



Embrace the Struggle: Living Life on Life's Terms

By Zig Ziglar, Julie Ziglar Norman

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One of the leading stars in the "positive thinking" movement, Zig Ziglar has made a career out of telling people how to have a positive attitude, no matter what their circumstances are. But when a fall down a stairway onto a marble floor leaves him with a head injury, he is challenged with how to put the principles he'd been speaking about into practice. Ziglar's willingness to be transparent has him back writing and speaking with renewed energy before audiences in the tens of thousands to show that life on life's terms is still well worth living. *Embrace the Struggle* affirms the validity of the principles Ziglar has held true his entire life and includes not only his account of living positively through difficult circumstances; it also includes heartwarming stories of real people who encouraged him with how they put into practice these vital principles.

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Editorial Review

Review

"For decades Zig Ziglar has been a champion of positive thinking. On the sixty-ninth anniversary of his twenty-first birthday, he declared he was 'refiring' rather than retiring. And despite a brain injury that's left him with short-term memory loss, he's still fired up. Anyone facing tough circumstances will find comfort and inspiration in Zig's encouraging message." -- **Ken Blanchard, coauthor, *The One Minute Manager®* and *Lead Like Jesus***

"Zig Ziglar's *Embrace the Struggle*, written with his daughter Julie, is timely reading for me. As my wife and I grow older we know we will have to leave our home, where we have lived for over fifty years. But with Zig's guidance we can Embrace our Struggle with energy and with hope." -- **John Sherrill, roving editor, *Guideposts* magazine**

"My mood-swing patients who listen to Ziglar the most do the best. *Embrace the Struggle* is for everyone who faces challenges, whether medical or from life's stressors. Facing an unpleasant reality with a positive attitude can make all the difference. Zig explains his highly successful approach to traumatic brain injury with courage, common sense, and his usual humor." -- **Leland M. Heller, MD**

"Zig Ziglar understands life including its struggles and setbacks. If you want to live an abundant life by embracing all that God gives -- read this book written by one of the greatest Christians I've ever known." -- **Jack Graham, pastor, Prestonwood Baptist Church**

"Zig has one more valuable lesson to teach each of us. Living in the moment, right now, with the people you love and for a cause you believe in -- this is what matters. He is an inspiration and a national treasure, and each of us is better off because Zig Ziglar cares about making the world a better place." -- **Seth Godin, author, *Tribes***

About the Author

Zig Ziglar has motivated the sales forces of multi-national corporations, as well as the thousands of individuals who have attended his seminars and read his books. He is the president of the Zig Ziglar Corporation and the author of the bestsellers *Secrets of Closing the Sale*, *Success and the Self-Image*, *5 Steps to Successful Selling*, *How to be a Winner*, and *How to Get What You Want*.

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1

The Fall and the Future

I get lots of ideas when the lights go out at night and it gets very quiet. Sometimes they come when I first lie down to sleep; other times I wake up with an idea racing through my mind. But regardless of when an idea comes, I have made it a habit to get out of bed and write the idea down before it disappears into my dreams. You should do the same.

I've also made it a habit not to disturb the Redhead if I can possibly help it, and that night was no exception. I quietly slid out of bed and hurried toward my office, which is across the hall and to the right of the head of the staircase. As usual, I did not turn on a light. I had traveled that particular path thousands of times in the

twenty-two years we'd lived in our home. However, in all those years I had never accidentally put my left foot down where the second floor ended and the first step down our staircase began! Let's just say that misstep more than disturbed the Redhead!

Most of what I am writing at this point is information my family filled me in on after the accident. Since I was unconscious for several minutes, I have absolutely no recall of what happened after I fell, but from what the Redhead tells me, she grabbed the phone and dialed 911 as soon as she realized I was tumbling down the stairs. An ambulance was dispatched, and help was at the house within a few minutes of my fall.

“The Call”

While the paramedics attended to me, the Redhead called our children. By then it was about 10:30 p.m., so seeing our name come up on caller ID at that hour struck fear into our children's hearts. And this time, I'm sorry to say, their fear was not unfounded. My son, Tom, refers to that night as the night he got “the call.” I'm quite sure each of you has had “the call” at one time or another and can relate to what our children were experiencing. I'm grateful that all three of them, including Tom who was out of town, hurried to the hospital to help their “elderly parents”—that is what I call us when I'm about half-teasing and half-relieved that our kids are hovering around us, willing and eager to help.

