

JEANETTE ORTEGA –
Celebrity Fitness Trainer,
Author & Speaker,
Creator of Bootoga®

THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK OF FITNESS

**BREAKTHROUGH INSIGHTS FROM MIND,
BODY & SOUL WARRIORS**



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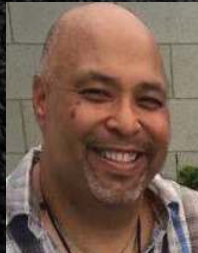
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Another Broke Athlete

Foreword by Jenni Pulos, Executive Producer and Co-Star of Bravo's *Flipping Out*

Wellness Warrior

noun | wĕl'nīs·wôr'ē-ər

A person who shows great vigor, courage, and strength in a dynamic and active process of becoming aware of themselves and making choices toward healthy growth in their mental, physical, emotional well being for a fulfilled life.

They require a disciplined attitude of persistence; they train mind, body, and soul. They are brave and courageous yet show love and compassion as they model for humanity living the healthy and joyful life of their dreams.

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THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK OF FITNESS

BREAKTHROUGH INSIGHTS FROM MIND, BODY & SOUL WARRIORS

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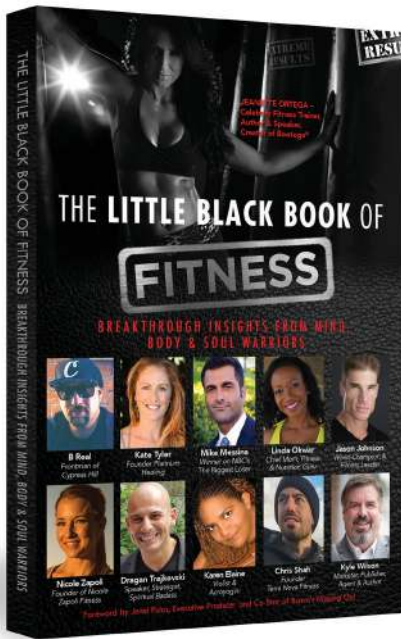
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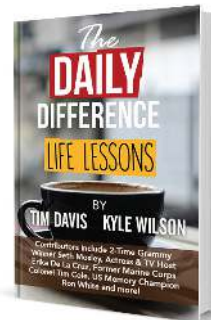
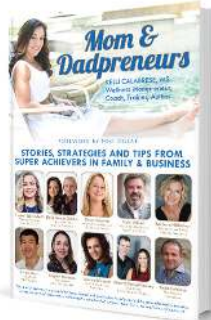
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Foreword

by Jenni Pulos

I have always loved the feeling of being healthy and fit, and in today's world everyone's perspective of this is very different. The health craze has intensified over the last few years, and I feel many of us have lost sight of the true meaning of fitness. It's not just about getting incredibly toned or super skinny; there are many more elements to the complicated process. I met Jeanette quite a few years ago and started training with her to get fit quickly for my upcoming wedding. Simultaneously, I was working crazy hours on Bravo's Flipping Out home renovation TV show.

Jeanette came to my home in the late evenings and sometimes early mornings to help me get and to keep me on track for the big day. I realized during the journey, not only was she coaching me to getting physically fit, Jeanette was strengthening me mentally and emotionally. I had a lot going on: my schedule was overwhelming, I barely slept, and she provided a solid plan for the health of my mind, body, and soul. She ensured I was eating enough and correctly during this busy time, and we had many amazing conversations that kept my mind going when my body wanted to quit. As the big day approached, Jeanette was a trooper as the crew of Flipping Out filmed our last few workouts before the wedding day. She made the process enjoyable and exciting as she even trained Zoila and I. A few days later, I married the love of my life in Chicago feeling incredible inside and out. Later that year, at the holiday party for her fitness center, my husband and I came and stood in awe of this health gym that was packed with people that she had touched, moved, and inspired in one way or another. It was beautiful to see how she had reached and transformed so many lives through physical and mental fitness.

Fast forward a year or so, and I was calling her again, this time to help me shed my baby weight. She showed up, and we took off into high levels of working out, kickboxing, yoga, and more, all while my baby girl was there watching us in her bouncy chair or smiling while I lifted her as added weight for the exercise. It was a time where I realized my life had completely changed. I was now getting healthy not only for myself, but more importantly for my little girl. I wanted to make sure I was healthy for her, especially as an older mom. This was a shift in my mindset; I now had a responsibility to be healthy for my family as well as myself.

Jeanette is the epitome of extraordinary health and fitness. I admire her positive outlook on life and her sheer determination to never give up on your

goals. She has dedicated herself to helping others achieve a true shift into living a healthy lifestyle in mind, body, and soul. I am grateful and honored to write her foreword as you will now get the opportunity to meet this ray of sunshine, a remarkable woman, and the amazing co-authors that she has so diligently selected to deliver such incredible insights, tools, and tips for you to use in your life.

The Little Black Book of Fitness is one you will have forever as your go to guide of physical, mental, and spiritual wellness. Jeanette Ortega is a powerhouse of positivity and her love of fitness will inspire you to make whatever adjustments you need to your current physical and emotional routine. The stories in this book are inspirational and motivational for all. The Little Black Book of Fitness is a must have for everyone as it will recharge your physical, emotional, and spiritual battery.

Enjoy this read, and remember to never give up on the desires of your heart. When things that you want seem the furthest away, it is in those moments you must persevere and know they are closer than ever to becoming a reality.



Jenni Pulos
Executive Producer and Co-Star of Bravo's *Flipping Out*, Actress, Author, Rapper, Wife, Mother, and Client of Jeanette Ortega

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Introduction

by Jeanette Ortega

I was given a trip of a lifetime to Indonesia where I visited Bali, Java Island, and Jakarta. My favorite, of course, was beautiful Bali. I fell in love with the ambiance, the energy in the air, and the feeling of freedom in my spirit and soul.

I have been in fitness all of my life. My mom said I used to make my family exercise when I was six years old, and I would not take no for an answer. So, I obviously loved the euphoric feeling of working out all these years, yet something was still missing deep inside.

Then, one glorious day in Indonesia, I experienced bliss and beauty in a way that I never had before. My soul was awakened; my vision and my heart felt like they had just been upgraded to brand new levels. Everything was so clear, calm, and joyful. I will never forget the day that I swore I would use all of my gifts and talents to help people learn and live what I had experienced. It was the true meaning of fitness: being fit in your soul, your mindset, and your physical body all at once. From that point on, my fitness experience has never been the same for me. I make time every day to feed my spirit, my mind, and my temple (my body), which is something I would have never done years prior because I was all about working out, eating right, and looking my best. Now, I'm on a whole new level of what I've developed, not only for myself, but also for my clients and anyone who has asked for my guidance.

Has this journey been easy? No, not at all. I remember coming back home from Indonesia all pumped up with goodness, love, and pure bliss to be received by the same old energy when I left. It takes work not to go back to our old patterns and routines. It takes consistency and perseverance to fight the mind chatter of doubt and fear. It also takes a good community of friends and family that understand you, love you, and only wish you the best. This had me ponder... how many other people have such amazing stories about their transformation journey whether in mind, body, or spirit/soul and haven't had the opportunity to share it?

Just like our physical muscles require workouts, so do our mind and our heart. We hear on a daily basis how mindset is everything. We are reminded to control our thoughts, to watch what we speak, and so on. While all of this is true and good advice, how do we attain this? Where do you begin, and who else is going through this?

I felt there needed to be a platform, but how, when, where and who? Have you heard of the phrase “Don’t worry about the “how” of something (meaning all the details). Just create it, and watch the right people show up and align with your purpose. Well, that happened. I was introduced to an amazing man named Kyle Wilson (Founder and President at LessonsFromNetwork.com and Founder of Jim Rohn International, yes I said Jim Rohn), about 2 years ago and from the start we had many meaningful conversations. I became the Lessons From Fitness Expert in his company and part of his fantastic Inner Circle Mastermind where I have connected with the most beautiful, authentic, and creative souls on the planet. We established a close relationship of mutual respect and honor, and now, here we are partnering together on this book project to get so many of our talented co-authors messages out to the masses.

We have personally read each and every story in this book. I have cried and experienced heart palpitations because these stories are so intense. I have identified with many of them on every level. I have scribed notes as I listened to these icons and heard what they have experienced and persevered through with great courage to their victories. I am honored that they agreed to be a part of our passion project and that they share the same values of health and wellness of mind, body, and spirit.

You’ll read stories from all different types of people and facets of life: fitness, business entrepreneurs, yogis, my friend and celebrity hip-hop rapper of 20 years, B Real of Cypress Hill, Mike Messina, winner of the Biggest Loser, and so many more. We come to you from all spectrums of life with ONE common purpose: to inspire you to become a wellness warrior in your own life and to pass this onto your families and communities creating a ripple effect. Yes, it only takes one person to inspire and motivate another to live a life of their dreams, hopes, and aspirations.

If you are entering your journey of health and wellness or looking to take it to the next level, please allow these stories to enter into your soul, as each author has shared authentically about their life, challenges, trials, and victories and has provided tips and tools that helped them along the way in hopes that they may also help guide or encourage you in yours.

Much love and peace to you all as you enter or continue your path to living life as a Wellness Warrior in your mind, body, and soul.

Namaste,

Jeanette Ortega

Dedication

To all my clients, old and new, I thank you for trusting me to guide you in any part of your pursuit of health and wellness. You have given me so many beautiful lessons of laughter, love, and support. I proudly share and celebrate this book with all of you. Cheers to many more years of health, wellness, and happiness and all of our dreams coming true!

Acknowledgement

Takara Sights & Kyle Wilson

Takara – I am in awe of your skills, patience and badassery . . . You kill the editing game! Thank you for your care and the beauty of your soul.

Kyle – I thank you for always believing in me and holding the space for me to step further into my greatness. You are genuine, you are brilliant, and I'm so honored you are my partner and friend.

CHAPTER 1

Fit from the Inside Out

by Jeanette Ortega

“It’s all about LOVE.”

So, you’re reading a fitness book. You may be wondering what the heck does fitness have to do with love. The answer: EVERYTHING! It took me awhile to truly learn and understand this for myself, but once I got it, it transformed my entire being. How can we commit to being fit in our mind, body, and soul if we don’t have enough self-love to begin with? It all starts with self-love....

Do we have what it takes internally to meet our heart’s desires? That is the true question.

I get asked all the time: How do you stay motivated? What motivates you? And how do you get started? The true answer to that is that it starts from within, deep within the very soul of ourselves. Do we love ourselves enough to invest the time, the money, or even the thoughts to get ourselves healthy? If the answer is no, then you’re faced with much deeper internal questions: Why am I resistant to being the best version of me? Am I acting out of fear and not love for myself? Am I resistant to truly being happy in my mind, body, and soul? There’s a saying, “Energy flows where our attention goes.” And if it’s not in self-love, then our energy is usually in a self-defeating emotion that does no good for anyone, especially ourselves.

From the outside looking in, people seem to think I have it all. I worked hard all these years to own my own gym, more than people realize. I survived a very emotional divorce many years ago and then a few long relationships that turned out to be some of the greatest lessons of my life. During all this, I continued to work hard to support myself and my business on my own. I competed competitively for 10 years in the fitness world on large stages, being judged for my appearance and poise, all for the sake of a winning a title. Did I win titles? Yes. Were the judgments of others and my own crazy mind chatter of not feeling good enough, too fat, or too thin worth it? No! From the outside looking in, people had no idea that there was a big piece missing for me; I didn’t give myself time or permission to love “me.” I was too busy running my business. I felt I always had to look and be a certain way because I was constantly being judged by my physique and by my business.

So there I was, frustrated and angry: angry at my gym, my relationship at the time, my finances, my body, and myself! I had no internal peace. I was crying, wondering why everything seemed like it was falling apart all at once. I had worked so hard. I had done everything I could possibly think of, and the worst feeling of them all was that I felt like I didn't even know myself anymore. Have you ever experienced the feeling of despair where it's so deep that you can't remember why you started everything, or what you stand for? It's the epitome of FEAR where every area of your brain and life is blocked, and the only way out is to get real with yourself in a way that you never have before. It was time for me to surrender, to let go, time to stop resisting love, joy, and happiness for myself. You see, we think that we want all these amazing emotions, yet our actions reflect the opposite. We self-sabotage, and we get so used to this pattern of living that this becomes normal to us. I had to get real, and I mean "REAL," with myself. I had accomplished so much, yet so much was missing! I was on the cover of magazines, had articles and blogs written about me, and won many fitness titles. My gym was named Top 5 in *Los Angeles Magazine's* "Best of LA" two years in a row, and yet there was still the feeling of unhappiness.

All the areas that I was sick and tired of all had one common denominator, and guess what, that common denominator was ME! I was standing in the way of my own greatness! I didn't love myself enough to appreciate my own accomplishments or accept people's love, help, and guidance or even my own inner guidance for that matter. As much as I had accomplished, I still had doubts about being "good enough" or "deserving of what I had," which now started to block me from receiving more. I had to put a stop to these limiting beliefs of mine and figure out the ROOT of it all. I realized the root was love or lack thereof. When there is fear of love, lack of love, no self-love or hurt, it blocks us from receiving anything greater. When I was emotionally ready to grasp this, it blew my mind.... You mean my body wasn't changing because I didn't love myself? Or my finances were stuck because I didn't love myself? My relationship was falling apart because I didn't love myself? Yes, YES, and YES! My thoughts and actions were fear based, which attracted more fear into my mind, body, and soul, and ultimately, my LIFE!

We are always creating our own "reality," and it is based either on fear or on love. We are the creators of our own reality, and once this sinks into our spirits, we have the choice to shift our entire thought process. We make the choices. Am I willing to live in fear or in love? Are my decisions and actions based upon fear or love? Once I received this message in the depths of my being, I dropped to my knees in a new revelation. I had to step into the place of love where I could love myself enough to do the work. I had already completed so much personal development work over the years. How did I miss these crucial pieces?

I now had to be completely authentic with myself. What did I truly want for myself? Not for others but for me? Was I truly being vulnerable and authentic with myself, friends, family and clients about all of my gifts and talents? No, I wasn't. I was afraid of the judgment. I was used to being known for being the girl on the cover of a magazine, the girl who owns the gym, the girl who has that kick-ass body and has won many competitions. That was never the true me. I was so much more than that. Yes, I love health and fitness and always will, but to me, fitness meant so much more than just the physical aspect. My physical body was on point, but the rest of me was not! I knew I was here to help people heal internally on a much deeper level, emotionally, spiritually, and on a soul level, but first, it had to start with me. I was no longer willing to just live life. I wanted to live the life of my dreams, a life of fulfillment, and I also wanted this for everyone that I encountered. Imagine the world we would live in if everyone were truly living a life of their dreams. There would be no time for hate; we would be in love with living our lives with no time or want for attention elsewhere.

I showed myself some grace knowing that we all have many layers to uncover and as one layer unfolds, we keep peeling them back until we get to our core. This was my moment to continually surrender to the unknown and to the true love of myself and my gifts and talents. I would remind myself that I was strong enough to get through all the years of emotions that were built up inside of me. It was time to release it all. It was time to let go of what no longer served me.

I remember the day vividly. I was crying in my 5,000 square foot gym on the floor inside our yoga room asking God to please show me some answers and to guide my path. Yoga was one catalyst that helped transform my spirit; it felt fitting to let it all out in my yoga room, to surrender and to listen, to sit in silence. My mind wouldn't shut off, but I fought the urge to move. I knew I had to be still. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, peace of mind came like time stopped, and I had arrived in a place of stillness that felt so warm and comforting. It was then that I felt I finally, truly surrendered. I let go of control, of expectations, and of outcomes and I remembered a statement: when you think you've surrendered, surrender some more. This statement couldn't be more true. I, the teacher, became the student of my own teachings. How do you find comfort in the discomfort? What can you release? What can you soften and let go of? What no longer serves you? These were questions I would pose to my clients, and now I was faced with them. They brought me peace and a confirmation that I was on the right path.

I started journaling and meditating, praying daily, reading books, and attending workshops and retreats, and as the months went on, my numerous emotions were being released. I believe we often feel that we have let go off of our baggage, yet if we don't allow ourselves to feel the challenging

emotions of surrender, then we still hold on to it, and eventually it starts to build back up because it was never fully released and healed.

One day, sitting outdoors in silence, I was given an idea. I knew I was here to help heal and be of service to anyone I encountered. I was to create a program and workshops that incorporated being fit in mind, body, and soul...not just the physical aspect of fitness, but the whole meaning of wellness and fitness. I was to help my clients, my family, my friends, and eventually people globally (starting in Belize, my first humanitarian trip) to understand their mind and body connection from the inside out. I was to help guide them with true transformation of their mindset, physical body, and spiritual fitness for a lasting change to live a life of their dreams and pass this on to their families and communities. Hence my fitness method Bootoga® was born. It is a fusion of boot camp, yoga, and meditation. This inspired me to take it a step further and create my own workshops, complete my life coach certification, and create programs to serve the community of people looking and longing for an answer from within, a deeper purpose of life, but just not knowing how to access it. My method serves all three aspects for a complete balanced life centered in self-love, which is the root of it all.

Building and creating this program and my workshops has not only helped heal myself, it has helped heal young ladies in rehab centers recovering from drugs, alcohol, and prostitution. It has helped women in prison in Belize and young, underserved Belizean children in a summer program, along with my gym clients, private celebrity clients, and more. We are all in search of true love, but we must first love ourselves. When we get out of our own fearful thoughts, our true presence appears. This is our authentic self, the self that is unconditional love.

This is a day by day process; it just doesn't happen overnight. I want to share a few of my daily rituals that helped me maintain my connection to love in hopes that it may help and inspire you.

- 1) I start with morning prayer and meditation time. My time spent varies, some days I have 5 minutes, other days I may have 30-45 minutes. Doing this first thing in the morning jumpstarts my brain and my cellular system to the feeling of love and positivity. I then set empowering intentions for myself.

Example: I am open to receive all creative opportunities with love and acceptance.

I am UNIQUE, I am LOVE, and I am ABUNDANT, and the world needs me to be the BEST version of me.

Our intentions create our reality. What do you want to create today?

- 2) I list 5-10 items (people, things, circumstances) that I am grateful for. Even if something is presented as challenging, I know there is greater growth and clarity for my journey. Take a challenge on as a positive. Turn the thought process around and take a step back to view it from love and a greater opportunity or life lesson that is needed.
- 3) Understand the power of JOY in your life and focus on something that brings that feeling to you daily. What activity, person, or place, brings you true JOY? Do or focus on what brings you JOY once a day! Energy flows where your attention goes.

I hug and kiss my dog in the morning, then I dance and sing in my car on my early morning drive into the gym to get the “joy bunnies” all over my body! Have FUN with yourself. Wake up and say THANK YOU for another day of life and the opportunity to be a better version of you.

- 4) MOVEMENT: Our bodies and our minds crave movement. Walk, bike ride, workout, dance, yoga.... Do whatever your heart desires, but get up and MOVE! It changes you from the inside out! View exercise as an appointment you make with yourself daily, and don't cancel on yourself. This is one appointment you don't miss. Whether it's 10 minutes or 45 minutes, just do it and know that you are becoming fit in your mindset, physically fit, and making your soul happy each time you show up for yourself.
- 5) At the end of my day, I celebrate my day's accomplishments, as small as they may seem. Every action step forward is worth celebration! One of the best feelings is finishing what you promised yourself. You are one step closer to your heart's desire. I personally list my accomplishments or verbally say a thank you prayer and acknowledge my growth on a daily basis.

We must retrain our brains. We must start thinking and feeling from our heart and not always our head. Allow love to start making the decisions and actions instead of fear, and see how your life begins to shift.

We will have our “off” days when we don't feel like playing full out. Don't forget about all this goodness. How quickly can we start training ourselves back to love? How fast can we make the shift from fear to faith? Surrender to love as often as possible, and allow the beauty of the word to fill your heart and your mind to become fit from the inside out.

Fitness from the Inside Out = Fit in Mindset + Fit in Physical Body + Fit in Soul/Spirit



TWEETABLE

Allow love to start making the decisions and actions instead of fear, and see how your life begins to shift. Become fit from the inside out.



Jeanette is a health and wellness expert, writer, two-time bestselling author, fitness model, and owner of her own gym Extreme Results Fitness, creator of her own method Bootoga®, celebrity trainer, life coach, speaker, and WBFF Bikini PRO. Contact her at

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CHAPTER 2

My Transformation

How I Became the Biggest Loser

by Mike Messina

It was May 1, 2012 when I walked out onto a stage in Studio City, California wearing a tailored, royal blue *Biggest Loser* tank top and black shorts. It was the season 13 live finale of NBC's *The Biggest Loser* reality show, and I am the last person to get on the scale. I could honestly stand there in front of that studio audience and the millions of fans who were watching at home with "NO EXCUSES."

I gave it everything I had to give and then some. I didn't know if it was enough to win the \$100,000 prize, and in that moment, I could care less about winning the title or the money. I felt like I was finally a "normal person," and looking as good as I did was priceless.

So there I am staring into the lights, and the faces in the crowd are smiling up at me as the number on the scale stops spinning. I am completely overwhelmed as the host Alison Sweeney is looking up at me with her warm and beautiful aqua-blue eyes and saying, "Mike, you went from 358 lbs. to 198 lbs. for a total weight loss of 160 lbs. or 44.69% of your body weight. Mike, YOU are the winner!" It was the most thrilling moment of my life. I threw my hands in the air and pointed to the heavens as I roared at the top of my lungs, "YES!"

I was rockstar skinny, I was getting tons of attention, and it felt amazing!

Come back with me way back to 1982. Back to a time in our world that had no reality shows, internet, or social media. This was America without the media onslaught of courageous transformations and weight loss stories.

I had no idea what a physical transformation looked like, no reference for what was possible. It was a tough time to be 12 years old and fat! My heroes were MTV rock stars like Joe Elliot, the lead singer of Def Leppard, who was setting the world on fire in his sleeveless Union Jack t-shirt, screaming about pyromania. And Simon Le Bon of Duran Duran, looking fly in his silk pastel "Anthony Price" suit and singing about a girl named "Rio" from the bow of a sailboat. I wondered how I could ever be like them. I loved to sing, and I often heard that I was a good looking kid, but my heroes were skinny, all of them. I felt alone and lost. I felt that I didn't belong.

It was the end of the summer of '82, and my dad and I were coming off the road after a journey around the country delivering furniture and stuffing our faces. Every time we stopped was a celebration, and for me, there were only three things I enjoyed on the road, and they were: taking a hot shower, playing video games at the truck stop arcade, and eating at the restaurant buffet. We would drive for two or three days straight sometimes, only stopping when it was absolutely necessary. He was always behind schedule. He would get stuck at poker tables for what seemed like an eternity. When we finally reached our destination, we would load or unload the truck for up to fourteen hours depending on the size of the load and how many flights of stairs there were. It was a dirty and incredibly hard life. I was the kid who loved to ride his BMX bike and play ball in the streets. I had friends and activities that kept me busy and somewhat happy, and there I was living in a truck with a thirty-two-year-old man who was confident and had movie star looks. All that I wanted was for him to be my hero, but his choices and habits were disturbing and contagious.

I gained 50 pounds that summer. Before that trip, I was a healthy and fit kid, but it was getting hard to move around or even just get up out of a chair. That summer was the "straw that broke the camel's back" for me. I went into a deep depression. It was the first time that I had ever spent more than a couple of hours with my Dad; but I wanted a *life* with him, and what I got was all he could offer. I took it personally, and once again, I felt that I didn't belong.

Fast forward 30 years and 54,750,000 calories, and I was 41-years-old and nearly 400 lbs. My lifelong obsession with food had really come at a price. I was sick with diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, and sleep apnea. There were times when I thought I could lose the weight and escape the hell that I had created for myself. I would think to myself that if the people on those reality television shows could do it, I could do it too. And then, in one of my fleeting moments of lucidity, I realized that I was sitting there in my worn out La-Z-Boy recliner doing what I always did, drinking to get drunk, eating like a pig, and living vicariously through the people on the television set. I was in so much emotional pain that sometimes, I wanted to end it all.

Every now and then I would get all fired up and go on a diet or go to the gym. I would try super hard for a day or a week and then just straight up quit on myself. My consistent lack of integrity and low self-esteem left me less and less hopeful that I would ever lose weight and live a life worth living. Fortunately, I could always hear my mother's voice in the back of my head telling me how great I am, and that I could do anything I put my mind to. Because of her unconditional love, I refused to completely give up and eat a bullet. Thanks, mom, you know how much I love you!

One day, in early 2011, I was at the house watching TV when I got a call

from my brother Joe. He was super excited and yelled over the phone, "Hey Mike, I just tried out for that reality show *The Biggest Loser*. I went to a live audition, and they like me. And, yeah man, you have to fly to New York and do a second audition with me. They want a family member of mine to be on the show with me, and you're the only one bro, you have to come out." Pessimistically, I said, "We have a one in a million chance of being picked, and I don't have the money to fly to New York!" Suddenly, I started thinking to myself that it had been like five years since we hung out, and I really missed my brother. Joe was my dad's favorite son; he had four boys. Ultimately, I believe the unhealthy lifestyle my dad lived on the road took his life. He died of cancer in 2002. He was only 52 years old. God rest his soul.

Fortunately, I got the chance before he passed to tell him that I loved him. He did the best he knew how at the time. Sitting there on the phone with my brother, I thought that maybe our dad's spirit had a hand in making this all happen. Perhaps this was a way to right his wrongs. I told my brother that I would be on the next flight. Why not us?

A couple months later we were chosen to be contestants. I was convinced our Dad had something to do with it. What are the odds!? I couldn't believe it, but it was true. I was on TV, and I had a chance to erase the past and live into a whole new future! My dream was being realized, and seen by 10 million people, and I was going to do this or die trying. My whole conversation changed. No longer did I feel an occasional spark of inspiration, I was on fire every second of every day. But, there was a problem. Some of the other contestants did not like me. It was two weeks into filming, and my teammates voted me off the show. There I was, forcing my 4XL butt into a tiny, little airline seat and heading for home. In my mind, I had been misunderstood. I was just trying to be cool and fit in, but they did not see it that way. I was super angry at my team and myself. Fortunately, the show and the staff gave me a ton of amazing information and encouragement. They liked me and couldn't believe that I got voted off. They told me that that I could not only lose the weight but maybe also win *The Biggest Loser* as the at-home champion.

Back at the house, nothing changed. All of the temptations of food and alcohol still existed and were easily accessible. I am outside of the safety net of *The Biggest Loser* Ranch. I had to make a choice, and I decided to choose me. I told everyone that I love that I was going away for the next six months. I told them that I would be physically there but completely unavailable. I needed laser focus, and I had to do it alone.

It is day one at home, and I took the advice of the show's doctor, Dr. H., and found the steepest hill possible. I ran up it as fast as I could for 30 seconds. My objective for each run was to try so hard that when the 30 seconds were

up, if I could even say one word, then I did not try hard enough. I pushed myself to a very vulnerable place where death seemed like a possibility. I had a realization after my first couple of interval runs that transformed how I thought about myself and what I am capable of.

