



#Metamorphosis



*To my mom, Rebecca, who taught me how to laugh,
love unconditionally, and inspired me to expand my territories.*

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*The Ultimate Makeover Manual
for 40-Year-Olds and Beyond*

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Effectual Wellness Coach

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FOREWORD

*Life begins at forty.
Forty is the new thirty.
Strong is the new skinny.*

MIDLIFE IS NO CRISIS. IT IS AN AGE OF NEW ADVENTURES. IT is a no turning back zone, a make or break, a now or never. It is when you realize your mistakes and try to make amends, the time when you forgive yourself and others. It is living life to the fullest and savoring each present moment. It is the age of achieving impossibilities. It's giving all you've got to make a difference, another hurrah, another chance to reinvent your altitude.

However, it is also a time for many changes, some good and some unfortunate.

It was when I hit 40 that I started to experience my body deteriorating — lower back pain, swollen knees, inability to crouch, signs of rheumatism, numbing toes, vertigo, unexpected fatigue, blurring vision, and amusingly unreliable audio faculties. All these in addition to saddlebags, flabby arms, a double chin, chubby cheeks, a belly bulge, stretch marks, darkening spots, and wrinkles. I resigned myself to the fact that the aging process was in progress. There is a Filipino saying that quips, “Only

carabaos age.” So if you want to stay young, all you have to do is to pray that you don’t end up a carabao in your next life.

As a flight attendant for more than 25 years, my travel buddy has always been my image. Whenever I’m in my uniform, dragging my overweight suitcase along airport corridors, I know that left and right oglers start to critic me from head to toe. It’s either I get a nod of approval or raised eyebrows, dictated by a series of interconnected positive and negative images prancing in their heads. It’s sad to say that things never change in terms of branding air hostesses. They either say you have the X-factor or they ask why. Through the years, it has been a constant challenge for me to keep up with the looks expected by travelers and riding critiques, and be able to confidently trot without bumping into an aircraft’s aisle seats, courtesy of a slim figure. A good weight is not easy to maintain with all the unhealthy offerings in planes and hotels, not to mention the various gastronomical adventures which I indulge myself into in the different places I visit. It is made much worse by jet lag, fatigue, and an overly physical work routine. The older I get, the more I feel the strains of flying on my physical well-being.

I was 42 when I became desperate and started taking diet pills. I got hooked because it was convenient. I would pop a pill for series of days and my weight would start to drop. I was indulging this practice for almost six months, until learning that these pills contained harmful and prohibited substances. I was lucky it was short-lived. I realized that anything that’s easy would not last. I contemplated and told myself that my body didn’t deserve such treatment. Because of this, I was able to experience a paradigm shift, which completely changed the way I breathed, thought, and lived.

I don’t believe in overnight success. It takes time, determination, and a lot of sweat to achieve the optimal health

we all want. Studies say that it takes about 12 weeks to form a habit. I say it takes a lifetime. Habits do change. No one can take away your will to cease or continue doing something, regardless of how long you've been doing it. You decide for yourself and no one else. You create your reality.

I want to invite you to a wellness journey that will ask you to change your old habits and create new, exciting ones. My wish is for you to bring yourself into a state of “knowingness” — knowing that you desire well-being and knowing that you can do it! Only then will you be ready to embrace the new ideas and norms you need to learn and adopt to create a reconfigured, retrofitted, brand-new you.

Wellness is a lifelong journey. It is a constant developing awareness of how we can live life fully while maintaining an ideal state of well-being. With this in mind, I want to take with me as many friends as possible to share this amazing experience of having joy and a sense of fulfillment that comes along when you decide to take the practical approach to getting fit and feeling great.

#Metamorphosis is a compendium of valuable lessons that I learned during my birthing process. This is also an account of obstacles that physically, mentally, and emotionally challenged my goals and numerous inspirations that motivated me to create a better version of myself each day.

*Love and Light,
Joana*

Dublin, Ireland

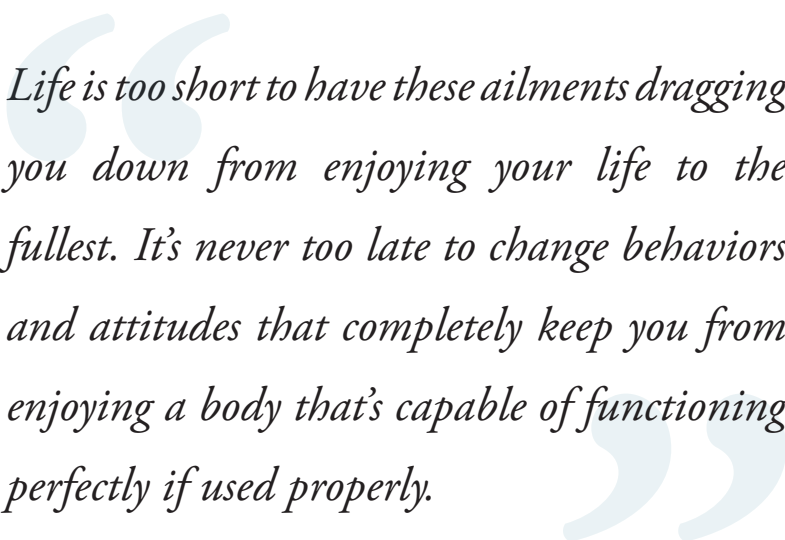




PART ONE

Growing Wings

“You learn to fly by falling.”



Life is too short to have these ailments dragging you down from enjoying your life to the fullest. It's never too late to change behaviors and attitudes that completely keep you from enjoying a body that's capable of functioning perfectly if used properly.



CHAPTER I

Life Is Too Short

I REMEMBER WHEN I WAS 12 YEARS OLD, I COULDN'T WAIT TO be called a teenager. When I became a teen, I couldn't wait to finish college and start earning on my own. But the moment I landed in my 20s, I suddenly lost count and it seemed like a year simply passed by every time I blinked my eye. While I was able to maintain a fairly trim figure without much effort then, I could undoubtedly recall when I started adding inches in my arms and belly. I would always blame it on the onset of the low-rise jeans era. It was when I started to ignore measuring my waistline and just concerned myself on the size of my hips, which apparently wasn't much of a problem. It boomeranged quite quickly when my tummy seemed to always hang loose when I tucked my shirt in.

Our age seems to add up as quickly as our weight, the moment we lose track of what we eat. Being surrounded by young and energetic colleagues would have given me some advantages. The "crab mentality" I used to have greatly changed. When a newbie flight crew would pass by with a 22-inch waistline, I would say, "Wait till you give birth," thinking that just like me, years would just flash forward and her metabolism would slow

down as fast as she could eat her crew meal before the Captain announced, “Cabin crew seats for landing.”

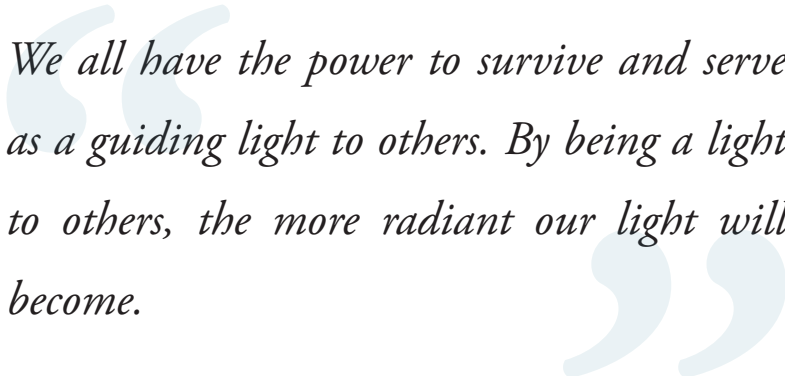
My medical history like most, isn't perfect. My mom is a thyroid cancer survivor. She is also currently under medication for hypertension and diabetes. My genes are quite ideal though, knowing that my grandparents died at a fairly advanced age. But in the kind of environment that we live in and with the quality of food that we eat, good genes may not be enough for us to experience a happy old age. This reality is one reason I have decided to embark on this journey toward a healthy lifestyle. Losing weight is only secondary. And looking great after losing those inches is a bonus. I admit that women are basically stubborn. We are more inclined to choose the trouble-free path to looking good. We think that a Hermes bag will probably divert one's eyes away from a bulging mid-section, a studded Rolex watch can snatch one's attention off a granny arm, and Bulgari perfume will hypnotize a passerby from seeing that double chin, which can disappear in a week's time via mesotherapy. All these mask what our body is trying to tell us. Don't get me wrong. I won't deny that I love branded stuff, and taking care of your looks through fashion statements can actually contribute to building your confidence and gaining respect. But focusing on these facets alone is detrimental in the long run. For instance, how can you wear a three-inch stiletto on your son's wedding if your knees are swollen as a result of carrying excessive weight? How can you flaunt your low-cut tiny black dress on a romantic date with your spouse if you think that your flabby back is an eyesore? And even so, how can you dance the night away if you worry about your blood pressure rising to an uncomfortable level?

Life is too short to have these ailments dragging you down

from enjoying life to its fullest. It's never too late to change behaviors and attitudes that completely keep you from enjoying a body that's capable of functioning perfectly if used properly. Nobody wants to die young. At the same time, no one wants to get old. When you decide to change your lifestyle and ride the healthy wagon with me, together we can age gracefully. Who says that, "You can't have your cake and eat it too?" Ever since I've chosen to walk this path, the brownies would be here to stay, even just during those treat days.

Studies indicate that life expectancy in general is around 65-75 years, depending on which part of the world you live in. At 47, I cannot seem to grasp the idea that I am more than halfway there. And this is the time I've realized that I still have so many skills to learn and dreams to pursue. Sometimes the 24 hours that I have each day do not seem enough if I list down all the things I need to do to get me a step closer to where I want to be. And all these won't be possible if I don't have the most important tool I need — a healthy body.

Jakarta, Indonesia



We all have the power to survive and serve as a guiding light to others. By being a light to others, the more radiant our light will become.



CHAPTER 2

Rise and Shine

DO YOU LIKE WHAT YOU SEE? THEY SAY THAT THE AVERAGE number of times a woman checks herself out in the mirror is eight times a day. We all want to look good. The moment we get out of bed in the morning until we hit the sack, we get our confidence and sheer joy through a measly thumbs-up that we get either from ourselves or from someone who matters to us.

I heard from a Disney character, named Thumper, one piece of advice that some people should consider more, *“If you can’t say something nice, don’t say nothing at all.”* Every time I found myself in Manila at my heaviest weight, I would get blunt and sarcastic comments that I was fat. While it was true, it still hit me like a radioactive torpedo straight to my core. But it was a blessing in disguise. Without those honest remarks, I would still probably be tilting the weighing scale toward my chubby edge. Even my husband didn’t find the guts to say the truth. He was way too worried to hurt my feelings knowing that my looks really meant a lot. But there are times in our lives that we need to be shaken from this denial stage, for us to take a closer look at ourselves and see something more behind the brand-new dress we wear. During this time, I was already experiencing problems with my

knees due to my weight. As flight crew, we're expected to be on our feet most of the time and it truly is a pretty strenuous job. Our newly issued uncomfortable red shoes at that time aggravated my condition. My left and right knee swelled alternately. I thought that I would forever be unable to crouch and have normal functioning knees because of my age. I managed to adapt by enduring the pain. I hardly practiced the knee-strengthening exercises advised by my orthopedic surgeon. I'm sorry, Doc Sonny O! Those were the days I felt so old and incapable of doing any physical work or activity. I was resigned to accept that this came with maturity. My self-pity shot up and my self-esteem went the opposite way.

I didn't have much self-confidence reserves stashed away from my past. Although I was an above average student, I have never believed in myself. No matter what accomplishments or awards I got, it seemed to be insignificant in terms of how critical I was with regards to my looks. I was a dark, skinny, and boyish teenager compared to my mestiza-looking classmates who were articulate in the English language. Looking back, I could have never imagined myself managing teams of different nationalities in a leading airline, and be confident in dealing with issues onboard while engaging passengers from all walks of life.

Before I left my comfort zone, it took a lot of courage to venture into a new life alone in a foreign land. Despite the discouragement that I heard from some family members and friends, I still decided to go against the tide. Aside from the selfless support given by my spouse, I counted on an inspiring utterance made by an ex-colleague, the late Dawn Muñoz. She simply said, "*Your light will shine.*" I brought this with me as I left for the land of the Arabs. And every time I would realize a

dream, no matter how big or small, she would cross my mind. I wish I could have had the chance to tell her personally how much her words made a difference in my life.

Change is tough. It is also scary. But we must remember that self-reliance is one of the most important ingredients to success. Regardless of what changes we may face in life, by choice or by fate, knowing that you can weather the storms will make you rise above the circumstances. We all have the power to survive and consequently serve as a guiding light to others. And by being a light to others, the more radiant our light will become. We all have our innate purpose in this world. We all have a mission in this life that only you and I as unique individuals can give.

We are body, mind, and spirit entwined with wellness. Our wellness in turn affects our self-esteem and also our emotional and mental states that reflect significantly on our physical appearance and affect our overall behavior. It is never too late for us to remind ourselves that we need extra care and attention for us to be constantly well. I regret that I didn't realize this sooner. It's sad that most of the time, a dramatic event has to happen in our lives before we recognize that whatever bit of sacrifice we do to avoid a serious sickness or disease will always be worth the effort. Like they say in French, *"Mieux vaut prévenir que guérir."* (It is better to prevent than to heal.)

No one is too old to start. I know that some might require extra energy, time, and resources before they can embark on this lifestyle change. But I can assure you that whatever will be asked of you will be worth it. You will greatly appreciate the fruits of your labor and will continue harvesting them along the way. It's time for you to realign your vision and start reassessing old habits and behavior. Each time the sun rises is a sign that we are

given another day to live and another chance to make our life better and brighter. I don't believe in coincidence. All things happen for a reason. And I know that having this book in your hands is a reminder that you are born to rise and shine.

Chicago, Illinois



CHAPTER 3

A Blessing or a Curse

I GREW UP IN A VERY CONSERVATIVE FAMILY. MY DAD IS A retired airline captain and my mom never worked a day in her life. I am the eldest of three and the only princess in the brood. My dreams were a bit absurd and diverse when I was a little girl. At some point, I wanted to become a nun, which I declared openly, then secretly wished to become a beauty queen. I was able to achieve both halfway. I ended up with a career that's popular among beauty pageant participants and titleholders. At the same time, I became a lay communion minister in the Catholic Church and an active member and resource speaker of Charismatic communities. The combination of these two lifestyles probably created a balance in my life, while struggling to manage an acceptable level of materialistic tendencies and finding time to constantly nourish my spirituality.

