

Rebuild Your Life: How I Turned Pain Into Purpose

No matter what lies you're telling yourself right now—that you won't survive, that you're not good enough, that you can't handle this, that you'll never be anything more—I am here to tell you that I believe you can do anything—and you can and will get through this. No matter where you are in life right now, no matter what has happened to you, who has hurt you, or how you feel—you can and will get through this.

However, you need to take this opportunity—right this second—to promise yourself that you will try, and when you try and fail, you will promise to be compassionate with yourself, forgive yourself, and try again.

I want to preface this by saying that I'm not going to tell you my story for sympathy. I am not a victim. I am telling you my story because if someone like me—someone with a diagnosed mental illness of bipolar II disorder¹, anxiety disorder², and insomnia³; a recovering alcoholic pill and marijuana addict (yes, marijuana is addictive⁴); three suicide attempts; and two additional times with suicidal ideation⁵—can make it out not only alive and well but also on a path toward helping as many people as I can—then you can too.

Imagine your habits as individual bricks in the construction of a house. Each brick may seem insignificant on its own, but collectively, they form the structure of your life. Sometimes, you might realize that the foundation needs reinforcement (changing fundamental habits), or perhaps you need a larger blueprint (a new mindset) to build something even greater. And just like in construction, seeking advice from a seasoned architect (someone who has been through similar struggles) can guide you in creating a solid and beautiful home. Each tiny habit you build upon is a brick that contributes to the masterpiece that is your life.

After surviving yet another rough period in my life that started about a year before my daughter started preschool, I had been overweight. I injured myself on my treadmill while trying to get back in shape. I managed to dodge pain medication in the hospital until the third visit for the same injury when I could no longer get out of bed or move my right leg without excruciating pain.



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On the third visit, I gave in to their request that I take pain medication, and that's all it took. I have an addictive personality (I had been completely sober for four years before that day, six years with no alcohol now). So I was sent home with painkillers. I never took more than I was supposed to, and once I healed, I decided to take better care of myself. I made several appointments with doctors and a dentist appointment. I went into my dentist appointment so excited to get a cleaning until I found out they couldn't even do a cleaning until they removed two of my wisdom teeth. Can you see where this is going? Well, I got my wisdom teeth removed and told them no pain meds. I went three days switching between Tylenol and ibuprofen, but it just wasn't cutting it. I went back in for my checkup and asked for the pain meds. A few days later, I made a special appointment to get more, but thankfully after that refill, they cut me off.

A few days, maybe weeks, passed (the timeline is still foggy), and I was fighting through the withdrawals. I just couldn't handle life mentally anymore. I was angry all the time, couldn't sleep, was waking up in cold sweats, and felt like a complete failure as a mother. I made the very bad decision of smoking pot to manage my emotional state. I thought it would be better than trying to get more pills. For other people, this may very well work, but for me—not a chance. After eight months of smoking pot every day—all day, and several tough situations, including an early miscarriage—I finally had the inevitable breakdown. I thought, “My daughter would be better off without me.”

Seconds after having that thought, I told my husband to call an ambulance. I knew it had to be then. If he had driven me, I might not have made it through the door. I knew that legally if I had him tell them about my suicidal ideation, they had to bring me in, evaluate me, and admit me into an inpatient behavioral health program that could last anywhere from three days to two weeks, depending on my progress. I wasn't new to this type of thing; it was my fifth time.

I was there for six days and in that time I got sober, had my medication adjusted while they monitored me, went to one-on-one therapy and group therapy, and participated in everything to the fullest extent. It was not easy; it was scary, and for the first three days, I was still an erratic mess, but as each day passed, that mess got a little smaller. It took several more weeks to feel human again, but in that time, I implemented tiny habits into my day that added up to big changes at the end of each week and passing months. I was starting the construction of my new life.

I had to forgive myself and ask others for forgiveness. I'm not sure which one was harder. I began reading books by the top motivational speakers and spiritual leaders in the world, as well as listening to their podcasts, audiobooks, and YouTube videos—all with the same purpose: to learn how to heal—whenever I could pop my earbuds in—while I did the dishes, laundry, worked out, and cleaned.



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I filled my day with the positivity of the world. Yes, it still exists and can be used to help you, especially when you filter out all the garbage around you—including others' negative opinions. Usually, these are the people you should have removed from your life sooner. But as you gain strength and start to understand how worthy you are of real love and respect, you get better at weeding these people out. And for those you can't remove, you suddenly become immune to their negative behavior. You start to see clearly that their behavior and poor interactions with you are a part of their world and they are just reflecting it onto you so they don't feel so alone.

During my education, I listened to the way others had healed and researched the best ways to get healthy mentally and physically because while there are some universal truths to healing, most of us need a personalized touch—after all, we are all unique.

The first step is to make the promise, and the second step is to put in one small action towards changing your situation. Don't wait for the breakdown; don't wait for the suicidal thoughts to drag you out of your situation like I did.

