

NATURAL EXHILARATION

LEAD AN ADVENTUROUS LIFE YOU LOVE

DI WESTAWAY

Why we need adventure

Adventure is the key to endless motivation.

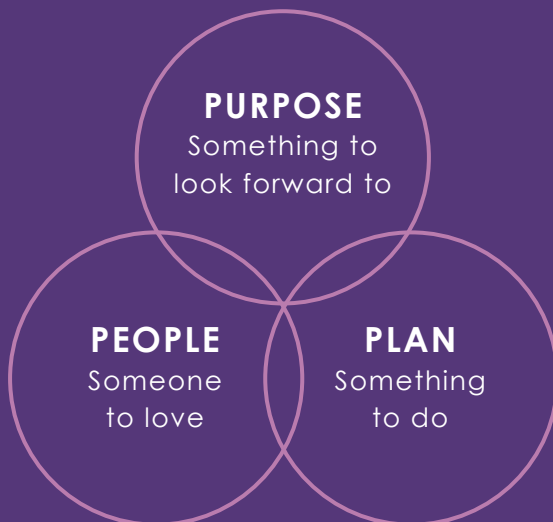
Adventure:

- Connects you with your innate desire to seek, shine and soar, creating pleasure, power and productivity.
- Replaces excuses and bad habits with thoughts that thrill and rituals that replenish and rejuvenate.
- Immerses you in a mind, body, spirit experience which creates natural exhilaration.

Active Adventures With Friends In Nature help you create a life you love, with people you love, doing stuff you love.

The Adventure Mindset is therapy that makes you thrive.

Some doctors call it Lifestyle Medicine.



About Di

Di Westaway is a global leader, founder of Wild Women On Top and one of Australia's 2016 Top 100 Woman Of Influence.

Since recovering from her mid-wife crisis in 2000, she has helped nearly 20,000 people to experience the natural exhilaration of active adventures with friends in nature while raising nearly \$20 million for charity.

When she's not going upside down on knife edge summits, Di leads her team on a mission to connect, inspire, empower and motivate women to lead adventurous lives they love.



Di found her passion after personal trauma led her on a failed mountain quest. She's bold and bad-ass as she elevates and nurtures, getting us off the couch and into nature to reclaim our feminine powers.

Di loves sharing her Rituals of Joy and the rejuvenating powers of adventure and hopes you will too.

She'd be delighted to reach out to share stories with your community and connect with you.



di.westaway



@diwestaway

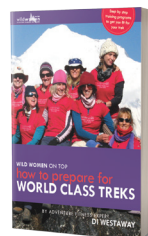


@DiWestaway

More from this author

*"Wild Women On Top:
How To Prepare For World Class Treks"*

Di has compiled the best training techniques to assist you in preparing your mind and body for a world class trek.



Natural Exhilaration is a women's health book of stories & science to entertain, educate and inspire you to **lead a life you love**. Di shares the Adventure Mindset and the Rituals of Joy to enhance your pleasure, power and productivity in a busy buzzy world. If you're feeling fine, sad, mad or bad instead of gorgeous and glad, you need this book.

"No matter your age or fitness level, there is a story in here of someone just like you - women empowered to overcome their fears, find their strength and reclaim their health and happiness. I hope you will join them."

- **Heather Swan**, World wingsuit pilot, adventurer, mother.

"Unlike much health advice, Di's work is based on sound scientific evidence. This book has advice that's worth reading and following to get more life into your years."

- **Professor Garry Egger**, Australasian Society for Lifestyle Medicine (ASLM) Adjunct

"In this outstanding publication Di highlights the medicinal and healing powers of active adventures in nature with life changing plans that help ordinary women achieve extraordinary goals."

- **Dr Paul Batman**, Exercise Physiologist



DI WESTAWAY is a global leader, founder of Wild Women On Top and one of Australia's Top 100 Women Of Influence. She has inspired 20,000 people into active adventures with friends in nature and blogs on the Huffington Post and Thrive Global.



www.wildwomenontop.com



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NATURAL EXHILARATION

LEAD AN ADVENTUROUS LIFE YOU LOVE

D I W E S T A W A Y

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Note: All recommendations in this book are backed by science but those suffering from chronic diseases should seek expert healing advice from trained professionals. Some exercise can be potentially dangerous but walking in the park is not. If you're sick and sad consult a doctor who leads a life you'd love.

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What they say about Natural Exhilaration

Di is an extraordinary woman who has me quite baffled. How she manages to achieve all she does and help so many along the way is an absolute mystery. Find the secret inside this book.