As I write this chapter in the comforts of my hotel room in Paris, I am bombarded by a series of unfortunate events in the news channel: a devastating typhoon in the Philippines, casualties in Vietnam and Southern China, an earthquake in Indonesia, a cyclone in Somalia, flooding in Iraq, failure of

peace deals in Congo and violent protests in Poland. It seems like the world is getting to its end. So why bother thinking of our health. *“Despues de los años mil, torna el agua a su carril.”* (In a hundred years we will be dead anyway.) Let’s just drink and eat what we want and die happy. I’ve been observing this kind of common mindset since time immemorial, particularly with regards to vices like smoking and alcohol, as well as binge eating, addiction to sweets, junk food, fried fatty food, and so on and so forth. But do these things bring us real happiness? Or do they eventually lead us to a life of misery and bring burden to our loved ones?

Every day we make choices, good and bad. The choices that we made have brought us to where we are now. And the choices that we make from now on will dictate where we will be in the future. We can choose to look at events that happen in our lives with optimism or join the band of “negaholics” who focus on what’s going wrong in the world.

In 2009, I was asked to represent our chapter in a mini-beauty pageant as part of the anniversary celebrations of our Charismatic community. I’ve never imagined myself indulging in such kind of a contest in my 40s. It ended up though to be very wholesome and unexpectedly fun. The pageant’s theme was sports. I was pressured to come up with a unique and creative costume within two days. But all the common and easy ones were already taken. So I decided to wear a gym outfit, not knowing that I would really be addicted to going to the gym in a few years time. I made a huge barbell using a mop handle that I painted silver and huge paper plates wrapped in foil. It looked so real that everyone was flabbergasted when I lifted it with one hand on the stage. The question and answer portion was a bit unconventional. They would show a picture on a huge

screen and we would have to share how we perceived what we saw. The first few photos were quite positive, pertaining to life events. After listening to the views of those who answered ahead of me, my heart started pounding harder than ever. I've always had difficulty speaking onstage and I would always volunteer to go first if given the chance so as not to prolong my agony. Unfortunately this time, I was the last. When it was my turn, they showed a man paddling a small wooden boat with a house submerged in water and a stop sign behind him. It was a picture of flood, the aftermath of a storm. I said, "We can always see things as a blessing or a curse. And what I see is a survivor."

We all have a survival instinct. The lifestyle change that I am encouraging you to embark on will bring you to a comfortable zone where you can enjoy life to the fullest. Prevention will always be better than cure. This will extend your time as long as possible from shifting to survival mode. Premature death is so common nowadays due to negligence of healthy eating habits and physical exercise, denial of deteriorating physical states and stubbornness to follow medical advice. We all know what is good for us. But lethargy and poor time management of our daily responsibilities prevent us from entertaining the idea of doing what we should do. What we do not think of is that the healthier we become, the more capable we will be to cope successfully with all the demands of everyday life. This will give us more energy to be more productive and at the same time avoid sickness brought about by the different kinds of stresses that attack our body. It's also been proven that exercise releases happy hormones that give us a joyful spirit, which is essential for confronting our problems with optimism and hope.

We must learn to look at things that matter most. Setting your priority straight is important. If you have a tendency to be

a workaholic, know that whatever you have deprived your body of will be asked of you later in life.

Despite the fact that flying is physically taxing, I still loved my job and I feel so blessed to have seen a lot of things that most people would never get the chance to see. Next to astronauts, we are probably the only ones who have constantly seen the magnificent view of the world from above, bathed in the sun or beneath the sparkling stars. Witnessing the dance of thunderbolts and lightning among the mushroom clouds in the sky is a privilege for a few who chanced the route at an opportune time. I will cherish those sceneries that even the most expensive cameras cannot give justice to once you've seen them with your very own eyes. Our magnanimous universe is proof that there will always be a silver lining beneath the dark and dreary events that happen in our lives because of the mistakes that we make. So if things don't go as planned, keep in mind that the universe will always have a plan B, which may even be better than your plan A. And that's what we call blessings in disguise.

Paris, France



CHAPTER 4

Your Vision Is Your Mission

AS I ENTER OUR FIT2FLY GYM IN ABU DHABI, A WONDERFUL facility for our airline employees, I start eyeing the different personalities doing their own little thing. One British flight crew, whom I haven't seen for sometime, is on the treadmill doing her sensuous prance, showing off her perfectly formed triceps and deltoid muscles while doing some stretches with her towel. An Indian ground staff who appeared to have just given birth as emphasized by her unusual bulging abdomen is on the other side of the room. The fitness trainer is holding a piece of paper, which seems to be a program designed for her to get back into shape. On the other corner of the room are two effeminate South Africans having fun with heavy metals trying their best to spot each other while doing some weight training. It's amusing how each individual is pushed to go to a place to do similar activities yet have varied intentions. We all have different dreams, goals, and wants in life. And there lies within the motivating factors that propel us to start off our engines and race toward them.

As I start doing my interval training on the treadmill, the other four machines beside me start filling up. At the far end, a Filipino whom I recognize as a gym rat, is running at a faster pace than usual. Beside him is another crew member who's been

jumping in and out of his own race by doing intermittent weight and cardio training. Beside me is a young female, who doesn't appear to be working out much, but seems to be alternating body weight exercises on the mat and intending to use up all the cardio machines. She is running at seven km/h, but will hang on the side railings with a hop every once in awhile. The guy beside her glances with an amused smile. Everybody seems to be having fun doing his or her own style. I can compare each one of us to a hamster running on a wheel not knowing what's going on inside its head. Nevertheless, whatever they're musing about, no matter how relevant or important it is to what they're doing, it helps them continue to run and just keep going.

Years ago, I learned from Bo Sanchez, one of my favorite Filipino authors, to write down all my dreams in life. I had totally forgotten about it until I saw a rolled piece of paper inserted in a miniature urn, collecting dust in a shelf at home. As I opened it, I rediscovered my visions in life at five-year intervals starting at age 25. What's amazing is that those goals have become and are becoming a reality. Even without seeing that list, I have subconsciously imprinted at the back of my head what I wanted and worked my way toward realizing those plans. The hurdles that I have encountered along the way haven't been significantly detrimental for me not to grab hold of my ambitions one at a time. Napoleon Hill is right, *"You can be anything you want to be if you only believe with sufficient conviction and act in accordance with your faith; for whatever the mind can conceive, believe the mind can achieve."*

When I was in preparatory school, I kept on thinking why people wasted their time selling goods that they also bought from someone else. I had no clue what the exchange entailed and what profit was all about. As I graduated with my

bachelor's degree, I started wondering who in the world would give me money in return for my services. I felt incapable and incompetent to perform any kind of job and much more, receive compensation. So many questions and doubts filled my mind as I tried to fathom the principle behind labor and wages. I have been brought up in a way where I have learned more about values than how to earn a living. Although my life as a flight attendant wasn't the most ideal in terms of career growth, I had no regrets taking this path as each day was spent significantly to make me who and what I am today.

The opportunity to advance in another airline may have come quite late, as I am the oldest cabin crew from my previous airline to leave and start again from ground zero. Although I have made my way up quite quickly, it has been a rough climb. But I have proven that it's never too late to create new ambitions, change directions, and start anew. Keep in mind that as long as you know where you want to go, the "getting there" part will fall into place and the results will simply follow. After all, the lessons you learn throughout the race are as valuable as the prize that you receive at the finish line.

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates





PART TWO

Aim High

*“The greatest gift you can give yourself is to
believe that you can soar.”*

There are so many success stories of men and women in all of history. And the essence of their journeys is what propels them to achieve their dreams and exhaust all their T's — time, talent, and treasure to get there.



CHAPTER 5

Maximum Altitude

AIRCRAFT WERE BUILT WITH A CAPACITY TO CRUISE AT A CERTAIN maximum level. As for humans, I believe we create a similar version in terms of our life goals and we can only fly as high as our perceived ability. While we can dream bigger and greater, we tend to put a limit to our belief that we can only do so much due to a lack of confidence and maybe even hope. I encourage you that when you set your ambitions, aim high. But don't forget to bring a parachute so that in case you fall, you won't hit the ground with a big thud. You might even get lucky and end up on higher terrain, which will provide you better leverage next time you take off.

When I joined Etihad Airways, my goal was to become a cabin manager or more commonly known as purser in other airlines. While I started again from scratch, taking up *Abinitio* courses alongside fresh university graduates, the greatest challenge was to unlearn all the procedures that I knew from my previous airline. It was like rebooting my whole system and switching software from Microsoft to Apple. Nevertheless, within six months after my graduation, I was able to get this position through patience and proper mindset. The airline was operating for only four years when I joined, a toddler compared to numerous established carriers around the world. But this

didn't stop the company from declaring its ambitious goal to be the best in the industry. When I heard this, I knew that a huge responsibility would fall upon the shoulders of all its employees. True enough, we were pushed to put our best foot forward and constantly raise the bar, while keeping an eye on our performance and behavior. Without any choice, each one of us adapted to the system and accepted that we were capable of doing what was asked of us. We were given sufficient training and resources to use as our tools to cope with the high level of expectations. And I'm proud to say that as of this writing, *World Travel Awards* has recognized Etihad Airways as the "Best Leading Airline" for the nth time running, and its cabin crew team has received prestigious awards for the company throughout the years.

As I drink a cup of *Sencha* green tea in my cozy little room at The Intercontinental Hotel in Sao Paulo, I am inspired to review the dreams that I have set for myself in my career and personal life. I ask myself, *"Is my dream grand enough? Will it be my source of happiness? Will it bring me the right kind of fulfillment? Is this the plan that God has for me and my family?"* I have great and noble aspirations, with emphasis on the "s" because as an artist, my inventive mind will not allow me to stick to only just one. There will always have to be an "and" one after the other. I am thrilled though that I manage to link each one, though it might be viewed as diverse activities in a different perspective.

There are so many success stories of men and women in all of history. And the essence of their journeys is what propels them to achieve their dreams and exhaust all their T's — time, talent, and treasure to get there. I know that the appropriate means will present itself to help you get to your end goal. For me, there's no such thing as failure. We may choose a longer or more challenging path, but no matter what, the only variable

is how long it will take to get there. Even so, each step of the journey is going to be a learning process, which means that it will always be a win-win situation. Superstars aren't just born. It takes blood, sweat, and tears to get to where they are. Along with all the hard work and determination comes the patience to be a winner.

So what do all these things have to do with wellness? Achieving optimal health is not a joke. Before you can come up with a plan, you need to have a goal. You have to identify your own *Energizer* to keep you going and going and going. You need to discover your own unique motivator that will keep you running on that inclined treadmill and adding reps to your crunches. And most importantly, discern and recognize what will boost your determination to say "no" to all those lovely cupcakes that keep on calling, while having afternoon tea with your girlfriends. The bottom line is to know what you want by setting your most favorable altitude, so you can start revving up your engine, take off, and reach your destination without encountering any system failure that may push you to an unforeseen diversion.

Sao Paulo, Brazil

When you're doing it alone in your quest to wellness, it's going to be quite a struggle to maintain a "safe" motivated level. This is the comfort zone where you're assured that you won't give up and throw in the towel at any time.



CHAPTER 6

Trot. Don't Walk.

STUDIES SAY THAT BRISK WALKING BURNS THE SAME AMOUNT OF calories as running. Aside from the fact that it's a more practical and popular form of exercise for many people, it also provides less impact on your heels and knees. By all means walk, jog, crawl if you want to, as long as you enjoy what you're doing while breaking a sweat to remove the nasty cholesterol in your body.

Asking you to trot is an invitation for you to be on your toes, to keep that fire within you burning. I'm sure that you have noticed that when you're surrounded with people who are highly active, enthusiastic, and passionate with what they're doing, their energy simply rubs off on you like a contagious disease. Let me share with you an example. As standard airline procedure, we start our flights with a briefing. Our team will gather in one room, make introductions, and the purser will share relevant flight information and discuss issues on how to achieve the set goals for the flight prior to the captain's arrival. Our cabin crew complement is comprised of more than a hundred different nationalities and we hardly work with the same people for every flight. So you can just imagine the various kinds of energy bubbles that engulf the team as dictated not only by each culture, but also by diverse personalities. The greatest

challenge is to unify these differences and create a group that is highly motivated, proactive, and goal-oriented as quickly as possible. There are days when you get lucky, when there is a Ms. or Mr. Congeniality who can break the ice and at the same time set the tone for everyone on a very positive note even before you arrive. But there are times when there will be a rotten apple with a worm trying to eat its way to the good ones nearby. Through the years, I have developed the skill of smelling decaying fruit the moment I step inside a briefing room. Not only do I keep an eye on them to make sure their worms don't wriggle out and infect others, I also spray it with an insecticide or step on it before it ruins the team spirit. I'm kidding, but the bottom line is that we don't need to be around anyone who will slow us down.

When you're doing it alone in your quest to wellness, it's going to be quite a struggle to maintain a "safe" motivated level. This is the comfort zone where you're assured that you won't give up and throw in the towel at any time. Running will keep your pace at high gear and in case you slow down a bit, you will still have enough momentum to go back on track. While it is highly recommended to have a support group, I can assure you that as soon as you have achieved that appropriate pace, it will be an easy jog regardless if you're with or without anybody giving you a pat on the back every now and then. Keeping the right tempo will become a responsibility not only to yourself but also to other people you have inspired. The challenge is to be creative and resourceful enough to stay up and running so that boredom won't catch up on you. Set the beat at a high rhythm and keep your heart pumping. Dance, don't sway, or just like we did in the 70s, *"Let's boogie!"*

Narita, Japan



CHAPTER 7

Layover

WELLNESS IS NOT ALL ABOUT DIET AND EXERCISE. IT'S A HOLISTIC approach to having good health, a happy disposition, and a great sense of fulfillment. It is living a well-balanced life, being able to satisfy every aspect of your being to maximize your existence. It is giving attention not only to your body but also to your mental, spiritual, emotional, and even financial health. That's why it is important that you give enough time for rest and relaxation. Without it, you might create more harm than good on your well-being.