At the end of the 30-second sprint, my heart was pounding out of my chest, and I was gasping for air, and in that moment of fear, I made a conscious decision to stand “at attention” with my shoulders back, my chest out and, with all of my being, fight to regain my breath and bring my heart rate back to normal. I became aware that I could harness my anger and use that emotion for extreme focus. I typically would have paced around or bent over at the knees all caught up in my head and questioning why the hell I was doing this, and then find a way to justify quitting. But this badass and pissed off me was cool, and I was having fun with it. Every run was a challenge to see how winded I could get and how strong I could recover. I would turn up the heavy metal jams and run intervals for 90 minutes per day, six days per week. With every run, I felt more alive and in control of my life. I believe that an empowered state of mind can be created with the body.

For me, easily learnable skills such as “alpha posture,” positive body language, positive self-talk, and high-performance breathing are highly effective prior to and during a workout or anything else that is uncomfortable or difficult. These four tools have managed to keep me mostly sane, fairly confident, healthy, and continually growing as a human being. I highly recommend Amy Cuddy’s and Dr. Allan Pease’s TED Talks for some insight into the science of body language and power poses. Also, Google Wim Hof “The Ice Man.” His high-performance breathing technique and its ability to save lives and break Guinness World Records is fascinating.

After a week back at home, I met John Hebison a trainer at the local “big box” gym. He did not like his job and was going to quit and start his own training business. I asked him to train me and help me win the show, and he said, “No problem. Let’s make it happen!” We worked out for two hours after my morning hill runs, which brought me to three and a half hours per day of training. “J-Heb” was always encouraging and funny, and I always got an amazing workout with him.

I was three months in and had lost 75 pounds. It’s not record breaking weight loss, but it is consistent. I was at home after a long day of training, and I got a Facebook message from a trainer named Michael Friedman. Michael told me that he trained last season’s at-home winner, and he wanted to train me to be this season’s at-home winner if I was up to the challenge. He told me if I did exactly what he said that I was guaranteed to win. I was like, “Two trainers? Why not!”

Michael's plan for me to win: I got up every morning at 4:30 a.m. and took the BART train to San Francisco to train with him for two hours. Michael was a little sadistic and had NO mercy. It was two hours of pure ass kicking! Thank God for my posture and breathing techniques, or I would have definitely quit. After I trained with Michael, I would walk and run the hills of San Francisco for another two hours, and then go back across the bridge to train with John for two more hours. For the final workout of the day, I would play basketball and swim at the local 24 Hour Fitness for three more hours. It took me about 17 hours a day to cook, travel, and work out and the only time I ever sat down was when I drove. I did get Sundays off to rest and have my high-calorie day. On top of my regular daily caloric intake, I would eat an additional 1,000 calories of pasta or pizza. Sunday's were super tough; it was really hard to slow down and eat all that food! This routine went on for just six months. 180 days to become a brand new man, it was like a miracle.

People ask me all the time how I did it. I tell them that I weighed and measured my food and worked out all day, which is true. And I also say that I will forever be grateful for the guidance and support of my two trainers and anyone else that was there for me, especially my brother and his wife Anita for being courageous enough to go to that first audition. In my opinion, the working out all day, complete change in diet, and subsequent weight loss were only possible because I stumbled upon those four tools when I first started running up those hills. The extreme focus and confidence that I created by using posture and breath during my interval runs gave me an opportunity to be fully alive and in the moment, so much so, that I could push the boundaries of human endurance and suffering.

Those six months of brutal training, overuse injuries, and calorie deprivation were by far some of the best times of my life. They have given me the ability to believe in myself and in the possibility that my story and the tools that have worked for me can make a positive difference in the world. I believe that everything that you will ever need to know already exists within you. When you make the choice to confidently embark on your own heart's journey, whatever that might be, and in spite of your fears, something wonderful *will* happen. You will not know when, but there will come a moment while you are in action that the floodgates of possibility will open. And if you listen closely to your universal truths, you will get exactly what you need to keep going towards your goals and beyond!

I would like to leave you with a golden nugget from my good friend Zig Ziglar, may he rest in peace.

“It is a lot harder to get on top than it is to stay on top, and I will see you over the top.”



TWEETABLE

Those 6 months of brutal training, overuse injuries, and calorie deprivation were by far some of the best times of my life!



Mike Messina is inspired to help people lose weight so that they can be happier and more confident. He is the at-home winner of NBC's The Biggest Loser and a motivational speaker, weight loss expert, and personal trainer to the stars.

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CHAPTER 3

Never, Ever Give Up

by Nicole Zapoli

I am so grateful that God uses the storms in our lives to challenge and grow us in ways that we could never have imagined. I would not be who I am and would have never known how strong I was if I had not chosen to face it all.

I got married when I was just 18 because my pastor assured me it was God's will. Then, knowing my friends and our church would not be supportive, I auditioned for the NFL Houston Texans Cheerleaders and made the team. My girlfriends sat me down and rebuked me until I agreed with them that I was in sin for cheerleading even though I never believed I was.

I soon began my first business, a mobile gym. My husband had control of the finances; everything I made went straight into a bank account I never saw. After seven years of being married and three years after I gave birth to our daughter, he told me he didn't want to be married anymore and left for California. Our house was foreclosed on and my truck was repossessed. I moved on, but that experience left me confused and angry at God.

I was terrified that I was disobeying God by following through with the divorce and felt so much shame. I chose to focus on setting some positive new goals for myself. I continued to coach while I trained for a full marathon. Following the marathon, I made the team with the NBA Houston Rockets Power Dancers.

Shortly after making Rockets Power Dancers, I was introduced to CrossFit. I did one workout and fell absolutely in love. The Houston-based warehouse in August without A/C was hot and reminded me of the gyms I missed from my childhood gymnastics career. Often, I was the only one in the noon class due to the heat, but I was honored to receive "private coaching" from my awesome coach, Grace.

When beginning CrossFit, you scale your training to match your fitness level, but the day I saw the benchmark WOD, "Angie," one round for time of 100 pull ups, 100 push ups, 100 sit ups, and 100 squats in that order, on the board, I told my coach, Grace, I wanted to try and go Rx'd. Even though it seemed beyond my fitness level, she encouraged me to give it a shot and had incredible patience as I ripped my hands in four places.

She asked me if I wanted to continue several times, but I was determined. There was blood all over the pull up bar, and it took me far longer than it should have. Crossfit was one of the most challenging things I had ever done mentally and physically, but that was what kept me coming back for more.

I was relieved to have endless small goals to work towards. I loved the tight-knit, supportive community of CrossFit. I had never felt that kind of support before. I loved how much stronger I was becoming, not just physically, but mentally, too. I loved my inspiring, incredible, and impressive coach, Grace. During one of the toughest times of my life, CrossFit was there to help me rebuild a new and improved version of myself. Without even knowing it, my coach inspired me to not give up on my lifelong dream of owning my own gym and my passion for coaching and helping people.

At home, my ex-husband sent me a message. He was apologizing and asking me to give him another chance. I felt so much guilt. I wanted my daughter close with her dad like I was with mine. So, I dropped everything, moved to California, and got remarried. I knew almost immediately I had made a terrible choice once again. We soon went our separate ways.

I soon moved on and began coaching gymnastics, a beach boot camp, and later on CrossFit. Coaching CrossFit allowed me the opportunity to grow and learn so much more as a coach. I enjoyed exploring creative ways to help as many people as possible regardless of their background or ability.

I had started dating someone, and it moved way too fast. When we moved in together, I remember him yelling at me that he did not want to take a set of chairs I had refinished by hand and that I loved. I remember thinking I had made another terrible relationship choice, but I felt like I had already made my choice, so I stayed. I was in yoga teacher training, and shortly after moving in together he told me I could not continue with it because it was too far of a drive. He needed to know where I was at all times. He told me that my personal success and where I was in life was all because of him. He would ask me to stuff my bra for photo shoots for his apparel brand that I was expected to do at a moment's notice. He would compare me to other athletes and his ex-girlfriend. Almost any attempt to communicate with him was met with the response that my "feelings were wrong" and that I needed to "push my feelings down." I longed to be respected, but he would tell me that I "shouldn't worry about getting respect." He seemed to never be satisfied with who I was or anything I did no matter how hard I worked to make him happy. Before I realized it, my internal self talk began to sound very similar to what I was allowing myself to be fed; however, this was my big quiet secret. Ironically, the only person I felt I could trust was the same person I was allowing to feed me lies, all of which I believed. My confidence

began to dwindle as I became severely anxious and depressed; suicidal thoughts plagued me.

I was hired onto the CrossFit Gymnastics Seminar Coaching Staff, and later that same year my lifelong dream came true when my partners and I opened the doors to our CrossFit affiliate. I was there before the sun rose and long after the sun set every day. My boyfriend/business partner did not workout at our gym for close to a year. When we started to look like we were becoming somewhat successful, he showed up. Our other partner ran our books and was the entire financial backing for the gym. Both my boyfriend and I were investing with sweat equity. He took 35% and suggested I have 15% since together it equaled 50%. My job was to work as the general manager and head coach. His was to do our website. I took no paycheck for months and then eventually was able to start getting paid about \$500/month. Even though I was the general manager and head coach, I still felt I had to constantly ask his permission to make decisions. He would get angry if I agreed to coach overseas or anything that was not local. I was asked to lead coach a seminar in Israel and was super excited to go, but instead, he called my boss and told him I couldn't go. I tried to stand up for myself, but that never ended well, so I would just keep the peace to avoid the conflict. The longer I stayed in the relationship, the less I liked who I was becoming.

After four years of dating, almost three years of owning a business together, and over two years without him even looking at me like he loved me or was attracted to me in the slightest, I was ready for some type of decision one way or another. For years I had openly communicated with him that I did not like the health of our relationship and that I strongly felt we were not right for each other, but I would allow him to convince me otherwise. I tried with all my might to remain strong and positive. I knew deep in my heart that he was not the man for me, but I was also terrified of what a break up would do to the gym, the community, and my daughter.

I chose to set some new positive goals for myself as an athlete and coach through private coaching. When my fiance found out I had decided to get a coach from OPEX, he was completely against it and let me know every day, but I proceeded anyway. I was done bowing down to him. My coach asked me some challenging questions that really made me think and get brutally honest with myself. I finally felt like I had the courage to stand up to my fiance. I broke off our engagement that September. To be true to my heart and soul and to live an authentic, positive life for myself and my daughter, I knew I could not spend another day in that relationship.

It wasn't an easy break up. We were still business partners, and breaking up did not make our relationship more healthy. I was so used to keeping the peace, but keeping the peace was not yielding a stronger, healthier,

happier life for me. To be willing to make peace within ourselves, we must also accept the fact that doing so will almost always create external conflict in our life temporarily. This truth can be really scary and can tempt you to not follow through with your choice. I chose to commit to my decision to living a stronger, healthier, happier life, but it was far from easy.

I had started to pursue building my own business on the side while going through the OPEX CCP Total Coach Program when my entire life was suddenly hacked: my new website, bank account, cell phone, computer, email, and the gym's member management system. I soon also realized that my identity had been stolen and that someone was using my information to impersonate me. I had trouble wrapping my mind around it all. The word violated does not come close to describing how I felt. I wanted to be done with it all, but I knew that was not the answer. I had to figure out a way to be strong for my daughter, but I was beyond exhausted from the hopelessness and the confusion I had been dealing with for so long.

I reached a full-blown burnout. Following the hacking attack and criminal impersonation, I lost even more trust and respect for myself and my inner voice. I blamed myself for everything. I had always been so sure of what my purpose on this Earth was, but for the first time I was completely lost.

For the first time in five years, I went back to church. I began having some deep conversations with God. I realized my personal relationship with Christ had nothing to do with anyone else. I was so hungry for His peace and joy. I could feel Him healing me from the inside out. I could feel myself coming back to life.

I finally made one of the toughest decisions I have ever had to make. And that was to leave my gym, a place where I invested all of myself and poured all of my heart, soul, blood, sweat, and tears into. I finally made the choice to free myself from all that was holding me back from living a balanced, happy, healthy life in every aspect, pursuing my passions, and being the best person and mom I could be.

I am so thankful for the tough stuff because it has made me who I am today. We are not what happens to us. We are who we choose to be. I am so grateful for the few true friendships I have gained through it all and for the ability to let go of relationships that were stifling my growth. Choosing to not sit on the sidelines of life, but rather to live life with a big, open heart is guaranteed to lead to hurt, pain, and struggle, but that is also when we are able to grow deeply through vulnerability, from the inside out developing more strength, confidence, and character. We are all imperfect humans in need of love, grace, and mercy.

I wouldn't be who I am today if I had not been introduced to CrossFit. CrossFit was always there. It was an outlet, a place to train for the sake of training, and a place to focus and release whatever was going on outside of that safe place. Pursuing my goals in CrossFit gave me space to work through stuff. I always enjoyed working out alone as it was my quiet time. I still appreciate my alone time, but there is something so empowering about working out in a room full of hard working, passionate people suffering alongside you, all working to improve, all working to be the best versions of themselves.

As my faith was renewed, I was soon able to release all the shame I had been holding onto so tightly. I was able to forgive myself and those who had hurt me so deeply. I developed a deep love for God, for myself, and for humanity again. I began to take my power back. I was done living as a victim and ready to start living my life as a victor. My experiences have taught me, pain can push us, but it can also serve to let us know we are still alive. Challenges are what force us to grow. No matter what, no matter how bad it seems, never ever give up. You don't need permission to be amazing. We were each created for a very important, specific purpose. Life is so good even in the darkness. That is where your ultimate beauty and inner strength is found.



TWEETABLE

Challenges are what force us to grow. Pain can push us, but it can also serve to let us know we are still alive... never ever give up.



Nicole Zapoli is the founder of Nicole Zapoli Fitness offering custom programming through remote and private coaching. She is a former competitive artistic gymnast, four-time Texas state champion rhythmic gymnast, four-time Junior Olympian, member of the Junior Olympic Academic Team, and a three-time All-American cheerleader who cheered professionally in the NFL and NBA.

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CHAPTER 4

Heart of a Lion

by Jason Scott Johnson

As a child, some of my fondest memories are attending wellness conferences with my mother and running daily with my dad through the farmlands of Wisconsin. I grew up with fitness as my backbone. It helped me win a Wisconsin State Title in wrestling and get honored as platoon Ironman while in the US Marines. In addition, physical fitness allowed me to handle the intense rigors of training and missions while serving with the Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team and 2nd Force Recon. Fitness has also allowed me to compete in Ironman Triathlons and a host of other sporting events.

More importantly, being a fitness enthusiast, I have been able to help countless others reach their fitness goals and drastically improve all areas of their lives. I continue to use it as best as I can to inspire others to continue to reach the next best version of themselves.

The lessons that one uses in fitness can be applied to anything in life. I am honored to share a cherished example of how fitness and competition greatly enhanced my life and my belief in our capabilities with you.

I walked with a little limp, past a gentleman selling rice sticks, to a nearby newsstand. I went inside and asked for a copy of the local paper. I looked at an article and felt chills of excitement run through my body as I smiled and purchased two copies then headed back to my hotel

Harvey's Casino, Council Bluffs, Iowa. Three months earlier, during Labor Day Weekend. I was having a dish of oatmeal with a protein shake. Across from me was Duke Roufus, the head coach of the then called "Phetnoi" Camp Muay Thai Kickboxing team. A casual conversation turned into an exciting dream that I will never forget.

A day prior, all of the top IKF Kickboxers, including me, fought for the National Title. It was a day that I will never forget because I battled the hometown favorite, stopped him, and captured my first championship belt.

Now, there was talk at the breakfast table of taking the National Champions and sending them to Bangkok, Thailand to compete in the World Championships. The conversation seemed like a dream that was too good to be true. I imagined it and thought to myself, "Wow, that would be

awesome. Here I would get to see Thailand and fight for the United States. What could be better?"

Duke taught me that luck is when preparation meets opportunity. I always focused on being prepared because you never know when you'll be called.

Shortly after that victory breakfast, I got the call. Yes! It was really happening, a group of us Americans were going to get our shot. Suddenly, the training took on a whole new meaning. I learned right away the secret to unstoppable energy and enthusiasm. It's the power of purpose! Every training session, every run, every drill, every sparring session were all fueled by me imagining fighting in the birthplace of Muay Thai kickboxing. I may have gotten physically tired, bruised, and taken to my mental and physical limit in training, but I didn't even notice because I was running on sheer inspiration.

Bangkok, Thailand. Music of the live band played in the background, and the oo's and ahh's of the crowd created an atmosphere overflowing with adrenaline and thrill.

My training partner held the Thai pads as I cracked them with punches, kicks, elbow and knee strikes. I bounced back and forth from excitement and confidence to fear and doubt. I was about to fight for the World Championship against an undefeated fighter from the Ukraine. He weighed in at 240 pounds and stood 6'5". He had also knocked out all of his previous opponents in the first round.

They had us all warm up in the same room, so it became a major mind game. I could see the giant warming up and looking at me and laughing while talking in his native language. I had to create laser-like focus on why I was there and what I had to do. Fear quickly turned into empowering anger.

My body felt tired and shaky as I continued the warm up. I knew from experience that this was normal for me, and that it all goes away the second the bell rings. The warm up finished. Now it was time to control my breathing, thoughts, and feelings.

As my teammate put on my robe and Mongkon (ceremonial headdress) I relaxed and used a technique that I learned while in the US Marines. It was a mental switch that you hit when it's time to go into combat mode. It's a mode where you have to go mentally and set aside all fears, discomforts, and what ifs. You simply focus on your job.

"Johnson, USA," I heard. Okay, it's go time. I walked barefoot across the cement floor, pressed my gloves together, and marched in while visualizing my hand being raised at the end. I entered the ring, and I felt my heart rate hitting peak levels.

I looked across the ring and there he was waiting for me. I decided to do the ceremonial sealing of the ring, which is a tradition for the fighters from Thailand in their country. I then bowed to honor my teachers and my school. My teammate James Downey removed my Mongkon, meaning it was time to go to war.

My opponent and I came to the center and got our instructions. I looked up to him, and we touched gloves. At this moment, you think, "I wonder what's going to happen in the next three minutes." It's crazy how your mind goes 110 miles per hour in moments like these.

The bell rang, the referee yelled, "Chuk," which is "fight" in Thai. We met in the center and the giant unleashed a barrage of punches, and I was hit from all angles. I just remember the feeling of being overwhelmed and out of control. The punches were rattling my head, my vision got very blurry, my legs got rubbery, and I couldn't even see the punches at this point. Before I knew it, I was down. Laying on the canvas I could see the lights above me, and everything was a fog. My head was ringing, and everything felt very hot in my head.

I struggled to get to my feet, and then a thought hit me; it was so crystal clear. "I came too far to go down now." All of the fear and worry was gone at this point. I knew that I would rather die than give up. The referee wanted to stop the fight, but one of the judges from the United States pushed to let the fight go on.

Somehow I managed to make it to the first bell. Then, while in the corner, I got a chance to let most of the fog dissipate in my head. My goal was simple, make it through round two. Ding ding. The second round started, and I felt better on my feet and was able to move and work better defenses. Then something wonderful happened, my endless repetition of certain drills kicked in. These are techniques that Duke taught me from the very beginning with countless daily repetitions.

Duke Roufus, a four-time Kickboxing World Champion, taught me a key strategy. Basically, whenever a boxer throws a punching combination, you duck under and counter with a right kick to his left outer thigh. The prime spot to hit was right at the short line above the knee.

That is exactly what happened automatically for me, and I just kept doing it. I would wait for him to put his weight on his left leg to throw a punch and I would dive in and kick that leg like I was chopping down a tree. I didn't care about anything else but breaking that leg down. Then something even greater happened. At the very end of the second round, I nailed that same spot and he winced. It actually affected him! That was all I needed to see. Right at that moment, my mindset shifted.

In the corner, I remember my two teammates smiling because they saw it too. I felt a sense of possibility for the first time that I might put up a good fight here. “Just keep kicking that leg,” my cornerman said. I was in total agreement.

The third round sounded. Now my focus went from “not being hit” to “let’s see how many times I can hit him.” The third round started with me just waiting for him to try to punch me because I knew that it would allow me to kick his already wore down leg. I basically learned how to turn his weapon into his biggest weakness.

Half way into the third round, I noticed that he could not put weight on that leg anymore, which meant that he couldn’t punch me with any kind of real power. I had a feeling of “my turn.” I was then able to open up my own favorite combinations of punches, kicks, elbows, and knee attacks. I felt like I could do anything that I wanted. What seemed like a giant just fifteen minutes earlier, now seemed like a punching bag with arms.

Now I was having fun. I went from fear, to hope, to knowing that I was going to win. I had the whole crowd cheering for me. I connected directly with the locals and even purposely used the traditional footwork that is common place for fighters in Thailand, which involves a rhythmic tapping of the lead leg to the beat of the music.

At the end of the third round, my corner and I knew that I had him in the palm of my hands. I was grinning ear to ear and could not wait to go back out there and fight some more. I went into the fourth round with the utmost confidence and continued to land my fun combinations and, of course, go after that left leg a little more. Before I knew it, the giant went down. His leg crumbled, and he could not get up.

My cornermen ran out and lifted me in the air. I had a mix of emotions from excitement, to disbelief, to sheer joy. After the officials raised my arm, I left the ring and was pounced on by reporters from all over the world. They wanted to know everything about me and get pictures of me. I had never had that kind of attention before. They were talking about big opportunities like the prestigious K-1. I did not feel ready for any of that; I was still trying to digest what had just happened. See, in fights like this, the memory shuts off. After other fights I might not be able to recall any parts of the fight until hours later.

After the initial mayhem, the judge came up to me, and we both got teary-eyed about what had just happened. It was a life-changing event for me.

I remember that night, going out for dinner, enjoying a nice piece of chicken, and pinching my left forearm to do two things. First, to make sure

I wasn't dreaming. Second, because I knew I would always remember that moment when I purposely pinched my skin as hard as I could. I didn't want to forget how I felt.

That next morning, I was told that I should go and get a current copy of the newspaper because there was an article written about me with my picture on the headline. I headed as fast as I could to the nearest newsstand and there it was, the paper that captured the whole event and will forever be a symbol of strength and courage that I can draw from. Now, I have two copies protected, and one of them was made into a plaque that hung at our gym for inspiration to other athletes. My dad took the other paper to get it translated as soon as possible to find out that the headline read, "The Heart Of A Lion."

From this I've learned, first, that your thoughts and feelings create your reality. When I came from a place of fear and hoping not to get hit, I got exactly what I was focusing on. I got hit and hit a lot. When I then put my attention on doing the hitting, I got what I focused on. I landed shot after shot. This metaphor can be used for anything in life. Simply, keep your eyes on what you desire and on all of the ways that you can win. Basically, put your attention on all of the reasons why you can succeed and stack up all of your advantages. This, in turn, will keep you in a winning mindset and increase belief and ability to take the right actions.

Second, you are never out. If you can breathe, then you can still win. There is always a way if you want it bad enough. When challenges hit, it's time to get even more focused on what you want and why you want it. I knew that I wanted to keep fighting, even though I couldn't see straight or even stand normally. I had a desire greater than life itself to keep pushing. I wanted it for me, for my supporters, for everyone. If it is something important to you, then you owe it to yourself and those around you to always drive harder when the obstacles surface.

Third, when you feel inspired to do something, do it and do it now. Inspiration is your soul calling to you asking for growth. With that growth comes great thrill and excitement. When you follow your soul's calling, like I did when I got the chance to fight in Thailand, you are on the right path. We have all come into this life with unique desires, skill sets, and gifts that we can bring to this world. One of the greatest contributions that you can give to others is to follow your inspiration. I continue to do what feels energizing, exciting, and challenging. It always brings me to new journeys and adventures that lead to countless lessons and experiences that I can learn from and teach others.

Focus on what you want, decide to always drive harder when challenges

appear, and follow your deepest dreams. We did not come here to survive but to thrive.



TWEETABLE

When challenges hit, focus on what you want. I knew I wanted to fight even though I couldn't stand. I desired more than life to keep pushing



Jason Scott Johnson is a transformation coach, National Academy of Sports Medicine certified weight loss and performance enhancement specialist, and a natural bodybuilding and sports model champion. He won the IFMA World Super-Heavyweight Amateur Kickboxing Title, was IKF Amateur of the Year, and ranked 7th in the world as a professional. He served with the US Marine Corps. Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team and the elite 2nd Force Recon. Jason has appeared in and written for publications such as Muscle and Fitness, Ironman, Men's Fitness, Exercise For Men Only, Physical, and Inside Kung Fu. He is currently an international film actor and fitness leader.

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CHAPTER 5

The Road to Confidence

by Dani Lau

“Believe in yourself and all that you are. Know that there is something inside of you that is greater than any obstacle.” – CHRISTIAN D. LARSON

Fitness is a long journey in which many obstacles have to be overcome. Belief in yourself and confidence to know that you're capable of the process is what brings success. Confidence was something I never had, in any aspect of my life. I was the shy girl who was afraid to talk to anyone and always felt awkward, weird, and not good enough. I envied the girls who were talkative, fun, and popular, and didn't understand why I couldn't be like that. I was always in my own head questioning everything I said or did, and it took me a long time to warm up to people. Because I was self-conscious, I portrayed myself as the opposite of the person I really was.

I was never very overweight, but I was also never the skinny, pretty girl either. I floated through my childhood trying to go unnoticed and was never the attention grabber in my home life. I have an older sister who, although we were very close and did everything together growing up, was “the good kid”—responsible, smart, and well-behaved. I also have a younger brother and sister who required more attention from my divorced parents than I did. As I was growing up we moved a lot which made life even more difficult for me. Constant change made it difficult to make connections with people and really figure out who I was. The only real stability I had was gymnastics, which taught me a great deal about self-discipline, consistency, and determination. I was able to put all of my energy and time into my training, which became my coping mechanism for the craziness around me. I had confidence in my gymnastics skills, which gave me self-worth.

As I got into my early teen years, I made the big decision to quit gymnastics to pursue other sports, but found that with that, I lost all direction and pride. I started seeking that same sense of confidence and found that only alcohol filled that void. I loved the way drinking made me feel because it gave me confidence to leave my “shell.” Eventually, I started using drugs, was barely eating, was tired all the time, and used energy drinks to keep me going. I was becoming unhealthy but also getting skinny and loved it. I became anorexic, and eventually bulimic. I got so unhealthy that I ended up fainting a couple times at school. When my dad heard about this, he took drastic

measures to change the direction in which I was headed.

One fateful day, I met up with my dad for lunch. I was about to be on my way when I was suddenly grabbed and thrown into an SUV. I tried to break the windows to get out and found myself yelling “DADDY! Please, Daddy no!” I saw him crying as I was driven away against my will; this was the worst feeling I’ve ever felt. I felt powerless and scared.

By the next day I was in Utah at a wilderness survival program, where there were no toilets, showers, or shelter and where I was required to learn survival skills and hike miles each day to a new campsite. I had to complete self-reflection assignments and ponder past mistakes and behaviors.

