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CUTTING EDGE GROWTH  
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REAL WORLD STRATEGIES FROM EXPERTS IN THESE CONTENT-RICH INTERVIEWS

# Chapter Five

## Licking the Sticky Wicket



*An Interview With...*

### James Carter

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#### **David Wright (Wright)**

Today we are talking with James Carter, Founder and CEO of Repario. Repario is Latin, meaning “to renew or restore.” For fifteen years, Carter has helped people reconnect with their inner strength through experiential learning opportunities in executive retreats, “team-building,” and open enrollment programs. Carter’s client list represents a who’s who of business, including over half of the Fortune 500 and most of the Fortune 100 companies, including American Express, Johnson & Johnson, Bayer Healthcare, Siemens, Caterpillar, and dozens of other household names.

James, welcome to *Discovering Your Inner Strength!*

**James Carter (Carter)**

Thank you, David. I appreciate the opportunity to offer my thoughts and ideas about inner strength.

**Wright**

What is “inner strength”?

**Carter**

There are many kinds of inner strength and we should carefully define what we are talking about. The area of inner strength I focus upon is our emotional strength—in other words, performing during crisis or periods of stress and being a rock for others and ourselves during emotional turbulence. One thing is certain, emotional crisis is one of the great equalizers in life. We will all be strained emotionally at some point in our lives. No one is immune.

What if we find, in our time of greatest need, that we don’t have the strength? This exact situation occurs countless times to people all over the world because they are not prepared emotionally to deal with life. But life happens to us whether we are ready or not.

Many times, we think of an immediate event like a car crash or a sudden illness in the family. But emotional strength is perhaps even more important in sustained crises such as:

- A disability from the car crash,
- A family member’s long-term illness,
- Or more common in these difficult economic times, job loss (either you or your spouse) and not being able to find a new one for months while your child’s college fund is taking a 40 percent hit and your child is expecting you to send him or her to college in nine months.

In most cases, the emotional strain created from these life occurrences does not kill us. However, it deeply affects each one of us in a very different way.

Inner strength is both complex and simple. Most of us feel we have a great deal of inner strength. However, we don’t really know until we are in crisis and discover we aren’t prepared. We spend hours thinking about other people, examining their behavior and motives behind that behavior. But we rarely spend time thinking about

ourselves, what drives us, and why we do the things we do. We are, in effect, mysteries to ourselves. We *think* we know ourselves, our strengths, and our capabilities, but in reality, we have only vague notions of what that means. You must have specific examples and stories that you can draw upon to support you.

To better yourself, you must take the time to understand yourself, why you behave the way you do, and what other choices you could have made in certain situations. Knowing your strengths enables you to operate to those strengths.

**Wright**

Why is emotional strength an important aspect of inner strength?

**Carter**

Emotional crisis is one of life's great equalizers. Regardless of what we are good at, our character, our income level, or quality of life, we all go through stress and emotional turbulence. Our emotional strength will be tested whether we are ready or not. And we will deal with that crisis in different ways depending upon our level of emotional strength.

Some people are naturally emotionally stronger than others. You can take a lot of stress and strain without falling apart, while others simply cannot maintain their composure. There are those who exude calm and strength. You can feel their strength, even when there is no emotional crisis. You feel safe with them. We have all known people who have that inner calm and strength and negotiate crisis with relative ease.

Then there are others who try to put on the "face" of calm and are absolutely falling apart on the inside. Eventually, these people crack under the pressure of trying to maintain the façade as well. And the true crisis is still not addressed.

**Wright**

So does having emotional strength mean that you don't feel or have emotions?

**Carter**

Not at all. Those who are emotionally strong and secure in that inner strength simply do not allow their emotions to overcome and overwhelm them. When you are emotionally strong, you can feel emotion without becoming overwhelmed. You

are not afraid that the emotion will paralyze you. So you actually feel more deeply than those who are afraid of the emotions. When emotionally strong, you *choose* when to let the emotions run strong and true.

“Fake it till you make it” is not a good strategy. When you are maintaining a façade of emotional strength, you also fear someone will see your lack of strength. There is a greater fear of falling apart, and the negative emotions you are having are amplified. This creates a downward spiral until you break down completely.

Those who are emotionally strong during a crisis can deal with each aspect the best possible way.

### **Wright**

So tell me about discovering your inner strength—how do you do that?

### **Carter**

We use a simple process to help people see their own authentic behavior and then help them examine it. The activity is designed to help you discover your core motivation in life as well as examine your behavior. It is called “The 5 Whys.”