I just came back from a 15-day Christmas break. I knew it was going to be the busiest time of the year and the busiest time for my stomach with all the parties, buffets, get-togethers, afternoon teas, and midnight meals. These were days of nonstop chitchatting with family and friends while sipping and munching the time away. Food that I haven't seen for a year are presented before my feasting eyes and for the holidays' sake, I gobble them up along with all the excuses I could think of. These celebrations didn't mean no more workouts. I was able to shoot a few hoops, experimented on a slow jog while maneuvering a pair of five-pound dumbbells, and bonded with my new favorite primitive cardio gadget, a handy-dandy jump rope.

My approach to a healthy lifestyle doesn't mean foregoing tea and cheesecakes with girlfriends for the rest of my life. Neither does it mean enjoying the company of loved ones on the dinner table while resisting mom's home cooked *kare-kare* and crispy *liempo*. It is being able to live life as normal as possible without being a killjoy during special occasions. We also need to find time for all these revelries to ensure that our relationship tanks are kept full, which is essential in giving us the simple joys that make us all tick. But time for R&R (rest and relaxation) is earned. It is not served on a silver platter. You have to be in tip-top shape, with room to spare, before you immerse yourself in such festivities.

As soon as I have reached my target, I am able to reward myself every so often with some of my favorite treats. I do not quite have a sweet tooth and am actually a moody person when it comes to chocolates and desserts. I don't crave for it and can easily say no most of the time. It will probably be harder for me to stay away from chips, a very good friend of my belly. But I am able to once again taste all these as soon as I am down to my "fighting weight." The first three months are the hardest. It is when cheating is unacceptable. It is crucial to have zero sugar, salt, and oil. But don't worry, you will be able to taste them again after a bit of sacrifice.

Before I left for my vacation, I did the *Insanity* workout for a month, which I was able to use one hole less on my uniform belt. This was my go signal to splurge and indulge, though still in moderation, during the holiday season. It was truly a Merry Christmas for my excited tummy.

Discipline and perseverance are the tools that you need, along with the belief that you can change your futile habits. If you keep in mind that lethargy and cravings are temporary and

that there will be rewards in the end, it will be easier for you to stay on track. Always focus on the long-term benefits when you're tempted to go back to your old behavior and mindset. And once you're there, I assure you that you will not do anything that will put all your hard work and efforts to waste. The harder it takes, the longer it stays. Push! Before you know it, your much-awaited holiday is just around the corner.

En route to Abu Dhabi, Seat 11A





PART THREE

Crew Resource Management

“Team works!”

Our mind is a very powerful tool that we can use to achieve anything. It's a matter of choosing what to think. You can opt to think 'it's difficult,' 'it's crazy,' 'it's not going to work.' But you can also decide to think that it's possible.



CHAPTER 8

No Excuses

“KUNG GUSTO MO, MAY PARAAN. KUNG AYAW MO, MARAMING dahilan.” (If you want it, you’ll find a way. Otherwise, you’ll find a lot of excuses.) This is so true in every aspect of our lives. Our moving force is the intensity of our desire to achieve or acquire something we earnestly want. And this is not strong enough, we will always find a million reasons not to move.

My husband and I were born from different poles. My expectations of him used to be unrealistic from his point of view, which resulted to unnecessary debates that turned into petty quarrels. I had to learn the hard way. It came to a point where I decided that whatever I wanted in life, I would have to work hard and earn it myself. I started to believe that I should not expect anyone, not my spouse nor my parents, to bestow my dreams all boxed-up, tied with a fancy ribbon, and ready to be opened by a spoiled brat. From that time on, I found myself creating my own reality. I went into various kinds of entrepreneurial activities, purposefully honing my talents and skills, learning from my mistakes, and using these failures to get better and smarter.

Excuses are for those who are lazy. Pardon me for being blunt, but I believe this to be so true. It is for those who have no

sense of purpose and are just content with what they have and what they are at the present moment, as dictated by indolence. This is not what life is all about. It is about discovering something new each day. It is realizing your uniqueness and ability to make a difference in the lives of the people around you. So why make an excuse if you know that you're capable of creating something remarkable with what you possess? Our bodies are amazing machines, from our brains to our toes. We are equipped with complex systems which are capable of strengthening old parts, repairing damaged areas, and fighting foreign invaders. If only we could maximize the capacity of each and every component of our being and constantly use it to our advantage to create a healthier and better version of what we are each day, then we could have that sense of satisfaction in everything we do.

Exercise is one of the top exploits which people find all the excuses not to accomplish. Lack of time is the common reason offered. However, time is the only thing in this world I can think of that is given fairly to each and every individual aside from gravity. We all have 24 hours each day. You won't get a single extra second no matter how rich you get. It's up to you how you can maximize time to your advantage. Getting organized may be a cinch, while the hard part for most is the implementation. So many people make exercising and dieting their New Year's resolution, but they get stuck with just declaring it and writing it down. Come December, they're back to square one, having done nothing at all. So what seems to be the problem? The answer is with utmost certainty a lack of commitment and effort. If one cannot execute a plan or a goal, failure is inevitable.

Our mind is a very powerful tool that we can use to achieve anything. It's a matter of choosing what to think. You can opt to think 'it's difficult,' 'it's crazy,' and 'it's not going to work.'

But you can also *decide* to think that it's possible. That first step will make the difference. No manner of appropriate exercise will suffice unless you choose to make it a part of your system. No amount of diet will ensure weight loss unless you choose to eat the right food. Chances are you already know what is suitable and what is not. It's a matter of opting in.

Knowledge, precise information and clear inspiration leads to the proper mindset, thus enabling us to change bad habits and create new and healthy ones. As Henry Ford once said, "*Whether you think you can or you think you can't — you're right.*"

Long Island, New York

Offloading does not only pertain to social relations. We need to leave a lot of excess baggage that may slow us down. What we also do not need are harmful attitudes and beliefs that will be detrimental to achieving our goals.



CHAPTER 9

Offload Analysis

WE HAD A SYSTEM IN PLACE WHICH ENABLED OUR STAFF on the ground to provide a better way of identifying the preferences of our customers, so as to give sufficient and accurate resources inflight to satisfy their needs. I'm sure that all companies which are service providers have a similar procedure. Regular clientele are the backbone of successful businesses. Thus, while products must be readily available to suit their requirements; unfavorable ones should be offloaded.

It goes the same with our lives. It may be as simple as getting rid of people and things around us that do not contribute to our well-being. We must choose with regard to who and what must remain in our inner circle. One of my life's principles is to readily keep distance if someone or something brings out the worst in me.

Offloading does not only pertain to social relations. We need to leave a lot of excess baggage that may slow us down. What we also do not need are harmful attitudes and beliefs that will be detrimental to achieving our goals. Pessimism and doubts for instance have no room in our brains. We must replace them with a strong conviction, partnered with a can-do attitude. Substitute fear with perseverance, tenacity, and determination. All these will assist us to overhaul our behavior to produce an outcome

that will be favorable in the end. And again, we have to remove the deficiency syndrome and adapt a mentality of abundance. We must believe that our time, resources, knowledge, and skills are more than enough to face the obstacles in our crusade to health and happiness.

Successful people know that the key to winning is to be surrounded by other people who can push them towards victory. Recently, I have been inundated with the idea of creating a dream advisory team. Without the right mentors, it would be a herculean task to carry out an effective master plan. Aside from them, a support group that will encourage and carry you to your limits is also essential in creating an environment that is enlivened and inspired. These are friends, family members, and peers who have the same outlook as you do.

As I've mentioned earlier, developing sufficient self-confidence was hard to attain during my younger years. I used to have serious stage fright and it was a challenge to overcome my feelings of inferiority. Although, I was an above average student, being brought up in a middle-income family didn't give me the advantage of being clubby, much less fluent in English. Communicating effectively was my Waterloo. My language proficiency *could* have been adequate, but my way of thinking dictated that I was incapable of being spontaneous and grammatically correct at the same time. I was so scared of being laughed at and being looked down upon. I couldn't have imagined myself having managed diverse individuals without inhibitions at all. Becoming a resource speaker in my church community and being a part of my company's leadership and development team was beyond my wildest dreams.

Confidence is brought about by the loving acceptance of oneself, which is the true essence of what wellness is all about.

We must first identify the things that we are not, so we may be able to get rid of them and strip ourselves down to our core — which is our perfect self.

Here are 12 things to keep in mind while preparing for your journey to wellness:

- Unload any form of anxiety.
- Unpack and leave demotivating thoughts.
- Keep a towel for your sweat and tears.
- Make no room for apathy.
- Eliminate distractions and focus.
- Doff past mistakes, but remember them for learning purposes.
- Stow away your vague lenses; use your heart and mind instead.
- Leave your worries and doubts somewhere you can't find them.
- Embargo *negaholics*.
- Take pain to gain and leave behind the complaints.
- Dispose all signs of lethargy.

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates



CHAPTER 10

Dodos

DODOS ARE EXTINCT FLIGHTLESS BIRDS FOUND IN MAURITIUS up until the 17th century. They are also what we call bald pilots-to-be who are still learning how to fly.

Before I could call myself a wellness angel, there had to be someone I needed to be a guardian to. Why? Mind you, in the ladies world, just about anyone aspiring to have a body of a diva would be willing to do anything. So, these two were my first subjects.

Let me introduce to you my first Dodo, Normelyn, a mother of a 10-year-old kid, gorgeous, seductive-looking with a well-endowed upper body. She wanted to get back in shape after gaining more than 10 kilos due to excessive eating and lack of exercise. At 5'5" and with an endomorph body type, she deemed her apple-shaped structure as unappealing with respect to a lot of fashion styles. Although, she is blessed to not have any problem with her arms and legs, her biggest challenge was how to get rid of those back fats, which most women find so hard to remove.

My other Dodo was Micah, a mother of two, soft-spoken, amiable, and very charming. While you won't find anything wrong with her torso, she considered her hips and saddlebags

the most frustrating parts of her body. She had an incessant craving for sweets, which is the number one culprit in storing ugly fats in the most unlikely places in a woman's physique. Overcoming her sweet tooth was not a very sweet struggle she had to face.

All I needed to do was to show them the light at the end of a dark tunnel. I gave them not just a little push, but a big shove to ultimately do the trick. Results were realized and obvious, but sustaining their efforts without their wellness angel would be an ongoing challenge.

Finally, as they say, charity begins at home. I asked my son to write his unique experience as a flightless chick with his own mother hen and I would like to share his reflection with you.

Crunch Time Realizations

By Mikey Alberto

During the first semester of my third year in college, I absolutely had no time to exercise — at least that's what I wanted to believe. Ploughing through countless papers and exams, I constantly reassured myself that not exercising was perfectly justifiable. I had convinced myself that "being busy with school" was a legitimate excuse. This mentality was quite chronic in the sense that whenever I had free time, I would always choose leisure over sweat by playing online games or catching up with the latest anime episodes. Exercise was not a priority. However, when Christmas break came around, my ignorance stabbed me in the back.

One evening, I was busy enlisting for classes in preparation for the following semester. I made sure to account for all the assigned courses listed in the curriculum — excluding P.E. My

mom had just arrived from Abu Dhabi a few days back. On the night of her arrival, after she had already finished expertly unpacking her things, she asked me if I wanted to join her for some home exercise. I paused and caught myself thinking. In a moment's time, I realized I could no longer procrastinate engaging in any form of physical activity as the break was sure to *heavily* penalize me. And so, I accepted my mom's offer.

I got into a set of exercise clothes which were very *pambahay* (home clothes), and after a few minutes of stretching, we laid our backs down on the living room floor. Using the sofa as counterweight, we started our routine with some full sit-ups. My mom asked if 150 reps were OK with me. I nodded, albeit reluctantly, still somewhat confident that I was capable of the feat. Getting into position, I took a deep breath and off I went.

About a third of the sit-ups done, I couldn't believe that my core was already worn out. I looked over to the side and saw that my mom was still keeping constant pace. Seeing this was quite a blow to my "youthful" ego, but doing any more sit-ups would also be detrimental to my supposedly "youthful" body. After I let out a disappointing sigh, I stopped and took a minute break. I told myself, "*Bawi na lang ako sa push-ups and squats.*" (I'll make up for my substandard performance when we do push-ups and squats). I repositioned myself toward the other side of the room and began to reclaim my self-esteem. In the end, I had done around 50 full sit-ups, push-ups, and squats respectively. I thought that it wasn't really bad for someone who'd been physically negligent for the last couple of months. I stood up, planted my buttocks on a nearby chair, and caught my breath.

Suddenly, my chest started to tighten, I started to go deaf, as my sight gradually turned fuzzy forcing me to breathe slowly

but intensely. Deep breathing helped but it wasn't able to stop me from ultimately losing my lunch. "*Nagsuka si Mikey!* (Mikey vomited!)" my mom shouted. My dad immediately put on a face saying, "*I ain't cleaning that up.*" My mom rolled her eyes but still acceded to his unwillingness. As she prepared for cleanup duty, I was still in a light-headed state, mulling over what had just happened.

"My mom is at least three times busier than me, but she still has the time for regular exercise."

Fast-forward to the point when Lysol had already been sprayed, and my feet had already been washed, I lay in bed contemplating two things:

One, there is simply *no excuse* not to exercise — because as the old saying goes, "If there's a will, there's a way."

And two, I should probably enlist in a P.E. class.

Pasig, Philippines



CHAPTER I I

The Captain

IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY, A CAPTAIN IS A SENIOR PILOT WHO is in-charge of the aircraft. One day, the airline management asked us to refer to this position as the “commander.” However, due to operational requirements, there were instances whereby two commanders were called to operate the same flight, and one of whom is assigned as pilot-in-command.

In this journey to wellness, there will only be one commander — that’s you. You are in control; you make the final decisions; and you are fully accountable. You are in-charge of a vessel that is far more valuable than any Dreamliner or any magnanimous Airbus 380 that has ever soared.

As a flight attendant, it has been engraved in our heads that safety is our number one priority. Service is just secondary. We would divert to Timbuktu if it meant saving the life of an individual, regardless of costs to the airline, and inconvenience to the rest of our 400 passengers. If this is how each crew values the well-being of every individual onboard,

how much more must we value ourselves?

Now that we have clearly identified our roles as captains of our respective ships, it is time to move on and meet the other members of the flight team.

