

What challenges have you faced in your life?

I find it a little challenging to write about what I've overcome for two main reasons, 1. I now no longer hurt, fear or feel the shame that I did in the past. I know the freedom of forgiveness and the courage of authenticity. 2. For the past six months I have been mentoring a young man in Rwanda, who was a 12 year old boy when his nation and family was torn apart by the 1994 genocide, in which a million Rwandans were brutally killed, including his mother.

It's a great perspective shifter. However, it's not useful to compare ourselves to others – their pain or their achievements. We all have our own journey to walk and our pain, regardless of the extent, is still pain. It's not useful to downplay it, or to dramatise or dwell on it. It's to learn from, turn it into gold that can make a powerful difference in your own life and in the lives of others.

I've suffered various forms of abuse at different times in my life, not for long periods of time, but enough to change my life forever. I'm very fortunate to have grown up in a loving, stable home, but small pockets of the outside world hated me, abused me and stole my innocence.

Sometimes I've been hated for who I am, or what I have, which I've found really confusing at times. Who would want to be me? I didn't realise the value of things like a growing up on a farm, with well-respected parents and grandparents. I didn't see myself as someone that people could possibly be jealous of. I tried for so long to be someone else, because who I was didn't seem to be enough. I wasn't pretty enough, old enough, clever enough. I never felt that I measured up from the time I was in primary school and becoming aware of being compared with others.

When I say it's changed my life forever, it's given me an appreciation of life, and an understanding and compassion for people who face challenges of many kinds. It's developed a cheerleader within me, to cheer people on with all my heart – especially those who are committed to overcoming, and making the most of their lives.

It's given me the belief that one who has no hope, one who is self-destructing and wants to end it all can become one who loves life and people, because that's been my journey.

What external fixes, if any, did you use to try and overcome these challenges?

I used to talk to anyone who'd listen, but discovered that is often not useful! I worked so hard to please people and to try to fit in, but I just exhausted myself. When I was looking externally for help, I was unaware of just about everything I needed to be aware of – from awareness of my emotional state, how I really felt and what I thought, to my physical state (I was ignoring some pretty unhealthy symptoms) and I wasn't taking responsibility for myself. I was operating out of a vacuum and hoping I was making a positive difference in people's lives.

I've found writing to be a significant help as it shows me when my thinking is heading in the wrong direction! When I was recovering from chronic burnout and unable to work, a friend of mine who is a psychologist asked me to write everyday and it was a very useful tool in gaining clarity and perspective.

What was the turning point that made you look inside yourself for the answers?

I've had so many turning points, each one turning my face toward the sunshine, away from the shadow as Helen Keller puts it. Turning points have been honest conversations and tough love from mentors, coaches and friends – each moment being another slight adjustment in direction, always a step – or leap forward. I love that coaching is about self-reflection and discovering the gold within.

What techniques did you use and continue to use today to create the life you now live?

Working with a personal coach has been an essential element of my personal and business success. Techniques include goal setting, strategic thinking and mindfulness.

Writing has had a massive impact – I wrote my way to healing, and have since written many articles for several national magazines, and written 2 of my own books, and chapters for three other books.

Because of coaching, writing and my journey of self-awareness I notice immediately when I feel stressed and it triggers my 'slow down, breathe' response.

Who are you, today?

I'm ME! I'm joyful, even when my body isn't keeping up with my passion, because I know I'm living on purpose. I rest when I need to, I am aware of what I allow in my world – I guard my heart, my mind and my body by feeding it the best. I surround myself with inspiring, positive, authentic people and I love being with my family. My husband of 17 years is truly my best friend and we really love doing life together. Our 11-year-old son is brilliant, funny and thoughtful and it's a joy and a privilege to be his mum.

At my core is an unshakeable faith in God. It's been tested in many difficult times, but since I was 20 I have known without a shadow of doubt that God is with me, within me, guiding me, never leaving me. God loves me and has a purpose for me. That's all I need to know.

My writing, speaking and coaching comes from my passion to cheer people on to live purposefully and authentically.

What single thing can you say to our readers that will inspire them to start believing they can BE more?

It really doesn't matter what your background is, dig deep, to find the gold in you, develop self-awareness and allow yourself to be your absolute, authentic best.

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