

Choosing To Be Fit

INTRODUCTION

I believe we learn best from stories, including our own.

I don't know about you, but I'm able to make changes in my life more easily after reading a story than I do after reading a self-help book that tells me what I must do. I am affected emotionally by *the story*. I remember *the story*. That list of things I must do just doesn't stick with me the way a story about a person who actually did them sticks with me.

Some years ago I wrote *Choosing to Be: Lessons in Living from a Feline Zen Master* because I had difficulty learning how to meditate from books by gurus who spoke in a language I didn't understand. I decided to write my own story about how I learned (and struggled) to be a meditator. This is not to say that the meditation books I studied were not helpful, but I learn more from stories that include the passion of the struggle, because they are real life. The feedback I receive from my readers assures me that I am not the only one like this.

This is why I decided to write *Choosing To Be Fit* as a story. I'm not a fitness guru. I'm an author and educator who needed to change some things in order to get fit, so I used my research and problem solving skills to figure out what to do. I've spent most of my life helping people and organizations change, so I know a thing or two about how to help others implement the changes they choose to make. However, this does not necessarily arm me with a presto-chango magic wand when I am trying to change myself. I succeed at change by grappling with it and writing about it, then sharing what I write to emotionally energize you in your own journey. Rather than being a self help author, I seem to be a help-self, help-others author.

Seeing the big picture helps us make better choices.

One of the biggest challenges I faced early in my journey was that there were so many ingredients to a fitness recipe I had trouble organizing them all in my mind. I would

grasp something important and experiment with that for a while, and in the meantime I would forget another important component I had decided to embrace.

This is why I developed the *Choosing to Be Fit Alignment Wheel*®. After I figured out the important components I entered them on a graphic of a wheel. This way I could see them all at the same time, and I could rate where I stood in each of the components. I share the Wheel and how it works in Chapter Two. As you follow along in my story, you will see how the use of this Wheel helps me again and again, what I learned from it, and the encouragement I gained about making needed changes from visualizing it.

Doing things in a new way helps us think in a new way.

Early in my journey, I discovered a fitness guru who had a philosophy about “not dieting” that really appealed to me. I watched his videos and bought his program. As I was heavily underlining his e-book, I felt like I had found the Holy Grail – this was an approach I could believe in and embrace. Then I got to the end of the book and hit THE LISTS. First he listed everything in my kitchen that I needed to throw out immediately, and then he followed that with a THREE PAGE GROCERY LIST of what I needed to rush out and buy at the grocery store, followed by a ton of complicated menus and recipes to use all this stuff. I was so let down and deflated – how could someone who supposedly knew so much about how hard it is to change set up such a huge barrier to success?

I’m a big believer in “acting as if” small changes are possible. Acting “as if” creates step-by-step new frameworks for my thinking. Thinking about myself as a really fit person doesn’t work to get me out of bed in the morning to put on my running shoes and get outside for a vigorous walk. First I need to commit to get the shoes, then I need put them on and go for a short comfortable walk. Now my imagination has some evidence to work with in building that “me becoming a fit person” story. My new “becoming” story shifts and motivates me. I put on my shoes on the next day and go for a slightly longer walk. This newly revised story gets me out of bed the next morning, etc. You see where I’m heading with this.

Why we need to break things down into small steps: If we take on too much, like that guru’s GIANT LISTS, we feel overwhelmed and stuck. Then we don’t have a story line of

ourselves becoming a fit person, we have a premise of ourselves as an overwhelmed person, and that is not going to help us move forward.

What if we ran our own fitness program like a business?

I admit I sort of stumbled into this approach by happenstance. I was planning to take a course in the Emotional Freedom Technique, as I had been playing around with EFT and found it very helpful. I mentioned to my friend Ellen that she might want to take it with me. The next time we talked she said was thinking about taking the course but she just wasn't sure it would really help her.