Although this felt like a horrible process, it made me strong-minded. It helped me realize I can accomplish anything I set my mind to. It taught me to work through every obstacle to accomplish my ultimate goal. And it helped me to start realizing my worth and that strength came from inside of me, not from outside sources.

After almost three months I left the program, and despite my progress, I quickly fell back into old habits. I returned to such an unhealthy state of not eating and using drugs that I was constantly sick and in pain, yet told myself that it was worth it because I was skinny again, and I didn’t want to give that up. I used my body and looks to get ahead, even winning a few swim-suit contests, which further validated my poor lifestyle. However, I still had no sense of self, I felt lost and empty inside, and I was unhealthy again.

I was so unhappy that I spent much of my time watching TV. Mostly shows about people who were being helped in various ways, and I wished I could make a difference in people’s lives somehow. I also began watching cooking shows, which inspired me to start baking again, like I had with my mom and grandma growing up. This brought back memories of better days and closeness with family. I started to feel better physically, but it also led me to eat more and I started to become horrified with my weight gain. I knew that I needed to find a way to look AND feel great, and find my true purpose. I knew that helping people would make me happy. Since I had a passion for sports and fitness, I signed up for my personal training certification. And so, I began my fitness journey to find myself and my happiness.

Through the process of learning about fitness and nutrition, I finally found the healthy way to have the body I wanted. I started putting this knowledge into practice, and was getting “my dream body” back. It was not easy, and it took much perseverance to see the changes happening to my body. In the past, I always wanted a quick-fix vs. long-term hard work, but this time I was ready to put in the effort and do it the right way. There were days where I wanted to give up, where I felt hopeless, where I was frustrated at the

speed of the results I was getting. But I used that same determination and consistency that I had learned from gymnastics and the wilderness program to drive me. Because I had always lost weight in an unhealthy way, it was new and exciting to be getting into shape while feeling good as well. I was elated to have learned what works and excited at the possibility of being able to help other women experience the same success I was achieving.

Although I now had correct knowledge on how to be fit, I was nervous to actually start teaching it because I didn't feel worthy or experienced enough, an old familiar feeling. I was so used to letting myself down, but this was the path I truly desired, so I took the risk of failing, let go of past emotions, and seized the opportunity. I knew I had to prove to myself that I was capable and worthy of this challenge. This was the start of my new life, and I had a newfound sense of pride, something that I hadn't experienced much of in my life. I got the opportunity to train people from all walks of life, creating individualized programs for each person. I was becoming confident in myself and my abilities and came to realize that I am actually good at connecting with people, which really surprised me! The more I learned and taught, the more I grew as a person. Because my clients were achieving such amazing results and gaining their own confidence and vitality, I knew this was exactly what I was meant to do.

I was proud of what I was doing, but knew I could do more. Following my passion then led to acquiring a client who would change my life. Kim Somers Egelsee is a life coach, author, speaker, and an amazing mentor. She taught me so much, and ended up certifying me as a life coach as well. She pushed me out of my comfort zone, and gave me the confidence to further my career, so I left the gym to start my own personal training business.

I finally had a breakthrough, and knew I could do anything if I just stayed positive, kept an open mind, and tried my hardest. I gained many clients and found the perfect training gym. I was finding my true self and loved who I was becoming. I was no longer the shy girl who was awkward in talking to people. I was leading people, changing lives, and a professional mastering my craft. I love my career and all the people am able to help. I have built great relationships with my clients and learned that everyone has their own story. I know now to never be so quick to judge people in thinking that they're judging me.

I am thankful for all of my life experiences, both positive and negative, because they all played a role in creating the person I have become. Each experience has made me stronger, smarter, and wiser. I know that there will still be challenges, things to overcome, and skills to learn, but I also know that I have the strength to take those challenges head on and come out

the other side victorious. This is the way we all have to look at our fitness journeys. We have to take our experiences and learn from them in order to use them to our advantage. Without gymnastics, my unstable childhood, my poor life choices, being sent away to a wilderness program, and having eating disorders, severe body image issues, and a lack of confidence, I wouldn't be the complete person I am today or be able to overcome any obstacle thrown my way.

In fitness and in life, we have to take control of ourselves, be fearless, and take risks. We have to make choices that will better ourselves and open the door to new opportunities, which will give us inner strength and ultimately confidence. To me, the true meaning of fitness is so much more mental than it is physical. We have to have our minds in the right place to be able to be physically fit. Fitness creates trust in yourself, and brings about both inner and outer strength. With fitness, no external validation is needed because we prove to ourselves that we are strong, capable, and worthy. Happiness is all about health and confidence and knowing that we're capable of achieving anything we want with hard work and determination. If you have a bad day, or get off track, it's okay, just know that tomorrow is a new day. If I would have given up when my journey was difficult, or let my negative thoughts take control of me, I would have never succeeded in achieving my goals in fitness or in life. I am a better person physically, mentally, and emotionally because I kept pushing and never gave up. Just like I teach my clients, if you persevere and take things day by day or minute by minute, things change. Consistency, patience, and belief in yourself is key. As Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you can, or think you can't, you're right." Believe in yourself and have faith that you're great and that you can and WILL achieve your goals. Be patient, stay positive, and with time you will be fit in mind, body, and soul.



TWEETABLE

I had always sought external validation, until I realized fitness enables us to prove to ourselves that we are strong, capable, and worthy



Dani Lau is a certified personal trainer, life coach, and weight loss and behavior change specialist with over 10 years of experience in the fitness and health industry. A former competitive athlete, Dani holds over ten certifications in from NASM, NESTA, and more and has 1500+ sessions trained. Unleash your inner warrior, step out of your comfort zone, break through barriers of self-limitations, and reach your fitness goals.

Connect with Dani at danivfitness.com or danivfitness@gmail.com.

CHAPTER 6

Train Like a Rock Star

by B Real

I'd like to start my chapter by thanking Jeanette Ortega, or J.O. as I call her, for opening my mind and teaching me that healthy eating is just as important as working out, if not more. The two work in tandem. You cannot have one without the other, and she taught me that.

You see, beginning in my late teens and into early adulthood I maintained an active lifestyle. I practiced martial arts, weight trained, and played basketball, among several other sports. However, as we all get older sometimes the realities of life slow us down. Maybe even more importantly than that, a lack of knowledge on how to keep fit and healthy in an increasingly hectic world becomes a bigger factor in one's physical breakdown.

I couldn't afford to let this happen in my line of work. For the past 25 years, I've had the honor of being the frontman for the legendary hip-hop band, Cypress Hill. We have had the honor of touring the world many times over. We've sold over 19 million records worldwide. Our music has been traditionally up-tempo and aggressive throughout our career, and the task of performing these up-tempo songs in a live show scenario is a workout in itself. I am front and center at these shows. Not only does the brunt of the show rest on my shoulders, but the spotlight catches every imperfection. Consider the level of fitness I need to maintain to perform for one hour and thirty minutes night after night for 36 shows per tour. It's much like playing a sport. You must train your body in order to meet your full potential, whatever that may be.

There was a point in time that I stopped working out for a couple years. My touring schedule was rigorous and demanding. Touring had me on the road consistently. I felt overwhelmed with my schedule and trying to maintain regular workouts was becoming less appealing. So, I decided to give myself a small break. This was a mistake my body and mind would pay for dearly. I procrastinated and began making excuses for not working out. This meant I was working out less and less. I began to relax a little too much until I altogether stopped. Eventually, I came back home from tour, and instead of getting back into the gym, I took it easy.

I was going out for dinner and drinks every night at my favorite restaurant, the Rainbow Bar & Grill. The food was rich and the drinks were strong.

The Rainbow is on the famed Sunset Strip. It is a well-known haven for rock stars and the like. Some of the most well-known artists to frequent the establishment include members from Led Zeppelin, Guns N' Roses, and Mötley Crüe. The ambiance was always lively and colorful, as were the patrons of this legendary hang out. I was hooked. Pizza, off-the-menu Ronaldo stew, and Jack Daniels and Coke were my staples. The waitresses knew what I wanted before I even sat down. With all the sugar and carbs, I began piling on the weight.

As I gained weight and time passed, more tours were getting booked, and those shows were getting harder. My lack of activity and increasing weight were squarely to blame. My endurance was lacking, my legs would start burning, and they'd feel like jelly midway through a performance. It was like walking 100 flights of stairs. My cardio was not great either, as most times I felt like I was out of breath while performing those uptempo songs. I'd be gasping for breath in the middle and at the end of songs. I was trying to catch any fleeting break between them.

You see, the word count in hip-hop music differs from all other musical genres. There are infinitely more words projected over the course of a hip-hop song. It breaks down to more words per minute, in the context of a verse, at the tempo of the beat. The faster the beat, the harder it is to vocally project these phrases in sync with the rhythm. It's all the more difficult when your body is not in tune. Little by little, I was breaking down physically. Tour after tour, the fatigue began to worsen, and that bled into problems with my knee and my back. It got to the point where I would feel nauseous after a show due to the all the energy I was putting into the performances. Despite being out of shape, I was still putting 100 percent behind my performances. However, I was paying the price after every show.

As many people do, I neglected to see all the weight I had put on, but I definitely felt it. I lacked the energy to workout and was overly fatigued because I would eat maybe once or twice a day. Imagine what that did to my metabolism! Unknowingly, I was depriving my body of fuel and drastically slowing down my metabolism. My weight had reached 246 lbs. by the time I took notice. My face was round, and I had ballooned to my highest weight ever. Prior to this downward spiral, I weighed about 205 lbs. I knew I had to get back on the grind.

I began working out day after day. Five days per week I was in the gym weight training and running an hour on the treadmill. But for as much work as I was putting into it, I had not dropped any weight after three years. I felt stronger in certain ways, but the shows were still tough, and my lack of fitness knowledge played a big part. All of this began to affect me physically and emotionally. Physically to the extent that the extra weight felt as if I was

carrying an extra person on my back. Emotionally to the extent that I felt bad about my appearance as my weight had really begun to show, and my body was breaking down. I really took notice of my weight in photos surfacing on social media. Suddenly I knew I had to do something different because what I was doing was obviously not working.

Fortunately, around this time I met Jeanette Ortega. We were introduced by a mutual friend who had the opportunity to see her in action as a trainer. My friend was always brutally honest with me, and although he poked fun at my weight, he knew I had a strong work ethic and that what I was doing wasn't working for me. He suggested that I let Jeanette train me. I was reluctant at first as I had never worked with a trainer previously. I was even more reluctant because she was a female trainer. I thought, "How is she going to train me?" Typical bullshit. I made a judgment before I really knew about her. Nonetheless, I took a chance on his suggestion because I've never been afraid to take a chance and think out of the box. That's how I approached my career in music so why not for my overall health and fitness? Now, I can say that was the best decision I have ever made for my health. Jeanette pushed me hard, but it was unique how she motivated me. My first workouts she partnered me up with a gentleman named Bob. Bob was at least 10 years my senior. He was in great shape and worked hard. He inspired me to push harder as he was kicking my ass in all the first sessions. It motivated me to work harder, and it wasn't easy. After each session I would feel nauseous, and I couldn't suck in enough air. However, step by step, I got less and less fatigued. I felt my endurance start to change and improve. My legs were feeling stronger, and my foundation was strengthening from the work I was putting in. Small, marked improvement was motivating me to want more. Bob would eventually show me an old picture of himself so I that could see where he was when he started with J.O. The story was similar. We were both overweight, had a bad diet, and shared in all the other things life throws your way. I saw Bob's transformation in his photos and how he was kicking my ass in the gym, and I thought if he did it—I can do it.

So, I worked at it and let J.O. guide me. As the months passed, I was feeling so much better, but again, I had dropped no weight. Even though I felt significantly stronger and emotionally I felt better, I was still a little discouraged to be honest. J.O. asked me one day, "So how are you feeling?"

I replied, "I feel great, but I've lost no weight!"

She simply replied, "Well, are you following the meal plan?"

I replied, "Ugh! No! Not yet!" She proceeded to give me the look your drill sergeant gives you when you tell them "I can't do a push-up."

She then said, "Do the meal plan that I designed for you!" She explained why I had not lost the weight. My metabolism was slow, and I had not wrapped my head around eating five portioned out meals a day. I thought how do you lose weight eating five times a day? What did I know? I gave it a shot and changed what I put into my body.

I began weighing out my protein, carb/starch, and green intake and drinking much more water than I ever imagined I could. That was the hardest hurdle for me, but one of the most important. I still struggle with it, but nothing good for you is ever easy, and it takes work. I let go and bought into the meal plan, and from one month to the next I saw results. After all those years of working out and dedicating my time in the gym, nothing happened. After just one month of following Jeanette's food and workout formula, my body started to change! No, the food isn't as fun as the Ronaldo stew, but once it's stripped down and simplified, it can still be great. Once I completely bought into the meal plan, I progressively started to drop the weight. With all the work I put in the gym and the dedication to the meal plan, I got my weight down to my original 205 lbs. I felt great! The performances began to feel like a pre-workout warm up after awhile. I recalled when it was excruciating to perform for an hour and thirty minutes, now I felt like I could do two hours easily. Emotionally, I felt like I had never felt before. The confidence and sense of accomplishment I felt after successfully hitting my goal, dropping the weight, and changing my lifestyle by incorporating a proper meal plan was immeasurable. Family, friends, and fans started complimenting me on how I looked 10 years younger and fit!

I owe it to the knowledge Jeanette gave me. She made me realize the importance of the meal plan and how it must become a part of your lifestyle and not a quick fix. You can't look at working out and dieting as a quick fix; it has to become a part of your lifestyle. It has to become a part of you, if you will. Otherwise, you will be in a constant battle with weight and health. If it's a part of your lifestyle, you are keeping active and maintaining. I thank J.O. for imparting this gift to me. It has made a huge difference in my life. I would tell anyone who thinks they cannot do this, yes you can!



TWEETABLE

Having the proper guidance makes all the difference with having success in health and fitness. Jeanette gave me the tools to be successful.



B Real, frontman of legendary hip-hop band Cypress Hill, has been performing worldwide for the past 25 years. The original Latino hip-hop superstars have sold more than 19 million records including their crossover hit "Insane in the Brain" with their slow, rolling bass-and-drum loops, fusion of Latin and hip-hop slang, and early endorsement of marijuana legalization. Visit B Real's live network site, breal.tv, to get your fresh daily dose of news, music, and culture.

*B Real
www.breal.tv
www.cypresshill.com*

CHAPTER 7

Music and Movement

by Karen Elaine

My life as a professional musician has been filled with cross-training in various sports along with bouts of drunken revelry as many musicians are prone to do. In 2012, a combination of profound sorrow for my mother's death, a lying, cheating boyfriend, a prolonged sports injury that I "just powered through," and my ambitions of training to be a sommelier led me to drinking six (yes, 6!) bottles of wine A DAY! From 2010-2011 I saw ten of my music colleagues die from various illnesses, all of them very close in age to me and all of them handling the stress of work in rather harmful ways. A life of excess was the theme—binge eating, explosions of rage, drugs, various kinds of smoking, and excessive alcohol consumption were the norm. My habit of drinking myself to sleep was not going to be sustainable, and I am grateful that I never took myself over the edge. These deaths inspired me to find a way to change the toxic environment I lived and worked in.

I made a New Year's resolution in December 2011 to make 2012 a year of dramatic shift, but I was not certain how that would manifest. On one of my daily morning walks with my puppy Maximus Maximillian Puffington Esquire, I came across flyers advertising free workouts at the beach and thought that a regular gathering with sports enthusiasts would be a very nice way to activate this shift. The fun obstacle courses in the sand got a few of us talking about rugged adventure races like Tough Mudder, Spartan, and Eco Challenge. One of the morning fitness crew joined me in a try at the various obstacles outlined in the Tough Mudder race using the outdoor playground next to Santa Monica Pier (the original Muscle Beach). We worked our way to the travelling rings, watched other tourists give it their failed attempts, then gave it our try, entering from the wrong side of the tall rings.

After 20 minutes of watching us hilariously fall off each other's shoulders, a beautifully svelte man approached us and asked if we ladies would like a little guidance.... Mr. Heath Perry gave us a FREE 30-minute lesson on nearly all of the fitness apparatuses. Six months later, we paid Heath for four days a week of private coaching, and as a team, we successfully completed the 2012 Tough Mudder 10-mile race in Snow Valley.

I was still consuming six bottles of wine a day. Not surprisingly, I sustained

injuries during the six months of training. Chiropractic work gave me brief relief from the pain, but I found longer lasting relief from a few of the yoga poses that Heath incorporated into our daily workouts. I eventually took a hot yoga class—I THOUGHT THAT I WAS GOING TO DIE! I had no problem with distance running, gymnastic bar work, ocean swims, and cycling, but a partial inversion like downward dog or any twisting pose were things that made me feel weakness in all of my joints, vertigo imbalance, and nausea within three breaths of holding the pose! No matter how much water or electrolyte liquid I drank before, during, or after class, I still had this overwhelming urge to drink SOMETHING because of my parched throat. It never occurred to me that my dehydration was because of the massive amounts of wine I imbibed between workouts.

I finally began experimenting with less wine intake, eventually going a full day with no wine...

Now I have three glasses of wine over the course of one month! Today my daily yoga practice simply does not allow me to put toxic food or liquid into my body, and I am grateful for that. I can appreciate the struggle people have when embarking on a new total-body-health path. The hard fact I have learned is that the concept “living in moderation” does not apply to people who want to make and keep positive change in their body physically, mentally, and spiritually. One must have the self-control and discipline to walk away from negative influences, be it food, drink, or people.

I have performed viola in the orchestra pit for many dance and ballet performances. Musicians and dancers are always separate—one never sees partner dance expressions in which the movement and music are entirely provided by the same performers. My 40 years of music study and performance have given me the focus and muscular control to play a non-fretted instrument at a very high skill level. I have always been curious about combining these two disparate disciplines. Watch any recital or solo performance presented on an orchestral instrument, and you will see a performer standing static and unmoving because a tremendous amount of focus and energy is required to play these acoustic instruments with accuracy and a beautiful tone.

Taking my new found love of yoga to the next level, I began a little practice incorporating acrobatic yoga poses as choreographed expressions of the court dance movements done to the music of J.S. Bach as I played the viola, literally “Bach flips.” As I continued to practice, this became AY-M (acrobatic yoga and music), pronounced “I AM,” the two most powerful words to describe one’s self. I finally conceived a way to combine my passions of music and movement in a performance art presentation. AY-M challenges the audience to witness the divergent disciplines of music and

dance as one unit. The performances of AY-M effectively blur the lines between dancer and musician.



Photo Credit: Barbra Porter Photography

100 hours of rehearsals in calibrating my body and my partner's body and me acclimating to a new gravitational pull on my bow were invested for my first AY-M performance with Heath. This blossomed into another 100 hours of training with international acroyogi Mr. Whakapaingia David Luke of Koha Yoga and performances captured on YouTube which have thousands of views.

The joy I reap from teaching and performing acroyoga is in seeing the bond created between humans who allow themselves to trust one another in this fun and very physical modality of exercise. Jami, one of my private



therapeutic yoga students, sent me a photo of herself and her niece in a beautiful heart-opening pose. Jami explained that they studied a few videos on my webpage www.YogaMusic.me, resulting in great fun and a good workout as they found the full expression of the pose.

I am a real believer that sharing love-light energy by opening one's heart is the ultimate and most efficient way to absorb the unlimited abundance that the Universe has to offer. Since I have been sharing the magic of acroyoga as a performer and teacher, tremendous benefits have come to me: my brand name fitness program YOGA MUSIC is sought after by sports festivals and corporate events, my weekly INTRO TO ACROYOGA WORKSHOPS and CLASSES are attended by an eager and eclectic group of athletes at the Mystic Journey Bookstore in Venice Beach and the Capoeira Besouro Studio in Santa Monica, and my performance art piece AY-M (acrobatic yoga and music) is requested on music series of the world stage. And the blessing of my continually expanding work as a studio musician for the motion picture and television industry in Hollywood has demanded a lot of my automobile, so this summer at 50-years young, I treated myself and the sales team at Tesla to a little acroyoga fun when I picked up my new wheels.



Music and movement. To calibrate one's self with life, a certain control must be found. Yet control with no release creates a tension that manifests as stress. In my life experience, the way I have managed stress has been to magnify it, resulting in emotional garbage that I chose to medicate with alcohol and an aggressive fitness regimen that nurtured my inner angry warrior princess, both expressions of an effort to maintain control, resulting in various debilitating injuries that included depression, two knee surgeries, and treatment for body alignment.

The multilevel release one finds in a disciplined daily Ashtanga Yoga practice brought me into a closer connection with myself on a physical, mental, and spiritual level. In the Yoga Sutras by Patanjali, the student learns

that when the fluctuations of the mind are restrained, one has found balance through yoga~ [2] Yogaś citta vritti nirodhah.

These “mind fluctuations” are the limitless distractions of life. The method used in Ashtanga Yoga to get focus in one’s practice on the mat is coordinating one’s breath with each movement—”breath to movement” called “vinyasa.” As a musician, the breath represents to me the sound of music. We can sing, wind players generate the sounds on their instruments, and string players emulate the generation of sound by coordinating their bow movements with their breathing. Thus, my lifetime approach to making music has been synonymous with my yoga practice—”breath/music to movement,” simplified as “Music to Movement.”

I have found a method that effectively inspires people to be in balance with themselves and others through touch and trust. My INTRO TO ACROYOGA classes allow participants to discover the quintessential balance through yoga. Presentations of my performance art piece AY-M demonstrate the magic of shared energy transformed into balance through music and movement. As a participant or as an audience member, I guide people into being fully present as they experience more profound connections with themselves and others. To be fully present in this way, one can authentically say “I Am.”



TWEETABLE

Music moves me because I AM the music—a new art form through mindful movement. I Am AY-M acro yoga & music.



Karen Elaine is a musician, yogini, scuba diver, and Reiki Master. She has over 3000 television, motion picture, and phonograph project credits. Solo features include the London Symphony Orchestra and the First Place Grand Prize Award Winner of the 1988 Bruno Giuranna International Viola Competition. Her students include acroyoga models, award winners in music, boat captains, scuba diving instructors, environmental lawyers, and Reiki Masters.

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Photo Credit: Barbra Porter Photography

CHAPTER 8

A Warrior's Journey

Insight and Inspiration from a 31-Year Marine Corps Leader

by Tim Cole

Two years after finishing college, I had so much to be grateful for: a professional career with a Fortune 500 company, credits toward my MBA, and an active social life with friends. Even so, I felt uncertain and unsettled. My career and graduate-level education challenged my mind but did little to exercise my physical body or connect to my soul.

Clarity came one wintry morning when, regrettably, a respected co-worker suffered a fatal heart attack in our large, open office. I heard the extensive lifesaving efforts of emergency medical staff just a few cubicles away. I witnessed the medical stretcher whisk by my work area en route to the local ER. We were informed a short time later that our co-worker's life had ended that morning. That day, I was vividly reawakened to the brevity and value of life, and I gained immense clarity that I wanted different for my own life. I demanded of myself a more authentic lifestyle that challenged the whole of me—mind, body, and spirit. Within 24 hours I had enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. Within weeks, I was at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego fully engaged in the rigors and challenges of boot camp.

Recruit Training has been described as:

Employing one of the most grueling training regimens known to man, the Marine Corps is renowned for producing warriors who exhibit the highest levels of physical strength and mental toughness.

In the decade that followed, my improved mind-body connection contributed significantly to my self-identity, self-esteem, and personal achievements. I once “maxed” (scored a perfect 300 on) the Marine Corps PFT (Physical Fitness Test) and always performed it at First Class or Superior Performance levels. I ran the Marine Corps Marathon and regularly trained for and ran half-marathon and 10K races. I worked hard serving the Marine Corps and in my civilian career following my years of active duty. I

had graduated boot camp as the Company Honorman, was selected for the Enlisted Commissioning Program, completed Officer Candidates School, and became a Marine Corps officer. I applied myself to the mission and the numerous assignments provided to me, which earned recognition, awards, and promotions. I developed valuable disciplines in mind and body, and yet, I failed to authentically develop the vital soul connection in my life.

Absent a spiritual foundation and failing to cultivate all three vital connections for mind-body-soul cohesiveness, my personal life spun out of balance. The grief, chaos, and confusion of a failed marriage proved to be the necessary catalyst for my soul's connection to the creator, spiritual growth, personal development, and a genuine life change. From that painful perspective, I came to my personal faith with our loving Father, through his son Jesus, profoundly changed by his amazing grace. I grew in my faith with an eager, open heart and a renewed mind, applying personal discipline to live as the loving, committed, engaged, and encouraging dad three young daughters deserved. There is boundless hope and great heartfelt joy when we acknowledge our soul and cultivate an authentic spiritual relationship with our creator. From that point forward, growing faith (soul), personal development (mind), and strengthened fitness/health (body) have been the axis of my life. Several years later, I was blessed to marry a wonderful woman, my best friend. Mary Anne and I blended our two families for a total of five school-age kiddos, three young gals and two young guys.

Just over a year later, the horrific 9/11 attacks against our nation impacted our family's lives in powerful and significant ways. Our eldest son was just out of high school and graduating from USAF basic training the week of the attack. Over the following 12 years, I would spend the equivalent of six years mobilized on active duty away from home, deploying overseas in 2003, 2005, and 2006. It was during these years that the balanced daily disciplines of soul, mind, and body were both extremely valuable and exponentially beneficial. Outstanding physical fitness has always been a Marine Corps requirement, and lifelong learning has been a personal passion, yet when combined with balance in our personal faith and spiritual growth, simple physical fitness can be the therapeutic antidote to the chaos and stress of life, be it in the political arena of Washington D.C. or within the combat zones around the world.

Take these tips from Tim Cole to make sure you get the physical fitness you need every day.

Rise early (three hours prior to starting work). Take this time before your work day begins to read, meditate, pray (I recommend Bob Beaudine's book *2 Chairs*). Exercise early if work conditions impair the consistency of a midday fitness schedule. Daily exercise does not have to be extensive

or time consuming. Try some basic pushups and crunches to strengthen your core and a few simple calisthenics and stretching (I enjoy windmills and leg stretches), then get in a 20-30 minute brisk walk or jog. Slow walk your cooldown and breathe deeply. Finish with light stretching, and enjoy a quick refreshing shower while drinking plenty of cool water. Enjoy a green smoothie for breakfast. Hydrate throughout your day. Simple and easy. You are off and running with a powerful, uplifting start to your day!

I encourage you to be a lifelong learner; it will serve you well. Willingness and the faith to step up will separate you from so many who hesitate and hold back from new opportunities. There is a slogan I cherish: show up, suit up, and get in the game, your game—your life! Our military members and generations of veterans have paid a great price of service and sacrifice for the vast freedoms and liberties we Americans value and hold dear in this nation. My encouragement is for each of us to do something constructive with the generous opportunities we've been provided. Play full out as my friend Kyle Wilson advises. An old Marine adage declares, fortune favors the brave! Live life fully! Occasionally, I think back to the life-changing decision I made years ago, walking away from a successful business career, joining the Marine Corps, choosing an authentic life, and living a more balanced life of soul, mind, and body.