Deadheading to Singapore



CHAPTER 12

Group Hug

“LET’S DO THIS!” OUR SLOGAN GOES.

The first circle of friends that bolstered my lifestyle change was a group of Benedictine Abbey School batchmates.

It’s amazing how a single drop of stone could create a ripple effect over a body of water. We found our special wellness inspiration from our fellow high school batchmate who was a cancer victim and left us during our quest. Through him we realized the importance of our health more than anything else. For what we have learned, Ranny, we would be forever grateful.

We came up with our own *Biggest Loser*, Facebook edition on our batch’s group page and called up willing participants. Although only a handful of us were crazy enough to commit, it was a fun and amusing way to change our lifestyles. Our personal journals were our posts on the page wall. It was a free-for-all, stone-throwing event for anyone who was not keeping up with the rest. Surprisingly, it didn’t turn out that way. Instead, constructive feedback and inspiring words were shared. This gave each one of us the perseverance and motivation to go through the challenge for three months. And we’re proud to say that this event has already made it all the way to a third sequel.

This experience taught me to maximize my creativity, and

not be afraid to lean on friends for support when needed. Kudos to the core members of this amazing team!

Here are a few of the notable individual contributors to this remarkable group.

The One

Salvador from San Diego, California

Sal's the eloquent one. He walks the talk. He's the one true mentor. After this group endeavor, he didn't stop in his wellness quest and became a gym rat.

So I asked for his two cents. He eagerly shared snippets of his experiences as they relate to the wellness principles that I am so passionate about.

Read more out about his life-long fitness journey in the penultimate chapter.

The Bully

Arthur from Los Angeles, California

We call him Max. He evolved from a grade school bully to a respected police officer, crime fighter, and became our primary motivator. We named one workout that he had taught us after his alias, MDQ, which stands for Maxi Doodle Quickie. It includes burpees, squats with tricep kickbacks, shoulder presses, bicep curls, and mountain climbers. It is a highly effective 15-minute, full body workout for all those busy bees. For starters, you can do eight repetitions of each for three sets. And for those who can do more, good for you! You can research these activities on the Internet.

The Gazelle Princess

Lea from Markham, Ontario

Lea was the first winner of our own version of the *Biggest Loser*. We were extremely motivated with the number of pounds that she had lost. As a result, she managed to lower her blood pressure thus avoiding reliance on maintenance medication. And just like her favorite exercise machine, the Gazelle glider, she transformed into one swift, slender, and charming looking creature.

The Lurker

Laarnie from Hercules, California

Although she had fallen off the bandwagon a number of times, she ultimately remained faithful to the group. This was after much pleading, prodding and persuading from everyone. Her turnaround showed how effective peer support can actually be. Through her perseverance, we realize that it is never too late to redefine one's quest for personal wellness.

To the rest of the *Biggest Loser*, *Facebook* edition team: Nolly, Eileen, Riz, Pepe, Mia, and Ronald, thank you for partaking in our unforgettable journey aboard the wellness train. And to those who popped in and out, the door's open so come on back in!

Together, let's shout out our mantra — "*Let's do this!*"

London, United Kingdom



CHAPTER 13

Airborne Muses

THERE ARE STILL A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT FACEBOOK FANS. They reason that social media creates more harm than good. But I believe otherwise. It depends on how you use it. It's just like weeding the crops. You have to make sure that you separate the good from the bad. Hats off to those who use Facebook to inspire others, knowingly or unknowingly. And to those who assimilate towards the darker side, intentionally or not, "Good luck!" What goes around comes around.

Facebook provides me with an unlimited source of inspiration, and ideas which keep me on the right track. In this chapter, I give tribute to special people who had brought me back up on the saddle when I was falling. They were the ones who brought some sense when I thought that my efforts meant nothing at all. They pushed me to my limits, as I saw them achieve so much more than I was personally striving for. I call them my airborne muses and I was their wellness stalker in the virtual world.

Caroline Diaz
Atlanta, Georgia



“We desire to bequeath two things to our children, the first one is roots, the other one, wings.” ~ Sudanese proverb

Caroline writes, “When I lost my mom unexpectedly, I was destroyed. Every truth I knew just made no sense. I was upset, angry, hurt, and lost. Somewhere along the way of madness, I realized I had to make a choice — a choice to live life or deaden myself to everything. I chose to live. I did everything I could to get myself out of a cold and empty space. Just like the Lotus flower that rises and grows out of the dirtiest water, I pushed through all the negativity and learned how to breathe again.”

Peace amidst chaos is what I have learned from Caroline as I witnessed her hectic lifestyle. She finds time to put quality

in everything she does, may it be for her kids or for herself. She exerts effort in making sure that every little detail contributes to creating precious memories, like integrating art into everyday *bentos* for her two sons. Her passion for photography shows her simple yet remarkable talent in capturing a millisecond of a perfect moment of an imperfect individual, young or old, alone or embraced. Her closeness to kids as she teaches yoga, while creating stillness in their highly spirited minds, gives us a complete understanding of the benefits of discipline and quiet time. Her beautiful aura simply exudes her calm and gentle soul.

Joey Pacheco

Pasig City



“Il riso fa buon sangue.”
Laughter makes good blood.
~ Italian proverb

Joey was my first mentor in flying. Despite his strict training methods, he manages to put a smile not only on the faces of his

trainees but also in their hearts. Through the years, his witty anecdotes and humor gave us reasons to find joy in the simplest things, even in the midst of rant or rage. Even his one-liners could make your day. Sharing freely his personal encounters makes me realize that nobody is ever free from struggle and no matter how much we try to elude, life's trickery seems to find a way to cross our path. What matters is how we are able to face it head on with a positive spirit. Joey inspires me, sometimes in a subliminal way, to be aware of our behavior and decisions no matter how great or small. It's funny how the food choices that he posts on his wall will make you stop and think if it's a tactic that he carries out to influence his friends to create new health habits. Despite this, it is also evident that he still prioritizes wellness regardless of how exacting his schedule may be. His inner joy is most likely the fountain of youth that keeps him young at heart.

Carol Bunagan
Quezon City, Philippines



“Keizoku wa chikara nari.”
Perseverance is power.
~ Japanese proverb

Raising a brood of four kids is never a joke for a mother who exemplifies a remarkable dedication to improve and develop her inner and physical strength. I have witnessed her transformation from her last birthing experience to who she is now. The uniqueness of her passion for vertical flex and antigravity yoga keeps me breathless as I immerse myself in the photos of her victories. There's no doubt that the strength she possesses is drawn from the very core of her being. The universe obviously orchestrated things to make her life centered on joy, peace and love.

Aileen Slivkoff
Aliso Viejo, California

**“Strength does not come from physical capacity.
It comes from indomitable will.” ~ Mahatma Gandhi**



I couldn't fathom that my cousin Aileen, the charming young cheerleader with pompoms who I used to visit in Los Angeles, was the same person I saw in the photo lifting huge barbells like a burly, tattooed hunk. Playing the flute, skating,

and doing cartwheels were among the unforgettable feats she introduced to me when we were younger. Lamentably, I have never engaged in them. It shouldn't have come as a surprise to me that she was into CrossFit, a high intensity circuit program for advanced fitness enthusiasts. Every time I read her advancement in this field, I'm left with nothing but *ooohs* and *aaahs*.

Fitness runs in her whole family, husband and two beautiful teenage daughters. “*Buon seme dá buoni frutti.*” (The fruit of a good tree is always good.)

Mary Anne Laverty

Phoenix, Arizona

“Non puoi insegnare niente a un uomo. Puoi solo aiutarlo a scoprire cio che ha dentro di se.”

You cannot teach a man anything, you can only help him find something that is already in him. ~ Galileo Galilei



*Photography by: Scott Turner
MUA: Dania Blanco*

On January 15, 2009, U.S. Airways Flight 1549 ditched at the Hudson River, right off Midtown Manhattan. Like a seagull, the A320 settled smoothly on the water, this crisis ending with zero fatalities.

Every time I recall this event, I remember Mary Anne. I wasn't too surprised that she flew for a company which became synonymous with "the miracle on the Hudson."

Mary Anne was my colleague at Philippine Airlines, and her story conveys that it's never too late to start your wellness journey no matter your state of affairs.

She has proven that even as a flight attendant, neither jet lag nor a nomadic lifestyle are valid excuses to turn a blind eye to maintain a healthy physique. She has raised the bar to a level, which I thought was quite unreachable. Her aspirations pushed her to create *Fit and Flying (FAF)*, a Facebook group for airline crew members who share in her quest for fitness. When I thanked her for being such an inspiration to myself and to many others, she replied with a quote from one of the bodybuilders she admires, "*We can only inspire others because something in them resonates with the passion they already have.*"

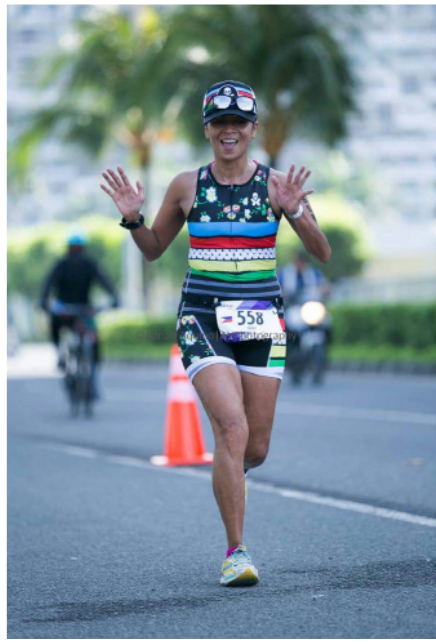
Then she added, "*So sweetie, it wasn't something I got nor did that inspired you. You had it all along. You just saw a mirror of it in me.*"

Mary Anne won first place in the Masters Bikini Category at the 2015 AZ Western Regionals Body Building Competition. As I was finishing this book, she bagged third place at the 2016 NPC (Natinoal Physique Committee) Teen Collegiate Masters National Body Building Competition, not to mention the other numerous titles she received in the recent years.

Patricia Halagueña
Alabang, Muntinlupa

“Qui n’avance pas, recule.”

Who does not move forward, recedes. ~ French proverb



What I thought would be a siphoning of information (a.k.a. interview) over lunch in a lovely Italian restaurant in Alabang turned out to be a series of realizations and learnings.

I never really had the chance to get to know Trixie that well when I was working with my previous airline. But seeing her after almost a decade, her 37 and a half years of flying didn't seem to take its toll on her incredibly fit physique. She's living proof that flight attendants age slower than other human

beings. I'm actually married to a Star Trek fanatic, so I'm still in the process of looking for evidence that time warp happens even when we only fly on airplanes. Kidding aside, despite the enormous stress that she went through as a flight purser for so many years, she came out with flying colors in terms of health, body structure, and lack of wrinkles. Her passion for running seemed to be her pixie dust to *Neverland*. I also discovered that she's vegetarian, munching more on raw and organic greens, rather than the hallowed food most just can't shun.

After witnessing the kind of lifestyle she lived, I saw that physical activity and proper diet were her secrets for looking young. Recalling our intimate lunch date, I remembered something quite determining. I have noticed that people who are happy and secure like Trixie like to tell tales with a giggle. Her zest for life is amazingly infectious. Her short stories are willed with words emanating from a truly joyful heart, eager to make a difference in the lives of others. Despite the fact that she recently ended her career as cabin crew, she quickly opened new doors leading to other opportunities to continue exploring what the world had to offer. Her latest endeavor *Aviair Aviation*, their family owned flight training schoool. She is, indeed, captain of her own ship.





PART FOUR

Seatbelt Sign Off

“Execute the flight plan.”

Accountability is the key. If there are other eyes watching, you will be more responsible in staying focused.



CHAPTER 14

Gravitophobia

IT IS SAID THAT ONE OF THE MOST COMMON FEARS IS THAT of public speaking. Probably because it is an offshoot of one of the three strongest human fears — failure. The other two are rejection and death. Stage fright was one of my greatest anxieties as I was growing up. Relating it to the fear of failure, it makes sense why it is so common: possibilities such as failing to touch your audience, failing to communicate effectively and spontaneously, and even failing to establish one's credibility, makes one afraid.

Only a year ago, I was surprised to discover my unusual fear of the weighing scale called *gravitophobia*. People who are into serious dieting and exercise can probably relate. When you didn't do too well the past few days in controlling your food intake and sticking to a rigid exercise program, the sight of the weighing scale will bring you much apprehension. Anticipating the unfavorable digits that could appear on that not-so-friendly but honest display might even cause a nervous breakdown. However, there's no other way to monitor one's progress except through measurements.

When I embarked on this wellness quest, the first term I learned was BMR or basal metabolic rate. I was already familiar with BMI or body mass index, since it was how airlines measure

the ideal biometrics of their crew. BMR became my partner in gauging whether my caloric intake was in excess of my daily requirement. Simply put, BMR is the number of calories that your body can burn without engaging in any physical activity. *Google* it, input some figures such as your height, weight, and age, and results are instantly calculated. I also use a website called *myfitnesspal* to check the calories of whatever food I eat each day. Their database is so huge that it shows most, if not all the local food varieties in different countries. The website helps me simplify what I eat by tracking calories, not minding much the sugar, cholesterol, or transfat content of my meals. More about my food journal in a later chapter.

The following equation representing diet and exercise seems to be the easiest and most practical way to go for those who want a straightforward quantitative way of losing weight:

$$(\text{Calorie intake} = \text{or} < \text{BMR}) + \text{exercise} = \text{weight loss}$$

Again, there's no other way to monitor weight loss without looking at numbers. So, I suggest that you step on that scale and start thinking how much of those kilos you are willing to part with. The most ideal time to weigh yourself is first thing in the morning. I advice that you strip down to your birthday suit, especially if you wear woolen jammies and thick fluffy socks when you sleep. Set a day of the week when you will have an appointment with the weighing scale. And that will be your official weekly weigh-in day.

Nevertheless, if you're within your weight range and just aiming to tone down areas of concern, then the weighing scale won't be the most reliable tool to check your progress. The reason is that muscles can weigh more than fats, thus, the figures might

just give you heartaches rather than motivation. Get a measuring tape instead, and take note of your vital statistics: waist, wrist, hips, neck, and forearm. You can check body fat percentage and waist-to-hip ratio including your BMI easily through online calculators. Just input the required measurements and the results will show the level of your fitness and possible health conditions related to obesity, if found beyond acceptable standards. Below are some charts which may help you.

