



## Off Course on Purpose: A Story about Chasing the Impossible

**Bill Berry**

MBB

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*Off Course on Purpose is a celebratory memoir about mixing obsession, creative thinking, and hustle to turn passion for juggling into a career.*

An entertaining memoir about being an unabashed performer and nonconformist, Bill Berry's *Off Course on Purpose* follows his uncertain path from small-town misfit to championship juggler.

As a child, Berry had heart problems that prevented him from drinking caffeinated drinks. After being thrown out of high school for refusing to fake late notes or abide by detention rules, he took on a series of odd jobs, including brutal stints in telemarketing, retail, pizza making, and theater support. But after years of low-wage jobs and working long hours, Berry yearned for more. He cultivated his passion for juggling and realized that it was possible to make a career out of it.

Covering, in depth, Berry's process of figuring out his new, insular, and unstable profession, including via cold calls to agents, finding a performance partner, learning new tricks, and auditions, the memoir's concise chapters are a veritable treasure trove of memorable scenes and stories, as with a sword-swallowing event that triggered a chain reaction of vomiting in the audience. Elsewhere, Berry dons a Darth Vader costume and becomes the subject of merciless bullying from the children and parents at a birthday party.

The stories are energetic, narrated in a tall-tale fashion, though also grounded in pathos. At the core of each is a clear sense of the enormous effort and sacrifices that went into Berry's becoming a professional performer. Even as the book shows perseverance and commitment leading to success, as when Berry first learns to juggle four and five balls by getting to his pizza job early and practicing with the dough, there are countless depiction of failure, frustration, and coming up short.

The prose is open and candid throughout, though, at times, the depth of its introspection—which often interrupts events to describe Berry's thought processes, as with those following his disappointing second-place finish at a juggling competition—slow the book's pace. Some repetition also occurs, as with its depictions of circular thinking, self-punishment, and blame, which are belabored. Even so, Berry's candor in revealing these dark moments, and the warmth with which he points toward other ways of handling them, imbues them with meaning. What comes through is gratitude for the almost invisible lessons that inflect a life—from a parent's ultimatum that, after eighteen, a child must fend for themselves, to a judge who is blunt about a bad performance.

A stirring memoir about building an unconventional career from the ground up, *Off Course on Purpose* celebrates the trials, tribulations, and dreams that go into becoming a professional juggler.

WILLEM MARX (April 10, 2026)

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