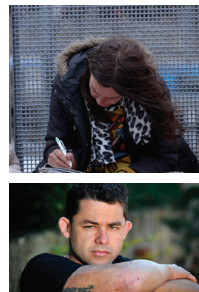


MINDSET
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RESILIENCE

Building a Powerful Mindset



*Stories transform lives. If we all share these forward,
together we can change the world.*

SUSAN DEAN



RESILIENCE

Building a Powerful Mindset

FEATURING
**14 INSPIRING
AUTHORS**



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I thank each and every one of these amazing authors who shared their personal journey, their knowledge and their life lessons. They do this in such a selfless way; to be able to help and teach others through their own personal journey, so that we the readers, can learn, grow and shift our mindsets.

Even if just one of these stories can touch someone's life, to educate or awaken another to be grateful for what they have, to become a better person, or to shift their mindset in a positive way - then we have all achieved our outcome.

We can change the world one story at a time. The honesty, vulnerability, courage and generosity shared by the YSHIFT authors in this extraordinary book of true stories is truly inspirational.

Thank you to my family and friends and my beautiful daughters Chloe and Monique for all their love and support. A special thank you to my amazing husband Michael who has always believed in me and my dreams and supported me in more ways that one could ever image.

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A special thank you to Michael Hanson (www.humanizeyou.com) who brought my story to life through film and to the beautiful Aroha Moore who plays the little star feature role and the lovely street artist who allowed us to film her.

To all the readers and YSHIFT members who all play a vital role in sharing forward these amazing stories, inspiring others to join the YSHIFT Movement, so together we can change the world.

Susan Dean



This book is dedicated to all the people in the world who feel stuck, who may feel that no one understands them, or someone who is looking for inspirational or educational stories.

Know that there is a lot of love out there in the world, you just need to make a shift, believe in yourself, take action and never give up!

Yshift? Because if you stay where you are, you're not growing.

INTRODUCTION

Stories transform lives. How do I know? I've seen it happen time and time again. Just one meaningful and inspirational true story can and *does* change lives. Maybe it's your story that would have a profound impact on someone? Or maybe someone else's story will deeply impact you?

Our authors all have one goal in common: to *share forward* their teachings, in order to help others. It's the old saying 'If I can do it, then so can you.'

No one likes to be told what to do and often people feel misunderstood. Well-meaning friends and family may offer help but unless someone has experienced a similar circumstance, to truly connect and understand can have its limitations. Often, another person (even if they're a stranger) who has 'been-there-and-done-that'; someone who has gone through a similar experience and come out the other side, can be that beacon of hope. Often these unsung heroes inspire, empower and shift others through the power of their personal story. This is where I have discovered that the power of story - if shared forward- can change the world.

Personal stories of some of the world's most renown people, such as: Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, Helen Keller, Steve Jobs, Albert Einstein, Anne Frank, Aung San Suu Kyi and Malala Yousafzai have had a deep impact globally. They inspire millions with their individual story of courage and vision.

But we're not all made like Nelson Mandela or Mother Teresa - and we're not supposed to be. We are unique. We each have our own story, our own life experiences, challenges, dreams and adversities.

I've come to know that the world is full of ordinary people with extraordinary stories and abilities. People whose life may have been affected by tragedy, or challenged beyond the norm. People whose story and mindset is a testament to the human spirit that resides in each and every one of us.

I began this series because I believe in the power of story. I believe that every person has something they can share with others. Whether it's the secret of resilience, the power of self-belief or the ability to evoke passion and purposeful living. There is a jewel within everyone.

The authors in the YSHIFT series are all real people, telling you their story in *their* own words. These stories aren't sensationalised or manipulated for the reader. Instead, unlike a lot of multi-media platforms these days, the YSHIFT stories are told in a simple, candid way. A real and congruent way. These stories are about triumph over tragedy, building resilience from the inside-out, overcoming insurmountable odds and fully embracing your passion, purpose and life! These stories are about living life to the full...against any obstacle.

The beauty of this series is that the openness of each author doesn't stop at the end of their chapter. In fact, the entire idea of this series is that you, the reader, can connect with any of these authors. You can contact them, learn more about them, find out more about their products or services or simply drop them a line to say 'Thank you for sharing your story'.

We also offer you an invitation to join the Interactive YSHIFT Library, where we continue to share with you powerful life-enriching stories on health, wealth, relationships, mindset, spirituality, business and more. This library will include additional videos, audios, images, helpful tips, contacts and more.

So, join us in sharing forward these extraordinary stories; a shift for one – if shared – can equal a shift for many.

Your Share-it-Forward Teachings

www.yshift.global

SUSAN DEAN

Founder and CEO of YSHIFT





TWICE UNLUCKY... or JUST LUCKY?

BRAD GUY



BRAD GUY

Brad Guy has a story that most people cannot believe.

Brad, a 22-year-old young man in the prime of his life, notoriously out-going and gregarious, was celebrating a belated birthday present; a thrill-seeking tandem skydive.

In what can only be described as a 'freak accident', Brad and his instructor's parachute failed to open properly – not once...but twice! The reserve chute got tangled in the first. With both parachutes failing they circled furiously in the air like two rag dolls in a treacherous vortex, plunging 14,000 feet to the ground at 80kmph.

What are the odds of surviving a freefall from a plane 14,000 feet in the air? That is the equivalent of free falling from half of Everest. Well... they did survive – only just; but not without trauma and injury; both physical and mental. A broken spine and torn neck were Brad's physical scars; severe depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were his unseen scars.

Brad went from a fun-loving, carefree young man to an introverted recluse, silently battling the dark throes of physical pain and emotional scarring.

With a deep dose of family love and intense personal counselling Brad slowly fought back to reclaim a 'new life'. A life that wasn't like the old one, for that had died with the accident, but nevertheless a new life with a new perspective.

Using his natural sense of humour and great love for comedy and showmanship, Brad revitalised his heart and mind through the medium of YouTube by creating his own hilarious videos. Medicine comes in many forms, and for Brad humour was the remedy that outlasted his painkillers.

A grateful survivor, Brad has fought through countless demons and taken life with gusto, he now inspires others to do the same. A videographer for commercial radio mogul FOX FM and an inspiring author, Brad's future is looking brighter than ever.

Brad's isn't just a guy with an amazing story of survival, he is a dynamic and authentic public speaker and a passionate advocate for 'talking and reaching out'. He speaks to groups from all different walks of life on the topics of: living life to the full after trauma, self-acceptance, sexual identity in a modern world, happiness and depression. He is an educator on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and teaches others the valuable and life-changing skill of openly communicating.

YOU HAVE SUCH A MIND-BLOWING STORY BRAD. THOUGH IT MAY BE DIFFICULT, WOULD YOU MIND TELLING US ABOUT THAT HARROWING DAY?

Something about that day didn't feel quite right. I had a sickly nervous feeling for hours prior. I wondered if I was just feeling scared about the jump. Being a self-confessed thrill-seeker I contemplated these unfamiliar feelings for a while.

Yes, I was an adrenaline-lover and found fear somewhat exciting. But it wasn't that. It was a completely foreign feeling. Like something was wrong. I couldn't see a future. Strange, uneasy, unfamiliar feelings coursed through me but I couldn't put my finger on it.

It was a day I knew was coming for a long time. I had received a skydiving voucher for my 21st birthday and it wasn't until after my 22nd birthday that I finally used it. Typical of me leaving something until the very last minute.

I was staying with my boyfriend at the time and we headed off to the skydiving airport to meet my family. The field was surrounded by luscious, green countryside – an almost picture perfect day. The skydiving airport itself was just a huge barren field with a tarmac and some over-sized farm sheds. Nothing glamorous.

Being a family man, it made sense to make a full day out of the jump. Mum and Dad. My three sisters and their husbands and kids. We're a very tight family unit and looked slightly out of place - one large group supporting just one person. This however was my normal. Surrounded by my large loving family. It also helped me deal with my nerves.

'Aren't you nervous?' they asked.

'It will be a piece of cake,' I reassured, masking those strange insidious feelings that plagued me since the morning. I played my role well – that's what I do. I'm Brad! I'm whacky and fun! Skydiving isn't scary for me! Woo!

The lady who checked me in for the jump that day seemed relaxed - a little too relaxed for my liking. A portly woman with a lot of energy and warmth. I guess her friendliness would make other jumpers feel less frightened

but her nonchalant attitude towards skydiving made me feel more uneasy. Had she just jumped out of too many planes that she was desensitised to the whole outrageous process?

A prolonged delay in the company's timing gave me time to observe other jumpers.

The soft shapes of the parachutes grew in size as they descended. The geometry of the jumpers becomes clearer, until soon enough you could even see the concentrated expressions on their faces before they land. Their gentle descent morphed into the sound of commands being shouted from their tandem instructor; as though they were leading an army to war. The shouting continued until they hit the ground with a noticeable thud or tumble. The speed at which these jumpers landed alarmed me. The impact made limbs jolt in all directions, grass was uprooted and sprayed everywhere. The stark juxtaposition between the descent and the land increased my fear. I felt stuck in a bizarre limbo of nerves.

Back at the airport the main shed was a hub of activity. Then...it was time. Time to leap from a goddamn plane!

Successful jumpers were taking selfies, parachutes were being packed and I was getting strapped into my gear. I tentatively slid my legs into bright blue and yellow overalls whilst trying to keep an ear on the woman preparing me.

'You'll meet Ben soon, he'll tandem jump with you today', she informed.

Ben was a highly-qualified instructor, he'd done this a million times before, you could tell by his walk. Jet-black hair spiked high from the wind and his slick sunnies carried the unique blend of experience and coolness. He waltzed over to me fresh from a jump and asked if I was ready.

'Let's do it! I'm so ready!' I excitedly spat out. My voice betrayed my true emotions. The nervous energy started to turn into mad adrenaline. Holy shit. I was actually about to skydive. I was about to be filled with that intense ineffable thrill the jumpers before me had captured in their selfies. I wanted that feeling. I had heard it was the ultimate high.

Ben and I exchanged small talk on the tarmac as the tiny plane approached. We boarded the vacant tiny space in the back. Deafening noise flooded the space and our small talk turned to window gazing. The planet I firmly felt underneath my feet soon became a distant tiny sight. I was saturated in sweat; all there was between me and thousands of feet of empty nothingness was the metal base of that tiny plane.

It was time! ‘Chuck your goggles on!’ screamed Ben. I complied. He opened the door of the plane, the earth was right there waiting for us below. The wind was so powerful that it felt like a small hurricane was trying to enter the aircraft.

Fear was kicking in and it was kicking in hard. Ben shuffled our bodies closer and closer to the door but I was reluctant. I could feel his entire body behind mine. He was just doing his job but I was just trying to protect myself. I was digging my heels in like a stubborn toddler. I knew I wanted to do it, but I was overtaken by utter terror.

After what felt like hours, we were finally on the edge. Ben and I were holding onto the plane, but with very different grips. My feet were dangling in the wind as if they held no life. The wind picked my feet up and threw them in all directions. I faintly heard a few reassuring murmurs from Ben before the ‘magic’ question. He pointed to the GoPro strapped to his wrist, pointed it toward my face and asked the most existential question I had ever been asked in my life.

‘Any last words?’ he asked.

‘Yeah...’ I yelled into the wind. ‘I hope my parachute opens!’ Prophetic last words.

We jumped fearlessly into the void underneath us.

Ecstasy enveloped me. Finally relief from all my fear, doubt was swept away with the wind. We were weightless, suspended in mid-air. A flood of pure warm adrenaline ran through my body. The sensation was short-lived however.

Then...suddenly...I felt the thrust of a parachute release, but not as strong as I anticipated. We didn’t slow down. Strange. I looked up, a crumpled

parachute was flailing in the wind! It had failed to open up and catch the wind. Ben began to swear and scramble. Panic!

Terror started to set in as I hoped and prayed that whatever was causing the issue would stop – now! Please! We began spiralling out of control. Violently shaking, like being stuck in a washing machine. We spun so rapidly that I even lost my shoe. Through all the thrusts of spinning, I saw the earth getting closer and closer. It was coming at us fast. I was terrified.

Ben was shouting for me to keep my knees up. I looked up and he was working hard at the parachute. I notice a second parachute above me. Sheer terror floods my entire being. The scene is surreal - the emergency parachute got caught on the original; tangled together. Instead of seeing full buoyant balloons above us, the parachutes were lifeless ropes flailing uselessly in the wind.

We were falling.

Helplessly falling. Right – down – toward – the – ground.

That's when I realised that I was going to die. Death was right there in front of me and there was nothing I could do to stop it. I knew I was going to hit the earth and simply stop existing. No more 'me'. Chilling thoughts. Unfathomable emotions ran through me so fast that I could barely compute what was happening.

'Are we going to die?' I screamed to Ben.

Pause...

'Probably', he said.

To describe this moment is impossible.

I braced myself for impact, for death. I could see my family in my mind. What must they be witnessing right now, I thought. I knew that they were about to watch me plunge violently to my death. Guilt washed over me. Dread. I had brought my whole family here, only to have them watch me die.

We fell to earth but it looked like earth was rising to meet us.

Suddenly.

The ground moves closer. Close. Too close. Bracing. Holy shit! I'll die.

CRASH!

We crashed to earth. Immediate, unbearable searing pain filled my being. Winded and gasping for air but unable to get any. I couldn't feel my legs or move my neck. 'I'm a paraplegic,' I thought. I moved my fingers and felt the parachute on top of me. I threw it off and my fingers met water. We had landed beside a lake. My legs were submerged. I slowly clawed back the ability to get oxygen. Finally, a breath.

I realised that I was on top of Ben, he was blue and unconscious. We were on top of each other but slightly perpendicular so I could see his face. Ben was blue all over and completely motionless. I immediately thought he was dead. A death I felt responsible for. I'll never know how the guilt consumed me so soon, but it did. I thought that I had killed Ben.

My shivering hands, though almost immobile, grabbed Ben in an attempt to try and rouse him. Tears streamed wildly down my face as I clutched his hand and begged him to come alive. I just kept repeating 'Please Ben, please. Please don't die'. I don't know if he heard me or not but signs of consciousness eventually emerged from Ben.

He was in a world of pain. I tried to ask him if he was OK, but the pain was intolerable and he was too injured to form words. He tried to move himself away our harness was still tightened together. We were strapped to each other and too injured to unhook ourselves. My body being on top of his had caused him more pain and I was in too much agony to try and free myself.

In the distance I heard shouting and running footsteps. Three strangers had driven over on a golf buggy. We landed on a golfing field. Two of them waded into the water and unstrap the harness, another uses his hands to keep my neck in one place. Tears keep falling. One of the men kept reassuring me that I'd be alright, but I knew things weren't 'all right'.

Commotion disrupted the once peaceful golf field - an ambulance, a stretcher, a series of questions. I heard someone screaming my name - my sister

Jess had run all the way from the airport. Screaming at me, telling me that I'd be fine. I start crying even more now. People only tell you that you'll be fine when things are *really* bad. Another voice emerged from a distance—it was Mum. Blood-curdling screams of 'I love you' could be heard over the commotion. I just wanted to give her a hug right then and there.

I've heard some stories from my family about what that fateful moment was like. One sister vomited, the others rushed around for help. Every single member of my family came to my rescue. Surviving a freak accident with a one in a trillion probability might seem lucky, but having a family like mine is even luckier.

WHAT ABOUT THE RECOVERY PROCESS?

When people think of my skydiving incident, they think of the freefall. When I think of it, I think of the recovery; which often feels like it has never really ended. So much of the recovery period is still a hazy blur, whilst other memories of it are vivid, bright and forever etched in memory.

After the fall I couldn't feel my legs or my back. I couldn't move my neck either. I was totally immobile and only able to look straight up. Pain of that magnitude is unexplainable in words.

Hospital was like a montage sequence: torches in the face, needles in the arm, pressure tests all over my body, straps to keep me down, a flurry of medical staff relaying messages and attending to my damaged body. It was during this time that I experienced my first trigger. I heard a nurse say 'parachute incident' and then it hit me! I fell from the bloody sky. My parachute didn't open. I came crashing to earth. I was horrified, I couldn't contain myself. Tears flooded my face. I was getting questions from every direction and I couldn't even answer them.

They dulled me with pain relief but this only added to my confusion. What just happened? Will I be OK? Am I actually dead?

Reality started to dawn in my memory and it was terrifying. I didn't want to face it.

A nurse told me that Ben was stable but had received lower body injuries including broken legs and a broken pelvis. I was incredibly relieved but deeply saddened. His injuries were my fault. I did that to him. She continued telling me about how I had torn the ligaments in my neck and most of my spine was broken and/or fractured.

My parents came quickly. Shattered and crying. I felt so sorry for them. I never wanted to put them through any kind of trauma. But I had. The heavy guilt from injuring Ben spread through to my parents. I was laying there just swimming in tears at the thought of what I had made them witness. I took full ownership of the incident and the guilt just grew. I was drowning in it. That moment was the genesis of my self-loathing. I hated myself for doing the jump and making my parents think that I was dead.

Mum and Dad held my hands and told me everything was going to be fine and that I needed to be brave. I told them I'd be OK, but I knew I wasn't going to be OK. I didn't want to tell them how scared I really was.

That first night in hospital was the worst night of my life. Laying in a shared hospital room in pitch black darkness with nothing but the sounds of beeping and snoring. I just stared at the roof and cried in pain. My eyes ached from all the crying. I just couldn't stand the pain. I truly wanted to die. My entire body was on fire and my back was immersed in severe stabbing pains. This went on for hours.

The worst thing about that night were the visions. Every single time I closed my eyes, I could feel myself falling. I could hear the parachute flailing, I could feel Ben scrambling, I could see the ground and my imminent death. It was all too vivid. Vertigo crippled me so badly that I wouldn't even know where I was. Being alone in a dark room left me completely disoriented. I buzzed the nurse several times and begged her to give me more drugs and knock me out. I pleaded with her, so desperate for relief. She couldn't administer more drugs, probably because I had already been pumped with copious amounts of morphine.

The next few days in hospital were trying. I eventually was able to walk again, although my steps were tentative. I had a long road to recovery ahead but what I feared more was facing reality outside the hospital walls.

It took four months of physical recovery. The whole time was just bleak as hell. I slipped into a pretty gnarly depression almost straight away. I stayed in my room at my parents' place and hardly ever left. I couldn't deal with the outside world. I shut myself off from family members and would yell at my parents if they tried to comfort me. I refused to see my friends and didn't post anything on social media. I was a recluse. Triggers from the trauma terrorised me. I became filled with self-hatred, mourning and exhaustion. I spent my days lying on my bed with a neck brace and back brace on, trying to numb the pain with intense medication. I was so disengaged from life that I hardly knew what time or what day it was. Guilt and fear wore itself like a suffocating blanket around me, I couldn't escape their wrath; I decided to force myself to see a therapist. I didn't want to remain the burden I felt I was.

Psychological therapy gave me so much clarity. It was both enlightening and confronting. I could finally begin to make sense of all these foreign feelings, slowly developing skills in how to overcome them. I was informed that I was suffering from depression, nightmare disorder and PTSD. It was a huge blow. Was I really that bad? Wow.

My depression came as a massive shock to people who knew me. I always had an extroverted zest for life. You'd never see me without a smile. When people learned that I was depressed they'd simply tell me to just 'be happy' again, as if there was some sort of switch. It doesn't work that way.

Previous to this, I knew nothing of depression and trauma. I hadn't even broken a bone before. As far as I was concerned, I was invincible. I was a happy person by nature, not just happy but exuberant and excitable with an endless supply of enthusiasm.

Prior to the accident, I was hitting my peak. I had just turned twenty-two and was ready to move out of my parents' place and into the city for the first time in my life, a big deal for a country boy like me. I was a month into a new job, one I had worked so tirelessly to land. I had busted myself for years as a volunteer radio announcer and finally got my big break as a digital producer at a commercial FM station working with the breakfast show there. The countless hours of sending demos, producing community shows and networking like a fiend had finally paid off. My career was blossoming and my future was bright.

Depression rearranged my entire mindset. I dramatically transformed into a pessimist with little love for anything. I felt hopeless and doomed. I didn't recognise myself. The things that once made me happy just saddened me because I couldn't enjoy them anymore. It was an internal, solo war. Anyone who has had depression knows that it's not easy to survive. Depression kills people.

Nightmare disorder was completely foreign to me. I had heard of night terrors, but I never knew it could become a full-blown disorder. I had such severe night terrors that it affected my ability to sleep. The nightmares were catastrophic. I would have visions of my own skydive death over and over again. Eventually those nightmares shifted to other forms of death. I'd wake up hysterically screaming and yelling, with no idea where I was. Mum would have to rush to my aid and comfort me. This disorder riddled me with insomnia, I became agitated around sleep time and rarely slept.

To go from life-of-the-party to the walking dead was soul-destroying. What had I become? I hit an all-time low. I had grown so tired of the self-loathing, fear and agonising pain that I contemplated killing myself. One more second of living life the way I currently was just didn't seem worth it. I knew my family and friends would be devastated, but better they have me dead than go another day dealing with my problems. Being alive meant being a burden. When it came to planning my suicide, I was pretty calculating. Knowing that I had that power and control was quite calming. The best I felt for the longest time. My plan was pretty simple; just bomb a crazy amount of Endone and OxyContin and peacefully slip away. It was the perfect plan.

I got up in the middle of the night and walked to the bathroom. Pills were kept behind a mirrored medicine cabinet, as I reached for them I was met with my reflection. I got a fright from seeing the unrecognisable man staring back at me. I hadn't looked intently at myself for the longest time. I was dishevelled and gaunt. I wasn't Brad Guy at all. I was a stranger to myself.

That's when I gave myself a second chance. If I was overthinking 'it' this much, then it meant that somewhere I still had some remnants of life inside

me. The old Brad was already dead. So, was there really a need to end it all when I was just a shell of my former self anyway? I held off on ‘the plan’ to see if I’d feel inclined another time. Thankfully, I didn’t. I knew I had to get better. Yes, old Brad was dead and I told myself that it was OK to mourn that person; but through death, a new person could be born. It could take a while to build that person, years even, but it was time to build. And he’d be better than the last.

HOW DID YOU MAKE THE SHIFT TO REBUILDING A NEW YOU?

Throughout the recovery process, I was craving for nostalgia. It’s a common feeling for people suffering depression as it numbs their present sadness by resurrecting fond sentiments of the past. For me it was playing old school video games that I loved as a kid. I still owned a bunch of old consoles. But once all the playing was done, I was left with searching online for more ways to play. Turns out, there are giant communities of people online who still play old games! Better yet, they upload videos of themselves playing these games on YouTube.

It was here that I discovered YouTube. I honestly thought YouTube was just for music videos and viral fads. But I found vloggers with massive followings who were basically online celebrities. I could see why they were so popular. These were just ordinary people that exposed themselves by candidly sharing their lives through a lens. I’d watch videos of vloggers sharing their experiences of traumatic events...and I realised that I wasn’t alone. It was so cathartic to watch people just like me tell the world that you can survive those dark patches in your life. That’s when I had an epiphany; if these people can not only survive, but thrive, then so can I.

My four months of being in a neck brace and back brace were over, so I was able to return to work to discuss how I could venture back into the workplace, I knew the best thing for me would be to establish some structure in my life. I was thrilled at the idea of returning to a job that I loved. Finally some normalcy after months of chaos.

Sadly I never did return to that job. My boss and the HR manager informed me that I had been made redundant due to a network restructuring. I was utterly ravaged by that news. I saw my salvation in that workplace and

craved the routine. Just pure devastation. Guess what I did? I cried. Surprise, surprise. I was told a quick ‘good luck Brad’ and to keep an eye out for the redundancy money.

Afterwards, I took refuge in my bedroom again and sought some YouTube therapy. I clicked on a regular vlogger I loved watching and instantly felt inspired by her openness. She said that YouTube and her fans had helped her through some dark times in her life. I loved that idea. She is just a normal person who has been able to inspire millions. I’m a normal person, I could do that. So I did. I spent all the redundancy cash on camera equipment and got filming straight away. I haven’t looked back since.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN A LITTLE ABOUT POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AND ITS IMPACT?

PTSD is often misunderstood by the general population. I didn’t have a clue about PTSD until after the accident.

With PTSD, memories of the trauma are accompanied with intense emotional and physical reactions. Your entire nervous system is wired on ‘alert’. Nightmares or flashbacks, avoidance of situations that bring back the trauma, heightened reactivity to stimuli, anxiety or depression are typical symptoms of PTSD. Living with them has multiple challenges every day.

Despite the fact I’ve done years of therapy, PTSD still plays a massive part of my life. Even though I’ve improved my mental health, I know PTSD will never leave me. I may adopt more strategies in the future that will enable me to cope, but it will never be eradicated.

The foundation of my PTSD is my constant state of readiness. Ready and fearful that I could encounter danger at any moment. Triggers happen daily, often without warning and can come in many forms with differing levels of severity. (Triggers can be anything: sights, sounds, smells, touch or even feelings can bring back memories instantly of the trauma and cause intense emotional and physical reactions, such as raised heart rate, sweating and muscle tension).

As I’m always in a state of calm-alertness, I can never fully relax or put my guard down. I’m forever tense and edgy, like I’m constantly prepared

for something terrible to suddenly happen right in front of my face. I can so easily lose concentration and become irritable because I know danger is imminent. It leaves me limited. I'm never fully free of it. Not only is it debilitating, but exhausting. When your mind and body are working overtime to protect you, you can be left with very little vitality.

The worst thing about triggers is that they can hit you at any time, that's why I need to be on my toes. When I'm triggered, my soul leaves my body. I'm instantly horrified, panicked and visibly shaken. The shock is like a lightning bolt. My heart will beat like crazy and I'll lose the ability to breathe. It's a very visceral response.

The trigger's aftermath can be just as worse. I remove myself from the situation and focus on bringing my mind back to reality before I cave in and succumb to the fear. It's a tug-of-war that happens inside my head each time. If I fail to ground myself, I start falling into a cycle of fear that is extremely difficult to escape. I am transported back to the trauma and the same feelings I had that day, they can crash me like a tsunami. If I begin to drown in the fear, the flashbacks swallow me alive. I'll cry hysterically, I'll throw things, I'll get furious. I can't be tamed. Luckily, I'm experienced enough now that I have some pretty solid techniques in place to avoid such episodes. I remain mindful, so I can avoid that fear and focus on what is real and present. I remind myself of where I am and open a dialogue with someone. It anchors you to reality.

Picture all of that happening but at a workplace or a party. Having a mental episode while in the middle of something is absolutely awful and impossible to hide. Normally I remove myself from the current situation or wait until I can be alone so I can heal. Sometimes you don't get the luxury.

The aftermath or 'post-trigger' is also a tricky space to navigate. When I'm reaching back to my normal state, I'm very introspective. I remain withdrawn and void of emotion until I feel like the trigger has fully vanished. This period can be hard on loved ones who feel helpless as they can't wake you from your daze. Eventually though, things do return to 'normal'.

It's hard to put a number on it, but I'm probably triggered 5 – 6 times a day. Sometimes the number can be higher. My triggers are quite varied but pretty obvious: I'm ridiculously jumpy for a start. I get startled when

I hear my phone vibrate. People at work will knock on the door and I'll jump straight off my chair. I even get a scare when I unexpectedly see my reflection. Getting startled is the most common trigger.

Heights is a big one. I can barely survive on a second story balcony without shaking like jelly. And there's no way in hell I can look over the edge without feeling vertigo. When I peer over edges, I become dizzy and disoriented. Mainly because I know what it feels like to freefall from that height. My perspective is very different to the normal person.

The other huge trigger is skydiving (obvious?) I can barely say the word. Even hearing the word cripples me. I become powerless when I see any hint of skydiving. It could be on TV or in a picture, it doesn't matter the form. When I'm confronted by my past, I can't help but be transported to the skydive, *my* skydive that went catastrophically wrong. Flashbacks are so vivid, it's like I am actually reliving it. I feel the wind, I hear the parachute flailing, I see the earth getting closer and closer.

My life has changed because of these triggers. Every facet of my life has needed to be lived differently than it was before, whether it's work or my love life. Drinks on that rooftop bar? Sorry, can't do it. Want to sit on the window seat of the plane? No way in hell. Feel like seeing that new horror film? Not going to happen.

Explaining PTSD to others can be humiliating. Yes, some people are very sensitive and respect my condition but unfortunately there have been countless times where someone's ignorance has made me feel incredibly ashamed. It comes from a lack of understanding. For example, when I explain to people that I hate being startled because it paralyses me with intense fear, they often laugh and even deliberately startle me like an easy gag. Though I understand that my story is a miracle of epic proportions, sometimes to talk about it is extremely traumatic for me. Nowadays, if I don't feel like talking, I won't. It saves me the trauma.

HOW IS LIFE FOR YOU NOW?

Though my story has been full of extreme trials and trauma, it's not all bad. Trust me, I'm still a fun guy! I've been to hell and back but the pilgrimage has been so worth it. I'd do it all again in a heart beat if I knew that my

current life was the reward. I wake up with such wild enthusiasm for living now. I grab life by the balls and make the most out of the time I have left. I'll wear the loud, colourful shirt to work, I'll pash that cute guy I like, I'll ask for more aioli on my chips. There's no time to waste when it comes to living!

The skydive has given me the most precious gift. This new-found energy I have brings me so much joy and I want nothing more than to spread that joy. I've never been better! After years of hardship and struggle, I'm finally at a place where I can talk about my past. But I don't just want people just to hear a cool story, I want to inspire people. I want people to hear about my history and understand that help is only a conversation away. We can't suffer in silence. The more open we are with communicating about our mental health, the better life gets. We need to create an open dialogue for those who suffer, ensure their future is full of possibilities. This will encourage people to speak up and obtain the resources they need.

Yes, talking about your feelings can be distressing, but you've got to break a few eggs to make an omelette. For me, I chose to confide in my therapist and my family. If I didn't seek out those avenues of communication, I definitely wouldn't be here today.

Just know that if you are struggling, it's not permanent. One day things *will* get better. It might not be tomorrow. It might be years from now. But they will get better. Hold on to that hope, never let it go. Hope can transform you and you'll get there. If I can not only survive, but eventually thrive, then you can too. I guarantee it.



TWICE SHOT

DARYL ELLIOTT GREEN



DARYL ELLIOTT GREEN

Daryl Elliott Green was a police officer for over 8 years. He understood the dangers, he knew the streets, he was a well-trained highly functioning Constable. What Daryl didn't know was that one fateful night, his life would change forever and all the training, experience and street cred that he had worked so tirelessly for, could not change the fact that in one split second, at a routine job, a madman would ambush and shoot him - twice.

Daryl was shot in the face and in his shoulder, his fellow colleagues were also shot; miraculously they all survived, but not without life-changing injuries and mental demons.

Daryl had to endure 17 major medical procedures, first to remove the bullets, next a tracheotomy to breathe and years of surgery to reconstruct his face, whilst battling the throes of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. A dark place that Daryl had never known before. With the unconditional support of his loving parents, family and close friends Daryl fought back and regained a new style of leadership and outlook on life. Rebuilding his life, his face and his perspective Daryl gained some insights that only someone at the brink of a near death experience can really fathom.

Daryl clawed his way back to life and used the life lessons he had learned to formulate talks, workshops and programs about resilience, courageous conversations, leadership and brave decisions.

Daryl emerged stronger and wiser, armed with a burning desire to help and inspire others. And that's what he does.

Daryl returned to the police service, earned three further promotions, attaining the rank of Senior Sergeant, whilst completing a Master's degree in Finance. His courage on that fateful night was recognised by the Queensland Police Service, when they bestowed upon him the Valour Award – their highest accolade for bravery. He is now a reputable international motivational speaker and educator. In 2015 he was awarded the prestigious Kerrie Nairn Scholarship by Professional Speakers Australia, recognising him as a rising star on the speaking circuit and resulted in the launch of his speaking business.

www.twiceshot.com

DARYL, YOUR STORY IS INCREDIBLE, WOULD YOU MIND WALKING US THROUGH THAT NIGHT, THE MOMENT THAT CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

It was the 1st of May, 2000 and I was working nightshift with good friend and colleague, Constable Sharnelle Cole. We were catching up with our Sergeant, Christopher Mulhall, over a cup of coffee at a local service station in the early hours of the morning. The police radio crackled, it was our call sign - November 471. We received information from Police Communications to attend a nearby address in relation to a job code 'Threats against the person'. A man called Paul Moran at Hanbury St, Brisbane, alleged a male by the name of Nigel Parodi told a third person, Robbie Allen, about 14 hours earlier, that he was going to shoot him (Moran) and put him in a wheelchair. All the men were neighbours, all residing in a small quiet cul-de-sac in what we regarded as a good neighbourhood. We immediately drove to the location to begin our investigation.

[The actual incoming call from the neighbour]

Police Communications: *How can I help you?*

Paul: *I've... I've got this guy living down the road, and I get the information tonight that he's gonna do me in tomorrow, he's coming round to do my kneecaps or put me in a wheelchair, so he reckons, kill my dog. He's already covered me dog in spray paint.*

Comms: *And this neighbour, what's his name, please?*

Paul: *Oh, his name's Nigel something, but now he goes under Jesse Ford.*

Comms: *What was his other last name?*

Paul: *Parodi.*

Comms: *OK, what type of weapons has he got there?*

Paul: *Semi-automatic .22, with a silencer, and he's got loads and loads of ammo.*

Caller: *Basically, as soon as there's a unit available, we'll get someone around there.*

Sharnelle drove, I navigated to Hanbury Street in Brisbane and Chris followed us in his patrol vehicle. It was a dark cul-de-sac at 3am on a Monday, normally a very quiet shift. The neighbour, Paul Moran, couldn't tell Police Communications the house number for Parodi, so unwittingly we drove past the suspect's house. We usually try to avoid doing that if possible, but this particular time, we had no choice.

Moran apparently had made a bet with Parodi over a football match. The story was that Parodi had lost that bet on the weekend and threw down the \$20 on a table and stormed out. Later on he told Robbie Allen that he was going to come around and kneecap Moran and then turn the gun on himself. We tried to obtain as much information as possible but it wasn't a very clear conversation, there was a mass of unreliable information, chopping and changing, talking about listening bugs being planted in the house by Parodi. We all found it quite bizarre to assess the situation and the threats being made. All the while there was a pink spray-painted dog running around the scene. Constable Cole, Sergeant Mulhall and I decide to go back to a vehicle for a chat, we needed to access this situation together and make some further enquiries.

I sat in the middle of the back seat listening to Chris call for background information on Parodi over his mobile. Sharnelle was on the police radio to a Communications officer asking about the Moran's and Allen's background history.

We had the interior light on in the car as our doors were open. I heard a strange 'pat-pat-pat' noise coming from the left-hand side, just outside the vehicle. I turned and looked out the car door, standing there was a man with a 22 calibre rifle pointed at my face.

The next thing I knew, my head was flung to the left side of my lap. My hands were around my face, I could feel the blood, teeth and bones in my hands. What I didn't immediately know then was that I had just been shot at close range (about 1 metre away) by a semi-automatic .22 calibre gun with a home-made silencer attached. Parodi had let loose on our vehicle, showering bullets toward all three of us.

I was shot first, in the face and the second round hit my shoulder. Sharnelle was shot multiple times and Chris was shot in his right arm and lower back.

I had been hit! Masses of warm blood flowed from my mouth; the primitive part of my brain that responds to life endangering threats responded to the situation in a millisecond. I felt driven to exit the vehicle and go after the offender. I headed out the door that I'd been shot through. I took my gun from the holster and was ready to kill the gunman who I felt to my bones, committed a cowardly attack. I was enraged. Sharnelle was in the vehicle, shot several times and badly injured.

I shouted to Sharnelle, 'Get help!'

[The actual call to Police Communications]

Sharnelle: *Code one, code one. I've been shot! Help!*

Police Comms: *Officers down. Get a car there now.*

Sharnelle: *Help! Help!*

Comms: *Yes, what's your location, please?*

Sharnelle: *I don't know!*

Comms: *We're getting the ambulance now.*

Initially I shouted to Parodi to come back, I wanted revenge for his cheap shot. I shouted obscenities to him at the top of my voice. I soon realised Chris was missing, so I walked down the street and shouted his name half-a-dozen times. My eyes captured some movement, I levelled my firearm and saw a person, 'Don't shoot!' they shouted. I quickly recognised it was a middle-aged woman in a white dressing gown! I gave her a direction to move back to her house. But then... a dark silhouette appeared on the other side of the street. I swivelled, pointed my firearm and started to move toward the threat. The lady shouted again, 'Don't shoot, that's my husband.' I gave him a similar order to move back to his house, in a not so friendly voice.

I moved back to our patrol vehicle, where Sharnelle was. Leaning on the bonnet, holding my shattered jaw up with my hands, I try to reassure

Sharnelle that it's going to be alright. I'm not sure if my appearance resembled my optimistic words, but I wanted to protect her and reassure her things were going to be okay; if Parodi returned re-loaded then I was ready. I was intent on killing him.

Chris, with two bullets in him, had thought we were being shot at from afar, and ran down the side of Moran's house. Coming to a 6ft chain mail fence, he threw his revolver over the fence, somersaulted the fence, picked up his firearm and ran to the next street over. He found a house with a light on, entered and rang police communications.

[Call from Sergeant Chris Mulhall to Police]

Police Communications: *Hello?*

Chris: *Yes, Sergeant Mulhall here.*

Comms: *Got police injured?*

Chris: *Yes, they shot my troops.*

Comms: *You've got two down?*

Chris: *I'm OK, at the house.*

Comms: *No, you stay put.*

Though Chris didn't want to stay in the house, he was ordered to whilst help arrived for us. Parodi was on the loose and no one knew where he was, but we did know he was armed and prepared to kill. More than prepared.

What I didn't know at the time was that the bullet had gone into my face, blasted off five teeth, shattered the top part of my jaw and was embedded in the back of my tongue. I didn't even realise there was another round embedded in my shoulder. I had been millimetres away from instant death.

I did not realise how much blood I had lost or how much was flowing from my face wound. I was running on pure adrenaline, I felt no pain, until later. I was losing an incredible amount of blood. When help arrived, Senior Constable Brett Price pulled me to the side of the vehicle, next to where Sharnelle had tried to exit the vehicle, but was so badly hurt, she collapsed

in the gutter. Brett pushed me to the ground to form a small protective arch of defence, in case Parodi returned guns blazing.

Despite a massive manhunt that night and in the weeks following, 32-year-old Parodi wasn't found until three weeks later. He had taken his own life in bushland not far from the crime scene.

It's hard to understand why people do what they do, or how they arrive at attempted murder or murder. Normal minds find it difficult to comprehend. It later emerged that Parodi, who was educated at the elite Brisbane Grammar School, and was the son of a highly-respected research scientist and biochemist, was likely the victim of horrific sexual abuse at the hands of a school counsellor, the notorious Kevin Lynch. This is not to make excuses for the horror he inflicted on us, nor dissipate the severity of the heinous crime; it does however show the multifaceted complexities of how deep trauma can turn into an insidious parasitic demon of the mind.

WHAT WAS THE AFTERMATH LIKE FOR YOU DARYL?

The first two months after the shooting I was just in a haze. Numerous operations, bone and tissue transplants, titanium implants and facial reconstruction. The physical pain was intense and the mental pain was excruciating. I realised how close I was to being killed, how fragile life can truly be. You can be here one minute and gone the next.

I played the game of 'what ifs' over and over in my head. If he had used a shotgun (which he was shown posing with in newspaper photographs) then I wouldn't be here, if he shot me two inches higher up in my face the surgeon said I would have died at the scene. My brain couldn't comprehend that I was on top of the world in my life one minute and then shot at close range in the face the next.

The thoughts didn't stop, the questions, the anger, and the seething pain of surgeries. I started to think that I was going mad. I had never experienced the throes of deep depression before, nor was I well informed about PTSD. I took one of the bravest decisions in my life, I asked for help and sought an experienced psychiatrist. It was a relief to speak to somebody who understood this madness and could explain it to me. Someone to reassure me that these intense overwhelming feelings were in fact normal.

People often described me as a ghost through this period of my life. I had become evermore isolated and shut myself away from the world. Mum and Dad supported me through thick and thin, but I was having trouble dealing with *me*. It was like a flick of the switch. The Daryl I once knew was not the Daryl that I even remotely resembled.

No one captured the reality of my personality change better than my mate Senior Constable Vaughan Carmen in his 2012 e-mail:

Daryl - Prior to shooting: *happy-go-lucky; outgoing; friendly; energetic and an extremely good mate to hang out with.*

After shooting: *Extremely introverted; could not handle crowds; would not smile due to facial scars and teeth missing; wore high neck shirts to hide throat scars; preferred to stay at home and would not come to the movies as we loved to do; no longer interested in martial arts or fitness; short attention span; no longer reached out to mates; personality changed to being very angry and lashing out.*

As the years progressed after the shooting, your personality continued to change and it has only been in the past 2 to 3 years that the old Daryl who I knew and loved has begun to return.

Being shot changed my life in ways that I could never have imagined or foreseen. I returned to work 20 months after the shooting, the first round of major reconstruction work had been complete, but I was still undergoing procedures, and at the same time battling depression and PTSD. Despite the fact that I was surrounded by police officers who knew my situation, I was still engulfed in the feeling that *no one really understood*. I decided to gain new skills and commenced studying a Master of Applied Finance in 2003. An attempt to rebuild and re-skill myself.

I tried desperately to get back to my former self but I just couldn't, something was obstructing me. It was difficult for Mum and Dad to watch their once happy-go-lucky son morph into a sad, distressed shadow.

It was my colleague Sergeant Paul Trinder, whom I'd served with as a young Constable, who kindled the fire in me again. He thought I might have something to contribute to his recruit class so I agreed to do a presentation

on the shooting. I began with the actual audio of the shooting, an hour-long talk and left them with four lessons to take away from my experience. It was well received. My boss the late Inspector Dave Stevenson asked to come to the first presentation. He said 'It might make me a better boss for you'.

This is the way he operated. He'd apply this to all of his team having a simple chat about something not work-related each day. This became a barometer and a sounding board for the days when I wasn't doing so well. I can never thank him enough. His support, mentoring and friendship was what finally started my journey out of the 'pit of despair' and commenced my rise to a happy, meaningful and purpose-driven life.

HOW VALUABLE IS SUPPORT TO RECOVER FROM TRAUMA?

It's vital. I strongly encourage anyone who is going through a hard time, no matter what it is that is challenging you, to get some support. Not everyone in your world will understand what you're going through, many won't, but support really accelerates the recovery process. Even one or two people who understand is instrumental.

My Mum and Dad were my pillars of strength. My brother and close friends made a massive difference. Mum and Dad nursed me through surgeries, the legal minefield of WorkCover and criminal compensation, the psychological impact and societal pressures that I was dealing with.

My depressive thoughts and all the insensitive comments I received from work, I voiced to my parents. They listened and worked through each step alongside me, but they felt helpless in areas that were out of their control. Anyone who has children can understand how they felt, helpless and distressed, however they put on a brave face for me.

In serendipitous sequential timing, Inspector Dave Stevenson stepped in and became my lifeline, friend and a mentor at work. He went above and beyond his role of 'boss'. I'll never forget the first time I met him, it was six years after the shooting and though I was back at work and studying my degree, I was still battling the tormenting psychological demons that nagged at me daily.

