

Chapter 12 (We Win)

“In the end, love wins!”- Carrie Underwood

A few years ago, I realized that I could not take time off from work without exercising. I am a mailman, so coming back to work to walk around twenty km a day was not going to happen easily. With that in mind, we bought a treadmill. I called it the thump, thump because that was the sound it made. It was self-propelled and that was hard work. Recently, I upgraded to an amazing NordicTrack treadmill that has motors, elevations and a ten-inch HD screen. I love that thing. The Ifit program that accompanies this beast is amazing. I can run anywhere in the world.

As it happens, there is more to this story. One of the Ifit trainers is Dr. Jarrod Spencer. He is an athletic motivational speaker and writer. This is one of his quotes “make the unknowns known.” I believe he means that we are uncertain of our abilities. Some of our anxiety is based on unknowns. People become uncertain that they can do their dreams and goals in life. This man says that they are the unknowns. We don’t see the finish line. We can’t believe how we could accomplish a goal. All of these fears are out in realm of the unknown. What if we could make the unknown, known?

Welcome to my treadmill adventures. I’m fifty-five and trucking along. Yes, I have been involved in exercise and running all my life. You know the drill. Up and down, always losing and gaining weight. My whole life has been a series of gains and losses. I appear to be focused now. This period of my life combined with this spectacular treadmill has fueled me. It’s literally the best of times right now in the middle of a pandemic. I’m completing this challenge and that race. Currently, I ran the Boston marathon over five days. Then I ran a grueling ten km race. It’s been amazing!

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Could I run the marathon at fifty-five? My job is pretty physical. Could I still use a treadmill after work? Low and behold, I can and certainly found more energy that I thought I had. One of the trainers said that when we hit that wall and can't go on, that's where we have only used up forty percent of our energy. There is still more to give. More to use. I would also say more to gain. When we think the race is lost and were exhausted, lo and behold we have more in reserve. That trainer also said that she found out that the other sixty percent is in the mind. When the body hurts, we give up. When the mind is fatigued, we surrender. Yet, more power lies in wait, unused. Dreams unused?

The best part of this adventure has been the breathing. For a few years now I have been on a kick of finding balance with my body, mind, and soul. I did not know that all three are connected to breathing. I work with some young people. They tend to make it back from their route much fast than me. Breathing properly has changed all that. I have more energy and am consistently beating them all back by a half an hour. My massage therapist told me to breath properly. So did all the Ifit trainers. Even at church they said in a sermon to try spiritual breathing. What's up with the breathing?

I am not a naturalist, or am I? Do I go to the natural food section and buy bags and bags of nuts and berries? Am I taking zinc, vitamins, and herbs to bring my body inner peace? No, I don't do those things. Yet, I am beginning to lean that way. Those health nuts are the ones teaching me to breath. When I breath at a consistent rate it clears my mind. It's not about the breathing half as much as the mentality of it all. Focus on breathing in and out at a good rate. Goodness, I am a naturalist! That Ifit program has yoga and mental experts telling me to breathe right. I get it!

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This looks like an infomercial for an exercise machine and program. It's not about that but the process. My breathing has changed. I use it at the dentist. I find that I am sleeping better because my breathing is rhythmic. Breathing while I'm reading, having sex (no less) and running. Duh? I'm a human breathing machine now! Yet, it's touched my mind. I'm less stressed about things. It's touched my body. I'm so much stronger and happier. It's also touched my soul. I'm breathing in the Spirit of God at church. There is focus and intent. I have found balance after all these years in the one thing I always had: breathing.

I must be on a spiritual trek. All of a sudden, I'm seeing it all over the place. What is it? There needs to be balance in life. Balance in our body. Balance in our mind and soul. We were watching Vampire diaries and the script says nature requires balance. The vampires can't do what they want. The trainer doing yoga calls for balance. So does my preacher. I get it now. You too are standing in the same place I am. Wasted time comes from imbalance. We're putting too much effort into one thing and ignoring another. Time is then wasted trying to right the ship. Maybe we should spend a little time balancing the ship?

I have been studying cameras for church. Doing a live-stream is tricky business in low lighting. The church was having trouble with lighting so they bought a better camera. Actually, they were always having camera trouble. It's an interesting problem too. It is called white balance. Each camera needs to be color balanced to get the picture consistent with all the cameras. Yet, the older ones had trouble white balancing. This new camera was having trouble too. I decided to watch a few videos and read a bunch of articles on white balance. Oh, oh there was that word again: balance.