The 5 Whys was created by Sakichi Toyoda and was made popular by him as a way to determine root causes in the manufacturing methodologies. The 5 Whys are now used in many quality situations, especially when human interaction is a factor.

You are going to use the 5 Whys differently than Toyota. The same process can be used to help you examine your motivation. Once you understand your motivation, your behavior will make more sense. Keep in mind, the 5 Whys is a discovery tool and not necessarily a coping tool. For our purpose, there is a premise everyone should know, understand, and believe:

*Knowing purpose is a source of emotional strength.*

Let me explain what I mean by that and why I feel it is so important to understand motivation using an example we can all relate to.

Imagine you are in a vehicle and someone, driving too fast, is weaving in and out of traffic and cuts right in front of you. What is your reaction? “That guy is going to *kill* someone! What is he thinking?” Or perhaps you might say something more colorful. Now, imagine you see another vehicle coming up behind you, driving exactly the same way. But as the car speeds past, you see this vehicle has “Ambulance”

written on the side and flashing lights on top. What is your reaction? *Very* different, right? You are concerned, hoping no one is hurt. You want to get out of the way. Why the difference? The behavior is identical. The difference is because you understand the answer to a simple question, *Why?* You understand the motivation for the behavior.

Answering the question “*why*” about yourself could be the most important question you ever ask yourself. When we understand *why*, we are empowered with choices. The answer helps us understand our own motivation and purpose for our own behavior. Motivation drives behavior.

On a blank sheet of paper, answer these five questions. Not in your head—on paper, because you need to be able to go back and examine the answers, sometimes again and again.

You are reading this book.

1. *Why?* Or, perhaps, *why* is that important?
2. *Why?*
3. *Why?*
4. *Why?*
5. *Why?*

Remember, your maximum input equals maximum output. If you take this seriously and spend time in your head and heart answering these questions, the correct answers will come. If you look at the last answer and it is not right (you will know if it is not), keep asking.

This can be a frustrating task and some of the initial answers you give may not be right. However, the answer to question number five should be very close to a piece of your inner strength and possibly a core motivation in your life.

Once you have the answer to question number five, you can begin to navigate your mind and think back to events in your life that have shaped you and begin to understand *why* you acted the way you did. We all have deep motivations that drive the external behavior everyone else sees.

Below is how I would respond to the question of why I am reading this book:

1. *Why?* I want to learn more about my own inner strength.
2. *Why?* I need greater inner strength.

## *Discover Your Inner Strength*

3. *Why?* Greater inner strength will help me be a good role model for my child.
4. *Why?* I want my child to grow up confident and strong.
5. *Why?* I feel raising my child is the greatest contribution I can make in life.

I honestly feel this has helped me identify one of my core reasons for being and one piece of my “purpose.” And, knowing my purpose is a source of strength.

This tool can also be used to examine our behavior, especially behavior that is sapping our emotional strength and stamina.

Let’s go back to the vehicle example. I used to be one of those “road rage” people. I would get so angry with people and their driving behavior. I never realized how detrimental this behavior was. When a driver passed me, weaving in and out of traffic, I began to scream at him. I forgot my one-year-old daughter was in the back and she began crying. This is in direct opposition to my answer to number three above. I was certainly not being a good role model for my child. I knew I could not continue what I was doing. What can I do? How can I look at my reaction differently? Use the 5 Whys! Below is an example of how I could use the 5 Whys to help me understand my behavior.

I get angry with bad drivers on the freeway (problem):

1. *Why?* I feel I am a good driver.
2. *Why?* I don’t want to hurt anyone while driving.
3. *Why?* I am very sensitive to how I affect those around me.
4. *Why?* I feel I can have a positive influence if I choose.
5. *Why?* I have a unique contribution I can make in the world.

However, be careful with the 5 Whys. This process is highly subjective. You must be completely honest with yourself or the tool will not help you. Below is a completely different way to answer the same situation. You can see the results are different.

I react with a great deal of anger toward people who drive irresponsibly (problem):

1. *Why?* I think they are going to hurt someone on the road, possibly me.
2. *Why?* I believe they don’t care.
3. *Why?* I feel most people are self-centered.

4. *Why?* I see it every day in the news.
5. *Why?* I watch too much television.

You can see from above that the statements are very close to each other, but elicit different responses. I would suggest the first set of statements is more accurate and gets to the heart of my core motivations while the second does not come remotely close to something meaningful. You may need to revise the statement, as I have done above, and look closely at the answers to your 5 Whys. You must be clear, honest, and question your own answers. And remember, only answer “Why?” to the immediate statement above it, *not* the original statement. If you only answer the original statement, you will end up with only a list of responses to the first statement and not delve any deeper than surface responses. If you need to, cover up everything but the statement you are answering. I find doing so makes it much easier.

