

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/play-to-your-weaknesses>

Zymergen Co-Founder and CEO Joshua Hoffman discusses an "extreme version" of the growth mindset: Don't just expect to be challenged. Put yourself in situations where you know you'll perform poorly so you can develop those skills. He shares the example of choosing a previous job in San Francisco instead of Johannesburg, South Africa, because he had already worked in Uganda.



Transcript

- I'm gonna encourage everybody to go do stuff they're really bad at, right? By and large the people in this room have gotten where they are by being really good at stuff, and that's great, but kind of uninteresting in some sense.. Like you all are all studs, great.. Go pick the things you're bad at and go do them.. Play to your weaknesses, not to your strengths.. Because if you actually want to go be an entrepreneur, you can't, you kinda have to have breadth across the waterfront.. So you need to have, you need to be only so bad at some stuff, and you need to know which of your weaknesses you can get better at versus which are really things that you're not gonna go do.. So, I talked about getting a, McKinsey reached out to me about working in their Joburg office, and I didn't take that job, I didn't go work in Joburg.. I actually came and I worked for McKinsey in San Francisco.. And the reason I wanted to come to San Francisco, I mean there were some personal reasons, but there was a higher order, which is I sort of felt like I knew what it was to work in a developing country.. I knew what it was to find a way of being successful in a place where the rules were maybe, where it was a more entrepreneurial culture, let's say..

I knew that San Francisco was a much tighter, more buttoned-down environment.. In these days you had to wear a suit every day to work, so it was definitely tighter and buttoned-down.. And I wanted to make sure that I developed the expertise and the capability to operate in that environment.. There are lots of other examples like that, but I would really encourage folks to think hard about what you're bad at, and then how do you put yourself in a situation where that's the thing you've gotta go develop? It's sort of the extreme example of the growth mindset.. So it's not just like expect to be challenged.. It's actually put yourself in a situation where you're not gonna be good, 'cause you know, if you wanted to be the best at something you'd just stay doing the thing, and that's, from my standpoint, that is, that's satisfying in the way that eating too much candy is satisfying.. It's kind of enjoyable at first, but it's ultimately not that nutritional...