Body Mass Index Interpretation [1]

Under 18.5	Underweight
18.5 – 24.99	Normal
25 – 29.9	Overweight

Body Fat Percentage [2]

Classification	Male	Female
Essential Fat	2% – 5%	12% – 15%
Athletes	6% – 13%	16% – 20%
Fitness	14% – 17%	21% – 24%
Acceptable	18% – 25%	25% – 31%
Obese	25% and more	32% and more

[1] <http://www.calculator.net/bmi-calculator.html>

[2] <http://www.calculator.net/body-fat-calculator.html>

Waist to Hip Ratio Chart [3]

Male	Female	Health Risk Based Solely on WHR
0.95 or below	0.80 or below	Low Risk
0.96 to 1.0	0.81 to 0.85	Moderate Risk
1.0+	0.85+	High Risk

So before you start making your plan of attack on those unwanted belly fats, know your figures. Write them down and visualize those pounds diminishing as the weeks go by. I assure you that any irrational fear of the bathroom scale will disappear in no time.

Paris, France

[3] <http://www.bmi-calculator.net/waist-to-hip-ratio-calculator/waist-to-hip-ratio-chart.php>



CHAPTER 15

Log It

I WAS ALL SMILES COMING OUT OF OUR MAILROOM PRIOR to my flight to Manila. I had just received the hard copy of my wellness coach certificate. It was so timely as I was flying with my Dodo, Normelyn. Holding the document made a difference even if I had officially earned it a few weeks ago. To see is to believe, as they say. It was my sign to move on and proceed to my next planned coaching modules.

I have my handy journal as a constant visual companion. My inputs help me visualize where I am, where I was, and most importantly, where I'm going. It compels me to be accountable to achieve the goals I have set, identify flaws, and correct any signs of lethargy. It helps me manage my time efficiently as well. Like magic, even if I have tons of errands on hand, it seems that my day expands when everything is all planned out and written down.

Now let me help you start your own journal, by suggesting that you record your initial statistics. Although your weight and waist measurements are the essential figures needed to keep track of your start off and improvement, there are other ways to ascertain how to begin. Let's consider what you've learned from the previous chapter and add some more. Again, the weighing scale, a tape measure, and access to the Internet will be really

handy. Now, in case you're also not a big fan of math, just type the following key words below in your search engine to look for various sites providing free:

1. BMI (Body Mass Index) calculator
2. Waist-to-Hip ratio calculator
3. Body Fat Percentage calculator
4. BMR (Basal Metabolic Rate) calculator
5. Target Heart Rate calculator

All these make up the platform from which you will take off. These numbers will counsel you on how you are doing. So, make sure that you keep them handy for easy reference anytime you need a little push.

For some it is tedious to be dragging a huge brown leather journal to write down every nitty-gritty of what's going on in their lives. But with all sorts of these gadgets, alternatives within our fingertips, there are numerous options for organizing. The bottom line is you need to organize your schedules, errands, workouts, meals, inspiring quotes, and any bright idea.

Here are some options to consider:

Old School

All I have to say is 'Dear Diary' and I'm sure you can figure out what comes next. You don't need to buy a pink laced notebook with a heart-shaped lock to make it really inspiring. That black or brown boring journal which is available in any bookshop at the start of each year will do the trick. Just make sure it's big enough to accommodate all the things running in your head.

Photoshoot

You don't need to be a writer to create an effective journal. I'm sure taking photos of food before you even start munching is not at all alien-sounding. Get a phone with good photo storage and you're good to go. Applications which enable you to add texts or layout options can be helpful as well. But make sure to choose a simple and easy tool so as not to take much of your time. Remember, you might as well be exercising than sitting down and editing pictures on your mobile.

Shout It Out

Accountability is the key. If there are other eyes watching, you will be more responsible in staying focused. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are just a few of these options. You can include photos with captions or even personal notes. I'm sure that you will be able to gain inspiration from the comments of your friends along the way. (Better yet, hire your very own wellness coach... ahem!)

The Motivator

If you have the passion for writing and have the willingness to allow sneak peeks of how you live your life to leak publicly and significantly inspire others, blogging is the way to go. There are a number of free websites that can produce substantial traffic to serve your purpose. Your effort wouldn't only help yourself, but it would also share some insights with others who have the same goals. This can create a pool of followers and supporters, which can even build a virtual wellness community.

These four options which I have mentioned are not the only ways to go. I'm sure there are a lot of other methods of journaling that you can think of and explore that will suit your

personality and way of life. So make sure to take time and give some thought before deciding on how you can organize your daily routine and underline proactive ideas to keep your enthusiasm revved up in the days to come.

Milan, Italy



CHAPTER 16

Duty Time

ZUMBA WAS MY FIRST LOVE. WE HAD AN AFFAIR FOR THREE weeks before our relationship started to get cold. I knew then that it was time to move on. I was a player for quite a while, romancing with Tae-Bo, Hip-Hop Abs, Yoga, and eventually getting it on with Insanity and P90X Workouts.

Having gone through all these programs, there were two attributes that I had learned, both required creativity and resourcefulness.

Interest

As the crew call it, DALPO — do all possible — to keep your interest nailed to the ground. Once you lose your enthusiasm, chances are you simply stop.

Immunity

After a few weeks of doing strength training exercise, we become immune to the physical stimulus of any program, and progress stops. That's why we need to tweak our routine all the time. While there are hundreds of videos on the net to help you create a program, having a coach or fitness trainer around will be an advantage. Here are some ideas that you can use to establish yourself on that runway. Initially, what is important is to create that positive habit. Keep in mind that one of the most

critical phases of flight is when the plane leaves the ground and starts flying.

Tic-Toc

Don't count, just look at the clock. This is a good workout to warm up for your strength training if you don't have any kind of cardio machine available. Make sure you get the rhythm right. Rest in between sets for approximately 90 seconds. Do this three times. The first couple of days will be challenging, but I assure you it gets easier. This is a 20-minute workout tops.

1 minute - jumping jacks

1 minute - knee-highs

1 minute - jump squats

1 minute - side skip and touch elbow to opposite knee

1 minute - side skip and touch the opposite foot

TV Addict

Enjoy your show while toning your core. Let's talk planking. Do the five types of planks while watching your favorite show. Don't forget to tighten your core while doing your planks. There's no time limit. Plank until you drop.

Forearm plank

Forearm side plank

Extended arm plank

Extended side plank

Tricep plank

Love to Dance

Zumba and *Hip-Hop Abs* are just a couple of instructional

video titles I watch and follow that make me sweat and at the same time allow me to express my love for dancing. They're both great for the waist, hips, and abs. Get in shape and try to get their latest copies.

Just Another MDQ

This is an advanced version of the MDQ (mentioned in a previous chapter). If you have a couple of dumbbells of at least 2 kgs at home, that'll be of great use. Otherwise, two 1.5 liters of water bottles will do. One minute for each variation, 3 sets with rest in between to recover your heart rate.

Squat thrusts

Squats with dumbbells triceps back kicks

Lunges with dumbbells biceps curl

Charlie Squats with dumbbell side raises

Cross Body Mountain Climber

All about Abs

Need I say more? This workout is all about strengthening your core.

Standard Crunches

Leg Scissors

Knees Up Crunches

Reverse Crunches

Flutter Kicks

Hip bridges

Reaching Oblique Crunches

Russian Twists

Toe touch Crunches

Sit-ups

All these exercises can be researched in the web. You can find a lot of photos and detailed instructions on how to do them right. So don't waste your time just going through the motions. Do them properly and make them worth your while.

Frankfurt, Germany



CHAPTER 17

Rest Period

I HAVE A SPECIAL SKILL THAT OTHER FLIGHT ATTENDANTS WISHED they had. I believe I got it from my dad who's a retired Boeing 747 Captain. We were probably born to be nomads, with an uncanny ability to adjust to ever-changing time zones. Now, I would like to zero in on the significance of resting your muscles in between workouts and being able to listen to your body and respond to its needs constantly.

It is vital to have a workout routine that will focus on different muscle groups each time. It takes a while before muscles recover especially with gym exercises. Cardio and stretching are the best complements during these rest periods. Being sensitive to each body part is essential to avoid any injury and to maximize toning your target muscle group. It would be detrimental to overwork your muscles although you'd want to achieve your goal faster. It is better to determine your stress tolerance and increase the intensity of your physical activity gradually. Be on guard though with exposing your body to too little stress or none at all, which might result in time wasted. That's why I have advised earlier the need for a journal to track your improvement and determine your strength and capacity. The most ideal weight loss for a slightly overweight individual is one pound a week. This will not only allow skin to tighten, but

will also provide less risk of gaining your pounds back.

Here are my foremost four Rs:

Recover

Flying ultra long flights is never a joke. Extended duty hours and exposure to the thinner atmosphere and the resulting pressurized cabin environment require us to recuperate upon arrival. That's why civil aviation authorities always have a say on the number of hours rest the crew would need to take at their outstation or home base before they can operate in another flight.

It is the same with exercise. When you provide your body with enough time to recover, you give it time to adapt to the aches and pains as a result of your strenuous activity. It is not easy for your body to deal with the stress it experiences during the onset of new physical exertion. So you have to make sure that you don't defeat the purpose of getting fit by causing your body more harm than good. If you have a fitness trainer, make sure that whatever related history you may have laid out before a program suited to your conditions and objectives is considered.

Restore

You have to make sure that you adequately replenish the energy you consume during a workout. While the basic energy sources of our body come from these three fuel molecules: carbohydrates, lipids, and protein, you must keep in mind that if you indulge in strength training exercises, muscle breakdown will occur, requiring amino acids — the building block of protein — to repair and build new ones. Our muscles contain 40% of the protein in the human body. We need to replenish our dietary protein to ensure that we have enough

of these exercise stimuli to induce muscle growth. There are a lot of protein shakes (which come in very handy after visiting the gym) available in the market. But for me, nothing beats honest to goodness protein sourced from real food such as lean meat, fish, and eggs. My personal favorites are chicken, turkey, salmon, dried fruits, and nuts to name a few.

Recharge

Make sure that you have adequate sleep. Eight hours of sleep is essential to cope with our normal day-to-day activities. As a member of the flight crew, I always say that we are forever in a state of jetlag. If only sleep debt earns interest, I'd probably be hibernating for a year. That's why I always tell the younger crew members to make sure that they get enough sleep before and after a flight. My sleeping record is actually 18 hours straight, no toilet and water breaks.

Studies prove that sleep deprivation has a negative impact on our immune system and brain functions, while having adequate sleep significantly increases aerobic endurance and optimizes performance which is critical for athletes. We may just be ordinary individuals trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle but we also need to have good rest to maximize our energy. Our behavior, productivity, and daily functions are highly dependent on the quality and quantity of snooze time we get.

Refuel

Our body mostly consists of water, ranging from 50-75%. Infants, however, have much higher water content.

They say you should practice what you preach. I am guilty as charged. I have to constantly push myself to drink water and other liquids to sustain a healthy fluid level in my

body. Like any ordinary machine, our body cannot run without proper fuel. Especially during workouts, we must be able to constantly replenish the liquid that our body loses when we perspire. I cannot stress enough the importance and benefits of drinking lots and lots of water. It hydrates our skin, which is the largest organ of the body. It maintains normal bowel functions. Water also aids in controlling calories. Instead of a high-calorie beverage, drink water instead. It's good for your health, period.

Recover, Restore, Recharge, and Refuel — do all four and you're ready for your takeoff roll.

Milan, Italy



CHAPTER 18

Juicing Up the Crew Meal

WHO DOESN'T WANT TO EAT? WE ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD TO culinary adventures when we travel. We look to indulge in the most authentic local cuisine as much as possible. But you don't order pasta in Johannesburg or steak in Milan, nor will you order bulgogi in Japan and sashimi in Korea. Rather, the moment I arrive in Bangkok, Tom Yum Kung and Thai fried rice are musts on my itinerary. From these experiences however, I learned that mindful eating is the key to a healthy life. I always say, "Buffet today, tomorrow I pay." Contrary to this, eating properly means having the right amount of food at the proper time.

Here are several valuable tips you can follow to have a healthy tummy:

- Never eat less than four hours before you go to bed.
- Do not eat within an hour before hitting the gym.
- Never eat immediately after a workout. Wait for at least an hour.
- Don't skip breakfast. It's the most important meal of the day.
- Anything brown will be healthier than white; but not necessarily better tasting. Think brown bread, brown

rice, and brown sugar.

- Too much salt, oil, and sugar is straight out bad.
- Don't eat if you're not hungry.
- Five small portions will always be better than just one huge meal a day.
- Nuts are better than chips.
- Boiled, steamed, or baked, will always have less calories than fried.
- Bonus tip: You're not a geek when you count your calories. You're actually just smart. Remember to check out *myfitnesspal* in the Internet for a huge data bank of food variety and their respective caloric counts.

Now, let's juice it up a bit. I recently fell in love with juicing more than other kinds of food preparation. It actually takes you the same number of hours as preparing a meal, sometimes even longer, if you include cleaning up afterwards. But what's good about juicing is that it allows our body to take in more nutrients, faster and easier, without much digesting required.

At first, I followed recipes on the Internet to the tee. However, since I hate measuring and following instructions, I ended up making my own concoctions. Green apples are the most popular sweeteners that are being used as well as carrots, and other fruits. Bananas are my favorite ingredients. I would throw them in the blender before mixing them up with other juiced up veggies such as kale, broccoli, lettuce, and spinach, among others. Your juice ends up usually green or muddy. You don't need to pinch your nose to drink it though. The fact that I was able to convince my husband and son to drink a whole pitcher means anyone would enjoy it.

Let me tell you about my weekend food buddy, Fritz Regis. She's someone who borders on being a nerd when it comes to

unconventional eating habits. Don't get me wrong by thinking that I'm quite nerdy as well, nope... not me. But we get along really well when it comes to treat days. However, on regular days, she ventures into uncharted territories more often rather than just sipping freshly squeezed lemon juice first thing in the morning, before brushing her teeth, or drinking at least seven cups of green tea a day.

