

A portrait of Chip Gaines, a man with light brown hair and a beard, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. He is sitting in a workshop, with a hammer and a wrench visible in his hands. The background is a blurred workshop setting.

NO PAIN

*The good
stuff doesn't
come easy*

NO GAINES

CHIP GAINES

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NO PAIN, NO GAINES

THE GOOD STUFF DOESN'T COME EASY

CHIP GAINES



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No Pain, No Gains

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This is a work of nonfiction. The events and experiences detailed herein are all true and have been faithfully rendered as remembered by the author, to the best of his ability. Some names have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

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My life has been shaped by the people in my network. People who say yes to life, yes to hard work, and yes to risk, but who aren't yes-people. People who have fought for me and beside me as I have for them. People who I trust with all my heart and who trust me with theirs.

This book is for them.

To Jo. Win or lose, it's always you and me forever.

To our kids, Drake, Ella, Duke, Emmie Kay, and Crew. You five are daily reminders of all that is possible in this world when we live and love and trust one another with everything in us.

To my parents and sister and Jo's parents and sisters. You were our earliest networks and our first cheerleaders. You have shaped and continue to shape us into the people we are.

To everyone else who has come alongside me over the years. Who has taught me what it looks like to expect greater for myself and to seek the extraordinary. Who has extended kindness to me even when it's been uncomfortable. Who has been willing to bet on me and shown me the reward that comes with being willing to bet on other people.

You all are a part of my network, and I wouldn't be who I am without each of you.

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FOREWORD

Thinking of times Chip has done things differently isn't hard. When I sat down to write this chapter, I thought I knew exactly what I'd say. I figured I could talk about the countless times I've watched him close a deal with a handshake when it might've been safer to sign a contract. Or the times he has hired on a few guys just to help them get on their feet. I thought I'd tell you all about how, for as long as I've known him, he's been a serial business card collector. Early on in our relationship, we'd be out at dinner and he'd end up talking with the owner, asking him questions about turnover and operating costs, and we'd walk out of the restaurant with the proprietor's card. He'd run into a painter at the hardware store and add another card to the collection. One time, I watched him exchange cards with a stranger he'd struck up a conversation with while pumping gas. Apparently, the guy knew how to lay tile. It's been nearly twenty years of life together and those business cards continue to fill the big black binder stowed beneath the front seat of Chip's truck. They're every bit a part of his daily rhythm as his well-worn drive into town.

One day a few years ago, as Chip hopped back in the truck from what was supposed to be a “quick errand” and filed away yet another business card, I asked him about it. “You never know when we may need it,” he’d said. I sat there thinking, *I don’t know anyone who needs the number to six different plumbers*. Chip and I saw the value of those cards differently. I’d always thought of business cards as a means to an end. But Chip saw them as a beginning. A potential connection worth having and holding on to.

In a way, that says it all. To Chip, those cards carry a currency far more valuable than what there is to gain from the information printed on them. They represent connections he’s made with people he’s met along the way whose lives have become stitched together with his simply because he chose to say hello, to ask what they do and what they care about. Simply because he was open to seeing them not for who they are in relation to him but for who they are all on their own.

The thing I’ve realized about Chip is that it’s never really been about *how* he does anything—*how* he networks, *how* he does business, *how* he connects with people. He has never set out to do things differently. He is the thing that’s different. Because for Chip, it’s always been about the *why*.

Whether someone looks and acts and talks like Chip, or is different in every seemingly possible way, when he engages with them it’s not with the intent to reinforce who he has always been but to sharpen who he is still becoming. As much in our life as in our business, Chip is always looking for ways to move forward. He never wants to be stuck. He’s never content with the status quo or the way things have always been done. Growth is the measure of his life. That’s his *why*.

This feels especially important at this moment. Never in my lifetime have I felt such a dissonance in our country. I’ve watched as our culture has made it acceptable to mute people or unfollow those who aren’t like them. People who challenge their thinking, who call them out

before they're ready. Social media has offered the convenience of making new connections but just as quickly shows how fragile those relationships were to begin with if they fracture when faced with a difference in perspective.

Chip just does not operate this way. He genuinely desires to understand and learn from those around him. He seeks out opportunities to interact with someone who is different from him. To ask questions and then be willing to answer questions in return. He wants to be challenged if there's a chance for growth and a chance to build something better. Something real.

I get that we all have different comfort levels when it comes to putting ourselves out there. Chip is a born connector. And me? I am naturally wired to be more reserved. But what I've realized is that it's more our insecurities than anything else that hold us back from taking a chance and trusting someone new. And what I've learned watching Chip engage with people is that when we can push whatever fears we carry to the periphery—whether it's a fear of not fitting in, of getting burned, of being wrong—it's with renewed clarity that we can see the beauty of what other people bring to the world and, in turn, better appreciate what we have to offer.