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This church asked me to come on the team and fix the tech side. I'm not a tech or a naturalist. Yet, I have a knack for both. What's wrong with your cameras? Like I said, they even bought a new one first to fix the issues. Yet, they really did not know what the issues were. White balance, as a process, is getting the white right. Making sure that all things white in your picture frame are consistent. When that happens, amazingly, all the other colors will fall into place. Who knew? The current camera people at church certainly didn't. Just one weekend doing white balance properly fixed the problem. The camera crew were astounded. Balance in the camera force was restored!

There is a movement these days to find your inner peace. I suppose it's a Buddhist or yoga thing. You can find brochures at the naturalist stores on how to eat a balanced diet. How do you get your camera shots to look good? Find balance in one thing and all others fall into place. To Buddhism the goal is to find Nirvana. A place where you rid yourself of all the bad things that ruin you. Jesus says that we should believe in Him with our mind and heart. Then we will experience joy and happiness. Of course, the naturalist says to eat nuts, kale, and protein to balance your body chemicals. There are plenty of others too. What do they all say is the way to seeing Nirvana clearly: balance!

Now, I'm not here to debate that all roads lead to heaven or nirvana. What I am saying is that for the entire history of human-kind we have searched for peace. Like Dorothy says in the Wizard of Oz: *we don't need to leave home to find it*. Dorothy couldn't find it in Oz. There is no need to trek all the way to Tibet and seek a Buddhist temple for peace. Saying four hail Mary's or smiling in the mirror while saying I love you fifty times won't cut it either. No, unfortunately the naturalist yoga teacher is right. Just breathe!

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Look at the piles of memories you have. Take a gander at the other piles of unaccomplished dreams. Breathe! What do those piles really represent? Don't let feelings of sadness and regret consume you. Who wants to be angry or sad towards bad circumstances or tragedies forever? Breathe! I'm not here to insist that you regulate your breathing and all your dreams will come true. You won't find nirvana by breathing. However, just maybe you will slow down. You will begin to clear your heart and mind of stress. Within that, you just might be able to see unknown things in your life. Places that looked far away will now appear closer. Is there a chance that you could make some impossible dreams known just by breathing? Find peace in breathing!

Ok, the point of retiring is to rest from work. Yet, we work like a bugger for around forty years to find rest. I suppose some people fight their whole life to find peace. I guess the goal of many is to finally be your own captain. I have seen the commercials called freedom 55. The idea is to save for retirement so that life will become easy at 55. Not a terrible plan except the average age is 71.5. How much time do you get to enjoy after 55 if you're lucky enough to get there? I wonder if the commercials say "you can finally breathe easy."

How to find your nirvana 101? Is it found in a new love because your old spouse wasn't cutting it? Will it be waiting there in your freedom-55 portfolio? I got a text this morning from a fifty-year-old friend who says he is leaving his wife. For what? Greener pastures at fifty? He has a mild career, no savings, no house, and clearly no wife. In the grand scheme of things, he only has himself. This man, at fifty, has only a certain amount of time left in life to find peace. In his actions, is he saying it's time to take control of his life! Should "taking control" be all about you?

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Again, how to find your dreams 101. It's not found in a bottle. You will never find it in people. A healthy lifestyle is a great thing. Do it! Yet, my Ifit instructor who is dying of cancer at 37 was fit as a fiddle and clarinet. Is the point of living trying to find a place of peace? We spend our whole lives working and stressing just to retire and rest. Are you serious! Is that the whole reason for getting up each day for years and years? I will maintain that a happy "you" will help make people around you happier. A happy "you" will make the mirror smile. Treating life as a battlefield is not positive thinking. Planning for the future while ignoring the present solves nothing. It makes a twenty-eight-year bad marriage even worse. The real way to avoid wasted time is to embrace the time you have now. To embrace the opportunities within that time. They do include people.

Carrie Underwood says Love wins. I want to agree with her. Yet, is the whole goal of God to love for us? Do we need Him to be a well of love we take from and give to others? No, I don't think it's quite that easy. God shows us the right way to love others and ourselves. God offers spiritual balance which in turn creates a certain amount of physical and mental balance. It's putting value in balance. Breathing well has calmed my heart and mind. It's soothed my soul. I am more open to love than I was. I want love to win. Yet, I know that I must put on the love mask first to save others by love. There is balance in relationships when two people love each other. Yes, love wins if we seek balance!

