

The Greatest Breakthroughs Happen When You Want To Quit



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A version of this article was written in 2014 and published by Parade Magazine. It's one of my favorites, and I'm providing an update specifically for the athletes, coaches, parents, and supporters of USA Synchronized Swimming. Yet this is a message that applies to all of us.

Quitting Is Not An Option

The feelings of **overwhelm, stress and fear** can be **very disruptive when we're facing them head on**. From time-to-time, these feelings have caused me paralysis. I share this because I know it's a common experience for all of us as we stretch beyond our comfort zone.

Growing up is hard, and I laugh to myself about this because growing doesn't end once you hit a certain age or height! I thought it did, and boy I was wrong. Growth can be painful too. Growth can come in the form of learning to develop a new skill, implementing healthy habits, or letting go of relationships that no longer serve us, and our goals. In order to maintain balance during these growth spurts, and not be consumed by the stressful feelings we often experience, it's important to take a step back. I know your first instinct is to work harder and push harder to figure it out. After all this approach is what we're taught consistently is the formula for success. But there is another way that we don't hear about very often. While hard work is an important component leading to success, it's half the equation. There's another piece of the puzzle that I'm going to talk about. It's the give and take. It's the space between with time to breathe – it's when you ease your foot off the gas pedal instead of pressing harder. Taking a step back allows us to look at ways to shift our focus, ask for help, and cultivate resilience when facing adversity.

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Often times we get so caught up in all the things that are stopping us – time, money, other commitments, confusion, etc. In these circumstances, **I challenge you to ask yourself these questions:**

- What can I let go of – attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, relationships – that no longer support my goals;
- What do I need to help me reach my goals; and
- What nurtures my soul and makes me a better teammate, daughter and friend.

Overwhelm is bound to happen with school deadlines, team obligations, and balancing a social life on top of the day-to-day grind.

The truth is you have a choice. **Choice One is to be paralyzed and retreat because of overwhelm** (fear, self-doubt, lack of clarity and poor time management are often culprits) by shrinking our energy and staying “safe” **OR Choice Two** is to surrender, make necessary changes, and have faith. And always... **give yourself permission to slow down and ask for help.** You’re not a time magician and growth doesn’t happen alone or overnight.



You Are Super Human

Here’s what I learned about our brain and body – there’s a natural chemical process that occurs with change. How cool is it to know there’s a biological process our mind and body goes through to create change – small or large – in various aspects of our lives?

It’s fascinating to learn that the struggle is real! I’ve definitely felt this way and I know you have too. Sports Psychologist, Todd Herman refers to this process as the OWW brain or WOW brain. When your OWW brain is ignited you often feel stuck, bored and want to remain in our comfort zone. **This is why we quit or talk ourselves out of certain things before giving it a real chance – we say, “this isn’t working or it doesn’t feel good.”**

When our WOW brain is ignited we approach change and newness with confidence, a sense of adventure and as an opportunity for growth – the change within us feels energizing.

Having this knowledge can ultimately help us **push past the OWW or painful part of growth** because this chemical reaction is going to happen no matter what, and it will happen many times in life. The more we reach for the next level and succeed, the more confident we become, and this confidence creates momentum. It also lessens our need to rely on drama, adrenaline, and the sense of urgency to make things happen – making us more resilient.

How To Ignite Your WOW Brain

The Inner Athlete is your antidote. YOUR Inner Athlete gives a voice and identity to the part of you that desires feeling, energetic, alive and strong. It’s a partnership with your most resilient self, and most playful self!

Just like you have two hands – right and left – Your Inner Athlete has two parts of self – one that embraces discipline and rigor, and one that embraces play, silliness and peacefulness. All are needed for success. Your Inner Athlete intuitively knows when it's time for discipline, and time for play. So how can you tap into it?

Meeting & Growing YOUR Inner Athlete Relationship

Since the Inner Athlete cares both about striving for the next level, and rest from the daily grind, you can easily begin consulting YOUR Inner Athlete by asking what it needs, and listening for the answers. **Play with these questions:**

- What does my Inner Athlete need more of right now?
- What can my Inner Athlete keep doing {what's working}?
- What can my Inner Athlete stop doing?

Sticking to our commitments is only half the equation for success. The other half is **consulting yourself to figure out what's okay with you.** This way you can come from a peaceful and centered place about what's important to you when the urge to quit – OWW Brain – rears its ugly head.

Ashley DePaulis, creator of The Inner Athlete Difference leverages Your Inner Athlete to consistently find your competitive edge in life and in athletic pursuits.

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