Remembering that the course had a 30-day money back guarantee, I suggested that she pursue it as a "let's see what happens" experiment. Try it for one week, do the exercises every day, and track how she was feeling. At the end of the week, she could calibrate if there was change afoot.

She did this and it worked. When we talked about it, she affirmed my hypothesis. She said that thinking of it as an experiment appealed to her as less daunting than committing that she was going to endure this challenging course and counting on it paying back her money, time and effort.

That night I reflected on how I usually think about personal change, and realized that I was being uncharacteristically sloppy about it. If I ran a business the way I was running my own personal change program, I would be quite hesitant to reveal it. I imagined talking to a business associate about my personal fitness program and her asking me what techniques and methods I employed for my personal fitness. I imagined myself saying something like this . . .

"Well, I don't really consider getting fit as a business. It occurred to me that I needed to make some changes, so I did some things for a while and then moved on and forgot them. Then I did some more things and I forget those too. I see some results but then I don't remember what I was like when I started so I take them for granted. I don't really track stuff because it is too much trouble. And I don't spend much time learning how to

measure how successful my efforts are. I just do stuff. I mean after all, I'm a very successful business person and I'm too busy to turn this fitness stuff into yet another business.”

Hmmm, need I point out that if we don't succeed in our personal fitness journey, our “real” business or career may suffer? So why can't we use the same approaches and tools we use in our work for our fitness program? Wow, once I rallied around this idea I was off and running, literally, thinking of myself as not only a fit person but also as a successful business owner of my own personal fitness business.

As my story unfolds, you will see me employing the same techniques that delivered success in my consulting business. Taking responsibility for my success, and learning what I need to learn to make informed choices. Developing ways to track my progress. Finding tools and programs that teach me how to measure what I do. Writing down my short-term and long-term goals. Building a team of people I can count on to support me in my quest for fitness.

I celebrate experimentation done within a defined, preferably short, timeframe. Trying things out with a measurable intent or purpose allows us to open our minds and challenge our thinking. My journey is actually a series of experiments, and I hope you will create your own as you read about mine. All of the tools and exercises I use will be made available to you in THE LAB on this website as each new Chapter is posted.

The book is being released a Chapter at a time on this website. You can see which Chapters are available in the same pull-down menu you used to access this Introduction. If you have questions about anything in a Chapter, just use the Contact Form to send me a note about it. I'll answer your question in a post on THE BLOG if it seems relevant to other people, or by email if it is more personal.

Here is a preview of all the Chapters, complete with the clever titles I had great fun creating. This reminds me, it's important to have fun on this journey. Because if we don't find playfulness in what we are doing, we probably won't continue to do it.

Chapter One: Denial is Not a Viable Strategy is my “before” story, the story of how I got to be in such bad shape without really “knowing” it. This is how it happens, because if we really “knew” it we probably would do something about it, but we are all capable of ignoring the warning signs and seeing only what we want to see.

And then, as day follows night, comes **Chapter Two: The Wake-Up Call**. By the time we reach mid-life we have probably had at least one of these. This is the story of the event that made me decide it was “make or break” time. This chapter contains many of the strategies and practices I created and began to put into place.

I know many of you will relate to **Chapter Three: Trust Me, I Know What I’m Doing**. This is about how we continue to make the same mistakes over and over in our lives, because we are not paying attention and embracing and “installing” the lessons we need to learn. Our Mind is running amuck, fueled by our Ego. Meanwhile our Heart and Soul are watching our Body race lemming-like toward the cliff, shaking their make-believe heads and wondering if we are ever going to listen to them. Of course this tendency doesn’t always end in disaster, but things could have been better if Ego and Mind and Body had aligned with Heart and Soul, and worked as a team.