Fast forward 31 years from that life-changing decision. It's a beautiful spring day on a picturesque college campus; a large audience of family and friends are excitedly observing the military officer commissioning ceremony underway. I raise my right hand and begin administering the official oath of office to the young officer standing before me. She is the youngest of our blended family's five children, and I am deeply honored to commission her a new Second Lieutenant in the Nurse Corps. She wears a U.S. Army blue dress uniform and will soon pin and wear a single gold bar indicating her new rank. It is just days after I officially retired from the U.S. Marine Corps at the rank of Colonel, having served over 31 years, spanning the terms of five different U.S. Presidents, and having provided honorable and faithful service around the world in both peacetime and war.

A lifetime legacy of service still continues as I now expand my efforts to serve the family members, friends, and loved ones of our nation's military veterans. Today, my efforts help us all gain better understanding, greater appreciation and convey genuine honor to our beloved military veterans, past and present, for their service and sacrifice on behalf of our freedoms. It is my heartfelt passion and personal mission to use decades of life experience to deliver honor, hope, and healing to our beloved military veterans and to their families and their friends. We are truly blessed to live in a land of the free and the home of the brave.



TWEETABLE

Show up, suit up, get in your game! One Team!



Colonel Tim Cole is a retired military leader, team builder, and passionate advocate for our nation's military, veterans, and their families. His purpose is to encourage others to live purpose-filled lives, leaving an impactful legacy. His passion is helping the families and friends of military veterans better understand and honor their military heritage and their veterans' service.

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CHAPTER 9

My Inner Journey to Platinum Healing

by Kate Tyler

This is my story of physical and emotional healing, how I overcame debilitating anxiety, depression and panic attacks, and why I was inspired to create Platinum Healing, today considered by *The Telegraph* as one of the best juice detox and healing retreats in the world. Little did I know, my own life experiences and challenges would be the catalyst for me to become a world-renowned clinical hypnotherapist and healer, who has helped thousands of people to transform and become the best version of themselves. My work has been featured on the pages of magazine giants such as *Vogue*, *Tatler*, *Natural Health*, *Good Housekeeping*, and many others internationally, which has enabled me to spread the word of my teachings and the formula that I believe can help anyone heal themselves.

As a child, I was surrounded by signs: pictures of Indian deities in our family home and spiritual books on our bookshelf went unnoticed, or so I thought. Like many others, I left school not knowing who I was or what I was put on this earth for. I didn't see the signs. My drive for financial security started at a very young age, having watched my mother struggle to make ends meet. A fear of living in poverty led me down a path many others were following and still do: the well-known corporate rat race of chasing time, security, achievement, and status. I thought I had it all: the high-powered career, hefty paychecks, business suits and designer heels, caffeine-fueled 12-hour working days, and a social life to die for, or, more accurately, that was killing me. Romantic relationships failed as I barely knew who I was, so how could anyone else?

I developed anxiety and insomnia that worsened as the months went by. Depression soon crept in. Keeping it hidden from my family and friends, I just "boxed" it away, hoping that the tank wouldn't eventually explode. I decided to work even harder to distract myself, pretending it wasn't happening and trying to keep up the facade of success. Then the warning signs worsened as I developed migraines, digestive issues, and cysts on my ovaries. Most months I would take days and weeks off work sick, trying

to secretly patch up the cracks that were slowly appearing and that even the designer suit couldn't camouflage.

My mum noticed there was something wrong. I think they call it motherly instinct. She purchased a yoga DVD from the local charity shop for £2.99. That was all it took to start my journey of self-healing and self-discovery. It was a gift I will cherish forever. I bought a yoga mat that barely fit in my small room, but I persevered. "What have I to lose?" I thought. After a few days, I felt a huge shift; my sleep improved, I felt optimistic about my life, and my energy levels soared. I felt naturally compelled to change my diet dramatically. I cut out dairy and started eating a mostly plant-based diet instead. I felt like something had awoken inside of me. Despite these changes, I still felt lost as to what my purpose in life was. One morning during meditation I asked the question "God, what is my purpose?"

Within a few weeks of bedroom yoga, the clearest message came to me on a night I will never forget. While I was used to being woken regularly with night terrors, on this particular occasion, I awoke with a sense of inner peace and calmness that filled the entire room. My clock read 4:04 a.m., and at that moment I heard a "voice" that said, "You MUST go to India and become a yoga teacher." It was like someone had slapped me in the face. I immediately logged onto my computer and began researching training programs for hours. Eventually, I found "the one," the Sivananda School of Yoga. It was the only teacher training that seemed to be traditional and incorporated both yogic nutrition as well as scriptures. Mum was extremely supportive when I told her as she could see how unhappy I was with my life. It turned out that one of the books she'd had on the shelf during my entire childhood was a book by Sivananda. Coincidence? I don't think so. It took a lot for me to leave my well-paid career and risk everything to pursue this new path, but I felt I had no choice but to trust in the universe and let go of control. Life was calling me, and I knew in my heart I had a mission to help humanity.

I pursued the training and went on to study Ayurveda with doctors in India, as well as clinical hypnotherapy, NLP (neuro-linguistic programming), life coaching, and a host of other body treatments and holistic therapies. I traveled the world searching for the "answers" and a formula for emotional, psychological, and physiological healing so that I could pass this knowledge onto others. I created vision boards, said affirmations daily, listened to guided meditations, trained my mind to focus on the end result, and made a commitment to myself that nothing would get in the way of my vision. My friends thought I'd gone crazy, and I lost many along the way who just didn't resonate with my new lifestyle.

Thousands of pounds spent training and traveling the world meant I was

left penniless but rich with wisdom and a very strong vision. I knew I had to create a space for self-healing, one that would encompass everything I had learned on my own journey of self-healing and transformation. That is the point that the seed for Platinum Healing was planted firmly in my mind. Spiritually I was abundant, but financially I was a mess. I was almost evicted from my home. I resorted to raiding a penny jar and searching for things to sell to meet the rent. It was then I had a moment of pure rage. This was a real turning point for me, one where I affirmed that I would NEVER be in this position EVER again. I also prayed for help. If I was to fulfill this calling to assist humanity, I needed some assistance.

At that moment, everything started to change. A dear friend loaned me £500 cash to start my business and through blood, sweat, and tears and many nights working into the early hours, Platinum Healing was born. I began offering retreats on a one-to-one basis, and my first client was a well-known actress from Ireland. That gave me a huge boost of confidence. Word spread fast and, before I knew it, I was attracting up to 16 guests on each retreat.

In 2015, I very nearly closed the company down. I was no longer living in the UK and believed that the retreats could not run without me, but an intuitive coach firmly told me not to. She informed me that Platinum Healing did not belong to me, but it was spirit working through me to assist humanity, as this was so desperately needed in the world right now and that I should trust the team in the UK and the universe. Who am I to argue with this?

Faith has continued to play such an important part in my life. I truly believe it helps me through the tough times. Everyone experiences pain at some stage of their life, but it is how we respond to that pain that is important. There is always a way if you believe and trust.

From personal experience I believe that anyone can start a business—and you don't need thousands of pounds and a well-drafted business plan. For me, a simple idea transformed into providing a space to help people heal physically, emotionally, and psychologically.

If you follow your heart, abundance will flow easily, doors will open, miracles will appear—but it is all about taking that first leap of faith.

So where am I now? My own journey has taken me to Los Angeles where I spend time writing articles on health and wellness for magazines across the world as well as consulting and offering private healing sessions.

I have a wonderful husband who, like me, is a wellness fanatic, but is also a business owner and semi-professional cricket player. Together we live a simple but happy life full of yoga, beach walks, drinking fresh juice, and eating a clean, healthy diet. I am happier than I have ever been and stress-

free. I have a team of supportive managers and therapists back in the UK who share the same drive and passion that I have for empowering others to self-heal, for whom I am truly grateful.

For any of you who relate to my story, my advice to you would be to start by taking a small step. Whether that be to read an inspirational book, take a yoga class, buy a meditation CD, or go on a retreat. For me, it made all the difference.



TWEETABLE

Start by taking a small step. Read, yoga, meditate, or go on a retreat. For me, it made all the difference.
www.platinum-healing.com



Kate Tyler is the founder of Platinum Healing, "One of the Best Juice Detox and Healing Retreats in the World," The Telegraph.

As well as being a world-renowned clinical hypnotherapist, psychotherapist, life coach and yoga expert she is also an international health writer and published author.

Kate's work and retreats have been featured in publications including Vogue, Good Housekeeping, Natural Health, Women's Fitness and Healthy.

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CHAPTER 10

Strength Through Adversity

by Cesar Martinez

Our mind is made to seek survival, not happiness. It is designed to search for solutions and avoid discomfort. When our mind tells us to change, we struggle because we hate change and it brings discomfort, anxiety, and several feelings of uncertainty. But change is inevitable. Change is great, and what many don't understand is, we need change in our lives. We need problems, obstacles, pain, discomfort, bad breaks, and catastrophes to occur because that is what changes us deep in our cellular structure and makes us into a brand new person. It reinvents our purpose, our path, and our choices. Our greatest lessons or teachers are our failures, our losses, and our obstacles. From our struggles comes necessity, and through necessity, we reinvent ourselves into a different person. Our mind is different, our choices are different, and we are different.

I was born in Chihuahua, Mexico and came to the United States in 1978. I was four years old and didn't know the language or the culture and had no friends. My parents and I lived in a one bedroom apartment in North Hollywood with my older brother and younger sister. I remember specifically sitting in the living room and asking my dad in Spanish, "Why did we move Dad?"

He said, "So you can have the opportunity for a better future." I didn't understand at that age what my dad meant, but while growing up my dad would always tell us that education was most important. He worked three jobs in order to make ends meet and still had the time and energy to watch us play Little League Baseball.

We grew up in North Hollywood and during the 1980's the neighborhood was very active with gang members. I went to school with many, but because of my extra-curricular activity (baseball), I didn't associate with them after school. I loved baseball and was good at it. I made all-stars every year and was always chosen first on teams.

I continued to play baseball and by the end of ninth grade, I had received an offer to get an education and play baseball at Notre Dame Sherman Oaks High School. It was a high-priced private school, but an opportunity for a better education. The Carson Family was my financial sponsor and

support in allowing me to receive a better education. I graduated high school in 1993 and attended Pierce Junior College. I played baseball for two years and then transferred to Cal State Northridge on an athletic scholarship.

In 1998, I graduated from Cal State Northridge with a bachelor's degree in sociology. My dad was ecstatic and soon after, I joined the Sheriff Department as a Deputy. I worked two and a half years in the detention center, then transferred to patrol. I worked patrol for six years and then transferred to the elite Gang Enforcement Team.

I enjoyed helping the community by taking guns and criminals off the streets. I worked hard and also enjoyed the close camaraderie with my fellow deputies. Throughout my career I had been involved in three officer-involved shootings and received several commendations. I was considered a leader, a proactive deputy, and a mentor amongst my co-workers. My fellow deputies and supervisors took notice of my hard work and my coworkers asked me to receive a very special tattoo.

The tattoo was a symbol of your hard work, loyalty, integrity, and a brotherhood among an elite group of hardworking deputies. I was honored and excited. During this time the Sheriff's Department was going through political changes and a possible regime change. Station tattoos were a hot topic in the media because the Undersheriff had a station tattoo. Our tattoo received national media attention and a year later, after an internal investigation, six other deputies and I were fired for causing embarrassment to the Sheriff's Department. We had done nothing wrong and no policy or criminal violations had been founded. We were thrown to the wolves and fired for political reasons. I was 38 years old, a father of two, and had bills to pay when I was fired. I was left with no job, no income, no medical coverage, and the media had tarnished my name for my family and friends. This was one of the worst times of my life; this was my catastrophe, my struggle, my problem, and my obstacle.

I was lost, confused, depressed, and angry. My world was spinning out of control, but I knew I had to continue to fight, and soon something would change. I worked some security jobs. I was a salesperson for 24 Hour Fitness and would hustle by working side weekend jobs to make ends meet. I had worked so hard to have a career that would offer me and my family the financial stability, and in an instant, all that hard work was gone.

One day I woke up and, while looking through some old Deputy pictures, I realized I was out of shape. I remembered a time when I chased a suspect on foot and at the end of the foot chase we were involved in a fight. The suspect was on drugs and was doing everything in his power to not be

apprehended. I was in a fight for my life. I requested back up and continued to strike the suspect with my hands. The suspect struck me in the face several times and chipped my tooth. I was exhausted, dazed, and I felt as if I was going to pass out. At that moment I envisioned my daughters and I realized that if I passed out, the suspect would take my gun and shoot me. I pushed him off of me and pinned him to the ground until my partners arrived to assist me. The incident was over, but the memory of that night made me want to make a drastic change, which led me to become a personal trainer. I had no experience, no degree, no client, and no certifications, but I had the passion to learn and teach others.

I educated myself and became a certified personal trainer. I also became certified in kettlebells, TRX, and MMA conditioning and became a use of force instructor. I was obsessed with helping others achieve their fitness goals, but I was more passionate about changing the way they think. I wanted to teach everyone that health and fitness is important, but your mindset in and out of the gym is most important. I wanted to train my clients intensely so that if they were ever involved in an intense situation that intense situation would cease to exist.

I am currently the owner of Ultimate Athlete Gym, located in Northridge, CA. I have trained athletes, celebrities, weekend warriors, law enforcement officers, and many others from teenagers to the elderly. My mission is to change the way people think, train, and live. I offer private, semi-private and group sessions, and I specialize in a workout I created, called "The Rock Down." It is a high-intensity, 33-minute workout that uses open-handed MMA gloves and stresses the importance of mental and fitness survival. It will elevate your heart rate, burn calories, burn fat, and build muscle, but most importantly, test your will. It will make you feel faint, exhausted, and nauseous, but I will not let you quit. This workout is designed to change the way you think and prepare you for realistic everyday situations that can occur in our daily lives. Your mind, body, and soul will be prepared for any intense scenario and react accordingly from the training you have received. I enjoy seeing the change in my clients and hope my story and new training method will assist you in staying ready, so you don't have to get ready.

People always ask me if I miss being a cop. I do miss helping the community, taking bad people to jail, and the unpredictable nature of the job. I then tell them that I am happier now because I get to inspire others and change their lives through health and fitness. I like to refer to myself as a preventer and not a trainer. I help others to prevent injury and health problems and teach them how to deal with stress. I love seeing the transformation in people's health, fitness, and mindset. Here at UAG we change the way you think, train, and live.



TWEETABLE

Fear is a Liar. Don't be afraid to fail while daring greatly. Live in the moment and continue to progress because that is true happiness.



Cesar Martinez owns Ultimate Athlete Gym and is a certified force instructor, MMA conditioning coach, TRX group training specialist, kettlebell coach and personal trainer. His workout, "The Rock Down," teaches self-defense and puts clients through intense training scenarios. Cesar trains celebrities, athletes, weekend warriors, teens, and the elderly. If you need a personal trainer or speaker, want to run a marathon, or just live healthy, contact:

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CHAPTER 11

From Baby Blues to Baby Boot Camp

by Linda Okwor

It was sudden and powerful! I didn't understand why or where the cloud of melancholy was looming from, but it was dark and indescribable at times. I was a new mom to a beautiful baby girl named Isabella. I was mostly over the moon happy so those times of sadness baffled me.

Before becoming a mom, fitness was not only a way of life, it was a burning passion. Some love shoes, curling up with a good book, even chocolate and wine, but I am happiest when I'm drenched in sweat, heart pumping and muscles quivering. My love for fitness got me through awkward school days, shaped my body and my successes, earned me a position on a limited lineup as a professional NBA cheerleader, and won me many accolades as a national and international fitness competitor. It would also become my saving grace after becoming a mom.

I am truly blessed to be a mom of two beautiful angels, Isabella and Maxton. I say blessed because I understand the enormous gift motherhood is. I don't want anyone to misunderstand or underestimate my love for my children, the journey of motherhood, and all the joyful moments. I also know the enormous feat that comes with it. We moms sacrifice our body, mind, and soul to ensure that our babies are healthy, happy, and prosperous. We proudly spread our invisible cape and pull out our superpower shield at the slightest sign of our baby's discomfort or danger. We often go without food, sleep, and basic comforts to ensure that they are well. Our own needs and wants become a distant fourth behind kids, husband/partner, and home. There was just not enough time or energy for those simple pleasures that made me so happy before pregnancy and motherhood such as meeting up with friends for laugh-out-loud chats, nights spent dancing until our feet were sore and throbbing, sunset runs along the ocean edge, studios packed with sweaty gym rats, and the occasional quiet time spent meditating woes away before the day begins. These joys slowly happened less frequently until many were nonexistent.

I loved spending time with my new baby, so I didn't mind or even notice all of the activities that were replaced by my new role as a mom. But, I couldn't

deny the occasional dark emotional cloud. I finally said to my husband, “I feel so sad, and I don’t know why.”

As a first time mom, I was afraid to take my new baby out too soon or leave her with anyone. We lived almost an hour from our closest family member, so that left just my husband and me. I was also worried that I would injure myself by engaging in those activities that I once lived for. I pushed myself to take walks around the neighborhood. Even those walks were exhausting and uncomfortable mostly due to an unexpected C-Section. A friend suggested that I take a workout class for moms where moms could bring their little ones with them as soon as I was cleared to workout by my doctor.

During my first class, I was doing squats while nursing my daughter and I knew I was in love. In love with that feeling I get when I am in my element. It was a mind, body, and soul connection that I haven’t felt in a very long time. Yes, I was stimulating my muscles, but I was connecting what I know with action, which is the ultimate use of your mind. What good is knowing if you do nothing with it? As a fitness professional, I coach my clients to use physical activity to not only look better, but also feel better. One of the ways to do this is to release endorphins. Endorphins help relieve pain and induce feelings of pleasure or euphoria. Exercise, sex, and even hot peppers are known to help release endorphins. When faced with a flood of negative emotions, I pushed aside what I knew, which was exercise to heal my soul, for what I thought I was supposed to do. I put my personal feelings and needs aside to focus on caring for my new baby. I could hardly find time to sleep, how was I supposed to find a whole hour to workout. I have heard many moms say this, and now that mom was me. It was time for me to take my own advice.

Along with my baby weight, my feeling of sadness started to melt away with every class. The best part was that I could take my daughter with me, so I was not sacrificing my personal needs for my motherly duties. It was a beautiful mix of love and passion for myself and my daughter.

Postpartum depression was the source of my sadness, but it was baffling until I started learning about prenatal and postpartum health. I learned that I wasn’t alone. About 30% of new moms suffer from some form of “baby blues” or postpartum depression. Some health professionals say the number is much higher because many moms will not report it or talk about it due to lack of knowledge, not wanting to seem like an unfit mom, shame, not feeling supported or feeling like a failure. I learned that postpartum depression has more to do with your body’s hormones and many of the changes of motherhood than lack of love for your child. More than anything, I learned that it is something that must be talked about to break down the wall of shame surrounding it. I was advised to speak with a professional, get

some sleep, seek the social support of other moms, and exercise.

Working out was helping lift my mood, create a bond between me and my daughter, build a community of other moms, regain my self-confidence, and I couldn't complain about the firming effect it was having on my post-baby body. I wondered how many other moms were feeling happy, sad, surrounded by love, isolated, fully in the moment, confused, accomplished, and frustrated. These feelings were all present, and I learned to accept them all as part of my motherhood journey. I wanted to let other moms know that these floods of feelings are all ok. The universe must have been listening because it started to speak back. It was as if the heavens opened and angels started to sing. There was an amazing energy that came over me. What I was feeling was my inner self, my passion, my vital force, my soul. And it was calling on me to share this with other moms.

Within two weeks of taking my first class, I was in the process of opening my own fitness program for moms where moms can bring their babies with them. I started my program with one mom, and three years later, we have touched hundreds of moms personally and thousands more on social media. Many moms seek us out because they want to lose the baby weight, some come because they are looking for a community, and others come because they know it will help keep the sadness away. I'm proud that our program can fill all these needs and help moms care for their body as well as their mind and soul.

Here are some things that moms can do now to start nurturing their body, mind, and soul:

1. Embrace the journey! Motherhood is imperfectly perfect! It is the most rewarding AND challenging job you will ever do. The journey is not always paved with flower petals or late night Facebook brag moments. It's ok. The tough times will help you cherish the good times.
2. Move. A good sweat always helps me feel better. You don't need hours in the gym. 30 minutes most days are all you need. And yes, a brisk walk with your baby or family counts. It's not just something I'm telling you to trick you into working out :-). Exercise is one of the proven ways to release those feel-good hormones called endorphins.
3. Eat well. Let's face it, having little ones can be exhausting. Routinely eating healthy foods throughout the day will do more than help you lose weight. It will maximize the energy you have, help with recovery, fuel your brain, and nourish your soul. These benefits will contribute to helping you be a better mom. While there are some things that are out of our control, we can contribute to how well we eat.

4. Find a mom tribe. You will be amazed how good it feels to be around kind, supportive, like-minded, and like-hearted people. They can be a shoulder to lean on, a listening ear when you need to talk, a sympathetic audience when you are not loving motherhood, a community to celebrate your triumphs, and a support to lift you up in times of challenge. Having a community to lean on has been shown to help moms feel good and look good too, if the community is one that includes working out.
5. Nurture yourself. Too often, we moms are so busy taking care of others that we put ourselves last. In a time-limited day, the thing that is listed last sometimes does not get accomplished. A little time set aside can go a long way to nurture your body, mind, and soul. My time is usually spent moving or working out.

These five things have helped me not only embrace my mind, body, and soul, but it is helping me survive the motherhood journey and thrive!



TWEETABLE

Motherhood is imperfectly perfect! The journey is not always paved with flower petals or late night Facebook brag moments. It's ok!



Linda Okwor is a fitness & nutrition specialist and owner of Baby Boot Camp in LA, a fitness and nutrition program where moms bring their kids. Linda has been featured in Oxygen magazine, ESPN, ABC 7, FoxLA, LA Parent Magazine and The Doctors.

With a BS from the University of MN and an MBA, this former pro cheerleader and international fitness competitor has helped many people achieve and live a healthy lifestyle.

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CHAPTER 12

Slave To My Ego

by Don Padilla

It was September 2008. My world came crashing down. I had two assistants, and I was working about four to five hours a day Monday through Friday. I was vice president of investments at one of the nation's largest savings bank holding companies, a subsidiary of a big bank you've definitely heard of, making several hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. My stock in that bank that was valued over \$500,000 came crashing down to be worth a few dollars. The FDIC handed over the bank, valued at \$39 billion in assets, to the "evil empire" our hated competition bank for \$2 billion. You've definitely heard of that bank too. I had no savings, and I was TERRIFIED! The writing was on the wall, that our competitor bank was going to split up my book of business.

In fact, I was in a Chinese space working with many Chinese people and didn't speak Chinese. My two assistants, who spoke Chinese, were going to become my adversaries as our former competitor, the new owner would split up my perceived book of business, one-third to each of us. Holy crap! My lifestyle and income were about to be reduced to two-thirds of what I was making. How was I to make a living making two-thirds less than what I was making?

Is this what I was really scared of? Was it really making less money? Was I scared of not having any of the problems that I always complained about? *My company sucks, they should pay us more, we need better performance trips, we deserve more, etc., etc., etc.* Was I scared of not feeling worthy? Now that I wouldn't be making several hundreds of thousands of dollars, or with this new company would I be a nobody? Was I scared that one day I'd "make it" and have my own practice? It was none of those!

My dream of becoming an entrepreneur and having my own practice was about to happen, but for all the wrong reasons. I knew I would be a "successful" entrepreneur. I knew I would make more money now that "the evil empire" couldn't hold me back. I knew my friends that left and opened their own practices were successful, and if they could do it, I could do it better. I knew I was an expert to model how my friends successfully opened their own practice, but I would do it better. I knew that if somebody could do something, I could always do it better as long as it didn't require real talent

like hitting a baseball, running a four second 40-yard dash, or shooting balls through a hoop.

Wow! I was finally going to be a president or CEO, not a bank broker. What was driving me? Can you guess? Was it my purpose? Was it being able to make a bigger difference in my client's lives? Was it to service my clients better and offer them better choices for their lifestyles? You better believe it wasn't. It was my ego driving me.

According to Dr. Shermeil Dass, who is a child psychiatrist in the Bay Area of California, the ego is "defined as the mediator between the id and superego. The id is our primitive drive, sex and aggression. The superego is the part of our subconscious that governs and rules ourselves. Psychic conflict arises when there is an imbalance between the id and superego drives." I was going to make more money, have the title CEO, and of course, the more money I made, the more important I thought I was. I knew, with a little hard work to transfer my perceived clients over to my practice with my name on the shingle, I would feed my ego with more and more possessions, more and more money, more and more success, more and more power, and more and more of whatever. Why? Because more is better! My ego was going to get fed like Jabba the Hutt being fed human beings.

When all this came to pass, I still felt unfulfilled like there was a hole in my heart. Even with all the experiences, I had no physical or psychological gratification. I was letting my outer, shallow purpose of feeding my ego determine my happiness until I woke up, or became conscious of what was driving me. My outer purpose of accumulating possessions, power, status, money, etc., etc., was bound to fail because of the law of impermanence. This states that all things have a beginning, a duration, and an end, i.e. nothing is forever or permanent. Although I heard this all my life in church and understood the concept, I really never got it until I got it. When I woke up or became conscious of my outer purpose of feeding my ego, I was able to re-discover my inner purpose and be free of being a slave to my ego.

My mindset completely shifted. It didn't matter how many "things" I gained, what mattered was the pride I had in teaching other people to grow their investments as I had. I began to focus on helping other people increase their wealth with my expertise, but not just for the sake of being wealthy, so that they could go on and make their own positive impacts in the world. Waking up to my inner purpose gave me happiness where once I had a hole in my heart. The knowledge felt good not just in my mind, but in my body. Things are just things. Money is just money, and it won't last. Find what fulfills you and go about doing it bigger and better than anyone has done before.



TWEETABLE

When I “woke up” or became conscious of my outer purpose of feeding my ego, I was able to re-discover my inner purpose.