My first impression of Dave was the sight I captured of him through a large pane of glass at the front of his office, he was sitting at his desk reading a document. He was a big bear of a man, a presence that you couldn't miss. I saw him look up, with no expression in his face, and we were locked in eye-to-eye contact. I thought, 'I've had some insensitive managers before, what am I in for with this big gorilla of a boss?' How wrong I was. Little did I know at the time that I had just glimpsed the man with the finest interpersonal skills of anyone I have ever known and the man who would help me turn my life around.

Dave was someone I was meant to cross paths with – only someone of his calibre could reach through the barrier I had erected between myself and the outside world. He was literally the salvation to my workplace welfare and police career.

Dave took time, care and effort to listen to me, to others, and he never had a 'too hard basket'. Slowly he helped me dismantle my protective guard and I was able to confide in him about my true feelings. I was a very tortured individual at this time, and I tried my utmost to hide my feelings and emotions from everyone at work.

I came to a breaking point in late 2006 when the pressures bearing down on me all became too much and an off-handed comment at work led me to crumble inside. I felt I just could not carry on at work anymore. But the bridges Dave built with me drove me to go see him. I knew morale and the functioning of a work unit was a reflection of its manager. I could not just walk away from the work place, the police, my career and allow this to reflect poorly on Dave, as he had simply been the finest boss I have ever had.

I went to Dave and he saw I was highly distressed. I thought I had nothing to lose, so I told him all: the medical procedures, the mental anguish of dealing with the shooting, the legal battles, the stress of postgraduate studies, a feeling of being a burden to my parents, depression and the personal depth of worthlessness that I felt I had succumbed to. We sat, talked and he shared a very personal story of a time in his life that caused him much distress and this helped build a strong understanding between us. He then suggested that I go home and get involved in something that would take

my mind off the day's events. I did this. I went home and went for a long run. The important thing was, I turned up to work the next day; this was all due to Dave's caring nature, incredible interpersonal skills and his unique ability to connect with people.

In 2007, I discussed with him the impact of my degree, the toll it was taking in my life, or literally, having no life other than work and study. He knew why I had started this course of study; that I had given up on my police career and was working towards leaving the Service. Dave said to me, 'Greeny, I reached a stage in my life when I said to myself, my divorce has taken a lot, it is not taking my job. Parodi has taken a lot from you, don't let him take your job'. Those powerful words helped fortify me to complete my study and continue with my policing career. In a little over two years I was promoted to Senior Sergeant. I will forever be grateful for that particular chat and the piece of advice imparted on that day.

I have studied and met many leaders in my time, but Dave lived great leadership. He was the quintessential supportive leader. He died at the young age of 47, that day the world dimmed in its greatness and lost some of its shine.

Some leadership lessons Dave taught me remain with me forever and I use them in my talks, workshops and programs.

One day I said to him, 'Dave, you are the most respected leader I have ever met, what is your secret?' He responded, 'Greeny, it is really quite simple, I say please and thank you, and treat people how I would like to be treated'. This simple piece of advice is the most valuable leadership lesson I have ever learnt.

He also said 'Never ask anyone you lead to do something you would not do yourself'.

He confided in me later, that he would often lie awake at night 'trying to think how the Commissioner would best want me to help you, Daryl'.

That was Dave. The type of leader that, if he was lying in no-man's land between trenches at Gallipoli in the First World War, regardless of the machine gunfire sweeping the ground around him, the troops would scramble over-the-top to rescue him. He was one in a million.

YOU NOW SPEAK AROUND THE WORLD ON THE POWER OF RESILIENCE, COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND BRAVE DECISIONS. CAN YOU SHARE MORE ABOUT RESILIENCE WITH OUR YSHIFT AUDIENCE?

Firstly let's sum up what resilience is. Resilience is: the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — this can encompass a broad range of areas; from natural disasters, family and relationship problems, loss of a loved one, serious health problems, divorce, workplace and/or financial stressors. It means 'bouncing back' from difficult experiences, but sometimes it is a 'long crawl back', with quite a few slips along the way. The important thing is to keep going and not give up hope.

Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It can be learned and developed in anyone. Resilience doesn't shelter us from life's problems or makes us bulletproof, but it does help us bounce back from adversity and learn a new set of behaviours and processing methods so we can overcome the obstacles with greater clarity and personal strength.

In today's world I believe that learning the keys to resilience and understanding how humans react and adapt to change is essential.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE THE KEYS TO RESILIENCE?

I'd like to share my top 7 keys to resilience in their basic form. Small simple ideas that we can easily implement to lead us through some rough terrain.

Resilience is returning to strength

Life throws us many challenges. Some events can knock us down into a pit of sadness, pain and despair. At these times you certainly don't feel strong. That's okay, it's normal. Resilience is our ability to pick ourselves up, keep going, accept setbacks and move forward mentally and physically. In time, we do work our way out of the pit. When we overcome events that seem insurmountable, we return to strength, emerging wiser and more resilient than ever. This return isn't an overnight success, it can be planned and work toward step-by-step.

Don't focus on what's unfair, focus on the future

Life is unfair, full stop. We can't rewind time or undo unjust actions, decisions or opinions. Even if we would like to, it's impossible to go back in time. Harboursing bitterness and anger will only do you harm. Acceptance is a golden quality. It allows you to move on and do the next most important thing: focusing on designing, creating and living a fantastic future. Acceptance may not always be easy, but it is worth it. Accepting what happened, accepting yourself and looking forward, not backwards.

As Henry Thoreau said 'Never look back unless you're planning to go that way'. This of course is easier said than done; but remember you don't have to take this new mindset on all at once, little-by-little, step-by-step is the right direction.

A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step

– Lao Tzu

Reach Out

We all need help, whether it's with our tax, failed plumbing or a computer glitch. Sometimes events occur and we just don't understand our thoughts and feelings or know what to do. This can be overwhelming and you may feel weak, inadequate, even pathetic. This is the precise moment to reach out for help. Carefully choose your words, the person to help you and the time to reach out. In life, particularly in a time of crisis, reaching out for help is the smartest, most courageous and life changing thing you can do.

Tap others experience

Whatever your situation, someone else will have experienced what you're going through. Be it divorce, death of someone close, illness or horrific violence or trauma. Finding someone with a similar story who has come out the other side can be powerful. You soon discover that your feelings are normal. Learning from someone that has 'been there, done that' can be invaluable and open you up to new courses of action. If you don't know someone personally, there are many great autobiographies and biographies available to help shed some light on someone who has had a similar journey to you and reached the light at the end of the tunnel.

Challenge Yourself

A story, vision or smell can bring back dark demons from a terrible time in our life. Running or hiding from the demon provides temporary relief. Challenging the demon is daunting, but empowering. If you've been involved in a horrific motor vehicle accident, you might take an advanced driving course, or, if you've been shot like me, you might become a fire-arms instructor as I did. It's far from easy to conquer that demon but the blood, sweat and fear is worth every ounce of pain to re-establish control of your life. Having the courage to tackle something head-on is challenging at first but over time it brings out the demons and shadows that lurk in the dark and forces them into the light.

Adopt my G.R.I.T. formula:

Goals + Roadmap + Innovate + Time

We learn stories about peoples' lives and say, 'Thank God that's not me.' Well, a policeman's worst nightmare – a firearm pointed at your face and being shot – happened to me. Out of the 400 recruits that I graduated with me, I was the one shot in the face. I was then to face countless David vs Goliath battles over many years. Strangely enough, I ended up succeeding because I worked out there was a formula to what I was doing. It involved setting goals, acting on a roadmap, innovating when things were out of my control and appreciating that time and patience were critical to being gritty. Best of all, following this formula lets us finish in triumph! Adopting this formula has been instrumental to my ability to set and achieve, what I once thought, were insurmountable goals.

Renew

The emotional toll of an event can be even more draining than the physical toll. Just like a car, you've got to refuel your energy tank. To keep going is critical to resilience and to do this you need to renew yourself. Plans and action lists are essential to making a path through the haze of a catastrophe; as is making sure we put time aside for renewal and rejuvenation. All recovery and healing requires a degree of rest and rejuvenation. What makes you feel peaceful? What renews you and makes you feel more vital and whole? It's OK to take the time to renew. Some very simple ways we can do this and aid our recovery include:

- ✓ Get quality sleep
- ✓ Enjoy nutritious food
- ✓ Exercise regularly
- ✓ Minimise stressors by climbing one mountain at a time
- ✓ Relax
- ✓ Laugh
- ✓ Socialise
- ✓ Do things you enjoy regularly
- ✓ Create things to look forward to

Living in the now and pursuing my passions for travel, skiing, personal fitness and cooking have been critical to my recovery and success. I also involved myself in an expedition climbing Mount Kilimanjaro as a fundraiser for the Special Olympics Australia. Goals that also involve a level of fun and activity, and are part of something greater than us, can restore us and act as medicine to the human spirit.

IF SOMEONE CAME TO YOU NOW AND ASKED HOW TO GET THROUGH A LIFE-ALTERING TRAUMA, WHAT'S THE FIRST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU WOULD OFFER?

When you experience an adverse event you can never be the exact same person again. It's up to you to determine whether you remain a phantom of yourself, consumed and immobilised, or if you rise from the ashes.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR YOU NOW DARYL?

The future is bright and full of possibility. I have learned so much through this experience and love helping people on the four core areas I speak on: resilience, courageous conversations, leadership and brave decisions. However these aren't just topics I want to talk about, it's about living and embodying them.

When I entered the police first, I entered because I wanted to be of service to people, I really wanted to help. My passion for helping has not wavered, if anything it has only strengthened my resolve.

Gaining information and knowledge has been a major factor for me, I needed to understand the journey and the experiences that I have travelled since that fateful night 17 years ago. Everyone deals with things differently but for me to fully accept and understand this multi-layered incident and the aftermath of it, I had to intensively researching the subject, the incident, Parodi – his motivations and re-walking the steps that led to our paths crossing. Knowledge and awareness helped me surmount the doubt and nagging ‘what ifs’. Through a process I learned to accept the fact that life isn’t necessarily fair and learnt to talk about my experience and come to terms with what happened and who I am now as a result. To be able to offer someone a glimmer of hope is what I am about.

A mate of mine, Trev Baker, helped me expand my message to include multimedia, the walk-through, crime scene reconstructions, ballistics mapping of injuries and resilience. We’ve subsequently polished and taken the presentation from country Queensland to Sydney with audiences ranging from colleagues, emergency services, community groups, charities and corporations. I have taken these messages across the seas, as far to Berlin and Gimborm, Germany, New Zealand and the Philippines.

When someone asked Gandhi if he had a message for the people, he wisely replied, ‘My life is the message’. This is what I believe life is about. Living congruently with what you stand for.

My mother, Eileen Jean Green was an angel in my life, she passed away on 16 August 2016, my Dad, brother and I miss her terribly. She lived what she was. She understood what mattered in the world and never lost sight of that. I think if we can all try to remember what is really important and hold tight to the substance of that, then it will steer us in the right direction, even against all odds. This poem of truth encompasses what I wish to continually live and strive for. It was part of my Mum’s funeral service and holds wisdom for every person. It’s about what really matters and what really counts.

What Will Matter

Ready or not, some day it will all come to an end.

There will be no more sunrises, no minutes, hours or days.

All the things you collected, whether treasured or forgotten, will pass to someone else.

Your wealth, fame and temporal power will shrivel to irrelevance.

It will not matter what you owned or what you were owed.

Your grudges, resentments, frustrations and jealousies will finally disappear.

So too, your hopes, ambitions, plans and to-do lists will expire.

The wins and losses that once seemed so important will fade away.

It won't matter where you came from or what side of the tracks you lived on at the end.

It won't matter whether you were beautiful or brilliant.

Even your gender and skin colour will be irrelevant.

So what will matter? How will the value of your days be measured?

What will matter is not what you bought, but what you built; not what you got, but what you gave.

What will matter is not your success, but your significance.

What will matter is not what you learned, but what you taught.

What will matter is every act of integrity, compassion, courage or sacrifice that enriched, empowered or encouraged others to emulate your example.

What will matter is not your competence, but your character.

What will matter is not how many people you knew, but how many will feel a lasting loss when you're gone.

What will matter is not your memories, but the memories that live in those who loved you.

What will matter is how long you will be remembered, by whom and for what.

Living a life that matters doesn't happen by accident.

It's not a matter of circumstance but of choice.

Choose to live a life that matters.

– Michael Josephson

I like to share this final personal quote, which encapsulates my journey and may help those who are facing adversity or struggling in life:

*Are you a shipwreck or a clipper?
Shipwrecks allow the environment to swell,
swamp and consume them.
Clippers ride out the storm, until blue waters,
brilliant sunshine and favourable winds return!*
– Daryl Elliott Green



‘LIVING THE DREAM...’

ANDREW MORELLO



ANDREW MORELLO

Andrew Morello, often known as 'Morello' was the winner of the first season of ***The Apprentice Australia*** TV show. He is the Head of Business Development at Mark Bouris' Yellow Brick Road (YBR) Wealth Management.

Morello's lifelong exposure to business, wealth creation, real estate and property development coupled with his impeccable sales skills and contagious enthusiasm means he is adept at providing people with exceptional service and outcomes. A passionate and highly sought after motivational speaker Morello's expertise originated from his 'grassroots' upbringing and strong, focused work ethic.

Andrew Morello isn't only a successful entrepreneur, the man behind many corporations and multi-million dollar business ventures, he is also a big-hearted humanitarian with a deep wisdom on life and the true meaning of it.

Andrew is also highly involved in the 'Dare to Dream' workshops, an inspiring movement created by Project Gen Z. (www.projectgenz.com.au). The initiative involves over 50 leading entrepreneurs who expose and encourage disadvantaged Cambodian youth (13 years-17 years) to big-picture thinking, practical business skills and personal development. A powerful and meaningful initiative that truly changes lives.

Andrew enjoys sharing his well-earned wisdom and inspire others to live their full potential; to 'Live the Dream' – just like he has. He not only believes in the power of relationships and the opportunities they can create, but lives it in every facet of his life – business, family and personal.

www.andrewmorello.com



ANDREW, YOU HAVE ACHIEVED SO MUCH SUCCESS, DESPITE SUCH GREAT SUCCESS YOU'VE CONTINUED TO STAY TRUE TO YOURSELF AND VERY GROUNDED AND AUTHENTIC.

PUTTING ASIDE THE WONDERFUL EXTERNAL ACHIEVEMENTS FOR A MOMENT, WHAT DRIVES YOU DEEPLY FROM THE INSIDE?

Great question. Not many people ask the deeper questions. We're now living in a consumeristic, materialistic world. Most people want to talk only about business, money and how to be successful. There certainly is a place for that, but we mustn't forget the most important things in life, such as spending time with family and giving to others. I used to place money extremely high on my scale of importance, so I can understand its lure and importance, however now it's all about being emotionally nourished. I place my charity and volunteer work, helping others on the 'extremely high' spectrum because it deeply nourishes me emotionally, far more than financial wealth can. I feel I've contributed. The argument people would say is 'you only say that because now you've got a lot of money'. In some ways yes and in other ways no. Having lived and seen many facets of life I know that money is a wonderful privilege but emotional and spiritual nourishment is truly the richest commodity.

YOUR MOTTO IS 'LIVING THE DREAM', HOW DO YOU STAY ON TRACK WITH THIS AND ALSO INSPIRE OTHERS TO DO THE SAME?

'Living the Dream' isn't just a quote or a nice idea, it's a heartfelt conviction. I have this motto tattooed on my leg in Thai and seeing it every day forces me to live my dream and a positive life. If I did not live my dream, this tattoo would be a constant lie to myself, its permanence helps me stay on track and pay homage to what's within all of us. With the right mindset and honorable intentions, we can all live our dream. I try in many different ways to encourage, inspire and educate others to live their dream. Whether it is to be a baker, a footballer or a business owner, it doesn't matter – dreams are personal and they CAN be achieved. I'm living proof of that and I make it my life's purpose to remain true to that conviction and inspire others. It's not always easy, but it is possible.

Winning *The Apprentice Australia* really changed my life, but there were also many steps preceding this that helped me get there. No matter what stage of life you're in, no matter what situation or financial level – each step has value. Each step leads to the next one.

When I speak to groups I have few messages. I generally speak on two main topics: creating success or changing your life.

HOW CAN PEOPLE DO THOSE TWO THINGS?

Firstly, it's important to be aware of the conversations you have with yourself. If you really want to change or be successful, whether it's financial success or working for the community, you need to come to grips with what you've experienced up until this point. Some of the most successful people are living at about 60 per cent of their potential simply because they hold onto negativity or issues from the past. We as humans can forgive, but sometimes we don't forget; often it's the other way around and we forget without forgiving. I always tell people that if they have unresolved issues whether personal or business related, in order to be successful these issues need to be sorted out. It doesn't matter how successful you get, if you have unresolved issues or negative thoughts you have to deal with them. Once you have come to an internal resolution you can then move on and become even more successful.

My other piece of advice is to know your 'Why?' and I call this the Morello 30-second answer at 3am. It's very dramatic: if I came into your bedroom at 3am and put a gun to your head and asked, 'Why *you*?', how would you answer it?



After giving people a little time to consider their answer I explain that it's actually not about the answer, it's about how you perceive the question.

The 'Why you?' could mean - 'Why do you deserve to be the CEO of a company?', 'Why do you deserve to be the mother of three beautiful children?', 'Why do you deserve a job at Yellow Brick Road?'

The second part to this is how you answer the question: Is it authentic, is it true, is it something more than just money, is it more than just success, something more than just happiness, but rather a deeper thing? If I told you that your answer wasn't good enough and that I am going to shoot you, how would you *really* answer, deep from your heart? It's all about appreciating what you've got, loving who you are and believing that you deserve to have it. It is not something that you have to share with everybody, but if you don't know the 'why you?' you can't go out and achieve great things. It wouldn't be deep enough to stand the test of time - and it has to.

I often get emails from people who have heard me speak, many tell me that they finally worked out their 'why you' and it changed their life.

AFTER PEOPLE WORK OUT THEIR 'WHY YOU' HOW CAN THEY BEST SHIFT THEIR MINDSET TOWARD SUCCESS?

A successful mindset comes from an internal decision you make about how you are going to live your life and approach things. I don't think you get it from attending a two-day motivational seminar, or from reading a book. That's not to say that you shouldn't read books and go to seminars as they definitely have their place, but a success mindset is something that you are, something that you decide and possess. You must always carry it around with you and allow it to become you.

Success is also about treating people well – people will remember how you treat them. I hand out 1000 business cards a month to everyone I meet and I tell them to call me if ever they need financial advice, and I will personally take care of them. When I first moved to Sydney I didn't know anyone so I went out into the neighbourhood and introduced myself to the local schools, the local retailers and tradies, I told them to get in touch if they ever needed anything. Recently I was contacted by one of the people I had introduced myself to – I was asked to be an ambassador for a foundation in

Sydney. So while opportunities might not be constant, they certainly come around if you put yourself out there and treat people well. I meet a lot of great people this way. I also get a lot of business this way.

WHAT DO YOU THINK STOPS PEOPLE FROM LIVING THEIR DREAMS?

I think it relates back to the old cliché, 'the most important conversation is the one you have with yourself' - that is first and foremost. If you think you can't do something, or believe that you can't be wealthy because you didn't come from a wealthy family, or that you're not smart enough, what makes you think you are going to be successful? You need to believe in yourself and tell yourself that you can do it, whatever it is you want to achieve.

I also think people give up too easily, and this is why I talk about the importance of 'quick wins'. Often we're working towards a big goal, but it could take two years or five years to get there, and this is when people tend to give up; so along the way you need to focus on the quick wins. For example, one of my goals with Yellow Brick Road was to sign up 150 franchisees by the end of the financial year; so every time I signed up even one franchisee - I celebrated it! Once you start building momentum, adding up your 'quick wins' often, you naturally become a happier person. The road is wonderful along the way, and celebrating as you go is so much better than toiling hard for that one big goal somewhere in the future.

I have a 10-point system which aims to give you 10 quick wins; for example, if someone said to me, 'I am 35 years old and I have never owned a property', we will set up a plan for them to save the deposit over the next 12 months; so if they are saving \$30,000 we will set up trigger points along the way at every \$5,000. I tell them that once they have reached \$5K, I will take them out for dinner, we will celebrate. So they start moving forward, the first savings might take them three to four months to accumulate, the second may be two to three months, the third maybe two months and the fourth may be one month or two. What ends up happening is they see these as quick wins and they are now building their confidence.

This confidence starts to show in all areas of their life. If you're looking for a partner, your confidence will come across in a positive way rather than

those feelings of, ‘I should be married by now and have children.’ It’s the same in business, if your confidence is building from the quick wins and you’re cool, calm, collected and in control, people will notice that and want to do business with you; if you’re stressed and negative, your clients will see that; people don’t want to do business with a guy who doesn’t believe in himself.

Setting yourself quick wins is extremely important, as is talking to people. Australia has become so unattached with the internet and Facebook. Nothing beats human interaction at the end of the day; you have to go out there and be prepared to knock on the door and say, ‘Hi, I am your business guy, or I am your neighbour’. Just introduce yourself and offer to pop down for a coffee sometime; be open and so many things will come your way. Be open to new possibilities.

You never know what can happen in this world. As I said before, I think people tend to give up too early when success could be just around the corner.

CAN YOU GIVE SOME PERSONAL EXAMPLES OF HOW YOU SHIFTED YOUR MINDSET TO BEING OPEN TO NEW POSSIBILITIES?

I remember when I first started in real estate my boss at Compton & Green dropped me off in a suburb with a stack of business cards and said he’d see me back at the office in the afternoon. I was left to door-knock and introduce myself to the residents. I literally knocked on hundreds of doors and I was over it; I felt like giving up when I came to a house where the owner was sitting in the front yard playing with her baby. Why not another attempt? When I told her I was now servicing the area for Compton & Green, she turned to me and said, ‘Interestingly, we’re thinking of selling.’ I was so excited that I ran all the way back to the office to tell my boss. I sold the house on a 2.5 per cent commission to Western Bulldogs player Adam Cooney.

Submitting my application form for the television show *The Apprentice Australia* really changed my life. A friend and client had suggested I try out for the show and had emailed me the application form. The night before the

applications were due I was working late in real estate making calls and I noticed the application form in my email inbox. I started to fill it out not thinking it would come to anything but I was open to a new possibility. A few weeks later I got a call from their office asking me to come in for a group audition, the following week and a few interviews later I was offered a position on the show.

I was excited to make the show, but I didn't think I'd make it very far in the competition and that I'd be back to my usual workload in a few weeks. When Mark Bouris called to say I had won and that I needed to move to Sydney to start work with him at Yellow Brick Road I couldn't believe it! Four weeks later (January 2010) I was living in Sydney. This was the first time I have lived outside my hometown of Moonee Ponds.

I was offered \$250,000 to head up business development for Mark Bouris for 12 months. My job was to sell franchises, and in 18 months we had 109 branches nationally. After 12 months I thought I would return to Moonee Ponds and get back into real estate, but towards the end of my contract Mark asked me to stay on in the role and to buy into the company as a shareholder.



Andrew Morello and Mark Bouris

Source: *The Entourage Education Group Pty Ltd*

I accepted the offer and, to keep my hand in the real estate game I flew back to Melbourne a few times a month to auction homes for some of my clients and started auctioneering in Sydney, including for *The Block* on Channel 9.

I now live in Bondi with amazing ocean views, I work with my mentor Mark Bouris and get the opportunity to speak to people across the country and internationally to help people to get into their own business. Staying open to new possibilities helps us keep an open mind, it keeps our dreams alive and allows for wonderful people and experiences to enter. This is why I'm such an advocate for remaining open to new ideas, new experiences, new possibilities – small windows in life can create extraordinary changes.

PEOPLE MAY SAY 'WELL IT WORKED FOR YOU', HOW CAN I REMAIN FLEXIBLE AND OPEN TO NEW POSSIBILITIES WITH MY CHALLENGING SITUATION?

One of the biggest things that holds many Australians back is the tall-poppy syndrome. A guy in America drives by in a Lamborghini and the first thing they say in America is, 'Geez that guy has done well,' a guy here in Australia drives by in a Lamborghini or a Ferrari and the first thing people say here is, 'He or she must be a drug dealer'. I am not like that and I am more interested in what he did to get there. We must shift the criticism and judgement; it holds people back years. We must begin where we are.

Many people get upset when their dreams haven't happened exactly when they wanted them to. Delays are not denials. Many people have a fixed blueprint of how they expect their life to be and, if one little thing doesn't go to plan, they tend to get down about it. For example, I talk to a lot of men and women who say they wanted to be married by 28 and have children by 30, or they should have bought and sold 20 properties by now; what I say to these people when I'm coaching them is that: it's important to have goals, but you also need to be flexible. In fact, it's critical to success.

Life is full of opportunities and sacrifices and you are always going to be fighting with them. If your plans don't come to fruition exactly when you thought they would, that's OK, it's not the end of the world. Instead of being bitter about it look at the things you have achieved. I have met a

lot of women who are in very high corporate positions and they often feel down because they haven't found someone to spend their life with; but they aren't looking at the positives of what they have done. They're involved in the community, raised money for charity, they head a multi-million-dollar company. I say don't waste energy on the things you cannot change; control the controllables and be open to opportunities. What happens to a lot of these men and women when something doesn't work out is that they put up a shield and think that if it hasn't happened by now then it mustn't be happening at all. All of a sudden they're not 'open for business'. If you're not open for business metaphorically you're not going to be open for opportunity psychically either.

One of the best pieces of advice I ever received was from one of my mentors – Gerry Harvey. He told me that there is no magic dust; you just have to take action. You can have all of the mentors in the world, read every book, go to every motivational seminar that exists – but the real trick is 'having-a-go'. The good ol' fashion Aussie slogan. If you don't 'have-a-go' how will you ever learn and know if it will work. The best advice you can get about business is from successful business owners who have been through hard times and come out the other end. They have learned to take risks, make money, save money to grow their businesses and learn from mistakes along the way.

YOU'RE INVOLVED IN SOME HUMANITARIAN TYPE WORK, BUT ONE THAT BUILDS ENTREPRENEURS FROM THE INSIDE-OUT. CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THAT?

Yes, I believe it's vital that every one is emotionally and spiritually nourished. This is our highest currency in life. It's what truly changes people from the inside. Sure, material comfort is important and I'm all for people being wealthy. But wealth isn't true wealth unless we have a wealthy heart and soul – one that is nourished with love, acceptance and self-belief.

I'm involved in a very powerful initiative called the 'Dare to Dream' series, by Project Gen Z, created by my childhood friends Liz and Jesse Volpe. Project Gen Z involves a collective of Australia's leading entrepreneurs and CEOs who have joined forces to run entrepreneurial workshops targeted at young people all over the world. The overall vision is to 'Inspire,

Educate and Activate' the next generation of world changers. I have been involved in the Cambodian project and it's truly life-changing.



Source: projectgenz.com.au

In Cambodia we have the wonderful privilege to speak with the young disadvantaged Cambodian youth aged 13-17 years-old. These are often kids with little opportunity from poverty-stricken backgrounds, or horrific life stories. We aim to educate them with real-life business skills, positive attitudes and entrepreneurial know-how. They even get involved in an 'Apprentice' style challenge. The aim is to educate 1 million young entrepreneurs by 2030. Project Gen Z have already inspired, educated and motivated over 200 disadvantaged students; raised over \$250,000 for charity partner and helped 4 young people start their own business.

Going there and being amongst these beautiful kids is really inspiring. It's a deeply moving experience and your perspective is forever altered.

I'll never forget my first experience 3 years ago. I got off a bus on a very warm and humid Cambodian day and this young boy walks right up to me and gestures for me to pick him up. Now, I'm a big guy which could be

intimidating to a small boy – but this young child wasn't afraid at all. I pick him up. He puts one arm around my neck to hold on and with his other arm he wipes the sweat from my forehead with delicate care. It was a pure act of selflessness, a pure act of love.

I later found out, this young innocent boy had been rescued from child prostitution, he had been violated and treated in the most disgusting and terrible way possible. This little boy who had every reason to be frightened and in contempt of the world just gave out love, pure love. He bought tears to my eyes.

The 'Dare to Dream' workshops provide life-long tools to those who are often left with little opportunity. In Australia there is opportunity hanging out on every street corner, you just have to find it and seize it. In many other parts of the world it's just not that easy. Lack of education, lack of guidance and support, lack of job opportunity. This initiative arms young people with tools, real-life sustainable tools that can help them overcome their circumstances and build a life for themselves.

WHO HAVE BEEN THE BIGGEST INFLUENCES IN YOUR LIFE?

First and foremost, my Mum and Dad. They came to Australia from a war-torn country with nothing and they saw everything as an opportunity. Everything we had growing up and everything my parents now have they created from nothing. Mark Bouris is an amazing guy and I continue to learn from him every day; he took a risk to bring me on board at Yellow Brick Road, and I am forever grateful for that. Another friend of mine, Phillip Di Bella, is a great mentor as well. Phillip is the creator of Di Bella Coffee and at 28 years of age was worth more than \$70 million. He had a similar upbringing to me and isn't afraid of hard work. There is also Dorry Kordahi, who is the creator of DKM Blue, worth about \$21 million. At just 36 he was listed as one of the hundred young rich in Australia by BRW. Both of these guys have a few years on me and we all value the same things in life, so they are easy to look up to and learn from. These are people I know, value and deeply respect.

Being from a corporate background a lot of people assume that my idols are only big money-makers in the world, the names, the shakers and movers.

And though obviously some of my mentors are in fact of that profile and calibre; it's the story behind the person that really inspires me. Often these are people who have overcome the odds, built things from the ground up, took risks and challenged themselves well beyond their comfort zone.

There are so many unsung heroes that pull fiercely at my heartstrings. The Tenzing Norgay's of the world. Do you know who Tenzing Norgay is? Most people don't. They've heard of Sir Edmund Hillary and labelled him as the 'first man to climb Everest', but Tenzin was the experienced Nepalese Sherpa who helped guide him and was also there at the top of the summit. Also 'the first man to climb Everest'.



Sir Edmund Hillary and the British army officer that led the expedition, John Hunt, were both knighted by the Queen for their efforts. Tenzing only received the George medal, an award created in 1940 for acts of bravery by civilians. Other recipients included air raid wardens during the war and members of the emergency services. In fact, Tenzing had been to Everest seven times by 1953, and knew the mountain better than anyone on that successful expedition. He was never after notoriety or awards, he used his earnings as a Sherpa to educate his children and begin a Mountaineering Institute. So, it's the Tenzing Norgay's of the world, the unsung heroes that really get to me. And travelling all over the world, I have met so many of these humble and great human beings. They inspire me greatly every day!

DESPITE HAVING ACHIEVED SO MUCH AND BE SURROUNDED BY A LOT OF WEALTH AND FAME, IT SEEMS YOU'VE KEPT YOUR PERSPECTIVE IN LIFE AND MAINTAIN A VERY STRONG WORK ETHIC. IS THAT SOMETHING YOU NEED TO WORK AT OR IS IT JUST PART OF WHO YOU ARE?

It comes from my upbringing. My father was, and still is, in the service station game. We grew up around the family business – BP Morello Motors in Moonee Ponds, Melbourne – helping Dad stock shelves, clean cars and toilets, and pump petrol from the age of eight to around 13 for \$5 per day. An average day for Dad was to start work at 6am and go through to about 10-11pm, seven days a week. He did that for about 20 years and then cut it back to six days a week. For Dad, work was and still is a lifestyle and he loves it – he has no motivation to retire whatsoever – and this instilled a great work ethic and a drive to work hard.



**Andrew with parents Pauline and John after winning
*The Apprentice Australia***

Source: news.com.au, published online January 26, 2013

I got my first job outside of the family business when I was 13. I worked at the local sports store, Hanna's Allsports at 15 Puckle Street in Moonee Ponds selling sporting gear. My first day was during the Christmas holidays and I worked 12 hours straight while everyone else was taking tea breaks, a lunch and dinner break. When we got to the end of the day the

boss looked at the time sheets and asked why I hadn't taken any breaks. I wasn't used to taking breaks – when we worked with Dad, if there was a customer on the driveway, we didn't take breaks and on some days it was constant. Keep in mind, when I worked for my father I got paid \$5 per day; I didn't want to take a break at this new job as I didn't want to miss out on the extra \$28; my boss and I reached a compromise that I would take a 30-minute break, miss out on \$7 and still make a \$21 profit.

It wasn't until I left Moonee Ponds in 2010 that I started to understand how the rest of the world works and this was a real culture shock for me. After winning *The Apprentice* I moved to Sydney to work with Mark Bouris at Yellow Brick Road Wealth Management and a few months into the new job they asked me when I wanted to take holidays. I didn't know what they meant and, when they told me I got four weeks' paid leave a year, I couldn't believe it. I was from a world in which you didn't make money if you were on holidays, so we didn't really go on holidays because we had to run the business. If we went away it was never too far, maybe just a day trip to the beach; in the early days on Sundays Mum would make a special lunch and we'd have family lunch together at the service station. The business effectively became the heart of the family and part of the community.

Funnily though, as much as I admire strong work ethic, growing up this way also showed me what I didn't want to do or become. Not going on family holidays because we couldn't shut the business, watching Mum cook for the community and tolerate her husband's continual absence. Though I still have a strong work ethic today, now it's much more balanced, I attribute that to both the positive and negative experiences growing up. Learning the importance of hard work but not letting business be the main focal point of your life.

I am very grateful to my parents for the sacrifices they made so that we could have a great upbringing and I want to be able to do the same for my family. Growing up I played a lot of soccer and was on the school debating and speaking team and, because of the business, Dad couldn't always come to watch. I remember saying to myself that when I get older I am going to have lots of money and flexibility so that I can be there for my kids.

So my number one 'why you?' and motivational tool I share with people is:

*Andrew Morello wants to make lots and lots of money,
to pay other people really really well,
so they can do the things that he doesn't want to do,
so he can do more things he loves doing,
with the people that he loves.*

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNT ABOUT MONEY?

I have learnt a few lessons about money and one of them is that if you do the right thing by people and look after people, the money will follow.

I have also learnt that money isn't everything and it certainly can't buy you happiness; it's not about the car you drive or the house you live in, it's about the legacy you leave behind. I think all too often people think that the grass is greener on the other side, but then they get there - there's water restrictions. People often think that everything will be better if I just have the better house or the better car. These things are nice but at the end of the day they don't make a difference. You need to stay nourished – emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. Spiritual nourishment is essential. I'm not talking about reading the bible or going to church. I'm talking about taking time in silence or to pray, to nourish your soul with gratitude and deepen your awareness through contribution and generosity. Spirituality for me is an inner-world that keeps us aligned with our true purpose and deepest heart. It helps us maintain perspective in this mad world and gives us a purpose that far exceeds any material possession. It also helps you live your full and truest potential.

Doing the right thing and helping people is the way I live my life. I don't constantly look at my bank account to see how much money I have. I know that if I look after people and do the right thing the money will come.

HOW CAN PEOPLE BEGIN RIGHT NOW, IN THIS MOMENT TO SHIFT THEIR MINDSET REGARDLESS OF THEIR CIRCUMSTANCE?

If things aren't totally as you wish them to be right this moment, then don't give up. Appreciate what is currently working in your life and that will only get bigger.

There are things to appreciate in all situations. People often remark that they hate the weather in Melbourne, so I ask them what they like about Melbourne. If it's the food and the culture, that's what they need to focus on and not the weather. When my sister was living in the UK, even though she hated the cold, she focused on the things she loved, like how beautiful it looked when it was snowing on Christmas Day.

It's the same in your workplace; if you work with 10 people who are great, but one person is a pest, try to find the positives in that person. For example, the sales manager brings in a lot of sales for the business, but he doesn't reply to your emails for a week; focus on the sales rather than the slow email reply.

It doesn't mean that along the way you don't make changes, but focusing on the 'good' brings more good as you step toward your goals.

I studied Deepak Chopra's *Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* and practicing non-judgement of others is one of the many lessons I learnt.

The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success are:

1. **The Law of Pure Potentialities:** Practice non-judgment.
2. **The Law of Giving and Receiving:** Do something nice or compliment someone who's not expecting it and also reward yourself and be able to accept opportunities; if you do good things for people good things will happen for you.
3. **The Law of Least Effort:** Be open to other people's points of view and practice acceptance.
4. **The Law of Intention and Desire:** Know what you want by being clear of your intentions and then trust the outcome; a lot of people don't realise that their intentions have a cause and effect; so when you are creating your intentions they should be pure, look at what your intentions will achieve, and also how that will affect others.
5. **The Law of Detachment:** Learn to embrace uncertainty instead of forcing an outcome.

6. **The Law of Karma:** Choose actions that are best for everyone and that keep the flow of happiness going.

7. **The Law of Dharma:** How can I serve myself and others?

If you are doing something you love, you become a better person and have a better energy for the whole world. I believe in some small way we can all do this regardless of our situation. It's more of an attitude, a mindset, a way of living. It's the true legacy we leave behind.

A free copy of 'Morello Matrix' is available
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LIVE YOUR UNLIVED LIFE

MARY SMITH



MARY SMITH

Mary Smith is an advocate for authentic change and personal transformation. A photographer and dedicated mother of four sons, Mary is certainly no stranger to adversity. Born and raised in Mount Gambier, South Australia, Mary's childhood and teenage years were spent in a repressive religious cult. With courage and determination Mary, with her husband and sons, broke free from the bonds of the cult, leaving behind her parents, siblings, friends and every aspect of life as she knew it. Mary had to learn to live an entirely new and different life, one that she wasn't familiar with.

One pivotal moment in her life occurred whilst hiking the ancient Camino de Santiago trail, a deep and authentic transformation. A letting-go of the past and the hurts she endured. From this time on, Mary released any remnants of the past and decided to continue to step into challenges and face everything head on. Mary began to *really* live in full empowered freedom.

Step-by-step Mary began living outside her comfort zone, not just for herself, but also for the benefit of others. Since then, new opportunities have opened up to Mary and with a new-found confidence, she is now ready to accept the challenge of new and exciting prospects.

As a member of her local camera club her entries in the monthly club competitions earned her a number of second and first places from the judges and her peers. Mary's photography has been used in illustrating a book of poetry, *Heartfelt*. This book can be purchased from her website www.inspiredlifecollections.com.au/heartfelt. She is also an avid volunteer having helped in several organisations including spending three years volunteering with St John Ambulance.

Mary's goal is to help others discover their passion and to then implement that passion into their lives, a desire to help people overcome whatever is holding them back and to find their full potential. Mary believes that it is not what happens to us that is so important, but how we respond to those things that happen to us.

www.marysmithimages.com | www.inspiredlifecollections.com.au

WHAT WAS YOUR LIFE LIKE GROWING UP?

I had an amazing childhood. It may not be considered the ‘average’ childhood by standard definitions, but my memories from this time are rich and unique. Unlike the kids I went to school with, I was raised in a repressive religious cult, although I didn’t stay in the cult, I am still grateful for the values that were instilled in me as a young child.

I was raised by loving parents in Mount Gambier, South Australia, and am the older sister to three boys. What we didn’t have in financial riches, we had in love.

Having uncles and family friends with farms, I spent many of my younger years helping out on the land and raising orphaned lambs. I was always more excited about working in the sheep yards, shearing sheds and hay-carting than I was with traditional ‘girly’ pursuits.

I loved bushwalking around the local area with my Mum. Along with the many school holidays I spent with my Grandmother in Gippsland doing early morning walks through the bush. I am certain that these walks with my Mum and Grandmother is where I developed my love for nature.

Although my upbringing was different from the other children I went to school with, I wasn’t bothered by it, as I really didn’t know anything different.

As I progressed through high school my interests were in photography, chemistry and physics and I especially loved the challenge of learning German as a second language. In 1983 and 1984 I received the Goethe Institute Award for German language in my high school, this inspired me to want to further my knowledge of the language and culture. When a scholarship became available to go to Germany, I was prevented from embracing that opportunity due to the beliefs and rules set down by the cult. A scholarship provided by a different organisation outside the church was forbidden.

This was when I first became seriously disillusioned about my dreams for the future. I left school and unwillingly took up an accounting course at TAFE whilst working part time at an insurance assessor’s office. Although I passed my first semester accounting exams with credits, I found the whole concept of accounting incredibly boring and uninspiring, so I was only too

happy to leave that behind and to take on a full time position that opened up in the insurance office.

In 1984, at a church meeting, I met my future husband. We spent time talking in the churchyard after church. These talks weren't so private, as our chats were seen and noted by members of the congregation. Over time we got to know each other and in November 1986, at the age of 18, I married my husband and moved from Mount Gambier to Perth. I very quickly fell in love with Western Australia and the warmer weather. By October of 1987 we were blessed with the arrival of our first son, followed by our second son in October 1988.

WHAT WERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING YOU LEAVING THE CULT?

Just before the arrival of our second son, for reasons I am still unaware of to this day, a particular 'priest' from the cult began to harass my husband and I over menial things. After the birth of our second son and while I was pregnant with our third child, this priest stepped up his antagonism so that it often spilled out to become public 'attacks' on my husband and I during regular 'church' congregations, which took place daily and three times on a Sunday.

It was expected that you attend each of these nine services per week, unless you had a really good reason not to. By late 1989 I was happy to find any reason, however small, to attend as few 'church' gatherings as possible. I felt no compulsion to make myself available for the public intimidation and shaming meted out by the narcissistic 'priests' in their attempt to establish their authority within the congregation.

One wonderful outlet we had during those years was to go fishing, however when my husband's brother found out and let the 'priests' know, we were informed that we shouldn't be going fishing and that we should go to the store and buy the fish that God provided!

The emotional blackmail and abuse continued and my husband and I started questioning things that were happening within the cult. One thing that you're not supposed to do in a cult is – question things. You are expected to blindly follow a set of rules and regulations that can change at any time without any given reason.

By early January of 1990, when I was 37 weeks pregnant, we had a visit at our home from two of the ‘priests’. One ‘priest,’ and chief perpetrator of our abuse, told us that we needed to consider the possibility of having a deformed child, this was apparently God’s judgement on us for the way we were behaving! We were also told that we were summonsed to a ‘confined’ situation, which meant that although we hadn’t been completely excommunicated from the cult, we were no longer allowed to go to the church services and couldn’t communicate with anyone else, including family. Our only point of contact was to be with the ‘priests’.

Three weeks later, 12 February 1990, we were blessed with a perfect and healthy baby boy; our third beautiful son.

We began to realise that this cult was not the place for us, or where we wanted to raise our young family. We made a life-changing decision to leave the cult. Leaving the cult also meant leaving behind our families, friends and life as we knew it. We needed to start a new, fresh life.

The cult however, was desperate to retain the children and myself, so the ‘priests’ waited until I was most vulnerable – my husband had gone to work and I was alone with three small children (a two-year-old, a one-year-old and a six-week-old baby).

After my husband had left for work I had a phone call from the ‘priests’ saying that they wanted to come and visit. I told them my husband was at work and I didn’t want them there. They insisted that it was me they wanted to speak to and it didn’t matter that my husband was not at home. Again, I repeated that they were not welcome at our home while my husband was absent. I learnt a very valuable lesson that day – listen to your gut! I had a very strong gut-feeling that they were still going to come to our house anyway, and so I went around the house and made sure that all the doors were locked. They were desperate to take the children and me from my husband to retain us in the cult. I was well aware that the ‘priests’ were not foreign to spiriting a wife and children away in the absence of the husband.