Take this blueprint I am handing to you. The pathways are simple, but I know it's not easy. Sometimes, even one task added to our huge list of to-dos is daunting and makes us want to give up before we even start. But I know you can do this. I believe in you and my ability to motivate you and support you in every step of your journey.

Use my carefully curated list below for some of the most viral tips from motivational speakers to health and well-being experts. All you need to do right now is make the promise to yourself that you are going to change your current situation and pick one of these steps—or even part of one of these steps—and put it into action. This action is not going to change your life immediately, but it's going to show you that change is possible. With each brick you stack, your new house gets a little bit bigger. Little changes add up to big ones. I am proof of this. You can do this. Don't wait. Start right this second.

Practice Gratitude

Gratitude is not always a natural state, and some of us have a hard time finding anything to be thankful for. If you can't think of anything, just be thankful for your next breath and heartbeat. Focus deeply on it and be grateful that you are still here. Being thankful for the good things in your life can boost your mental health and foster a sense of positivity. Each night before bed, think of three things you're grateful for. It could be friends, family, or even your favorite game. It takes practice but does get easier.



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Set Clear Goals

Clearly defined, actionable goals make it much easier to achieve success and stay motivated. For example, if you want to improve your mental well-being, set a goal to read a book or practice mindfulness and meditation for 10 minutes each morning. Write it down and stick to it. Having clear goals helps you know exactly what you need to do to improve.

Visualize Success

Visualization is a powerful tool that helps you create a clear mental image of your goals, boosting your confidence and performance. If you want to feel calmer throughout your day, close your eyes and imagine yourself handling stressful situations with ease. Think about how peaceful and accomplished you'll feel. This mental rehearsal can make a big difference in your experience.

Daily Affirmations

Positive affirmations can rewire your brain for success by reinforcing a positive mindset and self-belief. Look in the mirror each morning and say, "I am worthy of love and happiness." Starting your day with positive thoughts can set the tone for everything you do.

Prioritize Self-Care

Taking time for regular self-care activities can reduce stress, enhance your mental health, and improve overall well-being. Dedicate at least 20 minutes each day to activities you enjoy, like reading a book, soaking in a warm bath, or practicing yoga. Taking care of yourself is just as important as any other task you do.

Mindfulness Meditation

Practicing mindfulness can improve your focus, reduce anxiety, and enhance emotional health. Sit quietly for five minutes, close your eyes, and take deep breaths. Pay attention to your breath going in and out. This simple mindfulness exercise can help you feel more centered and calm.



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Seek Continuous Learning

Committing to lifelong learning helps you grow personally and stay competitive in today's ever-changing world. Read a new book, take an online course, or watch a documentary on a topic you're curious about. Always be open to learning new things and expanding your knowledge.

Build a Support Network

Surrounding yourself with positive, supportive people can enhance your motivation and overall happiness. Spend time with friends who encourage you and talk to family members who listen to you attentively. Join groups on Facebook and follow people like Mel Robbins or Ed Mylett for daily inspiration and motivation. Having a strong support network can make a big difference in reaching your goals.

Embrace Failure

Viewing failure as a learning opportunity can help you build resilience and pave the way to success. If you don't achieve a goal, reflect on what you can learn from the experience and try again with a positive attitude. Remember, every failure is a stepping stone to success.

Finding or Reuniting With Your Faith and Spirituality

Reconnecting with your faith or exploring new spiritual paths can provide immense emotional support and clarity. Whether it's through prayer, meditation, attending religious services, or simply spending time in nature, spirituality can offer comfort and a sense of purpose. Reflect on your beliefs, seek spiritual guidance, or join a community of like-minded individuals. Embracing spirituality can help you feel grounded and open new doors for personal growth and healing.

Don't let the challenges of your life make you feel small. Let them be the reason you rise up and change the world." – Sarah Jakes Roberts



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You are stronger than you know, and your journey can inspire and transform not only your life but the lives of others. You've got this. We got this. Let's keep moving forward.

Which step are you going to start with today? I may only be a few steps ahead of you, but I'm here to show you the way. Let's continue this journey together.

All my love,

Danielle Pohl

References:

¹ Bipolar II Disorder: A mental health condition characterized by alternating periods of depression and hypomania, a milder form of mania that includes heightened mood, increased activity, and often increased productivity but does not include the severe impairment found in full-blown manic episodes.

² Anxiety Disorder: A group of mental disorders characterized by significant feelings of anxiety and fear, which can encompass various conditions like generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and others. These feelings can interfere with daily activities and are often disproportionate to the actual threat or situation.

³ Insomnia: A sleep disorder where individuals have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.

⁴ Marijuana Addiction: A condition where a person continues to use marijuana despite negative consequences, showcasing addictive behaviors.

⁵ Suicidal Ideation: Thoughts of engaging in behavior intended to end one's life.

find
your
purpose



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