Don Padilla is a certified financial planner, public speaker, author of Not Another Broke Athlete, and CEO of PS&A Wealth Management, Inc. He is also a National Football League Players Association (NFLPA) registered player financial advisor. For more information on what Don Padilla is doing go to donpadilla.com or notanotherbrokeathlete.com

CHAPTER 13

From Despair to Repair, Treats to Retreats

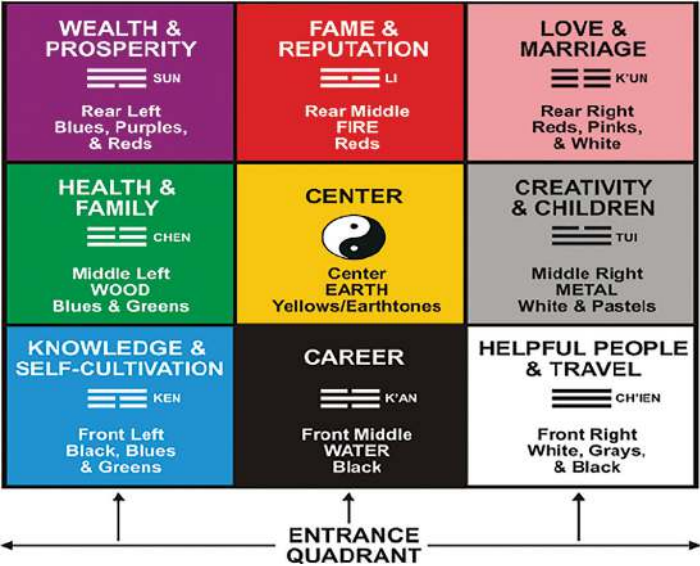
by Lynn Heubach

Do you ever look at yourself in the mirror or an old photo and think “I don’t recognize ME! What happened to the ‘better me?’” That was me many years ago. I got lost and became unrecognizable. I didn’t know who “the true me” really was. I knew a brighter, lighter, happier, joyous, and fun person must still be within.

I used to be fit and happy, a world traveler and connector. Then I became broken inside, which manifested negatively in my life. You see, I had been telling my subconscious mind many less-than-positive things, and negative things started showing up everywhere. I stopped caring about my appearance. I got frumpy, old looking, and old feeling. I lost my self-care. I lost some investments. I lost a parent. I got injured and lost the majority of use of my right arm. I lost my job and my career. I lost the desire to vacation and have fun. I lost hope. I gained weight! Wait a minute; I thought I was on a losing streak! In 2009 it seemed everything was spiraling down.

We were expecting the arrival of a foreign exchange student. I secretly told myself I wanted to be a stay at home mom for her junior year of high school. Well, it happened! I got laid off from work shortly after hurting my arm, and I was at home. We played; it was fun, just not enough.

I knew I needed more. Thankfully, I did have some time to explore how to heal, as I was not feeling “fixed.” I was all frumpy, and I had lost the use of my arm, but it was not just my body that was ill. It was my mind, body, and soul. As I started reading self-help and motivation books, I was led to workshops, seminars, and other people. I learned more about vision boards from a Feng Shui master and mentor. She shared that to affect change in our life overall, we affect change in the bottom three quadrants of our vision board using a Bagua Map:



Bottom Left: Self Knowledge | Bottom Center: Career | Bottom Right: Helpful People & Travel

I was ready to get my arm really healed. I sought out new doctors and decided to undergo major shoulder surgery. I was excited yet scared about the outcome. About the same time, I finally set an appointment with someone to talk about real estate investments...or so I thought. Instead, we talked about travel and vacations and I became ALIVE. I knew then, I needed to travel and dream to awaken the more youthful and energetic me.

I put more vacation pictures on my vision boards. I recovered fast from the surgery. I had a pending Caribbean vacation as my treat. I was moving slowing away from despair. Now I was ready to take on more life again. I was getting repaired. In August 2015, I looked at some recent photos taken of me. “Wow, I was really that heavy even after surgery?” Yep. It was time to take massive action.

It was time to get fit. I was fed up. I had been doing lots of walking in my various groups, yet that was not enough. So I started enrolling others around me to help me get fit and drop weight. My husband came on board and did some pilates and running. We were preparing for ski season and a European vacation. We dropped 20 pounds in four months. Then we needed to maintain. I created some walking and fitness social groups. I knew I wanted a big vacation and to fit into my wedding dress at our 25th wedding anniversary. I kept my treat dangling in front of me: a vacation retreat and a slimmer body.

So, I enrolled my spouse, got some fitness coaches, and we dropped another 20 pounds before our next two-week vacation to Mexico right before our 25th wedding anniversary. My motivation was a mental image of me fitting back in my wedding dress and a photo of a fitter us 25 years ago just before another vacation. I was learning to incorporate real pictures of me in the vision boards. It was all coming together: ME, all of ME, was improving. My image, my bank accounts, my new businesses, my investments, my fitness, my new friends, my relationship with family and my spouse. And, most importantly, I had a more centered, peaceful me.

I'm thankful for this journey. I discovered myself, my ability to help others, and a passion for travel. I'm planning my next vacation. Vacation retreats are my treat. That works for me, and I'm inspiring others too. Vacations are giving me something to look forward to, to dream about, and teaching me how to live again. Our vacations and travels are truly what I look forward to, what I really enjoy.

I enjoy helping others share their travel experiences as well. There seems to be a sense of connectedness. It is amazing to see the transformation on people's face, their spirit, their body language when they speak of their travels, past and future. After all, don't we all really look forward to our vacation time? Don't most of us dream of where we want to go next? Don't our minds, body, and souls need refueling and regenerating? Don't we dream of what we might wear, what we might do, who we might meet, and what we might experience? Are our vacations often the reason for us to diet, or tan, or get fit? This is why I'm becoming a better me. Travel was my blind spot. It re-entered my life just when I needed it most. Sharing my love of travel is bringing joy, happiness, adventure, and lasting memories to others that travel with us and because of us.

Find your blind spot. Find the lesson in life that inspires you to the soul to make a change. Learn to enroll others to help you get what you want and set your pride aside. Write down unfiltered what you really want in life then sort through it to find your target inspiration. Start asking others to help you get it, even when times get tough. Stay focused and don't quit until you reach your first goal, then set an even bigger one and keep living boldly to achieve your dreams. You will feel enriched in mind, body, and soul when you look at your success.



TWEETABLE

Retreats are my Treats. Dreaming of retreats with others inspire my health, fitness and joy.
#Getinspired2travel #retreatsmytreat



Lynn Heubach speaks four languages and wants to impact others with her love of travel, the outdoors, and cultural exchanges. She's been scuba diving in Cozumel, voluntouring to Guatemala to build a bottle school, wine tasting in Greece, and so many other places. Connect, have fun, and create fabulous memories.

To learn how you can book a dream trip locally or globally and vacation sooner, visit Lynn's website www.Travelynn2.com. Connect at Travel@travelynn2.com or 714-585-5386.

CHAPTER 14

From Empathic to Empowered

by Angelica Perman

I am laying in a hospital bed, in Sylmar, CA, staring at a mound of uneaten, red Jell-O that reflects the mystical glow of my Himalayan salt lamp. My brain drifts off in between two worlds from super strong pain meds and from an oxygen tube that fills my nose up with air. The whirling sound lulls me in and out of the mist of my mind. I am holding a stuffed purple owl with very big, watchful eyes in one hand and a black tourmaline crystal in the other, both to protect me from the weird vibes that permeate every inch of my room. At this moment, my breathing is very challenged because, as I will learn later, tiny air bubbles are sticking my lungs together. Also, the fact that it is raining ash from the air vents in my room due to a nearby thirty thousand acre fire is not helping one bit. I am the phoenix lying squished in a heap, unable to get my pillow and bed situated properly no matter what button I press, and I am in shock.

I now recall how I ended up here. Earlier this morning, before the surgery, I await the fate of the blade, in a worn out, cramped, pre-op surgery lounge while I observe my husband, whose smile betrays his deep fear of losing me, while a loud Latin soap opera blares on a TV. I need something to drown everything out as I wait for the wall phone to ring and tell me it's time to go behind the curtain between before and after, the worlds of now and later. iTunes provides the perfect soundtrack to distract me from fear of death: Katy Perry's new song "Rise" plays on repeat over and over again. She belts out, "When the fire's at my feet again, and the vultures are all circling, I will survive and still I rise!" Yup, it's working for me. Tears fly out of my eyes onto the ugly, orange, plastic, subway-like waiting chairs. I sob silently for all the love I have for my husband, for how I waited two years to schedule this moment due to insurance issues, for every family member, friend, and client praying for me, and for every single thing I can think of to cry about. I decide I actually am in the episode of the Latin soap opera. Just then, the hospital bat phone rings. I answer "Hey, what's up?" suddenly unusually calm. "Angelica Perman, we are ready for you," a chirpy and urgent-sounding voice sings sweetly in my ear.

Seven hours later I finally awaken and am wheeled to my room. It is stark, dark, dense, cold and feels so...sad. Moments later, I tell an angelic, flaxen-haired nurse, "I need to get up and walk right away!" Her smile cracks into

a look of worried hopefulness. I pull myself up by sheer will and a handrail. With everything I've got I get up, grab her hand, and take my first three steps as a new and Wonder Woman. My angel nurse telepathically says, Please don't over do it, to which I lie out loud, "I promise I won't push myself too much!"

She leaves me to lay looking out the window at the apocalyptic scene of relentless flames lapping at the nearby mountain. Every single moment that has lead up to now flashes before my eyes as I think that perhaps I died and I am in purgatory for healers that didn't complete their mission. No, I decide.... If that were the case, I don't think it would include this feel-good cocktail dripping into my arm.

List of things I have lost in the past two weeks: four wisdom teeth, my pride, many tears, thousands of dollars, a root from a root canal, one ovary, my uterus, two fallopian tubes, a basketball-sized fibroid, my cervix, my fertility.

Wow, my astrologer sure had been correct about long-term health issues getting resolved in July. A partial hysterectomy and three dental surgeries proved her prediction to be true! All that now remains of my female parts is my pretty pearl, aka vagina and one ovary I have proudly named Thor for his inner and outer strength and stellar, heroic act of rebalancing my estrogen. I am grateful even though Thor is giving me a hot flash and terrible migraine headache!

How in the Universe had I let my own imbalances get this far? Blame it on my hormones, a lifetime of often over-giving and under-receiving, being an empath aka a highly sensitive person, or just being a female! For those of you that do not know, an **empath** is someone who senses energies other people cannot hear or see as well as the unmet needs, hidden thoughts, emotions, and agendas of others and feels them in their own body. They have a heightened sense of smell, sound, sight, and intuition. This ability has given me a successful private practice for the past twenty years as a spiritual counselor, intuitive guide, angel medium, and energy sound healer. I have worked with celebrities, CEOs, cult and coma survivors, war veterans, authors, musicians, models, people in law enforcement, judges, surgeons, athletes, spiritual leaders, scientists, inventors, moms, and children. My assistance has spread into many areas including recovery from addiction, PTSD, abuse, co-dependency, loss, divorce, custody battles, anxiety, and depression. They all have the same "condition" as I do: sensitivity at the price of wellbeing and needing to learn proper self-care.

I toss and turn for the next few days. I can't eat or go to the bathroom. Nurses visit me giving me lots of pills, and my husband visits giving me foot massages. I thank God for both.

Eventually, a pushy, loud, cheery nurse announces as though to a stadium that she needs to change my bedding and props me up against the sink nearby for balance. My physical weakness is completely overwhelming. My usual willpower on steroids cowers as I hold the soap dispenser and notice my name, Angelica, is all over the bed sheets, which ironically is the name of the hospital sheet service company. Suddenly, I am overwhelmed at the thought of my name on all the hospital beds everywhere, and I feel all the people suffering in hospitals all at once. It's a perspective jump that happens to a super open person like me, often out of my control.

Then, a very comforting thought comes to me. When you go through something traumatic and you survive, you get to keep something in exchange. A sense of strength and super power comes to you that only adversity can give to you. You cannot buy this or skip steps. No moon or sun or day or night can out-gleam your radiance.

Throughout my stay at the hospital, I am attended to by so many empathic, sensitive, intuitive, and loving nurses that it blows my mind. They love my salt lamp. They get essential oiled up and neck rubs by my healing, thoughtful husband. I talk to them about how to care for themselves better. We hug. We cry. We bond. I am blessed.

I am released five days later clutching the hand sewn love pillow a friend made to protect my mile-long scar as my husband drives me home. My filters are gone, I'm an open vessel with the traffic of Los Angeles driving through the middle of my body! I am completely freaked out.

For the next two months I create healthy boundaries to avoid being overwhelmed by the needs of others. I notify my clients that I am on a self-prescribed, self-care, summer staycation. I eat like a green Goddess the many superfood smoothies and tasty organic meals friends and family share with me. I hydrate with high-quality, alkaline water which cleanses my many emotions and the medications filling up my liver. I "meditate" on my crystal-filled Amethyst BioMat which I fondly call my *baba* and practice breathing in my lung ball blower thing. Sage is burned. Deep inner demons are confronted.

I am visited by many devoted loved ones. We laugh. We cry. We hug. We love. I am filled in places where only holes of sadness used to be. I give birth to a new life as a highly sensitive person. I practice the kind of self-care that usually is at a five-star retreat and spa. I learn to put the oxygen mask on myself first before tending to the needs of others. My cup fills up, and only through overflow do I share with others, as I am instantly depleted like an empty balloon if I don't. I practice the divine feminine art of receiving by nurturing myself. I receive gifts in the form of prayers, flowers, calls, texts,

cards, and care packages that include crystal elixir, scar salve, a fuzzy rug, a medicine pouch filled with a little girl's wishes, coins and stones, books, and guidance by beings that drift in and out of my healing space. I build my stamina with nature walks, step-by-step, inch-by-inch, which at times, requires resting every few minutes. I crawl...then walk...then dance...then sing...then fly!

As I complete writing this chapter, I decide to close my eyes and randomly "pull" a rune oracle stone for clarity. I choose the perfect one and read the meaning from *The Book Of Runes* by Ralph H. Blum: "Opening - Fire Torch. Simply put, if you have been operating in the dark, there is now enough light to see that the patient on the operating table is yourself!" I cannot believe how accurate this is for me.

The phoenix has risen from my hospital bed, covered in the ashes of my empathic sensitivity, instead of drained and sick, newly reemerged as something I like to call a *self-ful* person—lighter, brighter, and bullet-proof because I learned to truly care for...myself. And still, I rise!



TWEETABLE

As a highly sensitive empathic person who cares for other people, it is part of your job to practice extreme self-care! #GoddessGangster



Angelica Perman assists people around the world with her reading/clearing sessions for clarity and empowerment with matters of the heart, leadership, abundance, business, wellness, addiction recovery, and developing their gifts. She has shared at world-renowned Passages Addiction Recovery Center, appeared on hit BBC show Hollywood Me, and regularly offers live readings on popular radio shows. To book a phone reading/clearing session, personal recovery retreat, or energy house clearing and to watch her weekly online show Magical Mondays, visit: www.AngelicaPerman.com, Facebook: /Angelica.Perman

CHAPTER 15

Leader of the Band

by Troy Hoffman

A sick child alone and wild, a handyman's son
His hands were meant for different work
And his heart was known to none
He left his home and went his lone and solitary way
And he gave to me a gift I know I never can repay

A quiet man of music denied a simpler fate
He tried to be an electrician once, but his music wouldn't wait
He earned his love through discipline, a thundering velvet hand
His gentle means of sculpting others health took me years to understand

The leader of the band is gone and his eyes are now closed
But his blood runs through my instrument and his song is in my soul
My life has been a poor attempt to imitate the man
I'm just a living legacy to the leader of the band

His brother's life was different for he heard another call
One went to Europe and the other to Florida
And I'm in California when I'm not in some hotel
Living out this life I've chose and come to know so well

I thank you for the music and your stories of excellent health
I thank you for the freedom when it comes my time to go
I thank you for the kindness and the times when you got tough
And papa, I don't think I said I love you near enough

The leader of the band is gone and his eyes are now closed
But his blood runs through my instrument and his song is in my soul
My life has been a poor attempt to imitate the man
I'm just a living legacy to the leader of the band
I am a living legacy to the leader of the band

Songwriter: Dan Fogelberg
(some words changed to tell my dad's true story)

"The older I get, the more I realize how important our health is to enjoy life."

Posted by Dr. William A. Hoffman on his About Me section on Facebook

Musician, Surfer, Son, Brother, Husband, Father, Uncle, Grandfather,
Legacy Leaver, Chiropractor, Neurologist, Internal Medicinist, Clinical
Nutritionist

Born August 12, 1948 – Died Oct 31, 2016

When I was 11, I remember one doctor telling him he only had a year to live. He was only 37 years old at the time. Through diet, supplementation, and a variety of therapies not being discussed or pushed by Western medicine, he kept himself alive for another 31 years.

It was another cold day in Long Beach Island, New Jersey as my dad recounted the story.

He was lying sick in bed for another three-day stint. At this point, he was spending almost three-days out of school for every one day he was in. He realized at this point what he was experiencing wasn't going to change much, and he would have to find a way to change it. The flood of different medical doctors weren't helping. The antibiotics they were putting him on regularly were not cutting it either.

In six years he would be graduating high school and, shortly after, he would lose most of his hair to breakouts on his scalp. The one thing that energized him was surfing, and this passion led him away from New Jersey to the North Shore of Hawaii. Here, he started eating a little healthier and getting a little better.

A few years later he was in Boca Raton building Heritage Electric Company. He was married now, and I was only a year old when he met a chiropractor that would forever change his life. Although he was still dealing with massive health problems that had lingered since he was a baby, the principles he learned and applied gave this man in his late 20's a new lease on his health.

He worked all day building his electric company and all night studying to get into chiropractic college. His passion was to search for answers for himself. Why was he so sick, why did he have so many health challenges, why was he coughing, and why was his skin breaking out? WHY? He sought answers over the next 40 years of his life. I don't remember a month going by where he wasn't at a seminar or conference. I don't remember a week going by where he wasn't buried in a book. I don't remember a day going by where he wasn't fervently working on his own health.

You see, when he was born, the immunization shots weakened his immune system. The onslaught of antibiotics helped destroy his immune system over time. That, along with not being breastfed per the medical doctors' recommendations and instead being put on baby formulas, and living on a poor diet of breads and dairy, which he was highly allergic to, completely did him in as a young boy.

The rest of his life he suffered terribly because Western medicine wasn't teaching the basics we all should be applying in our lives. Eating live organic food, drinking water, avoiding medications, and getting daily exercise are huge components in living healthy. Discovering your food allergies and staying off those foods helps keep reactivity down.

A lot of you reading this today have an opportunity to drastically change yourself, and your family and friends' lives, if you apply these basic lessons to your own lives daily. Here is what my father discovered over his 50 years of research. He applied this research to thousands of patients the medical community gave up on. He helped heal people that were taking 30 different medications, people bedridden, people with fibromyalgia, cancer, lupus, etc...through these following steps.

- #1 Discover first what your body can and cannot eat through food-allergy testing and intolerance testing.
- #2 Then eat only those foods that are good for you.
- #3 Do deep cleanses periodically.
- #4 Take the right supplementation for you regularly.
- #5 Stay active, stretch daily, and do resistance training.

- #6 Focus on the mind-body connection, and find your way of clearing any past emotional trauma.
- #7 Become your own doctor, and keep pushing to find what works for YOU.

He died a slow, lifelong death because of the lack of understanding and application of the basic principles of health by Western medicine of that era. We now know so much more. We have so many people teaching great truths. It's now your turn to turn your life around and make the daily disciplines apart of your life.

Let his story inspire and guide you to live a lifelong legacy of health for you and those around you.

Live Your Destiny,

Troy Hoffman



TWEETABLE

Eating live organic food, drinking water, avoiding medications, and getting daily exercise are huge components in living healthy.



Troy Hoffman is founder of Simpluris, Inc. a three-time Inc 500 honoree. Troy's personal mission is to build companies and people that truly impact others' lives. He has traveled the world speaking about leadership and entrepreneurship and worked with various industry founders to develop legacy-leaving organizations. Troy holds degrees in performance management psychology and multinational financial management. He has built five seven-figure companies.

www.simpluris.com

www.troyhoffman.com

CHAPTER 16

Snail Life

by Shkira Singh

“It was Monday morning, and I hit the snooze button hoping I could sleep in for a couple minutes before the madness would begin. I wanted to continue to dream of being in Maui with the sun hitting my face and a nice cold drink in my hand while watching the waves break. I wanted a retreat from my powerful, highly-stressful corporate life. As a little girl, I always dreamed of being a powerful woman wearing a business suit and high heels to work, thinking that I would have a better life than my mom who stayed home to raise me. I really had no idea that my life would be like *The Twilight Zone* and everyone in the corporate world would be walking zombies. I was the number three top financial consultant in my company and had every luxury money could buy including a desk full of awards, but I felt hollow inside.

Even though I had just received a “promotion” that everyone in my office would die for, I felt empty coming to work. This new opportunity to work with the most affluent clients of the organization brought me nothing: no joy, no excitement, nothing. I was not looking forward to walking into the high-rise building in downtown Los Angeles and saying hello to everyone with no one responding back, pretending to be swamped with their work. Whenever I opened the glass doors, I could feel the negative energy hitting my face. I would daydream, looking outside the glass doors and wondering if there was more to life beyond this. Then I would ask myself, “What is happiness? Why I am not happy?” Every day I wondered if I had gone insane. Everyone around me thought I had a perfect life and would look at me like I was crazy not to be happy.

Finally, I decided enough was enough. I had to start my journey of going within. For the next three years, I would go through my “Transformation Inside Out,” which is the name of my new baby, the heart and soul of my life experiences, and the name of my company. I realized I had to go within and start my transformation before I could share my findings with the masses.

I never thought I would learn so much by sitting and watching a snail in my backyard at 11:01 a.m. on a Friday. Three years ago, I would have said “this is crazy” because I would have already been so “productive.” My day would start by working out, driving one to twelve hours in traffic, being on three conference calls, and skipping breakfast so I could check the messages from both cells and make sure I called all the clients back before 9 a.m. I

always knew I was different from the other employees of corporate America, but I did not know how different. There were days when I would look to them to ask them if they had ever imagined a life beyond the chamber of glass walls surrounding us or if they ever wondered if there was more.

I lay next to the snail to see the world from his/her perspective and wondered what it would be like to enjoy every moment and capture the joy of slowing down. The snail is a rather slow creature, taking its time going where he/she pleases. While some see the snail as being lazy, it is a positive trait to take one's time. If we are to rush everything in life, how will we be able to appreciate the small things? The snail is slow and steady and appreciates the path that he is on.... He is not solely focused on where he is going. As I looked at the snail, I thought about how many important lessons it was teaching me. In the last 15 years, I had never slowed down to just be. Just "being" was so foreign to me that I would have to take baby steps. While rushing to my next milestone in the corporate world, I never had a chance to take in my success and accomplishments. I had a nice, big house with a beautiful pool but never really enjoyed it. I always wanted more and never FULLY enjoyed what I had or realized how blessed I was. I am grateful that today I am able to enjoy the wisdom of nature and take these three lessons from this snail by just being.

- 1) **The concept of patience.** Many people are frustrated because they just want to get it done "now." However, patience is a necessary ability. Knowing how to endure waiting and delay with calmness, without annoyance, is a skill that needs to be gently trained and developed over time. The snail is showing the art of being patient. It knows that its own journeying will take time, and snail energy is okay with that and enjoys the ride.
- 2) **Flowing with it!** It's important to let go of fixed or unrealistic deadlines and let life pass you by. It may not be possible to do all the things you want to do in a single lifetime. That doesn't mean you shouldn't have any goals at all, but it does mean that it's okay to slow down and appreciate the smaller moments and the parts of your life that aren't "goals" but nourish you all the same. When you let go of unrealistic expectations, you learn how to accept the present as it is, and find joy in that, instead of buying more things to try to find happiness.
- 3) **Take time to enjoy the smaller things in life.** It helps me to identify and write down at least five of the smaller things I appreciate each day. That has made the biggest difference. Life isn't always about the big events, but instead, we should take the time to cherish the smaller moments.

The snail shows that patience, flowing, and enjoying the smaller things will allow us to be more present with our loved ones and experience life from a different lens. This different viewpoint will help us see the beauty in everyday things that we often dismiss. I know that I have been trying to look from this new lens the last three years and find that I have more peace and happiness than I have ever had before. I hope that you will also take the same wisdom from the snail and see how your life shifts.

It's important for us to look at our lives not just from the results we want to accomplish but from enjoying the process and not just the result. It's important for us to slow down and take a step back as opposed to putting all our focus on the destination. We will experience a much more fulfilled life and will find happiness within instead of relying heavily on external things. I have done the work to go within for the last three years and have realized that we have to have the transformation from our internal to shift our external.



TWEETABLE

Life isn't always about the big events, but instead, cherish the smaller moments.



Shkira Singh is a financial advisor at PS&A Wealth Management, Inc. who focuses on advising high net worth individuals on retirement income planning, wealth preservation, as well as estate and family asset transfer strategies. In the last 14 years, she has advised on over \$250,000,000. Her background in psychology allows her to simplify complex financial issues and present them in a clear and understandable manner for each unique situation.

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CHAPTER 17

Rebirth of the Goddess

by Karen Desouches

My journey to help women came to me from personal experiences. I will be honest, since English is my second language, my first being French, it took every cell in my body to find courage and vulnerability to write this chapter. I just said to myself, if some people can write, you can do it too. This one affirmation made me start writing.

I grew up in a household where arguing, belittling, and anger between my parents were more present than unconditional love. I couldn't understand why they were arguing so much in front of me and my little sister instead of loving each other. I didn't know at the time that they were doing the best they could from their conditioning to raise us, but I know that now, and I have forgiven them for it.

As a result of all this instability, I was sent to boarding school where I was physically abused by nuns, left to feel lonely, sad, and misunderstood. I felt very abandoned, and I shut myself down to avoid pain.

As if that wasn't enough, due to my dad's profession, I had the opportunity to live in Saudi Arabia as a teenager. I experienced a new country and new culture. That opportunity became a nightmare when I realized how different and difficult life was compared to life in Europe, especially for women, who didn't have a lot of rights. In fact, in Saudi Arabia, no women from any nation had freedom. There was no way for me to express myself in public, wear the clothes I wanted, or have a romantic relationship. Every women had to wear a long, black robe, called a djellaba, all day in public. Thankfully, I didn't have to cover my hair because I wasn't Muslim. I don't think I would have been able to accept that. Even so, it was still an intense culture shock. I didn't know what was happening to me. I felt rejected and restricted, and for a European teenager and a woman, it was the worst feeling in the world. I didn't know how the women around me could become happy and fulfilled. I was very angry all the time. During this period, I stopped trusting men because I felt violated by the way they were looking at me from head-to-toe with "I want you" on their faces, whistling at me while I was still a child. I couldn't understand how grown men could be so inappropriate. Even recently, 25 years after I had to hide my body as a teenager, I realize the impact of that. I was still uncomfortable showing my body and had the

epiphany that I really had to become a “friend” with the parts of me that I didn’t like and love myself fully to be free.

After studying Reiki and personal development, I realized that my Saudi experience wasn’t a mistake. I was chosen to live this experience to be a voice for women. My Reiki journey started by accident, literally. My car was rear-ended. It was my first car accident, and I didn’t realize how impacted I was by it. I thought it was just a fender bender, but next thing I knew, I couldn’t move my neck and was in terrible pain.

A very good friend of mine, a Reiki master, offered to do Reiki on me. To my surprise, it was the only thing that made a difference in my well-being, physically and emotionally. It was a sign from the universe that everything happens for a reason. If I didn’t have this wake up call, I might not have believed in the power of Reiki. I might not have realized how important Reiki is for everyone, especially women. Women are so often victims and they tend to keep their suffering bottled up for years, making living their lives miserable. As a result, these women are constantly trying to belong and connect with others, especially men.