Within 10 minutes of the phone call there was a knock at the front door. I gathered the children and took them to a bedroom at the back of the house. These two ‘priests’ spent 20 minutes trying every door and window

on the house in an effort to get to the children and myself. Imagine a mother hen and her chickens, hiding them beneath her wings protecting them from vultures. Asking God to keep us safe, I sat huddled in a corner of that room with my three children held close and tight as these two men who I couldn't trust, rattled on a window only metres away, trying to get in.

I thank God for protecting us from the evil that walked around our home that day.

Everything about life as I knew it, had changed. We were completely isolated from family and friends, and it was time to start a new life! We had to leave the cult. This wasn't easy. I had been raised to believe that we couldn't trust people outside of the cult. All our friends and family were still in the cult and banned from having any contact with us. We had been instilled with a fear that if you ever left the cult, bad things would happen to you. We also didn't know life outside the cult, we weren't allowed to own TVs or radios, or even listen to most forms of music. Life outside the cult was completely foreign to us, and very daunting.

I could no longer have a chat with my mother – not even over the phone, and I found it hard to understand how a parent could just cut-off their child. Even though I had grown up in the cult and knew why she wouldn't talk to me, I still found the concept of a parent turning their back on their child something that just seemed totally unnatural and incomprehensible.

It was now time for us to start making decisions for us and our young family.

Our fourth son was born in July of 1991. We realised fairly quickly that something was different – something wasn't quite right and he required my attention not just during the day, but also every two hours during the night. We were the parents of four children and we knew that something wasn't right. After repeated visits to various doctors and specialists, my husband and I were running short on patience. When our son was around six-months of age, my husband finally stood up, faced the doctor and said 'We wish you would just level with us. If we need to adjust our home to cater for a wheelchair, then tell us so we can get started on it. Just tell us what's going on!' The doctor admitted to us that they had no idea what our son's prognosis was and they did not know if he would walk.

At this point we had no idea what the future held, but we were not going to sit around doing nothing and wait. Often throughout life I have looked to one of my favourite quotes:

*'Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass,
it's about learning to dance in the rain.'*
~ Unknown

We did everything in our power to give our son the best chance of being able to walk. With the assistance of an incredibly dedicated physiotherapist and doctor it was discovered that one of the reasons our son was restricted in his movement was because his bones were growing faster than his muscles could stretch, thus resulting in him curling up in an almost foetal position. If only we could get him walking and moving around he would be stretching those muscles and he would be essentially doing his own physiotherapy with every step. So began a relentless routine of leg-stretches and painful exercises. Persistence, however, began to pay-off and eventually his legs could be fully extended. The next stage was to build up strength in his legs. We spent many hours 'walking' him around the house – one of us holding him upright, while the other moved his legs. This was our family's evening routine for many months. At 18 months old our son found his feet and away he went! From that day on he rarely walked– he just wanted to run and to join in on activities with his brothers.

I have often asked myself what would have happened if our third son (the one that we were told could be born deformed) had been born with the problems of our fourth son? God knows exactly what he is doing and has the most perfect timing. Although it was only 19 months after leaving the cult behind us when our fourth son arrived, I know that we were blessed to have this special person come into our lives. Our youngest son taught me a whole lot about patience and determination and he has grown into an independent, most loving, and helpful kind-hearted adult.

HOW DID YOU INTEGRATE INTO YOUR NEW LIFE OUTSIDE THE CULT?

With four young boys all under the age of four, life was very busy; but it was a bucket load of rewarding fun! My life revolved around raising the

children and working in our business. As the children started school I began making friends with other mothers and built a social life following our exit from the cult.

One of the benefits of having our own business was working school hours, and being there to spend quality time with the boys. We spent holidays and as many weekends as possible camping, fishing and water-skiing. They have all grown up with a love for the outdoors and had travels together – both domestic and international. Although the boys are all now well into their 20s and most of them have their own homes, we are a close-knit family and still often go camping or holidaying together. In fact the family keeps enlarging; as our sons' partners and friends join in our regular camping trips too!

WHAT WAS THE HARDEST THING ABOUT INTEGRATING INTO A NEW LIFE?

Just starting everything again, and not having all the family around to share life with. I didn't have any contact with my parents and siblings for the first 13 years after we left the cult. We were very young, I was only 21 and my husband was 23. So going from a restrictive cult to a new life had many daily challenges, as well as many rewards.

I enjoyed being able to listen to music, as in the cult we were only allowed to play our own music. No pre-recorded music was allowed. Things that people take for granted, such as TV and radio, were more unusual for us. We had been told these things were evil. But, to me, they both have an off-switch, if you don't like it, or it's not appropriate—switch it off.

The best part of being out of the cult is the fact we could think for ourselves, make our own decisions.

IS THERE A PARTICULAR EXPERIENCE THAT HAS BEEN PIVOTAL IN MAKING YOU WHO YOU ARE TODAY?

In 2012, I spent 35 days hiking the famous Camino de Santiago; an ancient Pilgrim trail from St Jean Pied de Port in the French Pyrenees, across northern Spain to Santiago de Compostela. An experience I had during this journey became the catalyst for a number of wonderful changes in my life.

October 9 2012, day 23 of our journey. A day I often refer to as the ‘First Day of the Rest of My Life’. We left the tiny village of Molinaseca while it was still dark, so to arrive at Cruz de Ferro (The Iron Cross) to watch the sunrise. As we ascended the tranquil path that led to the Iron Cross, the area was covered in heavy fog and I thought we wouldn’t see much of a sunrise. Minutes later the fog lifted to reveal Cruz de Ferro silhouetted against a magnificent orange sky! I snapped a few photos and made my way up to the cross, where it is tradition to leave a stone from your home with a message inscribed onto it. I placed my stone and said a silent prayer of gratitude for my family. As I made my way down from the cross I was overcome with a surreal and indescribable feeling. As the fog closed in once more, something happened that I was not expecting– I broke down and wept. I was suddenly overcome with a huge sense of surrender; of letting-go of the past, and I felt the sweet waves of relief and forgiveness surge through me. I finally relinquished all the hatred I had been harbouring for the ‘priest’ who had been instrumental in treating my family so poorly 22 years earlier. The person who had tried to take our children away and had come between my parents, my brothers and I.

The fog lifted again and revealed an even more enchanting sky.

It was then I realised that God had been asking me for years to let him take that burden from me, but in my stubbornness I had thought it was something I had to deal with myself. God was there that morning to take my hatred and anger away, and reveal to me the sense of love and lightness of heart that comes with forgiveness. As I continued my hike through the crisp, clean morning air, the sun cast its light across the landscape and the music of Chris Tomlin’s chorus came to mind:

*‘My chains are gone, I’ve been set free
My saviour God has ransomed me
And like a flood his mercy reigns,
Unending Love. Amazing Grace.’*

This was a beautiful day in the mountains; walking through clouds and mist, rain and sunshine. The mist would lift on occasion to reveal amazing scenery very steep and rocky tracks had become slippery in places where rain lightly fell– a grove of blackberries to feast on, the awe-striking landscape

that beckoned to be noticed. The fog lifted to reveal such beauty; but the most amazing scene that occurred that day was both silent and invisible; the decades of fog that was lifted from my heart. The radiance within shone like the sun through the clouds and I was finally at peace with the past.

The biggest insight I learnt from this deep moment was that being strong isn't always about hanging on, often a greater strength is found in letting something go.



HOW DID THIS ACT OF FORGIVENESS CHANGE YOU?

Being able to finally forgive made a huge difference in my life. I discovered a sense of peace and reconciliation that wasn't present before. Forgiveness doesn't mean that what happened is acceptable, or that you accept that person's behaviour, but it does remove the power it once held over you. Take the lesson from what happened, but forgive for *you*. It's a gift you can give to yourself. You deserve the peace, the happiness and a lighter heart.

On my return home, I printed one of the photos of that morning at Cruz de Ferro with Chris Tomlin's chorus overlayed on it. I had many comments on this piece of 'photo art.' A short time later I was looking for a gift for a friend's birthday and wanted a good photo with a motivational caption. I couldn't find anything that wasn't 'tacky' and mass produced, so that was when I first considered the concept of creating a business around this idea.

Although the idea had been birthed, I still didn't have confidence or belief in my ability. It took me a lot of encouragement, help and mentoring to stop hiding the photos on a hard-drive and take the step of starting my business, Inspired Life Collections.

YOU NOW WORK IN PHOTOGRAPHY. WHEN DID YOUR INTEREST FIRST BEGIN?

My interest in photography began at the age of eight when my Grandfather gave me a Brownie-box camera. The first picture I took was of my pet lamb—yes; Mary had a little lamb! This interest in photography carried through to high school where I studied photography and was often seen around the school yard and on school outings with camera in hand, taking shots for the school magazine.

I was fascinated by the magic of photography; from capturing an image, to processing the films in the darkroom, developing the images and watching a blank piece of paper come to life in the chemical baths.

WHAT WAS YOUR ORIGINAL MOTIVATION FOR STARTING A CAREER/BUSINESS IN PHOTOGRAPHY?

My husband and I had a business that was very successful for many years and it took a heavy hit in 2010 that resulted in a 70% reduction in turnover. After spending considerable time in trying to rebuild that business, we realised that while we had a part-time business producing a part-time income, then this was the perfect opportunity to refocus our energies into other pursuits, but I had no idea what I wanted to do. I suddenly realised that I had spent my life doing what I was expected to do, and in saying that I don't mean that it was necessarily all bad.

At school I had loved studying photography, German language, maths, physics and chemistry. Growing up in an environment where tertiary education was banned, my options and career prospects with the subjects I enjoyed was clearly very limited. When I left school at 15 after being prevented from applying for the scholarship to Germany, I applied for a secretarial course at TAFE. (It was the expectation within the cult that as a female you would take up a job in an office – often at a business owned

by somebody within the cult, and that you would work in that position until such time as you were married.)

My application for the secretarial course was rejected as the board felt that with my subjects and grades that secretarial work was the incorrect career choice for me, and they were absolutely correct! That however, put me in a bit of a 'sticky' situation as I was still expected to complete 12 years of schooling and the cult would have accepted the TAFE course as my final year. That was when I reluctantly applied for and was accepted for the accounting programme at TAFE.

Once I started my job in an office role, I only worked there for a year and a half before marrying and becoming a wife and mother. When I did work, I worked in the family business, which suited perfectly as I could either work school hours or from home. I loved my role as a stay at home Mum and cherished spending those important years with our boys.

When the time came for me to pursue something else, I was really lost as to what direction I wanted to take. I just knew that I would rather be my own boss.

It was time to work out who Mary really was and what she enjoyed doing? What were *my* passions in life? What was *I* good at and how could I monetise that to provide an income?

I started working on my personal development and it was during a workshop that I completed an exercise on 'Finding your passion.' Two things stood out very clearly for me; photography and helping people. That was when I revisited my passion for photography – something that had been put on the shelf for 30 years.

This quote by a friend sits on my desk:

'Most of us have two lives; the life we live and the unlived life within us. Between the two stands resistance.'
~ Mathew Denton

Remove the resistance, whether it be internal or external, find your passion and live your unlived life!

HOW HAS YOUR BUSINESS EVOLVED AND CHANGED SINCE YOU INITIALLY STARTED IT?

I have always found a sense of peace in the great outdoors and have always loved nature, so I guess it was natural for me to begin my business with landscape and nature photography.

As I started experimenting with my photographic equipment I began taking a few shots at my sons' football matches and on family water skiing holidays, but when my oldest son started participating in triathlons and Ironman events I discovered my real passion – capturing *motion* with *emotion*. This led me to taking pictures at any event my sons were competing in and taking shots at the local motocross track. Sports photography is my passion. I love it.

I have retained Inspired Life Collections as the landscape/nature and soulful part of my business, and developed Mary Smith Images as the sports, corporate and commercial division.

WHAT MAKES YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS STAND OUT FROM YOUR COMPETITORS?

I work with the philosophy that first impressions count. I have found this to be very true. Whether it's business or personal, first impressions really do matter.

This philosophy became abundantly clear when we had just finished building an investment property. At the final inspection handover with the builder I snapped a few photos. I then handed the property over to a property manager and let them do the rest. After a number of weeks with not much interest in the property I took a critical look at the online advertisement. I very quickly learned that real estate agents and property managers aren't photographers! Our brand new house certainly didn't look appealing! The quick snapshots I had taken for my own reference, although far from professional photos at the time, did a lot more justice to our house. It took some persuasion, but I eventually had the property manager replace her photos with mine. Five days later we secured a tenant @ \$100 per month above what we had been told we could expect!

In business and corporate areas you often only get a few seconds for people to be interested in your product or service before they move on. I understand that, and ensure my photos deliver the right message from the beginning. For me, commercial and corporate photography isn't just about taking photographs of people or products. It is about going behind the scenes to tell the story behind a client's business. Today's consumer wants to know who they are doing business with, so to showcase a client and their business is very important in the process of relationship marketing.

I have had the privilege of working with professional organisations like Business Women Australia and of displaying my work at Houghton Wines gallery in Western Australia. (See: www.marysmithimages.com)

I love to let the art of photography deliver the right messages. My landscape and nature photography, paired with quotes, is the soulful part of my work – capturing moments in time. My website inspiredlifecollections.com.au showcases a selection of photography, some already paired with quotes, and some without. The marriage of the quote and the picture is very important in producing something that is individual and meaningful to each client.

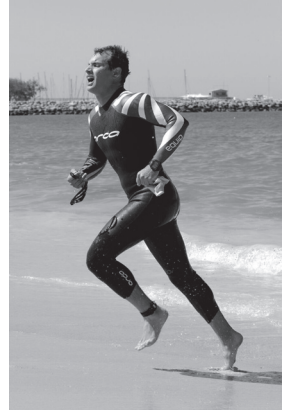
TELL US MORE ABOUT THE SPORT PHOTOGRAPHY.

Sport photography is my passion within my passion! Portfolios of various events are displayed at marysmithimages.com I enjoy the challenge of shooting a moving subject, of capturing *motion* and *emotion*. An associate put it best when he introduced me and my photography to a group of business people – ‘I think she likes seeing people in pain. Her photos show the pain, the determination and the emotion of the athletes. The image is captured in such a way that you can feel the emotion.’

- I am continuously amazed every time I photograph a triathlon or Ironman event. There are so many lessons to be learned about life in watching these elite athletes:
- The determination to see the challenge through to the end.
- The mindset to work through pain.
- The ability to overcome internal and external negative forces that would cause one of lesser courage to quit.

- The dedication and discipline of training and preparation.
- The desire to better oneself.
- The constant focus on completing the goal.

These are all qualities that we can apply in our business and our daily life.



(See more colour images in the Yshift library)

YOUR OTHER PASSION IS HELPING PEOPLE. CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT THIS?

I have liked helping people for as far back as I can remember, and have always had a nurturing nature. To see anyone being unfairly targeted, alienated or bullied has always annoyed me. This may be due to seeing how people were treated within the cult, and also what I experienced. There is no need for good people to be repressed and held back from being who they truly are, whether that be through a cult, a relationship or through beliefs and lifestyle that have been bestowed on someone. I want to help people, especially anyone that has experienced a repressive lifestyle, to help them to break those ties and find their passion.

During my time on the Camino de Santiago I connected with a dear lady, Camille, from Pennsylvania. We spent many hours walking and talking. After sharing my background with her she told me that I needed to tell my story. I thought this was strange and asked why on earth anyone would want to hear *my* story. Her reply was simple; 'To give people hope. You won't know how many people you can help until you start telling your story.' It took me another three years to decide I would take her advice, but there was still a hurdle in my

way. I had a fear of speaking; not just in public, but also even in small groups! Through the amazing work of Peter Shaw at Scary and Exciting, I was catapulted out of my comfort zone and overcame my fear of speaking in public. Within a few short months of starting to share my story, my experiences and of overcoming challenges, I discovered just how right Camille was – once I began sharing my experiences I was amazed at the response and reactions from people. I remember clearly the first time a lady approached me in tears and told me that I had moved and inspired her to take action in her own life. That response alone would have been enough to make me continue, but there were so many more people reaching out. From seeing those results I realised that helping people find hope and encouraging them to take action in their own lives, was a much greater need than I had ever given credit to.

WHAT WAS THE ONE THING THAT WHEN YOU GOT IT - EVERYTHING ELSE SEEMED TO FALL INTO PLACE?

Stop trying to do everything yourself!

In business and in personal life: Outsource the stuff you don't like, or are just not so good at.

Get a business coach – someone who has already done the hard yards and can guide you on the track to growth by way of experience. The knowledge imparted from a good coach can prevent you from making mistakes and save you a lot of time and expense.

Do yourself a favour, save yourself a lot of time (maybe even years) and work with someone who has the expertise and knowledge in the areas you require.

Deal with the physical, spiritual, emotional 'stuff' that is tying up your time, mind and energy, and it will free your time so you can concentrate on moving your life in a positive direction.

WHEN YOU OVERCOME A CHALLENGE, HOW DO YOU KEEP FOCUSED? IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU DO TO PREVENT SLIPPING BACK INTO OLD HABITS?

You need a long-term vision, without one I believe that the danger of slipping back into old habits and beliefs is much greater. With a long-term goal you strive

clearly toward that goal, rather than looking back. If you do look back, make sure you take that moment to see how far you've already come. Let what you have already achieved motivate you to continue forward.

Staying focused can be more difficult if you are in an environment that is surrounded by negative influences. Wherever and whenever possible remove yourself from any environment that doesn't promote your growth. If it's not possible to completely and immediately step-away from negative influences, make sure you keep in contact with a mentor and develop strategies that will keep you on track until new behaviours and mindsets have become a part of you.

When I overcome an obstacle, or have a major breakthrough in my life, I note it in my journal. I diarise each day what the 'new me' achieved or how I handled a situation differently than what the 'old me' would have done. With this strategy I have found that the old thought processes and behaviours are quickly replaced by the new, and within a month or two I have a positive new habit.

ARE THERE POINTS OR LESSONS THAT YOU CAN LEAVE US WITH THAT PEOPLE CAN IMPLEMENT INTO THEIR LIVES?

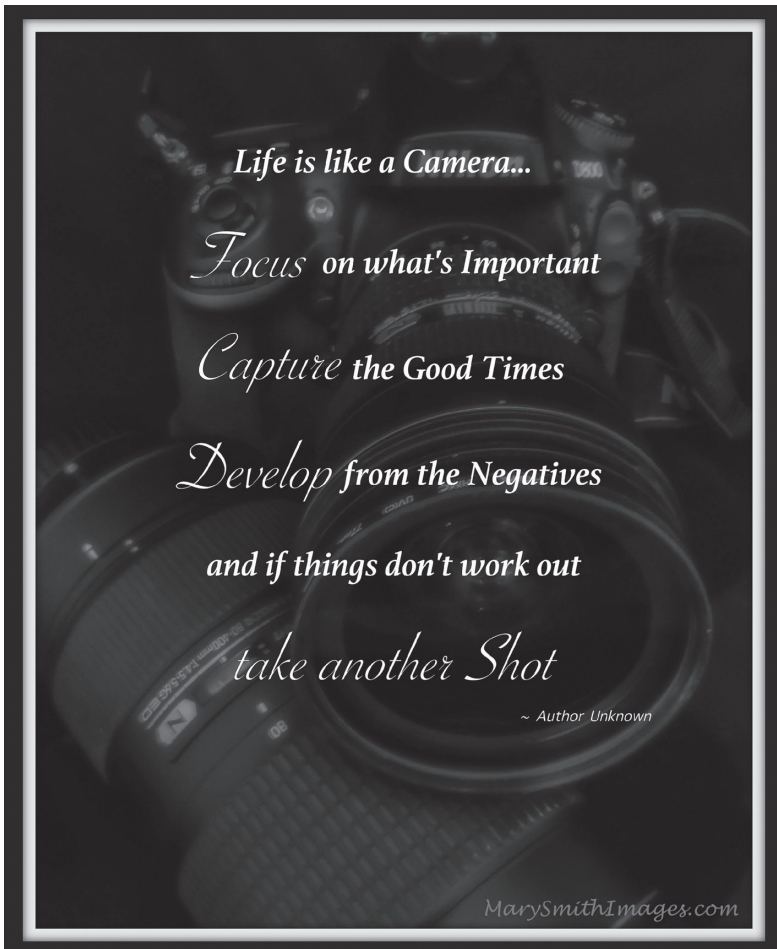
- **Remain Flexible:** In business, as in life it's wise to remain flexible. Flexibility will enable you to diversify and easily adapt to changes.
- **Follow your Heart and your Gut.**
- **Believe in Yourself.**
- **Release the Past:** cut any ties to the past that are holding you back.
- **Forgive:** you deserve it and you are worth the peace it will bring to you.
- **Find Your Passion.** Discover that thing that gives you those butterflies in your stomach, which makes your face glow. You will realise your full potential and come into your power when you are passionate about what you do. Explore and expand your talents and gifts.
- **Be Ready for Opportunities.** Be open and ready to new opportunities, even if some are out of your comfort zone. It is often said: 'Life begins at the end of your comfort zone.'

My chief message for anyone who has been repressed, or in a situation that is restrictive or hard; no matter how big the situation or how seemingly small you may think it is. You and your situation matter.

Your life matters. **Go and Live your Unlived Life!**

To hear more about Mary's inspiring story,
download 'Inspired Passion'

www.marysmithimages.com
www.inspiredlifecollections.com.au





LEADING THE CAUSE
ONE DAD'S CRUSADE TO CHANGE
THE STIGMA OF SUICIDE
ANDREW MARRIOTT



ANDY MARRIOTT

Andy Marriott has gained a wealth of knowledge from a wide range of life experiences. At 17 years of age Andy joined the New South Wales Police Cadet Corps and went on to complete 16 years of service. During these years he was exposed to victims of serious assaults, car accidents, drug abuse, domestic disputes, theft, murder and suicide to name a few. He had to become hardened to the darker side of life.

Following on from this career he entered the world of self-employment and after almost suffering financial ruin with his first venture, has since gone on to resurrect and redevelop many businesses in different fields, ranging from wholesale fruit juice to retail floor coverings, real estate and commercial fencing. His current project is a beachside healthy food, juice and smoothie café—Raw Energy in Coolumb Beach. Andy has also used his broad experience to help and coach others with their business ventures.

Andy met his wife Megan later in his police career; they had two children together and moved to Queensland. Here, all the family became involved in a wide range of sports and community organisations as the children—Glenn and Jaimi, progressed through their schooling and into sport competition.

Andy believed that his original police career had exposed and hardened him to pretty much all that life could throw at a person. How untrue this turned out to be, when late one evening he received a visit from the local police to tell him that his son, and first child, Glenn, had taken his own life.

Andrew's mission is to help raise awareness about suicide and change the way in which we talk and think about it. This change, though too late for his beloved Glenn, is not too late for others. True change begins with all of us—our awareness, our attitudes and our education; on what has notoriously been, a neglected, but all too common subject.

SurviveGoOnAndThrive.com.au

ANDREW, THANK YOU FOR SHARING SUCH A PERSONAL AND DIFFICULT JOURNEY, WE REALLY RESPECT YOUR PLIGHT IN CHANGING THE STIGMA OF THIS DELICATE AND CHALLENGING SUBJECT. PLEASE TELL US WHERE YOU'D LIKE TO BEGIN...

I know this is a difficult subject for so many people. It's not a comfortable topic, it is hard for many to talk about, but I assure you, it's much harder to live the reality. If we talk about it, educate ourselves, understand it and work toward changing the stigma and social attitudes around it, then we may in fact alter the disturbing statistics and save lives.

Over a five year period from 2011 to 2015, the average number of suicide deaths per year was 2,687. The most recent statistics released for 2015, reveal that, in that year alone, 3,027 people died by suicide, they take their own life. This equates to an average of 8.2 deaths by suicide in Australia each day, or 1 person every 3 hours.ⁱ In Australia, suicide is the leading cause of death for males and females aged between 15 and 44. It's not car accidents or alcohol—it's suicide. Over 2687 people die from suicide each year, to an average annual road toll of 1,400!

It has been established that there are as many as 100 people affected by every suicide.ⁱⁱ Of these 100 at least 10 are profoundly or directly affected or bereaved.ⁱⁱⁱ This means that at least 250,000 – 300,000 Australians are affected by suicide every year. That's around 3 million people each decade. More than statistics, they are the countless mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, partners, relatives and friends.

On November 22, 2006, our son Glenn made the decision to end his own life. This was almost 2 months after his 18th birthday. On that heartbreaking day, he became one of the 2500 individuals that chose to end their life that year. Our family became part of the grieving 250,000 for that year. In spite of these statistics, the subject of suicide has not been regularly and openly discussed

i Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). Causes of Death, Australia, 2014, Catalogue No. 3303.0. Belconnen, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia. Released in March 8, 2016, <http://www.abs.gov.au>

ii Campbell F. & Cerel J. A (2008) Suicide survivors seeking mental health service: A preliminary examination of the role of an active postvention model, *Suicide & Life Threatening Behaviour*, 38 (1), 30-35.

iii Wroblewski. (Crosby, A.E., & Sacks, J.J., (2002). Exposure to suicide: Incidence and association with suicidal ideation and behaviour: United States, 1994. *Suicide & Life Threatening Behaviour*, 32 (3), 321-328)

in Australia. Historically it appears to have been a taboo subject and, in my experience, there is a stigma attached to it. This stigma is particularly noticeable in the language traditionally used when speaking about suicide.

Today I'm asking you to help me remove the stigma and to talk more openly about suicide. It may not be a subject you *want* to talk about, but as a nation, it's a subject that we *need* to talk about. We are in crisis, and tragically, most are not aware of the alarming statistics.

HOW CAN SOCIETY BEST CONTRIBUTE TO REMOVING THIS STIGMA ANDREW?

One simple thing we can do to help the 1 in 5 who have in some way been affected, is to change the language we use when talking about suicide. The present, common and current language itself leaves some clues as to the social mentality we have grown accustomed to in relation to suicide; most of which have never been questioned or updated. It is a matter of public record that throughout history, suicide has been viewed by many in a negative light. Law-makers and in particular various church or religious organisations have at different times regulated against those who take their own life. In early times it was required that they be laid to an 'uneasy' rest at lonely rural crossroads after being tied to a wagon and dragged from town. Later they were denied a Christian burial in consecrated ground. They would be laid in the grave north to south (Christians were buried east to west), face down and then staked through the heart. This was to 'pin the spirit' and deny them from rising up to meet God. They were not allowed to be 'laid to rest' as was the normal practice for others. For many years, separate cemeteries or burial grounds existed because a person who had chosen to end their own life was not permitted to be buried 'on consecrated ground'.

The continual use of the word 'committed' (in the expression 'committed suicide') was one that first drew my attention. In my experience, 'committed' implies an 'offence', rather than reflect a person's decision. In many archaic traditions and religious affiliations suicide was once considered a 'felony' and thus the word 'committed' originated. Though attitudes have generally softened, suicide only became decriminalised in England in 1961.^{iv}

iv Suicide Act 1961, www.legislation.gov.uk

Thankfully, in Australia, as we have become more aware of suicide and its causes, laws have changed and progressed; but unfortunately our language has not. Suicide is not a crime; in fact the dictionary states it clearly as ‘the deliberate taking of one’s own life.’

A simple change in the language we use is a huge leap forward in reducing the stigma and shame often associated with suicide. My son Glenn wasn’t a criminal, he was a bubbly, energetic, kind and caring young man who made a decision, albeit a heartbreaking one, to end his own life. Like many bereaved, I would do anything to have him back, and desperately wish that he didn’t make that fateful decision. But he did. He chose to take his own life; he was desperate and lost, but one thing he certainly wasn’t—was a criminal. I ask that we may change our language, and in doing so, we contribute to changing awareness and to the act of compassion and understanding toward our nation’s leading cause of death.

New phrases we can use to help change social stigma:			
Use: <i>Died by suicide</i>	instead of	committed suicide	
Use: <i>Suicided</i>	instead of	successful suicide	
Use: <i>Ended (or took) his/her own life,</i>	instead of	completed suicide	
Use: <i>Attempted to take his/her life</i>	instead of	attempted suicide	

By shifting your own language, you not only make it easier for those affected, but also help to remove the stigma and get this tragic subject talked about more openly and regularly.

TELL US ABOUT GLENN.

Glenn was a very special young man. He was bright and bubbly, very active and always ready for fun or an adventure. He was always very kind, caring and giving to others. He had a marvellous smile and a warm and generous heart. At the same time there was also a cheeky, mischievous, larrikin side to him that we really enjoyed. He was particularly supportive and protective of his sister and our family. I guess he was your typical boy!

His very active nature saw him playing sport from an early age. He started in a soccer team at five years of age and it wasn't long after that he discovered a love for water and the beach in particular. He went on to participate in a wide range of sports. In Year 11 he represented his school in seven different sports at open, and up to State level while also being heavily involved in surf sports including Ironman and longboard contests. The ocean was certainly his passion. He was later described by a group of regional coaches as one of the most naturally gifted and talented athletes they had seen. It would be fair to say that he had little interest, or time for, academic pursuits.



(See video footage in the Yshift library)

WHAT WERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT LEAD TO GLENN TAKING HIS OWN LIFE?

After finishing Year 12 Glenn gained employment as an apprentice carpenter with a local builder. He continued with his surfing sports and rugby. He also had more time on his hands and a vast array of new or unexplored opportunities and choices. Glenn had also become involved with a girl who demanded a lot of his time and focus. Glenn appeared to me, to often struggle with this combination and I later learned that he had been dabbling in (or turned to) alcohol, cigarettes and even marijuana. This came to light as a consequence of his changing demeanour and moods. He had been mostly living with the girlfriend and her family before asking to return home. This arrangement only lasted for a short time as a result of the pressure bought to bear on him by his girlfriend, a result of her discomfort from being around Megan and I. He was then convinced by his girlfriend and her mother to move away from his home and beloved surf in Queensland, to Adelaide. They made the move with the assistance of his girlfriend's mother, and Glenn again secured work as an apprentice carpenter. Just six weeks later we received a late evening visit from the local police to deliver the horrific news. Glenn had taken his own life earlier that day.

Glenn had called me three days earlier and Megan spoke to him on the telephone the night before he died. At no time did we pick up any hint of what his thoughts or plans were. Unbeknown to us at the time, Glenn had shared his dark feelings and intention to take his own life with a couple of people. Heartbreakingly for us, we were never called or told of Glenn's intentions. Little did we know that those phone calls were to be the last conversations we would ever have with 'our special little man'.

HOW DID YOU COPE IN SUCH TRAGEDY?

The ensuing period is sometimes crystal clear and others a blur. After the police left, around 9pm, my wife Megan and I took some time to console each other, trying to accept that what we had just been told was in fact true. Trying in vain to deal with the raw and endless flood of emotions overwhelming us. By an uncommon sequence of events, the news of our son's death had spread extensively through text messages and social media and

many school friends and acquaintances knew before we did. His girlfriend wasn't forthcoming with our details or address to the Adelaide police at the time and our local police were deeply concerned that we could be contacted by somebody else before they had notified us. This made my mind conjure up the desperate hope that maybe this was all just a horrendous mistake.

Megan called a couple of our closest friends who, even in their state of complete shock, came to our house quickly to offer their support. I called my family. Megan, myself and our daughter Jaimi were in deep shock and complete devastation. We had lost our much loved son and brother. We had some great people rally around us and flood us with kind words and caring gestures; strangely, and also shockingly, we also had some people close to us reflect their discomfort and ignorance about suicide. Sadly, whilst trying to come to terms with our son's suicide, we also had to come to terms with some sad and disturbing comments made to us. The suicide stigma had raised its ugly head in our own home! Some indicated that a church service may not be a suitable venue for our son, and furthermore, a small discreet ceremony may be more appropriate, so it can all be 'cleaned up quickly and quietly'. The impact of such statements make the wound cut deeper.

The following morning I visited the funeral director's premises with a member of my family, to make arrangements for the repatriation of Glenn's body and discuss our options. Later that day, having received numerous visits and telephone calls from friends, family and his former school friends, I suggested to Megan that we go up to our local church to try and find some peace and calm. We sat in the church for an unknown period of time before looking at each other and simultaneously saying that this was where his funeral service needed to be. His funeral service was held at that church a week later, with over six-hundred people attending, many having to stand outside as the church was at capacity.

Just three days after Glenn's funeral, one of our closest friends, the second person we called that night for support, was the victim of a hit-and-run accident. As well as dealing with the loss of Glenn and legal issues surrounding his death, we spent the next couple of weeks driving to Brisbane to help comfort and feed our critically injured and totally immobilised friend. Megan described it accurately as 'hell on earth'. 'Hell on earth' continued

for over a year. Our daughter Jaimi, who was just 15 years old at the time, later wrote of how she felt that it was her job to take care of us, to be strong and support us. She recalls weeks of not only cooking and cleaning, but paying the bills and attending to a variety of duties as we regularly lay in bed unable to move.

WAS THERE ANYTHING DURING THIS PERIOD THAT HELPED YOU MAKE SENSE OF WHAT OCCURRED, OR GAVE ANY RELIEF OR SUPPORT?

On the Saturday afternoon, two weeks after Glenn's passing, two ladies came to our home—Jill and Dianna. They were from a small organisation in our area called StandBy Response Service, a group whose focus and expertise is in suicide postvention. They offer support and guidance to those left behind, or are affected by suicide. This visit had been initiated by our family doctor on the recommendation of a nurse at his practice. We were later to learn that the nurse had lost her husband when he decided to take his own life.

It was a fine, sunny December afternoon that day, so we decided to sit outside around the table under our pergola. It wasn't long before Megan and I felt comfortable enough to openly talk about our grief and the confused state we often found ourselves in. Jill and Dianna listened patiently as we poured out the sadness, guilt, anger, confusion and frustration we were experiencing, and our desperate desire for answers and understanding. We had accepted that those friends and colleagues who were around us, thankfully, had no experience in this area and some of them, although remaining outwardly strong were deeply sharing our feelings.

Having listened, Jill then started to share her wealth of knowledge and experience in this area. She spoke openly and shed light on the myriad of haunting questions and thoughts that had been flooding our heads. Things we had been lying awake in bed thinking about and discussing. For the first time we were hearing answers and explanations that we thought may help us come to grips with what had happened. We heard possibilities to help us move forward with our lives. It felt like there was some slight lifting of that heavy, thick fog that had descended over us.

Possibly as a result of my 'process based' nature, it had become important for me to try and piece together a picture or understanding of the events, thoughts and reactions that Glenn may have experienced in the lead up to, and during this defining time.

In the weeks and months following Glenn's funeral, and with my desire to make some sense of what had happened, I spent periods of time sitting in the sun. In particular, when I built-up the courage to leave our home, I would go and sit on the wooden deck at his favourite surfing spot. The combination of the sun and ocean seemed to put me in a place where I could think with some clarity at least. At this time I was still trying to come to grips with Glenn's death and many of the unjust and unbearable circumstances surrounding it.

When Jill from StandBy Response Service came to talk with us at home she suggested that at some point I might consider the fact that Glenn's suicide was a decision that he had made on his own, and that his final action was just that— *his* action.

This was very hard to accept at first, with me wanting find blame in myself and others. Over time I slowly began to accept it as a fact— this was Glenn's decision and Glenn's actions. Whilst I will never fully understand his decision and subsequent actions, I must at least accept and respect them. As I continued through the process of gaining increased acceptance of this, I also felt my feelings of anger, guilt and blame begin to dissipate. I progressively become more comfortable within myself.

Once I had accepted that it was Glenn's decision, I looked for an opportunity to talk with Megan about what seemed to be working for me. We had become even closer than ever during this grief-stricken period.

YOUR ACCEPTANCE OF THIS SEEMED TO BE A MAJOR TURNING POINT. DID THIS HELP YOU SEE THINGS IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT?

Acceptance is a major healing force, it doesn't happen immediately, but over time, it certainly can help alleviate the residual emotions and continual questions.

Now, we believe that Glenn always knew that he was here for a short time and had to pack in as much experience and fun in as he possibly could—and he sure did that! When we look back at events or his actions now, more often than not, we are able to see them in a positive and happy light. His teaching for us has become—that we must go and do things, have experiences, live life because you never know what may happen.

Those directly affected by suicide often find that it leads them toward a spiritual path. Trying in some way to move forward, grasping for anything to help, to find some sort of relief so guilt doesn't eat you up. Megan and I went back to church, and Father Richard was a tremendous help and spiritual comfort. We also researched and sought out spiritual healers and mediums.

The single most positive thing to come from this tragedy has been, that against all odds, our marriage has become stronger and relationship with our daughter Jaimi, closer. While Jaimi was very strong through such a devastating and tumultuous period, Megan and I were able to be strong and support her when she finally did release her feelings, some three years later. Our memories are precious and can be triggered by a variety of things—actions, events and even places, often for unexplainable reasons, however now we are able to put a positive meaning toward them, and if unable to do this, now, we don't dwell on them. We have learned to celebrate and be grateful for the time we did share. Now in reflection and learning, I can say there are 3 things that we can do. We cannot bring Glenn back, but we can: Survive, go on and even thrive. This is also the message that I want to get out to others who have been unfortunate enough to have shared our experience.

WHAT CAN WE DO, IN SOCIETY, TO HELP PREVENT AND DECREASE THE SUICIDE STATISTICS?

There are many steps we can take. Obviously, preventing suicide is the best and most necessary step. Education and understanding are paramount. Suicide is a permanent 'solution' to a temporary problem. For those affected by suicide, postvention is needed. Those directly affected by suicide are 8 times more likely to also suicide.^v Prevention and postvention measures are needed. There are many things we can do in our daily lives to make a difference.

^v Postvention Australia, National Association for the bereaved by suicide.

REMOVE THE STIGMA – Removing the stigma around suicide is vital. We can see by the staggering numbers of suicides that secrecy, shame and silence are not the answers. Suicide is preventable! We CAN do something about it! But we cannot do what we have been doing and expect different results. We need to talk about it, open our heart and minds to new preventable solutions and eradicate the social stigmas that have plagued this misunderstood topic for centuries.

USE APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE – Change your language, change the stigma! Let's 'de-criminalise' the archaic language and begin to use current and appropriate language. Let's not make those who were, and are, emotionally struggling into criminals. Our language can be changed in one second, all it takes is a decision to change it. I ask you to please consider this minor change in your language to help make a major change in shifting the stigma.

SUPPORT EACH OTHER – Support networks and associations are wonderful, but in addition to this we also need to support each other as global citizens. Support friends and family who may be going through a hard time, support those who need it and those already touched by suicide. Whether it's just a hand on the shoulder or a phone call, every little kind and compassionate gesture matters. If you are really worried for somebody then reach out. Start a conversation. Tell them you are concerned for them. Don't be afraid to ask if they are thinking about suicide. It is a tough question to ask, but necessary. Research has established that most people with thoughts of suicide want to talk about it, they want to live and need someone to hear their pain. Listen to them – let them do most of the talking. Where possible, don't leave them alone and ask for a promise. Get help from a doctor or one of the support centres and phone call hotlines that are critical to ensuring contact and support for those struggling. Support can come in a number of ways and it's up to all of us to offer what we can and look after each other.

In summary, as the slogan for World Suicide Prevention Day (2016) says:

CONNECT - COMMUNICATE - CARE

It is vital that we do.

HOW CAN PEOPLE BEST SUPPORT THOSE AFFECTED BY SUICIDE?

Some people don't know what to say to those who have lost a family member through suicide...but I assure you, saying something, whether it be 'I'm sorry for your loss', or 'I don't know what to say, but I'm here and I care' is much better than saying nothing at all. Just make an effort to reach out. Megan and I had some people even cross the street when they saw us walking toward them, not because they were nasty people, but because they didn't know what to say. In these cases, even just 'hello' and a kind smile is better than nothing.

'Saying the wrong thing is better than saying nothing at all'

— Megan Marriott

The Standby Response Service distribute a simple but effective document to help people support the bereaved. Its headline is '*What Do I Say? What Do I Do?*' It offers 10 simple but poignant strategies that I'd like to share.

1. **Listen to their story**—over and over again. Or, alternatively, sit with them in their pain—sometimes this may be a time of silence.
2. **Listen without judging**—those who are bereaved will have intense feelings that are likely to include anger, sadness, fear and guilt. You cannot change this or take their pain away but you can help them by being there, caring and listening.
3. **Be prepared** for any and all reactions. Be particularly aware of the needs of children.
4. **Remember** that there are some very important things that people want to know. Offer to find out about some resources and information that may assist them in their grieving. Support them in accessing specialist care if they need it.
5. **Keep in touch** on a regular basis. Don't abandon those mourning. There may be times when your offers of help are refused. Try again later. If you feel awkward because you don't know what to do, or say, be honest— 'I don't know what to say...is there anything that I can do?'

6. **Offer to do something practical** like making a meal, paying bills or doing the shopping or washing.
7. **Send a note**—if you don't know what to say, you can just write 'thinking of you'.
8. **Share good memories** of the person who died and what they meant to you.
9. **Give the bereaved time.** Don't expect them to be 'over it' in a few weeks or months. It can take months or years to find a way to live with loss. Try to remember birthdays and other special days. Be aware that these may be particularly difficult times.
10. **Be kind to yourself**—it can be draining to share another's loss. You may also be affected by this loss and have your own grief to deal with. Take time to do some special things for yourself.

Knowing how to support others during uncertain times is an important life skill.

On reflection, we learned a lot about people during this time. People who we would have considered acquaintances stepped up and were of immense help and support, while some friends became obvious by their absence. We learned to accept that it may be harder for those who knew us in the 'happy family environment'. We received some amazing support from people we didn't know so well, and simultaneously, shocking denunciation from some people we knew very well. It was mind-boggling and hard to assimilate.

THOUGH SOME GOOD STEPS HAVE BEEN MADE, E.G. INCREASED AWARENESS, HELPLINES AND SUPPORT GROUPS, IT SEEMS THAT THERE'S STILL A LONG WAY TO GO IN TERMS OF THE SOCIAL ATTITUDES TOWARD SUICIDE?

Glenn's death and the multitude of experiences we've endured has fuelled my deep passion to make a difference and contribute to shifting the social attitudes of suicide.

I often ask myself these questions:

- At a time when our society has become much more open and willing to discuss topics which were previously taboo, why is suicide still practically taboo?
- How can we get people thinking about and openly discussing this subject?
- How can we better inform those who have not been affected so that they may reconsider, what to me seems to me, to be an outdated view of this subject?
- Shouldn't we be better educating both teenagers and adults in how to recognise signs of depression *and* desperation and how to best seek help for themselves and others?

It is very disappointing to me that while our Government pour vast amounts of money into areas that in fact have a lower annual toll, groups working in the sectors of prevention or postvention of suicide and mental health in general, continue to scratch for funding. I do not want to see funding withdrawn from other areas, I want to see increased funding for what is a national crisis. A silent and 'forbidden' epidemic. It needs to be urgently addressed.

What also needs to be addressed is the aftermath of suicide. Those left devastated and desperate and in vital need of support. Support programs and self-care strategies support bereaved individuals and families and help reduce the 'domino effect' that can be accompanied with suicide. The grief and bewilderment of suicide can trigger depression in another, this is especially common in young people affected by suicide. A team of researchers at the University of Melbourne studied this topic and how best to prevent additional deaths after suicide. They came up with six recommendations of implementing a community-based strategy, this primarily focused on using 'response teams' such as mental-health professionals, teachers, parents, police, community leaders. It also included 'hands on' plans and strategies, group and individual counselling, education on teaching others how to deal with grief, guilt, sadness, and suicidal thoughts. In summary, it focuses

on a community response rather than individualising or ostracising the bereaved.^{vi} Suicide affects many people in a multitude of ways and if we work together we can save countless lives. These lives aren't just numbers, they are someone's son or daughter, someone's husband or wife, friend or family. We, as a community can band together and support each other and the lives of our loved ones.

