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In a flurry of speeding white sails, blinding salt spray, 100 other boats, and high-pitched yelling, there was no way out, no last split-second opportunity to avoid the oncoming disaster racing down the face of a high rolling white-capped wave, and unfortunately, I knew it.

There had been no avoiding it. No possible alternative manoeuvre. No forewarning. Suspended in my harness, my legs were numb and lifeless. The periphery a blur. "Stop! Stop! It's going to be bad. Get ready for a crash!" Screaming last words over the whipping wind to my 17-year-old daughter, before I realised the sailing boat charging towards us, just off the congested start line, was, in fact, going to hit me and not the fibreglass hull of our dinghy.

A 400+ kilogram impact into the side of my hip catapulted me still fully in trapeze harness attached to the mast, to a bone thumping halt on the leeward side of the boat where I hung waiting for the boat to capsize onto me. Remarkably, my less than 50-kilogram superhero daughter instantaneously revealed her latent physical and mental muscle, managing to battle high winds, 2.5 metre waves, and rigid shock, to keep the boat upright and haul my dead weight back into the boat. As she signalled for the medics on standby at the National Sailing Championships in Perth, we had only days to recover to compete in the Women's World Championships.

After an initial X-ray and the false diagnosis of "muscle bruising" was changed to the more accurate (yet convoluted) medical description, "Intra-articular fracture of the right anterior acetabulum extending to the anterior articular surface, displaced fracture of the left superior pubic ramus and a vertically oriented fracture of the right sacral ala with buckling of the anterior cortex," it became apparent that the Fremantle Doctor sea breeze

had in fact blown in my favour that December day. I narrowly avoided a lifetime relationship with a wheelchair in exchange for three nasty fractures.

With the initial prognosis of 'bum sitting' and no weight bearing for at least four months, my best friend kindly commented to her puritanically holistic medicine friend, "You are going to need serious meds to stop you going crazy!" As an active, 'all you can embrace' person, I was now charting unfamiliar waters with

a compass bearing pointing, as far as I was concerned, in the wrong direction. Suddenly Lao Tzu's, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step," loomed as an insurmountable enterprise. That one step an ever-moving mirage.

Initially, it was pain that won in the heavyweight fight between physical malaise and mental determination. Hip pain, head pain, and heart pain. There was no way I was getting back into the boat for the World Championships. That opportunity had evaporated into the salt air, sunk to the bottom of the Indian Ocean or blown straight to the

shores of Rottneest Island, carrying with it the hours and hours of pre-regatta preparation, sweat, and tears.

I quickly discovered there is a deeply unsynchronized connection between discomfort (both physical and mental), comfort zones and courage. Climbing three flights of stairs with the absence of both an elevator and correct diagnosis was all I needed for confirmation of that reality. Without superpowers, courage I reasoned, is rarely the default response to all things excruciating or new.

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A wise old man once said, "Fear is a reaction. Courage is a decision" (Winston Churchill). There is no recipe for courage on any of the celebrity cooking shows. I didn't find a healing poultice or herbal remedy for courage bubbling anywhere. There's also a definite absence of 'Moving Your Comfort Zone for Dummies' on Amazon. Nevertheless, a road is rarely walked for the first time and often not alone. Long-time famous self-development guru Stephen Covey clearly didn't suffer excuses (and mine were not going to be anything exceptional), with his candid tonic, "Between stimulus and response, there is a space where we choose our response." He went on to say, "Happiness like unhappiness, is a proactive choice." The correlation of wisdom between these two wise gents was unmistakable. I secured my boots, grabbed my crutches and packed as much available courage into my rucksack as possible.

It was hardly going to be a rapid march forward, or linear trajectory towards the initial stages of regaining movement, walking, working and driving, let alone a return to my avid pursuit of outdoor adventures. Life is slow when the trek is carried out on crutches, not Leki hiking poles, and spent floating around in hydrotherapy pools.