Gretel Killeen | Comic | Writer | Guru

Di Westaway is a woman of influence who reminds us that health is not something you buy, but what you do! She demonstrates fun ways to bend the body and mind in the pursuit of happiness and health. Stretch your legs, embrace the natural world, and keep the body moving.

Jennifer Byrne | Journalist

In all my years in the fields of health, lifestyle and fitness, I've never come across someone as enthusiastic and passionate about the field as Di Westaway. She not only has the drive to help stimulate women to become more active, but the imagination to also make it fun. Her adventures for women are inspiring and transformative at a level that make a real difference to women's lives. Unlike much health advice, Di's work is also based on sound scientific evidence. This book has advice that's worth reading, and taking up, to get more life into your years and years into your life.

Professor Garry Egger AM MPH PhD Vice President, Australasian Society for Lifestyle Medicine | Director, Centre for Health Promotion and Research | Adjunct Professor, Health Sciences, Southern Cross University



Di and her Wild Women on Top make you believe that extraordinary is ordinary, that being brave is best, that risks are rewarding but most importantly, that trekking in the sun with like-minded women can be fun.

Rachel Anderson | Director Amex Travel

From the first page of this thoughtfully crafted read Di's passion for adventure takes a flying leap off the page! You'll be knocked over and bounce back up again ready to indulge in the beautiful and challenging wild world she creates. Di leads fearlessly, reads ferociously and educates wildly. With her natural strength and creativeness, she trains her team of wild women to find exhilarating ways of exercising in nature, teasing out their goals and ambitions and inspiring women to get out there and be wild, confident and brave!

Kate Clissold | Radiographer | Mum

Natural Exhilaration is a book everybody who is seeking to break free of the shackles of a difficult or unfulfilled life should read. Di has empowered thousands of women to create healthier, happier and more productive lives by using the most natural resources we have; nature. In this outstanding publication, she highlights the medicinal and healing powers of nature and active adventures by including life changing plans and adventure alternatives that can transform ordinary women into achieving extraordinary goals.

Dr Paul Batman | Exercise Physiologist Australian College

Di's work and her Coastrek partnership with The Fred Hollows Foundation has transformed hundreds of thousands of lives by restoring sight. This book is a must read for women who want to experience Natural Exhilaration. Di shows us how – with thanks for your passion and purpose.

Penny Tribe | The Fred Hollows Foundation

This book is dedicated to all the wonderful wild women who have taken the challenge of Active Adventure With Friends In Nature. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for showing me it creates natural exhilaration. And to my kids who know this to be true and my mum who gave me nature.





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Gratitudes

This book was inspired by our wonderful Wild Women On Top and Coastrekkers. Thank you for sharing your stories which inspire others to believe they can lead adventurous lives they love too. I've renamed you all to protect your privacy.

A big thanks to my mum for providing me with a happy healthy childhood and teaching me how to change my thoughts. This priceless gift has helped me manage my moods while finding my purpose.

I am super grateful to the extraordinary people who have helped our team overcome countless obstacles to inspire and motivate nearly 20,000 trekkers to choose our Active Adventure With Friends In Nature and to all past and present Wild Women On Top, Coastrekkers, volunteers, partners and donors without whom none of this would have been possible. I feel blessed to have you all in my life.

Thanks to the energetic, dedicated, wonderful team at Wild Women On Top, led by trek athlete super-mum Lisa Marshall and Base Camp goddess Tania Taylor, our Advisory Board's delightful David Fell and wonder woman Carole Davis, plus calm Keith Marshall, brilliant Bella Westaway, delightful Danae Griffith, effervescent Elaine Kindred, super Skye Paton, lovely Lara Leisegang, power house Pip Soulsby, unstoppable Jane Denning, awesome Ann Jenkins, Valerie Reilly, Jules Holbrook, Donna Freak, Sammy Page, Alex Willis, Anna Betcher our amazing coaches, Wanda Nicholson, Jo Vartanian, Roz Warne, Nicola Moran, Kelly Books, Jacq Conway, Fuchsia Simms, Millie Walker, Vic Silk, Jules Stern, Sue Wallace, Merel Dalebout, Katherine Rothwell, my Friday Gals and Sunbursters.

And to Project Manager Angel Alice O'Connell-Milne and Editor Tammy Ballantyne.

