. Go after it.

**Lewis:** I think the cool thing with what you just brought up to me right now what came up for me is; now I see how anything is possible in the exact path that I could get there. From where I am right now, the level of things that I’ve achieved or whatever because I feel like I’ve done it a few times and I know it’s possible.

But when I was younger, when I think back it, all you need to focus on is giving your best effort for the thing you want to do right then in that moment and in that season. I focus it on seasons because if I’m playing football and our goal is to win the championship for those three or four months, and I start thinking about, “What am I going to in two years from now? What’s going to happen next year? What’s going to be happening in the basketball season? I’m going to be start thinking about basketball.”

If I started thinking about the next season, I want to be giving my full energy and attention to what’s happening right now. Because I emphasize that in my life to like, “Okay, this six months is what I’m focusing on but I have a vision about in the future but it’s really this season.” Because I do that, I feel like I’m always rewarded because I give my full energy and effort for each season.

**Chalene:** Phenomenal advice. It’s really important that people pay attention to what Lewis just said because we’re so easily distracted and it’s so easy for us to say or to look off and see that someone else is doing something else. We feel like, “Gosh, I’m supposed to be in this season of building my business. Here this person is starting their family.”

You feel like you’re supposed to be at all seasons at once because you can see all those seasons. But what you’ve just said I think is he secret to your success and many of the successful people that we know. You have the opportunity with your show to interview the most inspirational, motivational thought leaders in just about every arena.

Have you figured out if there’s one or two things that people who have achieved greatness have in common?

**Lewis:** Yes, definitely. There’s I would say eight common themes that I’ve discovered so far. There’s probably more but I’ll just categorize them in eight themes.

**Chalene:** Give us a big two.

**Lewis:** I’ll give you a few. The first one is vision. I’ve got a lot of friends who think they know what they want but they’re not willing to put 100 percent commitment in doing whatever it takes. I always make the analogy of don’t put to your head or to the head of the person you love the most. You have to get something done that you’re really scared of. Could you figure out and make it happen in that time frame that you needed to deal?

Everyone says yes. But other than that, they don’t think they can do it unless their life is on the line or someone else’s life is on the line. I think the biggest leaders have a vision that they pursue with that mentality in mind.

**Chalene:** Like, “I must figure this out. I must do this, and I can do it.”

**Lewis:** Yes. They’re not thinking like, “I need to do this or someone’s going to die,” but they have this purpose-driven energy and focus that nothing can stop them and they will figure it out somehow and they’ll do whatever it takes. I think people aren’t willing to sacrifice that much pain, humiliation, or rejection or nose or whatever it is working out to get the results they want.

The second part of this process is learning to turn adversity into advantage because with every huge vision, all the great – if you think of any great mind or athlete or business leader, whoever it may be, they all have incredible visions and had to have overcome amazing adversity, unreal stakes and adversity against them.

They learned to develop the mindset, the will, and the courage to overcome the adversity, whatever it may be they’ve learned to figure out to move past it.

**Chalene:** And you feel that some people are held hostage by their adversity?

**Lewis:** Of course. We’ve all been victims in some areas of our lives. I’m a victim sometimes when I try not to be. Some people are stuck in this victim mentality where they’re like, “I can’t do it because of this. She broke up with me. He divorced me,” whatever. So they get stuck and make that their story. “This happened to me, so I’m never going to amount to anything else. Or this happened to me so I’m never going to find love again. Or this happened to me so I’m never going to be back health again so I’ll just keep eating.”

**Chalene:** Man, I know people are going to be rooting for you, Lewis. Tell us how we can become a Lifer for Lewis Howes. Don’t you have a book coming out?

**Lewis:** I do, yes. If you go to LewisHowes.com, you can check me out there. I’m @LewisHowes everywhere online, on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. So anywhere you like to hang out, I’ll probably be hanging out with you. I’ve got a book coming out later this year, on October that I’m putting a lot of energy into right now. I’ve got a very clear vision.

**Chalene:** I want people to make sure that they’re part of this, really. It’s cool to see somebody put their heart out there and be open and vulnerable and for them to be rewarded for doing such a great service for others, which you’ve been doing so tirelessly. I just have to tell people that this is a cool thing and I’m going to make sure we do everything within our power to see that you are number one in the on the New York Times Bestseller list when that book comes out, baby.

So can they do that by getting on your newsletter on your website?

**Lewis:** Yes, of course. You can jump over there at LewisHowes.com. You can sign up free and I send out just free stuff all the time. I’d love for you to join me. You’re incredible, Chalene and your podcast. I don’t really listen to podcast, but yours is something that I want to listen to all the time. Thank you so much for creating such a comfortable space for me to share and for trusting me and bringing me into this community. I am just so inspired by what you are creating in the world and by your message and your commitment to love.

People don’t know how loving you are. It’s just so amazing and I feel blessed that you’re in my life and we’re friends. So thank you so much.

**Chalene:** Yes. I thank God because I always believe that it’s a God thing when you meet someone you’re not even sure how you found each other but you just love their spirit. What you did for us today was a gift. So thank you, Lewis.

**Lewis:** Thanks for having me on. I appreciate it.

**[END OF INTERVIEW]**

**Chalene:** Amazing. Am I right? Was that a gift or what? Unbelievable. Now, if you broke the rules and you listen to Episode 2 without listening to Episode 1, go back and listen to Episode 1 now.

Lewis wanted me to make sure that I brought awareness in this episode to an organization that’s mean and dear to his heart. The organization is OneInSix.org. That’s an organization that helps victims of childhood sexual abuse to recover, to find resources, to bring awareness and of course for support.

Now, if the message in Episode 1 or 2 triggered something in you, I want to make sure you do something about it. I mean the potential for you to be great and to let go of the baggage from your past to move beyond it, to conquer it, and to find greatness to turn your adversities into advantages really starts with getting help, talking to somebody, opening up and knowing that when you do that, you just make people love you more. Secrets destroy us. The shame is not yours to carry.

I can’t think of anyone who I would rather see hit the New York Times Bestseller list. Are you with me? Let’s get on this train. Let’s help this guy out. Bret and I are committed to making sure you remember Lewis that we reward him for his vulnerability, for his courage, for sharing his story and his greatness with others. I hope that you will do the same. If you’re not all ready subscribed to his podcast, come on now. School of Greatness, go to iTunes or Stitcher and you can download his podcast. It’s a fantastic show. Let’s return that gift to him because I know he touched your life today. I so appreciate you sharing this message with others.

So email it to somebody, text it to them. Let them know how powerful this message is. If one in six people were victims of childhood sexual abuse, think of all the people in your life and how many needs to hear this message. I promised Lewis that I would forward your voice mail messages about this episode. So if you’d like to leave a personal message for him, you can go to ChaleneJohnson.com/podcast and record your voice note there.

Of course, you can hit him up on Instagram, on Facebook, on Twitter. But most of all, just give him your love and support. Lifers, you are the Bomb.com.

**[END OF RECORDING]**