The healing of fractures is about as speedy as a 16th century Pavan. Every footstep is considered, every access path negotiated. Forward planning from one end of the kitchen bench to the other, or from the bedroom to the laundry is paramount; value adding (accomplishing many tasks whilst headed in one direction) and route mapping an acquired obsession.

The word Algebra from Arabic "al-jabr" literally means the "reunion of broken parts". What's the formula for the reunion of broken parts? An obvious consideration when the couch is your constant companion. What principles are needed to restore equilibrium, a balanced equation?

As the days turned to weeks and then months, attributes crystalized, and an equation began to manifest. An unwavering husband, dedicated loved ones, a chorus of positive well-wishers, skilled practitioners, determination, the patience of Job and an enormous serving of positive attitude, (along with blood thinners and a few painkillers), seemed the perfect antidote. Otherwise summarised as: Support + Encouragement + Unconditional Love + Perseverance + Positive Attitude = Healing.

However, formulaic theories and practice often battle it out on the field. Maths was never my forte, but I've always loved psychology, so the showdown was good. The algebraic reality comprised of the smallest of increments; getting into bed without assistance, showering independently, dressing autonomously, moving up and down steps, carrying a cereal bowl or cup of coffee with one crutch, perfecting my penguin waddling skills whilst regaining the ability to walk, and finally, five months later, permission to drive a car.

Excuses abounded and proved an ever-present temptress. Moving through the fear of one leg lift to achieving three sets of fifteen, from side planks of five seconds to the goal of seventy-seven, to regaining core balance and standing on one leg without reservation or anticipation of pain. Clearly "I can't" was comfortable, encouraging an aching resignation keen to settle deeply, where life threatened to remain a tiebreaker.

But tiebreakers belong to tennis, not one of my recreational pursuits. A shuffle to the letterbox was in my line of sight. A 100 metre totter to the end of the street. "Start small, be realistic, be kind," whispering reminders. An overwhelming dissatisfaction with the present formed the solid impetus for change and goal setting. A concerted effort to "Not let the darkness steal the joy within my soul," or "Let my circumstance become my compass" (Rend Collective), became my tablespoon of accountability. The letterbox materialized, passing street signs were photographed as milestones, hydrotherapy became gym sessions as the pain gradually became past and gradient a godsend.

With an inflow of 'energy-oxidants', spurring the ever-present whisper of optimism, milestone achievements became a communion of triumph over human frailty. A recognition and re-affirmation of an intrinsic capacity to grow further, stretch longer, continue harder. Each new day an occasion for thankfulness and a sincere and renewed connection with hope for the road ahead.

Every serious injury leaves a memory embedded in muscle or mind, and most times in both. A natural reflex drawing down on pain or responding to opportunity. The opportunity to embrace a challenge or be controlled by circumstances. I've learned that injury doesn't come with a roadmap, GPS or even an ETA. Patience and determination don't appear on the Pharmaceutical Benefits list.

What it does come with most times is choice. Walking forward, even in the midst of doubt, the shadow of my trail past continues to form, testifying progress. Benchmarks are challenged and further milestones established. Routes from the bed to the kitchen, kitchen to the couch, couch to the letterbox, letterbox to the end of the street, micro strolls of 500 metres, one kilometre, and three kilometres. Eight months later, mountain trails a solid reality, and fourteen months later, a sailboat the sweetest reward.

Freedom to choose in the minutest of seconds a path of problem or possibility lies within us all. And hopefully;

"I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference."
— The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost.



MEET Jarka Kluth

Successful sailor, coach, organisational team and culture leader; Jarka Kluth is passionate about seeing individuals identify, embrace and live out their full potential. Next to her day job in management, Jarka is a sailing, hiking, reading and writing enthusiast. Her trails have taken her to multiple continents, with years spent hiking in the German Alps. Passionate about seeing individuals identify, embrace and live wholeheartedly, she is a member of the 'She Sails' committee of Australian Sailing, set up to encourage and support females in the area of sailing participation and personal growth.