Over the next several hours it became apparent that my left side took the brunt of my fall. When I landed at the bottom of the stairs, I hit my head on the marble floor and then slammed it against the front door. Please don't ask for a reenactment—you get the picture! I had to spend a few nights at the hospital so the doctors could monitor the two areas where my brain had a bleed, and I needed some time to get used to the positional vertigo that I began to experience about twelve hours after I fell. Amazingly, I suffered no broken bones, but I can testify that I was one sore and dizzy guy!

What we didn't know when I finally left the hospital was how seriously my short-term memory had been affected. Sometimes it is nice to be a little clueless. Everyone in the family has had ample time to adjust to the fact that my short-term memory is very, very, short. Now we are all learning how to live with that fact.

Life *is* change. On March 7, 2007, my life changed completely with one, simple, misplaced step. Some would say it changed for the worse, and by human standards they would be entirely right. Fortunately, and I can assure you this is not by chance, the one verse that I've written in the majority of books I've been asked to autograph, the verse that I believe encourages people most in the midst of their troubles, Romans 8:28, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (KJV), is the verse that allows me to know that God will use this season of my life, difficult though it may be, for His glory and my ultimate benefit.

By human standards my fall down the stairs and the vertigo and the brain injury that resulted in my short-term memory loss would seem to dictate an end to my long and much-loved career, but I'm here to tell you that, even with its problems, my life is more inspiring, more intriguing, and more fulfilling than ever. For me, when life does take an unexpected turn, it is somewhat like taking a hike on a new trail; I can't wait to see what is around the next bend. If the going gets really rocky, I might start hoping smoother ground is just ahead or that I'm close to the end of the trail where I can take a long desired break from the grueling journey. But my enthusiastic expectation for what is yet to come, for what God has planned for me and my life, never wavers. I trust Him.

I also trust my family. Many years ago I told my family that I was concerned that I might not realize it myself if I started to lose my edge and my speeches were no longer as effective as they should be. I did not

want to embarrass myself, so I asked them to promise that they would tell me if they ever thought it was time for me to step down from the stage. As I got older and started experiencing some of what I'd call the usual memory loss that happens when we pass the ages of fifty, sixty, and then seventy, the children often checked on me to be sure I was still able to deliver. Thankfully, they were discreet, and until after the accident I didn't even know they had already begun checking me out periodically. They took their assignment seriously, and I'm glad they did.

It is true that as I neared the age of eighty, I began to rely on notes to help me keep my place as I was speaking. But I figured that most folks rely on notes by the time they are eighty, so I wasn't at all concerned about how my audience would perceive my occasional pass by the podium to reference my outline. My daughter Julie reviewed the DVD of the Get Motivated Seminar engagement I did in San Bernardino, California, on March 6, 2007, the day before my accident, and she assures me that I was still completely stageworthy at that point. Unfortunately, my brain injury had such a profound effect on my short-term memory that the ability to reference an outline was beyond me. I could look at the outline, but I couldn't remember the last point that I had made. To add insult to injury, the vertigo I was experiencing made it virtually impossible for me to even walk around the stage safely.

The Dilemma

Obviously, I had a real dilemma. I book engagements months and years in advance, and there were several engagements pending when I fell. I know companies and individuals alike are negatively impacted if I can't keep an engagement, so I have always done everything in my power to be where I'm expected. I've sometimes missed the funerals of my siblings and friends, and I've spoken when I probably should not have due to illness, but I always felt like my responsibility to show up according to plan was paramount. I can still hear my mother saying, "If a man's word is no good—he is no good." I had given my word.

Situations like the one I was in create circumstances that make a fellow really grateful to have good family relationships. I knew I could count on the help of my family, and I got it in spades! The Redhead, Tom, Cindy, and Julie enlisted the help of my doctors who were working with me after my accident, as well as the help of my friends and associates, to determine if I should find a way to continue speaking or stay home and concentrate on my writing.

My family was open to seeing how I would progress, but they were concerned about the very real possibility that my vertigo might cause another fall and that traveling would put me in more vulnerable positions than staying close to home would. When they discussed the idea that it might be time for me to retire from public speaking, it was quickly followed by a concern that God might not be done with using me on the stage, and none of them wanted to be responsible for suggesting I stop if that was, in fact, the case. However, it was crystal clear that short of an outright miracle I would not be giving the kinds of speeches my audiences had come to expect.