So of course this cockiness leads to **Chapter Four: Yet Another Rude Awakening**, often as rude as our original wake-up call. Sadly, this is often what’s needed to get the attention of our hard-headed, ego-driven self. We see this happen in the movies all the time. The heroine gets the wake-up call, she charges out with no idea of the sheer magnitude of the challenge she is facing, and then she gets clobbered. Nothing new here, so why is it we keep doing it this way, one wonders.

Chapter Five: Starting Over is named after a favorite movie of mine with Jill Clayburgh. I loved the heroine’s vulnerability as she stumbled around, trying to discover what she really wanted, after losing what she thought was her best life. This stumbling part is what we often rush through, because our Ego wants to get everything tied up in a nice big bow once again. (Heart and Soul shake their heads at this, why doesn’t Ego understand that nice big bows don’t really work?) In this chapter, I begin to listen to my own Heart and Soul. I begin to understand what I really want. This is when I decide to write *Choosing To Be Fit*.

Chapter Six: Not So Fast, Smarty Pants is one of my favorite chapters, because it reminds us that there will always be more hurdles than we think and we will always need allies. The challenge is that we need to choose our allies carefully. Just because someone is a “guru” it doesn’t mean he or she is the right guru for you. Once again my Ego takes control and I am off and running, leaving my Heart and Soul behind, just because some expert tells me I’m going about this in the wrong way. Of course, hurdles begin to appear because Ego is in charge, but now I am in that “doing what the Expert says” mode, so once more Denial becomes my strategy. Interesting how history repeats itself.

Chapter Seven: Against All Odds shows what happens when the excellent programs I have designed and implemented with such success get tested at maximum capacity. I find out we have to move out of our house that we have only been in less than a year. I think I am coping well, using the *Choosing To Be Fit Alignment Wheel* I invented to make sure I’m covering all the bases, and begin my superb planning process and executive task list for the move.

In **Chapter Eight: At Warp Speed**, the move takes on a life of its own. I didn’t see that the prior trials with my *Alignment Wheel* were not a big enough test, that my systems would not be good enough to handle this level of stress. My Heart and Soul were telling me to slow down, to take care of myself, but now there was no stopping the momentum. And of course there were unexpected challenges which pushed me even further toward the cliff.

And then we hit **Chapter Nine: All Hell Breaks Loose**. As often happens during a series of tests, I lost the ability to pay attention and track what was happening. My stress, the move, and an odd little accident combined to create a Sciatic Nerve injury that put me in excruciating pain and immobilized me. This happened after the trip with our cat to the Emergency Vet for her terrible reaction to the fleas we did not know were lying dormant in our new house. While at the Vet we learned she also had abscessed teeth that needed to come out. Oddly enough, this is when my Alignment Wheel gave me hope, because I found one component that I could hang on to. I might be lying on ice all day long, but I could damn well drink my daily quota of water!

In **Chapter Ten: Deeper and Deeper We Go** I learn valuable lessons about dealing with the challenges of an extended period of pain and healing. Finally, I get back to writing and then I am faced with crippling fear about not being good enough to write this story. The need to deal with my Critical Voice becomes paramount. I must say I didn't expect this to be part of my journey to fitness.

Chapter Eleven: Learning the Art of Small Steps. By now I have learned so much about the powerful nature of Resistance and stress. I see where I could have taken small steps that would have been more effective. I need to remember that Life doesn't always unfold the way we laid it out in our plan – Ego thinks it will, but it usually does not.

Chapter Twelve: Finding the Magic Potion. My most important lesson of all turns out to be learning how to replace my Critical Voice with my own Intuitive Voice. This was not what I set out to do when I started my journey, but I learned I couldn't succeed with *Choosing To Be Fit* without learning how to do this. Who knew?

Epilogue: It All Comes Together, For Now. The story, the wheel, the practices and tools, the healing modalities all come together. I have brought back the Elixir from my journey, and it is to TRUST my intuitive voice, and to SIMPLIFY my life in ways I could not have seen before. And to understand the Journey will continue with new adventures and new lessons, because nothing ever stays the same.