A life in pursuit of growth isn't easy. Of course there have been times I've witnessed Chip's desire to engage get him sidelined. I've seen him be bulldozed when he's put himself out there. Yet he sees those moments of painful exposure as fleeting, and they've never stopped him from getting up, scraping himself off, and trying again. Chip dares greatly, and he dares often. He has shown me the reward that comes with a willingness to dig in, to raise my voice for whatever passion might be buried deep within me, to be open to being challenged, and to kindly challenge others. Because when you get to the other side of a reckoning like that, you're a stronger and more gracious human for having gone through it.

Chip's heart and intention for connection have naturally formed

this community of people whom he trusts and who, in turn, trust him. People whom he's given a chance to and who have offered him that same chance. Call it a network, a community, a home team. These people have come alongside us in the good times as often as in the bad. These are the people who tell us how it is and expect us to do the same. Whom we know we can count on and who know they can count on us.

This is something Chip deeply wants for everyone. It's why he wrote this book. And it's what makes it a love story, *Chip style*. Because it will challenge your perspective. It will make you question your fears. It will cause you to ask yourself what is keeping you from living a life of rich, authentic connection. But it will also remind you of all that is sacred in who you already are and of your extraordinary uniqueness. And it will ask you to share those parts of yourself with a world that's desperate to know them.

I am grateful every day to catch a glimpse of the world through Chip's eyes. He reminds me what life can look like when you're willing to believe with complete abandon that we are all made better when we trust one another and work together. It's a shift in perspective that costs me nothing yet colors the world in a much brighter, better hue. And that view, well, I wouldn't trade it for anything.

—Joanna Gaines

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My name might be on the cover of this thing, but no book is built by just one person. Without these creative minds, this idea I had one morning about how we build our network of people wouldn't exist as anything more than a few thoughts scratched onto a piece of paper. This group of people brought those ideas to life and helped me build them into something I hope they are as proud of as I am.

Kaila Luna, what can I say that would suffice? Steady from start to finish. Through not only these crazy times but also through the birth of your first beautiful baby. All the things, all the crazy twists and turns.. and yet there you always were. Listening and writing. Thank you.

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Uncle Ricky; Gabe and Justin Grunewald; Chip Smith; Brian Campion; Dr. Tanner; my granddad, J.B.; and, of course, my mom and dad, for showing me a way of life that woke me up and got me moving toward a future I could be proud of, and for allowing me to share each of your extraordinary stories in this book.

CHAPTER 1

NO PAIN, NO GAINES

I believe in sweat equity. By that I mean actual physical labor. The kind that makes you ache with exhaustion yet fills you with pride the moment your head finally hits the pillow. I always have. It was just one of those things that was built into my DNA.

When I was just a kid struggling to engage in school, it was how I set myself apart. Maybe I wasn't destined to be valedictorian, but I always knew I could rely on my ability to work harder than anyone else.

From an early age, I spent countless summers working out the nuances of every sport imaginable. I pounded the pavement selling books door to door till late into the evening. I trimmed trees and mowed acres of grass from dawn till dusk in the scalding Texas sun. Now I restore hundred-year-old houses back to their former glory. I build new houses from scratch. Perspiration and aching muscles make me feel alive. If I come home at the end of the day and my shirt and boots are clean, I don't feel right. I feel unsettled, like I've shorted myself somehow. But when I've physically

worked hard, when I've given something of myself and can actually *feel* what it cost me, that to me is time well spent. Those days hold real worth.

I remember one time back when I was a sophomore in high school, my granddad, J.B., took me out to his ranch to help him dig some post-holes for a fence he planned to build. J.B. had another errand to run, so he dropped me off and told me to get to work until he came back around lunchtime.

I'm a very competitive person, always trying to prove myself. I got that from my dad. In our house, when the mail came, it was a race to see who could get back with it first. If you ordered a pizza, it was a competition to see who could eat it the fastest. J.B. was always messing with me about being a city boy, so when he left me there, I thought, *I'll show him. I'm gonna go dig some holes.*

If you've ever seen a posthole digger, it's not a real comfortable tool to use. You've got a shovel handle on your right and you've got a shovel handle on your left, and at the bottom two thin shovel heads come together. When you stab it into the dirt, you pull these two handles apart and it closes the two shovels together. You pick up some earth and drop it right next to where you dug it up. Doesn't sound like much, 'cause you're not having to move the dirt twenty-five feet; you're just moving it a couple of inches. You pick up dirt, you drop it. You do that until you get down about a foot and a half. Then, due to the nature of those thin shovel heads, you have a hole about six to eight inches in circumference.

I got to it, and right away I realized that the dirt seemed more like concrete. *No big deal*, I thought. *This requires no critical thinking, no strategy. It's just a lot of hard work. I know how to do that.*

So I kept at it, and by hole number four, my arms were burning. The dirt I was digging into was rock-solid earth. By five, I could feel the blisters forming on my hands and realized this was going to be a looong several hours. The force of that posthole digger hitting that rock-hard dirt made those blisters throb until they finally burst. And once the

blisters burst, it was like I was not only tunneling through solid concrete inch by inch but doing so while holding a scalding-hot tool with my hands on fire. The more I worked and clawed at those holes, the slower I felt I was going, and the less it seemed I was accomplishing.