The doctors had said that I might recover more of my short-term memory with time as my brain healed, but they couldn't be sure what the ultimate outcome would be. More than two years have passed since my fall, and it seems that I have good days and other days. (You know there are no bad days. After all, some people didn't wake up today, so compared to them, I'm having a better-than-good day!) Since I am over eighty years of age, we are taking the conservative approach to my medical options. We're taking our time and applying the good old Ben Franklin approach I've taught all these years: divide a page from top to bottom, put positive benefits of procedures/therapies in one column and possible negative outcomes in the other, and we'll let the obvious, as well as prayer, determine our decisions.

I'll go into more detail later about some of the therapies, supplements, exercises, and medical treatments friends and even clients have suggested and that we've tried, but for now I want you to know that we've never stopped looking at possible treatments for what ails me. We pray about the treatments and supplements we are told about, and if we feel God is leading me to try them, I try them. My doctors remain supportive and encouraging about the possibilities the future holds.

My associates, particularly those who also speak on public platforms, were and still are concerned about my retaining my dignity and going out on top. The thought of me—in many cases their mentor—performing differently and faltering here and there before an audience is almost unthinkable. I love them for wanting to help me be remembered as I was before the accident. And I love them for personally helping me move ahead, to do what God puts in front of me to the best of my ability.

The Immediate Solution

Thankfully, the only speaking engagement I had to miss immediately after my fall was for my friends and business associates Peter and Tamara Lowe at one of their big Get Motivated Seminars in Houston, Texas, on March 13, 2007. After a lot of in-depth examination by no less than five doctors, it was determined that I had retained almost all of the information I have taught over my many years as a speaker and author, and that I was totally “present” when being spoken to. The only new memory problem I had was with the most immediate short term. When questioned, I could answer without any hesitation; but if you asked me what you had asked me when I finished answering the question, I could not tell you. Yes, my memory about current events is that short! (You're probably wondering how this book got written, and I'll tell you—we are both the beneficiaries of the good help I have. Between my executive assistant, Laurie Magers, my editor/daughter, Julie Ziglar Norman, and others on my staff, we got it done!)

Since I could recall information when asked, Peter Lowe came up with the idea of changing my speaking format. For years I have been known for my energetic, highly physical speaking style. Some people have even accused me of being more than enthusiastic during presentations. I liked to somewhat live out the stories while I was telling them, and I thought standing stock still behind a podium might block or slow down the words that came flying out of my mouth at the rate of 250 per minute with gusts up to 450. You would naturally assume that it was my vertigo that put an end to all my physical on-stage activity, but it really had more to do with the fact that we couldn't find anyone who felt comfortable chasing me around the stage to ask the next question in our new interview format! Sorry, I couldn't contain myself.

Sitting down for one-on-one interviews on stage came about through a combination of my being unsteady on my feet and my mind's not keeping track of what I'd already said. Peter Lowe interviewed me for the first time in Boise, Idaho, on March 27, 2007, just twenty days after my fall, but after a few engagements it occurred to him that my associates, Bryan Flanagan and Krish Dhanam, both having shared the Get Motivated Seminar platforms with me on many occasions, might be a better fit for the interviewer role. They have both taught my material, and they've studied it in order to apply it to their lives. They can tell most of my stories almost word for word, and in the event I had trouble recalling any answer to their questions, they could help out by prompting me toward the answer or outright supplying the answer if it still eluded me. It made perfect sense to ask them to interview me at the Get Motivated Seminars. Fortunately, they both agreed, and with great faith we pressed forward to keep my commitments.

Love and Honor

Both Krish and Bryan did an excellent job of interviewing me on stage. They carefully laid out their questions so that we could cover several different areas of interest, such as the mental, physical, spiritual,

financial, and relational sides of life. Their goal and mine was to continue to give the audience valuable, applicable, life-improving information in an entertaining way.

I cannot express fully the gratitude I have for these two men. Engagement after engagement, they tweaked their questions as they learned better how to deal with my short-term memory. They spent hours and hours working on how to make me look my very best. They learned how to highlight the good and minimize the imperfections that were bound to show with the kind of brain injury I suffered.

We continued on this course with the public seminars, but we had to address what we, as a company, would do about my corporate engagements and about my two-day Born to Win (BTW) seminar that I had hosted since the 1970s. Tom was the president of our company at that time (now he is the CEO), and I sorely wish that all the weight of this problem hadn't fallen squarely on his shoulders, but he handled and continues to handle the business beautifully.

Tom decided that we'd notify the corporations I was scheduled to speak for about my accident and the change to an interview format and let them decide if they wanted to keep their engagements or cancel. He also decided that we would not book any more corporate events for the foreseeable future and that we would promote the upcoming Born to Win seminar as the final one.