United we stand and divided we fall- Aesop fable

I titled this last chapter *We Win* because people that are balanced win together. So, what does balance between people mean to us in regards to wasted time? It means that

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you surround yourself with those who want to love you. It means to reject those who continually mistreat you, bash and milline you. Let's face it, we want people in our lives to congratulate us, encourage and push us to be amazing. For heaven's sake we must have a desire to do that for others! Throughout history people have used this theme of love to grow human communities. There needs to be human balance so that "We" can all Win!

"I win" means someone lost. "We win" means we win! There does not have to be a loser. You have lost dreams. Let's say that you re-discover them. Yes, you always wanted to be a teacher, lawyer, or in a band. In regret, you might say "I wish I had done those things.". Then you look across the room and see your spouse excelling in his or her career after all these years. I can hear the voices creeping in saying "why am I not excelling?"

"Did they hold me back?"

"My spouse just wanted to use me, keep me down, and pass me."

Yet, did you ask them to help you win? Did you tell them that you wanted a career too? Nine times out of ten it is the lack of communication. Who's communication? Nine times out of ten it's yours. How do I know? Have you sat in a counseling session with someone? Usually, one spouse says *I never knew*. In a divorce, one spouse is broadsided. They never say *I saw that coming*. It's amazing to me how two people get married and decide right off the bat to stop communicating. Then ten years down the road they hate each other. Each person could win if they talked. On the first day after a wedding does your spouse want you to win? Would they help you succeed in anything? Sure, they would! How does that change into "I wouldn't help my spouse because I hate

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him or her?" I contend that it doesn't change. Instead, we let anger, frustration, passivity, and a whole lot more win.

I told a woman's group that they need to encourage their spouse to win. Help them be the best they can be. Devote yourself to encouraging your spouse. One woman said "but I might lose myself in the process." We have relationships all wrong. Is it about protecting yourself in a marriage? Making sure you win too? Yes, I think you should win in life. Succeed within a relationship. Yet, don't you want to be married to a winner? Imagine yourself on the middle of a teeter totter. It's fun but balance is not easy. Imagine two equal people on either end? There is always balance if you're equal. To find balance in your life and the relationships around you requires that you invest in their balance too. It's not rocket science. Two balanced things are better than one. It's a win, win!

Balance

How to find balance in our lives? Look back over the chapter titles of this book. It's a progression towards this moment. Why do we struggle? What is your story. How did you get here? If you found your dreams, are they still important? Take a long hard look at what makes us human? We have desires, hopes, dreams, that drive towards people, places, and things. We love to have sex and eat. Humans are not all that complicated. Why do you think history is littered with cults and fallen nations? People can be swayed easily if you dangle the right thing before their heart. Under all of it is people trying to find balance. The easiest way to peace.

Many of us want our soul mate. People will go out of their way to find true love. We love stats on how much sex is good. Diet books are always top sellers. Why are super heroes and vampires a hot topic? People flock to mediums, psychics, and lottery tickets.

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We all want to make live easy. To know how to pick the right path to nirvana. There is life on one side of the pendulum and something else on the other. What is the best balance?

It's a two-fold answer. The first is all about you. Remember when I talked about the rules in an airplane. Put the mask on first and then help others. You must find balance before you can make a balanced life. That balanced life could help others balance theirs. That's the way it works. I am about to meet someone who is contemplating a divorce. Clearly there is imbalance in their relationship. However, I know that one person is seeking equilibrium within themselves. Will dumping a spouse do that? It's all in the mind. If a relationship is about two people, then it can't just be about one person. It's the law of non-contradiction rearing its ugly head. It's either about both of you or one of you. By the way, your next relationship is still about two, not one.

Why do you insist that your happiness and balance is found through burning everything to the ground and starting over? I can guarantee that you are human. That means that you will encounter human traits within you and those around you. Will you take your flaws into another flawed human relationship? What has changed from the one you left? Ah, that word "changed." If something is unbalanced then it makes sense that something must change to find balance.

A pile of messy feelings, bad memories, and mis-placed views will hurt you. Imagine looking for happy times within a pile of disasters. Imagine being angry at a new love because of feelings from old relationships. You can put your emotions and soul at ease when you sort out your feelings, hopes, and dreams into their proper place. To even

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out the messes into balance. The problem right now is that everything is piled up on one end. You have no balance.

It's so easy to give up or panic. Time is running out! Yet, to those who are successful later in life, there is plenty of time. To them, it's not over until it's literally over. I have read countless stories of people leaving unfinished projects. In Egypt, they dig and paint tombs until the pharaoh dies. Then it all stops. We need to treat life that way. Seek balance until our dying breath. Seek our hopes and dreams until we are done on this earth. Panicking and stressing over unfinished projects are not half as bad as leaving things untouched. Just floating through life hoping we won't die, but literally doing nothing in the meantime. Maybe you dream of the "one day." When will the "one day" happen? It's time to make things happen "today." Live life so hard that somethings become unfinished only because your gone.