CAN YOU SHARE SOME SIMPLE SELF-CARE TIPS FOR THOSE WHO MAY UNFORTUNATELY BE AFFECTED BY SUICIDE?

Self-care is the most important thing, both for those bereaved as well as anybody working in or helping others in this area. Standby Response shared some steps prepared by the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement which I have found most helpful and still refer to from time to time. They are:

1. **Be nurtured.** Look after yourself. By looking after yourself you will be able to also support those around you.
2. **Seek balance.** Be kind to your body—make time to do things that help you relax, e.g. sleeping, listening to music, massage, having a bath or meditation.
3. **Healthy eating.** Try to maintain a healthy diet and be cautious about overuse of alcohol or medications.
4. **Physical activities.** Try to build some physical activity into your day, even a 30 minute walk can make a difference.
5. **Stay connected.** Make an effort to be with others and catch up with friends.
6. **Do things you enjoy.** Set time aside for yourself—play music, go fishing, read a book, spend time in the garden, play sport or catch up with a friend.

^{vi} Pirkis J. (2010) Developing a community plan for preventing and responding to suicide clusters, Centre for Health Policy, Programs and Economic, Melbourne School for Population Health, The University of Melbourne .

7. **Go outside.** Spend time outdoors—fresh air and sunshine (Vitamin D) can assist your overall health and wellbeing.
8. **Talk.** Storytelling or yarning circles can be healing. Talk to someone supportive and understanding about your grief journey.
9. **Healthy relationships.** Re-establish meaning and connection with others. Ask yourself if your relationships bring comfort and meaning, and be open also to new friendships with others who understand the grief journey.
10. **Seek help.** Help is available. Don't be afraid to reach out and find what support may be available to you, or ask if someone can help you find the support you need.

I would also advocate to practise getting to a point of ACCEPTANCE. Getting to this point will be a different journey for everybody and will happen over different time frames. In accepting that it was Glenn's decision to end his life, we found some peace and peace makes life possible.

SUPPORT LINKS:	
StandBy Response Service www.unitedsynergies.com.au/program/standby-response-service	
1300 659 467	www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
13 11 14	www.lifeline.org.au
1800 55 1800	www.kidshelpline.com.au
1300 78 9978	www.mensline.org.au
www.headspace.org.au	
www.suicidepreventionaust.org	
1300 22 4636	www.beyondblue.org.au
1800 184 527	www.qlife.org.au
1800 18 SANE (7263)	www.sane.org
www.livingisforeveryone.com.au	

SUPPORT LINKS <i>continued</i>	
www.canmentalhealth.org.au	
1800 242 636	www.careraustralia.com.au
1800 650 890	www.eheadspace.org.au
www.grieflink.org.au	
www.counsellingonline.org.au	
1800 688 009	www.childabuseprevention.com.au
www.mindhealthconnect.org.au	
1800 985 944	www.minetworks.org.au
au.reachout.com	
www.caps.org.au	
www.supportaftersuicide.org.au	
www.unitedsynergies.com.au/program-category/affected-by-suicide	
www.postventionaustralia.org	

STATE CRISIS NUMBERS:		
NSW	1800 011 511	Mental Health Line
VIC	1300 651 251	Suicide Help Line
QLD	13 43 25 84	13 HEALTH
TAS	1800 332 388	Mental Health Services Helpline
SA	13 14 65	Mental Health Assessment and Crisis Intervention Service
WA	1800 676 822	Mental Health Emergency Response Line
NT	08 8999 4988	Top End Mental Health Service
ACT	1800 629 354	Mental Health Triage Service



FROM REFUGEE TO RICHES TALES AND TRUTH ABOUT MONEY, HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS

YEN SHINE



YEN SHINE

Yen Shine is a remarkable woman of many talents. Born in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge period, she spent her childhood escaping the hardships of war and living in a refugee camp in Thailand.

Yen's story isn't just hers, it is the result of a determined and persistent father, who against insurmountable odds battled his way through many storms, seizing any opportunities in order to give his cherished family a new life in Australia. Yen Shine has continued the family legacy, embodying the same tenacity and resilience as her father.

Yen has bought and sold a multitude of different businesses, managed numerous residential and commercial property developments and built a steady portfolio. Despite her uncommon upbringing and amazing success Yen knows that the true meaning of life is not in society's idea of success, but in the one we feel deep within ourselves. She knows that 'being rich' is not about money but about family, joy and inner peace.

Yen is a successful entrepreneur and speaks an astonishing six languages; yet most importantly, Yen is a proud wife and mother of two beautiful sons.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO SHARE YOUR STORY WITH THE YSHIFT AUDIENCE?

In today's society we are living in a world of information *and* a world of material belonging. All we see is what others have, and how others see us; which in turn forms the idea, that our image is 'who we are', and inevitably this creates the picture of 'what we want'. Most people want the bigger house or the better job, but is that what you *really* want? What is *really* in your heart and soul? When is the last time you took a long honest look into your eyes in the mirror?

We are living in a much richer, and more competitive world than our heart desires. We have become so busy, that we forget to look at ourselves and listen to what is *really* inside of us. What deeply sustains and satisfies us.

The reason I share this with you is because I have seen both sides of the coin—poverty and prosperity. I have lived from both ends and understand that our true hearts desires may not always be in accordance with society's rules or the material world we are growing up in. We are bombarded with marketing and media and messages of 'do more, be more, have more' every single day of our lives; yet instead of being slaves to this mass-marketing and aggressive consumerism, I encourage you to take a deeper look into your own heart and ask yourself what you truly want and who you truly are?

I share my experiences and life story with you, not because I have a personal wish to tell *my* story, but because I feel I have a duty to my children to do so. As a mother, a refugee and an entrepreneur I know how easy it is to lose sight of what is truly important in a world that is hellbent on hammering us with commercials and consumerism. But let's just take a step back for one moment and allow me to share a story with you. A story that is both epic and true. A story that is significant to life. A story about a 40-year-old Cambodian refugee man and his journey to the 'lucky country'.

Though this humble man grew up in war-torn and poverty stricken Cambodia and has become successful, he also raised four children. Despite this extraordinary feat, this story is not about money or achievement, it's about the deep resilience and ineffable human spirit that made these feats possible. It's about one man's tenacity, unrelenting persistence and

extraordinary vision. For it's here, within these human qualities, that the real legacy is made and it's within these inner resources that we hold our most valuable and significant treasures. It's here, buried within our stories of accomplishment and overcoming adversity that the legacy of a lifetime is born, and if this legacy is kept alive it continues to be active through each generation.

My name is Yen Shine and this is my story, and that of my father—the Cambodian refugee man. It is also a story born from his father and generations before him. As a Shine, I am a blood-born warrior of persistence and purpose and I stand proud of my heritage and proud of our humble beginnings. I am not just a 'refugee survivor', I am a hard-working proud Asian Australian who trekked the long road toward success. I am a proud and caring citizen who came to realise the true meaning of life, and it is with this realisation that I share my story.

With a humble heart, I carry the lineage of my father and devote this story to my children. For when times get tough or life becomes hard, they can know their true origin and understand that their true identity is never severed. They can reach into their own hearts and remember that they are of a strong lineage, a living legacy made from strong, determined and generous people. And if things get hard, or they were to find themselves in financial disaster or hard times then it's this legacy that they can rely on. They can find their own inner resources within their genes and climb out of any situation and make a good life for themselves.

CAN YOU SHARE A LITTLE MORE OF YOUR UNIQUE STORY YEN?

In 1983, after the horrifying Khmer Rouge period, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, my Dad decided he had no choice but to leave Cambodia and give his family a better life. The closest country was Thailand. Therefore he planned to cross the border to Thailand on foot. They made their way with what they could carry in a cloth wrap. Dad's father-in-law, two brother-in-laws, and a sister-in-law carried water and clothing. He carried his three-year-old daughter and his wife carried their one-year-old son. They made their journey by boat and foot toward Thailand, however whilst

passing through the forest, they got robbed of everything they were carrying. They had nothing left, so he had to make the dreaded choice of turning back to Cambodia and begin the long arduous task of gathering more funds again. He got a little bit of gold, but not quite enough to pay for everyone's boat fee to Thailand. He sent his wife's family out first and he and his family would stay back in Cambodia to gather more funds. With luck on their side, and with the funds my Dad gave them, the in-laws' made it safely to Thailand. Soon enough, it was time for him and his family to try again. They left Cambodia and headed again toward Thailand. During this very unpredictable time, Cambodian citizens weren't supposed to cross the border to Thailand; but he had to try. Unfortunately they were caught by the Thai police and weren't allowed to cross the border. Seeing their desperate situation, one Thai police officer gave my father an unforgettable, and unforgivable ultimatum. He requested that my Dad give him one of his beloved children in exchange for entry to Thailand. Not only did he want to 'trade' one child for the safe passage to Thailand, but he further offered additional money to help settle into a new life. He promised Dad that he and his wife would raise the child as their own. Apparently this Thai officer and his wife couldn't have children after 10 years of trying and he saw this as a 'solution' to his 'dire' situation. He declared to Dad that 'a boy or girl doesn't matter, as long as I get a child'.

Dad saw the armed officers with their rifles and knew their reputation for using them. He was petrified that this desperate officer may in fact shoot most of his family dead but take a child or two for himself. He knew this situation was extremely precarious.

He boldly told the officer that he would never separate his family and he would rather that we all die together than live apart. He even added that he would kill his own family 'right here and now' than have the officer do it to us. He said if we were to die, then we'll do it together under our rules! The police officer in fact shed a tear at his own 'misfortune' in securing a child and sent us all back to Cambodia once more.

Back again in Cambodia, and refusing to give up, my Dad decides to attempt the trek again. On the third attempt - the Shine family are safe in Thailand. Relief!

Six long years in a refugee camp in Thailand, this noble man did not give up on his dream of a better life. He was sent \$250 from his in-laws; that's all he needed to start a life. He used this \$250 to make more money through small business ventures. He told his wife's family not to send any more money because this was enough and he would make it from here.

Six years in the camp and he attends an interview for entry into Australia. Australia accepts him and we're overjoyed! In 1989 the Shine family arrive in Australia. Carrying very little, but full of hope. We begin a new life in a new country.

When we land in Australia and move into a hostel and see beautiful living areas. However, this refugee man knew deep inside that this was not going to be forever and he must make his own way and give his family a stable place to live. He had a dream and he was dedicated to making it happen. He moved us out of the hostel and into a garage owned by someone his friend introduced him to. This move into the garage made, me—his nine-year-old daughter, cry inconsolably. I was jumping up-and-down, begging him to go back to the place with the nice clean room and the shiny bathroom. I didn't want to stay in this dirty, old garage.

Dad reassured me that 'everything will be fine'. He kneeled down to my height, cupped my tear-soaked face gently in his hands and promised me that one day he will give me a bigger, clean house with a shiny bathroom. He asked me look at the garage again, to look at the wide open space and all the room I could run around in. He pointed to the acreage and said 'Isn't this better than Thailand? Isn't this a bigger space than what we had in Thailand?'

Seeing the backyard and the space I had to run around, I realised it wasn't so bad. I calmed down and smiled to Dad. Just to be sure, I asked once more 'Do you promise that we will have our big house one day?' Dad replies an affirmative 'Yes!'

Mum and Dad go to work every day and we go to our Grandparent's house. Bit-by-bit, as they kept working and working, they made enough money to rent a three room house with a bungalow. They rent out two rooms to another farm worker and keep the other room for us. Mum and Dad worked very hard often getting only four hours of sleep. They saved every cent

they could so they could buy a Milk bar/mixed-business store. They didn't speak English, or had very limited English so after school I would work in the Milk bar to help them. I had learned English much faster and could converse with the customers. I would ask them what they wanted and then translate to Mum and Dad. They kept working and working to give us a better life and we would help where we could. I was working from a young age to help my family too. Soon we saved and saved and went from a milk bar to a grocery store. My Mum and Dad would never give up. My Dad's tenacity and sheer willpower was at the forefront of our family and we all contributed to his vision.

WHAT A TRULY AMAZING AND INSPIRING STORY YEN. YOU MUST BE SO PROUD.

Yes, I look at my parents, how hard they worked, and how they never gave up.

Dad's belief in hard work and believing in a bigger vision has always inspired me. I think it really planted a seed in me early and I have never shied away from hard work. He instilled—if you have a goal, work hard towards it. Yet he never stepped on people or put himself first in order to achieve success, he is the epitome of combining good ethics and morals with hard work and tenacity. His belief and faith is always so strong, he still looks after others before himself. His theory of putting others first is what makes him even more special. This man made it even without a word of English, yet now he can speak English.

DO YOU THINK SOME IMMIGRANTS WHO HAD A HARD ROAD TO SUCCESS HAVE A DIFFERENT MINDSET THAN THOSE WHO HAVEN'T BEEN IN HARD CONDITIONS?

I can only speak from my own experience and observations. I think it's natural that if you've seen and experienced some tough challenges that you automatically have a different perspective than those who haven't. This is across all cultures and countries.

I know many refugees who are more than willing to work twice as long and are willing to get \$10 per hour than many others. Many employees think that the boss is trying to rip them off and most aren't willing to work

more than eight hours. To most of us, a job is just to pay bills and feed the family. However to a refugee, a job often means a whole new life, a new beginning, a new possibility, a future. Any pay is extra. It is also the meaning of having something to do, the ability to do work, and the value being a worker. A refugee is often a very proud worker, proud to have a job and proud to do work and be integrated within the community.

Although, in general I really believe refugees have a very strong will in their life and reputable work ethics. There are others that should deepen their value and respect for their opportunity here in Australia and what the government has provided. As a refugee I suggest to all refugees to reflect often about the reason you are here, and not to forget it. We are here because we want a better life for ourselves and our family. And Australia is the country we value for giving us this amazing opportunity. It's important to adapt and learn Australian culture. We must all condition our mind to positive change and embrace the new opportunity we are given. My Dad did just this, he kept growing and changing and adapting.

Australia is a land of opportunity for everyone, and a very beautiful peaceful country, let's keep in that way and contribute to it. If we don't value it, it will be gone. Look at the whole world now, one country wants to take over another country, all these battles and crises. We do not want this.

WHAT CAN SOMEONE DO TO KEEP PERSPECTIVE? THIS WORLD IS SO BUSY AND WE NEED TO GET MONEY TO LIVE? HOW CAN WE BALANCE THIS AND NOT LOSE OURSELVES IN THE PROCESS OF ACHIEVING?

The world can be a very cruel and tough place to live in. If you don't set the right mentality or condition yourself to be what you want and work hard for it, you won't achieve your dreams *and* be happy. Some people are outrageously successful but unhappy, you just have to see the celebrity suicides and it shows you that fame and wealth do not necessarily mean happiness and joy. Then we also see many people have very little and radiate immense joy and happiness.

Firstly, we must realise material success doesn't always equal happiness.

Through much hard work and tenacity I have achieved prosperity. My husband and I have made good decisions and worked extremely hard to achieve this. Now we are at a point that the businesses and investments run themselves. I was once insistent of being a super-achiever, making a fortune, now I understand balance.

However my sweet six-year old son showed me quite innocently that there is more to life than just having money. Last year our family went to Jakarta, I wanted to 'find myself' again. I was wanting to get some perspective and have some time out. I had worked so hard and wanted to reflect and rediscover some areas of my life that were challenging for me. In some way I think amongst my hard work and daily go-getting I had somehow forgotten the true meaning of life and the true meaning of marriage.

I had been so driven to succeed and create a wonderful life for us that I had not been mindful of the other areas of my life that were neglected due to my rigor and pursuit. I was only focusing on my husband's 'weaknesses' in business, not his meaning in my life or mine in his. We were in a position in life where we didn't have to work hard for money anymore and he was fully satisfied with what we had. He didn't need another business venture or another property investment. I, however saw this as a weakness, a laziness, an inability to succeed. I hadn't understood yet, that he simply was content with what he had.

I was in my thirties and we had already set-up our sons' lives. They wouldn't ever need to struggle. But, strangely after all this pursuit and effort, I felt empty inside. I didn't know myself without hard work and endless pursuit. I had conditioned my mind to never stop. I had achieved so much in such a short time and yet I 'forgot' that I am also a human being and I needed love and care and understanding too. I needed to get back in touch with the truth of life.

To me, work had taken over and my drive to be successful was so strong that I hadn't switched it off after we had 'made it'. I began to blame my husband. However, I was wrong. He felt whole and understood the value of balance, whereas I had lost touch and become focused on achievement.

That nine-year-old girl who asked her Daddy to promise her a bigger house hadn't yet stopped. Until one day, she had to. Though she had achieved her goals, there was a void within, a sense of being lost, wondering 'what's next?'

As I mentioned, I was in Jakarta. We were going to see a mature friend who does film producing, and is highly experienced in analysing people's characters, he is also an entrepreneur. Who better to ask for help, right? It was a moment of self-discovery.

I was looking forward to seeing this man, I wanted to talk with him and share my story so he could analyse our characters and situation. I was expecting him to tell me how obviously right I was, and how wrong my husband was. Then it would be all solved and I'd go home. How naive I was. Instead this magnetic man informed me that the problem was with me! Ouch! What? How could this be? He enlightened me to the fact that my husband was both rich and internally happy, whereas I wasn't. I was rich but unhappy inside. Furthermore, my husband was loving me very very much and putting up with my erratic and demanding behaviour, whereas I wasn't loving him very well at all. This lightbulb moment was hard to digest. I thought how on earth could my husband be smarter than me? After all, I had created all this wealth and been the instigator and mastermind behind our success, and here he was being wiser and 'getting it' way before me. I was simply blind to this obvious fact.

Not only was my husband my teacher at this moment, but so was my six-year-old son. While in Jakarta, he saw some scenes he had never been exposed to before. He saw so many destitute children who were running around happily with the biggest smiles. The scene that most captured his interest though, was the local school. He saw a ruined and dilapidated building with no facilities. It was the complete antithesis of what he knew to be 'a school'. He was worried the building would collapse on them. But the kids there were all smiling and happy. Not one complained about their school. My six-year old son asked me 'Mummy, can we help them?'

I gave him some money and he happily passed it onto the school. On our return to Australia, he hadn't forgotten these kids. He asked me if I could build them the school. He really wanted to help the Jakarta kids and since he had seen us build houses, he figured we could build them a school just as easily.

At first I was a bit shocked at his request, and then I remembered how important it is to condition our mind to success and solutions. I told him that if he can earn \$80 by himself before the school holidays, then I'd take

him back to Jakarta and help the school. I honestly thought he would have to slave away for at least a year, \$80 for a six-year-old boy is a huge sum of money to earn from his own ideas and ingenuity. I wanted him to understand the value of a dollar and how hard it can be to earn money. Boy, was I wrong. Again! This young boy showed me how to pluck money from thin air. First he began with a read-a-thon, after four books he decided that it took too long to earn money. Next, he started to paint a rock and then asked his aunty to put the rock on eBay to sell it. He decided that he needed to make money faster. We all laughed at him endearingly. Who would buy a silly rock painted by a kid? He insisted that he was going to make a lot of money from these rocks. In good humour, his aunty put it on eBay. He sold his painted rock for \$50! He made \$80 in just a few weeks, not one year as I had expected. He showed me that making money wasn't *only* hard labour, but could also happen through creative imagination and a bit courage. Everything is possible. Even the impossible is possible, if you put some belief, creation and imagination with it.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU'VE HAD IN BUSINESS AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

At the age of 25, I bought myself a business in a notoriously rough neighbourhood. At that time, I was completely naive to some aspects of life; I didn't even know what a drug-addicted or alcoholic person looked like. But here I was buying a liquor store in a well-known 'bad' suburb. Dad was overseas at the time and would have warned me against this purchase, but I was wanting to show my independence whilst he was away. I can remember standing in front of the shop and seeing a 6ft man drinking out the front of the shop and talking loudly to some women close by, who were also drinking. As I walked into the shop, I asked myself, 'Are you sure this is what you want? How are you going to handle them?' I stood there for a good ten minutes and closed my eyes, talking to myself from the inside. My heart was stable, and I spoke to myself 'OK Yen, you only have to do this for three years. You'll get all your money back and more, so just go for it!'

So I did. I sold my husband's house, and my house and borrowed money from my in-laws. I bought the liquor store and my whole family helped me clean and fix it up. They also gave me some money to help buy stock.

Within one week of owning the store, there was screaming, yelling, fighting and bloodshed right out the front of my new shop. I spent that night mopping up blood. Instantly I regretted my decision and begin to cry. Then I spoke to myself again, ‘Yen. Yen it’s just blood. Remember three years, just three years and you’re done’.

The next morning I opened the shop with a grumpy face, feeling a little lost. I was scared of what the day could bring. Everything began well... until midday, after they’d had their drink and went crazy again. There was loud swearing and trouble brewing again. This time, it was inside my shop. I got so angry! I talked to myself again ‘Yen, everyone is waiting to see you cry, to laugh at you. Who are they to do this to you? It is your shop, just like your house. Why do you let them treat your property with disrespect?’

I was furious. I confronted the thugs. I took off one of my thongs and began hitting a man, a regular customer called Stan, with my thong. I yelled at him and pushed him out of my shop. I yelled at every bastard outside the shop and told them that I am going to close the shop. And I did.

The next morning they all waited outside the shop, waiting for their grog. I told them that I didn’t want them as customers anymore, ‘so don’t come in my shop or I will close the doors again.’ They all looked stunned and ask me ‘why?’ I told them ‘I don’t like you and I don’t need you as my customer. This is MY shop! Those that cannot respect me are not welcome to come in’.

I put up a ‘Rules of Entry’ sign all around the shop. They must read the rules and knock on the door and say they accept my rules. Those who do not accept or abide by the rules are not accepted into the store. If they do not follow the rules then the consequence was— no entry ever again. Everyone agreed and obeyed and the shop was soon re-opened with the rules intact.

From that day onward, I knew that in order to protect myself and the shop, I must get to know my customers and understand their behaviour. So I began to talk to them and within three months I knew the whole neighbourhood—their name, their address, their police record and behavioural patterns. I learnt how to talk their language so I could ensure that they would always behave appropriately in my shop. I had a business to run. I took control of the situation and instead of making enemies I talked to

them, listened to them and acted as their friend. I helped them out here and there and they learnt to trust me.

I ended up staying seven years, not three as I had intended. Those big scary alcoholics, ended up protecting me in some way and my shop was never once broken into, which in this suburb was unheard of. When I was pregnant with my second son, they helped me open and close the shop, and ensured I had made it to my car safely before they walked home. To me, they became much more genuine and real than most of the high-profile people I've known.

From this grocery and liquor shop experience, I have learned that you must control your own destiny. You cannot let others control it for you. Your destiny stems from the power of your mind and your ability to adapt to situations. Getting too emotional about things can just kill the business and make you want to step away. Just get smart and take control.

I bought two more shops in that time and after seven years I sold the grocery and liquor store. With the money I made I bought two pieces of land. One of them happened to come with a plan and permit to build; it was the catalyst for enhancing our journey from business to property development.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHERS ABOUT BUILDING BUSINESS SUCCESS?

Firstly, success does not happen by luck, it's rare. People often say 'life is a gamble', but life is not like gambling at all, gambling is set-up to have the odds against you, to have little chance of winning. Life is more of a competitive game. To increase your chances of winning in the variable game of life depends on how well you learn the rules and how well you master the game.

There's always opportunities out there but you must be willing to take that opportunity and more importantly, to make the most out of those you get.

One of the core principles to success from my experience is the willingness to give. Building wealth isn't just about how much you get, it comes from how much you give. Be determined and willing to give. Give time, effort, kindness and success will naturally arise.

Business success is all about taking appropriate and calculated risks. It's not the casino and you don't need to gamble on an idea. It's best that

you use common sense and calculate your decisions. You must be honest in identifying your strengths and ability. What can you really handle? Do you have the right skill-set for this?

Believe in yourself and never give up. Try and try again. It may not be glamorous but it works.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY HAVE BEEN THE 3 BIGGEST LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNT IN BUSINESS?

1. **Listening.** I have learnt to listen. You must listen to what people need and value and understand the inherent need to belong. You need to make sure your customer feels that they belong in your shop, and you make sure they are proud to be your customer. Listen to their needs.
2. **Believe.** Believe in yourself. Believe that you can do it! It may not happen overnight but with self-belief it will happen at some stage.
3. **Focus.** Focus on the end goal. Everything begins with a decision and remaining focused to finish it, is the formula. You must prepare for the worst case, not the best.

YOU HAVE INVESTED INTO PROPERTY AND COMMERCIAL OUTLETS. WHAT PROPERTY STRATEGIES DO YOU USE?

There are many different property strategies. It's a very big and variable topic. Many people have made their riches in property and many have gone broke. There also are lot of scammers and charlatans trying to show people how to make money from it. Even some popular renovation style TV shows can be misleading. Just because one person made it big through renovation, doesn't mean that you will too. I haven't gambled in the areas of property that I'm not familiar with, instead I stay in the areas I have mastered and gained success from.

Personally I have properties that are only 'cash flow positive', because when I wasn't so well off, I didn't want to have any extra liabilities. This category of property is suitable for those who have enough income but not enough cash. By cash I mean 'real cash' not 'on-paper cash'. Over time this type property will increase but often in a very slow manner. This often

means no capital gain in the short term, and even in the long term, but there's no financial burden. In the very long future, the properties automatically increase in value due to inflation. These properties are a great long term asset with the short term benefit of extra cash each month.

The general population say it's hard to find 'positive cash flow' properties, returning an income each week. We specialise in furnished room rentals. The model is renting out a house, room-by-room for student accommodation and backpacker bunks. Initially we had no money to buy a house, so we rented. For example a four bedroom house in the suburbs can be rented @ \$350-450 per week, whilst on-campus students are paying up to \$250 per week per room. The opportunities are always present, we just learnt to recognise and seize them.

HOW CAN SOMEONE BE A SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPER?

The art of being a successful developer is to eliminate as much risk as possible and understand your opportunity cost.

The risk can be reduced by being able to service the project. The biggest expense is interest on the loan. Hence time is a critical factor.

For example, if the loan amount is 500,000 at 5% interest rate that means the annual interest is \$25,000. I would make sure I have a reserve of 50,000. In my serviceability of the project, I would calculate the interest at 10%. This allows a safe buffer for any unforeseen situation, such as interest rate increase, renovations, outgoings, and tenant vacancy.

One of the most vital part of development is learning to negotiate a fixed-cost build, it helps immensely through the building process. Often in building, any little hiccup will incur an extra expense, so when you get started, you don't want the process held-up over cost negotiations.

Just like anything else, development happens to be a management job. Dealing with the paperwork and bureaucracy, the draftsman and the engineer. There's quite a lot of time and expense before you even get to the building stage.

My golden rule is—don't wait for things to happen. You need to set deadlines and be pro-active in your approach. Keep in touch with your team of experts, get on the phone and chase them rather than wait for them to call you.

We have become experts in managing developments in short timeframes. Often ‘in-and-out’ within a year, built and sold. We don’t just let something sit there for years eating away profit or increasing bank loan interest.

Surprisingly, I think my days at the liquor store, making rules and hounding and chasing customers for money came in handy in setting tough development guidelines.

WHAT ADVICE COULD YOU GIVE OTHERS FOR DEVELOPING A PROSPEROUS MINDSET?

In business, whether it’s a small business or a large one—it’s all a mind game. I believe the key to success is the ability to use your mind.

To control your mindset it’s important to:

- Use your mind toward success. This means focusing on what you want and the benefits of progressing with it.
- Never gamble on business ventures. Make calculated decisions based on fact rather than emotion.
- Put the right people in the right position. Know your strengths and weaknesses and those of the people you are working with. Maximise your ability to succeed by putting the right people in the right positions.
- Make detailed plans and check them regularly. Don’t leave the planning to others, be proactive in your business approach and make it happen!
- Listen to the advice of experts, but build, develop and trust your own way along the way.
- Believe in yourself and show others that they can also believe in you.
- Never give up. Often the key to business success is just this.

HOW DO YOU KEEP BALANCE IN YOUR DAILY LIFE NOW YEN?

Well first, I have learnt through my own experience that the richest person is not the person that has the most money or possessions. The richest person is the person that is content with themselves and happy with their life.

This is what life is about after all. Often as we are out chasing the dream, we forget the true meaning of ‘being rich’.

We have seen so many poor people internally rich. These are the ones that I really admire.

Factually, we don’t need so much to live, but often what we think we need is simply inaccurate. Often we are more driven by our impression of happiness that we forget to claim happiness with where we are right now. Often, the chase of ‘more’ changes our nature, from kind to heartless. The current culture encourages the ‘more mentality’. We are almost hypnotised into believing that if we get that bigger house, the better car, the prettiest wife or the richest husband then all our problems will be solved. Then we’ll somehow be happy.

Most of us already have what we most need, but the perception in society is that we need more and this corrupts our mind into believing it. It creates jealousy and feelings of inadequacy.

Often happiness is our dream goal. We think ‘If I work hard and pay off the house, get the kids through college, *then* I’ll be happy’. Why wait for happiness? Why not be happy now? If we continue down this path we give up our life, and keep working to find our so-called happiness one day. Along the way to destination happiness, we forget who we are and what we really need to be happy. It’s a paradoxical dilemma where in our attempt to obtain happiness, we only create more unhappiness.

Even in families and with our own children. Often, as a parent, we are so busy working *for* our children, that we often don’t have time to look after our children and connect with them deeply. That isn’t happiness to a parent. What is all that time, effort and money for if we are just breaking a relationship, or creating a bigger gap? I know this from my own experience, as my parents were so busy working, they didn’t have the same choices that I now have.

Spending more time with the family and making communication a deeper and richer experience really helps us keep balance; maybe the rate of depression for kids and divorce rates for couples may not reach record highs? Many people never stop and question: ‘Is this what my kids want?’

Am I really doing this for the best of the kids or am I just doing this to be seen a certain way in society?’ When is the last time we truly talked deeply to our kids, or looked deeply at our husband or wife? Sometimes we forget the simple things, like talking to each other and sharing time.

The most valuable thing you can give to your kids is a good relationship with them. Be there with them, be there when they need you, as this is something that school or material possessions can’t buy. Many kids would not turn to the false comfort of drugs or alcohol if they had a deep connection at home. Home is where kids need to feel they belong. If they can’t gain a deep sense of connection then they will find elsewhere to belong to.

ANY FINAL REFLECTIONS YEN?

I just want to encourage others with my simple message. With effort, self-belief and determination anything is possible. Life is about fulfillment and happiness. Those two things don’t come or get determined by your wealth. It’s determined by how you condition your mind. We just need look within ourselves and take responsibility.

Money is not the answer to happiness, and is not the key to life, the key to life is simpler than we think. You are the only person that can change your destiny.

I will never forget the day my Dad knelt down to me, and swore that we would one day move to a bigger house. Every time I launch into a new business I always ask myself ‘Yen, what happens if this new business doesn’t work out, what will you do, how can you get up and start again?’ This question stays answered in my heart. I simply remind myself ‘Yen, you have lived in a garage. Picture the worst case scenario— you move into a garage again. It’s not the end. You’ve done it before, you can do it again.’

Remembering my Dad’s humble beginnings and the dream that we had and achieved together always keep me sober to what is a challenge and what’s not, what matters and what doesn’t. A triumphant story is always inspiring but what deeply touches my soul is, that it’s my family’s true story, and for that I couldn’t be more proud or more grateful for having experienced the spectrum of love, sacrifice and dignity. Thank you Mum, Dad and my husband.



BE-ING TRUE

DR MONICA DEVANAND



DR MONICA DEVANAND

Monica is a woman of many talents, she is a practising medical doctor, a mother and also runs her own boutique gifting business called '*Be, Gifting and Living*' (www.begiftingandliving.com). Monica was born and raised in Malaysia and from the age of 18 she began her new life in Australia. Migrating to a foreign country with no friends and family meant Monica had to build her new life from zero, which was no easy feat. Studious and hard-working, Monica graduated as a medical doctor from Monash University and became especially interested in women's health and wellbeing. After a series of personal setbacks and health issues Monica began to soul-search and discovered a deep and lasting relationship with God. Her fresh perspective on life helped her establish a new business specialising in unique gifts designed to celebrate and acknowledge life's precious moments; thus '*Be, Gifting and Living*' was born.

Monica has become a passionate public speaker and advocate for women's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Her life experiences and professional knowledge are now purposely used to create a difference in the lives of others; whether it's a unique gift from her business, or a speaking event about health, pregnancy and miscarriage, domestic violence, diabetes or medicine, Monica is an expert in many fields. Not only has Monica come face-to-face with many of these life issues herself, but she has conquered them!

Monica now shares her personal and professional knowledge to support others in their journey, whilst using her business to make a positive difference to others. Monica believes in giving—both to ourselves and others, as well as celebrating and appreciating every tender and meaningful moment.

www.begiftingandliving.com

WHAT IS YOUR CAREER AND HOW DID YOU COME TO START THIS BUSINESS?

My career path has been very interesting. I am a trained medical doctor, having graduated from Monash University Medical School in 2006. Since then, I worked in both the public and private sectors. In recent years I also trained as a cosmetic physician and currently still work with a private clinic in Melbourne.

Having said that, I have always had an artistic eye, a keen eye for detail. My expressive and creative side simply needed to be expressed. Though I love being a doctor, I also have a strong passion for style. I qualified as a personal stylist in 2013 and this skill set, combined with my entrepreneurial passion, led to my boutique gifting business. I love to give and I truly believe that giving heartfelt and meaningful gifts is a very special gesture.

The motivation behind the brand '*Be, Gifting and Living*' is to empower women to be in the moment. Precious moments rush past far too quickly, often without us having a moment to sit back and enjoy the substance of it. The joy of it. The value of it. The meaning of it. I want the brand, '*Be, Gifting and Living*' to act as a simple reminder—to 'be' in the moment. To live in the moment, to 'be'-lieve in the moment.

Between the years of 2013 and 2015, I experienced a series of personal difficulties. I suffered numerous miscarriages and was diagnosed with a chronic medical condition. It changed my view on life very quickly. My new 'norm' was vastly different from what I had known. I became deeply aware of the need to celebrate life and the people in my life. My perspective on life shifted dramatically and my passion to honour life deepened. Thus, my business is a reflection of this shift.

CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE MORE ABOUT YOUR MEDICAL CONDITION AND HOW YOU DEALT WITH YOUR PERSONAL DIFFICULTIES?

At 33, I was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, an autoimmune condition, usually seen in children. Type 1 diabetes is a medical condition whereby the body's immune system attacks the insulin producing cells of the pancreas. There is no cure—yet! One depends on insulin and the constant daily monitoring of blood sugar levels. What this means, is that now I have to inject

myself with insulin between 4 to 8 times per day. This is my new ‘norm’, living with needles, and the constant need to mimic the natural work of the pancreas. Being diagnosed with this condition was one of the hardest things I’ve had to endure. I remember being diagnosed in September of 2014, walking out of the doctor’s office and making my way to the pharmacy to pick up all my new medical supplies. Till today, that day remains a blur, the days following were no different. Just like any diagnoses or bad news, grief sets in. Going through the next few months was difficult, I was back to juggling work and family-life with needles and continual injections. The grief was real, I felt lost in it all. My self-worth and confidence diminished. Wearing a medical device on my abdomen changed the way I saw myself, and at the same time I had to deal with the emotions of my young daughter who noticed the big changes happening with me. There were constant questions and constant tears. Continually having to monitor my health was a raw reminder that this condition was life-long. It would never end.

After a few months, the cloud slowly lifted. By God’s grace, I learnt to look after myself again, to find my confidence, to find my courage to persevere through life again. Yes, there were good and bad days, but there were more good than bad. I found my strength in God, being a Christian, I luckily found solace and peace in my faith.

I also suffered four devastating miscarriages, an ectopic pregnancy being one of them. Out of these losses, I learnt that life is a precious asset that we need to cherish and celebrate each moment. The pain of miscarriage is agonising. I know the pain that so many mothers face every day, never being able to hold that precious baby in your arms. In fact, 1 in 5 confirmed pregnancies end in miscarriage before 20 weeks. That’s a significant number of women affected.

I still find it distressing that as a society, we don’t speak about it or acknowledge it enough. We don’t know how to grieve with others going through this heartache. We feel almost embarrassed to speak openly about this, almost as though we are failures, that our bodies somehow failed us.

My personal hardships have given me a new depth, a heart-centered approach to people I am in contact with, a compassion and a true understanding. Being a medical doctor doesn’t make me immune to life’s health

issues or tragedy. In fact, I hope it helps show people how human we all are and that we need to support each other.

In a previous relationship, prior to meeting my husband, I found myself in an abusive domestic violence situation; of which I had to escape. Though I am educated and have high personal morals, I found myself in this overbearing, distressing and extremely traumatic situation. This went on for four torturous years and I found it exceptionally difficult to cope with.

The *Violence against women in Australia* report from an independent National Research Organisation for Women's Safety have found that 1 in 4 women have experienced at least one incident of violence by an intimate partner they may or may not have been living with.

This silent epidemic needs to be addressed. I believe; much like the topic of miscarriage, that if we speak about these 'taboos', we then begin the journey of changing both the statistics and the stigma. As a foreigner in Australia at the time I didn't know that there were support groups and networks that I could contact. I didn't realise that there was help available. I want the combination of my personal experiences and medical background to help others, to help disarm the stigma around many common topics. Domestic violence, chronic health issues, miscarriages and emotional hardship affect a large portion of the population, no one is immune. It happens to people of all backgrounds, all ages, all economic and social classes.

In today's world, we all carry many responsibilities; it is fast-paced, allowing little time for the real substance of life to be enjoyed, or to be mourned. There is tremendous power in community support, there is great power in being connected and looking out for one another. Speaking about life topics, the good *and* the bad ones, should be encouraged as it allows learning and encourages understanding. The countless different struggles we all go through in life can be eased substantially with the right support and connection.

WHAT IMPORTANT LESSONS HAVE YOU LEARNT FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?

When life throws curve balls at us, we have two options—allow it to run us down, or to run with it and conquer it. I also learnt that the human spirit,

together with God's is one of strength and power, and when supported by family or friends, or the wider community, it is possible to fight back and create a better life for yourself and those around you. It may not be a rosy day every day, but one more of positivity than defeat.

I have also learnt that no experience is in vain, good or bad, there is a reason for every trial we go through and that our trials and tribulations can help encourage others. Though I was not born a Christian (I was born a Hindu); after a very stressful few years in which I was searching for direction and answers, I was actually saved by His grace. I had a very powerful, deep and indescribable experience of God's presence. It was this presence that saved me, and has continued to help me through every difficult life experience ever since.

My husband and I are blessed with one beautiful daughter. Through all the trials we faced it was God that held us steady. My faith, my inner-knowing that He was always there supporting us gave me a deep sense of peace, one that surpassed anything I had previously known.

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE'S PURPOSE?

My purpose is to motivate, encourage and comfort others. I believe that we all have a purpose, and we've been given free will to be able to find this. With every peak and trough in life comes a very valuable life lesson, and with that perseverance comes the building of one's innate character.

It can be easy to give up on life, to become discouraged or to lose a sense of self-worth. At times it can be easy to sit and delve in self-pity, and I'm no stranger to such feelings either. However, those dark nights and personal struggles helped me decipher the purpose of my life. No one has a perfect life, even if we believe they do. We all have struggles and those struggles build our character. There is always a purpose, we just need to find it, work on it and believe in its value.

WHAT WERE YOU LIKE AS A CHILD?

I was born and grew up in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I was an active student, studies were my priority, though I was never one to shy away from other opportunities in sports, and extra-curricular activities. I always took pride

in my leadership abilities and enjoyed leading the sports club, drama and the community service club. I enjoyed being part of stage productions, and this was further made possible when I joined the national choir which toured many music festivals overseas, Spain and Greece, just to name a few. I was known for my big personality, always ready to share a laugh and tell stories and jokes.

I was raised in a household of hard-working parents. My Dad is a doctor and my Mum, a midwife. My Dad in particular has been a mentor. His gentle character, perseverance, hard work and compassion for people are some of the things that have shaped the person I am today.

When I moved to Australia I was forced to very quickly learn the art of living on my own. From cooking to cleaning to general solo living; though I was armed with the advice and training from growing up with Mum's guidance, life for me was suddenly a whole lot more challenging. Back home in Kuala Lumpur, I had a loving family, doting parents, and the constant company of my siblings. It was a big shock. I knew life had to go on and somehow I had to make it work.

WERE YOU ALWAYS ENTREPRENEURIAL GROWING UP?

I was always one to think outside the square, however growing up in an Asian society, a very systematic education system was often encouraged and it was the system that I was predominately exposed to. The ability to enhance my natural entrepreneurial skills was something I gradually allowed myself to discover after many years of living in Australia. What was once a passion is now a reality, I have delved deeper into the world of learning and growing as an entrepreneur. I've been in Australia for seventeen years now and have seen many unique opportunities. I have discovered the ability to constantly learn and develop in a supportive community is essential to personal growth.

WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS BUSINESS?

The highlight of the business has been the acceptance of the business concept and the support that I've received about it. The business was named after the concept behind it – 'Be'. I wanted it to be a boutique

where gifts were not only purchased for the mere fact that it was necessary, or for an event, but for the reason of wanting to celebrate the idea of ‘being’ in the moment, of ‘being’ present. The fact that many have been able to see this concept, and celebrate the idea behind this business has definitely been such a huge positive.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU HAVE LEARNT ABOUT STARTING A BUSINESS?

There are so many things that demand your attention when first starting a business, it can be easily overwhelming. But the key is: self-belief and persistence. There is no one out there that is going to believe in you, like you believe in yourself! Yes, your supporters that will stand by you, but you have to believe and back yourself first. It is *you* that will have to go the distance, and if *you* want to take the next step, then *you* have to believe in yourself! You have to remember the reason you started your business in the first place. Not believing in yourself or the business is like a ship without a captain. The one person who started it must believe in the cause and course or else the business will become stagnant or severely limit its potential for success.

Write down the key motivations and values of the business and keep it somewhere visible in your workspace; this can act as positive reinforcement, especially on the days you question what you’re doing and why you got into it in the first place!

The other vital ingredient is persistence! The race is long, and you may not see the finish line, but if you keep running, putting the next foot forward, you will inevitably move forward. Persist in your efforts, persist in nurturing your passion for the business, persist in self-improvement by attending conferences or seminars to learn new things. Without the ability to persist, it simply means we have given up.

I remind myself that overnight fame and success is not often the case, yes there are some amazing overnight success stories, but more often we hear from entrepreneurs who have known failure before success. Allowing failures to precede success, and persisting through these failures in a positive manner will help one learn and build a better and bigger business.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE SUCCESS AND YOUR PERSONAL OPINION OF WHAT SUCCESS IS?

Success is a loaded word and one we all strive towards. I see success as a step in the positive direction. It is not an endpoint, but the journey towards it. With every challenge, set back, disappointment, there can still be a success story. I truly know that failure is not always a bad thing. It has taught me many things and helped me move forward in the right direction. Success also means self-appreciation for the efforts put in. I believe that everyone's definition of success is different and rightly so, because no one's 'happy place' is the same. Through my medical career and my business, I feel that my biggest success is my family. The time for my family, to spend quality time with them. Being able to manage my time and find a way to blend work *and* family life is what I see as success.