I am writing this now to help women heal and step into their purpose and power like I did. I decided that my path was to heal the world, especially women and children because they are the most victimized, and their experience is close to my heart. I felt a calling to help them because they reminded me of me.

After hours of research, personal development books, conferences, an extraordinary relationship seminar, and Reiki, I realized that there are four steps to moving away from the pain of being a victim and rebirthing your goddess.

First, healing is the most important step to becoming a goddess. Without looking at the past, accepting it, and letting go of it, healing is very challenging. If I hadn’t healed my heart with Reiki, cutting the cords that didn’t serve me, surrounding myself with rose quartz, which is the strongest healing stone, surrounding myself with pink and red colors that represent pure love, and doing a lot of work on myself, I wouldn’t be who I am today. Everything is possible when you are willing to do the work: nourish your self-esteem with positive affirmations in the mirror everyday, eat a healthy diet and workout, and take time for yourself. Basically, put the oxygen mask on you before anybody else, and do whatever makes you the happiest.

Reconnecting to your inner child is the second most important step towards being a goddess. Go back to the time when you were the happiest, think about what you loved to do, how fully self-expressed you were with no care in the world. Imagine that you have this little girl in front of you, and embody

her. Make her part of you. Love her, protect her, nourish her, and promise her that nothing will ever happen to her. You will start feeling peace and love in your heart.

Declaring that you are a goddess and nothing can stop you is the third step of the transformation. Declare every morning before you start your day.

Getting your mind to declare this statement will create a momentum of habit. The more you say it, the more you become it.

I'm grateful for what I have.

I know that I'm doing the best I can.

I believe that my mistakes have helped me grow, and I have come a long way.

I smile a LOT...all day long. It's contagious.

I remember that positive energy attracts good people. It could change their day, and it will bring opportunities.

I understand that both my strengths and flaws make me who I am. I am perfect in my own way.

I let who I am really shine outward to others everyday. I live out loud.

I love myself, and I'm confident in what I bring in this world.

I keep loving everyday no matter what.

I love myself. At the end of the day, my happiness is the most important.

Embodying a goddess will be the last step of rebirthing the goddess in you. The goddess loves unconditionally no matter what the situation is. She owns herself and only surrounds herself with people who love and respect her. She is constantly growing and improving. She is in service to others and volunteers her time to help others who need it the most. She's very loving and healing. She is fully confident and knows who she is. She is pure and has a heart of gold. She knows that embodying the goddess will attract the perfect life partner to her as a mirror of herself.

Here are 10 affirmations to say to yourself daily as you embody the goddess within. Turn back to this page regularly and read them aloud to yourself, or copy them out and keep them somewhere you will see them often.

I am here for a reason.

My smile makes a difference.

I am stronger than I ever imagined.

I am appreciated.

I can make my dreams come true.

I am beautiful.

I am worth it.

I am enough.

I am loved.

I am the divine feminine.

As a Reiki master, I have helped many women become a goddess by helping them step into their powers, healing their hearts with Reiki, recommending the appropriate essential oils to address what's going on in their bodies, and giving them positive affirmations to keep on their phones or on their bathroom mirror everyday. I hope my experience will make a huge difference in your life and your children's lives because my life's purpose on this planet is to help women find who they really are: strong, fulfilled, happy, and "unbullshitable" from men or other relationships.

Life is a roller coaster. We all have a past, but it's the choices you make along the way that will make you who you are. You are perfect. You are a goddess.



TWEETABLE

Embody the goddess within.



Karen Desouches is a certified transformational Reiki master, color therapist, and entrepreneur. An advocate of love, healing, and health, her mission is to create wellness and save lives as an ambassador of the new Helo wearable technology lifesaving device. Find more info at internationalkjd.worldgdn.com.

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CHAPTER 18

Eating Disorder to a Smile

by Chris Shah

“**A**t least I’m not sticking my finger down my throat.”
Recalling this story seems like a past life. This was me rationalizing my eating disorder not being as bad as someone who purges on purpose.

A few weeks later in a dark, cold garage, my finger down my throat began the next stage, referred to as “purging bulimia.”

I would routinely fluctuate between excessive working out and eating my prepared food to overeating both healthy and unhealthy food. After the overeating, I would starve myself for 8-12 hours, then that graduated to purging after overeating.

I spent countless hours looking into the mirror to find the perfect view of my muscular body. Most people watched TV shows, I watched myself and ventured on an endless pursuit to find the perfect clothes to make me look muscularly big.

This consumed virtually every living second of my day. I was a seesaw of extreme emotional highs followed by downward spirals that seemed darker than the previous.

Catching a glance of myself in the mirror that didn’t look big consumed my whole being.

In this mindset, you only identify with your body image and eating. That means all my eggs were in one basket. If those eggs broke, I had nothing left to defend my emotional well-being.

If my current clients saw me during this stage of my life, they would have zero doubt they could conquer any emotional eating issues. Now, I’m known to my clients as “super positive and motivational.”

Turning It All Around

This disorder became my identity and the lens I saw the world through. I allowed it to selfishly push away a happy life from me. I had to get out.

It finally got to the point that staying the same seemed more painful than changing.

It was not a single event or breakthrough that changed it all around. Similar to any woman I have fallen in love with, it's a combination of factors. The following breakthroughs broke the chains forever.

Breakthrough one is **feeling present** to become the watcher of any emotional disturbance.

Breakthrough two is **diversifying your identities** to provide you with multiple emotional lives.

Breakthrough three is **relying on the process** to be your GPS guide.

Present Energy

I discovered the power of presence, which helped dissolve my ego and attachment to excessively judging myself.

It was like a prisoner getting his first taste of freedom and fresh air. This was another world I discovered. I was enthralled with it. I started on a quest to see what it would take to stay free.

Some ways you too can experience present energy is to simply watch a bird or a plant in nature. Just watch and put your focus on it, and you will experience a taste of presence. Meditation is a verified way to become more present as well, and incorporating it into your life is a great investment in yourself.

The single greatest power you gain from present energy (mindfulness and meditation) is that you become "the watcher" of your emotions. This breaks the illusion that you are your body image. You lose attachment, and ultimately you gain freedom and greater peace of mind.

A common response when I bring up meditation is "I'm no good at it, I can't stop thinking" to explain why they don't do it. They have unconsciously set up rules against themselves.

If your rules are "I can't think" and "I must always maintain concentration" to be successful at meditation, how often will you be successful? Very rarely.

The cool thing about life is that you can make up your own rules. Here are my rules in order to be successful at meditation. Rule one: Schedule it, Rule two: Start with two minutes, Rule three: Focus on your breathing, Rule four: Don't judge your performance.

When you do those things, you are successful at meditation, and the amount of time and benefit you will gain starts to increase.

Identities

What other identities must I value? I'm also a father, business owner, world traveler, and friend. I started to pour more focus into those other areas of my life.

What must I do as a business owner? What must I do to show my son I love him? What must I do as a boyfriend? Where do I want to travel next?

When I diversified my focus on many identities, the stranglehold of the "bulimia" started to loosen its grip on me. I would no longer put all my eggs in one identity.

If my abs didn't look exactly the way I wished, "No big deal. They will soon, but I have other shit to do." If I occasionally ate some chocolate, it was no longer, "I'm so bad. My veins will disappear." It was, "That was so good. I earned it."

I was no longer fully identified with the image of my body. The feedback loops from hell no longer terrorized my mind.

The Process

Life happens, and when it does, we need something to keep us calm. Inspired and confident we can make it though.

Relying on a process can guide us when many get lost in stormy emotions. The process gives me the power to be the director of events in my life. Without a process to navigate the world, most people will be in constant emotional reaction to events and results. This is commonly the thought pattern that rules over yo-yo dieters (also known as the feedback loop from hell).

I wake up between 3:15 and 4 a.m. to start my director process. I want to tell life what I'm expecting out of it, not wait to see what happens.

It starts with 10-20 minutes of meditation, which is followed by a few minutes of gratitude to excite my inner cheerleaders, reviewing my focus for the day, and incantations (mantras loudly vocalized) to program my subconscious mind. I want my subconscious mind to go to work for me so I don't rely just on will power.

Through this whole journey, life and I have taught each other everything is a choice. When you are at rock bottom, it's a choice to continue to look down or up in a new direction. It's a choice to feed the pain or reach out to hope and help. Once you realize we have the power of choice, life will never be the same again.

This is how I went from an eating disorder to a smile.



TWEETABLE

At rock bottom, it's a choice to feed the pain or seek hope and help. Once you realize the power of choice, life will never be the same.



Chris Shah is running with the bulls in Spain, walking with lions and riding ostriches in South Africa, walking the Great Wall of China, and coaching and creating new leaders at the gym he founded, Terra Nova Fitness, so that his members can also smile bright. Some smile because they feel strong, others because they accept themselves, are eating healthy, losing body fat, fitting into clothes, or finishing a race.

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CHAPTER 19

Check In with Yourself

by Meredith Kramer

I'd say I am lucky. I had a great pregnancy. Ok, so the first four months were rocky, but once I got on a workout routine everything clicked, and I was able to enjoy my pregnancy. The birth was pretty smooth too. I mean, it's not ideal that my water broke and I was 7,000 miles from my family, but all things aside, I could handle it.

Two weeks later I was alone, again, in our small flat in Germany with our newborn son, Jackson. A week prior to his birth my husband, Dennis, was offered to play for the German Basketball national team, and I told him he would be crazy not to take this opportunity. I remember thinking, "I am tough, I can totally handle this." Girl...was I ever wrong.

I had no idea this would be only the beginning. All of these little things kept trickling in, Jackson couldn't breastfeed; he couldn't drink the milk I had been pumping. And because he wasn't eating, he wasn't gaining weight. Then the mother lode hit. Dennis returned six weeks later, but this time with news that we were moving to Oldenburg. With Jackson only being a month and a half old at the time, my mind began to race. Then to make things worse two days after the move, we found ourselves in the emergency room of pediatrics. I spent four nights in the hospital, just the two of us, as doctors ran all kinds of tests on him.

On the day we were released, I joked that I had seen every wing of the hospital but not the town. This was me though. Always looking for the silver lining or a joke to cover up what was actually depression. To be clear, I never had the kind of postpartum depression where I wanted to hurt myself or my baby. But it was the kind of depression where you want to sleep, eat, and when you pass by a mirror you are kind of disgusted, and then soon you just try to avoid them.

Inside I was angry and jealous. These feelings were unusual for me, but I just thought it came with the territory of being a new mom. It wasn't until Jackson was six months old that I finally came to terms with it. I had fallen into that unknown percentage of women suffering from postpartum depression.

I apologized to Dennis. I apologized for the way I had been acting and said that, for the first time, if it was on my mind I was going to say it. As the new

year approached, I started digging deep and for the first time in months, looked in a mirror, and asked “Meredith, what brings you joy?”

Then, it hit me. I hadn’t really cared for myself since Jackson was born. A memory came to me of the time when my dad had passed away. During that time the things that gave me the most joy were staying busy by working on new projects and when I had found a workout regime I loved.

I reminded Dennis of an idea I had had when I was pregnant. It revolved around the combination of the two concepts. I love working on new and exciting projects. Spending hours on the computer with the design and details. On the other hand, I had loved working out during pregnancy and felt like what I learned needed to be shared with other moms. If I was in that spot at one point, how many other moms out there were in a similar spot? I was going to create the experience I hoped for. One where I could go to whatever week of pregnancy, go to that day, and have a step-by-step workout waiting for me.

Starting a new business is challenging. For awhile it seemed like every day was met with more hurdles, or obstacles. It’s kind of like a boot camp, your muscles are shaking and you are doubting your ability, then you mentally have to toughen up. I realized I loved it. I felt fulfilled. Women would write to me asking questions, or emails of testimonials would spill in raving about how much they loved the guides.

For the first time in months, I was able to look at myself in the mirror and feel an overwhelming sense of joy. I had taken stock of what I needed and I was doing something I enjoyed while helping others. Their words kept me positive in the moments I would cry and yell into my hands as I dealt with yet another obstacle.

I was reminded of an email I had received from a mom. The email sent to me was from a woman thanking me for the guides and saying that this was her best pregnancy. Before she had the guides she felt confused and lost when it came to finding a good workout routine. She, like me, couldn’t afford a monthly prenatal fitness class. If a single class is \$12 and you go once a week for 40 weeks, then you are talking about almost \$500! Plus, most doctors say that you should work out 3-4 times a week. Add those extra days to your routine, and now it’s between \$1500-\$2000 for the entire length of the pregnancy. To overcome the money issue, there is always the option of doing it on your own. But, there are conflicting ideas, thousands of books, numerous cheesy DVDs, and dozens of women who sport a fake bump as they work out on YouTube to add to the confusion. Two words—no thanks!

This is why I’ve made it my mission to create a workout plan from start to finish, one that I knew was going to be safe and effective in targeting

specific muscle groups that are important in carrying the baby and giving birth. I was that pregnant woman who read and spent hours every day taking notes to come up with the workouts I was going to do at the gym. I loved feeling prepared and going to the gym because it was “our time,” just me and my son. I knew I needed to share this experience with other women.

That’s one of the things I love about what I do. I get to work with moms! I have the privilege to motivate, and support them. I am far from perfect, but that’s ok, and I feel like that’s why we get each other. We are just moms.

I’ve changed now of course! I wake up every morning knowing I want to be the best version of myself. I workout and eat healthy 80% of the time. Not because I care what someone else thinks or care what my jeans size is, but because it makes me feel good. I can look at myself and embrace the imperfections, and life has been pretty good. A lot happens during pregnancy and to women as we go through life. Our bodies, our faces, and even our hair change. It can be a scary thing to look in the mirror and not recognize the person looking back at us. But, I promise they are still in there, that child-like version of who we truly are is still in there.

Pregnancy has really helped me hone in on the concept of “checking in.” Think of it this way: before you become pregnant, you have sweaty gym sessions in hopes to change your body in some way or another, but guess what, over the course of pregnancy the body is going to change regardless. Whether you enter the gym or not, your body is going to grow and do things you didn’t even know imaginable. There are going to be days you look in the mirror and don’t even recognize yourself. And to top it off, even if you eat extremely healthy you still won’t fit into your skinny jeans at 36 weeks.

I challenge you to look past the reflection you see in the mirror and check-in with yourself daily. The person that is there beneath your outer appearance, how are they doing? What do they need today, right now, this moment? Remember when I asked myself, “Meredith what brings you joy?” It’s important to check in to see what it is we need below that chiseled or flabby six pack and decide what it is that brings us joy. Are we hiding behind our “perfection” because we don’t know? Or are we performing mundane tasks at work because we are afraid to take a leap?

I love that during pregnancy I am able to help women check in with themselves as their bodies are quickly changing during those nine months. It is kind of like getting them for a 40-week challenge to become the best versions of themselves before baby is born. Here I am saying it: I had postpartum depression. I wasn’t focusing on the most important person, ME. It was through fitness that I found my refuge. It was the time I spent on me, filling my own cup.

I learned that it isn't selfish to spend an hour at the gym. That I am not a bad mom if I put my son in the swing so I can get in some abs. I no longer focus on what I look like after the workout, but how I **feel**. If we shift our focus to how we feel after the exercise, it becomes sustainable, something we can continue doing and not give up on because we aren't seeing results or we end up burning out. We continue because we **feel** better.

As women, we forget about ourselves and our own needs a lot. It's like filling a tea kettle. All week long we fill up everyone else's cup; our children, our husbands, our friends and before you know it, the kettle is empty. If the kettle is empty, how can we continue pouring into the cups of others? This is the mind-body connection. When we include fitness in our routines it is SO much more than getting that figure, or toning up the tush. It is checking in with ourselves, doing something for us that makes us feel good. And because it feels good, it becomes sustainable, not just something on the day's to-do list. That is really why I am in love with the idea of an active pregnancy. It's the one time in a woman's life that she isn't working out to lose weight or to look good for someone else. She is doing it for herself and her child, and there is something that is SO incredibly special about that. Even if it's just a walk in the park, or riding the bike at the gym, it is a time that she can check in with herself and connect with her baby. If she is in the gym lifting dumbbells, or in her living room dancing, it is time she is spending on herself, filling her own tea kettle so that she can be the best version of herself she can be. I say, ***"let's not focus on a belly only pregnancy, but focus on a pregnancy that glows from the inside out."***



TWEETABLE

Look past the reflection you see and check in with yourself. What do you need today, right now, this moment? #FitTips #CheckinWithYourself



Meredith is a mom, entrepreneur, and personal trainer specializing in pre- and postnatal fitness. Overcoming PP depression, she tapped into her passion for helping other moms during pregnancy and their recovery postpartum. You can catch her every day in yoga pants and a messy bun. Download her Free 7-Day Pregnancy Fitness Challenge at www.40weekFit.com and get pregnancy fit tips by following @40weekFit on Instagram.

(If you think you may have PPD check out www.postpartumprogress.org and know that you are not alone)

CHAPTER 20

Staying Spiritually Fit Through the Storms of Life

by Don Schneider

As I came through the fourth security door with the electronic releases, I was met by Kay, his nurse. She introduced me to Tommy, a female nurse, and another nurse whose name I forgot. They were vigilantly watching him by the door: one standing, one sitting. It's their job to do this 24/7, if necessary. He was lying there asleep under a thin blanket and sheet, his breathing heavy. Kay spoke softly to me in a comforting tone requesting that I don't wake him. He was down again sleeping, but for how long no one knew. The other sedatives had not worked over the last 24 hours, and there was now hope the most recent would. Sleep was everything now.

The attendants excused themselves for my privacy, though at a glance I could see the three security cameras affixed to the ceiling staring at my every motion and knew someone was watching from a screen not too far away. It was 10 by 14-foot, white-painted, brightly lit room with nothing except a twin bed in the middle with its occupant. I asked if I could touch him. The answer was yes. Tears weren't the question. It was how many and how long. The room was cold; the sheet and blanket were thin and, without knowing, I knew this was by design for his condition. No normal comforts.

Over the last seven hours, after departing on the flight made within minutes of receiving the news, I didn't know a lot. Most of the logical senses leave, and the mind enters a place of survival, filled with fog that covers thoughts with dampness and limited vision, which shifts each moment: a mix of clarity and then blur. Hours don't equal 60 minutes anymore. Time just happens. There are terms I had heard trying to describe the sensation, *crisis management*, *damage control*, *numbness*, but those are just expressive attempts at the impossible.

With intentional resolve, it became a priority to focus and act on a few things I knew would help maintain sanity and contribute. I reached out to a few very select trusted people for support and prayers. Though many in my life care deeply and would certainly be supportive, the distractions of explanations and updates would not be productive. I prayed and reaffirmed

my faith and trusted in God that he was in control. Ironically, this was all only two days after Thanksgiving. I read some strong passages and sections of encouraging books I brought. They reminded me to be accepting of whatever was ahead, and that I had the strength to handle it. It confirmed the importance and love of others close to me. It helped me to focus on the future—whatever it may be—and not focus on the past with blame, guilt, and shame which is a trap that could snare me without warning.

Helplessness. That was my first thought. Yet, *trust* was my second thought as I walked over to him and lightly ran my fingers along his brown hair. I felt helpless that I could not do anything directly to change this situation. No action could be taken, no check written, no directions given. Nothing. I trusted that God was in control and the doctors knew best. It might have been much worse, but he was in the best place possible. I think feeling helpless is the reason we breakdown. I broke down. Someone I was trusting must have seen me through the cameras since a nurse suddenly appeared with a box of tissues. They were needed. But that emotion did not last long because I knew the choice was that or trust. I chose the latter and felt inner comfort and peace. I prayed. They were good prayers, not of pity or blame, but of thanks and gratitude. They included hope, acceptance, and promise.

It had been a hard semester for him though it was not quite over. He had been caught up in the world of popular culture and all the good, bad, ugly, highs, and lows that accompany it. Parties, drama in relationships, irresponsible decisions, yet good grades. So much is about grades. Freedom to learn which included failure, growing, stumbling, and overcoming. There were some warning lights, but with 1800 miles between me and the brightness of those lights it can be hard to see. I made the call because the warning light was now obvious, even from a distance. He tried to maintain his composure, but things were not adding up; fantasy confused with facts, reality with irrational. Maybe my radar alert was too low before this. I did not second guess. It was time to take action and make the call even though, as hard as it was to believe, my family was celebrating Thanksgiving only the day before like thousands of others. He had agreed to be admitted with the urging of his girlfriend and the counselor on call Jennifer. They might have saved his life. It's been said courage is displayed through our actions, not our words. It took courage.

Sometimes I think God gave us two of everything to be used by design. Of course, physically, arms, eyes, legs, ears—even two nostrils in the one nose. But we also have two minds (really parts of one) pulling us two directions. One that says, it's ok when it's not and the other that says don't listen to the other one and do the right thing, whatever it is, in the moment. It's often a battle between the two that results in emotional outbursts, anger, regretted words, and even total breakdown if the struggle is too great. The

good one needs to dominate before the other destroys. Of course, the spiritual forces unseen are vying for influence; it's love versus hate with bad carefully disguising itself as good to confuse and tempt.

That's where my son was, broken down in the mental care unit of the local hospital under 24-hour observation. It was unclear even to those I was relying on for answers how and why it happened. But it happened, and at the moment I was sitting next to him, it was unclear what would happen next. In fact, the only thing clear was where he was and who I needed to trust, God. Would Paul continue to sleep? Would there be permanent effects if he awoke? Would he awake? Was there some deeper behavioral issue that would need treatment in the future? Other than recreational marijuana, the campus favorite, nothing else appeared in his blood tests. Had what he smoked been laced with unknown chemicals called "spice" as the doctors suspected? Was it the sleep deprivation from school without continuous rest north of two hours for the last three or four days? That can result in psychotic behavior. Was it the emotional challenges during the year that proved too heavy a burden, so heavy that it crushed his mind? The word the nurse and doctor used was—psychotic. Really, that was my son? He was lying in a deep sleep, and it was unknown if he would ever regain consciousness. Only hours before, he was acting psychotic... since checking in. It was good he was sleeping when I walked in. At least I recognized this state.

He slept for 15 hours and finally awoke. Another blessing. Paul remembered nothing of the previous 24—nothing. He watched a few minutes of the camera tape for confirmation of the severity of and proof he was in the right place for his condition. It was sobering; he did not recognize the person on it. Hearing him was confirmation that my choices of trust and reliance were good. In subsequent hours and days, Paul recovered completely without permanent brain impairment. Fortunate is an extreme understatement. Very blessed would be accurate.

The days and weeks following this trial so close to my life that they punctured my heart revealed lessons as all of our experiences in life can do if we choose to learn from them. This experience helped me reflect on my spiritual fitness. Like any muscle in my body or my brain, faith can be strengthened through conditioning and training too. But unlike mental or physical training, spiritual fitness gets tested when it's beyond our control to influence the event. We can prepare for a race or a competition. We can prepare for a business presentation or build our knowledge for future successes and make choices to empower that understanding. Spiritual fitness is different. You can't control a storm or the waves in the ocean of life. It just happens on its own schedule. We can prepare for it through prayer, meditation, a strong relationship with God, and support of others, but until

the test comes, in its own time, we don't know if we have prepared the spiritual muscles enough. It's critical to keep growing.

I reviewed all of these muscles and their place in my life. My faith, trust, endurance, calmness, sense of security, focus, beliefs, and wisdom. I know from experience when I lack these spiritual muscles that fear, distraction, panic, worry, and many other paralyzing emotions and thoughts can take over. But, as this crisis unfolded and these muscles were called into action, I could see the preparation had paid off, much like hitting the treadmill keeps the cardio fresh. Yet, I was also exposed to areas of weakness and the need for more growth. It's an ongoing exercise day by day for total preparation until the next storm or earthquake in life. I must continue to build, work, and grow.



TWEETABLE

You can't control a storm or the waves in the ocean of life. It just happens on its own schedule. We can prepare for it though.



Don Schneider is president of Recal Corporation and is managing partner of affiliated entities and partnerships in various real estate investment, development, and management ventures. Together, his teams have handled over one billion dollars in transactions. A multi-published author, Don's passion is mentoring young men through Bible studies, small groups, and life coaching. He, his wife, and his four children call Orange County, California home.

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CHAPTER 21

How to Live 100 Years with Optimal Health

by Dr. Karl Jawhari

I am writing this chapter because of my personal experience and journey in the pursuit of health. Years ago, I taught martial arts, I was a health nut, and I was a fanatic about everything I thought would make me healthy. You could tell me about any diet or program, and I had done them all in an attempt to perform at an optimal level physically and mentally.

The problem I ran into was that no matter what I did, I would constantly wake up in the middle of the night and would have trouble falling back asleep. This would take place the whole night until it was morning time.

This happened for about a year and a half until I decided to get some blood testing done. The issue though was that my blood test came back normal (something way too many people are told and left confused about). I immediately knew I had a bigger problem at hand. So, I consulted with several doctors, and still, everybody told me that I was okay, even though I knew that didn't make any sense.

I decided at that moment to go on a quest to find the real answer to my problem, and that is how I found a doctor who completely transformed my health in six months! After I went through that process, I asked myself, how come this information is unknown or is not being shared with people?

That is when I decided to create what we now call in my office *The Healthcare Functional Program*, and it is why I feel compelled to share this message with the rest of the world.

I especially want to reach those who share the same issues I had and were told there was nothing amiss in their blood work and are left with no real solution. I often tell my patients that my job as a doctor is not only to get people well but also to empower them with this information so they can handle their own health issues. I can assure you without a doubt, if you learn this information, you will be able to transform your health the same way I have and the same way all my patients before you have.

Nearly a decade ago, "A New Philosophy of Medicine," a *Time Magazine*

editorial described inflammation as a “silent killer,” and today it still is. Just take a look at all the diseases we are now finding that actually stem from inflammation: cancer, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer’s disease, pulmonary diseases, arthritis, autoimmune diseases, neurological diseases, and diabetes. What if medicine were practiced differently? What if the whole body was taken into consideration when a patient presented a list of symptoms tied to a chronic complaint? What if stress, pollution, and the foods we eat were taken into consideration by healthcare professionals when compiling the patient’s health profile? What if addressing food and chemical intolerance was considered a viable alternative to prescription medication? Surely patient outcomes would improve dramatically.

If food intolerance and inflammation issues are so widespread, why, you may wonder, aren’t more people talking about it? That’s a good question. And the answer is firmly rooted in the fact that food intolerance and “body type” sciences do not, for some reason, fit into the “traditional” model of medicine.

This paradigm is ingrained in medical school, where the human body is broken into multiple pieces to be studied and treated separately. As a result, if you have a sore throat, you go to an ear, nose, and throat specialist; if you have a stomach problem, you go to a gastroenterologist; and if you have a yeast infection, you go to the gynecologist. This leaves little room for practitioners that acknowledge that what a person puts in his or her mouth may cause a pain in his or her head, an infection in the ear, or various skin irritations.

Doctors who practice functional medicine and this type of medicine, called “alternative” medicine, have broken out of the traditional mold and taken a different path. This has often been the result of a personal health experience or because someone close to them suffered in the process of navigating the modern medical gauntlet.