We both love going to the supermarket. As there was nothing much to do in Abu Dhabi, we both had become very simple beings in terms of finding our happiness. Grocery shopping was a fun way for us to de-stress. One day, I noticed her lingering in the nuts and seeds section more than usual, while she was glancing at her mobile phone every once in a while. I found out that she was set to do a detox diet for two days. She was looking for ingredients for her diet plan. Our shopping cart ended up with all sorts of leaves that she needed to boil, seeds, quinoa, and a huge bag of lemons. You may not find that too queer; but once, while we were inside a typical Arabic shop, she got herself a copper pot. She was made to believe that drinking water from this vessel, rather than from an ordinary ceramic cup, would make her healthier. She only stopped using it when Jaq, another friend of ours, told her that the Statue of Liberty is made of copper, and warned that if she does not stop using it, she might turn green as well. Kidding aside, she's one person who would hoard kilos of flax seeds from the U.S. and packs of fresh *guyabano* leaves from Manila to satisfy her whims of "nutritional beliefs." Come to think of it, there's nothing geeky about the whole idea, it's actually pretty cool.

If you really put your heart into being healthy, nothing can stop you from doing what it takes, even putting castor and almond oil on your eyebrows just like Fritz. And maybe even

wearing a set of undergarments with embedded tourmaline 24/7, for nine solid months, just to detox and lose weight. OK, this one we can both take credit for.

Manchester, United Kingdom



CHAPTER 19

No Smoking Sign

IN THE 1990S, SMOKING WAS STILL ALLOWED INFLIGHT. It was the worst time for junior crew, who were automatically assigned to the rearmost cabin of the plane, which was the smoking area, while the seniors enjoyed so-called cleaner air up front. I still can't grasp the idea of having a smoking section inside one metal capsule, harboring the same air circulation. It was an annoying sight seeing passengers literally waiting for the "No Smoking" sign to be switched off after takeoff, so they could quickly light their cigarettes.



There is a clear implication of an unhealthy consciousness that permeates the minds of smokers who show complete disregard for their well-being and that of others.

We would witness the cabin filling up with smoke as we prepared the food cart to be rolled out for service. In the same cabin, two rows away were bulkhead seats equipped with baby bassinets. This area was considered to be a non-smoking zone. I recall dealing with numerous complaints, especially during our fully loaded flights to Japan, when we couldn't reseat families with infants away from this supposedly smoke-free location. What I hated most was when senior crew would visit the back galley to smoke after having requested to be assigned a position in the non-smoking area. I thought that it was such a selfish and inconsiderate act against non-smokers. But this was the time when society as a whole was not totally mindful of the hazards and consequences of secondhand smoke. This is a clear example of an unhealthy consciousness that permeates the minds of smokers who show complete disregard for their well-being and that of others. However, we have now improved by leaps and bounds though the printing of huge warning labels on cigarette cartons, proactive awareness, and designating smoking areas in public venues. I'm still

hopeful that some time in the near future, a further shift of consciousness would happen, that would result in the total removal of this health menace.

Nagoya, Japan





PART FIVE

Sky Is the Limit

“There are no stop signs in the clouds.”

In my flight, diversion is only an option during extreme circumstances. A constant heading to wellness is a big challenge. So the reason to deviate should be for a bona fide reason.



CHAPTER 20

Stick and Rudder

I ONCE SAW A SIGN THAT SAID, “DREAM WITH YOUR EYES OPEN.” It really makes sense to me. How can we reach our destination with our eyes closed?

As I’m writing this, I just stepped out of the cockpit on our not-so-busy flight to Dusseldorf. All our guests were sleeping and we had another four hours before we started our next service. I just wanted to jot some thoughts down before they slipped off my mind. I observed the pilots punch in different codes in the panels of this fly by wire aircraft to determine where it was headed. They were also constantly in touch with the different control towers along the route that we were taking. It was so amusing to hear different accents as I listened to the radio jargon. During turbulence, they also liaised with these people to request for a different altitude, most likely for the expeditious comfort of our guests.

As a cabin crew, it is part of our duty to check on the pilots every now and then to ensure that they are constantly awake, and needless to say, alert. It is our responsibility to make sure that they get what they need in terms of sustenance to keep themselves mentally active for the duration of the flight. I can clearly relate all these to my wellness journey. We can never reach our goal without keeping our eyes open and consciously making

better choices. We cannot sleep along the way. Otherwise time, effort, and resources might be wasted. We must keep our focus on where we want to go, otherwise we might get lost and head toward a different direction. And along the way, we must learn to adjust our “altitude” to avoid any mishaps that challenge our capacity to persevere.

Changing our lifestyle is not easy. There’s no way to go but toward our goal, shaping our hearts and minds, and adapting our habits and behavior accordingly. Likewise, an aircraft will not take off without a destination. It is programmed with certain parameters regarding the flight. Moving toward our goal and following what we have planned out to do along the way are both important in making sure that our journey will be smooth sailing.

I can clearly remember one experiment a teacher made us do in elementary. She asked us to close our eyes and drop a coin on the floor. After which, she asked us to pick it up still with our eyes closed. We all ended up groping for the coin and it took us some time before we finally had it in our hands. Next, she asked us to drop the coin with our eyes open, look at it, and close our eyes. She then asked us to pick up the coin. This time, we all picked it up instantly. At that age, we didn’t clearly understand the real lesson behind it. But as the years went by, I would look back and draw from that experiment its implication on real life. We are built with a GPS in our system. But for us to activate it, we need to correctly input the coordinates of where we want to go. The other details of the journey will be pre-programmed and modified as necessary along the way. Then all you have to do is to carry out the procedure no matter bumpy it gets.

I am now in the middle of a 30-day shred challenge by Jillian Michaels, which was suggested by one of my mentors. I

said yes without even looking at my calendar to check out how tight my flying schedule was or how much commitment I had to do in my other activities. Despite having skipped a couple of days of the challenge, I was so glad that I pushed myself to do it. My heading remained constant despite my altitude dropping low in terms of intensity and impact. It helped me gain my momentum back and gave me creative ideas to follow through on my accountability by setting up a beauty and health page on Facebook. Because of this, I knew that wellness angels from the heavens constantly descend with the mission to guide me throughout this journey. Now I am aware that every time I'd break more sweat when making extra reps on those killer dumbbell squats, they would remind me of the people I was able to inspire to get back on the wellness saddle and create a difference in their lives. Keeping that in mind, the *D.O.M.S.* (delayed onset muscle soreness) that I experience after each workout will always be worth it.

In any flight, diversion is only an option during extreme circumstances. A constant heading to wellness is a big challenge. So the reason to deviate should be for a bona fide reason. What we must be mindful of is that along the way, we have to be always ready to change our altitude or alter our course. But the focus still is to endeavor traveling on a direct path toward our final destination.

Dusseldorf, Germany

I have come to know wellness for a little more than a year now. And I have decided to embrace it as my new consort. I intend to love it, nurture it, and be united with it until death do us part.



CHAPTER 2 I

Turbulence

I'M GOING TO MAKE A CONFESSION. AT 1 A.M. ABU DHABI TIME on October 23, 2013, I failed my first attempt to acquire a wellness coaching certificate. Spencer Institute gives two chances to attain standards, without any monetary repercussions. I cannot recall having failed a mandatory flight exam. Every year I would aim to get a perfect score in our recurrent written assessments for my license renewal. And I would happily brag my excellent scores to both my husband and my son. This endeavor in wellness coaching is a new battlefield. While the subjects are somewhat alien to my aging brain cells, the final tests are extremely comprehensive and challenging. You would need mastery of all the modules for completion requirements. Thought I was smart, but the educators in this institution are way smarter. Mind you, my definition of adept does not pertain to the I.Q. level, but the ability to think, analyze a situation, and use one's resources effectively and in a timely manner. They ensure that all their online students are capable and equipped when facing the real world. Then, I became actually proud that I failed. It made me realize that the chosen field I would now venture on required a significant process of learning to be crafty-smart and theoretically competent at the same time. It may just

be continuing education, but it would require a lot of discipline, knowledge, and sweat.

Earlier during the day, I had a chance to talk with a colleague in the gym. As usual, I tried to pick her brains regarding her wellness values. She admitted that she let go of her healthy lifestyle after achieving her target weight for her wedding. And as soon as that special event was over, her vision just dissipated and her body slowly got out of shape. After sharing with her some inspirational thoughts about my passion, I eventually saw the vision that she used to have come back to life.

We are not perfect beings. We get tired. We become complacent and just settle for a comfortable and easy way of life. And when we're so used to getting things done without much effort, we tend to just let go and look for undemanding means. This, I think, was what happened to me. I got so used to getting high scores in my recurrent exams without much effort because of mastery. I've been doing it for so long that reading the manual once a day is enough. This, aside from the fact that I practically eat and breathe the knowledge included in those tests. "Operating a flight" along with all the hullabaloo of flying was already engrained in my brain.

In the beginning of my quest to lose weight, the most challenging aspect I encountered was staying away from junk food. I used to skip dinner and munch on these sinful, crunchy, cheesy, and salty chips while having a movie marathon. Life was good. I've been a night owl all my life. And these were my simple pleasures to enjoy my days off. Until I realized that it wasn't good for my belly, butt, and back. Those three B's were the favorite spots of my fatty friends where they had created their own little nook. While I was very determined to succeed in breaking this habit, there were still times that I would steal a

bite or two. Relapse happened along the way but I knew that it was crucial for me not to give in and totally lose everything that I worked hard for. I made focus and discipline my mentors and buddies.

Turbulence is part of life. I was able to learn how to use it in flight to my advantage during crew rests. I have made it as a lullaby instead of a waker-upper. It perturbs a lot of passengers but in my 27 years in the air, I have yet to experience one severe and injurious shake inside the aircraft. God forbid. These instances are what seatbelts are for. They are meant to be worn loosely whether the sign is off. Majority of the aircraft's sudden jerks are caused by clear air turbulence, which unfortunately cannot be detected ahead of time by the pilots through the plane's instruments. It is the same thing with our journey to wellness. We must remain glued to our seat in anticipation of anything that comes our way. No matter how much we are shaken by the jet stream, the weather, or the wind, we must keep on believing that there is going to be a safe and successful landing, sooner or later. And if you're good enough, you may even be able to use these threats as tools instead, and be able to dance with the current.

I have come to know wellness for a little more than a year now. And I have decided to embrace it as my new consort. I intend to love it, nurture it, and be united with it until death do us part. I know that like any relationship, I will be facing a lot of obstacles and trials along the way. But with my commitment and a huge drumfull of perspiration, we will go a long way.

Istanbul, Turkey

“Smile, though your heart is aching. Smile, even though it’s breaking,” the song goes. If you do, your disposition will simply follow as it trickles down to your heart. Eventually the other parts of your body will too.



CHAPTER 22

Smile

LAUGHTER IS STILL THE BEST MEDICINE. THEY SAY THAT PEOPLE who don't smile age faster than those who do. Everyone deserves to be happy. And if we have this joy within us, it resonates among the people around us.

Every time I get an all-women team in my flights, I always tell them, "Girl power matched with our smiles can help us get away with murder." Throughout my flying years, I have had **zero** passenger complaints. My secret is "the smile." I always leave our younger crew flabbergasted whenever I tell them my age. They say I look 10 years younger. At this point in my life, I can confidently say that I already satisfied the 10,000 rule advised by Malcolm Gladwell to be an expert in anything. I am an expert in smiling. No matter what I'm going through, I can welcome anyone with a genuine smile.

On my last flight from Chicago, even before closing the door, a passenger was already shouting at me for something that I didn't do. A mother traveling with an infant was complaining that they had booked a seat with a bassinet only to find out that it was unavailable. The fuming mom was in the middle of the cabin, threatening at the top of her voice to offload herself if she wouldn't be given one. While her husband was fairly calm, she would turn to him in anger trying to win him to join her

rage. I was able to keep my composure while I waited for a ground staff to resolve the issue despite the rudeness of the irate passenger. Unfortunately, there were more infants onboard than the number of bassinets available inside the aircraft.

Fast forward to my story, while on the jump seat prior to take off, a young crew asked me, “How can you take that crap and go on boarding other passengers with a smile?” Each passenger has nothing to do with the other and no one deserves a grumpy flight attendant as they step inside the aircraft. Besides, it’s really not worth the wrinkles.

“Smile, though your heart is aching. Smile, even though it’s breaking,” the song goes. If you do, your disposition will simply follow as it trickles down to your heart. Eventually the other parts of your body will too.

Casablanca, Morocco



CHAPTER 23

Self-Efficacy

ACCORDING TO WIKIPEDIA, SELF-EFFICACY IS THE EXTENT OR strength of one's belief in his or her ability to complete tasks and reach goals.

Do you know when the busiest time is for flight attendants? It's during the "Top-of-Descent." This is approximately 30 minutes before touchdown and the captain informs the passengers that they will be landing soon. Absolutely the most backbreaking part of the flight for the crew.

Why? Because the moment the skipper speaks:

Passengers start queuing outside the lavatories, and that is towards the end of a 12-hour flight.

Premium zone passengers wake up and start ordering — a full meal with matching latte and dessert.

Crew need to secure the cabin for landing. Seatbelts need to be fastened, seatbacks set upright, and all hand carried baggage stowed away.

Crew need to collect the headsets and pack them, that's why inflight entertainment needs to be switched off early if you're sitting in economy.

Crew need to prepare the destination requirements such as locking of Duty Free and restricted beverage carts.

Crew need to change and fix themselves. We don't want to look awful while saying goodbye to passengers.

Crew need to prepare a handover for the next sector; the next crew needs to know what they need to know.

Crew need to secure their belongings; we also have stuff like passengers do.

Crew need to clear the galley; we have to keep them tidy and we can't land with bottles and juice packs on the galley top.

Lavatories need to be locked and cleared of toiletries, and only after the passengers who started queuing last minute, finish their business.

If those tasks do not sound challenging to accomplish in approximately 20 minutes on a fully loaded Boeing 777, I don't know what does.

Self-efficacy for crew is therefore a must. If you don't have the drive to finish all those tasks before the captain requires everyone to be seated on final approach, you fail. The consequence is crucial. It can result in a go-around and aborted landing. If you don't have the ability to make it happen, better find another job that won't require speed and agility to do cartwheels, while multitasking onboard the aircraft.

The definition of self-efficacy in the field of wellness is similar if not more intense. We all have the ability to finish everything that we put our heart and mind into. A simple exercise or high intensity interval training requires the same willingness and focuses on the same kind of vision, which is to be healthy or fit. Following a rigid diet or choosing not to eat sweets requires the same kind of discipline in order to achieve your goal of losing weight. Virtue is essential to succeed in this journey. It defines the line between pushing through and just giving up. It is activated when the going gets tough. So the tough, influenced by their level of energy, will get going.