HOW DOES ONE ACHIEVE IT?

Firstly, I believe a large dose of self-honesty is required. Being an ambitious person myself, I understand the multitude of decisions to be made around work schedules, family and timetables. Trying to be in a million places at one time is simply not possible, however sometimes as wives, mums, workers, we feel we must wear all these hats at once. After coming very close to burnout, I realised that this simply was not possible, and in fact it didn't benefit anyone.

Overworking means constant tiredness, which results in less quality time with the family. The way to achieve this success is to be honest with oneself, to prioritise, to set limits, to set achievable milestones, and to get rid of guilt. Once all this is laid down, the journey to success is much smoother. There's not one particular recipe to success, there will be times where what once worked in the past, just doesn't seem to work anymore, and that's all right! Learning to be flexible with our time when the needs change, or when life throws a big bowl of mess at us is also important and more importantly we have to learn to not beat ourselves up about it. It happens! Life happens!

WHAT MAKES YOU OR YOUR BUSINESS STAND OUT FROM YOUR COMPETITORS?

The emotions of '*Be, Gifting and Living*' is a genuine point of difference. It is not only reflective of the everyday emotions that we often wish to

share, but also helps someone say something meaningful through a gift. Often we want to let someone else know how we feel, but often find it too difficult to verbalise. Gifting is an easy way to show that we care and are thinking of someone else. *'Be, Gifting and Living'* helps the giver share these emotions in a special way. Whether someone has suffered a loss or is celebrating a triumph or milestone, there are gifts that reflect your heartfelt emotions and offer a genuine gesture to the receiver.

A meaningful and well thought-out gift represents care and understanding, whereas simply buying the common off-the-shelf product often shows a lack of consideration or rushing.

My business also supports ethical buying. I have sourced local, organic and ethical products because this is important to me as a business owner. It's important for consumers to understand that we *can* change the way that we buy and this can have a long and lasting impact globally.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY HAVE BEEN THE 3 TOP BIGGEST LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNT IN BUSINESS?

I have noticed that when women go into business, there's often a strong feeling of isolation and loneliness, however, I quickly learnt that women in business together is one very potent force. I participate in social media network groups such as *Ausmumpreneur* on Facebook. This helped me discover that asking for help was not hard, and that there were many women in business that were willing to help. The social support helped me discover many new friendships, and working opportunities.

Networking face-to-face with others is important and nourishing. I have taken the time to attend many women entrepreneurs' workshops and conferences. I have met new friends and it has helped me move my business in the right direction.

Believing in your dream and your capabilities is vital as it helps you persist with your business, giving it new life everyday, as well as growth in the right direction. Many times in life, others may not believe in your ideas, but when you persist and believe in yourself, wonderful things happen! Learn to back yourself!

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW DOES ONE STAY MOTIVATED AND INSPIRED ON A DAILY BASIS?

Keeping motivated and inspired daily is no easy task. Life throws lots of different situations at us daily, but we need to find things that lifts our spirits up regularly. For me it can be as simple as reading one of my favourite magazines like *Frankie*, while sipping on a cup of coffee, or more often it is spending time in worship. I also like to take some time out to watch a good tear-jerker, or a romantic comedy to take my mind off the daily routines.

Surrounding yourself with like-minded people can help maintain motivation and inspiration. I love listening to powerful and inspiring stories of women who have been there and done that, so I often look for opportunities to attend women's entrepreneurial conferences to stay inspired.

Reading is another way I stay motivated and inspired. I would encourage any entrepreneur to find a business mentor, or someone you find inspiring and read about their journey. You will soon realise there is so much to learn from other people's mistakes and that mistakes are simply part of the journey and it is A-OK to make them along the way!

WHAT ARE YOUR TIPS FOR HELPING SOMEONE GET THROUGH A DIFFICULT TIME IN THEIR LIFE OR BUSINESS?

In this fast-paced world, we often put a lot of pressure on ourselves when dealing with difficult times. Stepping out of the situation can give us a different perspective. I often reflect and even take time out to grieve over any loss or failures. I remember that '*this too shall pass*', and often in prayer, I find the courage to pick myself up again.

Like anything in life, persistence and self-belief is important. I have also found that it's important to learn that failure is OK, but it's what you do with failure that makes all the difference. Feedback from others, talking to someone supportive or a health care professional can also help us recover from any situation. When others are in a difficult spot, we often find the time to nurture and show them care, so we should do the same with ourselves. Being kind to yourself is just as important as being kind towards someone else.

HOW DOES SOMEONE STAY POSITIVE AND NOT BECOME A VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCE?

See the best in each situation. Gratefulness is helpful, remembering the things we have and not dwelling on what we don't have. Learning not to complain about a situation helps change the way we see things, often for the better.

Surrounding yourself with like-minded people is also important. When circumstances go against us, as humans we not only need support and connection but also positivity. It is so important to have good people around us, not only to help us grow, but also to help us get out of our own negative space. Seeing and hearing others' experiences often fills us with hope and teaches us how to be resilient along the way. This is something we cannot learn from negative individuals.

WHAT MINDSET/ATTRIBUTE DO YOU BELIEVE YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO CREATE SUCCESS IN YOUR LIFE?

A positive mindset and great attitude towards life. Often, our battles are in our mind. Whether it's bitterness, jealousy, anger or frustration, they all start as a thought and if continued they eventually transpire into a negative mindset.

Having a 'why' in life or in what you do, is also important. It doesn't matter what you may be exploring, whether a new career, a new business, or facing an entirely new situation in life, the ability to identify the motivation for something helps us steer towards achieving it. Along the way, there may be glitches or loss of motivation, but when you have your 'why' clearly defined, you will always have an anchor to come back to. And when you're back at the starting point and ready to get going again, it is your positive mindset and outlook that will keep you moving forward.

As I mentioned before, the other attribute I believe is vital for success is perseverance; the go-getters attitude! It's so easy to lose your way in this busy and overwhelming world, hence having the mindset that you are not going to give up when it gets tough, will eventually get you across the line. I have seen this happen time and time again in my life, and despite times when I felt like throwing in the towel, it is the perseverance to push that got me keeping on.

EVERYONE KNOWS THEY SHOULD TAKE THE NEXT STEP IN THEIR ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY, YET SO MANY PEOPLE FIND IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO DO SO. WHAT HOLDS PEOPLE BACK FROM STICKING TO BUILDING THEIR DREAMS AND HOW DO THEY CHANGE THIS?

Coming from a medical background and then exploring the world of styling seemed worlds apart, but for me it wasn't. I knew inside the potential and passion I had inside. I invested in many development opportunities to learn the intricacies of business. I read a lot and engaged with like-minded people, this opened up my world to the compelling energy of entrepreneurs. My dream of one day being an independent businesswoman suddenly became a lot closer. But what was a thought and idea, looked much easier on paper. What held me back from executing this idea for a couple of years was the fear of the unknown. The uncertainty.

When we pursue formal education in a specific field, there is a natural progression toward our career. However, in the world of entrepreneurs, there is uncertainty of where the path may go or end up. Many of the success stories tell us that in order to become a successful entrepreneur, one must have failed on their journey. This failure can come in many forms, financially or emotionally, and it can be very strenuous.

The uncertainty of income, or the inability to guarantee success when walking this path can be frightening. Many find the continual uncertainty worrying, often resulting in dropouts or not pursuing this dream altogether. However, keeping things real, doing your due diligence in all things, from business partnerships, to products and services will help bring this dream to fruition.

I know such fears all too well, I even allowed them to hold me back for a little while, but I also realised that if I didn't do it now, there may not be another opportunity.

When thinking of pursuing a business venture or a change in direction, it is important to be realistic. We need to be honest with ourselves, ensuring we allocate sufficient time and funds to the venture. I found having a plan helped me see the real lead-time that was required to build a business, as well as plan my funds. If things are well planned, the better the chances of success.

HOW DO YOU DISCOVER WHAT TRULY INSPIRES YOU?

There isn't one specific way to discover what inspires you. However, I feel the most essential ingredient is to be true to ourselves. We need to remember that we are all different and have unique skills and styles. We need to harness our individual skills and not try and be someone else.

Finding my own inspiration often came from my love of reading, recently I've been reading books about business, and ensuring that I maintain a healthy balance in my life. This certainly helps keep a positive mindset. I find that occasionally 'turning off', taking a day or two to spend with the family, or going for a holiday is also very healthy. Writing down a list of what gives you joy in life, and trying to figure out a way to get there is also an inspiring way to spend time. Attending network events and hanging out with like-minded people is also a huge help.

WHAT WAS THE ONE THING THAT WHEN YOU GOT IT - EVERYTHING ELSE SEEMED TO FALL INTO PLACE?

Being comfortable in my own skin. I think when we get this, our self-worth and belief in our abilities just naturally fall into place. It is important to not compare ourselves to others, as we all have different paths and journeys to tread. When you believe in yourself things begin to work out with each effort you put in.

HOW IMPORTANT IS OUTSOURCING IN BUSINESS?

Very! This is something I learnt very early. After trying to have my hands in every pie, and close to burnout, with very little sleep; I had to ask for help. I set aside a good sum of my business finance to invest in the services of others. This helped me set up and maintain my ongoing needs for the business. Without this help, it would have been impossible for me to start this business.

WITH TECHNOLOGY, ONLINE STRATEGIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA CHANGING ALL THE TIME, HOW DO YOU KEEP UP?

This is an interesting topic and in this constant evolving world of technology, there is much to be learnt. Two things I've learnt is: be authentic and never compare! Two simple rules that have saved my sanity. Being seen

on social media is important in today's world as you can reach millions of people through these channels and should be used to build and grow our businesses. Often though, people get caught up with what is on trend, or what others are doing and we lose ourselves in it all. Being true to yourself and your business values is crucial, allowing one to showcase the true value of the business.

Not comparing yourself to other businesses or personalities is also important in the world of social media. We have to remember that we have a story to tell, hence why we started the business in the first place, and people want to know you — the real you! When we stop comparing our success to someone else's, it allows us to grow in our own journey, and allows one to be authentic. Yes, some businesses have a huge following, however I believe that with time and authenticity comes trust from your following, and this naturally then helps the business grow.

OTHER THAN YOUR BUSINESS, WHAT ELSE ARE YOU MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT?

My family and having quality time with them. As a Mum I enjoy the joys and challenges motherhood brings. I love spending one-on-one time with my little one, exploring the city and kid-friendly activities. Living in Melbourne means there's lots to do.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS SOMETHING VALUABLE THAT MONEY CAN'T BUY?

Peace. The way we cultivate peace with ourselves and life's circumstances, is to live with an attitude of gratefulness. Being grateful has helped me recover and retain inner peace when difficult situations arose. This peace sprung from my faith and my deep trust in God's plan for me. A special saying I live by is 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me', a verse from the bible that I believe in wholeheartedly.

Another saying I often use as a reminder is 'be in the moment'. Time passes, life goes by, but no one can rob you of the memory you have of the now. So treasure it. In life, spending quality time with loved ones, or in business, working and networking with others should be an enjoyable moment. An aliveness in the present moment.

DO YOU HAVE ANY FINAL TIPS/WORDS FOR SOMEONE STARTING OUT IN BUSINESS?

Start! It sounds very cliché but it is absolutely true. Unless you start, it will never happen. Ideas are good, but ideas not executed, remain only an idea. Get going, learn from the process, ask for help, speak to people about it, and grow in the opportunities that come your way. Expect some falls, because failures teach us and help us grow in the right direction. When we only expect to succeed from the beginning, it can mean that when we hit a roadblock there's a greater chance of giving up.

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOURSELF OR YOUR BUSINESS IN 3 YEARS?

To have grown my gift boutique business and increase my writing and speaking engagements. To be an encouragement to women and others to pursue their dreams. I would like to encourage migrant women to seize opportunities, and to grow with each opportunity that comes their way. I would like to be a source of encouragement and inspiration to those going through similar life challenges, and of course, live a fruitful and fulfilling life.

SO CAN YOU LEAVE US WITH YOUR TOP 3 LESSONS IN LIFE?

Be your own kind of beautiful; because we are all uniquely and wonderfully made.

Be kind to yourself and others; because this life is challenging, but kindness goes a long way.

Persist towards the things you wish for yourself and your loved ones; because the opportunity may not come again, and even if you've failed, at least you've tried!



SMALL CHANGE BUILDS BIG DREAMS

TAMMY CARMICHAEL



TAMMY CARMICHAEL

Tammy Carmichael has a passion for wealth creation through property investing. Armed with sheer tenacity and conscious spending habits, Tammy purchased her first home at 22, this triggered a passion to widen her knowledge and continue to grow a personal property portfolio, investing in Brisbane and abroad.

Tammy knows that analytical budgeting combined with a savings plan, can help anyone build or buy their home and live the 'Great Australian Dream'. Tammy specialises in helping people gain full control of their finances and move towards a financially-stable retirement, or simply own their own home sooner. Her honest, no-nonsense, hardworking and down-to-earth approach is a breath of fresh air. Tammy helps people from all walks-of-life achieve financial independence; from teens to seniors. As Tammy has personally shown, there's really no age bracket to success.

Tammy is a registered real estate agent in Queensland and comes with over 5 years experience in insolvency, giving her a firm grasp of budgeting and debt collection. Working within the insolvency industry, Tammy saw firsthand that simple budgeting can be people's greatest weakness. This has moulded her greatest strength: making the most out of every dollar and also inspired her latest initiative *The Budget Detox Manual*. This is a powerful and inspiring initiative founded and developed by Tammy. It's designed to help people gain a strong focus on strategic budgeting and educate them in saving for and buying their own home. The perfect platform to help others leap toward true financial freedom.

Tammy's quest to become financially independent ignited when a traumatic brush-with-death saw her hospitalised and confronted with her own mortality. Yet Tammy's misfortune led to her luckiest discovery, the chance to think bigger, better and bolder. Against medical odds Tammy survived, though according to doctors, she should not be here today. Turning tragedy into triumph has become Tammy's greatest strength. She now encourages others to look past the tragedies in life, overcome obstacles and surge forward to create something bigger: turn your dreams into a reality.

tammycarmichael.com.au

YOU'VE BUILT A GREAT PROPERTY PORTFOLIO AT AN EARLY AGE, HOW DID YOU BECOME SUCH A GREAT SAVER SO EARLY?

Funnily enough, as a child I practically failed maths and my other subjects were not too close behind. I hated maths and figures were my Achilles' heel. I never went to university and don't have a degree but I soon learnt that those figures I once dreaded were relevant, especially when it came to money and earning capacity. Fortunately, I had an outstanding Mother and Grandfather who taught me about the importance of saving, even from childhood I was doing chores around the house to earn pocket money. I was taught to save a portion. These little portions that I saved as a child grew to \$1,500 by the time I was a teenager. This was a substantial amount for a teenager. I proceeded to invest my exciting small fortune into shares which are still producing dividends.

Throughout high school and my various jobs, any money I received or earned was regularly saved and a strong foundation for saving was steadily built. This habit produced big results and it is the reason I am where I am today. It's not how much you earn but what you do with it that counts! This truth was made evident when I purchased my first car at age 18 for \$7,000 cash. After I purchased my car I still continued to save even though I didn't have a clear plan of what exactly I was saving for. This savings habit once again proved very fruitful when I purchased my first property at age 22. This was my dream home, and I want to share with others how to do the same, just by using a few timeless strategies you can have your dream house too. In order to reach this pinnacle, I made an agreement with my parents that I could stay at home rent free and use all the money I saved for my house deposit. Although I was at home longer than I would have liked, the short term sacrifice meant long term gain and independence. It also gave me a few years reprieve from the consuming cycle of bills, rent, and having to live in a share house situation. This really helped me gain momentum toward my long term vision and savings plan.

The most important lesson I learnt through this phase was that I didn't need to pass my maths exams or know calculus in order to buy a house. I just needed to know how to count and save.

WAS 'THINKING BIG' ALWAYS A TRAIT OF YOURS?

Growing up I always knew I wanted more, but this proved true when I was confronted with my own mortality at age 19. So young, so free and yet soon to be caged. It was a rainy night, past midnight; like so many innocent nights that encounter tragedy. A heated quarrel filled the car I was travelling in, the driver, and I as the passenger, were in a verbal disagreement. All of a sudden, our car fishtailed around a corner and lost control. Fear! Panic! We spun round-and-round, our car sliding across the road out-of-control. My screams alienating the driver until the force of the impact silenced me and knocked me out. A large mound of dirt stopped our car from further spins and rolling down the hill but the impact left me trapped inside the crumpled passenger seat.

I awoke, luckily, to a hazy blur and sharp shooting pain all through my body. My back was on the front passenger seat, where I was sitting, but my neck was pressed against the passenger seat and door, my legs and feet were on the dash. It didn't take me long to realise I wasn't able to move.

They say there is a bright light that flashes before you before you die, well lucky for me it was just a torch light being shone in my eyes by my brother. A friend witnessed the accident and called my brother who was on the scene early. I was instructed to keep my eyes open and not to fall into sleep. Still dazed all I could hear was a friendly familiar family voice telling me I was going to be OK and that an ambulance would be here any minute. I slipped in and out of consciousness. I could barely open my eyes or hear the jaws-of-life clawing through the wreckage to free me.

At the hospital, I was still drifting in and out of consciousness, the pain unbearable. I struggled to move, it was all-consuming. It felt like someone was squeezing my insides with a clamp. Simple breaths were abrasive struggles, with every breath it felt like my lungs were being scrubbed with sandpaper every inhalation. This pain was just the beginning of a long journey to recovery. I was soon wheeled away to surgery for the first time. This was the first of multiple procedures to come. My liver needed to be 'packed' and later that day another surgery was needed to remove it and insert a stent. Four days in intensive care and I roused from my dazed stupor to find a doctor and his multiple interns staring down at me.

He advised me that I had hearing loss in my left ear, four fractured ribs, a punctured lung and a lacerated liver. I really wasn't sure what to say, so I just nodded innocently while he proceeded to tell me the steps forward to recovery.

Nearly two weeks of laying still in hospital meant I wasn't able to walk very well. Nutrition was fast escaping my body causing me to now weigh 45kg from my original 60kg. The morphine and other medications were making me incredibly nauseated.

The doctors and nurses stressed the urgency to walk and eat, so begun my wobbly recovery: walks up and down the ward. At first, 20 metres was my personal best. Each day I went further until I was allowed outside to smell the fresh air.

Unfortunately, there were many complications in my recovery, which meant more hospital time. The pain from my internal injuries and continual medical procedures and surgeries was becoming intolerable. There were numerous endoscopes, cannulas, morphine, nausea, infection and fluid on the lungs. A nurse had accidentally pulled out my liver tube and her attempt to reinsert it quickly failed, causing the tube to have to be completely removed. As a result, an infection entered the wound and fluid began to accumulate in my lungs. The painful price I paid for this 60 second mistake was hell. The fluid felt like it was drowning my lungs and I had difficulty breathing. A week of this agony passed by until the fluid was finally drained. This consisted of a large needle being jabbed between my ribs to drain the fluid. No anaesthetic was administered and it was horrendously painful. My stoic mother, always by my side, despite hearing me yell and cry out in agony. I was overcome with a surreal emotion.

I sat vacant, staring blankly, nothing was going through my mind—not the pain I was in, not the pain I had endured, not the reason for being in hospital. I just stared vacantly out the window, watching a concrete wall. The mass of procedures and painkillers didn't enter my blank mind until later that evening, in front of a visitor, that strange empty state became an overwhelming vortex of despair. I yelled with fury and anguish 'Why didn't I just die?'

The turning point came when I found out that the administrating doctor from my first surgery was surprised that I was still alive. According to the injuries I had sustained, the initial doctor didn't have high expectations for a good outcome. I pondered this for a long time. I was alive, even though medically I should be dead. Those words hit me like a hammer to the head. I began to feel very humbled about my previous outburst in front of my visitor. I was so grateful to be alive.

I used the original poor diagnosis as constant encouragement, aiding in my recovery. The doctor's words rang true, this brush-with-reality caused me to consider the fact that I'm very lucky to be alive and that miracles do happen. I am one of those miracles. This shift in thinking helped me realise that I needed to do something bigger with my life, my second chance was here. I also owe that second chance to the dedicated medical staff at the hospital and my brother, who I could not be more proud of. He is a doctor and the man who held my hand at the scene. I am forever indebted. I will forever hold the highest respect and awe for the medical profession, who are dedicated to saving lives and do so every day.

TELL US HOW YOU SHIFTED YOUR MINDSET?

I forged forward, became stronger. A quote that sums it up best is:

'When something bad happens you have three choices.

You can either let it define you,

Let it destroy you.

Or you can let it strengthen you'.

- Unknown

In order to take the focus off the car accident, I went courageously into uncharted waters; I decided to build my first home. I was so excited to create a place that I could call home. This home was to stand as a pillar, a reminder of my triumph over tragedy. So often in life, tragedy gets us down, it's only natural, but if we look close enough, often we can see a small slither of hope. We can appreciate life and soldier-on to create new opportunities, become a better form of ourselves than yesterday. As the old adage says, 'What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger.' Even some misfortunes, can have a hidden blessing lurking somewhere.

I know there are countless people struggling with heavy life burdens. Even just the daily grind of working and living to pay bills, making repayments and meeting the high cost of living is extremely taxing.

But, if you are serious enough – you *can* make your dream happen!

That's my specialty and I'm here to show you how.

HOW DID YOU OBTAIN YOUR FIRST HOME AND WHAT CAN YOU SHARE WITH OTHERS ABOUT HOW TO DO THIS?

The first thing I did was establish what I wanted. It wasn't enough for me to just say I wanted a house, I had to be specific. For this I visited many display home villages and soon realised I loved the idea of building and house-hunting. I spent hours trawling through different homes and floor plans. I decided I wanted to build; build a new home for a new start. I decided on the house I liked and started a strict savings plan to record every dollar that I spent, even down to the last piece of chewing gum. Yes, it may sound extreme at first but if you don't know exactly where your money is going, then you need to find out. It's important to discover what your honest spending habits actually are; not what you *think* they are. Most people think they need money first but what they really need is the feeling of knowing what they want. Next is the idea of seeing the house visually, and then to create a strict budget and plan how to make it work best for you.

In building my dream home, I realised that I needed to meticulously save more money. For the next 18 months, as I mentioned, I kept a record of everything I spent money on. This allowed me to see the amount I spent versus my income at the time and how much I could save. It's not about missing out on having that social dinner out, you still need to live and have a little play money. It's about allocating a certain amount and sticking to it. For example, once a month I went out to dinner with my girlfriends and allocated \$20. I would not spend over that. I ate a slightly cheaper meal and still got to feel like I was having a social life. I was only stringent for four years while saving for the deposit, building and house expenses, but it was sustainable short-term. For others it might mean, still having your coffee but cutting back to buying one a day. Every little bit you can allocate towards your dream, the sooner it will materialise.

DURING BUILDING YOUR HOME, DID YOU HAVE ANY DIFFICULTIES OR STRUGGLES AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

The journey was certainly character building. It quickly taught me once again to turn my disadvantages in to advantages through discipline and determination.

The first problem I encountered was that the land was not ready when the developer said it would be and I had signed the building contract for works to commence. They couldn't start as there was still a large pile of dirt on my house lot. I was charged a very hefty extension fee, although I argued the injustice, unfortunately it was out of my control, I had to pay. As a result, I had to review my extra inclusions and reduce them as my budget had already blown out before we'd begun.

The builder and I had verbally agreed that I could engage a private company to install the air-conditioning, however at build time, it was not listed in the contract so the builder retracted our verbal arrangement and would not allow me to hire a private installer. I had to cancel the previous contractor and buy the 'builder selected' air-con. Making changes to the contract also meant hundreds of dollars in unexpected expenses.

Then came my biggest problem, unknown to me, the developer had stopped the building process because the mortar didn't comply with the covenant's 'earth friendly colours'. I had cut this inclusion at the last minute as it was thousands of dollars extra for white colour. It wasn't a priority, so I had it changed back to standard mortar. The developer insisted that I render the front of the house, which was thousands of dollars. Though I was initially told I could render later, this proved not to be the case. Being 22-years-old, I soon realised verbal agreements in the building industry held no value. Problem after problem seemed to unravel after this—from bolts not been tied down correctly, painting not being done properly and a myriad of other problems continued to arise. I craved settlement by this stage.

Once the house was completed, I thought that I could finally relax. I was wrong. The next day the developer was badgering me about getting the front rendered. I was in overdraft at this stage and not even knowing how to make the next mortgage payment. The developer threatened legal action and I visited many solicitors and went to many property seminars to educate

myself, but I was advised that nothing could be done and the developer could sue me. I had no choice but to negotiate with the developer, to allow *me* to paint the mortar, they agreed. It took four dedicated people and two weeks to finish the painting. Two weeks straight, before and after work, my dedicated family and I painted the standard grey mortar to beige.

The once striking darker mortar was now a mere wash of beige. I struggled to like it. Later I learned that many others in the estate didn't comply with the 'earth friendly colour scheme covenant' and if somebody had clearly pointed this out to me, I could have used this as leverage and avoided many hours in labour and stress.

My first building experience was a great learning curve. I say this as not to deter others but to help them avoid my inexperience at the time. Now I help others to easily avoid these issues.



WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST LESSON YOU LEARNED THROUGH THIS EXPERIENCE?

Make sure all things are written in a contract; verbal agreements mean nothing. I'd suggest to others to be careful about what you agree to in writing, as it is cemented gospel in the building industry and can be enforced at any time without an agreed date or timeframe. Yet, honestly, I would do it all again—it was amazing, fun and rewarding.

WHAT INSPIRED *THE BUDGET DETOX MANUAL* AND HOW DO YOU EDUCATE OTHERS NOW?

Along with my property interest and education in real estate, the last five years I have worked in the legal and insolvency industry. Insolvency is the state of being insolvent, which means a person or business is unable to pay their debts when they are due.

I found many, well-meaning people make poor financial choices. In fact, most never had a budget unless they were forced to pay back their debts. I observed that even once insolvent, people continued to spend at the same level which got them insolvent in the first place. They would spend the same amount on unnecessary items and then opt to pay creditors even less than the original agreed sum and term. I noticed that people just slipped back into bad spending habits without an emotional plan to keep them on track. I noticed there was a lack of real-life education regarding simple budgeting and finances. The biggest reality check was the age bracket, I was mostly dealing with were people my own age, which at that time was 29.

After perusing countless budgets, it became evident that people spend a lot of money on unnecessary items. There was a gap between people setting budgets and sticking to them. I found that young adults who had been renting for a long time felt they could never buy a house because it was too hard and expensive. Renting and the cost of living was putting a dampener on the idea of people even considering owning their own home, even at a young age. The missing piece of the puzzle is not rocket science but simple budgeting and discipline. It helps people gain momentum and stay on track with bills. *The Budget Detox Manual* helps others simplify saving and debt. To make conscious and daily efforts toward their future. Thrive instead of survive.

Most people say to me, 'I have no idea where my money goes.' It's true, most people have no idea where their money does go. If you write down what you spend and become conscious of your habits and allocate money toward your goals, you will begin to build a sense of empowerment and control.

I bought my first house on an annual wage of \$29,000. This first house led to building a lucrative property portfolio. Which is why I can now help people get into their first home or expand their portfolio easily and effortlessly using my streamline budgeting process.

I try to help young people understand early that you don't want to have regrets in your 40s about what you did in your 20s and then pay the harsh price of insolvency. Simple saving patterns can become an avalanche of prosperity if you begin now.

CAN YOU SHARE SOME SAVING TIPS FOR YOUNGER PEOPLE?

One thing many people aren't generally keen to do is: save money. But imagine if you could get your dream home just by putting a little bit away every pay day. Many people think they can't save, but I show them that they can. Many people associate saving with restrictions, responsibility and no fun. But learning the art of simple swapping will pay dividends in the long run. One significant change that I made was: swapping the habit of buying my lunch for making it. You'll be surprised what a difference it made over the years.

\$8 for lunch x 5 days of work = \$40 per week, which is \$2,080 per year.
\$2,080 per year x 5 years of simply making your lunch = \$10,400.
Tea/Hot Chocolate/ Coffee \$4.00 x 5 days = \$20 per week, which is \$1,040 per year.
For those that have two drinks per day, that's \$40 per week, which is \$2,080 per year.

Many people say they can't afford things but in reality, we afford the things we want. We find a way to buy that new car, lap-top or iPhone. It amazed me when analysing budgets how a simple reallocation of money could free up a person to save more easily. So people will find a way to buy their Australian dream, they just have to WANT it!

An increase in salary doesn't always happen, but swapping or reallocating money you already receive can have rewarding benefits. Delayed gratification can have much better outcomes than the instant gratification culture we are now immersed in. Look at the big picture and have a visual representation to keep you on track.

These small amounts all add up and yes many times I wished that I had bought my lunch but my desire for a house was far greater and more fruitful. The discipline of not having the regular luxuries temporarily, really pays off and propelled me forward at a great rate. Living in my dream home I remember every day but looking back I don't remember all the lunches I missed out on buying.

The Budget Detox Manual helps people tailor their dreams. Although it's generally geared towards a house deposit, it can be used for anything—an investment property, a new car, holiday or for those just wanting to become

more financially savvy. In the manual I take people through every single step of budgeting, saving, buying or building a house, bank loans, mortgages, what to watch out for, what to ask, how to use credit cards the right way so they work for you, vendor financing, along with a list of professionals to make the process easier. You name it, it's in there. It's designed to walk you through the process step-by-step in a no-frills, authentic and understandable way. I also work with people one-on-one and share my knowledge about finance, debt, banking, mortgages, savings and much more. We work together and tailor a workable solution to make their dreams a reality.

Some general savings tips:

- Put any extra surplus into a separate bank and bank account. One which is not easily accessible. There are certain accounts that take up to three days to transfer money across, this will make you think twice about dipping into your funds. I still use this style of account.
- Name your new saving account a name like, 'My Dream Home' or, 'My First House' or 'Family Holiday' and check the balance regularly so you can see how it's growing. Feel proud of every dollar you put in.
- Don't underestimate the power of saving even the smallest amount. Eliminate the old thinking habits like, 'This won't make a difference.' It does and it will!
- Know your spending habits and allocate the money you already earn before you spend it on frivolous 'stuff'.
- Use the simple 'swap strategy' to save and 'find' money you didn't think you had.
- Use credit cards properly, don't let them use you. Link them to rewards. (See *The Budget Detox Manual* for more details)
- Keep a visual display of your dream, this helps you stay focused on achieving your goals and dreams.

WHAT ABOUT SAVING MONEY ON HEFTY EXPENSES LIKE MORTGAGES?

Time is our greatest commodity, it's the one thing you can never get back once spent. Time can be crucial to a mortgage as interest is calculated

daily. The majority of my time was spent trailblazing my own financial knowledge. Being young, I quickly learnt through trial-and-error. Back then, not having anyone to gain advice from or bounce creative ideas off, there wasn't anything for me to do except follow the banks, developer and builders' advice. All knew this and took advantage of my lack of knowledge. I decided to attend multiple property seminars to educate myself and invest in courses to gain further industry knowledge, this was imperative for me to keep moving forward and build a lucrative property portfolio. It took me five years of self-education and much trial-and-error to get the ideal mortgage set-up, one that worked in *my* best interest, not the banks.

Two of the five years were wasted as I thought I had little option than the typical mortgage set-up; (let's be honest, the bank is not in the business of helping you pay your mortgage off quicker.) It's important to regularly review your loan options.

Checking that I had the most effective process out there would have saved me a lot of money in the beginning. Things such as getting the best interest rates, negotiating with my lender for lower rates and portioning off the loan, investigating the difference between principal and interest and interest only, and how they affect personal cash flow. For three years of my first loan, I realised I was only paying the interest which was disheartening, the principal hadn't budged after all the money I paid into the loan. If I had streamlined this process early I could have moved forward much quicker and shaved years of principle off my loan. There is a lot of time and money that can be wasted if you don't do the process right and in the best way possible from the start. I learned a valuable lifelong lesson and that is, 'You don't know what you don't know'. I wished back then that I had a straight-forward and honest 'how-to-guide' when I started out, hence why I created *The Budget Detox Manual*, so others can understand how it all works and have something solid to follow. I now share this streamline process with many new home owners and help them understand the power of a little goes a long way.

I also teach others about smart bank lending, (learnt through life experience). A redraw facility is considered the banks money and they have control of it, even if it's *your* money in the bank. An offset account is controlled by you and not the bank. It's important to know where you put your money and who has control over it.

HOW DO YOU ASSIST OTHERS TODAY?

Firstly, I follow my goal— I want to help every person own their own home!

I teach people how to get their first home and own it outright within a designated timeframe using a tailored approach to finance. This is done by implementing a simple budget strategy and regularly assessing their finances and banking strategies. My focus is to also assist others in applying a creative and positive mindset, the notion - ‘If she can do it, then I can do it,’ is an inspiring first step. There *is* always a way and I help others find that way. Authenticity combined with hard and raw facts was something I longed for as I went through my first few years in property and development. I realised there were many people willing to take full advantage of my naivety. Instead, I gained knowledge and learned through trying and applying. Now, I have built a lucrative portfolio and teach others how to begin doing the same.

The beauty about gaining financial freedom is the increased ability to give to others. This truly inspires me. I am affiliated with several Christian charities which assist people in Australia and overseas. I accredit this to my father who has been an avid advocate for charities such as Adventist Development and Relief Agency which is a non-profit organisation. There is no better feeling for me than donating to a worthy cause. I am truly blessed to still be alive. For a little more than \$100 you can buy someone in a developing country a flushing toilet. People spend more on alcohol in one night, when a mere \$5 can buy a homeless person a meal. It’s easier to change a person’s life than you think. Your contribution no matter how small can make a massive difference to another person’s life. This is true wealth.

I personally love buying chickens for people overseas, it’s something I do every year. Having my own finances sorted and owning my own home has allowed me to focus on others. I would never have been able to give as much as I do if I didn’t take the steps to secure my own financial future. People always say they would give more if they had money, but giving can start with a single dollar.

*‘You don’t know who is waiting for you
to succeed so you can help them.’*

-Tammy Carmichael

CAN YOU SHARE 5 CRITICAL STEPS TO GET ONE CLOSER TO BUYING THEIR OWN HOME?

1. **Imagine an image** – decide your location and have a physical picture in your mind of where you want to live and what your house will look like.
2. **Prepare** – have a chat with a professional and set out a plan on paper.
3. **Budget allocation** – know your income verses expenses and allocate a consistent amount to savings, along with assessing which luxuries can be reduced or swapped.
4. **Time frame** – allow an appropriate and realistic time frame in which to achieve your deposit. Write it down and be specific, e.g., 17 April 2020.
5. **Get everything in writing** – Keep a personal hardcopy and electronic records of all communication. For example, contracts, agreements - both verbal or phone conversations. Ensure anything agreed to is specified in writing.

ANY FINAL COMMENTS TAMMY?

I think few people realise the potential they hold to be free. To obtain the security in owning a home to live in for life. This kind of future security nourishes peace of mind, as even in hard times you know that the house is yours. For all your hard work you have something to show for it, which is such a rewarding feeling.

Imagine being told to move out of where you live, as the landlord wants to move in or sell the house you have called home for many years. This is an all too common, overwhelming and stressful situation, especially if you've just lost your job or had a baby. This is the last thing you want to deal with when juggling life, family, work and relationships.

Consider the following very conservative example:

If a person pays \$360 in rent per week, which is \$18,720 per year.
 $\$18,720 \times 5 \text{ years} = \$93,600$

Then with inflation, rent goes up for the next five years to \$380 per week = \$19,760 per year. $19,760 \times 5 \text{ years} = \$98,800$
First 10 years of rent = \$192,400
The following ten years, inflation pushes rent up to \$410 per week 10 years of rent @ \$410 per week = \$ 213, 200
20 years of rent is = \$405,600
Then the next ten years @\$425 per week = another \$221,000
30 years of rent = \$626,600
Next fifteen years @ \$455 = another additional \$354,900
A total of 45 years of renting = \$981, 500 That's close to 1 million dollars of rent money!

It's paying \$1 million dollars off someone else's mortgage. At the end of the day, you have to pay this amount to live somewhere, so you can spend your days paying off someone else's mortgage and not own the house, or you can spend your life paying off your own home and no one can take it from you. After speaking to many retired or older people they all told me that they wish they thought more about their future and took more risks when they were younger. The saddest part is, speaking with people in their 30s who have no assets and wished they'd done something intelligent with their money.

The most important aspect is that it's never too late to start. I want to short-cut the process for as many people as possible. I want to share all the life lessons and wisdom I have gained through hard work, trial-and-error. I want to inspire people to achieve financial freedom and let them know that even with a low income you can secure your own future. Stick diligently to your plan. It truly is possible and though it can take some initial sacrifice and hard work, it all really does pay off and leaves a legacy far beyond any short-term desire. Honestly, if I can do it, you can too.

*'Do something TODAY
that your future self will thank you for.'*
- Unknown



DO WHATEVER IT TAKES: THE COURAGE TO THRIVE

PHIL BRITTEN



PHIL BRITTEN

Phil Britten was your typical 22-year-old Aussie bloke, a carefree country tradie, heading toward a promising football career. Fit, happy and captain of the Kingsley Football Club based in Perth, Phil and his team mates did what many young Aussies do; headed to Kuta in Bali to celebrate the end of football season. It was supposed to be the time of their lives. A mere six hours into their holiday, instead of celebrating they were fighting for their lives. Terrorists bombed the Sari Club, a well-known tourist bar that was notoriously filled with fun-loving patrons that time of year.

The 2002 Bali bombings killed 202 people and injured a further 209. Phil lost seven mates in one evening and suffered burns to 60% of his body. A miracle to survive.

Through the loss of mates, horrific injuries and mental scarring Phil had to battle through years of recovery, pain and mental torture. To survive the attack was one miracle, to survive the aftermath was another.

Courageously, Phil decided to not let the terrorists take him down, he would re-build his life; his body; his mindset - step by painstaking step.

Phil's ability to re-build far exceeded the general idea of obtaining physical health and dealing with the emotional and mental impact of such tragedy. Phil went on to thrive, exceed in countless areas. Phil is now an international speaker, author and successful entrepreneur. He inspires people all over the world and helps them build extraordinary lives and successful businesses. Phil has created multimillion-dollar enterprises, turning over in excess of 25 million dollars in his first decade of business.

Phil was the winner of the coveted WA Business News '40under40' award in recognition as one of WA's top entrepreneurs. He was also awarded as a Top Four Finalist for the award's highest accolade 'First among Equals'. That same year, he was named 'Most Inspiring Man of the Year' by Momentum Forum and more recently recognised by The Professional Speakers Academy as 'Australian Speaker of The Year'. Phil received a 'Most Influential 100' Award by Nifnex and is the author of *Undefeated*, a powerful autobiographical account of life after the bombings.

Passionate and unstoppable, father-of-three, Phil Britten shares his expertise and life perspective with countless people all over the world every year. His unwavering attitude toward embracing life, along with his mantra of 'do whatever it takes', sees thousands of people following in his footsteps and choosing to become warriors in all walks of life.

PHIL, YOU'VE LIVED TO TELL THE STORY OF WHAT FRIGHTENS MANY PEOPLE IN TODAY'S WORLD: THE ACT OF TERRORISM. CAN YOU TELL US YOUR EXPERIENCE?

October 12, 2002, 11.08pm was the minute that transformed my entire life. Six hours into my dream holiday and I was fighting for my life and surrounded by bloodshed, bodies and bedlam. My mates and I were on our end of year footy trip, sharing some drinks and laughs. I was talking to a mate and the next second...bam! Fireballs of explosives ripped through the club. An almighty force with intense heart smashed me up against the bar, I was curled over and covered in other people's body parts. Disorientated and in shock, somehow I got to my feet. I unconsciously put both hands up to my bloody mouth, my teeth had been blown out and the lingering smell of chemical fumes clung in the air. For a brief moment there was just an eerie black silence...nothing. Then...dying groans and bloodcurdling screams filled the void; primal screams of horror that once heard, remain with you forever.

The scene was a real-life horror movie – flames, fumes, screams, dead bodies and people running everywhere, screaming, trying to save other peoples' lives. It was a massacre, a war zone.

To escape the destruction and continuous burning fires took more than just physical strength. The streets were ablaze and covered in rubble. To escape I had to scale a 3-metre wall to not fall victim to the burning inferno. In my first attempt – I jumped, hanging on by only my fingertips to the wall. Panic struck and I fell back into the fire. Second attempt – I made it to my chest, but as other frantic people try to escape, they used my body as a ladder – I fell again and was badly burnt. With skin hanging off me I made a third attempt. My strength and energy dissipated. I remember looking at the wall as I grappled with its size. It was in this moment that, almost like a movie montage flashback of my life, played through my mind: my childhood, parents, grandparents and all the people that were dear to me. The overwhelming thoughts of 'I'm never going to be a Dad, I'm never going to feel love, I'm never going to have a wife,' flashed through my mind. I didn't want to miss out on these things.

“No, I’ve got to get out of here; it’s not my time!” I thought and I scaled the wall.

Sitting on the wall for a brief moment, a broader scene came into focus. Total anarchy. I tried to talk, but the smoke inhalation had already damaged my throat, my skin was burnt to a crisp and large sections were peeling off me. I took off my singlet and large chunks of skin came off with it. I knew I had to act but I was completely dazed and confused.

I somehow managed to get down and run down the road. Locals tried to get me in their car to take me to hospital, but the instincts to go back and find my mates overwhelmed me. I fought the locals with the little strength I had left, every time they grabbed me, my skin fell off. Blood was everywhere. Over time they managed to calm me and take me to hospital.

Hospital was a real-life horror movie. The meagre facilities could not cope with a tragedy of this magnitude. Unrecognisable people were laying on blood-stained stretcher beds groaning for help. Shrapnel wounds, deep burns and smoke inhalation had made my body, and hundreds of others, an unfathomable mess.

I was moved into a tiny room with four or five others. I laid on a blood-soaked bed for hours. Doctors rushed in and out. I asked them for help, “Yeah, we’ll get to you,” they said. It was a nightmare and a miracle that I survived.

AND WHAT ABOUT THE RECOVERY PERIOD?

I was in an induced coma for quite some time, when I came out of it and saw my Mum, I didn’t know if I was alive or dead. Was she an angelic apparition or did I survive?

Being burnt is excruciating, but the years of recovery are indescribable.

Getting skin stapled together, grafted and living through the constant dressing changes is beyond painful. You wouldn’t wish it upon your worst enemy. To recover from burns is ten times more painful than the initial injuries. Even the small portion on non-burnt skin is taken off you and put onto the burnt skin. You’re pretty much like a mummified person. It’s a long, dark and tormenting road to travel.

Physically it was excruciating but mentally it was equally challenging, if not more. I was consumed by the loss of my mates and plagued with the guilt of surviving. The nightmares, the memories, the deep dark emotions tormented me. The mental demons were forever knocking at the door of my mind. I battled them daily.

WAS THERE A TURNING POINT, A TIME WHEN THINGS SHIFTED FOR YOU?

I think you need to create that turning point. There was a time that I realised that I would never be the same Phil Britten that I once was. I was different now. The 700kg of explosives packed inside a van outside the Sari Club, 20 to 25 metres from me, changed my life forever. There was no denying that, but I did have a choice. I could be worse from that experience, or I could be better. I chose to be better.