So what is inflammation? Inflammation is part of the body’s natural immune response. When something harmful or irritating affects a part of our body, there is a biological response to try to remove it. The signs and symptoms of inflammation, specifically acute inflammation, are the body’s way to try to heal itself. The purpose of this response is to remove harmful stimuli, including damaged cells, irritants, or pathogens and begin the healing process. Although, sometimes you can see inflammation in the form of physical changes such as skin rash, inflamed joints, or yellow eyes, most people can’t feel inflammation in its early stages.

Think of any disease in the world, this disease is synonymous with INFLAMMATION. Furthermore, once your body is inflamed, a cascade of symptoms start occurring. A good example of what can cause inflammation

is processed foods. All processed foods have preservatives and additives that the food industry has had to use to give long shelf life in foods such as bread, rice, pasta, most packaged foods, etc. Any time you consume these foods, the body reacts by creating digestive inflammation, and if you continue eating the same processed foods the digestive tract becomes diseased. That is the reason we recommend you consume whole foods that have not been processed and supplement with whole food vitamins to prevent inflammation.

So, what's the solution? Whole food supplements are an excellent source of nutrients we may be missing in our daily diet. These supplements are made from whole food concentrates rather than fractions or pieces of the food. The whole food supplements are derived from organic farms using nutrient-rich soil and therefore retain a higher quality of essential nutrients. Whole food supplements are based on the principle that the best sources of vitamins and minerals are found in whole foods. Eating a healthy, well-balanced diet can provide you with a strong, energetic, efficient, and long-lasting body.

Lastly, even if you eat healthy and take whole food supplements, that doesn't guarantee you good health. In my experience, I have seen people do everything right year after year, yet they have not been able to get rid of their ailments or are still struggling with resistant weight loss. I believe that having the right testing to find the source of the problem rather than dealing with the symptoms is the first step to getting your health back. In our office, we specialize in specific testing that looks at the body from a functional view which often is missed in the broadly used, golden-standard Complete Blood Count test (CBC). The best way to know if your body is functioning the way it is supposed to and if it is getting all the elements that make up a fully-functioning, healthy body is to discuss your concerns with a healthcare professional that understands the body functionally. This means looking at all the systems of the body and not focusing on one organ or one disease since the body functions synergistically.

An ideal blood test will be interpreted with the seven elements of health in mind:

- environmental factors
- stress inducers
- sleep issues
- organ health deficiencies
- gut health
- body type diet and
- metabolic function

So, living to 100 years in good health is achievable, especially if you eat a healthy diet with the appropriate nutrients and supplements and address chronic conditions with functional blood testing. Many people think that genetics is the only reason why someone would live a long life, and they are partially right because genetics will affect our age of death by 25% according to most genetic research. That leaves us with the ability to control 75% of the factors that affect how long and how healthily we will live. The most important concept I want people to understand is that blood testing by most mainstream medicine is looked at from a clinical range and not a functional range. The difference is that, if it is read from a clinical range and you fall within normal ranges according to that blood test, everything might seem normal at first glance, even though you could still have symptoms and physiological dysregulations. You will be told that you will have to live with what you have or that there is nothing showing up in the blood test. It is important to understand that even if your diet is excellent, if the underlying issues and deficiencies in the body are not addressed functionally, nothing else matters. You need to see a professional who is trained to look at the entire picture.

I am grateful for the doctor who transformed my health. By looking at health from a different point of view, I have gained a new quality of life and a purpose to share this knowledge with others. I want to do whatever I can to help as many as people as possible live healthier and live longer. Do the same for yourself. Take responsibility for your health.



TWEETABLE

You can enjoy food and live a long healthy life, but food is fuel for your body. Give it what it needs or make it fight what it doesn't.



Dr. Karl Jawhari is a functional nutrition practitioner with a goal to educate people on how they can consistently achieve healthy, long-lasting relief and weight loss regardless of their health stage or "body type." If you want further information, feel free to call us at (972) 239-7444 or visit us at www.coreintegrativehealthsolutions.com

CHAPTER 22

Change Your Mind, Change Your Life!

by Kate Purtle

Four years ago I was fat, unhappy, and had a strong dislike of myself. Despite the positive and confident exterior I personified, each night I went to bed knowing there was a better way of living, yet I still did nothing about it.

The way I cared for my health represented how I cared for the rest of my life, and it impacted my relationships, my results at university, and my drive for life. I disliked going out with my friends as I felt I was the elephant of the herd, I drank too much to hide my insecurities, and I ate too much food as a form of comfort, to mask my actual feelings about how my life was progressing.

At 20 years old, I shopped at a plus size shop, wore a size 24 dress, and weighed in at 295 lbs. I would binge and then starve myself, and the cycle would continue. I tried every diet under the sun. You name it; I tried it.

I thought I had tried EVERYTHING, and I continually lost hope that I would ever be able to lose weight. This cycle continued over a number of years, and all the while my self-esteem and self-worth continued to plummet. I looked in the mirror on a daily basis and hated what stared back.

I would stand there in my college dorm room crying, and on occasion, I would feel such anger and disappointment at myself I would punch my cupboard door out of disgust. I numbed my vulnerability and never dealt with my issues and thus lived through an exterior which did not replicate the thoughts going through my head. Something had to change.

One morning, I woke up and actually took in what was staring back at me in the mirror: a sad little girl with zero self-esteem or self-worth despite the love I had surrounding me. I was someone who despised her own image and wanted to disassociate her personality with her appearance. I took in the image of the excess fat around my face which made me look like a moon. I noted the skin which wobbled as I raised my arm. I noted the layers of fat surrounding my abdomen and the fat that hung over my undies. I noted how my thighs touched even when I stood with my feet wider than shoulder

width. I noticed the cellulite on my thighs and the thickness of my calves. And I called it. Enough was enough.

I recall the phone call I had with my brother, crying my eyes out, something I didn't do all that often. I recall the discussion I had with my very first personal trainer. And from that day, my life changed forever.

This day was debatably the most emotional day of my life to date. In that moment, everything hung on that discussion with that personal trainer. There were tears, anxiety, sadness, disappointment, happiness, excitement, letting go of the fear of the gym, letting go of the blame, and taking responsibility for my future.

There was something incredible about having someone outside of my immediate circle, who began as a stranger and became a friend, who believed in me, pushed me, consoled me, sympathized with me, and told me what I needed to hear not what I wanted to hear.

I would be lying if I said that the past four years have been easy. Success is never linear, and this has proved true time and time again with my weight loss journey. I have had to fight hard over the years to build up my passion for life, which I knew I was capable of feeling, to build the self-love and self-worth which others could see in me yet I couldn't manage to formulate myself. It took a long time to disassociate from the identity I had created for myself as the "funny, fat girl."

Over the past four years, I have managed to lose close to 100lbs. I have learnt more about myself and my limits than ever before, and the reason I have been able to stay focused for the best part of the past four years is due to a change in my mindset. My motto for life is "change your mind, change your life," and I will continue to honor that forever more.

I truly believe that you cannot make any changes in your life until you make the internal decision to commit, which comes from your will to want to do something. The thing about a fat loss journey is that you can be provided with all of the resources, all of the knowledge, and even hire a coach to help you along the way, but it's not until you make that internal decision to commit that you are ever going to get anywhere.

Why am I writing this story? Because I want my story to be your story. With the plethora of information out there about how to lose weight, we end up overwhelmed and confused with where to begin and how to keep going. I want to be able to provide the light in someone's dark tunnel and lead them into a life of loving and accepting themselves for who they are. We need to stop overcomplicating the process of weight loss. We need to step up and take responsibility, stop playing the blame game and being the victim of our

lives, and learn to become the hero of our own story. We have one shot at our life, and I want to enable women with the vision and the vehicle to live their best, most healthy, and passionate lives.

Not every day is going to be perfect. Some days I still look in the mirror and dislike what I see, but then I snap out of it because I know who I am and how proud I am for turning my life around. And I remember all that I have achieved: I've lost almost 100 lbs, completed an Olympic distance triathlon, run a half marathon, squatted and deadlifted 220 lbs, climbed a 12,000 foot-tall mountain, and battled through and overcome chronic illness. This body carries me through every day, functions as it needs, and allows me to continue on this journey.

When you find yourself falling back into the trap of negative self-image, you need to turn to self-love. Instead of focusing on the things you hate about your body, focus on what you love. Focus on the fact that the scale does not define your worth, that it is just an indication of progress. Focus on the fact that you are a loving, caring person, that you are generous and loyal, that you love unconditionally, and that you are an incredible friend. These are the traits that matter.

Whether you are working on yourself or are at your goal weight, you need to love yourself and love the journey of life. Your self-worth is not based upon a future number on the scale or a future body physique. You didn't put the weight on overnight, so you're not going to lose it overnight. There is no quick fix, no diet pill, and no surgery that is going to help you. What there is, is hard work, dedication, consistency, and persistence. If you don't go after what you want, you'll never have it. If you don't attempt something, you will never achieve it. If you don't step forward, you'll always be in the same place.

So it is time. I give you permission to put you and your health first because it is necessary. Prioritizing this will, in turn, make you a better mother, daughter, sister, aunty, or friend. There is greatness within you. If you continue the negative self-talk and shaming, you continue living an unhappy existence. You will never have enough, do enough, or be enough if you don't see yourself as enough. You are beautiful and your beauty is not based upon what your physique may look like in the future. Allow yourself to love yourself for who you are today whilst continually striving to be the best version of yourself there ever was.



TWEETABLE

Change your mind, change your life! Life is defined by the choices we make. It is your responsibility to take charge of your health.



Kate is a weight loss expert, a certified personal trainer, and founder and owner of Persistence Pays an online weight loss program for women. Her life's mission is to inspire and empower other people to achieve what she has. Above all, a weight loss journey requires persistence.

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CHAPTER 23

Healing From The Inside Out

by Vince Pena

I was brought up in a strict Hispanic (Puerto Rican), Catholic household in the '70s and '80s. I went to Catholic School, and every year we had to take two mandatory religion classes. Catholicism was engrained in my head for 12 agonizing years, putting everything I was “practicing” into a deep slumber along with my sexuality. You could say that I stored all my true beliefs in the back of the closet. Instead, I used my music as an outlet. As a flutist, music kept me alive and calm, and in some ways, in tune with Spirit. But, I was determined to be the good Catholic Puerto Rican boy my mother wanted me to be.

Now, at age 18 you really don't know any better. You just want to fit in somewhere. I decided that God was a questionable entity. Did He really exist? Was all the education about God I was fed a bunch of crap? At that moment, I became Agnostic, and all my intuitions were shut down. I didn't want to acknowledge anything that had to do with religion or spirituality.

I went through my early 20's stoic and living a life that wasn't true to me. I didn't major in music because the adults in my life (my mother, my teacher, etc.) all told me that I would never make enough money to live comfortably. I kept playing the flute, and I learned a trade. I became an accountant. Everything I learned about accounting was through on the job training. Because I was so good in math and very logical, I became a comptroller in a two year span. I worked for giant companies and handled millions of dollars for each. I made a very high salary and was able to buy everything I wanted.

All my life, I knew I was a gay man. I was always attracted to men, even as a child. In the 1980s, AIDS became prominent in the United States. When Rock Hudson died, the news of his homosexuality flooded the media, and his secret of having the AIDS virus devastated middle America. It came to the point that if you were gay or suspected of it, you were assumed to have AIDS. No one would talk to you. No one would hire you. No one would touch you. I made it a huge point to stay “in the closet.”

I married my best friend and college sweetheart. We bought a house together. All our friends were “straight.” Luckily, neither of us wanted children. I lived the life my mother and society wanted me to live. At 26, I denied my love for God, I denied my gift of intuition, and I denied my

sexuality. The only thing that kept me sane was my music. Even though I didn't pursue it as a full-time career, I was lucky to be hired throughout Los Angeles. I was playing in six orchestras at the same time, I was playing many private events, and I was hired for pickup orchestras. I was one of the busiest flutists in LA; along with having a full-time job as an accountant. As years passed, I noticed that my intuition was becoming strong again. I was hearing and seeing things that no one else could.

Through the years, my life became more complicated. I was never happy 100%. I was still in denial about being my true self. I would sabotage anything that was going well for me because I hated the life I was living. I left a job that paid almost \$100k a year and started working for a non-profit, making \$30k a year. That reduction of income later lost us our home. My wife and I split up. She moved to San Diego, and I stayed in Los Angeles. I worked for the Gay & Lesbian Center. I could live life as a gay man. But, I was still married, and no one from my past (wife, family, friends) knew of my other life. I was still not truthful to myself. I was still living a lie. I started to live a double life. I even had two Facebook accounts. One for my music colleagues and family and one for my new gay life, where I could be myself.

I was a very large 340 pounds. I came to realize that I put on the weight so I would not be attractive to anyone. Another self-sabotage. Along with some of my co-workers, I joined Weight Watchers. I love the program as it helps me to portion my food and eat clean. It also makes me responsible as I have to weigh in every week. I joined a gym going six days a week for 3-4 hours a day, but because of an injury to my left calf, I cut it down to four days per week. I lost 75 pounds.

With the weight loss, I noticed that people treated me differently. I was getting hit on a lot. And I was feeling a bit more confident, but I still wasn't completely happy. I still wasn't living my true self. All my gifts, including music, faltered. My intuitive gift would come out sometimes but then shut down instantly. I noticed that when I would see my future, the complete opposite would occur. Anytime I was attracted to someone, I would see us together and happy. But it would always turn out that he wasn't attracted to me and the outcome would be devastating. I know now that it was because I was still living a lie. Not ending my relationship with my wife and not letting my family know who I really was. That's how karma works. To be happy, you must be true to yourself and fully love yourself flaws and all!

In 2012, I encountered someone who, as soon as she walked through the door, opened my heart to Spirit. That one day would change my life completely. She was a clairvoyant and spiritual healer. She and I immediately became good friends. Through the years, she would introduce me to many people and teach me how to use my gift(s) to aid myself as

well as others. She taught me how to open my heart up to God and His Angels, giving them the power to guide me. Eventually, I went on my own and started practicing readings on friends. I was given two decks of Oracle Cards which I immediately connected to. The readings I was doing for my friends were always on point. I decided to try to do readings on myself. I noticed that the readings were always telling me to live my true self. When I started living my true self, I would genuinely be happy.

The first person I came out to was my mother. She knew. It was a huge weight lifted off my back. We reminisced about my childhood. How she would try to teach me how to walk like a man, with long steps. How she tried to teach me how to talk like a man, not to sound “whiny.” How she would slap my hands if I waved them too much when I spoke. She told me how she was afraid of me being gay and had a plan to travel to Tijuana, Mexico to buy male hormone pills and grind them up and put them into my food. But she had second thoughts, thinking that I would die from these drugs. All she cared about was my well-being and that I was happy. My mother is 86 years old. She comes from a time where people didn’t speak publicly about someone in their family who was a homosexual. They just ignored it and hoped it would go away. So, when I told her that I would tell who I wanted to know in the family, her immediate reaction was fear. Fear of what people would think. Fear of me being ridiculed. After a couple of conversations, she finally understood where I was coming from. To this day, the only people in my family who know about my sexuality are my sister and my godmother. Everyone else, I felt I didn’t have to inform because I’m not close to any of them whatsoever. But, I am free to come out to whomever I want.

The burden I still had on my shoulders was telling my wife. We had been separated for seven years, but she did not want to admit that our marriage was over. When you’re separated for that long, all things that were in common go away. At least, they did for me. She hung on to all the memories. She was still “in love” with me. I loved and still love her very much. I could not reciprocate the same love she had with me though. We still treated things as if we were a regular married couple. Money, debt, tax returns, articles we bought together, etc. We just lived 200 miles apart. Last year, she moved to Pasadena, just 20 minutes from where I live. This scared me to death as I felt she would come to my home at any time for a surprise visit.

Unbeknownst to her, I was living with three other gay men in a four-bedroom apartment, and I was involved in many gay community groups. Even though I blocked her from my “gay Facebook account,” she could see it via Google. Yes, when you Google someone and go to their Facebook link, you can see EVERYTHING, even if you are blocked from that person’s account. Well, she saw everything. She called me in tears, calling me a liar, a cheat, a fraud. I let her vent. And I did not fight back. Everything she said was the truth. I had

never felt so much pain in my entire life. I cried with her, but during that cry, I was finally feeling free. I was finally feeling like my true self. I wasn't only crying for her; I was crying tears of joy for me. Today, we are still married for insurance reasons, and she is still my best friend. I love her very, very much!

In 2015, my life changed completely again. I was traveling a lot to Florida to perform with the South Florida Symphony. It was a monthly travel for six months. Even though I was still practicing Weight Watchers, I treated my time in Florida like a vacation. In Fort Lauderdale, we were often housed in mini condos that had a kitchen. So I would go to the local market and buy healthy foods to cook. But I was also drinking a lot of coffee. When we were in Key West, we were on our own to find food. I would eat a lot of pizza and foods that I didn't eat at home. Little did I know that these few months would affect me in a way I never suspected in my entire life.

At home in Los Angeles, the day before my 50th birthday, some of my friends took me out for the day. We had breakfast and then we ended up at a bar that also served Mexican food. I am not a drinker. I would have maybe one drink, and I would never finish it. I don't like the taste of alcohol, and I don't like how it makes me feel. My friends ordered me a margarita. I was taking very short sips of it because I just wasn't feeling it. It was a very warm day. Half a margarita sip in, I started to feel very hot. The food was not tasting good to me at all. When I commented on the way I was feeling, someone said, "Maybe you should go to the bathroom and throw up. You may have food poisoning." I listened, and indeed, I threw up a lot! In the next hour, I threw up six times, each very violently. I was getting hotter and hotter, and I could feel my chest starting to burn. I told my friends that I wanted to go home. One of my friends drove me, and when we arrived, I started throwing up again. He called his aunt who happened to be a registered nurse. As he was giving her my symptoms, I started Googling the symptoms as well. I Googled food poisoning, alcohol poisoning, and other reasons for my symptoms. Then I heard my Spirit Guide tell me to Google heart attack. BOOM! There it was! I immediately yelled out, "I think I'm having a heart attack!"

My friend rushed me to the hospital. On the drive over my chest pain was worsening. It was unbearable. It felt like my chest was going to explode. When I arrived, they immediately wheeled me in and confirmed that yes, I was having a mild heart attack. I had immediate surgery to unclog my small artery. Everything else was fine. I woke up the next morning, my birthday. I was very uncomfortable with all of the weights they put on the surgical wound to keep it from rising. As I realized what happened, I started to cry. I couldn't believe something like this could ever happen to me, and on my 50th birthday! But then I heard my Spirit Guides talking to me, calming me down. At that moment, I thanked God for keeping me alive! I concluded that

I was not 50 years old. I was reborn and was given another chance to live the life I should've lived during my first 50 years. I was zero years old.

I made a promise that I would lead a better life. A life free of deception. A life of truth. A healthy life. A life to serve others in need. A life of imaginations coming true. A life of TRULY loving myself unconditionally. A life of being the true person I was born to be. From that moment, I have been living a life of light. I practice meditation every morning and thank my Higher Power for the gift of life. During meditation, I bring in the white light and push out any dark negative energies. I no longer work as an accountant. I have listened to the calls, and I am now an intuitive reader and healer. I am in love with an amazing man. Someone who understands me and has my back through all parts of life. Although I still struggle with weight, I eat healthy and try to exercise daily by walking. People always ask me, "If there is anything you could change about your past, what would it be?"

My answer is always, "Nothing! I am who I am today because of my past." It may sound as if it was difficult, but I survived it, and I am very happy being my true self today. Never let your past get you down. Learn from it. Embrace it. Whatever happens, "good" or "bad," it is always good. We learn from our past and move forward knowing what not to do again. You control your destiny. You control who you want to be. Let go of the fears and doubts. Take a deep breath, trust your heart, and believe.



TWEETABLE

"Guiding you back to the quests of the soul, through the realm within, by the guidance of the spirit of your soul."

– Vince Pena



Vince Pena is an Intuitive Reader and Spiritual Healer in Los Angeles, CA. He uses his Spirit Guides and Angels to tap into energies from the past, present and future to assist in the healing and balancing of one's life. He loves making music with his flute and enjoys the company of his close friends and family. Contact Vince at www.divineconcourse.com or by email: divineconcourse@gmail.com. Become a fan on Facebook at The Divine Concourse of Spiritual Awakenings for his live readings.

CHAPTER 24

Starting is Easy, Continuing is the Challenge

by Jackie VanCampen

In December 2014, I decided to go on a journey of physical transformation. I had been inspired by my sister who had been struggling with food allergies and decided to take her health into her own hands by completely changing her diet. She had to let go of many of the yummy things most of us get to have and take for granted. I figured if she could do it, so could I.

Although I wasn't struggling with my weight, I knew I could improve my diet and exercise by choosing to eat healthier foods and add a fitness routine to my day.

Two weeks later I was invited by a Facebook friend to join her health and fitness challenge group that focused on clean eating and exercising five days a week. I was reluctant since this was an online program, and I thought I probably wouldn't be able to hold myself accountable. But, I signed up anyway and began my journey.

I started with a 21-day fitness program and changed my diet as well to include healthier, clean, organic foods in addition to a meal replacement shake. Within 21 days, I had lost nearly 8 lbs., and my body shape was starting to change. I was so excited and feeling so good in my body and about myself. I felt a newfound confidence and started to share my transformational journey with anyone who would listen.

Before I knew it, I became a health coach and began running my own health and fitness challenge groups. My 2015 was shaping up, and I was feeling like I could do anything! Not only was my health coaching business growing, but so was my intuitive life coaching as well.

I realized that a fit body and mind helped me to stay active, energized, excited, and confident, which then helped me become more visible and attract more opportunities into my life. There was definitely a connection between health and fitness and being successful.

At one point, I had lost 18 lbs. and told myself that I had enough leeway to

play around with my diet. I gave myself enough room to take advantage of my new weight level and physique to start slacking a bit.

As 2016 rolled around, I had already gained 9 lbs. back, and I was ok with that. I was at my perfect weight, and I could still fit nicely in my skinny jeans.

However, that lackadaisical approach to my diet and fitness began to show. I wasn't as excited about my health and fitness business as I had been the year prior. I also wasn't as excited about exercising or eating 90% healthy.

As I declined in my nutrition and fitness, I began to notice a decline in other areas of my life. I began to feel misaligned with my body, mind, and soul. My team that I had built with so much passion began to reflect my steady decline. People started quitting or stopped showing up. I would get these bursts of excitement that were short-lived. I would make goals that I couldn't seem to be able to accomplish.

I began to lose the joy that I had once experienced.

Fast forward to December 2016. I found myself back at the original weight I was when I started my health and fitness journey, my businesses had slowed down, and I felt completely ungrounded, unmotivated, and very unsure of my future.

Eventually, I had a nervous breakdown which sent me into a tailspin of depression, hopelessness, and even having suicidal thoughts. I felt ashamed of where I was in my life—I had gotten myself into a lot of debt investing in my business to fill a hole of feeling not good enough; my marriage was rocky as my husband was also dealing with mild depression; I wasn't happy in my body; and I just felt like a total loser.

It was a tough month going through a rollercoaster of emotions. I was simply out of balance and out of rhythm with my own self. I dared not have any hope or dream or attempt to do anything in my business. I would get overwhelmed every time I tried to even remotely allow myself to dream or set goals.

By the end of the month, I knew I had to do something, otherwise my kids would not have a mom. I decided to get back on my spiritual practice, meditate, and allow a few people to help me get through one of my darkest times emotionally and mentally.

By January, I began to feel more hopeful and grounded. I began to dream again and set goals. Small steps at a time.

I also knew I had to start incorporating fitness and a healthier diet back into my routine. My body was awakening from a slumber, and it really did not want to be engaged in high-intensity cardio or heavy lifting. It really wanted

yoga. Funny thing is, I hated yoga! I had a bad experience years ago, and since then I never wanted to try it again. But, I listened to my body and gave it a go.

I found a yoga program that was for beginners and very gentle. I fell in love with the way yoga made me feel both inside and out. I felt so much more grounded and my mind so much more relaxed. It was truly a blessing!

Things in my life began to blossom again. My relationship with my husband strengthened because we were both committed to making it work by working on ourselves. I developed a soul-purpose mentoring program to help women go through their own self-discovery and healing process which will culminate in a book where they will share their journey; I started my Goddess Healing Circles where I get to bring my gifts of healing and intuition to facilitate deep transformation in women's lives; and I'm on my way to shedding those pounds that slowly made their way back onto my body due to my poor choices.

In hindsight, when I look at my health and fitness journey, I can see that fitness is not just a physical concept. You need to be fit in body, mind, and spirit. When one area is out of alignment, all areas will get affected sooner or later. I also realized that my nervous breakdown became one of my greatest benefits, as it offered a front seat into myself and to see where in my life I needed to make shifts. It was a spiritual awakening of sorts, and a reminder that I am an energy being having a human experience.

Now, I'm back at waking up at 5:15 a.m. on weekdays to get in my hour of chanting and doing my spiritual practice, followed by 30-minutes or more of doing my workouts. And after my kids are off to school, I sit down and meditate and journal. That's my formula for having a winning day.

I also make sure that I have a supportive community around me for those days when I may not be feeling my greatest, and they can remind me that I'm good enough just as I am and my life has value.

Getting started once you set your mind to it is easy, but it's in the challenge of continuing it that growth happens. As I continue to evolve, shed old skins, and grow new ones, I know that my health journey is a choice I have to make every day and that there will always be peaks and valleys, ebbs and flows, and challenges to overcome. It's in the awareness and being present to what's happening within that I get to choose how every day will be. And I choose to be healthy—no matter what. You get to choose that, too, if you want.



TWEETABLE

Getting started once you set your mind to it is easy, but it's in the challenge of continuing it that growth happens. Jackie VanCampen #LBBF



Jacqueline (Jackie) VanCampen is the author of Letters to My Daughter: A Mother's Journey of Healing and Transformation and other works. She is an Intuitive life coach and energy healer, motivational writer and speaker, NLP and Timeline Practitioner, and founder of Wise Heart Within. Jackie is also an independent Beachbody coach helping women get healthy, get fit, and fall in love with their bodies.

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CHAPTER 25

How I Became Dragan Slayer

by Dragan Trajkovski

They call me Dragan Slayer. Actually, legally, most call me Dragan, and I am just a small town boy living a childhood dream.

LISTEN TO ME NOW.

One of the most important lessons I've learned is motive does matter. The intent of my story is to help you become even greater than what you are already capable of. You can do, be, have, or create whatever you commit to. Not want. Commit. There is a huge difference between wanting and committing. I'm committed to helping you get your result, so let's get started.

I get statements like this quite often.... You are so confident. You are so well-spoken. You have this beautiful radiating light and energy, this strength and power, but also a childlike characteristic about you.

Listen up! It's not always been that way, not even close, but I've trained and conditioned myself to be this way today, and I don't intend to ever stop. My hope is that I will leave an impression on you that will help you realize how when you commit to anything and follow a few simple principles, you too can make massive changes in your life.