As a predictor, self-efficacy is supposed to facilitate the forming of behavioral intentions, the development of action plans, and the initiation of action. As mediator, it can prevent relapse to unhealthy behavior,^[4] and as a moderator, it can support the translation of intentions into action.^[5]

Amsterdam, Netherlands

[4] Schwarzer, R (2008). "Modeling health behavior change: How to predict and modify the adoption and maintenance of health behaviors." *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 57 (1): 1–29.

[5] Gutiérrez-Doña, B.; Lippke, S.; Renner, B.; Kwon, S.; Schwarzer, R. (2009). "How self-efficacy and planning predict dietary behaviors in Costa Rican and South Korean women: A moderated mediation analysis." *Applied Psychology: Health & Well-Being* 1: 91–104





PART SIX

Clear to Land

“Maintain your balance until touchdown.”

Wellness is all about finding our center of gravity. For us to soar higher amidst the turbulence and land safely, we must find our balance in life.



CHAPTER 24

Center of Gravity

ACCORDING TO NASA, DETERMINING THE CENTER OF GRAVITY is very important for any flying object. The design of an aircraft must comply with the uniform distribution of its mass to enable it to fly. In short, the center of gravity of a plane contributes greatly for it to succeed in having an equal number of takeoffs and landings all the time. But what happens when its center of gravity is compromised? What about other variable load factors such as passenger, cargo, fuel, water, etc.? Let's not be too analytical on the mathematical equation on this matter. We won't get anywhere, since I'm so bad with numbers. We will just use common sense. If you add in any variable weight on anything that is capable of flying, you must make sure that it maintains its balance for it to safely takeoff, cruise, and land.

I'm going to let you in on something really personal and a bit cheesy. I met my ex-boyfriend in a Fokker 50. Yes, that's a plane, a small one with propellers. It can only seat 54 passengers and five crew members including the pilots. Its cargo bay is somewhere at the back, not on its belly.

During my early years of flying when the flight was light, the captain would instruct us not to allow passengers to change their assigned seats before takeoff for weight and balance. I didn't bother to find out the details, but I knew that it had something

to do with the power and lift especially during emergencies. The flight was half-full and all the passengers were given seats in front of the plane. I assumed that we had a lot of cargo loaded at the back. But when my ex-boyfriend boarded, he headed straight for the last row and sat next to my jumpseat. Before I could even ask him to follow his assigned seat, he resolutely said that my colleague allowed him to sit there. How could I even argue when he used to be a PAL pilot? Who would've known that it was my date with destiny. As they say, the rest is history. In a year's time, we got engaged and got married soon after.

Wellness is all about finding our center of gravity. For us to soar higher amidst the turbulence and land safely, we must find our balance in life. Throughout this book, I have been talking about the importance of our physical health. However, along with that, we need to consider other aspects of our being to make our lives worth living. Wellness in the 21st century focuses on the obvious aspects of well-being. Spas abound that offer services pertaining to renewing the mind, body, and spirit through exercise, diet, and meditation. What is being neglected is the practical side of life, which is actually as important as what I have mentioned. The way we manage our relationships, finances, stress, and time are equally important for us to achieve wellness.

Like a plane, we want to reach our destination safe and sound. For us to do that, we must find our balance and determine our center of gravity to weather the storm while cruising at our maximum allowable altitude.

So how then can we find our center of gravity? I am not a Doctor of Psychology or a Master of Behavioral Science. But I know for a fact that if I balance my time and effort in nourishing the things that matter most, I will be able to live my life to the

fullest, with a sense of purpose. I am using the word **balance** for you to remember the different aspects of our lives that we need to focus on to keep ourselves centered.

B: Belief and Spirituality

I believe that we are all spiritual beings. It can pertain to having a religion or it can be doing some form of meditation to commune with nature, the spirit world, or your inner self (conscience). Having faith that there is a higher being that exists known as “God” or that there is something beyond the physical realm is what I am talking about.

I respect all kinds of religions and beliefs. While some may try to debate philosophically regarding the true essence or non-existence of God or other spiritual beings, I will not go to that. I am merely saying that you may kiss a rock, climb the highest mountain, even circle a temple or sit in front of a candle for hours if such gives your life meaning and peace. That is truly remarkable. So continue doing what you do.

I was born and raised as a Catholic. I have soul searched, far and wide to be confident and secure in my religion. And when I finally found my place, I have served my Church and community the best way possible to contribute to the society. In this manner, I am able to nourish my spirit and at the same time give back to others. It gives me a deeper sense of purpose. And what I learn contributes to how I make decisions and lead my life. It is my faith that guides me to leave a mark in this world.

We all have different levels of spirituality and if your belief or religion makes you a better person, nurture it.

A: Arts and Music

So I hear you say, “I can’t even draw stick people” and “I don’t even sing in the shower, much more play any kind of musical instrument.”

Arts and music are all around us. You may not know how to render it yourself, yet appreciation of it can bring you that first A.

I consider myself blessed to have received talent in both fields. I am a visual artist and I can also play the guitar and piano. My husband, on the other hand, can’t even write decipherably, much more sing “Teensy Weensy Spider” for my son. But he listens to music more than I do.

Arts and music fill our soul in a magical way. It creates an energy that rekindles and brings us back to our natural state. If you are able to appreciate art in everything that you see around you and hear music amidst the noise, then you are way ahead of others.

I love working on scribbles. I used to ask kids to doodle for me and I would transform them into funny faces and all sorts of subjects. My imagination is so wild that I can actually visualize these things without much effort on even the most absurd places such as dirt on the wall, water droplets, soiled carpets, and also on something delightful like clouds.

I was able to level it up in 2014 when I ventured on a new art form. I have a Facebook page called My Little EARTH Workshop, wherein EARTH stands for Enlightened ARTist for Humanity. I have always envisioned a higher purpose for my creativity. I would always try to have beneficiaries every time I sold a piece of work. And this time, in Abu Dhabi, along with another artist, Haven Hamilton, we were able to conceptualize

what we called “ScrapArt.” It was finding art in trash than on scribbles. It was so much fulfilling to save mother earth in a simple way through our masterpieces.

If I am able to find my A in the trash bin, I’m sure you can focus on your own definition of arts and music somewhere more appropriate.

L: Love and Relationships

People who are secure in love and relationships function better. However, my “L” doesn’t only mean love for others. It is actually loving one’s self first. Only then will you have enough love to share with others.

I have heard the phrase, “You complete me” time and again. For me it sounds like it’s coming from someone who’s a hopeless romantic. I may have become too independent of my spouse to some extent, but I think that’s the way it should be for some relationships to work. As I was an OFW, we wouldn’t have survived the distance if it wasn’t so. If two incomplete people try to complete themselves with one another, then it’s going to be trouble in paradise. In math, two halves make one but in successful relationships, two wholes make a Perfect One.

Since not everyone will be given the opportunity to unite with someone, balance must be determined no matter what. Relationships will always be free: families, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. All these can contribute for you to find your center of gravity. They can drag you down or pull you up, tilt you left and right. They can even twirl you around. But no matter what, as they fill that space inside your heart, it won’t matter much if you keep the balance. The movement will make your life more exciting. We are not created to exist alone. We

are all social beings and the only difference is that some people will need to focus on having either more or fewer people in their lives than others.

A: Assets and Liabilities

Admit it! Money makes the world go 'round. Unless you don't focus enough on the second A, you will never maintain your center of gravity.

We can never succeed in this world without making sure that our finances are doing well. We have to face reality and think of how we can live comfortably by managing our resources. Having the basic necessities is a must and the only way to acquire it is by having moolah.

A lot of people lose their balance completely because of their failure to cope with the monetary demands of everyday living for themselves and for their loved ones. Declaring bankruptcy may be rock bottom for some but it is actually a springboard for others. It depends on how you will use it to your advantage. In the U.S. for instance, it is actually another chance to start over again. But unfortunately, it is not an option in all places especially in the third world countries.

Regardless of whether you're in the red or a multimillionaire, it doesn't exempt you from fixing your finances because of the stress that is inherent. Unless you manage assets and liabilities smartly, affairs can go off course. The weal of many individuals were compromised because of financial ruin. It simply means that this part of the equation is essential to be reviewed regularly to ensure your well-being.

N: Nutrition and Exercise

I have been drilling this in your head from the time you read the introduction of this book. However, I would like to highlight the fact that I used the word **nutrition** and not diet.

“N” will always focus on how you will nourish yourself by eating the right kind of food with the nutrients required by your body to function at an optimum level. Conscious effort to make wise choices that will benefit you in the long run as you age will give you the edge to succeed in life.

And of course its partner in crime, exercise, will always be after the affairs of the heart. If your heart is in perfect rhythm with the other parts of your body, how can you not overcome absolutely anything that comes your way?

The food you take will actually dictate how your heart will function efficiently. So nutrition and exercise will always be a tandem. Keep them in check at all cost.

C: Career

What about your line of work? It highly influences your finances, but it doesn't always go hand in hand. “C” will dictate your sense of fulfillment. Whatever occupation you may have, whether entailing torrents of money or not, would certainly need attention and energy.

“Corporate Wellness,” which deals specifically on how well work-life balance is maintained, is another field wherein I completed certification attainment. A company needs to maximize its employees' productivity. And this can only be achieved if their employees are somehow content in terms of the

company's provisions along with their sense of satisfaction in the roles that they play.

On a personal level, this must be addressed properly in relation to the other aspects that we have been discussing. Aside from the financial implication of one's career, you need to ensure that the amount of time exerted on your job must not be prioritized more than that of family time. If such happens, imbalance may occur and determining your center will be very difficult. So that's the tricky part: While you know that career is something that you need to focus on, you also must ensure that work-life balance is critical so as not to jeopardize your love and relationships.

E: Education

Last but not the least, "E" is all about knowledge power. You must never stop learning. Education must be coterminous with one's life. No matter how old you get, there will always be something out there that your mind can absorb.

We fly with different crew all the time. The probability of having exactly the same variables is 0%. Destination, aircraft, crew lineup, passengers, and circumstances will always be different.

When I joined the pool of part-time trainers, I never looked at the learning process in the same way again. I may not have gone through post-grad school. But my experience in the Leadership and Development team is something that I can never learn in any university. I was pushed to the max in terms of using my skills, of which I wasn't even aware I possessed. While designing a Boot Camp program for our onboard leaders under time constraints, I was going through one myself. And

the moment I started teaching it, the more I learned. Focusing on “E” will always be to your advantage. The more you educate yourself, the more you gain in life, the more you become.

Brussels, Belgium

I realize that finding extra time to devote toward a healthy lifestyle may be a luxury in this day and age, but you have to make the time. I promise that if you invest in yourself now, you get to reap its rewards for the remainder of your life, benefitting you and your loved ones!



CHAPTER 25

Debriefing

AT THE END OF EACH FLIGHT, WE HAVE A DEBRIEFING. AN onboard leader ensures that our goals for the flight were achieved, efforts recognized, and developmental feedback raised. When I do these debriefs as a cabin manager, I always emphasize the importance of what you learn on each and every flight. I am delighted to delegate this chapter to one of my mentors, to share with you his lifelong fitness journey and a summary of what I want you to take away. This also represents the synonymy of our school of thought when it comes to our approach to getting fit and feeling great.

Johannesburg, South Africa

“My Fitness Quest”

By Salvador Dewey Belisario



An old friend writing a fitness book asked a few months ago if I would consider being featured in it. The premise of this book is catered to the Generation X so I agreed without hesitation. In fact, I was delighted to oblige. I have always lived a fairly active and healthy lifestyle. My father, an advocate of balanced nutrition and an avid tennis player his entire life, was a constant inspiration. Despite his countless trophies from tennis and badminton, none of his offspring became heir to his athletic prowess, although his respect for healthy living and commitment to physical fitness became deeply instilled in me. Growing up, I was never overly athletic but neither was I a nerd. I always watched what I ate and stayed fairly active throughout my childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Activities like dog-walking, running, swimming, dancing, acting, performing,

playing lawn and table tennis, volleyball, bowling, and exercising kept me consistently active and fit.

In 1996, I separated from the Navy after 10 years of service. Complacent and a tad rebellious against the military's fitness standards and structured lifestyle, I immediately took on a temporary customer service job, deskbound for most of each workday. I snacked on empty calories all day while fielding phone calls for a few months. Before it was too late, I snapped out of my heaviest at 168 pounds and left that job! A classmate and friend from grad school was a strict vegetarian. Inspired by this, I decided to totally forgo meat consumption and give vegetarianism a try.

My weight gradually normalized around the 140s but after two years, my weight still plummeted to the point that I dropped to the mid-120s. Dad even teased that my tennis serves barely got over the net! My two sisters pleaded that I start eating meat again because tofu and beans were seemingly insufficient sources of protein for my body. I started to steadily incorporate fish, seafood, and poultry back to my diet. Within just a few months, I was back to my ideal 140s and never looked back. To date, I have not had pork, beef, or other meats but I have to say, I do not really miss them. Nobody should claim that staying fit is a walk in the park. It is a constant and conscious effort to overcome various challenges, hectic schedules, and obstacles along the way. You have to dig deep at times to conquer your shortfalls and weaknesses and continue your quest toward a healthy lifestyle and fitness bliss.

I would like to think that I am a positive person just like my loving mom. Naturally, one of my self-proclaimed purposes in life is to inspire and motivate others through whatever means: be an example in person, by association, or even via social media

by posting inspirational quotes, motivational gym visits, healthy recipes, and citing other role models. Inspiring others helps me in return; it keeps me honest and on track to stay my own course!

Below are a handful of nutrition and fitness tips I swear by. Granted to each his own. What works for me may not work for you. Know your goals and capabilities along with any physical or medical restrictions you may have so you may tailor your diet and exercise goals to meet your needs with the guidance of professionals.

Eating a well-balanced diet is great. Exercising regularly does wonders too but take full advantage of the synergistic effect of these two programs together. If you incorporate dieting and exercising concurrently into your health and fitness regimen, you will maximize your intended results more efficiently.