I often tell people that the biggest breakthroughs come from pain, hardship or fear. It all begins and ends with your *mindset*. You have to use your mindset, otherwise tragedies, changes and life-defining moments can swallow you whole. You can choose to live life to the full from whatever vantage point you find yourself in. It may not be easy, it will have challenges; but it is possible.

Your mindset is yours, you can use it to your advantage or let it use you.

I used to see my burn scars as ugly and hideous. In hospital I remember thinking ‘who would ever love a monster like me?’ I thought that I’d be destined to be that beast that no one would love. How wrong I was.

When my gorgeous wife Rebecca walked into my life, that old belief gradually faded. She helped me wear my scars with honour and pride – like a badge that defines my journey. I can now take my shirt off and be proud in my own skin.

YOU ALSO USED YOUR MINDSET TO HELP RESOLVE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE TERRORISTS?

Yes, if I sank into the misery that forever tempts and taunts you to enter, then I would be letting them win.

At first I was consumed by seething anger, hatred and pure bitterness. These people had taken the lives of my mates, my physical and mental health, my football career and killed hundreds of people. They forever changed the lives of countless more. I was filled with pure rage.

I travelled to Indonesia to attend the trial of one of the terrorists, Amrozi bin Nurhasyim, dubbed by the media ‘The Smiling Assassin’ due to his ability to insidiously smile through the trial.

Initially there was hatred, anger, frustration. I had planned to yell stuff at him and if I had the chance I was going to thump him senseless. No one has the right to take another’s life and I was going to make that statement.

However, when I got there and saw this person, the anger dwindled. I looked hard at him and saw someone who didn’t have a clue about the meaning of life. A person who succumbed to the lowest point of humanity – to kill others. A person whose life was lived in hate.

In this moment things really shifted for me. I ceased consuming myself in thinking about the terrorists, in worrying over what was going to happen at the trial. I couldn’t change any of that. The only thing I could change was myself, my attitude, my life legacy.

My hatred morphed to clarity. Compassion entered where revenge once lingered. My life was going to be the opposite of what they chose. My life was going to be about love, life, hope and happiness. It was now up to me.

My first trip ever to Bali was on that fateful day, so I never got to really explore the region, I have since been back for the trial and on several anniversaries of the bombings. 88 Australians were killed that day and many others from countries all over the world. The Balinese people suffered greatly and have lost a lot. I endeavour to also remember the beauty of Bali, not just the pure devastation. The kindness and generosity of the people, the re-building that they’ve had to endure and the impact this horrific act has had on so many innocent Balinese people and their businesses.

Going back to Bali helped me reconcile my previous anger and resentment, I got to see the beautiful countryside and spend time with the loving Balinese community. It helped me resolve my feelings and see Bali with fresh eyes.

In all parts of the world there are good and bad people in each country, we can't allow the bad people or their actions to tarnish the exquisite beauty that is still present in the vast majority of people and places.

I proposed to Rebecca on Sanur beach in 2009, it was a magical evening and a memory that I'll always cherish.

Dealing with trauma and the act of terrorism is mentally very challenging. The ones that do survive are often riddled with acute mental challenges, survivor's guilt, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, agonising nightmares and flashbacks. It's horrendous and hard to explain the mental challenges so many survivors have to endure. Many don't make it through, and suicide is prevalent.

It was hard to not be filled with hatred for the people who did it. But I had to change my mindset, I had to shelve it. Recurring thoughts of 'why me?' get you nowhere in a hurry. You have to strive and train your brain toward positivity. Otherwise the mental torment can eat you alive. Accidents and tragedies are happening all over the world and touching so many people, I try and inspire people to really live life, to not just walk through it without maximising yourself and your opportunities. Make the most of all the big and little things. Be grateful for the opportunity to live. So many people had that opportunity taken from them, I feel I have a responsibility to live well and create a legacy of value.

WHAT STEPS DID YOU TAKE AFTER THIS EPIPHANY?

My life has been a series of steps. Not everything comes together perfectly at once, you have to set goals and work on your mindset. Continual growth and challenging yourself beyond the mental walls of your comfort zone are critical key factors. Inch by inch, it's a cinch; yard by yard, it's hard.

I would advise people to start wherever you are. Just small steps are fine. It doesn't matter what life dealt you in the past or what you've been told previously. You can achieve a new-found level of success and joy if you decide to, and if you're willing to do whatever it takes. The 'whatever it takes' mindset was a vital key for me and I encourage others to choose their goals, their future, their dreams with a determined, focused attitude. Know what you want and be willing to go for it.

My personal road to recovery was full of small goals: to play footy again, to continue my martial arts, to learn more about business, to challenge my beliefs and adopt new mental strategies toward success.

The horrors of Bali changed my life without my consent, but to stay in that mindset would be choosing the role of ‘victim’. I didn’t want to define myself that way. The term ‘survivor’ was a step further, but I didn’t want to merely survive and be classified as a survivor. Though massive changes had occurred in my life by default, I decided to consciously pave my own way forward. To thrive instead of survive. To be a warrior instead of a worrier.

These choices were, and are critical to overcoming adversity. The choices that we make internally today navigate our direction tomorrow. We may not control the wind but we can certainly set our sails and navigate our course.

**YOU ARE NOW AN INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED
MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER, WORLD INNOVATION EXPERT
AND SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR.**

**CAN YOU SHARE WITH THE YSHIFT AUDIENCE HOW YOU
SUCCEEDED IN SO MANY DIFFERENT AREAS IN SUCH A
SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME? IT’S TRULY REMARKABLE.**

Without sounding like a cliché, you first have to believe. Believe in yourself and your ability to change, grow, learn and develop.

I didn’t start out speaking grandly on an international stage, this developed over time. Initially I began at my grandmother’s local Lions’ club. My grandmother asked me to share my story to 20 of her friends at the local Lions’ club she attended. I was still in my pressure burns suit and wearing a dental plate where my teeth used to once be. I was still very vulnerable - physically and mentally. To be honest it was one of the toughest talks I’ve ever done, the attacks were still so fresh in my mind and my body was still in its recovery phase.

I went on a deep emotional rollercoaster ride. I talked and cried. My voice shook with tenderness and pain as I spoke my story to my grandmother’s friends.

At the end they ignited. They hugged me, clapped and told me how inspirational that moment was. It took me completely by surprise and somehow helped heal a section of my aching heart. It was the feeling that I'd been searching for. I spoke to 50 Lions' clubs the following year, raising money for a non-profit burns centre – the Fiona Wood Foundation. This stemmed out to later include talking at schools, universities and corporate areas.

Over time I honed my speaking skills and worked with some amazing mentors. Business enterprise was something that I was deeply interested in and an area that I could learn a lot. I now have built seven successful businesses from the ground up, but again, this didn't happen overnight. It was a series of steps and never giving up.

Martial arts was always a big part of my life, a sport I loved and fell back on when I was injured in football. I was working as a martial arts instructor and in 2007 I wanted to challenge myself further and open my own centre. In this first year I had over 100 students.

Branching out with a business partner, Graham McDonnell, a couple of short years' later saw the dojo's rise in numbers and turnover. There are now over 1700 students and 50 staff.

Business became a bigger passion in my life and helped me raise my family and inspire others through my story. The business platform has helped me broaden my reach and help others achieve their own definition of greatness. In order to teach success, I had to be successful. In order to help businesses' thrive and increase profit, I first had to do it myself. To really teach something to others, you have to have *been-there-done-that*. An inauthentic leader will eventually be uncovered. A true leader has to walk their talk and live their teachings. Otherwise it's all just smoke and mirrors and people eventually sniff that out.

Honest and sincere business leadership is a matter of ethics and these shouldn't get ignored in the slogan 'business is business'. Many people use 'business' as an excuse for ripping others off, over-charging or not being charitable. You take your character everywhere you go. It shouldn't be left at the door in the pursuit of 'making it' or 'getting rich'.

True leadership and business is all about character and giving. You can make money *and* improve people's lives – it doesn't have to be separate. To me, life is about leaving a legacy. A legacy that you can be proud of, one that represents you inside and out.

Business, family, relationships, goals, dreams and ambitions are all avenues in which you can become great! You don't need to choose one over another. They *all* give you the opportunity to develop your best mindset, your strongest character and highest aspirations.

Being a husband and father is a true gift, a dream I thought may be taken from me far too early. Though I love my business ventures and speaking opportunities, they need to balance with my family too.

Bali gave me the gift of perspective and it never leaves me. We must remember what's most important throughout our pursuits and endeavours. Being clear and keeping perspective is a component of true success.

Life is fragile and it can change in any instant; spending your life in a job that you hate, a relationship that makes you miserable or living a half-baked existence isn't necessary. You can in fact choose again.

GIVEN YOUR EXPERIENCE - YOUR MINDSET AND PERSPECTIVE HAS FOREVER BEEN CHANGED; HOW CAN OTHERS EXPERIENCE THIS TRANSFORMATION WITHOUT HAVING TO GO THROUGH A LIFE-ALTERING CHALLENGE?

You don't need to experience tragedy to gain perspective. We already know what our values are, what our dreams and goals are...we just need to reignite them and focus on them. You don't have to live in the rat race if you don't want to. Doing what you love, even if you start in a very small way, is very important to your happiness and wellbeing.

Recent generations were told that you had to get a stable job (even if you hated it), get married (even if you weren't in love), have kids (even if you didn't necessarily have the means to look after them). The message of 'Live your passion' wasn't the norm.

I believe we can all live our passion. For example if you want to be an online entrepreneur but don't have the necessary income yet, then begin

where you are with what you have. Work in your day job and slowly build your online business at night or on the weekend. Take small steps along the way. My entire journey has been built on small steps. The most important part is heading in the right direction. Small steps in the right direction get you to your destination.

I always recommend that people find a mentor in the area that they're passionate about. Find someone who is doing what you're doing and learn from them. Surround yourself with like-minded, positive people who believe in you, but most importantly you must also believe in yourself.

I know how important the right advice is, and how detrimental the wrong advice is too. Without leaders and coaches inspiring me I wouldn't have learned at the rapid pace that I have. I've recently created an online show called 'Innovation Hackers'. It includes tips and solutions to help people grow their business, how to 'crack the code' of business. It's based around the real things that actually build businesses.

The market place is full of new marketing fads and over-exuberant sales-people, I wanted to strip that all away and give real advice to real people to build real businesses. Talk is often cheap but the right talk is invaluable. I also interview successful leaders in their field, ones that usually are hard to access, I want to bring expert advice and useful content to the normal person.

I've also created an 'Innovation Hackers Facebook group'. I didn't want the typical group that I see so often, you know the ones that are simply used for promotion and self-gain. I believe it's important to give good strong content, content that is rich in value and actually helps people.

There is an overload of information out there and people want to consume a lot of information. Learning is great...but we also need to take action!

CAN YOU OFFER SOME PRACTICAL BUSINESS ADVICE RIGHT HERE FOR OUR YSHIFT AUDIENCE TOO?

Sure. There's some basic things that you can do (or stop doing) to grow or enhance your business. Business like any part of your life is a mindset and first it's essential that you adopt the right mindset for your business.

One important way to do this is to identify your target market. Define it down specifically to one person. Many people erroneously believe that they must cater to the general audience, reach the entire spectrum. When we try to be everything to everybody we become nothing to nobody. Your niche business message gets lost in the hit-and-miss of your broad sales ideas.

Define your perfect client down to one person. What age are they? What occupation? What type of personality do they have? What's their spending habits?

If you do the exercise you'll be surprised to realise that you can quickly identify that one – your perfect target market. Learn to address that one person, speak and market specifically to that one. When you can speak to that ONE, then you can speak to many of those ones. I brought out an eBook on this specific subject because it often gets missed in its simplicity. We keep trying to be everything to everyone and it just doesn't work.

I encourage people to position themselves in their niche field. To become experts in their arena and stand strong as an expert. Positioning yourself as an expert means you have to become one. Learn everything you can about your chosen field and offer that advice and education to others. We can't all be experts on every subject but you can be an expert in your field of passion. People need experts to guide and help them through this fast-paced dynamic world. Be that for others. Not only will people pay you well for your expert advice but you'll be able to give so much to benefit others too.

Whether you're into social media or not, the fact is: it's here and it's happening. You can use it to educate yourself and connect with like-minded people or you can use it to waste endless amount of hours browsing people's Facebook profiles and Instagram accounts. Like everything, social media is choice, a mindset. You control it, it doesn't control you.

Use it for growth and expansion, use it to educate people in relevant things. Things that matter, things that are meaningful, things that benefit others and ignite their dreams and goals.

I believe if you are congruent in business, then you'll always thrive. Live your message, not just teach it. Live what you stand for every day. Adding value and educating others is more than a business deal, it's a lifelong gift

that you can give in business as well as life. Helping people build businesses is a marvellous stimulant for me, but I could not do this if I hadn't at first done it myself. Don't be afraid to give, give, give. Share your knowledge, your expertise.

One thing I tell my clients is that sales is a disqualification process, not a qualification process. I often get perplexed looks when I first say this. I don't go around attempting to have my advice or knowledge qualified, I don't ask people to jump on board the Phil Britten gravy train. Truth itself or real advice that actually works, disqualifies people's doubts and concerns. You don't need to go around trying to make sales figures, when you are an authentic expert, people will want to buy from you rather than you needing to sell to them.

I give away an abundance of free stuff first, I don't ask people to buy from me. I can understand that it's important for people to know that what you're saying is actually worth them spending money on.

From there I offer low cost platforms, such as \$37 per month. It helps people get established and build business with the right advice at an affordable price.

Zero start-up businesses can be successful if you know what you're doing. How do I know that? Because I did it myself, so this I can now teach to others.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR YOU PHIL, WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS?

I want to continue to help other businesses grow and succeed. I am now up to my 7th business and have set a goal for it to be turning over 1 million dollars by the time that I'm 40.

My public speaking is currently global, however I want to talk on the world's biggest stages and reach out to as many people as possible. Could you imagine a world full of motivated, positive people? What a world it would be. Speaking is a deep passion of mine, connecting with others in this way has a synergy beyond other platforms. It's real, it's alive and electric. It's such an honour to speak to people about matters close to my heart.

I will continue to implement business strategies for people and advocate the power of mindset in business and life; over time melting those components into a platform based on leadership and legacy.

In the end it's our life, our attitude and what we give to others that is the legacy. This in my truest long-term goal. To use my life and the gift of life itself in the most meaningful and positive way I can. We can all rise like the Phoenix from the ashes and be regenerated to live anew. Thank you to Bali, my life is now a testament to living. Let's make every moment matter – because it does.



Source: abc.net.au



DO WHAT YOU LOVE AND GET PAID DOING IT

PIP McKAY



PIP MCKAY

Pip McKay is the CEO of Evolve Now! Mind Institute Pty Ltd. She is an Amazon Number #1 international best-selling and award winning author for *The 8 Principles of Achievement, Love and Happiness*.

Over the last 25 years, Pip has assisted over 10,000 people achieve incredible breakthroughs across all areas of their lives. She is a pioneer in the area of personal development and coaching and is a highly sought after speaker. Pip has also taught in companies such as NRMA, MBF and Mallesons' Law Firm. Her students include famous entrepreneurs, well-known actors, as well as everyday people who want extraordinary results.

She is the creator of *Matrix Therapies®*, *Passion and Purpose Coaching™*, *Masculine and Feminine Coaching™* and *Archetypal Coaching™* and has a suite of life-changing books, DVDs and CDs available on her website.

Diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD when she was young, Pip had problems with reading and writing. Her late teens were challenged by depression and Chronic Fatigue. Despite tumultuous times Pip overcame these struggles and gained a BA Honours Degree in English Literature from the University of New South Wales. Pip went on to graduate with a Diploma of Education, with Distinction in English and Drama from Sydney University, where she won the P.R. Cole Memorial Prize for Excellence.

Pip studied acting in New York with renowned actor, teacher and author Uta Hagen. During this time Pip embarked on a spiritual apprenticeship, which specialised in a deep understanding of the Western Mystery Tradition, archetypes and human psychology.

Pip taught in England and was a GCSE examiner then returned home to teach acting at McDonald College of Performing Arts. Many of Pip's students studied at NIDA and became successful stage and screen actors and performers. Pip ran the education arm of the Sydney Theatre Company before creating her own acting company, Spark Productions. She then became the Corporate Director of Accelerated Learning Worldwide. Now Pip runs transformative programs through her own company Evolve Now Mind Institute Pty Ltd.

During her years as a teacher, trainer and director Pip found that she naturally coached students and staff, dealing with a breadth of life issues. This prompted her to study Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) to enhance her interpersonal skills. She became an NLP coach and trainer and co-founded the Australian Board of NLP before creating her own techniques.

GIVEN THE FACT YOU SPEND MUCH OF YOUR TIME HELPING PEOPLE SHIFT THEIR MINDSET AND CHANGE THEIR LIVES, WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WHAT YOU DO?

Watching people transform is my greatest joy. I love to see clients' breakthrough huge blocks that were once holding them back and fulfil their highest potential.

When people have had a problem for a long time, they often believe that it will take a great deal of effort and time to make changes. But when you have the right tools, even long-term problems can shift quickly.

YOU ARE OBVIOUSLY LIVING YOUR PASSION.

MANY PEOPLE WANT TO SHIFT THEIR CAREERS TO SOMETHING MORE FULFILLING BUT ARE UNABLE TO DUE TO FINANCIAL LIMITATIONS. WHAT IS THE SECRET OF MAKING PASSION WORK IN THE REAL WORLD?

The key is to 'Know thyself' which was the cornerstone of philosophy in Ancient Greece. Knowing yourself is a combination of understanding your passions and talents, as well as knowing and overcoming your limitations.

It is then important that you use your passion and talent to make a contribution that others see as beneficial. They need to know how your product or service fulfils a burning desire or solves their problems. If you can do both - then you will be able to make money from what you love.

For instance, I have always loved the study of archetypes but most people do not know what they are, let alone how archetypes would benefit them. It took me a long time to work out what major problems archetypes solved but once I did, I could market my courses effectively and fill my trainings.

In the end I created a model that used archetypes to help people discover their passion and purpose. Then I added a process that helped them clear blocks to make money from what they loved.

So in this way, I could teach archetypes and people came because they understood and experienced the benefits.

When I first started my business I was still working as the Corporate Director at Accelerated Learning Worldwide. So I would put aside Wednesday afternoon and Saturdays to see clients while I still worked. I also negotiated with the company to teach NLP which they hadn't offered before. In this way I taught what I loved at work and coached at home. This gave me the cash flow I needed to set up my business, while honing my skills.

In order to succeed it is so important to see past limitations to what is possible. Most people see only their own and others' limitations. Schools focus on a child's weaknesses in an attempt to overcome them, but in this process dreams can be stifled or at least uncultivated. It's interesting that entrepreneurs are often rebellious or maverick in some way. In a society that wanted us to conform to mediocrity, you have to be different to succeed and inspire.

HOW DO YOU THINK PEOPLE DISCOVER PASSION?

I believe that spark of passion is hidden in childhood dreams of what you wanted to be or in the simple things you loved to do. It is then possible to decode these and discover your purpose.

When I was a child I wanted to be an actor because I wanted to enter into a magical world where dreams came true and transformations happened. I pursued acting and it took me to New York where I studied with one of the grand dames of the American stage, Uta Hagen, at HB Studios.

One day when I was on the stage in the middle of a performance, I realised that I was bored. I didn't want to say the same thing every night, following someone else's script and the director's direction. I wanted to be free to be me and do what I wanted to do. I realised I could no longer be an actor. The reality of it was not what I thought it would be. It was devastating. I felt like I had lost a part of myself. What was I going to do now? I floundered around doing one thing and another and then settled for being an English and Drama high school teacher; but I knew it wasn't really what I wanted to do with my life.

Finally, using archetypes, I realised that I could still enter a magical world where transformations happened without being an actor. As a speaker and

trainer I am able to motivate people to follow their dreams and assist them to transform their lives. To those who don't know the techniques and the structure I am following, it really looks like magic. Unlike most magicians, however, I am passionate about sharing how those changes take place. That's why I created *Archetypal Coaching*® and *Passion and Purpose Coaching*™.

I think people are deeply motivated by passion and purpose. It is fundamental to happiness to love what you do, make a contribution and be rewarded.

YOU HAVE MENTIONED ARCHETYPES A NUMBER OF TIMES. WHAT EXACTLY IS AN ARCHETYPE?

There has been much confusion and miscommunication about archetypes over the years. When this happens I like to go back to the original meaning of the word itself.

'Arch' means 'best' or 'first' and 'type' means 'symbol' or 'example of'. So, basically an archetype is the *best example* of something that is universal. So, some *best examples* we universally connect with are 'Mother', 'Father', 'Child', 'Lover', 'Teacher', 'Warrior', 'Maiden' or 'Magician'. Surprisingly there are many core qualities that make up the *best example* of these roles that all cultures agree on.

For instance, 'Mother' literally means: 'a woman who has given birth', but 'Mother' also has symbolic meaning. At her best she represents unconditional love, nurture and creativity. All over the world every culture attributes these symbolic meanings to 'Mother'. Therefore 'Mother' at her best is universal and archetypal.

Now of course your mother may not be ideal but the fact is, we do expect 'ideal' from the concept of 'Mother'. Plato believed that we were born with these expectations.

Some people in personal development will talk about the 'Wounded child' as an archetype. This does not fit with the original meaning of the word. We would say that 'Child' with all its positive associations of fun and innocence is the archetype. A 'Wounded child' would then be a 'shadow' of the archetype of 'Child'.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN DESTINY AND HOW DOES THAT AFFECT MOTIVATION?

Plato believed that we do indeed have a destiny and that we chose it before we were born. The later Greek philosophers elaborated on this idea, saying that we chose our parents, our body and both the major negative and positive events in our lives in order to strengthen our soul and fulfil our purpose.

I really like this idea. It gives a sense of meaning to the things that happen to us and encourages us to make something positive out of difficulties. At the same time it still allows for free-will and the fact that we also make our own destiny; it's a co-creation. I find it useful to walk a middle path between accepting certain aspects of the hand that has been dealt, while at the same time creating what I want in my life.

After all there is not much I can do about being 5'2" in height but I can make sure I never feel small or insignificant. In fact I have always felt really tall!

I believe that human beings yearn for something more than just the material plane. That something doesn't have to be religious, but it does need to be mythic. This is why we love stories, books and movies. We yearn to see ourselves as heroic rather than mediocre. We long to rip the veil from the everyday and discover that the world really is a magical place. To me the world is an enchanted realm filled with possibilities, if we just have the imagination to reach for them. That doesn't mean life will always be happy and nice. Instead we are on a heroic quest filled with ups and downs designed for our learning and evolution.

WHAT CAUSES DEMOTIVATION AND HOW DO WE OVERCOME IT?

Demotivation is generally caused by negative emotions, limiting beliefs and internal conflict. I believe that all negativity is caused by something very simple: the difference between the ideal we have in our hearts and the reality we see in front of us.

If we already have an idea in mind for a business and how we would like it to be. That ideal is based on a combination of our personality, influences, values and something greater and innate, some may call that spirit.

Many of our expectations, including those in business are unconscious. We only become conscious of them when things aren't going the way we want and we feel unhappy. That's why we have negative emotions to show us that things aren't the way we expected them to be.

The key to success is not getting rid of expectations or whining about what's not working, it's about making the changes that move our reality closer to our ideals. When that happens we feel inspired or 'in-spirited'.

Many people get stuck thinking there is only one way to get what they want or one person with whom they can feel happy. When that one way doesn't work they feel depressed and unmotivated.

Instead, success and happiness depend on realising that there are many ways to get what you want, even if the thing itself eludes you. You can easily stimulate motivation by finding other ways or other people who can give you the things you desire. All successful people find ways around obstacles in order to fulfil the aim of their dreams. They recognise that without obstacles they would never have come up with such great solutions.

Sometimes, however, procrastination is simply fatigue. We do so much pushing in our society that sometimes the child within just gets tired and needs to have some fun. If I'm procrastinating I ask myself, 'What is the purpose of procrastinating?' if the answer is, 'To rest', or, 'Have a break', then I make sure I give myself one.

HAVE YOU EVER FELT STRONGLY UNMOTIVATED AND WHAT DID YOU DO ABOUT IT?

I felt strongly unmotivated when I realised I couldn't have children, even with IVF. I had always assumed I would be a mother. I had found with everything else in my life that, if I visualised it clearly, took enough action and was creative about overcoming obstacles, I could manifest just about anything. Suddenly here was something that was more important to me than anything else in the world and I just couldn't find a solution.

It affected me very deeply; no matter what I did that door was slammed shut. Well-meaning people would ask me about adoption but the IVF drugs had taken a huge toll on my health and I was no longer sure I had the

energy. Other people suggested that I ‘clear the emotions and desire’, but that seemed inhumane to me. It is natural to want to be a mother and to feel intense disappointment and loss when you can’t be. I felt very angry, lonely and misunderstood in response to many people’s insensitivity.

I continued to run my business successfully, but I felt something was deeply missing and I didn’t know how to fill the gap. Finally I realised it was time to surrender profoundly to the emotions and find acceptance. It was a very humbling experience and deepened my capacity for compassion and understanding.

One day a dear friend of mine made me godmother to her daughter. There was this one defining moment when she was a tiny baby and I cradled her in my arms. We began staring deeply into each other’s eyes. Suddenly I felt an overwhelming sense of connection and love in a way that I had never felt before. It was as if I had known her before. It was incredibly powerful.

Unexpectedly I found what I had been searching for and I didn’t have to have a child of my own to experience it. It was not an intellectual concept, instead it was a profound shift that happened in the deepest part of my soul.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE *LAW OF ATTRACTION*?

Focusing on what you want is incredibly important, but it doesn’t work in isolation. I think the movie, *The Secret*, implied that you could just sit and visualise, do nothing else and that things would come to you. So people did that and were disappointed when they didn’t get everything they wanted in the way they wanted it.

Those who do visualise and have things happen realise that visualisation is only a first step; they then create effective strategies, take action and open themselves up to receiving. There is actually the *Law of Receptivity* as well as the *Law of Attraction* and these are meant to work together.

YOU MENTION THE *LAW OF RECEPTIVITY*, HOW MANY LAWS OR PRINCIPLES ARE THERE?

There are actually 22 principles and they have 22 secrets and archetypes associated with them. I call them the 22 *Principles of Success, Love and*

Happiness. There are 8 Principles of Achievement. Love and Happiness, 7 Principles of Growth and Abundance and 7 Archetypes of Transformation and Influence. They each work together in a particular order and sequence to get a specific outcome. If any step is missing or in what we call ‘shadow’, things don’t work out the way you expected.

‘Shadow’ is when you approach something in a negative way or overcompensate. For instance, it is great to take action but if you keep pushing too hard or banging your head against a brick wall, you are likely to burn yourself out instead of achieve what you want. This would be an example of ‘shadow’. Working smarter rather than harder would be an example of appropriate or ‘light’ use of the Principle of Action.

Whenever you get a successful outcome, you are using the principles effectively, even if it is unconscious. Some people create successful strategies intuitively and then repeat that formula and have effective outcomes. Most people, however, feel like they are floundering around in the dark and don’t know what to do about it. The 22 *Principles* gives you a blueprint for success and step-by-step strategies.

The 22 *Principles* formed the foundation of the great movements of history such as the Golden Ages of Egypt, Greece, Middle Ages, Renaissance and the Enlightenment. They have affected science, commerce, art and philosophy. Movements and civilisations come and go, but the principles that make them great remain the same.

WHERE DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE 22 PRINCIPLES?

When I was 19 I was feeling very lost and depressed; I hadn’t been able to overcome the abuse I had experienced from a family ‘friend’ when I was a young child, the related court case and then the subsequent death of my father.

In my search for healing I came across a woman who took me under her wing and taught me the 22 Principles and their associated archetypes. I did a 22-year intuitive apprenticeship with her. I used the principles every day and they formed the basis of the way I experienced life both consciously and unconsciously.

Even though I had been highly dyslexic at school and overcame that enough to go to university, it was these principles that allowed me to be dux of Sydney University and win the P.R. Cole Memorial Prize for Excellence. The principles allowed me to read Shakespeare with ease, decipher poetry immediately and unveil the mysteries of art at a glance. It brought order to my chaotic dyslexia and a healing balm to my shattered emotions. It also gave me an enormous creative capacity that allowed me to problem-solve easily, understand others deeply and be highly productive.

I knew that if I was to impart this information to others I needed a way of teaching that others could learn more quickly and apply immediately. So I spent 17 years combining NLP, coaching and other modalities with the archetypes to create a whole new way of helping others transform.

Then while I was teaching some of my insightful students wanted to know the source of the intuition, wisdom and understanding they experienced with me. They felt something was missing in their knowledge and they wanted to have that deeper level of mastery.

So in 2003, I took a small group through the 22 Principles and they were blown away by the profound depth of their learning and the new results they could achieve.

I continued to work and develop tools based on the 22 Principles and their archetypes and created new programs that suited people at different levels of personal development and coaching. Now there is a range of programs that include *Archetypal Coaching®*, *Passion and Purpose Coaching™*, *Your Quest™*, *Masculine and Feminine Coaching™*, *Matrix Constellations and Archetypes™* and the original program of *Matrix Therapies®*. These programs allow you to clear the past and step into your future full of passion and purpose.

Archetypes give people access to such powerful resources often hidden in the deepest part of the unconscious mind. Of all the things I teach this is my favourite topic because the information is so transformational and solves so many problems faced in traditional coaching and therapy, but in a new and highly effective way. They also give you a complete overview of the human experience. They are the companions of your personal hero's journey.

YOU ARE NOW A MENTOR TO SO MANY. WHO WERE YOUR MENTORS GROWING UP?

I found the positive aspects of both my parents incredibly inspiring. My Mum totally believed in the importance of education. We could have second-hand clothes and books and do without a bike but there was always money to get the best education.

I still have that strong belief today. Even when cash flow was tight in the business, I always found or borrowed the money to continue my education with those I considered the best. I really believe that is one of the cornerstones of success and wealth.

Mum would say: ‘Do what you love and the money will come’, and at the same time she was very practical about money and investments. In order to be motivated it is important to have a balance between passion and practicality. If you have no passion you lack energy and inspiration. If you aren’t practical about cash flow you can’t sustain a business. So the big question I always ask myself is: ‘How can I make money from what I love? How can I market and sell what I feel passionate about?’

My Dad was a very creative storyteller and interested in human psychology. At Christmas time he would ask my brother and me for two words and then he would make up a story, starring us.

I remember one day, when I was about six, I thought of two words that I believed no one could use to make a story. I chose ‘Drum tobacco’. I thought, ‘I’ve got you now Dad, no one could ever make up a story about that! Especially when cigarettes are so yucky!’ But lo and behold, that night Dad made up the best story ever.

It was an epiphany for me. I felt like anything was possible if you just used enough imagination and creativity. I also realised that challenges could end up giving you the best outcomes because, when something is not easy, you have to think outside the box for a solution. Later on in life it was those early lessons that attracted me to entrepreneurs like Oprah, Richard Branson and Rob Siltanen.

YOU MENTION SOME FAMILY INFLUENCES AROUND MONEY AND WEALTH, CAN YOU ELABORATE A LITTLE MORE.

I grew up with two completely different views of money. From my Dad I had the idea that money just comes to you because of who you are. From Mum it was that you needed to work really hard to get it.

When I was very young we lived in South East Asia. My father was a diplomat and my mother was a volunteer teacher. Dad was provided with a beautiful mansion and an entertainment allowance. My parents had time and I had loads of fun, love and attention; but all of Dad's wealth was dependent on his work. He had nothing else, no investments and no savings – nothing.

When we came to Australia Dad couldn't find work. The only job Dad could get was selling World Books door-to-door. It destroyed him. He would just sit in the car and smoke cigarettes. He couldn't face knocking on people's doors and selling, particularly when he had been so highly respected.

My Mum picked up the pieces to support the family. By then we had so little money that we lived in a tiny flat in St Kilda, Melbourne. The whole family slept in one bedroom lined up like sardines. St Kilda wasn't the trendy place it is today; it was terribly run down and unsavoury. I remember leaving my teddy bears on the fence for five minutes and someone stole them!

Mum continued to work incredibly hard throughout her life, particularly after Dad died, to improve our finances. She often had stress headaches and pushed herself. I am very proud of my Mum's achievements in such difficult circumstances, but it took its toll on her health.

HOW DID THIS AFFECT YOUR OWN BELIEFS ABOUT WEALTH?

When I started a business, I realised I had many conflicting views of money. On one hand I felt that people should just know who I was and what I had to offer, which I had picked up from my Dad. On the other hand I felt uncertain about my ability to make money and compensated for that by being a workaholic, like my Mum. I also had many negative emotions and beliefs around sales.

Luckily by then I had a coach and the tools to clear some of the internal conflict and negativity, however, there weren't any techniques to clear parental programming.

It became obvious to me that when it came to money, most people were unconsciously influenced by their parents' attitudes towards it.

So I created *Matrix Therapies – Clearing Negative Influences* so that people could clear the complex matrix of issues related to parents. It can be used in all areas of life including money, relationships or health. It meant that people could finally release the energy tied up with parental influence and be themselves. *Matrix Therapies* is now taught throughout the world and it is used by hundreds of coaches, as well as, doctors, psychologists and counsellors.

YOU'VE MENTIONED THE VALUE OF INTUITION. WHAT IS INTUITION?

Intuition is your 'inner-tuition' or inner teacher. It gives you fast, accurate knowledge of a situation without you being conscious of how you came to those conclusions. The key is its accuracy. Whereas emotions, such as fear, can create compelling conclusions and motivate action, however these conclusions are usually irrational and the action destructive. Intuition is centred in the place of 'knowing', beyond emotions, desires and intellect. When you follow your intuition the outcomes are successful, certain and wise.

Modern studies of intuition say that it is the result of all the information that bombards the unconscious mind being synthesised and then communicated to, the conscious mind via one of the senses. People will then experience it as a gut-feeling, vision or inner-voice.

The ancients called it the still, quiet voice. They believed that intuition bridges the gap between the higher self and conscious understanding. Even if you experience intuition as a gut feeling in the end you still have to understand and listen to it.

CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF SOMEONE USING INTUITION TO MAKE THEIR BUSINESS MORE SUCCESSFUL?

A few years ago I had a client who kept hiring people in her business who had a very negative impact. The candidates ticked the right boxes in the interview but the owner felt like something wasn't right but she didn't know why.

She would then dismiss her gut feeling by reasoning, 'I have been looking for someone for so long and this person is perfect'. Later, when she realised her employee was undermining her, she would say, 'Oh, I knew I should have followed my intuition.' She was so frustrated when she came to me and was beginning to lose trust in her ability to make wise decisions.

We did a process I created specifically designed to assist with intuition, which used the archetype of the 'Sage'. From this process she discovered that the people she employed were just like her mother. She had spent her childhood trying to rescue her mother and it never made any difference. It was like pouring energy into a big black hole. When she grew up she simply repeated the pattern with employees who unconsciously reminded her of her mother. She felt a compulsive need to rescue them.

Clearing the influence of her mother made a massive difference to her life. She began employing people who supported her. Now she is thriving because she can use her intuition effectively.

WHAT IS THE LINK BETWEEN INTUITION AND GENIUS?

Wherever your genius lies is where your intuition is strongest. If you cultivate your talents then your intuition becomes a valuable resource that others seek. Of course you need to share how your genius will benefit others— this is called marketing. To make money from what you love, you need both.

The ancient Greeks believed that before we were born we were assigned a fiery angel called a 'daemon'. This angel's sole purpose was to keep you on track to discover and live your passion and purpose. When the Roman's adopted much of ancient Greek culture they translated the word 'daemon' into the Latin word 'geni'. We were all assigned our own personal geni or genius before we were born. So you can see there is a strong historic connection between passion and genius, even in the origin of the word itself.

In order to find our passion we need to be willing to follow the clues left by our intuition. They really work hand-in-hand. Your passion and genius are not things you can figure out intellectually. There is a spiritual connection to genius, which is beyond the rational. Great geniuses usually describe their breakthrough discoveries as coming through them, not from them. Their most profound inventions are the result of intuitive leaps made during daydreaming or altered states of consciousness.

DO WE ALL HAVE GENIUS?

I believe we all have potential for genius but it needs to be cultivated. Genius is the result of combining passion with talent, skill and persistence. Passion by itself is not enough. For example, I have a passion for dancing but I don't have a talent for it. I do it, I enjoy it and it's a hobby.

I also have a passion for helping others transform. I have a natural talent for it and I have spent 30 years developing my skills. So that is where my genius lies. If you know your passion and have a talent for it, base your business on that. It will develop your genius.

So many people have false modesty about their abilities and don't communicate their talents. Many people don't know what they're good at unless you tell them. Some people are waiting to be discovered and rescued from insignificance; that can be a long wait. I like to say, 'If you want to be discovered, then discover yourself'.

DO POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS WORK?

What many people don't understand is that the unconscious mind is more influenced by suggestion than by command. If someone is desperately repeating positive affirmations because they are afraid or insecure, the unconscious mind will assume they want to replicate fear and insecurity rather than the positive affirmation.

Rather than mindlessly repeating, 'I am a money magnet,' hundreds of times, it is better to ask yourself, 'What is the purpose of making money?' The answer might be, 'To pay the bills' and the purpose of paying the bills might be peace of mind, and the purpose of peace of mind might be freedom and happiness.

Then you can ask yourself: ‘What is the most peaceful, happy and freeing way I can make ‘X’ amount of money?’ Brainstorm all the answers and then go ahead and take action on the most effective and interesting suggestions.

CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF ONE OF YOUR CLIENTS WHO HAS MADE THE GREATEST TRANSFORMATIONS?

I want to give an example of what I call ‘everyday’ change, because I think it is something that more people can relate to.

I had a client who was doing OK financially, but not brilliantly. His relationship was rocky, but had potential. He was really in love with his partner but struggled with commitment.

While I was taking his personal history he told me that his father was an aggressive bully and his mother was withdrawn and absent. He had done his best never to be like his father, but was afraid that if he got married and had children something would switch within him and he would end up like his father.

Through the process of *Matrix Therapies*® we cleared the influence of his father and he was able to truly step into his own identity. He no longer needed to rebel against his father or fear becoming like him. Instead he was simply able to be himself.

That night he went straight home and proposed to his partner. They are now happily married and have two beautiful girls. His income also went up hugely. He was also able to create his own concept of masculinity, one that was based on communication and understanding, as well as, assertion and action.

It is wonderful to know that those children will grow up in a family where old generational patterns have ceased. Instead his daughters have a wonderful example of how people can overcome challenges, fulfil their potential and be loving and happy at the same time. What a wonderful legacy for generations to come!

What we must realise is: we can all be our own inspirational story.

Starting now.



MY REDEMPTIVE LIFE VISION

PETER HIGGS



PETER HIGGS

What you are about to read is the story of Peter Higgs, a man who has endured his lifetime coping with both epilepsy and mental illness. His story is informative, inspiring and rich in spirit. Peter gives help and hope to so many that live the cruel fate, and consequences of, such debilitating conditions. His unyielding spirit, ingenuity, faith and meticulous approach to managing his illness ignited, what is now called - his 'Redemptive Life Vision'.

Peter is a passionate educator on mental health topics; an advocate for self-belief and a talented public speaker. His story is not only about mental and physical health, it also imparts a deep wisdom and humanity that is rare in today's world.

To describe Peter's path as going through hardship is simply a gross understatement. The challenge to be correctly diagnosed took many long years and took its toll on Peter and his family. His personal quest to get better and live well is a testament to his resilience. In fact resilience is only one of Peter's many inspiring qualities.

Read Peter's full story in our Y-shift interactive books, download the Yshift app or join at **www.yshift.global**

WHAT DRIVES YOU TO SHARE YOUR STORY WITH OUR YSHIFT MOVEMENT, PETER?

I think it's important to tell my story and hopefully inspire others. I would love to help people improve their lives – and show them it's possible. As the great Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'Life's most persistent and urgent question is – what are you doing for others?'

By 'Redemptive Life Vision', I mean a vision to redeem, or 'buy back' my life from mental and physical illness. I live with the consequences of – and complications as a result of – bipolar and epilepsy and the mistaken actions that were taken in response to it. My vision is to fight the disadvantages created around my illness. I wish to redeem my life and become a better person throughout the rest of my life.

CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR DIAGNOSES AND HOW THEY AFFECTED YOU?

I was diagnosed with 'nocturnal' epilepsy when I was six years old; here 'nocturnal' meaning that my seizures would only happen when I was asleep, and not necessarily at night.

It was acknowledged that my condition may have been caused by incidents at birth: My birth put my mother and I through a terrible forty-eight hour labour, with a series of unfortunate turns; resulting in a deprivation of oxygen during delivery.

Seemingly however, I appeared quite normal and my first six years were happy and fun. But then, at the age of six, the seizures started. I remember waking up during the night with Mum and Dad at my bedside. Dad, always caring and strong and would comfort me in his arms as I was scared and bewildered.

Unlike the epilepsy, the diagnosis of my mental illness was not straightforward and took longer to define. In fact a true diagnosis was a long, bumpy, windy path to navigate.

With epilepsy, it's one thing to define it medically and quite another to express its effect firsthand. Epilepsy affected my whole life: Heart, mind,

soul and will. Epilepsy is not just a case of a having a seizure and then going on with your daily routine. A seizure can affect your whole body and brain; your body alone can feel sore and tired just from the extreme physicality involved.

Seizures can also cause injuries, such as from hitting your arm or leg against a piece of furniture; even falling out of bed can be a hazard. Epileptics in seizure often also bite their tongue, which then causes bleeding from the mouth. Having a seizure often caused me profound mental confusion, bewilderment and soul fatigue.

Often after having one or more seizures the previous night, I would be ‘spaced-out’ the next day. Concentration and learning was difficult, a recurring problem through primary and high school that resulted in me attending five different schools.

School was a hard part of my life, sometimes an absolutely horrific part of my life. I was often subject to physical and verbal abuse to those who felt that I was ‘different’ to ‘normal’ kids. I was always worried they would discover my secret (the seizures).

I did not want to reveal my epilepsy for fear of being teased and ridiculed further.

Any small amount of kindness, even if unintentional was like a refreshing river of life. This however was rare.

The epilepsy episodes, together with the medication I was taking, left me feeling like I was living in a surreal fog most of the time. This made it especially difficult for me in regards to social relationships and communicating with other students, let alone teachers. I was also experiencing significant memory loss, even at that young age. All together these symptoms caused me a lot of embarrassment and difficulty with relationships. Understandably, my classmates could not comprehend why I couldn’t remember what I had said moments before; sometimes I couldn’t even effectively finish a sentence.

As a result, I isolated myself from the other students—my potential friends—and became more and more embarrassed, and lonely.

At the age of fifteen, still struggling at school, the headmaster in his ‘wisdom’ flatly advised my parents, ‘He’s never going to make anything of himself here, so he may as well get out of school and find a job.’

That was that. I finished school and thereafter, started another chapter of my life.

Now, leaving school created a whole new apprehension: ‘How would I deal with this totally new development in my life? I was only fifteen years old, basically kicked out of school and now expected to look for a job. Who’d want to hire a ‘kicked out of school’ epileptic teenager with no skills or math literacy? (Add to that a mental illness had not yet been diagnosed.)

I couldn’t explain to my family the seriousness of my concern. Perhaps it was because I didn’t understand exactly what was happening to me. I realise now that I was actually in a deep hole of depression. But at that time there were no appropriate support networks or organisations available. It was 1974 and I belonged to an era surrounded by great ignorance and stigma regarding mental illness, born from a lack of knowledge and understanding.