The Last Born to Win Seminar

I know rock stars have farewell tours, sometimes every four or five years, but I had never considered that I might actually "plan" to do any of the things I do for the last time. I've always figured I'll die while I'm still doing what I love doing. When folks say they've heard I'm retired, I say with mock surprise, "Retired! Friend, you weren't listening! I said I was reFIREd! I'm not gonna ease up, shut up, let up, or give up until I'm taken up! Matter of fact, I'm just getting warmed up!"

Some people might think that's reaching a little far for a man who has celebrated the sixty-first anniversary of his twenty-first birthday. (For those of you who are mathematically challenged, that means I'm eighty-two years old.) But I am truly the kind of guy who goes after Moby-Dick in a rowboat and takes the tartar sauce with him! Which will help you understand that it was with a bit of trepidation that I agreed to the "last" Born to Win seminar.

It wasn't long before I understood why rock stars have so many farewell tours. They sell out—fast! I was overwhelmed at the immediate response to the announcement. Many who attended Born to Win did so several times through the years. Some brought their employees; others came with their whole families in tow. Larry Carpenter particularly stands out in my mind. He attended forty-five times over twenty-seven consecutive years. His beautiful wife, Lisa, and their three sons participated more times than I can remember. Larry also financially sponsored nearly two hundred people down through the years, because he wanted the people he cares about to experience what he experienced there. The last Born to Win was no exception. He brought his whole family and, as we'd say down home, a passel of friends to boot! That event was like old home week for the Redhead and me. We got to see so many people we'd come to know and love. We were in "tall cotton" the whole time.

Because of my accident, my involvement had been scaled down a great deal, but I was scheduled to have three different interview sessions with Krish Dhanam and a great deal of time mixing and mingling with the participants. Krish did the interview the first evening but later fell ill; another long-time associate and friend, Jill Tibbels, agreed to do the Saturday-morning interview, which went off exceptionally well. Jill always does an incredible job of anything we ask her to do. That's just one of the reasons we're so grateful for her

association with us, which spans more than twenty-five years.

Tom came up with the idea of making this final BTW more intimate and special by having a “family” session where the Redhead, Tom, Cindy, and Julie joined me on the stage in a living-room setting to tell stories about what it was like having me for a husband and father. I often tell people that if I’d known how much fun grandkids were going to be, I would have been a whole lot nicer to their parents! I’d like to add that had I known my wife and children would be taking the stage to talk about me...

We all had a marvelous time, but I suspect my jaw was dropped open most of the time. I had no idea that I had raised so many hams! All three of my children had the audience holding their sides. Honestly, I didn’t know that growing up and working with me had provided them with so much funny material! And when the Redhead chimed in, people were almost rolling on the floor. It was as if my family had been saving up for this one occasion. It was all in good, loving fun, and the ones I love most in this world did get around to saying that they loved *and* respected me, so all’s well that ends well.

Another Unexpected Twist

Except, as is often the case, what appears to be an ending is anything but. That afternoon of August 25, 2007, was another beginning for me with my daughter and long-time editor, Julie Ziglar Norman. I love seeing the hand of Providence in my life. Julie became my editor as a result of having won a place at the biannual Writers Workshop that *Guideposts* hosts to develop new talent for their magazine. John and Elizabeth Sherrill—long-time roving editors for *Guideposts* and well-known coauthors of Corrie ten Boom’s *The Hiding Place* as well as David Wilkerson’s *The Cross and the Switchblade* and Brother Andrew’s *God’s Smuggler*—noted that Julie was a natural at editing. When Julie told me they, and a few others who were leading the workshop, had commented on her editing ability, I immediately knew I needed her to help me with my books. Sixteen years and twenty-one books later we’re still writing away. This book is our first effort as coauthors. With my short-term memory loss, the kind of help I needed was more in-depth than the usual editing Julie has done in the past.

And now we’re speaking together as well! Jay Hellwig, my driver and personal assistant at that time and the husband of Jill Hellwig, our number one salesperson for more than fourteen years, noticed that the Born to Win attendees responded enthusiastically to what Julie had to say from the stage. Jay told Tom that he thought it would be a more natural fit to have Julie interview me at the Peter Lowe Get Motivated Seminars. He pointed out that because of our father/daughter relationship she could more comfortably interrupt me if I started to repeat myself and, after all, she had been editing everything I’d said in print for years; she knew all my material. It was such an obvious fit that I wondered why I hadn’t thought of it myself! Julie, it seems, had been preparing all along to help me at this time in my life.

It made sense to Tom, too, and when he asked Julie if she would travel with me and her mother and interview me on stage, she agreed without hesitation.

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