I went by David Trajkovski up until 19 years old. I was born and raised in Gary/Merrillville, Indiana by blue collar, factory, steelworking, immigrant parents with a middle school education from Macedonia. They were old school, head down, work hard, small-minded parents who always did the best they could with the best they had. It wasn't always easy, but we always found a way.

Today, it feels like I'm living in a movie, a movie I wrote, because I live right on Hollywood Boulevard in Hollywood, California at the iconic Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel and am in the process of moving to New York City and then Miami. That's just this year.

I share this not to impress, but to impress on you that at one point I had no clue Hollywood was even an actual town. I am confident you too can write, direct, and star in the movie called your life or just make some massive shifts and progress with this information..

For the past seven years, I have been living all across the country, relocating every four months. I have been trained by the nation's foremost authority on the psychology of peak performance and personal, professional, and business turnaround, Tony Robbins. He is a legend who has been doing this work for four decades. Being one of only six hand-selected speakers and trainers in this space has been a wild and fulfilling ride.

I've now worked with, spoken to, trained, and consulted over 300+ companies per year, in total easily 2000+. I've had the honor and privilege to work with companies like ESPN, Salesforce, Wynn Hotels, Slack, Discovery Channel, New York Life, and Wells Fargo, and hundreds of other well-known companies.

Proudly and humbly, I am now one of the most successful and longest-ever tenured senior peak performance strategists with the living legend Tony Robbins who has constantly and sustainably performed at the highest levels alongside the top business and personal development organizations on the planet.

If it wasn't for fitness, I could not perform, have the energy, vitality, or confidence to go out and inspire others to become their very best.

If you are anything like me, you've experienced both of the two types of patterns. My health has swung from busted pants, being 35 lbs. larger than I've ever been, feeling absolutely depressed and self-conscious of about what my body looked like and using food as an addiction and distraction. I've ripped a belt or two. I've looked in the mirror and become completely upset by how my waistline was showing in my shirt. I've stared in the mirror at my body in absolute disgust, calling myself names that are not appropriate for writing, and still, nothing changed. Listen, I've been at the point where the diet starts tomorrow, where, even though I just committed the day before, I'm sitting devouring whole boxes of ice cream bars.

And I've been on the other side: feeling energetic, happy, sticking to my meal plans, training regularly, feeling confident when I step into a room, getting compliments on my body and overall presence, looking good, feeling sexy, and with unstoppable confidence.

Winners or losers, fit or fat, financially abundant or financially scarce, emotionally resourceful or emotionally unresourceful, intelligent thinking or unintelligent thinking, and almost all other results in your life are based on a set of standards, morals, rituals, values, or patterns that are driven by your internal software programming called your beliefs and emotions. Patterns are the constant autopilot actions you take, whether you're aware or unaware.

I just want to be upfront and honest with you. I'm here because I embody and live one master principle in life.

THE TRAINING NEVER ENDS.

In my last 13 years of intense immersion in the practice of personal and business development, my whole adult life now, I know this to be true: you and I can only control a few things and everything else we have little or no control over. If you only train, condition, work on, focus on, and execute the things you CAN control and nothing else, your whole life will instantly change.

There are certain patterns to success and failure in all areas of our lives. Training gives meaning to these patterns. You build an emotional feeling of interconnectedness to propel you to continue what is working and stop what isn't working. When we stop executing the actions we must take to succeed, we fail. Almost always these actions are simple and easy to understand.

As a speaker, serial entrepreneur, business owner, and buyer and seller of business, I'm always on the go. Constantly changing routines makes it difficult to maintain my health, but I still know I have control over what I choose to put in or not put in my body. There is no better feeling in the world than when I feel lean, trim, energetic, and muscular. Nothing tastes as good as healthy and fit feels.

Life can be simple, but we tend to overcomplicate it. The choices we make and the actions we take form the results in our lives. No matter your situation, there are only a few simple activities you need to achieve your desired results. If you do them very well and enough times, while also eliminating your biggest challenges and potential challenges, you will be on track to have great results.

Here is the best news you will hear today.

Just as I can control certain things in my life, you can control them too! Control what you can control even in the midst of all of life's chaos and the world is your oyster.

So what can you control?

You know the work, the grind, the difficult stuff, the stuff that makes the difference in your life. The most important of these is your emotions and the meaning you attribute to anything taking place in your life.

But why do most not control what they can control? Because of the OLD, OUTDATED, two-million-year-old mental and emotional wiring program running and directing your current life's movie!

You know the same reason why almost everyone has access to similar strategies, know what exercises to do and food to eat yet still fall short. It's the proper or improper way of preconditioned and current training and conditioning of mental and emotional patterns running the show of the meaning and feelings you experience in life. That proper or improper training is a direct reflection of everything you have and what the rest of every aspect of your life will be like.

Most of the time you are running on autopilot based on your past training. I mean, think about it. How many times do you leave work, school, or even the gym, and when you get home you have no clue how you got there!?

How many times have you had something that should only take two hours of your day turn into four, into eight, into the whole day? Valuable time at home or at work evaporates into thin air. You're getting little to nothing done, you've created more work, and you most definitely could perform at much higher levels.

Here is the thing, though...

If you don't know that you don't know, then you don't know that you don't know.

Let me say that again so it sinks in.

If you don't know that you don't know, then you don't know that you don't know.

Most of the time, we are running unconscious programming of our emotional patterns and mental conversations we have with ourselves based on our training.

Let me ask you this, where and when did you sign up for that gym? Where and how are you following the specific workout to train that behavior? How often are you doing it and how often are you tracking your magnificent or contradicting workout regimens?

Listen, I am guilty of it too. And listen, it's not your fault. And lastly, most importantly, you are not broken in any way, shape, or form, and you DO NOT need any fixing.

Here is what you do need. You need to control what you can control. You need to control a new type of training. You must identify your internal roadblocks and the mental inner conflicts and resolve the incongruences to get you to your desired outcome. Today, your results in your health, bank account, career, and even relationships are based on this one huge factor.

Health and fitness is congruency. Your actions and patterns must be in line

with your desired outcomes. When this training takes place and you develop this identity, you have a powerful tool for pushing past resistance and lifting off the weights of life.

We all have to face tons of resistance and external influences that affect our reactions, which affect the decisions we make, which will determine our actions, or lack of actions, and our results.

Resistance will try to knock you off track again and again and again, and again, but the training to be stronger than resistance never ends.

This is the method I have developed for maintaining peak performance in all areas of my life, including fitness. There are four steps.

Outcome

First, what is the outcome or result you are committed to? Not want, but are committed to. Be specific. What's the feeling, the emotion, the result of your result, and what will that result look and feel like? Who else will be impacted by that result? Starting with the outcome makes getting the results easier and helps remove most unnecessary, commonly taken actions. From there, it's a reverse engineering process. You work backwards from your desired outcome to figure out what steps you have to take each month, each week, each day, each moment to reach that goal.

Strategy

Second, develop a specific strategy. Or better yet, find the person, resource, blueprint, or training program of the person who's already got the result you've committed to. The truth is, all the resources you need already exist. This book, personal trainers, coaches, programs, seminars, and YouTube. The strategy you need and your plan of action are out there. Find them and organize them for you. It's never about resources. It's always about your ability to be resourceful during the execution of your proper strategy and training.

Action

Third, take action! With your specific and measurable key actions, behaviors, metrics, restrictions, rules, it's time to DO. In your actions, contemplate how you can commit to finding a way to honor your body with proper nutrition and proper exercise. Find what excuses or lack of actions were not taking you towards the progress and betterment of your body, emotions, beliefs, and values. It's not about the execution. It's about your commitment and your standards. It's all about the investment you make and what you're doing. Everything you do is an investment.

Training

Lastly, and most importantly, is your training. Train your mental and emotional muscles. Change your identity. You will never ever outwork, out train, or outperform your current training. That is why this step cannot be overlooked. Training and conditioning these new patterns and integrating them so they are part of who you are is how you will change your life.

Here is what I can tell you, in order for things to change, things must change.

We all go through very similar challenges, and decisions, and choices we have to make, even if you're thinking you're the only one experiencing what you're experiencing. That's why your training will be a direct reflection of how big of a blockbuster movie your life becomes. Make it OUTSTANDING.

Now you are going through a book filled with outstanding asskickers, amazing strategies, amazing actions plans, and amazing stories of people. You will see through their stories how their identities shifted and how their most current, up-to-date training program of mental-emotional software creates the field for their continued success. You are a creator, and right now you have created every area of your life based on a few things you can control. If you're not controlling them, they are controlling you.

It's time to create a new life. Focus on your desired outcome, find your strategy, take action, and train until you become that training. Write your movie the way you want it!



TWEETABLE

You will never ever outearn, out train, or outsell your belief system. Make the patterns you need part of who you are to change your life.



Dragan Trajkovski is one of six of Tony Robbins most senior trainers and speakers and has worked with over 2000 companies as a national speaker, trainer, and consultant. As co-owner of multiple businesses, he can look at any business, dead in the water or looking to scale up, and identify the best strategy for growth and success. To inquire about speaking and business consultations, contact Dragan at:

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CHAPTER 26

Contagious Wellness

by Donna Krech

Everyone knows sickness is contagious. I believe we can make wellness contagious! What if I told you that a disappointment is a divine appointment? And what if I told you that, related to health, your divine appointment is to BE contagious? Think about the disappointing things that have happened to you in health, weight loss, fitness, aging, etc. I'm about to prove to you it's all happened for your benefit because it's all a part of your story.

I was told I might die. A memory that will be forever burned into my brain is my children sitting with me as I told them. I was so weak I couldn't operate a can opener. I was so exhausted I could barely lift my head. The pain that ran through my body was indescribable. I missed a LOT of things that mattered to me. I had to say no to family time, events where help was needed, church functions, and travel. I vividly remember lying on my couch, sobbing, knowing I was missing time with people I wanted to be with, but also because the thoughts running through my mind were, "Is this it? Am I really dying? Are these years all I get? Have I made these years matter?" As tears poured, my body felt like I was 90, and my spirit felt a heaviness I want no one to experience, ever. I felt beaten. I was in a state of illness, followed by depression, that I can't find words for.

Then one day I said, "No! God's not done with this gal yet! This isn't going to get me!" As I researched plans to regain my health, I got worse. The whisper in my mind was trying to convince me I was dying, and there was nothing I could do about it. What a lie! I stated that, believed it, and kicked the plan into gear.

The journey was FAR more than just difficult, but the last time we checked, my labs were amazing! The doctor told me I looked incredible. She said she would never have believed I'd come back like that. I knew I felt great, but when she told me my results, I cried right there in front of her. I left walking on air! I'd been told I had 100% damage to key bodily functions and organs. I'd been told all my labs and symptoms indicated multiple autoimmune diseases. I'd been told my adrenals were so burnt out that adrenal failure was next. Adrenal failure equals death. I'd never been through anything that caused me to be so scared and certainly nothing that caused me to face death.

Now I have, and the story is changing lives. It's making wellness **CONTAGIOUS**. Stress was the root culprit behind my suffering. Too many of us are unknowingly, yet literally, dying from stress. It's causing unexplained weight gain, inability to lose weight, and a plethora of diseases that no one is telling you are tied to stress. Some say, "Donna, you share too much. You can't help everyone." But, the disappointment of me being a fitness and weight loss business expert and then becoming so sick I was told I might die was a divine appointment to teach the world! So, I **WON'T** be quiet! This is a story worth telling and a message worth sharing. **THIS IS CONTAGIOUS WELLNESS!**

Because of what I went through, today my team and I teach people how to get rid of stress and balance hormones. They end up losing up to 20 pounds in 30 days and report getting rid of high blood pressure, headaches, night sweats, hot flashes, and insomnia. They report their blood sugar stabilizes, acid reflux is eliminated, joint pain and inflammation disappear. It's **AMAZING!**

I cannot say we cure anything. What I can do is share my story and the stories of real people who've struggled with the disappointment of poor health, weight gain, or both, who have now gotten real results! And research proves, when people share their story, it not only helps others achieve the same benefits but also makes that person's benefits more likely to stick. **400% MORE LIKELY** as a matter of fact! Let me repeat: when you share your story of going from disappointment to victory, it increases **YOUR** likelihood of maintaining victory, by **400%**!

I'd gone through every test, poke, prod, scan, and X-ray, but couldn't figure out what was wrong. God designed our bodies to live in homeostasis and, I learned from our expert, if we stay there, we'll just sail right through life. We'll get older, but not feel or look old. If you have a health issue, the line, "It's because you're getting older," is **NOT** true! We're supposed to feel fantastic until the day we leave this earth. But nobody tells us this, and nobody tells us how simple it is!

Eventually, we figured out I was experiencing adrenal burnout. It had been adrenal exhaustion, and the next phase was death. My background is fitness. I believed exercise fixed everything. I always thought the answer to anything was, "Just move." But, I was in so much pain, I couldn't move. I just knew exercise fixed everything, so, I would attempt to, at least, walk. It took 20 minutes to get to the mailbox and then I'd have to sit down. If I did somehow gain enough strength to jog, I would be down flat for 2 1/2 days. That pattern repeated so often I became afraid to exercise because the symptoms would increase. My suffering escalated with exercise. My brain was foggy. I couldn't cope with stress anymore. My skin looked like I was

90. My hair was falling out in chunks. I'd wake in the middle of the night and stay awake for 2-3 hours. I was anxious, and my body felt like it was on fire! I tried not to talk about how afraid I was, but the more it went on, the more fear came out.

Well, I started working with a stress hormone expert, after learning that my symptoms could be tied to my adrenals. That expert saved my life. Today, he's a key part of what we do. Now, this next statement always shocks people.... I've been in weight loss and fitness for over 30 years, and I absolutely hate weight loss! Our original programs worked but didn't give enough people a truly permanent lifestyle change, and I was ticked about that! I was on a mission to figure out a lifestyle solution for our members. I knew fast losses were popular, but I'd always been trained that was dangerous, would slow metabolism, and destroy muscle.

When you go through our program, you see muscle mass doesn't go down, and health issues are resolved. That's what I wanted, a fast loss that was safe. Hormones were trending, so I'd already begun working with a sex hormone expert. We'd worked with world-class psychologists on mindset, and dietitians on nutrition, for years.

Here's that "disappointment, divine appointment" realization. I started working with a stress hormone expert because of my adrenals. If I hadn't gotten so sick, I wouldn't be able to offer the permanent solution we offer now. I feel like I'm 21 years old again! I got all my energy and strength back. I've now lived through what our members live through. And we now have a business model that is transforming the fitness industry and even provides success to all wellness-related businesses. We are a TOTAL lifestyle solution!

I did beat myself up with thoughts like, "I'm in fitness. How the heck could I get to the point where my adrenals are going to fail, and I'm going to die? How could that even happen?" It was ALL stress. When stress goes up, cortisol rises. Cortisol can only reach a certain point then it starts stealing from sex hormones, which means all hormones get out of whack. But cortisol will reach a cap where it can't steal anymore. That's where I was. If cortisol plummets, you're headed toward no adrenal function. And with that, you're dead. The symptoms I describe meant my body was shutting down. It was dying. If I hadn't gone through what I went through with my health, and if I hadn't been so ticked off about weight loss as a business, we wouldn't be where we are today. We wouldn't have this program that helps so many people or this model that's adding \$1,000,000 a year to businesses that help those people.

Maybe you've had disappointments. Maybe you've lost weight and regained

it, can't lose, are dealing with health issues, or just can't seem to get the healthy lifestyle thing down. I propose these things have been allowed to occur so you could end up here. You see, when you've been through these things, and you BEAT them, you tell others. And, remember, when you tell others of your success, you are 400% MORE LIKELY to maintain that goal! Hmm...looks like your disappointment IS a divine appointment. A divine appointment to be CONTAGIOUS!



TWEETABLE

We all know sickness is contagious. I believe WELLNESS can be contagious! #contagiouswellness



The go-to expert on producing wealth from wellness, Donna Krech is a bestselling author and international speaker with a 30+ year track record of building multi-million dollar companies in the weight loss and fitness industries. She's lived the American dream and is an expert at teaching others to do the same. Her passionate message, proven success methods, and result-producing programs have led audiences in 94 countries to hail her as a thought leader, business builder, and life changer.

www.FaceBook.com/2030FastTrackPlan

www.AddAMillionFromContagiousWellness.com

CHAPTER 27

From Addiction to Self-Care

by Kyle Wilson

Growing up, I struggled off and on with my weight. I was a good athlete and very active, but I seemed to always be challenged with overeating. Eating seemed to be there for me when I was bored, sad, happy, traveling, and of course, celebrating.

At age 28, I found myself entering the world of personal development. I went to work for a speaker as a sales rep. I learned to make calls to book myself to go into companies to speak and then sell tickets to a local seminar. I got pretty good at it. Eventually, I went out on my own and started my own company and began doing larger events, eventually traveling around the country doing 2000-3000 person events and having speakers like Jim Rohn, Brian Tracy, and Og Mandino as the headliners.

That led me to launch Jim Rohn International in 1993 (and my 18-year partnership with my friend and mentor, the amazing Jim Rohn) and Your Success Store in 1997. I became the agent for multiple speakers, created 100's of bestselling books and CD and video programs, put on and filmed large events, helped start two personal development TV networks, co-authored *Chicken Soup for the Entrepreneurs Soul* and built a million-plus email customer list between all my companies.

Immersed in all the amazing personal development tools and being mentored by Jim Rohn and others, I found myself succeeding in so many areas of life—except my health. I was still addicted to food and overeating.

I've read about every diet book and been on just about every diet. I've lost and gained back hundreds of pounds. The feelings of shame, guilt, helplessness, and being incongruent kept mounting.

In 2007, I sold all my companies and retired and became a Mr. Mom. The plan also included getting my health in great shape. Well, it never happened. Priority-wise, my spiritual walk, family, and business were my top priorities. Health was a hope, but I was missing a key piece.

I got the itch and started back in 2013 doing coaching, speaking and working with speakers and authors. In 2014, my good friend Kim Somers Egelsee did an event launch in LA for my new company, Lessons From

Network. At the event were some soon-to-be new and special friends I met through Kim, including Jeanette Ortega and Jackie VanCampen. Through Kim, Jeanette, and Jackie, I was introduced to and given new tools I had never experienced before including meditation and how to truly connect with your heart and spirit. The concept of self-love and self-care were at the core.

They helped me confront fears and areas I had been closed off from. Although I had been in personal development for over 20 years and had super success from a business standpoint, I had neglected the most important thing, my own self-care.

If you had asked me if I loved myself, I would have said yes. But I was so closed off and shut down in so many areas that I couldn't see the forest for the trees. I was committed to my family, my spiritual walk, and business success, but not my own self-care.

Not long after meeting Kim, Jeanette, and Jackie, I had the honor to meet and work with Phil Collen, the lead guitar player for Def Leppard. Phil is vegan and sober 28 years now. He is an MMA fighter and in AMAZING physical shape. We spent three days filming, and each day he would treat me to a vegan meal. We've since done many things together as friends including him doing a private mastermind at my house for my Inner Circle Mastermind and also letting us come back stage to the last six Def Leppard concerts in Dallas and LA. Phil is not only a rock star musician, he is a rock star in health and fitness, personal development, and as a human being. Phil allowed me to see a whole new level of commitment and energy related to health and fitness.

Shortly after my meeting with Phil, I was invited to go skiing with a couple of long-time good friends in my personal development world, Darren Hardy and John Assaraf. John, a huge wine connoisseur, had just become vegan and stopped drinking. Darren, who is in amazing shape, had given up bread for life. They both were full of energy, health, and vitality. I was self-conscious for sure as I was trying to fit into my ski pants and jacket.

I'm starting to get the message. My being overweight is becoming less and less acceptable. Because of business success and being an all around good guy and promoter, I had been given a pass for a long time.

But now, out of love, respect, and a commitment to having powerful associations and accountability, I've started being called out more often and stronger!

I'm blessed to be surrounded with personal influences like Phil, John, Darren and many more amazing people like my Inner Circle members Colonel Tim Cole, Kelli Calabrese, Erika De La Cruz, Dragan, and of course, my

good friend and partner on this book, the amazing Jeanette Ortega! People committed to their self-care and health in mind, body, and spirit.

I'm still in the process of getting to my ideal weight. And I say process because I'm done with diets.

Now it's about giving myself the gift of self-love, self-care, and nourishing my body, mind, and soul. The rest will take care of itself.

It's also about the amazing community I'm blessed to be part of, the loving, caring example they set in word and deed, and the roadmap to health and vitality they support me in that impact me now like never before.

I love what my mentor Jim Rohn says (and it applies to relationships, skills, money, and yes, health), "Start from wherever you are and with whatever you've got. It's the direction more than the destination that matters."

I'm honored to share my story among all these other amazing contributors. My hope is that my story or one of the others will make an indelible impression on you in a powerful way. I look forward to hearing from you and how this book made an impact!

Much love, Kyle

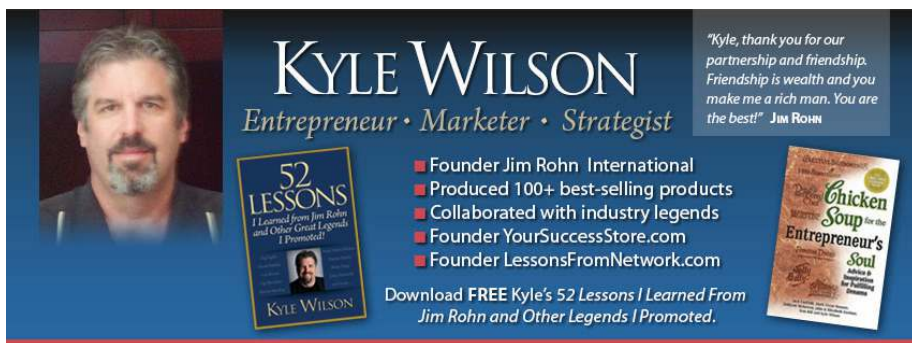


TWEETABLE

It's not about diets anymore. Now it's about giving myself the gift of self-love, self-care, and to nourish my body, mind, and soul.



Kyle Wilson, Founder of Jim Rohn International, YourSuccessStore, LessonsFromNetwork.com and KyleWilson.com. Kyle has filled big event rooms, produced 100's of programs, including titles by Jim Rohn, Brian Tracy, Zig Ziglar, Denis Waitley and recently the books Passionistas and Little Black Book of Fitness. Kyle leads the Kyle Wilson Inner Circle Mastermind and The Kyle Wilson Mentoring Group and is the author of 52 Lessons I Learned from Jim Rohn and Other Great Legends I Promoted! Go to KyleWilson.com/connect to download Free books and audios and to connect on social media.

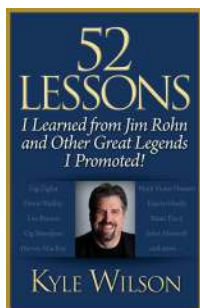


KYLE WILSON
Entrepreneur • Marketer • Strategist

"Kyle, thank you for our partnership and friendship. Friendship is wealth and you make me a rich man. You are the best!" **JIM ROHN**

- Founder Jim Rohn International
- Produced 100+ best-selling products
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- Founder YourSuccessStore.com
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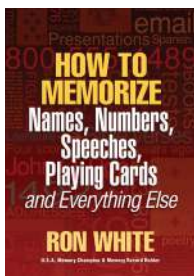
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Kyle shares Lessons he has learned from collaborations with Legend Jim Rohn as well as Brian Tracy, Darren Hardy, Jeffrey Gitomer, Les Brown, Og Mandino, Denis Waitley and more!

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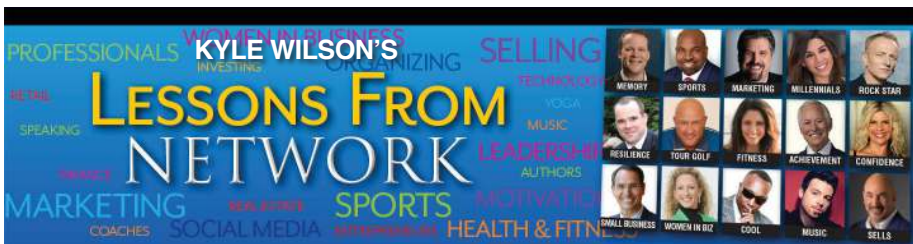
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A Community Connecting Life and Business Experts with the Marketplace!

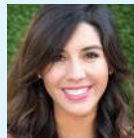
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Darren Hardy
Productivity Secrets of Super Achievers



Erika De La Cruz
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Delatorro McNeal
*Crush the Stage
Explode Your Income*



Seth Mosley
Parents Basement to Winning a Grammy



Nick Bradley
Habits of a Champion



Roy Smoothe
You Are Your Brand



Vic Johnson
Become the Celebrity Authority



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About the Author

Jeanette Ortega is a fitness expert, celebrity trainer, fitness cover model, two-time bestselling author, certified Life Coach, Yogi, Speaker, Creator of her own method Bootoga®, and owner of her own gym, Extreme Results Fitness. She offers online training courses and loves everything about being of service for the greater good. She is a true humanitarian who has traveled to Belize to serve on Ambassador Shabazz's delegation (Malcolm X's daughter), to help guide underprivileged children, adults, and women in prison in search of peace and love in their mind, body, and soul. She has also served locally, in LA, the lovely women of Freehab (The Teen Project's FREEHAB (free-rehab) Life Transformation Center) with her method Bootoga®.

She has been asked numerous times, "How did you get started in health and fitness?"

Her answer:

Always winning the jump rope contests but never able to climb the rope all the way up to the top during fitness tests in school. There was an imbalance in my physical abilities which showed an even bigger imbalance in my mindset. Little did I know, this elementary school girl would become a pioneer and expert for change and transformation not only on the physical level but from the inside out.

She became a WBFF Fitness Bikini Pro, competed on and off for 10 years against some of the most elite physiques and athletes on the planet and then, one day, turned into a yogi zen babe that loves meditation, peace, soul development, and following her life purpose for a much greater, worldwide reach.

She was in search of something deeper, a purpose, a passion, a longing, yet not realizing that her answer was inside. She looked externally for answers when all along it was within her, and when it was time for discovery, what a magnificent soul journey it became. It has been one wild ride that took her through some deep valleys into the most glorious highs of splendor and joy. She is a woman who stands for everyone to live the life of their dreams, to own the beauty of who they are from the inside out, and never apologize for their uniqueness and worth. She is, "Fitness from the Inside Out," and she's proud to share her story with all of you.

Are you ready to become a champion for change? Are you ready to create the lifestyle of the Wellness Warrior?



I hope that you have been inspired, moved and ready to take action in your life as these Wellness Warriors have done so in theirs.

I would like to encourage you to take your next step into your health and fitness journey.

I've created an amazing community and course to get you started and inspired for where you want to go. I'd like to invite you to my 6 week online course; Champions for Change in Mind, Body and Soul.

In this 6 week course, I will take you through Bootoga® movements and mindset modules focusing on freeing yourself from fear into faith and you also receive a FREE audio meditation download from me all about peace and love. Let's get you started!

Go to: JeanetteOrtega.com/Champions