Well, I finally landed a job at a camera repair shop. The job lasted a whole five days! Next, was a job involving spare car parts, again only lasting a few days. I embarked upon a mechanic apprenticeship. This lasted for around five months (an improvement at least). My next job was working in a food storage warehouse.

The job at “Butts” lasted around two-and-a-half years. This began a relatively good time in my life, socially and personally. I developed my self-esteem and was earning money. I enjoyed the job and was good at it. The job also provided me with much-needed friendly social interaction. However, I then moved on to Coles and participated in a management training program for approximately two years, before going on to sell life insurance; which again, only lasted about a year.

The constant changing of jobs was due mainly to my difficulty with math; there always came a time when my competence in math was not satisfactory for the job. However, as I did not have the ability or mental aptitude to achieve the level required, I would leave before anyone could discover my embarrassing secret—my math illiteracy.

During this period of continual job changing, it seemed like I was going from one failure to another but, underlying all of this, I had an inner, bloody-minded determination:

- I wanted to feel normal
- I wanted to achieve something significant and
- I wanted the approval and acceptance of others (not least, my family).

SO, AFTER ALL THESE JOB CHANGES, WHAT DIRECTION DID YOU TAKE IN LIFE?

Well, my parents were religious people. This upbringing instilled in me a lifetime commitment to faith, which I consider to be my ‘true north’. It is this inner inspiration that continued to drive me to fulfil my purposes and goals in life.

My purposes and goals include making a difference in people’s lives; to inspire and help them to discover and build their true purposes in life; their hopes, sense of meaning, values and endeavours, even in the midst of—what I call, the “black horror of living death”—mental, spiritual and physical illness (an all- encompassing state of being).

In that watershed period of my life, I started extensively documenting and developing my goals, plans and dreams. This included a desire to contribute significantly in the areas of youth and international community development. I had detailed plans for long-term study in the USA to gain leadership and personal skills, in order to work for non-profit organisations.

In 1981, I travelled to the USA to participate in a summer intern program. I then studied at William Carey International University in Pasadena, California in their mature-age study program. Despite leaving school at age fifteen, I managed to get good results at university.

My time in the USA was very special and remains one of the greatest times of my life, rich in experiences, discovery and change. I was truly inspired by some of my lecturers and visiting speakers; experts and leaders in their fields. Among my favourite subjects were anthropology, community development and theology.

Initially, I did well in this stimulating environment. The self-learning tools I practiced in previous years enabled me to gain good grades. But sadly, as the year progressed, I began experiencing changes in my personality. I felt deeply alone and scared—a ‘disconnect’ with people and with my surroundings. I felt haunted by emotional pain. Worst of all, I was also acting in ways entirely out of character and contrary to my deeply held moral beliefs which caused unfathomable guilt. I felt trapped. I was also involved in a religious environment which was uncompromisingly judgemental. I felt terribly alone.

So, despite being offered a three-year scholarship to complete a BA in Business and Community Development, I returned home to Australia. I knew I was not well and could not possibly stay on. Unfortunately, when I returned to Australia, these strange symptoms didn’t cease. I managed to maintain an intelligent and effervescent exterior. However, there was a big difference between me and the ‘me’ I was presenting. It was like living two different lives. I skilfully (dys)functioned through the rest of the ‘80s like this, seamlessly moving from ‘me’ to the other.

My life devolved into a desperate and often obsessive search for meaning; I longed for purpose, maturity of character and success. I was also searching for freedom from the awful pain—in my heart, mind and soul. My core life-long commitments and goals remained real to me, yet now seemed to be in a far off, unachievable ‘promised land’.

More and more I was presenting myself to be someone entirely different from the person that I was inside. I was living two separate lives. I could present myself in any situation as a strong, intelligent, powerful personality, but almost as quickly (in dropping the façade) be a person in overwhelming despair and dysfunction. My friends had no idea what was happening—I was very skilled at hiding it—although they did recognise my instability, as a sort of character ‘defect’.

DID YOU SEEK ANY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR YOUR FEELINGS OF SEPARATE PERSONALITIES?

In 1983, I went to a specialist physician who practiced ‘integrative medicine’, something very radical at the time. The specialist told me I had

schizophrenia. This terrified me so much that I only ever spoke about it once, to my mother, and it was never mentioned again. The idea of having schizophrenia was so scary, I never went back to that physician again.

A year later, in 1984 I visited a neurologist, hoping that what was happening to me was epilepsy related and hopefully easy to address. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case, and the neurologist couldn't 'fix' me. I was living in a silent black horror and was desperate for help. Then, in 1985 I went to a doctor called Professor Don Eastwell. He told me I was experiencing psychosis. Again, I hid this from almost everyone as I was scared—living in a toxic social and religious environment. Once again, I never went back.

After not working for two years, in 1986 I picked up trying to sell life insurance again. A master of disguise by now, I was still able to appear as working and functioning normally, all the while falling apart inside. My duality continued, presenting to the world as normal but seriously disconnected from it.

Soon my life started unravelling. I would attend business appointments and be unable to remember why I was there; or be unable to finish sentences because I didn't know what I intended to say. Such things became every day issues.

My relentless search for answers continued—from health professionals, regular doctors, neurologists, psychiatrists and 'alternative' doctors. I tried it all.

PETER, THIS JOURNEY IS SO HARROWING. IT WAS SO DIFFICULT TO GET THE RIGHT HELP.

Between 1987 and 1992 there was a continuing theme where medical professionals did not take me seriously and/or simply did not accept what I was trying to tell them about my symptoms. In late 1989, I was diagnosed by Dr John Varghese, with profound depression. This marked the beginning of me truly seeking help.

However, in 1990 I was admitted to hospital as I was hearing voices, believing I was receiving messages from train station advertising. During my stay in hospital I attempted suicide. I couldn't live with the mental pain

anymore. This was not just a cry for help. If I was not providentially found I would have died. I was unconscious for three days. I am still grateful for the support of my father, Neil Higgs and my uncle, Des Higgs who sat beside my bed for three days holding my hand.

I was assigned to a psychiatrist, Dr Debra Dall’asen, who treated me for seven years until 1997. This association gave me the opportunity to discuss my life and pursue a long-term goal to get better. Providing an initial broad diagnosis of mental illness, she prescribed me Lithium and Prozac, which lifted me out of suicidal oblivion. Surprisingly, I felt great relief. Then, in 1992 Dr Dall’asen clarified the diagnosis as bipolar affective disorder, type 1.

However, the black, relentless ‘horror of living death’ still haunted my every thought and feeling. Some deeply ingrained beliefs, as well as the effects of a dysfunctional brain, were creating a perfect storm, resulting in an erratic and bizarre lifestyle.

DID THIS MAKE ANY IMPROVEMENT IN YOUR LIFE?

Unfortunately, further complications transpired; in 1995 a neurologist made a decision to cease my epilepsy medication. The neurologist believed I had grown out of having seizures. (Note: Although this decision was essentially negligent, I have deep respect for the humanity of the neurologist concerned, who had a long career successfully helping many in the community).

At home, a few days after discontinuing my medication, I experienced an episode of ‘status epilepticus’—a state of continuous seizures. It’s believed I had been in this state for eighteen hours before my father found me. Two teams of paramedics worked on me to get me to the Royal Brisbane Hospital emergency department. I died twice in the ambulance on the way. I was in a critical state. Once there, I was put into a padded room, without medication, and recorded on video for forty-eight hours while I continued to have seizures.

Suffice to say, the next few weeks were particularly difficult and bewildering. I was having regular seizures—mostly the severe grand mal (tonic-clonic) type. The epilepsy was not controlled. I was on multiple medications, including anti-psychotics, anti-depressants and epilepsy medications. This was

creating emotional and mental chaos within me. I felt like I was living in my own four-dimensional real life horror movie. My soul, mind and heart were in an all-pervading fog of disenfranchised incapacitation. I didn't even know what a fork and knife were. I felt lost, helpless and hopeless. I remained in hospital for nine weeks.

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU LEFT HOSPITAL?

After leaving hospital, I was placed into a home—an old people's home, at the age of thirty-six. When I was taken there, my state was such that I wasn't able to effectively make any of my own decisions.

I felt socially and physically isolated, and initially it felt like hell. But although I felt emotionally and mentally overwhelmed, somewhere, deep inside me, my rational, analytic abilities were coming back to life. I held onto my faith and became obsessively determined to recover.

My family and I had all been told that I would never improve. But I relentlessly pursued health, remembering the 'mission' and 'purpose' statements I'd written through the years. I clutched on to the learnings and principles I'd heard, fifteen or so years earlier, spoken by mentors I deeply respected— Dr Denis Waitley, Jim Rohn and especially Peter J Daniels. I used these principles to survive; I did not want to be like this forever—or even for very long at all.

I lived in 'survival mode' for a few years, but—to my family's utter astonishment—within a few weeks of that personal resolve, I started thinking and communicating again with reasonable effectiveness. At times, even the depression and other symptoms would momentarily dissipate. And soon after, I began working at the newsagency next door. This job gave me the opportunity to mix with people and make some friends again.

The depression and fear had not left me and I still felt predominantly overwhelmed, but within a year I managed another great leap; I was travelling by public transport again. I took a bus and two trains to see my psychiatrist. Though I didn't ever speak to anyone while travelling—I stayed obsessively determined to get myself better.

It truly appeared, in all reality, like it was just an impossible dream.

WHAT KEPT YOU GOING WITH THIS ‘IMPOSSIBLE DREAM’?

This was when I developed an embryonic concept I termed ‘Life Practice’.

To me this term meant that I was striving for life: this represented to me—freedom from pain; freedom from the desperate, haunting, emotional and mental incapacitation and mental disenfranchisement that was still affecting me. However, more than any one thing, I wanted to function ‘normally’. I took a stand: I refused to allow bitterness to eat away at me and prevent me from living completely free. Life represents the spiritual, emotional and mental health as well; this was my blueprint for recovery.

Also around this time, my hero, Peter Daniels returned to Brisbane and I went with my brother-in-law to hear him speak again. His inspiration and encouragement was powerful. He emphasised the value of the human being; the godsend I was in desperate need of hearing!

For me, the timing of this event was even more significant because I was experiencing similar psychotic symptoms to those of previous years: truly bizarre thinking; hideous, demeaning voices; and a constant kaleidoscope of different images that were soul and heart destroying. It was like being an actor on stage in a theatre, yet at the same time sitting in the audience, watching and feeling everything the person on stage (also me) was experiencing.

Despite the psychotic symptoms I was determined to fight the ‘good fight’, to seek help to be able to live a better quality of life.

HOW DID YOU CONTINUE TO FIGHT THE ‘GOOD FIGHT’?

As part of moving forward, in 1996 I joined Herbalife, in trying to sell their products, I was a miserable failure. However, in terms of my recovery, it was good progress as I was at least mixing with other people, some of whom became good friends.

At one point I was asked to give a half-hour speech about Herbalife products at one of their upcoming functions. Even though I was pathologically afraid of public speaking, I was also too afraid to say, ‘no’. So, in order to prepare, I would go down to the local park and practice, practice, practice!

I would imagine there were thousands of people listening to me. Eventually, I had learnt the speech by rote.

After the delivery of my speech on the night, I was told it was one of the most professional presentations they had ever heard. I used this special event as a source of encouragement and inspiration. In spite of everything else going on inside me, this success proved that I could do what I always wanted to do ever since I was a young man – be a public speaker.

Over the next few years, I continued with my relentless driven pursuit, to get better.

HOW WAS THE MEDICAL ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE PROGRESSING AT THIS TIME?

In regard to my professional care, the appropriate treatment was still not defined. In 2003, I became a patient of Dr Joseph Mathew. He prescribed a powerful antidepressant, which lifted me out of my then, mental and emotional oblivion. However, the side-effects were palpably horrendous. A few years later, Dr Mathew clarified my diagnosis: bipolar affective disorder, type 1 with a psychotic illness; with mixed states, rapid cycling, primarily depressive. This was a significant, insightful change that provided me the hope to properly manage my life successfully.

From that year until around 2012, I was a patient, at different times, of Dr Mathew and another doctor, Dr Rod Hall - both exceptional doctors, with differing approaches to psychiatry, and successful in their own rights. However, I continued with my black horror of depression and the debilitating effects of bipolar with a comorbid psychotic illness.

HOW DID YOU COPE WITH THIS SCENARIO?

In December 2005, I met the most wonderful girl in the world. The day Lorna said, 'yes' to my proposal of marriage was the day God truly smiled upon my soul.

In 2006, I approached a fantastic neurologist by the name of Dr Dan McLaughlin. I presented him with some research I had done regarding the effects of the epilepsy medication I had been taking since childhood. I was

interested in the possibility of replacing it with a new drug called Lamictal. It appeared that Lamictal may be a better option for me.

I was tired of living in a bubble, and finding it more difficult, as the years went on I desperately wanted to be 'normal'.

Dr McLaughlin enthusiastically agreed to monitor the changeover of my medication. The process required that I remain off epilepsy medication altogether for two weeks. Subsequently, due to my 'nocturnal' epilepsy, I endured multiple seizures whenever I fell asleep.

Lorna slept on the floor in my room every night for two weeks, to provide help if needed, when I had the seizures. Without Lorna being prepared to do this, this changeover of medication could not have happened.

Over the next few years (while taking Lamictal) something truly life transforming occurred. Ever so slowly my memory began to improve. (Although it has never become as good as we had hoped, I am now able to function in ways which were previously impossible to me.)

Lorna and I married in late 2007 and moved into a townhouse. It is hard to convey the momentous changes that happened in my life as a result. To be in a loving relationship was a long-term desire that seemed previously unattainable. This is proof that wonderful things can happen if we persevere. Long held dreams can come true, even after twenty-five or more years. Lorna and I knew that many people were sceptical of our relationship at first and told us that the honeymoon period wouldn't last very long; however, for us the honeymoon period hasn't ended yet!

At the age of forty-nine, my life was changing in awesome ways. Every now and then I felt a deep gratitude and a slowly evolving happiness creeping into my soul. That feeling was truly surprising and revelatory. It was bizarre; an experience I was unsure how to handle.

SO, HOW DID YOU 'HANDLE' IT?

I eventually began developing a more structured program with deliberate steps to attain each of my set-out goals and purposes. This included writing and implementing new 'mission', 'purpose' and 'charter of life' statements.

I also created an extensive formal program I called Life-Endeavours, which incorporated practices for: Financial Prosperity; Self-sufficiency; Health and Fitness; Spiritual and Personal Growth; General Interests; Marriage, Friendships, Family; Mission and Calling; Personal Organisation and Effectiveness... and the list goes on.

The ‘Endeavours’, each had clearly defined plans and strategies, purposes and goals, created towards achieving the desired outcome.

These were part of my Life Charter and Manifesto... I had a lever arch file for each “Endeavour” sitting on top of my cupboard. They were labelled according to the areas of my life in which I wanted to succeed. These lever arch folders, although empty for years, represented where I wanted to go in life and what I wanted to achieve. It was a process of many years when I seriously began to discover and develop a real structure and plan to fulfil these ‘Endeavours’.

I now have a detailed plan of how to change my habits and behaviours—by changing my soul, heart and mind. This plan I call Soul-Building. I adapted this term from a book written by C.S. Lewis, the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, where he refers to ‘Soul-Making’. The concept is very simple: We must change our inner world before we try to change our habits and behaviours.

In 2008, I began a personal journey which has transformed my life. I developed a structured program with the aim of pursuing my dreams and visions on a daily basis. I realised this was necessary because I seemed to be trapped in a place where no matter how hard I tried, I failed—over and over again—in my attempts to change various levels of myself, both internally and externally.

*“We must accept finite disappointment,
but never lose infinite hope”*
Martin Luther King, Jr.

HOW DID YOU PURSUE YOUR DREAMS AND VISIONS?

Some of the deeply ingrained beliefs in my heart and mind were debilitating, I was still struggling to resolve my feelings of worthlessness, lack of self-empowerment and incapacitation. The previous few decades saw me develop mental and emotional strategies just to survive. My complex history and medical condition thwarted my ability to implement changes that normally would help one thrive; replaced instead with a necessity to create compensatory behaviours and habits in order to simply survive.

I found some informative reading that was a wonderful help. These included the great work of Norman Doidge – *The Brain's Way of Healing* and *The Brain That Changes Itself*. These books were truly informative and challenging.

Another two books by Kay Redfield Jamison, *An Unquiet Mind* and *Night Falls Fast* gave me inspiration, belief and hope that even a person with Bipolar (or other serious mental illness) could eventually still live well and make a successful contribution in life. Although confronting, they were revelatory and transformational.

I created a daily routine, predicated on my faith and conviction that I should be the very best man, leader and husband I can—within the parameters of Truth—regardless of what it took.

I began a daily program of study, learning and meditation; and what I now call ‘Verbalised Self-talk’. I described on paper what I was learning about myself; plumbing the depths of my heart and soul. There was a new awareness that challenged my perceptions; my beliefs, my fears, and the way I communicated with myself, my wife and others. This created something of real substance that I could return to and use as a method for retraining my mind. This ‘something’, I thought I would try to implement in order to assist me in being and living better.

The ‘Verbalised Self-talk’ program, led me to discover that when I talked out loud to myself I could lead my mind, heart and soul through the maze of my thoughts; recognise what was ineffective thinking; and report it to myself. As I practiced this with a more substantial body of information,

I noticed that my thinking was slowly becoming more defined and clear. My speech had improved too. I was no longer finishing a sentence half-way through as I used to do; as if simply forgetting the topic of conversation altogether. Previously I couldn't even hold a concept in my head long enough to complete what I intended to say. This myriad of changes was awesome and revelatory.

Soon I was able to consciously identify many weird psychological habits that I seemed to have locked into place with total intransigence. I was searching for answers that I could then reaffirm over and over again. In saying that, I am very serious. Some things took a few years to either resolve or change. Changing habits and activities took an extraordinarily long time, but eventually there was improvement. To keep some mental, emotional and external habits in place, I must still bring them into focus, even to this day. But I know unequivocally that I can in fact do this whenever I need to, which is truly liberating.

Then I taught myself how to talk to other people successfully. This also took years and is an exercise of continual improvement. I have practiced 'Verbalised Self-talk' every day for over seven years, minus four days. I have, literally, found this the best way to retrain my brain, mind, heart and soul.

These are the tools and practices that have helped me rebuild my life.

Also, over the years, I incorporated this daily regime into what I call my 'Redemptive Life Vision'. I wanted to accelerate my progress as I was seeing so much improvement in many areas of my life. There was also a growing desperation to break out into the wider world where I could affect real change in a broader sense of my life; succeed in achieving my true endeavours—not just be on the precipice of stepping out and also take advantage of the potential opportunities. I wanted a real and stable involvement in my friend's lives, and to further make friends and associates within the community.

Even to this day, I can still forget the many goals and purposes I have documented, as if they somehow slip away and go on holidays. Sometimes, it feels like they are not even there. This is the reason I developed such a

thorough program for myself, designed to review daily. Every single day, I retrain my soul and heart, directing them in an empowering way. This enables me to continue my pursuit of ‘redeeming’ my life. In one dictionary, the word ‘redemption’ means: ‘to buy back’ or ‘repurchase’. Some of its associated nouns are: ‘rescue’, ‘restore’ and interestingly, ‘life’.

I have carved out a deliberate process of daily practice in truths and principles which involves daily study, learning and journaling. As Gandhi said:

*‘Strength does not come from physical capacity.
It comes from an indomitable will.’*

I had always held on to, however tenuously, my dreams and desires, hopes and purposes. This was despite the agitation, mood swings, and other crazy things that happened in my mind. Most frustrating was that despite my relentless determination and desire, I went from failure to failure, creating greater despair and mental distress.

I tried to re-socialise and enculturate myself back into society despite the fact I had been isolated from performing many of the usual activities most people take for granted. (Although I had driven my father’s car on occasion I had to relearn how to put fuel in it. Believe it or not this was a terrifying thing to do!)

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE MEAN TO YOU NOW PETER?

Now at fifty-six years of age and in light of the past, I want to make the rest of my life the very best I can within the parameters of wisdom, truth and moral integrity. I wish to fulfil my life’s desires and dreams and live the freedom and abundance of an authentic life—in all of its wonderful arrays of beauty, joy, activity and achievement. Now I have the opportunity to make a difference in the way I wanted as a young man - thirty-five years ago - when I first documented my dreams and desires about what I wanted to do. Some of these great truths and universal principles helped me so much through the years. I would love to offer some hope to those who feel they are trapped in a ‘black horror of living death’— or experiencing depression, or any other type of hurt, helplessness or hopelessness.

I want to make a difference by inspiring others; to make a contribution to others living with some type of disenfranchisement, whether socially, personally, mentally and/or emotionally caused. I also want to assist people through depression by helping them to create their own unique ‘Redemptive Life Vision’— with adventure.



BEING YOUR BEST NEVER GOES OUT OF STYLE

CHRISTINE GAWITH



CHRISTINE GAWITH

Christine is a woman who has acquired many skills over her life. She has worked as a primary school teacher, a policewoman, a beauty therapist, a mental health social worker and a personal colour and style consultant. It is clear from her choice of careers that she has a real passion for helping people, and that's exactly what she does.

Christine helps others look and feel their best—mentally, emotionally and physically. It doesn't require an abundance of money, endless hours of psychiatry or a cosmetic surgeon—Christine helps people inside *and* out!

Her background in social work and counselling coupled with her work as a colour and style consultant is the ideal blend for personal empowerment. An experienced counsellor and fashion consultant all rolled into one! An internal make-over *with* an external make-over can truly change your life.

Christine's education has been put to great use; armed with a Diploma of Teaching, Diploma of Beauty Therapy, Bachelor of Social and Community Welfare, Bachelor of Health Science, Masters of Social Work, Certificate IV in Work place Training and Assessment and qualification in Style, Image and Colour consultancy.

Christine helps transform your inner world, your psychology and belief-systems whilst simultaneously learning about your colours and personal sense of style. Her motive is always to help others develop a positive and healthy change that lasts.

Her years of experience of working with so many people have cemented what Christine knows to be true—everyone wants and deserves to live their fullest life. However, most are unsure how to get 'unstuck'. Christine specialises in moving people out of their rut and into their remedy. Depression, fear, stress, being stuck-in-a-rut can have a holistic remedy. It doesn't always require long, tedious hours of psycho-analysis, sometimes it just requires a new change, a new attitude, a new belief system about who you are and what you can achieve.

Christine's philosophy is 'Life's too short, why not be the best you can be now?'

Christine isn't just talking the talk, she's walking it too. Having had her fair share of life challenges, Christine stands alongside her clients in full understanding and compassion. Christine stands a dignified figure, authentic in her cause of leading the way to personal empowerment. Christine says that no matter one's age, body shape, internal issues or past history, every single person can learn to be their best and live their fullest life.

www.gippslandcounsellingservices.com

www.dresswithstylebychristine.com.au

CHRISTINE, YOU ARE VERY PASSIONATE ABOUT HELPING OTHERS IN A POSITIVE WAY. HOW DID THIS TRANSPIRE?

I think it's always been a part of me. My love of fashion and clothes has always been a constant, as has my desire to help others. Combining both of them is my passion. Personal experience has taught me how difficult some circumstances can be and how important it is to retain some personal dignity and self-esteem through life's many trials and tribulations. It has been my personal cornerstone and it's this passion that I'd like to share with others because it has helped me immensely. My biggest life lesson has been:

*'Believe in yourself because you get
what you believe not what you want.'*

This has proven true in my life, and reminiscent in so many others.

WHAT ARE YOUR BELIEFS AROUND 'BEING YOUR BEST'?

Being your best is not only about fashion and clothing, it's an internal shift we must make within.

It's an attitude, a belief that we are worth it and that we can take the time to care and nourish ourselves. This is the first and most important aspect: the willingness to shift from self-neglect and self-loathing to self-care and self-love. Once the right mindset is established, then everyone can find more practical ways to look his or her best. Though initially this takes a little help and some thought, the results are worth it.

It doesn't take a cent to change your attitude and it doesn't require a lot of money to take pride in yourself or make good choices. I have experienced a fair bit of adversity in my life, such as bad relationships, career changes, depression and anxiety. Despite many setbacks, I have always managed to gain, and retain, some form of dignity and pride in how I present myself. I think it's important not to let others take away your personal sense of pride and dignity. I always feel better knowing that I have taken the time and effort to make the most of what I have. No effort, no reward! Notice how much better you feel when you make the effort to look your best, to care for yourself. Yes, it's often easier to just dress in track pants and a top every day, without makeup or brushing your hair; but we feel better about ourselves

when we take care of ourselves, when we believe that we're worth the time and care. This is an attitude we often aren't taught. Many women have been taught the opposite—that it's somehow selfish to take care of yourself before others. But it's not. The better we feel about ourselves the more that rubs off on the people around us and the happier we all become.

WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS?

I run a counselling business called 'Gippsland Counselling Services' (www.gippslandcounsellingservices.com) and also a styling business called 'Dress with Style by Christine' (www.dresswithstylebychristine.com.au). My passion in both fields is in helping people feel better about themselves inside and out. Having suffered from depression and anxiety since puberty and always feeling self-conscious about the way I looked, I found that if I took the effort to put on makeup and dress up, it always made me feel better about myself and in turn it had a flow on affect. People would often compliment me, which boosted my self-esteem. Today I do not feel the need to always apply makeup or dress up to feel good about myself but I do try to make the most of what I have. I also know that we need to make the most of the time we have because none of us know when our time is up. Therefore, if you want to wear high shoes or makeup or be the best version of yourself that you can be, then do it today. Time waits for no one. Seize the day. Seize your best life now!

In my work I love helping people be their best. My counselling business coupled with being a colour and image consultant really lends itself toward people's personal transformation. It's the ultimate makeover.

*If a great outfit gets you one step closer to feeling good
about yourself, then it's worth every penny.*

Rachel Roy

WHO ARE YOUR TYPICAL CLIENTS?

My typical clients are women who need to reclaim themselves, many have lost their way in relation to how to dress for their age and shape, or got into a mental or emotional rut. This can often happen after raising children and being out of the work force for a time. Often, after devoting so much

time to raising children or taking care of others, many realise they forgot about themselves. My clients often need to reconnect with who they are, find themselves again and allow themselves to blossom once more. There is a lot of pressure placed on women to look their best and mature women are often overlooked for younger women. This can cause a severe loss of confidence for the more mature ladies. Mature women do not have to feel this way, nor should they. It is a time to embrace who they are and let the world know they are proud of who they are and what they have achieved. It's a new attitude to life. Women do not have to be superstars, movie stars, and media personalities to be noticed, but we also do not need to neglect ourselves and lose our sense of pride. I help women recreate themselves and step toward a new sense of style and a new sense of confidence.

Like so many women, my weight has increased over the years, and though often disheartening I decided not to let this control my life. Yes, the changes in my metabolism and post-menopause are partly to blame, but knowing my suitable colours and best style of clothing has helped me work around this and still look stylish.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO SHIFT THEIR MINDSET?

Because you get what you believe! What you believe determines your experience. Being your best is not just about clothes and fashion, it's really a daily belief, a mental habit of believing yourself worthy of giving to yourself, nurturing yourself in a healthy way. Doing things that make you feel good. It's important to dress in clothes that reflect your unique personality, so you can express yourself through clothes and not feel uncomfortable or awkward. It's about you exploring and embracing you. Feeling confident is for everyone, not just for the genetically blessed.

Having a consultation with an image consultant may seem expensive to some people, but when one considers how much money and time is spent on clothing that is either not worn, or does not fit, or does not look good, it is an investment to learn the art of what suits you and to know that the money you do spend is money well spent and not wasted. A few good, well thought-out options that you feel great in and reflect your personality are much better than a cupboard full of clothes you don't like to wear or don't suit you.

Your appearance and the way that you carry yourself says a lot about who you are. Are you portraying how you want to be seen? At work, at job interviews or social gatherings, many people make decisions about others extremely quickly. In fact, a series of experiments by Princeton psychologists Janine Willis and Alexander Todorovⁱ reveal that it only takes a tenth of a second for someone to make their mind up about someone. Furthermore it suggests that the majority of people don't significantly alter those impressions after knowing more about that person. As the old adage says 'You never get a second chance to make a first impression'.

I want to help others put their best foot forward and reap the rewards.

WHAT WAS YOUR ORIGINAL MOTIVATION FOR STARTING A BUSINESS IN COLOUR AND STYLE IN FASHION?

Even as a young girl I always loved fashion and wanted to dress in the best clothes I had. My mother was an impeccable dresser, always wearing designer labels. She often won awards for her fashion, such as the 'belle-of-the-ball' or 'fashions on the field' at the races. I loved to watch my mum getting ready to go out. I saw her transform from fabulous to even more fabulous and I admired her sense of style. She regularly went to the hairdressers to have her hair done. It was very common back in the 60s for women to attend the hairdressers for a 'set and blow-dry'. Both my mum and dad took a lot of pride in their appearance, and as business people, they attended many functions where it was necessary to be well presented. Mum often said 'Fine feathers make fine birds', the same line her mother had said to her. I was brought up to believe that first impressions count and I realised at a young age—that they did.

I was fortunate enough to grow up in an era where people took a lot of pride in themselves and where having one best outfit to go out in was the norm. There was not a lot of money available when I was a child, so people would often refer to their most beautiful of clothes as their 'Sunday best'. I can remember being bought a beautiful dress by my mother, it was meant for church on Sundays but I loved it so much that when I came home from

ⁱ **First Impressions: Making Up Your Mind After a 100-Ms Exposure to a Face.** *Psychological Science* July 2006 17: 592-598, Janine Willis and Alexander Todorov. Department of Psychology, Green Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08544-1010.

school, I quickly discarded the dreary old school uniform and proudly put on my new colourful dress. As I proudly paraded around the street in my new outfit, I was ‘sprung’ by my mother and sent home to change. It was meant for special outings, not to just be worn ‘up the street’. I often went to Melbourne with my mum and just loved looking at the women in their beautiful outfits. Often women wore hats and gloves and it was rare to see any women in trousers. Thankfully the world opened up for women and we became liberated to be able to wear what we liked and not be dictated to by men and their preferences.

HOW HAS OUR ATTITUDES CHANGED TODAY?

Today I am a lot older than those young years spent as a child observing my mother and other respected men and women. Fashion and the way people dress has changed dramatically. Women would never be seen in public in active-wear, but today’s fashion has become more relaxed in so many ways. I remember the days when women were not permitted to wear pants and always had to wear stockings when wearing dresses and skirts. I think we are very fortunate to live in a time where we can dress as we please. There are days that I do not wish to dress up but rather be more relaxed and casual and I can do this. I think it is important for people to feel comfortable enough within themselves to not to be overly consumed with their appearance and to be more accepting of who they are. However, I do think there is a line between having a relaxed attitude as compared to having a non-care attitude. I believe that it is important for people to know what suits them in clothing and to dress appropriately.

WHO HAS BEEN YOUR MENTOR GROWING UP AND HOW HAVE THEY IMPACTED YOUR LIFE’S JOURNEY?

I have been fortunate to be surrounded by some great people throughout my life but the one person that had a great impact on me was my dear Aunty Sheila. She was one of the kindest, caring persons I knew (besides my own parents). Although her own life was full of adversity, she always managed to see the funny side of life. Unless you knew what her personal circumstances were, you would never have guessed what fate had befallen her. My dear aunty loved to dress up but she did not have the disposable

income to be just able to go and purchase clothes off the rack, so she would often make her own. I cannot tell you how many times, she would be frantically sewing a new outfit for the next day, whereas my own mum had more money and was in a position to buy expensive outfits. This taught me that although money gives us more choice, this need not define us, we are able to work around what life presents to us. My aunty taught me kindness and that we need to make the most of what we have and to always try and see the funny side of life. It makes life easier to handle.



Aunty Sheila

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE'S PURPOSE?

My life purpose is to help people. The one thing that has become very obvious as the years roll by is that I am a very good listener and I truly care about people and animals. Though I have had career changes, I have never wavered in my desire to help others. All my careers have been about this.

When I was 20 years old, I really wanted to be a policewoman and help others. At this stage I was not eligible because married women were not allowed to join and I was married. However, it must have not been long after that, that rule was changed. So when I was 31, I applied. Back then the cut-off age to join the police force in Victoria was 34. I was considered old to be entering as a recruit and was often referred to as 'Grandma'. Although there were many sad incidents in the police force, I do recall some happy and funny times.

Even in the police force, my fashionista mindset was present. The wearing of the uniform was a very special feeling, having worked so hard to get through the academy. Donning the police uniform gave me a well-earned and

empowering sense of ‘I made it!’ As someone who loves style, I also always felt that the policewomen’s uniform was badly designed and would have loved the challenge of re-designing it.

Wearing the police uniform emphasised what I knew about first impressions and the visual impact they have on others. The uniform definitely attracted attention, both good and bad. People who had a history with the police saw the uniform as a sign of something they did not like and so would be very disrespectful. On the other hand people who did respect the work we did were always very polite, helpful, wanted to engage in conversation and generally just lovely people.



Graduation Day, 24th June 1988

How did you transition from the police force into the career of image consultant/designer?

It may seem strange to many, but to me, it all makes logical sense. When I entered the police force it became quickly apparent that this was a really interesting and worthwhile job, and one that taught me a lot of valuable life lessons. One being: whom you associate with says a lot about who you are. If you want a good life, it’s imperative to choose your friends wisely. For someone who is fairly open in talking about most matters, there are incidents that I experienced in the police force that I cannot talk about. I find

them still too distressing. If someone had come to me and told me the things I witnessed, heard and saw, I would not have believed them, but having seen it with my own eyes, I sadly now know that these things do happen. After a while I realised that working in such a sad environment was not something I could continue to do, so when I was finally blessed with my children I decided to leave. I had had a long and difficult time in becoming pregnant but I finally gave birth to my beautiful twins, a girl and a boy – Bianca and Brandon. It was during their young years that I went into a more positive career of beauty therapy. It was at this time, that I was first introduced to image consultancy (colour and style in fashion) and I loved it immediately. I have not stopped learning about it, doing courses, assisting others with clothing dilemmas and generally being fascinated with all aspects of it.

DID THIS PASSION LEAD YOU TO START YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

Initially I simply enjoyed it for myself and helping others. There was also some reluctance in starting a business due to my mother always saying to me ‘It is easier to go and work for someone else’, and the fact that they over-borrowed in the 1990s and lost everything. So, there was some underlying fear, although the desire to be my own boss and have my own business, was stronger. Today I am a proud business owner with a desire to grow the business and help as many people as possible.

WHAT WERE YOU LIKE AS A CHILD?

I was shy, quiet but quite resourceful, always looking for things to occupy my time. From a young age, about 10, I chose my own clothes and brought them on apro (a term for being able to take things and pay for them later). My mother had an account at the few clothes shops that existed in our hometown and she gave me the responsibility for choosing my own clothes from a young age. She told me not long before she passed away that I was always a very independent child and so she gave me the freedom to have my independence. Which in hindsight was a very brave thing to do.

I grew up in a thriving industrial country town, where people really only dressed up for Sunday mass or to attend a party. If we wanted to see high fashion, it was necessary to go to the city for that. As a got older I wanted to

dress like the women in the city and although I did not take it to the lengths that they could, I had my own form of dressing up. It was not uncommon for me to be asked, ‘Where are you going?’ This always amused me because I was going nowhere in particular, I just liked dressing up.

One thing that did have a huge impact on me was having red hair and freckles. I was teased a lot because of it and as a result I always wanted to look like someone else. Preferably someone with dark hair and dark skin because this sort of person never had any freckles. As a result of the constant teasing and put downs, I became very self-conscious of my looks and tried desperately to look like the brunette that I so desperately wanted to be. I dyed my hair dark and wore a lot of makeup to try and cover up the freckles. Little did I realise at the time, that this was not a good look. I was meant to be who I was born to be and so towards the end of my teenage years, I started to embrace my red hair and not be so concerned about my ‘sun kisses’—the freckles. It taught me that we need to enhance and embrace what we were given and not try and hide what are often our most outstanding features.

WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS BUSINESS?

The great people that I have had the pleasure of meeting. I have shared some great moments, some emotional times and some ah-ha moments. It has truly been a blessing. I love all the people I meet in this field of work and it has opened up so many doors. I have met people from overseas, interstate and gone to places that I would have never considered going. For example, I went to a conference in Hawaii. It was fantastic and very liberating in many ways. I met women from all around the world who were also image consultants. More recently, I had the opportunity to meet the author of *The Dressmaker*. This film is fabulous for so many reasons and one of them are the beautiful outfits that Kate Winslet wears and it goes without saying that Liam Hemsworth is easy on the eye. What a great film. If you have not been to see it, do yourself a favour and go.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU HAVE LEARNT ABOUT COLOUR AND STYLE IN FASHION?

- It does not take a lot of money to look good.

- You only need to know the basics and once you know that you can spend as little or as much as you like.
- It is better to spend \$160.00 on an item and wear it over and over and over again, than to spend \$20.00 on something that you never wear. Cost per wear, the \$160.00 item will owe you nothing, but the \$20.00 item still owes you \$20.00.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE SUCCESS AND YOUR PERSONAL OPINION OF WHAT SUCCESS MEANS?

To me, success comes from feeling happy within, this is regardless of the amount of money you may or may not have, the relationships you may or may not have. It is that inner serenity and comfort from just being able to sit happily within your own skin. Knowing that you are contributing to society in some way. This does not have to be on a macro scale but can be something as small as knowing you take great care of your family, or your animals.

HOW DOES ONE ACHIEVE IT?

Learning to live in the moment and not project or compare. When I start projecting what life might be like, or what might happen, or who might come or go, then I really start to lose my sense of peace. This also happens to me when I compare my life to others who have more than what I have or who have what I want. I am old enough to know that everything is not necessarily as it seems. Quite often we can think someone has it all, only to discover that they are very unhappy. So it really does come down to making the most of what we have and changing what we can if we desire to have other things in our life.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED IN LIFE, HEALTH OR BUSINESS AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

I have had many knock backs and many disappointments in life. I have been married twice and had my heart broken many times. My love life has never been a successful story. Sadly I fall for the wrong people. Although my relationships have not worked for various reasons, I am still friends with most of the men I was in a relationship with. Unfortunately the combination was not

the right one. I have since realised that I needed to find out who I was and what I wanted before I could expect to find Mr Right. My lack of self-esteem saw me stay in relationships that I should have left long before I did. The fear of being on my own and being lonely in my old age was a driving factor. The reality is, I still haven't met Mr Right yet, but I have learnt that it is better for me to be on my own than be in a relationship with Mr Wrong. I have also realised that I am a very capable person and I do not need a man to make me happy or support me, I am actually OK by myself.

WHAT MAKES YOU OR YOUR BUSINESS STAND OUT FROM YOUR COMPETITORS?

The fact it provides a real life instant solution. You don't have to do hours of investigative therapy to find relief and understanding. My business isn't just about knowing your colours and style, it's about re-claiming yourself and changing your psychology. My approach is down-to-earth, easy-going, honest and gentle. I have a deep understanding about the pressures women face and I have the life experience and expertise to help them both inside and out! I know what it is like to not be happy with one's body shape but I also know ways that can improve how we feel about how we look. I know what it's like to have setbacks and feel a loss of confidence and depression. I know what it's like to go through menopause and gain weight. I understand the continual challenges women are up against these days; but the best part of my business is that I know how to help them with all of this. How to get out of a rut, how to overcome a sense of helplessness, how to dress for their body shape, age and style. How to feel amazing again. How to unleash their 'fabulous'.

*'Fashion is about something
that comes from within you.'*

Ralph Lauren

IF YOU HAD TO START OVER WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

I would have not wasted time. I would have just kept pursuing my dream. I was so busy comparing myself with others and thinking I wasn't good enough, pretty enough, rich enough, smart enough, or from the right town.

All that is ridiculous. It's what is in my head that is most important. What I believe about me. I am either the enemy of my life or the maker of it. It has taken me years to realise that it really is up to me. As the saying goes 'If it's meant to be - it's up to me'.

WHAT IS THE MOST COMMON QUESTION YOU GET ASKED BY YOUR CLIENTS?

- What colours suit me?
- What styles suit me?
- How do I cover up my stomach area?
- How can I achieve the look I want without looking like mutton done up as lamb?

WHAT ARE THE 5 TOP THINGS YOU WOULD RECOMMEND TO IMPROVE SOMEONE'S CLOTHING STYLE?

1. Know what colours suit you best. As Coco Chanel said 'the best colour in the whole world is the one that looks good on you.'
2. Accept your size, your age, and your shape.
3. Then work with it.
4. Enhance the best bits, the bits you like the most.
5. Remember that it does not take a lot of money to look good.

WHAT ARE YOUR 7 TOP TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL WORKING WARDROBE?

1. Clean it out.
2. Throw away anything that no longer fits, or is too dated, or too worn, ripped, irreparable.
3. Try everything on and if it does not fit or look good or you do not love it, throw it out.
4. Organise your wardrobe into sections. E.g. colour block and or sort into sections e.g. all pants together, all jeans together, summer tops, winter tops etc.

5. Ensure that all items are clean and ready to wear before you hang them up or fold them away.
6. If you find an outfit you like wearing, take a photo so you remember what it was you put together.
7. Do not get stuck in a rut. Always keep your eyes open and check out what others wear and if you like it, work it to your style as well.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY HAVE BEEN THE 3 TOP BIGGEST LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNT IN BUSINESS?

1. You need to be really confident in whatever business you are going into. There is no room for self-esteem issues.
2. Be prepared to work long hours and do the hard yards.
3. Treat your staff the right way. They will pay you back ten-fold if they are the right ones for your business.

HOW DOES A PERSON CREATE HIS OR HER OWN STYLE?

The fundamentals of style include:

1. Being confident.
2. Appropriateness – knowing what to wear and what is appropriate for your age.
3. Be yourself. Let your personality shine through. If you are a down to earth woman who likes little fuss or bother, then show this through your clothing or alternately if you are feminine, then wear feminine type clothing.
4. Keep it simple. Do not complicate it.
5. Be friendly and courteous.

*‘Style is a way to say who you are
without having to speak.’*

Rachel Zoe

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO SHOP?

1. Only shop when you know what you want.
2. Do not go into debt over clothes.
3. Never shop last minute for an important or expensive garment.
4. Keep impulse shopping to a minimum.
5. If you cannot afford to dry-clean the item of clothing then do not buy it.
6. Shop designer labels when they are on sale.
7. Do not spend a lot of money on trend items, which are often here today and gone tomorrow.
8. Chose two or three basic colours for your separates, which will give maximum versatility.
9. Foundation items such as shoes require the best quality you can afford.
10. Have an accessory wardrobe that can assist in varying the look of your clothes. E.g. adding a scarf to an outfit can really enhance the look.

WHAT ARE THE 5 BEST TIPS ON HOW TO LOOK SLIMMER?

1. Stand up straight. Having good posture always makes you look slimmer, more confident and helps clothes to look their best.
2. Wear matte fabrics (never shiny).
3. Wear fabrics that drape not cling.
4. Wear clothes that fit well and are more loose than tight.
5. If you carry weight on the lower half of your body, wear an accessory high on your body to detract from the lower half. For example, wear a statement necklace or pretty earrings.