I held my head up to look down at the long row of holes left to dig. I wasn't more than an hour into this thing. Before I'd started, I thought I would have dug twelve or fifteen by now.



I was down on my hands and knees for like fifteen minutes trying to catch my breath, a little frustrated and a *lot* embarrassed. What had I gotten myself into? I still had a couple more hours until J.B. returned, so I stood up and lugged myself back over to the next post. There might've been a few tears in my eyes.

When J.B.'s truck appeared I got a little flushed in the cheeks. I'd managed to dig only ten holes since he'd dropped me off that morning.

What do you know—he hopped out of his truck, walked over to me, and told me what a hell of a job I'd done. I hadn't given up, and for that he was proud of me. Through my blisters and through my aching muscles, it was evident that I had given it my all.

It may not have looked like a job well done to me, but J.B. could see that. Despite the embarrassing number of holes, the evidence of my hard work was actually found in my effort. I might've been knocked down a peg or two, but you know what? That night I went to bed proud and woke up the next day ready to do it again.

It's like I told you—I like to sweat. That's been true ever since I was a little pint-sized hustler selling candy and Capri Suns down at the public tennis courts or doing yard work with my parents. Later, I sweat plenty running circles out on the baseball field and putting in long hours starting various small businesses. You've probably even seen me sweat when Joanna and I did *Fixer Upper*. I've got no shame about any of that. I didn't bat an eyelash telling you about how digging posts nearly did me in. I'm proud of it. I have always known deep in my bones that hard work yields great results, even when there's little evidence of it.

Joanna and I have built our entire lives around this notion. We've put decades of hard work and grit and a whole lot of sweat equity into the work we do, and now we're launching into what might be the hardest work we've ever done: building a network. We were a few months out from our launch date when I realized—and I swear it was as crystal clear as I'm telling you now—that this physical network we are building wouldn't be possible without the network of people who have poured their lives into both me and Joanna and the work we're doing. Some when we were young, and some laboring alongside us now. I told Jo, “I think I want to write a book about how we've built our network.”

Jo and a few people on our publishing team kindly pointed out that there are already a lot of books out there about networking, and I would add that most of them were probably written by people much smarter than I am. Books that I'm sure have a ton of extremely useful tips in them, but most of those books focus on *how* to network, “network” the verb. How to go out into the world and meet powerful people who can turbocharge your career. But that's not at all what I'm after, and not at

all what you'll find in this book. I am more interested in “network” the *noun*, the group of people with beating hearts and passions who live and love and try and fail, and who are there beside you as you do the same.

**Hard work yields great results, even when there's
little evidence of it. #makesense**

The title of this book was going to be *Building a Network* because I'm a sucker for wordplay (get it—building a network?). But I kept veering off track. Every time I started thinking about my own network of people, I'd think about the circumstance that bonded us. It certainly wasn't any kind of “networking” event.

My network has been built by a bunch of small moments. Moments where someone extended me kindness instead of anger, and I chose to pay that kindness forward. Moments when someone told me, “It's just business,” and I refused to believe them. Moments when I had their backs and they had mine, even when it looked inevitable that we were going to lose. Moments I chose to do right by someone or they chose to do right by me, even when what was right was far from easy. Moments when either one of us could have brushed the other off because it wasn't convenient, but we didn't. Moments when we chose to lean in instead of pulling apart. Moments when authentic human connection was more important than any other earthly thing, *when we decided to bet on each other instead of the way of the world.*

Those experiences required hard work. It was painful at times. But boy was it worth it! And it got me thinking about what those fleeting moments of discomfort, inconvenience, and pain have yielded over a lifetime—a network of people I trust and who trust me.

In Jo's and my life, these are people so outstanding they have come through for us in good times and bad. People who remind us who we are and what we value and don't let us settle for anything less. People who

have our confidence because they can be counted on no matter what. People who have lifted us up and who know that we will do the same for them.

A network like this doesn't come easy. To say it requires sweat equity would be an understatement. It requires faith in people. It requires trust. It requires hope and lots and lots of very hard work. Not necessarily the kind of work that makes your back ache or hands throb, but equally hard, fulfilling work. Because sometimes you can be surrounded by people and yet still feel utterly alone. But you work to find one person you can lean on—that's one connection. You work to find someone else who believes in who you are, not what you can do for them—that's another connection. Before long, you've got a series of connections that hold you up. And this work, when done, can yield a network that can sustain you for a lifetime. A network like the fence I was building at my granddad's ranch. A single post may not be worth much, and building it was *painful*, but connect it to another post, and then another, and what you've *gained* is something strong, something reliable, something that can shape the world.

BOTTOM LINE

You get what you work for.