Watch what you eat and know your daily caloric goal! This may mean you have to count calories in the beginning or even use an application like *myfitnesspal* until keeping track of your calories becomes second nature. As far as the ideal diet, there is not one that works for all. There are tons of resources online. Find one that suits you, your taste buds, and your health, and minimize consumption of processed, fried, fatty, and sugar-overloaded foods.

Eat five to six smaller meals per day, staying within your daily caloric intake goal. Eat a pretty substantial breakfast, a snack mid-morning, lunch, mid-afternoon snack, and a smaller portioned early dinner. I try not to eat anything after 7 p.m. The idea is to eat throughout the day to keep your metabolism going before your body feels hunger pangs that could lead to overeating. Also remember to chew you food well. Your belly is supposed to feel full after 15-20 minutes, so if you eat your

big meals slowly, you will feel satisfied before the propensity to overeat kicks in.

Drink plenty of water throughout the day and minimize drinking your calories. If you have, let's say, a daily caloric goal of 1,800 calories, you would probably think twice if you find out that your favorite iced frappuccino with whipped cream at 500 calories would consume a big chunk of your daily caloric goal.

Do not totally rid your diet of your favorite foods or you will probably quit your quest for a healthy lifestyle before you even start. Portion control is key! Example, if you love rocky road ice cream like many do and used to eat a whole pint in one sitting, perhaps make it a once or twice per week treat or make a "cheat meal" out of it, but limit it to one scoop only. You will learn how to savor every lick! That way, you satisfy your cravings without sabotaging your nutritional goals.

Do not underestimate the benefits and power of adequate sleep. My body feels energized and well rested if I am able to get at least seven to eight hours of sleep per night. The extra energy comes handy with my regularly scheduled fitness sessions.

Commit about three to four hours per week to doing something active, be it a combination of weights, cardio, or sports activity. In the grand scheme of things, a four-hour weekly commitment is only about 2.4% of your entire week, hardly a dent on your schedule, but definitely worth the positive results it will bring.

Do not invest on expensive workout equipment or gym membership if your heart is not 110% committed to using them. There are plenty of cardio and workout routines you could do with zero or very little investment. Example, you may jump

rope with an imaginary rope, use your own weight with certain exercise moves, or use canned goods as dumbbells. Similar to diet, there is not one type of exercise routine that works for all so find your niche!

Incorporate a variety of cardio and weight routines to your workout sessions so you could minimize the plateau effect or the risk of boredom. There is such a thing as overdoing it too. If you are one of those gym rats who go almost every day, make sure you alternate the muscle groups you focus on with each session. This way, specific muscle groups get rest in between workouts to facilitate growth and recovery.

Use the buddy system. Work out with a friend or a family member, or even elicit moral support via cyberspace. If you bring people with similar goals together, they will inspire and motivate each other. The likelihood of success then increases with numbers.

Instead of spending way too much time inactive like watching TV or surfing the net, get up! Walk your dog, play sports, run, hike, swim, dance, meditate, take the stairs, park farthest away, or join a yoga or Zumba group. Staying fit doesn't mean just going to the gym for hours on end. Find activities that you love. If your heart is totally invested into it, you are more likely to reach your fitness goals!

Getting old doesn't have to equate to passivity or isolation. It has been said that age is nothing but a number and I agree! One does not have to settle and be part of the statistics. You don't have to look like a stereotypical middle-aged guy, out-of-breath, slouched, and unfit with a matching beer belly. You have the power to choose which path your life will lead you or which road to embark upon. If you take care of your body and mind, your biological age will transcend your actual age. If and when

you feel physically and mentally young from within (the inner you), your outer youth has no recourse but to follow suit. Sure it is a plus to look good outside but the real rewards are improved health and longevity!

I realize that finding extra time to devote toward a healthy lifestyle may be a luxury in this day and age but you have to make the time. I promise that if you invest in yourself now, you get to reap its rewards for the remainder of your life, benefitting you and your loved ones! You have one life to live so always go with gusto and live it to the fullest! Live, Love, Laugh! Eat healthy (most of the time), stay active (whenever time allows), and always inspire others! May this book motivate and inspire you enough to start your quest for a leaner and healthier you today!





PART SEVEN

Dream Destination

“Start living your purpose.”

Angels disguised as persons are sent to make a difference in your life. In addition, colors, things, events, and even numbers that you see around, accidentally or incessantly, will give affirmation that you are living your purpose.



CHAPTER 26

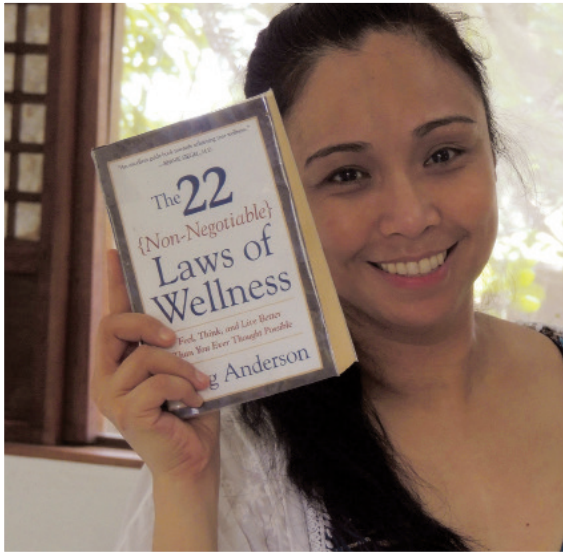
The Flight Number

I'M GOING TO LET YOU IN ON A SECRET. I BELIEVE IN SIGNS AND numerical symbols. It may sound strange, but the number 22 seems to be my guiding star both in frivolous and significant aspects so to speak. Let me cite a few instances:

- I got married at 22.
- My maid of honor's house number where I did my bridal shower was 22.
- When I applied for my dream job, it was April 22.
- My first and only one woman art exhibit was collaborated on a 22nd.
- My memorable *ScrapArt* Exhibit in Abu Dhabi was on August 22.
- My first home in Abu Dhabi is Flat No. 202 and my home for six years is of the same number.
- The first image of the Divine Mercy, which officially started my mission of propagating its devotion was brought to Abu Dhabi on 11.01.2008 = 22.
- I see 22 everywhere!

Every time I see this number, it somehow reminds me that I am on the right track. If you don't believe me, let me show you a picture.

I saw this book lying on a tabletop while I was touring around *Sonya's Garden* in Tagaytay. It was a month after I was considering whether to include “Twenty-Two” as part of the trade name of the wellness consultancy business venture that I was planning.



Airline marketing people often choose 888 as flight numbers specifically for trips to China. They also opt to do away with row 13 in the plane's configuration. It's quite obvious that I'm not alone when it comes to this.

I am not going to dwell deeper into numerology nor try to convince you that what I have shared is something that I have been imagining. As we journey through life, we must learn to open not only our eyes but also our hearts and minds to the things that manifest around us. We will continue to face challenges and will be prompted to make a lot of decisions. And

having that consciousness will always keep that balance when making choices.

One of my favorite priests once said, “A certain person answers a certain need at a certain time.” Angels disguised as persons are sent to make a difference in your life. In addition, colors, things, events, and even numbers that you see around, accidentally or incessantly, will give affirmation that you are living your purpose. Symbols will be all around you, shouting that life is great despite what you go through. The universe will be your guide, bringing you joy, peace, and love as you live your life to the fullest. My husband chides me to stop trying to solve the world’s problems all at the same time. I am aware that I may not be capable of doing so but I believe that every time I take wing, I can create a ripple in the sky for everyone to see and somehow make a difference.

Life is a journey. Take care of your body and value it more than anything tangible in this world. Be meticulous on how you manage your time. Spend it sparingly on worldly things, be generous when giving it away to people that matter, and invest it on occasions of more value. Always leave time for yourself to reflect and to make sure that you are always centered as you embark on new adventures. Believe that along the way, there is a God who commands His wellness angels to guard and empower you to enjoy each moment even before reaching your dream destination.

Edinburgh, Scotland



EPILOGUE

The Journey Continues

FIVE YEARS AFTER I STARTED EMBARKING ON MY WELLNESS QUEST, I am now taking a leap of faith as a wellness coach. I am leaving my life of nine years in *Etihaad Airways* and braving unknown territory. I am holding on to the signs that point toward the road going back home to my family.

As I was driving home one day, before deciding to resign, I found myself having this informal conversation with God. I asked Him, *“Lord, if it is Your will for me to resign sooner than planned, please give me a sign. I want to see an orange car along the way. The same color as the sun, symbolizing a new day ahead.”*

It was a quick 15-minute drive so I wasn’t really expecting much. As I turned to the freeway, I saw an orange DHL van. And woe me of little faith, I quickly said, “Nope! Car not van... I have to see another one.” Within another minute, an identical DHL van appeared. I was grinning and doubting at the same time. And because of my stubbornness I, of course, asked for a third, *“Lord, I know well that I have pleased You through the mission of propagating the devotion of the Divine Mercy here in*

Abu Dhabi, so please send me a third one signifying the time of Your death on the cross."

Despite my being a spoiled brat, He truly didn't falter and a third van came. Simultaneously as I made my exit, what befell me was a full view of the sunset, a huge sun of radiant beauty, embellished with all the shades of orange that you can think of. I was sobbing as I continued my drive home. And before I hit the last roundabout, parked in front of my village entrance was an orange car. And God said, *"You have served me well in the desert, it's time for you to come home."*

As I reached Manila, tugging along various certifications that were not at all related to my 27 year career in aviation, I was confident that I would be successful in reinventing myself in the field of wellness. It was only three weeks from the time I arrived when another opportunity fell on my lap. It was a one-month journey to Mysore, the Ashtanga Yoga capital of India, and this was a result of pure serendipity.

A week before this trip, I was sending a message to an ex-colleague, Clara, who confirmed that she would be attending a wedding of a common friend in Pampanga, a province north of Manila. Since my husband wouldn't be able to come along, I decided to ask her if she would want to hitch a ride to keep me company. And she did. On our road trip, she shared with me her plans of taking a Yoga Teacher Training course in India that coming week. As I listened intently, my mind was already busy mapping out a plan. There were quite a few snags that wouldn't make it possible. Processing of my end of gratuity pay was taking longer than usual. But I knew that if it was meant to be, neither hail nor storm could stop me. Thus, everything that I needed: funds, visa, connecting flight bookings, accommodations, a four-hour transfer from the airport, and my last minute slot in

class were processed. It was a couple of days before the flight when everything was ironed out.

I remember a few years back, on my way home to Manila, I was on a jumpseat having a chat with Clara. When I sense someone wondering what direction in life would make them happy, my usual question would be, “What is your passion?” Her answer was her love of yoga. At that time, yoga for me was just part of my stretching exercise. So I was interested on giving insights on how she should pursue it, rather than asking her, “Why yoga?” Little did I know that we would be taking a momentous trip to India pretty soon.

My Yoga Teacher Training was more of a life transformation than a certification. Among all the things that I learned, here are my top three:

- 1) Yoga is not a religion. Being a devout Catholic, I was skeptical. Now, I can say that yoga made my faith stronger than before.
- 2) Yoga is not just asanas (body poses). While initially focusing on physical transformation, it is just one of the eight-fold processes that will help you discover your true self and find more meaning in life.
- 3) Yoga rids you of your ego, the “I” that attaches you to the material world. It heightens your self-awareness and elevates your sense of purpose.

We are all yogis by nature. The four main streams of yoga tell us so.

- 1) If you find time for worship and devotion, you are practicing ***Bhakti Yoga***.
- 2) If you have a generous heart and are able to share your time and resources with others, that is ***Kharma Yoga***.

- 3) If you don't stop discovering yourself by developing the analytical power of your mind incessantly, that is ***Jnana Yoga***.
- 4) And if you aim to have full control of your thoughts, to enable yourself to serve your highest purpose, that is ***Raja Yoga*** or ***Ashtanga Yoga***.

And all these streams lead us to achieve the state of bliss or ONENESS that we all dream of.

I was blessed to be given the chance to be a part of the Leadership and Development Team of trainers. My last couple of years were spent teaching onboard leaders within the airline, and its partners. The rewards of being a trainer goes beyond the travel, shopping, and all merriments of being a flight attendant. Making a difference in someone else's life, creating a paradigm shift toward a grander perspective, and instilling leadership values are priceless. Much more than just putting a smile on someone's face or motivating them, as I manage the performance of my team. I always tell my students, "The greatest satisfaction of a leader is to hear someone say, *'I want to be a leader just like you.'*"

Now, I am relying on my experience in leadership training, managing performance, and my new love for yoga to create change in people's lives. I have built my own program based on what I call "Effectual Wellness," a holistic process that leads to conquering limiting beliefs through embodying a winning mindset.

Ergo, with my wings embellished with a fresh plumage, I am ready to expand my territory to conquer a new wellness frontier, as I approach my golden era and beyond.

Mysore, India



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



*Photography by: Will Dy
HMUA: Kerwin Solo*

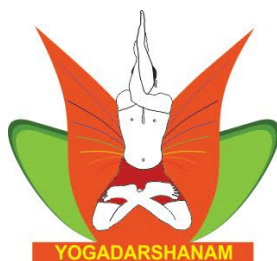
JOANA WAS A FLIGHT ATTENDANT FOR 27 YEARS WITH PHILIPPINE Airlines and Etihad Airways, where she became a cabin manager and eventually, a leadership and development trainer. In her nine years of managing performance and training leaders, she has witnessed the impact of stress and mindfulness on work-life balance and overall performance. This inspired her to get certified as a Personal and Corporate Wellness Coach, applying what she has learned in her own wellness venture.

As soon as she clipped her wings, right before getting settled back in Manila, serendipity allowed her to reside in India for a month to get certified as a yoga teacher. She calls it a life-

changing boot camp, which motivated her to draw 22 Wellness Nuggets from ancient yoga philosophy to be the values behind her present-day coaching. She instantly stopped eating Chicken Joy, Big Mac, and Lechon Cebu, and became a pescatarian. She realized that the secret to strong self-leadership is a lifelong quest to unify the body, mind, and spirit. Enhanced with her knowledge of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Basic Clinical Hypnotherapy, and the Usui system of natural healing, she now uses Wellness Yoga as the platform of her Effectual Wellness programs.

For coaching or consultations, visit her website at www.22holisticwellness.com. Follow her on Facebook.com/wellnessangel, on Instagram @wellness_angel and on Twitter @22wellnessangel.

For her certifications and trainings, check out:





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