*‘Over the years I have learned that what is important
in a dress is the woman who is wearing it.’*

Yves Saint Laurent



AN ENDURING LIFE

DIANA JOHNSON



DIANA JOHNSON

Diana Johnson has lived through more than most. She has weathered divorce, business downturns, career derailments, and unexpected tragedy that might sink some people.

A pioneering woman in her career, she became the first woman to be paid the same as the men and then the first to be appointed as an Australian manager when she worked with the Sun Alliance and London Insurance Group in Sydney. In her private life, she joined the Sydney Journalists Toastmasters Club, an early mixed club. There she became its first female president and was subsequently the first woman to become the secretary for Toastmasters District 70 (NSW). Tenacious and strong, Diana now works for global IT leader IBM Australia Ltd as a Profession Advocate for the Architect and Technical Specialist professions. A unique role where Diana is not only able to lead the next generation into new leading-edge digital systems, but acts as the interface between executives and technical professions.

Despite her innate ability to handle high pressure and big challenges, nothing could prepare her for what was about to occur. Within the space of four heart-wrenching years, Diana lost both her children in separate circumstances. A devastating and unfathomable situation.

Grief-stricken and shattered, Diana's successful career path faded into insignificance as harrowing years followed. Slowly Diana rebuilt her life brick by emotional brick. Armed with the will to survive and a wealth of experience Diana painstakingly found hope and transformed her living hell into a meaningful, beautiful life.

Diana shares her story to help others. Now, 70-years-old, working in a revolutionary industry and inspiring others, Diana is busier than many 20-year olds. Diana was responsible for guiding the creation of an IBM Development Lab in Australia and now guides technical professionals all over the world in developing their careers. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree (Honours) in Geography from the University of Nottingham, a Masters of Business Administration from the University of Southern Queensland and a Graduate Diploma in Change Management from the Australian Graduate School of Management.

Passionate and resilient Diana is an advocate for overcoming adversity and becoming all that you can.

www.dijohnson.net

YOU HAVE BEEN THROUGH A LOT OF CHANGE DIANA, CAN YOU SHARE WITH US *YOUR-SHARE-IT-FORWARD* TEACHING?

My core message is really about helping others deal with tragedy and change. It may not be an easy story, but it's important to share, for without sharing we cannot help others who may be struggling. And that's my goal. 'Never give up' is a common message, but living it isn't as common. My message to others is to live the motto 'Never give up!' every day.

Tragedy struck me not once but twice, when both my children passed away within four years of each other. I found myself wholly unprepared to cope with such unexpected and traumatic events. The society in which we live does little to help those who experience significant grief and loss in their lives. I was at an utter loss.

I lost my entire family and my career; and more recently (2014) my husband's business went into liquidation and subsequently we lost the family home. Brick by excruciating brick I've slowly rebuilt my life. If I can find purpose in grief and drastic change – you can find it in life – we all can!

Change happens in an instant, but coping with it can take a long time. I want to help people manage the various extremes of change. Coping with a child's death is something no parent should have to experience, unfortunately far too many of us do.

Change happens to all of us: losing a loved one, a job, a marriage or a family home are all monumental life-changes. Having to resume full-time work after my husband's business went under was a big shift for me, especially when I was already past the normal retirement age.

Yet I've found I can help others through sharing my own experiences. It's a natural progression to share my ideas with a wider audience for the benefit of others. I hope that by telling my story, I can help at least one person.

WHAT WERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH YOUR CHILDREN PASSED AWAY?

I was working in Perth at the time of my daughter's death. We'd known for a year that she was using heroin and we'd done everything possible to help

her break the habit. She'd been clean for two months when various pressures, ill health and available funds sent her back to her old habit.

In the middle of the night, alone on the far side of Australia from the rest of my family, I received the phone call that every mother dreads. A hysterical flat mate told me that my daughter was dead. One overdose too many; the paramedics were too late. Only the previous night we had talked about her twenty-first birthday the following week. I was coming home for it. But instead of attending a birthday party, her friends came to her funeral. Her brother never received the special Christmas present that she had so dearly wanted to find for him. And for me, her mother, my life changed irrevocably.

At this time I had no fear of death, no hesitation. I needed desperately to see my daughter as she lay so peacefully in her beautiful white coffin with her long blonde hair combed out around her shoulders. I took her favourite pieces of jewellery and her special teddy bear to keep her company in her long sleep ahead. I told my child, as I had done many, many times before and as I have done so many times since, how much I loved her and now how I missed her. Ten years after her passing, those feelings are as strong as ever. Time does not heal, it merely teaches you how to cope.

My son's passing was equally shocking and unexpected. As my eldest child, he was always a great support to me. From the time his little sister was born, he took care of her. When I became a single mum, he became the man of the house until I remarried. Two years after losing Kylie, we were thrilled to see Craig find happiness when he married the love of his life. Another joyful experience followed when their little son was born in the following year. But soon after this, Craig experienced some pain in his leg. Six months later he was diagnosed with a rare spinal tumour. Radiotherapy treatment seemed preferable to almost certain paraplegia from spinal surgery. All appeared to go well and the tumour reduced in size. Yet by Christmas the same year, he was suffering massive headaches which he hid from me as much as possible. By New Year's Day he was back in hospital. Five weeks later he had left us forever. The tumour spread to his brain and the doctors were powerless to help him. To lose one child was hard enough; to lose my entire family was unthinkable.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT THE GRIEF PROCESS FROM THESE TRAGIC EXPERIENCES?

In the early days I made every possible mistake. I did everything wrong that I could have done, although not deliberately on my part or from those who supported me. Purely through ignorance, we reacted instinctively. I was a mess. At night, I resorted to a bottle of Scotch and my sleeping pills in order to get any sleep. By day, I walked around like a zombie in a fog of grief, hardly conscious of my actions.

I've discovered this feeling of being in a fog is a very common sensation. A bereaved person will often talk about the fog lifting as they emerge from the most intense period of grief. Everyone is different. The fog may take longer to lift for some than for others. In extreme cases this may be years.

Through the continuous grieving process I hated the grief counsellors to whom I was sent. They gave me stock answers to problems that they hadn't experienced personally. Their suggestions did little to help me at the time. I found more comfort in those who had lived through a similar pain and come out the other side.

With the passage of time, I've been able to move past my mistakes and start to make conscious decisions about my life. These are lessons that have taken me years to learn. I have accepted that my life will never be the same again but that it can still be fulfilling. I've acknowledged that I must build a new life and I've started on the reconstruction. I've recognised the need, and found some alternative ways, to fill the void left by my children's untimely passing. Once again, time does not heal, it simply allows space and opportunity to find ways of living with the grief at the departure of a loved one from your life.

I was fortunate that I kicked the sleeping pills habit within twelve months of losing my son but alcohol was another story. I cannot say that I was not warned. A mentor of mine, who also lost a child, described publicly how she descended into a world of alcohol addiction but dragged herself back to fulfill an amazing role assisting others who have lost a child. I too have finally found the determination and the appropriate level of support to start my journey back to a healthy lifestyle. This has extra meaning for me.

In his final days, my son urged me to regain my previous levels of fitness. He knew that I'd let my physical health fall apart after his sister's death. Prior attempts to fulfil his wish and honour his memory had been derailed by many other challenges in my life. Finally, from the teachings of Dr. John Demartini, I learned to link my health to everything that is meaningful in my life. I've refocused on a healthy lifestyle and I've quit using alcohol as a form of self-medication. I now know how vital a healthy lifestyle is, how critical it is to recovery of any sort.

I made the mistake of thinking that I should return to work to keep my mind occupied. How wrong I was! I didn't understand that my mind was not in a suitable state for the work required in a professional job. Grief is akin to depression. Long-term grief can become depression. It slows your body down. It clouds your mind and reduces your ability to think clearly and logically. It is nature's way of protecting us during this period of suffering. Few people realize this or the equally obvious impact on your level of performance at work.

When I first learned that my daughter was using heroin, I sought help for her, and she was diagnosed with depression. At that time, I was also diagnosed with depression, and I learned to help myself through the worst periods by increasing my antidepressant medication. After my daughter died, I stumbled through six months of hell, managing a large team on the other side of the continent away from my family. Returning to the east coast of Australia, I accomplished one of the greatest achievements of my working career. The nature of the achievement is immaterial here but possibly I thought in consequence that I could successfully separate my work from my personal grief. I failed to recognise the personal cost. In fact, there was no time to learn and reflect on these experiences before my son too had passed away. Nor did I realise that each loss brings back the memories of earlier losses, compounding the current grief.

Back then, I understood none of this. I thought that I could cope. I really believed that I had to, that I had no option. My overdeveloped sense of responsibility drove me back to work. With my second loss in four years, this belief proved disastrous for my career. I struggled to be my normal, competent self without realising that I was not.

Despite my proven track record, I was hassled about my poor performance from the time I returned to work. Inevitably, I buckled under the pressure and was forced into long-term sick leave. Upon my return to work, my management role of 13 years was removed. Effectively I'd lost my career as well as my family. Since then I've created an entirely new and fulfilling career for myself.

This achievement was not without significant challenge. Three months back at work in the new position, I was quite literally suicidal, on a path towards self-destruction. I had the means and the method but I hesitated to bring more pain to others, to my family who had shared my grief journey. I awoke one morning hung-over, depressed and barely able to function, let alone work. I reached out to a lady who became my personal trainer, friend and guide for the next four years. At that time she was teaching classes in a combination of yoga and Pilates. Sabine Steiner is an exceptional person. As my personal trainer, she was able to recognise and gently reawaken my strengths of perseverance and determination.

I've heard numerous similar stories from people who found it difficult to return to work after a bereavement. Their jobs were threatened and in some cases they were forced to leave their company. I can understand the position of an employer who cannot always afford the cost of a non-functioning employee and must manage their business profitably. Nevertheless there is undoubtedly a need for employer education to help them understand the impact of grief on their employee and to encourage more empathetic responses in this situation.

HOW DOES ONE COPE WITH LOSS?

Literature on grief and grieving, or even the acceptance of change in life, often refers to the five stages of grief as denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Sometimes these stages are graphically represented but to depict them in a curve is a broad generalisation. In my experience, progress through the stages of grief is not linear. It is something akin to the development of a small child. In the same way that the new maturity of a four-year-old can vanish back into the troublesome toddler's tantrums on an off day, so the stages of grief fluctuate depending on external pressures.

Nor can one put a timeframe on each stage. Every person may respond differently. The same person may respond differently to one loss from another. I'm sure that I did.

Finding acceptance is critical to any successful coping strategy. Only when you reach a level of acceptance is it possible to start to work on rebuilding your new life. It's a new life because the old one is full of gaps that are left when you lose a loved one or loved ones.

My daughter's death from a drug overdose left me constantly questioning myself. What else could I have done? What did I do wrong? For several years, this feeling of guilt kept me in the anger stage and I kept thinking 'if only', which is typical of the bargaining phase. My son reasoned with me that his sister had made her own decisions. He begged me to move on. I recall these conversations clearly only eight months before his death, although I had no premonition of it at that time. Possibly he did. I will never know.

At his passing, I was plunged once again into anger at the injustice that had taken both my children, at a medical profession that had failed to save my son, at the cruelty of my manager, at the crass stupidity of some of the unfeeling remarks that were made to me. I did not want to be ordered to 'buck up and start smiling'. I did not need to be told that at least I had my grandson. I did not want a childless young man informing me he knew what it was like because he'd seen his friend suicide. I hated going to events that celebrated milestones in other young people's lives: a twenty-first birthday, a daughter's wedding. The loss of my career coming on top of the loss of my family before I'd had time to adjust was nearly too much, and the depression that followed was intense and prolonged.

Gradually, as some of the other measures that I've described started to have a positive effect, I've been able to take a more balanced view. As a passionate family historian, I recognise that my situation is by no means unusual. My own father lost his father by the time he was nine years old and his brother died of tuberculosis (TB) in his early thirties. My grandfather lost his mother when he was 13 and his father had been the only surviving son in a family of four boys and three girls. My mother's side of the family suffered equally. TB was the major killer disease of the nineteenth and

early twentieth century as cancer is today. For me, this knowledge helped provide a measure of acceptance. We have acquired a dog, a large black Labrador. Together with our black cat, the two of them are our ‘fur family’. They provide much amusement and laughter and of course, they give back unconditional love. They fill some gaps in my life. And as I find a way, often unconsciously, to fill these gaps, I cope better with my grief.

Coping requires acceptance and a willingness to rebuild. These two can be achieved through the journey of grief. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler put this most succinctly in their book *On Grief and Grieving*: ‘Grief is the healing process of the heart, soul and mind; it is the path that returns us to wholeness. It shouldn’t be a matter of if you will grieve; the question is when you will grieve. And until we do we suffer from the effects of that unfinished business.’

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH A CRISIS OF ANY SORT?

With the benefit of hindsight, my comments seem self-evident. So why didn’t I realise this in my times of crisis? Simply, I lacked the ability to stand outside my problems and be objective.

Gaining distance and perspective in a time of crisis is invaluable. Sometimes it is enough to physically remove yourself to somewhere that you can have space and time to reflect. More often it is necessary to seek good quality help and advice from those who are not emotionally involved. Surround yourself with good people who you trust.

Stay flexible in your thinking and be prepared to let go of long-held ideas, especially if they contribute in any way to the crisis. Our reaction in crisis, when we feel threatened, is usually to revert to less desirable behaviour. We become more intransigent and want to hold on desperately to the comfortable and the familiar. Most likely change is required to resolve the crisis.

Sometimes our mental chatter compounds our problems, so be compassionate with yourself and don’t beat yourself up. Telling yourself that you are to blame for some situation is counter-productive. It is time to leave the past in the past and focus all your energies on the way forward.

Tell yourself that all things will pass. I ask myself what has been the worst thing that has ever happened in my life. I already know that I have overcome that problem. I inspire myself with confidence that I can do the same in the present crisis.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE THAT HAS HELPED YOU MOVE FORWARD IN YOUR JOURNEY THOUGH GRIEF?

By strange coincidence, I started a class in meditation the night before my daughter died. We'd even discussed it in our last ever phone call. Eventually, after her passing, when I felt strong enough to cope, I returned and completed the course. I'd always had an image of meditation as being a little weird, with all the yoga positions and so on. My preconceived ideas were completely wrong. This course was not religious in any way. All sorts of people of varying shapes and sizes attended and I don't think there was a single flowing robe to be seen. My cousin suggested it as a method of relaxation from the stress caused by the knowledge that my daughter was using hard drugs. In reality, the course opened my eyes to a powerful tool for calming my mind. I still use that tool today.

I've also had an absorbing hobby that I first developed in 2000. A chance discovery of some family documents amongst my mother's possessions after she passed away turned me into a passionate genealogist. Like meditation, genealogy has a way of clearing my mind of painful thoughts as I focus on the work needed to unravel the story of my ancestors' lives. I spent many evenings alone in Perth after my daughter had passed away and I filled that empty space with endless genealogy research. The results of that work now occupy several large folders on my office shelves. The second stage took place after I lost my son and was forced into long-term sick leave. During this period I realised my dream of building a website to document my family history. I found it better to get on with a pleasurable hobby than sitting alone with melancholy thoughts.

I was baptised in the Anglican faith and grew up in a churchgoing family. But as I matured, I questioned many of those beliefs. I saw much hypocrisy in the Church and, to my mother's everlasting sorrow, turned away from it. I never found anything that filled the void, although I felt there were forces

that I did not comprehend. There were times when my mother and I picked up the phone to ring each other at exactly the same moment. It is easy to scoff, but was there some telepathy happening there? At the exact time that my father passed away, I experienced significant pain and grief, although I did not then know of his passing. I'm sure that he communicated very powerfully with me at that moment.

After my daughter died, I read several books by American psychics, wondering if there was a way to connect with her. I dearly wanted to. These mediums were incredibly expensive so I gave the idea away. That is, until I watched an Australian TV show called *The One*. I was killing time in a hotel room one evening when I was working away from home. On the first show, I was convinced that an Ipswich lady called Charmaine Wilson would win the title of the best psychic medium in Australia. Sure enough, she made it successfully through all seven episodes to win the series outright. I was fascinated and delighted when she appeared locally at a club near us. Watching her perform live, I really felt the audience reaction was genuine as she brought messages through from loved ones who had passed away. My disbelief was challenged. Nervously, I booked a reading with Charmaine. I should not have been concerned. Charmaine is a wonderfully direct and down-to-earth medium. Over the phone she told me many things about my children and the manner of their passing. I felt she must have a connection with them. But she did not stop at the one reading for which I had paid. She reconnected with me every three to six months for the next two years letting me know that my kids were aware of what was transpiring in our lives. I found this incredibly comforting. I knew that my son's spirit would inevitably spend more time around his widow and her children but, at her urging, he would still show Charmaine pictures that were very meaningful to me and only to me. It was personally powerful.

I should explain here that Charmaine receives messages from those who have passed, in the form of pictures and actual physical sensations or feelings which she attempts to interpret and pass on to the bereaved. Having lost her own five-year-old daughter as well as several close family members, Charmaine is amazingly empathetic with bereaved parents. I subsequently attended a retreat that Charmaine conducted. Some of the content was very

challenging for someone like me. I've spent my entire life in the computer industry, preoccupied with facts and logic. Nevertheless, four days of living in Charmaine's company convinced me that this lady has a genuine and unique gift which she uses for good purposes.

I recognise that this view may not work for everyone but I've realised that what is important is the need for an underlying belief system. The stronger the belief system, the more comfort it can provide. If you believe in some form of afterlife then you can hold onto the hope that you will meet with your lost one in another life. If you believe in the spirit world then you can feel the presence of your loved one with you at times.

Now when a butterfly flits past me or alights on my hand, I ask my daughter, 'What message are you sending me?' Strangely, it seems to happen when I'm overly anxious and upset over some issue. I can hear her telling me, 'Just chill, Mum. Don't stress about it.' My children's words often come back to me as comfort in times of trouble. Sometimes my son seemed wise beyond his years. Now his messages still resonate with me. If you have lost a loved one, you will understand why I want to feel that my children do still exist somewhere, somehow, in some other form.

My husband did a great job of supporting us both through the loss of his stepchildren but he naturally grew impatient of my repetitive conversations about my children. I felt that he and my friends were unsure as to what was the right thing to do. They feared I would only become distressed if I talked about the children too much. Whilst that was probably true, the need to talk was so strong that I found myself telling complete strangers in public places about my kids! The greatest support that anyone can offer to the bereaved is simply to listen.

Most people react strongly on learning of my situation. I've seen even grown men tear up when they realise the enormity of my loss. It is written plainly on their faces that they are thinking of their own precious family. They are asking themselves how they would handle a similar situation. Many people have asked, 'How on earth do you cope?' It is not a question that can be answered simply so I generally reply, 'Because I have to.' The real answer is more complex and multifaceted. The experiences that I share here only scratch the surface of my journey through grief and loss.

WHAT'S THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED?

There is a truly amazing amount of wisdom and advice to be found wherever you look and listen. I think that the best advice is something that resonates strongly with you and guides you for the rest of your life. In my case, it is an affirmation that I learned when I started selling life insurance. I first stuck the words 'If it is to be, it is up to me' on my bathroom mirror nearly 30 years ago. The same rather faded sticker is still on my filing cabinet beside me today. It has guided so many important decisions in my life.

WHAT IS THE SECRET TO LIVING COURAGEOUSLY?

In his book *And Never Stop Dancing*, Gordon Livingston says, 'We are defined by what we fear.' In other words, our lives are limited by our fears. Quite early in life, I learned that the best way to overcome fear was to approach it head-on and take action. I was a shy child and I feared meeting others socially. I deliberately put myself into social situations until this became the norm and my fear subsided. Earlier in my life I feared death, once I'd faced it, I conquered the fear. I'm not advocating foolish risk-taking but I do recommend action in place of avoidance.

I also think that courage comes from belief in oneself. We use the phrase 'to have the courage of one's convictions'. I grew up with a strong sense of right and wrong and the need to stand up for what I believed in. If you lack beliefs, you may be easily swayed by the opinions of others and inclined to seek their approval to bolster your own self-confidence. As the old adage says 'If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything.' It's hard to be courageous when you don't have a strong foundation of belief on which to build.

This applies equally in business where a courageous business person must take action and tackle their challenges head-on. Procrastination is a recipe for failure. So is blindly following your competitors. Courage in business means being prepared to do something differently in order to succeed.

WHAT ARE SOME TIPS FOR OVERCOMING ADVERSITY?

Think beyond yourself and your problems; there is always someone who is worse off than you. Be careful how you define the adverse event in your mind; it can shape your feelings and deepen the intensity of your reaction.

Seek help and support from those you trust. Be prepared to take massive action; never let yourself become the victim. Remember that ‘forgiveness is a gift that we give ourselves.’ (Gordon Livingston). This can be extremely challenging to practice but very rewarding to experience. I’ve also found the writings of John Demartini on achieving balance in our lives very helpful.

The simplest solution for me is to take time out for a meditation and clear my mind of the myriad of thoughts that are scrambling my brain.

HOW DID YOU SHIFT FROM WANTING TO GIVE UP TO NEVER GIVING UP?

It takes a definite shift in mindset. It doesn’t matter what the situation is, you may not be able to change the situation but you can change the way that you think about it. I went through a couple of major mindset shifts.

For example, being an older person in the fulltime workforce had its complications at the beginning. All my peers and friends were enjoying retirement, playing golf, living the grey-nomad lifestyle. Whereas I didn’t have a choice – I had to work. Since I couldn’t change that fact - I had to change myself, my mindset. With the help of Peter Shaw from Scary and Exciting, I soon consciously changed my mind. I decided to look at all the wonderful things I did have rather than what I was missing out on. I had my health, my skills, my husband, my job.

Simple gratitude and a mental shift from ‘What’s the flaw?’ to ‘What’s the blessing?’ creates massive momentum. I kept a Gratitude journal and it helped me immensely. Just being grateful for the little things can create an entirely new day. It could be a smile from a stranger, a kind word from a friend, a tranquil moment in peace. In the hustle and bustle of life we often go chasing the ‘big things’ that we *think* matter; like bigger houses and cars and promotions. We don’t take the time to be grateful for what we already have, the little things that do matter – like time with our loved ones, a hug from your child, a shared smile and other things we consider ‘everyday occurrences’ but are in fact blessings in our life. If anyone is going through change and adversity, it may be difficult at first to look for things for which to be grateful, but if you persist and make a conscious effort to be grateful it really can shift your mindset and your life.



THE BIG AND THE SMALL THINGS IN LIFE

ANGELA CLUCAS



ANGELA CLUCAS

Angela Lynne Clucas arrived into this world on the 11th May 1969, weighing a mere 2lb 6oz; which in today's terms is just over 1kg. For some reason, Angela wasn't able to receive food in the womb and thus she arrived in this world smaller than most. Growing up, Angela soon discovered that being different was not always easy; but what she lacked in height, she made up for in sheer determination and positive thinking. Angela was the target of a lot of bullying throughout her school years and often bore the brunt of people's jokes and remarks. Inevitably, this constant barrage led Angela to make a powerful decision as a teenager, one that steered the course of her life. Angela vowed that she'd never let anything or anyone stand in her way of having a great life, and if she really wanted to achieve something then she was going to go right out there and get it herself.

In March 1990, at the age of 20, Angela made the decision to leave home and move to Australia from New Zealand. She simply knew she needed to change her environment to fulfill her potential, it was part of the vow that she'd made to herself. Angela felt there was more to life than staying in the same small country town that she had grown up in, it was time to take charge of her life and make something of it. Something that she could be proud of.

Angela lives by a saying, 'If there's a will, there's always a way'. 'No' is not in her vocabulary. Today Angela is the manager of The Australian Aviation Heritage Centre, in Darwin; but her proudest achievement is her beautiful daughter Silvia, who is now a teenager and loves to play netball and spend time with her very close friends. Angela has a lot more adventures to come in her life and will approach the future with the same tenacity and passion as she has in the past. Her passion in life is to help people grow in confidence so that they can reach their full potential regardless of their circumstance.

www.angelaclucas.com

WHAT WERE YOU LIKE AS A CHILD?

Most of my childhood years were spent in a small country town called Darfield, which is inland from Christchurch in the South Island of New Zealand. I lived with my parents and my younger brother and sister. Like most kids of that era, we made our own fun in the backyard which involved a sandpit made out of a truck tyre filled with sand and old sacks for the cover. We spent a lot of time creating racetracks for our toy cars and making cities in the pit; this filled hours and hours of our childhood. There was also a playhouse that Dad had built for us, along with a home-made go-kart, trampoline, swimming pool and our handmade racetracks to ride our bikes around.

Sundays were special, it was the day we all went to work in Dad's stock truck. Sunday rides were great as we used to visit a lot of the local farmers and see other kids. It was also a great way to see the rest of the country as we never knew where we'd end up. If we were lucky we'd get to go with Dad on the school holidays and travel all over the south island. We had three pet dogs, working dogs for the farm, we played with them often but it wasn't as much fun for me as it was for my siblings. I was scared of dogs because when they jumped on me I would immediately get knocked due to my small stature.

The day I started school at the age of five, life changed for me. My carefree childhood was no more. For many children, starting school is an exciting adventure, but for me, school proved to be an endless nightmare. School was the place that first made me realise that I was not the same as everyone else. Children can be very cruel to each other without fully understanding that what they say and do can damage people and change the course of their life, some people never recover from the trauma. Kids would point and laugh at me and I was always being stared at and whispered about. To survive the constant ridicule I needed to build a tough skin—and fast!

It was the simple things that were the most challenging for me, such as using the toilets. I can recall one memorable day when I was unable to open the main heavy door to enter the toilets. It was needed to be pulled, not pushed, to get back out. The massive door was too heavy for my small

frame to pull open and as a result I was stuck in the toilets. I never arrived at the bus stop where Mum was waiting to pick us up. Soon enough, Mum worked out what had happened to me and she came to my rescue. I was extremely embarrassed and scared, I really thought that I'd end up spending a cold lonely night in the school toilets.

Little things were often the big things for me. I had to have a cushion to sit on in class as I was not tall enough to see over the desk and for writing I needed the cushion so that I was high enough to see what I was writing. I would always have to sit in the front of the class to see the blackboard. In the school bus I always was made to sit next to the driver so that they could see me, as I was always well-hidden behind any normal seat. So, the little things were always the big things for me; like not being able to sit at the back of the bus with my friends. As I went through school my height was always an active talking point. As my height barely changed, I had to change my mindset. I didn't have the growth spurt I dreamed of, so inevitably I had to draw on my inner strength and self-determination.

Mum used to tell me and my siblings, 'There is no such word as *can't*'. I think that helped form my mindset and realise that I can do anything I put my mind to. High school proved difficult too. There were subjects in particular that had some interesting challenges. I was kicked out of cooking class because I climbed onto the bench to turn on the power point. I couldn't reach it, and had been trying to get the teacher's attention for a long time without success. High school had tall tables and benches and my frame was always seeing things from 'below'. I learned how to navigate so many 'normal' situations because they were challenging for me. Luckily, I had some understanding teachers too, especially for classes like automotive and metalwork where there were often machines that weren't safe for me to use. In these situations some caring teachers used my project as an example to show other students, so I didn't have to demonstrate. All these situations helped me learn to look outside the box in order to solve problems and help me come up with inventive ways to accomplish things in any situation in life. What a normal size person takes for granted, such as sitting at tables and reaching for things was often a creative manoeuvre for me.

Now, as an adult I have learned to manage my small stature with humour and laughter. Often, when I see kids staring at me and whispering, ‘Oh my god, she’s so small’, I tell them, ‘See what happens to you if you don’t eat your vegetables.’ Mums’ often smile in surprise and goodwill. The kids usually fall silent.

IT’S GREAT TO FIND HUMOUR IN THESE SITUATIONS. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO OTHERS WHO LIVE SIMILAR SITUATIONS?

The challenge is to always look outside the box, especially if the answer is not always close or easy to find. You need to have a strong mindset and determination to make the best of your own life. Don’t waste your time worrying when you could be living. If you live by this advice then your motivation will stay high and you can create a very interesting and wonderful life for yourself and those around you. The more you put into your life, the more you get out of your life. You can measure this by looking at different areas of your life and you will soon see that there are some areas that are better than others and that’s because of the amount of focus you have on each area of life. Focus on the areas you want to improve and go right ahead and begin to improve them today. Seize the moment.

Sometimes in life we are faced with two choices. Get on with it or sit down and be miserable.

You may not be able to change things but you can change your attitude about it. It’s OK to have bad days but don’t let it rule your life. It’s a daily choice, and the best one you can make every single day.

AS A MOTHER, WAS THERE EVER A TIME YOU WERE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR SMALLER STATURE IN RELATIONSHIP TO PARENTING?

Yes, when my daughter was going to high school. I used to worry that she would get teased because she is normal height and I am not. I worried that kids would say cruel things to her about me and that she’d have to cope with that. I knew what school could be like and I certainly didn’t want that for her. When I was her age, I was still in the mere 4ft range and

about 23kg. I knew our experiences of growing up would be different, but I didn't want her to encounter any cruelty that I had. I didn't want my size to impact her childhood or teenage years. Luckily she had a nice group of friends and she was rarely teased, but I was very worried about it for quite some time. Growing up with tall siblings I was well aware of the comparisons people love to make. My younger brother is 6ft tall, so people loved such extreme comparisons.



Left to right: Angela's daughter Silvia, Angela's mother and Angela.

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT, ONE DAY I'LL LOOK BACK ON THIS AND LAUGH? IF SO, WHEN WAS THIS?

Yes, I remember the very first morning I woke up in a town called Oenpelli. Oenpelli is an Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory and my godparents, Jim and Kath, were living there at the time. I went to stay with them for a short while after I had left New Zealand as a young woman. My godfather Jim was a buffalo-catcher, which is exactly as the title implies - he catches buffalo. Not your average job description.

I woke up and looked out of my bedroom window to see my godfather and few other fellow buffalo-catchers parked outside the gate, along with them was a number of Aboriginal men with rifles. I had never seen an Aboriginal person up close before and I was both surprised and fascinated to find them outside my bedroom window that morning. The scene was quite remarkable as they were all gathered outside the front gate, packed and ready to spend a week catching buffalos. Having left the only world I had ever known in New Zealand, this scene was a complete contrast to what I was used to. It was this moment that I deeply realised that I had gone way out of my comfortable zone and delved into a completely new and unknown world. My emotions started to run wild as I realised an entirely new life was before me. I now look back at this scene and laugh at myself, because times such as these soon became a normal part of my life and I will always cherish these wonderful adventures. Jim and Kath were very kind to me and really helped me integrate and make a new life in Australia.

I ended up spending many years in remote places and in Aboriginal communities. I found the Aboriginal communities rarely noted me as different, instead they accepted me instantly for who I was. It was refreshing to be treated as normal. I remember in one Aboriginal community I was driving an old Datsun car around, and the people of the community all lined up clapping me as I drove down the main road. Maybe they had never seen anyone so small drive a car, but here they were applauding my efforts. I laugh when I recall the scene, as it would have looked to them like a kid was driving around their community.

WHAT ARE YOUR TIPS FOR HELPING SOMEONE GET THROUGH A DIFFICULT TIME IN THEIR LIFE?

The first thing I would say to someone is, ‘Tomorrow is another day, so let’s have a coffee together and sort out your problems.’ Then I would just listen carefully and allow them the chance to open up. Sometimes people just need a true listener, someone who really cares and supports them. This is always the first step.

In helping solve someone’s problem it’s important to first understand the mindset of that person. As it’s their mindset that you’re dealing with—not

yours. Once their state-of-mind is understood then together you can work out a plan to improve all aspects of their life. It's important not to overwhelm people with too much information at once, life changes and decisions are a process and sometimes things need to be done in small, but very valuable steps.

When someone asks you for help during a difficult time in their life, you must always ask them for their ideas and try and let them come up with their own ideas and steps. However, your encouragement in order to help them find these positive steps can ensure their future is massively improved. There is a saying that I regularly use, which is 'you cannot help people that don't want to help themselves'.

You must always have the upmost respect for people that come to you when they are having a very stressful time. It can be hard to ask for help. Most people cannot think clearly when they are highly stressed. People who are stressed can be very different and act very different from the way they would usually conduct themselves. It's important to point out the positives in their life and reduce the negatives so that the negatives don't overtake their thinking. Make the positive points the main focus and encourage them to take action to get their life back on track. Small steps to fix each negative point, one by one, are in fact positive steps that are long lasting. It's simple to do and yet often difficult to begin. That's why listening, caring and encouragement is the best medicine.

AS A MANAGER, HOW DO YOU STAY ORGANISED?

I tend to be an organised person, as one of my pet hates is disorganisation; it drives me nuts. If you're running a business or in charge of a number of people, you must be organised. Having a plan that is simple and easy to follow is a must in order to achieve results. Time management is the key to staying organised, of course there also must be room in your plan for changes and flexibility. A good backup plan for when things change is common sense and smart management skills such as, interpersonal skills, communication, time-management are essential ingredients. Understanding the importance of having the right people in the right positions of your business are vital keys to having a very successful, organised and motivated team. Like the old saying 'round pegs in round holes.'

HOW CAN SOMEONE STAY MOTIVATED AND INSPIRED ON A DAILY BASIS?

Motivation must come from within yourself. You cannot stay motivated if you are not doing something that you believe in, or enjoy. The best way to stay motivated is to have a job that you enjoy and are happy to get out of bed in the morning to go to work. I am very lucky as I have such a job, as the manager of The Australian Aviation Heritage Centre in Darwin which I have been employed there for almost ten years. It's a wonderful and meaningful place to work and listed as one of the top 10 things to do in Darwin. I get my inspiration from listening to the stories of everyday people that put their country first, so many unsung heroes that stepped up and said 'Yes, I will do my duty for this great country of ours'. Most not having any idea at what they had agreed to.

I also respect the guys that had the awareness to go out into the bush, in mostly very harsh terrain and recover this country's history and store it away for future generations to learn and grow from. So many people have dedicated their time, energy and effort into recording events, such as wars and social and political history, and of course aviation. These people also deserve a medal of recognition, as they are mostly volunteers and never require or expect anything for their efforts and long arduous hours of dedication. Such people are all over this great country and we are very lucky to have them among us today, and in the past. The point I wish to make is, how important it is to discover your passion, what you really love to do. Then, make it happen! Your life will feel much more complete and satisfying, then motivation and inspiration happen naturally. As a famous quote says:

*'Choose a job you love, and you will never
have to work a day in your life.'*

WHAT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PIECE OF ADVICE SOMEONE HAS GIVEN YOU?

1. **Believe in yourself.**
2. **Act on your gut-instincts** (when it is very strong) because then you know in your heart that it's the right direction to take.

I think it's important to have a deep understanding of yourself first, for when you are confident in your own judgement then you'll be comfortable to make decisions and not sit idle on the sideline your whole life. You must make things happen, because great life experiences don't come to those that wait for things to happen, you must go out and make things happen yourself. The more that you put into life, the more value you will get out of your life. You don't want to look back on your life and regret those 'decisions' that you were too afraid to make, the ones which could have given your life much more joy and fulfilment. You only live once so we should all make the most of it!

DO YOU SET GOALS? IF SO, HOW?

Yes, I do set goals because I have discovered that without having goals in front of me I tend to lose my way and I start to become lazy and unproductive. I need goals to drive me forward and improve all aspects of my life. Getting the balance in life can be a challenge. I have noticed that at times when I get driven on one aspect of my life in particular, then I tend to not think about the effect that it is having on the other areas of my life. This is why balanced 'life goals' are important and not just 'business goals.' Goal setting is also about making the goals purposeful and viable. Break the goals down into steps and timeframes to practically see the steps toward achievement.

It's wise to also understand that goals need to fit into a bigger picture that is much more than just yourself and your own ideas. When setting new goals make sure that you take an honest look at your motivations and ensure the outcomes are the best for everyone, including yourself.

Goals can impact those around you, your family members, work colleagues and close friends. It's important to take the whole picture of your life into account and not pursue one goal at the expense of other vital areas of your life. They can coexist if you plan and prioritise smartly.

WHAT CAUSES A LACK OF MOTIVATION AND HOW DOES ONE AVOID IT?

Lack of motivation can be caused by a many things and it's quite personality specific. Sometimes 'lack of motivation' is really masquerading as

fear. Often one avoids a new situation, or procrastinates for reasons that are deeply personal to them. Other times is due to lack of know-how or ability. The reasons are varied but it's a common problem for many. Here are a few common reasons as to why people often lose or lack motivation.

1. Low self-confidence/self-esteem. From my experience this is often due to bullying, and or growing up in a highly-critical environment.
2. Not having the required skills to do a particular job in the workplace.
3. Lack of education, which can be due to many reasons.
4. Feeling useless. Being told that you're not 'good enough' and 'won't amount to anything.'
5. Lack of good role models when growing up.
6. Not being able to find a job or passion that interests you.
7. Lack of direction in life.
8. Growing up in a family that relies on Centrelink from one generation to the next, and the cycle is never broken.
9. Getting mixed up in the wrong company, or influenced too much by others.
10. Being a caretaker for other family members and putting your life on hold while you look after them.
11. Just being plain lazy.

The best way to enhance and develop motivation is to have a purpose in life, to set goals that drive you forward no matter what your situation. It's important to have motivation toward your own growth, toward your own contentment, your own joy and happiness.

IS THIS WHY YOU BELIEVE IT'S IMPORTANT THAT PEOPLE CONTINUE TO STRIVE FOR SUCCESS?

Yes, by nature, human beings group and bind together, therefore people tend to become competitive in order to discover where and how they fit

into the group. People need to feel like they belong to something, that they are significant in the big picture of life. Being successful is one way to ‘move up the ladder’ in the human race, much like animals, humans also like to improve their position in the pack. Being successful makes people feel a sense of self-pride and reliance, they can earn the respect of their peers through their great skills and also share their ideas for the good of the business or family. Success enhances self-confidence and improves the morale of a person, this naturally induces a flow on effect to others around them. Success however is very personal, what one person classifies as ‘success’ may be vastly different from another. This is great because all we need to feel is our own personal level of success, our deep satisfaction and that changes our lives, and those of others around us.

WHAT LIMITS PEOPLE’S SUCCESS IN BUSINESS?

A massive amount of people go into business for themselves erroneously thinking that they will work less hours and have more money and time for fun and family. However, most new bosses end up working twice as hard for a smaller hourly rate than when they were an employee. Many people also go into business not really understanding everything that is involved, from tax, OH & S, business regulations and the overload of paperwork and accountancy that relates to their business. It can take many hours to simply complete forms like superannuation, tax, business agreements, just to name a few. Most businesses also rely heavily on finding very good staff members, with exceptional interpersonal skills. Businesses need to have a quality team of great people with the correct skills in each and every position of the business. It only takes one unskilled or lazy staff member to put your whole business in trouble and destroy the reputation of the business. Success can be limited if staff aren’t chosen mindfully or likewise, if business owners don’t look after good staff. Success is often achieved through great collaborations, where owners and staff work together toward a shared and highly-valued goal.

As a manager, my suggestion to anyone who wishes to go into business for yourself is to first develop an education of what is required to run a successful business. Surround yourself with people that have already become great business leaders and learn passionately from them. Invest in

yourself and learn as many skills as possible before you take on the major challenge of running your own business.

People like Sir Richard Branson understand that not everybody can run a business, that's why he has a very strict set of requirements when it comes to hiring managers for his business-- he always makes sure they are much smarter in their fields than he is. Not only does he hire people with the right skills, but he ensures he hires people with passion and personality. As he said, personality is vital because you can teach a skill but 'you can't train a personality'. He said 'You can learn most jobs extremely quickly once you are thrown in the deep-end. Within three months you can usually know the ins-and-outs of a role. If you are satisfied with the personality, then look at experience and expertise'.

'Purpose is no longer a buzzword. It's a must-have. Passion and purpose will keep people focused on the job at hand, and ultimately separate the successful from the unsuccessful.'

— Richard Branson

SHOULD EVERYONE GO INTO BUSINESS?

Definitely not. For some people owning their own business would be a financial disaster. A tradesman that is amazing at being a panel beater does not necessary have the skills to run a panel beating business. There are very different skills that are required to both of these very sufficient jobs. There are many people that are not made to be leaders, you must know whether you are a leader or a follower, there is no right or wrong but you must work out which category you fall into. You don't need to be a business owner to become wealthy and have a great life.

From the time you start your first job as a school leaver you are on the way to learning life skills that you were not taught during your school years. Most people learn much more in their first year in the workforce about life and themselves as a member of society. The importance of the skills learned at school become much more relevant and meaningful. As your work experience starts to grow you also begin to grow and develop personally as an adult, quickly you'll innately work out which category

you fall into more, a leader or follower. While you are young, you are able to learn great skills of older staff, the people that master this skill the best are usually the ones that go onto being business owners because at a young age they understand the value of learning from experienced people and are willing to invest their time into teaching you their skills.

I believe that even if you are an employee working for a boss, that doesn't mean that you shouldn't treat your job as your business, because you are part of that business and that business success relies on your personal part to be successful. People don't understand that they are their own business-- your reputation is very important to your lifestyle and your wealth creation. It doesn't matter what your job is, from a cleaner to a lawyer, the same rules apply. The more effort and pride you have for your job the better opportunities come your way.

I have been very lucky as I have had some great jobs that have given me some amazing experiences and helped me grow as a person, as well as find and understand myself. Sometimes you have to jump out of the comfortable life you have in order to find yourself. The fastest way to grow as a person is by testing yourself in new and different situations. You never know how good your life could be if you don't try. You must have the right mindset and attitude as new opportunities present themselves, as they arrive to beckon your future.

The world is a big place but it is getting smaller for us all the time thanks to aeroplanes and modern technology. The world of business is creating so many more opportunities at all levels and there is now no reason why you cannot be a part of the new dynamic business world; either as an employer or an employee. You must find out where you want to fit into this world of business because in some way we are all part in it.

ANY FINAL MESSAGES YOU WANT TO MENTION ANGELA?

Nobody has a perfect life. Nobody.

No matter where you start from in life, or what cards you've been dealt. You are the only person that can create the winning mindset for your life. You must be able to put the past behind you as there is no way that you can

change history. History is history. If you don't close the door on any bad history you let it control your future. If you let it control you, it will win. You may be physically in the present but psychologically and/or emotionally stuck in the past. If you remain stuck in the past you don't use your mind to create a new and exciting life for your future. You need to start creating new memories that are going to help you have a much more fulfilling life, one full of great contentment, abundance and value.

So, on a final note... stop reading this and start your first step right now! Live your dreams. Build a great life! Your great life! You never know, one day someone may just be reading your life story, so write the next chapter; what will they be reading about you?

You must have courage to spread your wings. If you are in a negative environment, then do everything you can in order to change it! Change it! Challenge yourself to grow and become all you can be.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR YOU ANGELA?

The most important aspect of my future is family, I want to be there for my parents and daughter as they go through different phases in their lives. I also wish to continue to write a bit more and help others in any way I can. I am also a passionate believer in getting financial education into schools, so in the future I would like to support any endeavours around this topic as part of my continued passion. 'Real-life' finance should be a subject taught in school. Why aren't we taught a subject that we will all have to deal with as adults? I had to learn everything myself and I believe it could have been a great asset to have a little bit of know-how along the journey. I will definitely be dedicating myself to increase financial education in our future generations. It's something I'm truly passionate about.



“There is a saying in Tibetan, 'Tragedy should be utilised as a source of strength.' No matter what sort of difficulties, how painful experience is, if we lose our hope, that's our real disaster.”

— Dalai Lama XIV

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