After really thinking about my answers to the 5 Whys and the ambulance story, I now simply assume that everyone driving like mad is rushing to the hospital and I am much happier. Seriously! I know that is not the case, but understanding my behavior has helped create a choice for me to react differently. Knowing my purpose is a source of emotional strength.

### **Wright**

What is a tool people can use to develop their inner strength?

### **Carter**

Perhaps the most important activity any of us can do for ourselves is the next activity we use in our workshops. This activity helps people both discover and develop their inner strength. This is the journaling of your story. This is the most important story you will ever tell. It is your own. There is not another single story like it in the world. It is Your Story.

Let me tell you a personal story that has helped me through many situations when I needed emotional strength. When I was in college, I was at home when I heard an incredibly loud crash in front of the house. I ran outside and to my great surprise, I saw a small plane on the second floor of the house across the street in my cul-de-sac. The second floor was essentially gone, as all the walls had been knocked down. The plane’s wing was hanging over the driveway as if someone parked it there

intentionally. There were several small fires going and I could already see some people moving around.

Without thinking, I immediately ran across the cul-de-sac and two other people ran over as well. One was a thin man who was a neighbor and the other was a huge man who had been taking a walk. We could hear children screaming. The big man yelled at us to hoist him up to the second story. I am not small and am fairly strong, but I have no idea where my thin neighbor got the strength to help lift the large man up. Small explosions continued to occur as the big man dropped three children down to us from above. The adults in the plane simply walked down the wing of the plane and dropped down onto the roof of a car that was parked in the driveway.

It turns out the grandmother and the three children were sleeping on the second story when the plane crashed into it. There were five people in the plane. Everyone lived—a true miracle.

The big man who was walking down the street made sure everyone was okay, and before the fire department or ambulance could get there, he continued his walk down the street, a little black soot on his face. I didn't even get his name. I found out later that the reason the plane crashed was because it had run out of fuel. Our neighborhood was in the plane's flight path. I did not know this at the time. I truly thought the plane might explode any moment.

I was not the hero here—the big guy was. But I now know, without a doubt, that I can put others first in times of need. You see, I retell this story to myself when I am incredibly stressed out and life seems to keep piling on. I need this story. My actions in this story were easy—I ran, without thinking, to help others in a dire situation. It is much more difficult to make those same decisions when you have time to think about them. More emotional strength is necessary when under emotional stress and strain for periods of time. Had I not sat down and wrote *My Story*, I would not have this incredible tool that continues to help me develop my emotional strength. The above story was simply a fun, “holy cow!” story to tell people at parties. Seriously, how many people have had a plane crash in their neighborhood?

But there was a great deal more significance for me than I ever realized. I said in the beginning, we have these vague notions of strength. That is all this story was for me until I turned it into a solid tool to help me deal with emotional crisis.

Let's shift gears to you and your story. Sit down and think back to three events in your life in which there was an emotional crisis for you. Write out answers to these questions:

1. What was the crisis?
2. How did you respond?
3. How did that serve you?
4. Were you emotionally strong?
  - a. If not, why? Examine the answer to the question.
5. How does this story fit into your answer from the 5 Whys?
6. What could you have done differently?
7. How can you use your example of this emotional strength in the future?  
What story will you tell yourself in the future?

I have other stories—unflattering stories that embarrass me and make me feel bad, stories I am not proud of. I tend to tell myself those stories subconsciously more often than I should. I have to resist that by telling myself one of my good stories.

Many times, we see how we fail and tell ourselves over and over. Do the below statements sound familiar?

1. I am not strong enough.
2. I am not going to make it.
3. I am falling apart.
4. I can't take this.
5. This isn't going to end.

Looking at your previous stories of failure and re-writing those stories is a great tool to develop your emotional strength. Stories that we view as failures can be re-written. So my goal would be to re-examine the unflattering stories I have and rewrite them, keeping in mind what I have learned: “Well self, I never have to make *that* mistake again.” And that becomes part of the new story—not the failure, but the lesson learned.

The road rage story I used is a good example. I now look upon that story as a success. I learned early on how my behavior affected my daughter and how my behavior was in direct contradiction with how I wanted to raise my little girl. In retrospect, and through rewriting my story, this was a monumental event in my life.

My success and lesson is that I changed my behavior. The process worked for me and I am a better man and father because of it.