This might seem like an awkward approach but we need a little breathing so that we win. Like I have mentioned, I went on a ton of walks for a year trying to figure out my divorce. The conversations I had with myself flew into the categories of rage, despair, and the non-sensical. I should be happy? What? Were put on this planet to serve others. Oh yah, well I have a right to love and life! On and on went the verbal jousting. The passers-by were calling the police or the loony farm. Yet, I needed these deep conversations with the one who truly mattered: me. Finally, there was this one voice calling me to breathe. Settle down cowboy! There are things to start and finish. This you have left untouched far too long.

Like I said, I'm not really an ah-natural freak. Yet, I am. I don't like pills. I rarely see the doctor. Just let nature work it out. Oddly enough we all have this one cure. Just

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breathe. It costs nothing and is completely time free. We do this strange act constantly about 16 breaths per minute, 960 breaths an hour, 23,040 breaths a day, and 8,409,600 a year. We do this without practice. It just comes naturally. But we could get better at it. They tell me that a runner is more than just legs. There is rhythm, stride, and body position. Above it all is breathing. It's the guy who commands a row boat. 1.2.3 row!
1.2.3 row!

Real breathing is an art form. Breath in and let it out. Just relax and listen and feel your body breath. Let the world slip away. All that remains is your breath. I use this technique now in everything I do. Look at your dreams. Breathe. Look at the past and see the points in time that you had fun. What feelings, flavors, and events do you love. Write them down and repeat them again and again while rhythmically breathing. It sounds odd but trust me. Breathing and clarity go hand in hand.

It's an exercise in control, concentration, and goals. Practicing seeing clearly will let you see possibilities. Taking control of your breath will show you that, yes, you are in control. People will try and waste your time and steal your life but they can't have you or you're breathing. Concentrate on hearing your body breathe. That is your body and your mind controlling you. Finally, are your goals. How to win the game? Score goals!
Imagine you and your spouse fighting. Now imagine the two of you sitting on the bed in a yoga pose facing one another. Oh, my goodness I'm a naturalist! Reach out your hands to each other without laughing. Good luck. Now, breathe and listen to the rhythm of two people breathing for a minute. You both just won the fight!

I know that people have issues that take a little more than yoga to fix, but do they? How many fights can be calmed by breathing together? The problem is that we are

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usually hyper-ventilating in rage. Ok, now pull all your dreams into your lap. I want your partner to do the same thing. Pass them all to the other person. You now have their hopes and dreams in your hands. Will you help them win? If your single, find a friend, family member, or work mate that could help. Do you really think there isn't someone who wants you to win! Together We Win! Imagine someone benefiting from you become a police-person or chemist. We Win! Maybe you run a marathon and inspiring a future Olympian, We Win! Your success finding and fulfilling your long-lost desires could change the world. We Win!

Wasted time comes from making snap decisions with little thought. Time is crushed when we go it alone. We all need a friend to help us along in life. You read a book and it inspires you. That just saved you time doing it the hard way. Instead of going out gambling with this month rent, you bought a treadmill and Ifit program. There you sit on the floor stretching and doing yoga. Your horrified that you're becoming a naturalist! What you're not doing is choking in debt or trying to breath in a cell. You're not lying in a hospital room looking at healthy people passing you by. If you used your time wisely then you win and We Win!

If I had closed my eyes and breathed just a few more times early on in life, things might have turned out better. Maybe I would have planned a marathon in 1998 instead of sitting in my parents' basement alone after my divorce. What if we took the time remaining and thought about it for one minute instead of two seconds? I made a life map that had all the things I loved about myself. I choose to breathe and put happy moments on those life memories I've experienced. There is no chance that I waste another minute, I'm fifty-five. It's time to live and the run the race well.

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You know what? I will waste time planning a future. I want to go to Italy. I want to run the Boston Marathon. My goodness, I want to finish working on my terms. To retire with a plan. There are a ton of unknowns in my life that I want to know. Yes, I want to explore other people's dreams. I'm surrounded with people who want to explore mine. We will Win! If you put in the work, time will all of a sudden stand still for you. What to do with a ton of time that will not be wasted? Continue to dig into the past and find those dreams, desires, and treasures of hope. Make them a major part of finishing well. Don't waste another second looking behind your plough towards the past in regrate. Have trouble sleeping at night because you're dreaming about the future. If you do, We Win!