## Discover Your Inner Strength

Telling yourself the right stories about both your successes and failures will make all the difference in the world. Your inner voice is incredibly powerful. Make sure it is working *for* you.

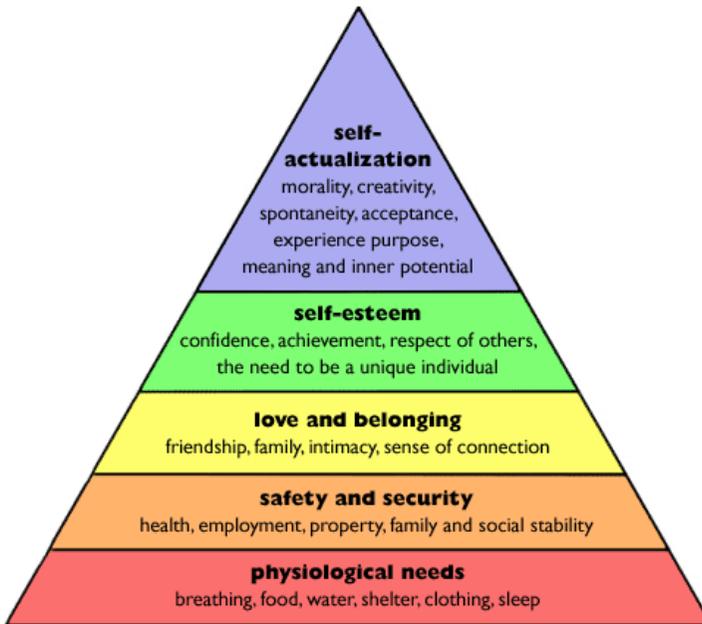
### Wright

What else can people do to develop their emotional strength?

### Carter

It is not enough to discover, you *must* exercise your emotional strength, just like a muscle. How do you do that? Practice—not in the traditional physical fitness sense, but in the mental sense.

Through Reparior, we provide several different kinds of experiential opportunities to help people safely create new stories through experience. Look at Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" below.



To a large degree, our crisis occurs lower on the pyramid. Additionally, a crisis will attempt to lower us on the pyramid. If you are in danger of losing your home and having your vehicle repossessed, you are having security and physiological problems that are at or near the bottom of the pyramid. Our goal in discovering and

developing emotional strength is to help us operate higher and higher on the pyramid and keep us there regardless of circumstance and crisis.

Look at the top of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It is very difficult to stay creative and examine meaning when you are, for example, helping a parent in his or her fight with cancer. That requires an incredible amount of emotional strength. It is almost inevitable that some crisis will lower us on Maslow's Hierarchy of Need. However, having emotional strength will help you deal with the crisis and move back up the pyramid more quickly.

So, what can you do to practice? Emotional crises will lower you on the pyramid, so intentionally, lower yourself on the pyramid. The key is to immerse yourself in the experience as fully as possible. Start with something easy such as volunteering at a homeless shelter and help serve dinner one night. You will receive a very small idea of someone at the bottom of the pyramid who is searching for food, shelter, clothing, and even clean water. You can learn from the stories of others. Talk to the people there, both the people working and the people receiving services. Hear what they have learned and how you can incorporate their stories. In the end, this experience is part of your life story.

What are you going to take away? You cannot fully experience having no home, as you are going home to your comfortable bed, but you will get a small idea of what being near the bottom of the pyramid is like. Your sense of security will be strengthened. You have shelter. You are not concerned about your next meal. Your appreciation for what you have, instead of focusing on what you don't have, will be greater. Journal about what you thought and felt while you are there and what you have learned through the process.

Move on to other situations that lower you on the pyramid. Only you know what will affect you the most. But make it genuine and make it real.

Another easy thing to do is go out and do something that scares you. Fear is an incredibly strong emotion, and overcoming it takes a great deal of emotional strength. It will help you find new depths to your strength. What are you afraid of? Take heights, for example. During this scary action you are taking, you are filled with emotion—overcoming fear and stepping off a bungee tower, for example, is something you can look back upon and say, "I did it. I made it through." This is one way you can create new stories. Pick your most fearful event—the scarier, the

better. Your brain will be screaming at you telling you to stop. Right then is your time—your opportunity—to create a new story.

Hope and inspiration are equally as powerful. In our large group meetings with Repario, we put participants through a similar process to what you have just read. We tell them that a potential life story event is going to occur in the next few hours. We then break them into small teams and have them build a bicycle. What they don't know is that a special child has been selected for each team. Each child has never owned a bicycle and never would, due to their family finances. The children don't know why they are there until the moment of reveal when the children walk in to thunderous applause. Each team has their own child who discovers the bike is for him or her to take home. The excitement and smile on a child receiving his or her first bike is incredible.

We carefully frame this event so the participants are thinking about their life and what story means—how the power of story can affect their beliefs of the world. Then they are given the opportunity to shape a story—their own and the child's.

After the children leave, we typically ask the audience if anyone would like to share their story and how they may now rewrite their story because of this experience.

I remember one man stood up and began talking about his son's death as a soldier in Iraq and that losing him was the single most painful experience in his life. Through the process of examining his story and looking at what positive aspect, if any, could be drawn from it, he said that his son's death had helped him realize how important it is to cherish the people around us and not take them for granted.

While it is easy for an outsider to see this potential lesson, his story was clouded with pain. One simple generous act of giving a bicycle to a child and using that joy helped him re-examine his story and rewrite it.

Another incredible story was from a woman who worked for a conservative financial company. She stood up at the end and told the group her most closely held secret. She used to be homeless. Previously she had been deeply ashamed of this and hoped no one would ever find out. However, through examination of that part of her life story, she was able to rewrite it for herself in such a positive light that now she wanted to share it with everyone.

The key to these emotional experiences is that you are intentionally writing a new story for your success. Whether you are using fear, inspiration, or both, be

conscious about what you are doing. Examine these experiences, write your story, and pull from it later when you need the strength.

When I say “writing a new story,” I mean that literally. Use the questions on page 88 and write it down. Physically writing something down makes it real in your mind.

**Wright**

So, if I am in an emotional crisis and need my emotional strength, what do I do?

**Carter**

First of all, believe, deep down, you *will* make it through. After all, you have survived before. Remember previous experiences you have had that were difficult and how you got through them.

Telling the right stories and thinking the right thoughts are the *keys* to sustaining and increasing your emotional strength muscle. Next, tell yourself the correct story.

- I *will* get through this.
- I have been through this before and made it.
- What is my life lesson in this?
- I can take it.
- People have been through worse.
- If I try, I can find an advantage in all this; when this is over, I'll be wiser.

Motivation creates behavior. Ask the question, “Why am I behaving this way?” Then think about it until you find an answer that feels right. Use the 5 Whys to help you see the root cause. Chances are, you will understand the answer and now have a choice to continue to behave in a way that saps your emotional strength or operate from a position of strength. You now have the power to choose.

Lastly, help someone else. Do something selfless. Chances are, there are others around you in need as well. Helping them will help you believe, deep down, that everything will be all right and will put your own problems in perspective.

**Wright**

What are your final thoughts on discovering your inner strength?

**Carter**

Let me leave with one final word of caution. Everything I have written is mostly common sense. We already *know* what we need to do and *how* to discover our inner emotional strength. We simply do not take the time to develop the strength. Begin now. Don't wait for a crisis. If you develop your emotional strength now, when the time comes, you will be ready, if not eager, to face the challenge. And that knowledge itself will make you stronger.

**Wright**

Throughout this interview you have not mentioned the title, "Licking the Sticky Wicket." How does that relate to what you have been talking about?

**Carter**

I am glad you asked! A "sticky wicket" is a drying cricket field after an overnight rain. A hard crust forms over soft, wet soil and makes the ball bite on the surface, spinning and bouncing sharply and unpredictably. On a sticky wicket, batting is awkward and sometimes hazardous to the batter.

Life is a sticky wicket. And we will all step up to bat. The questions, have you practiced? Are you prepared for the sticky wicket? If so, licking the sticky wicket is not just possible but probable. And remember, sometimes on a sticky wicket, the ball bounces in your favor!

**Wright**

Today we have been speaking with James Carter about his ideas about how to discover and develop your inner strength.

James, thank you for being with us today on *Discovering Your Inner Strength*.

**Carter**

Thank you, David. It has been a real pleasure.

# About the Author

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James Carter is the Founder and CEO of Repario Ltd, a socially inspired team and personal development company. James has created emotional learning experiences for thousands of participants through executive retreats and large meetings. James' passion lies in helping each person feel valuable as an individual and as part of the whole.

Clients consistently report that his energy, passion, and unshakeable belief in giving back to the community are the key factors in their decision to work with Repario.

James has a BS in Biology and a BA in Social Psychology from the University of Nevada, Reno.

James is currently writing a book titled, *TeamBuilding 2.0: The Next Evolution*, while running Repario and living in Northern Nevada with his wife, Christina, and daughter, Isabella.



## **James Carter**

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