And thanks to Coastrek Patrons Julie McCrossin and Adam Spencer, Ambassadors & VIPs John Faulkner, John Brumby, Ben Phillips, Libbi Gorr, Gretel Killeen, Susie O'Neill, Libbi Trickett, Anna-Louise Bouvier, Dr Joanna McMillan, Angela Mollard, Jennifer Byrne, Tracey Spicer, Tony & Margaret Abbott, Fran Kelly, Robbie Buck, James Valentine, Simon Marney, Sarah Wilson, Ruth & Rosa Hollows, Sally Barnes, Parks Vic's fabulous Fran Horsley and everybody who helped me connect with these gorgeously generous people.

A big shout-out also to the fabulous team at The Fred Hollows Foundation including CEO Brian Doolan, who always takes my calls, the clever Penny Tribe, marathon man Markus Schar and living legend Gabi Hollows who's shown me the family in community.

And big thanks to my fellow warriors against sedentary death syndrome Nigel Champion, Lisa Champion and Greg Hurst as well as Thought Leaders Business School genius, Matt Church plus powerful Pete Cook, ridiculously awesome Rohan Dredge and fabulous Christina Guidotti.

And a big 'woooooo-hoooo' to life-long friend and world Ecotourism authority Professor Ralf Buckley, Public Health guru and nature lover Dr Rob Grenfell, Rockstar lecturer Dr Paul Batman and living legend of lifestyle medicine Dr Garry Egger. Your generous support and encouragement has helped me make the important link between active adventure and lifestyle medicine.

And finally, to my kids and cats for surviving my horrendous housekeeping while learning how to stir-fry veggies, change light globes, unblock sinks and replace toilet rolls. I love you to bits.



Wake-Up

Within every woman there is a wild and natural creature, a powerful force, filled with good instincts, passionate creativity, and ageless knowing. Her name is Wild Woman, but she is an endangered species.

Dr Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Ph.D. | Jungian analyst and storyteller

The rustle of the wind through the trees, the smell of the moist vegetation, the warbling of the birds from the treetops and the bubbling of the creek. We all have memories of this scene, but how many of us get to experience this daily, weekly, monthly or even yearly? One of the great motivators for improving yourself is chasing an emotional experience and a great way of doing this is connecting with nature. How amazing that we needed to do research studies to prove that exercise in nature is the perfect setting to improve your mental and physical well-being.

Sometimes a feeling of incompleteness comes upon us, we wish we were a bit fitter, happier and generally better in ourselves. With the current pace of life, the pressures of finances and so on, it is so much easier to just succumb to sitting on the couch, watching the TV and eating another snack. But with all lifestyle related conditions increasing exponentially (such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease and depression) there has never been a better time to focus on turning the tide.

You may be thinking that you have just picked up another one of those motivation books about someone's personal journey to a better life – well that is really only partly true. For Di Westaway

is well qualified to guide you on a path to a better focused life. Not only does she describe her own personal journey to drive her transformation, but she has assisted nearly 20,000 others on equally life-changing trajectories.

Di has used the time-honoured approach of a well thought out plan, a graduated increase in activities, incorporating a group focused approach and setting sequentially achievable goals to excellence in 'Wild' adventures. All this is supported by infectious passion and enthusiasm. This works. Imagine encouraging and supporting over 20,000 busy women to train and walk 30 to 60km and then taking many of these on challenging adventures.

Read on, consider and act. Knowing that you are in experienced hands on this journey.

Thank you, Di, for all you have inspired.

Dr Rob Grenfell MB BS, MPH, FAFPHM | Public Health Specialist



Introduction

If you're feeling sad, mad or bad, this book will help you feel glad. It will help you lead an adventurous life you love.

Adventure energises you. It recharges and rejuvenates. It puts a spring in your step, pink in your cheeks and a sparkle in your eyes.

But if we're feeling flat we're more likely to reach for the Prozac than a project. And when we're feeling fine we don't reach because we're too busy. But there's more to life than flat and fine. There are mountains to climb, streams to ford and rainbows to follow.

There are dreams to dare, fun to feel and delights to dazzle.

But it usually takes either inspiration or desperation to send us searching. We need inspiring stories to lift our spirits and help us to soar again. We need to understand our natural nurturers to ignite our superpowers.

This book shares compelling women's wisdom, simple science and top tips to help you get your life back and guide your adventurous journey every step of the way.

By unveiling your purpose, your people and your plan, you'll ooze pleasure, power and productivity. And by practicing your Daily Rituals of Joy you'll live natural exhilaration. Some doctors call it Lifestyle Medicine. We call it natural adventure.

But it's not for everybody. It's only for women keen to take responsibility for their thoughts, lead a life they love and flourish in our buzzy world.

Come with us. You'll love it.

THE BIRTH OF WILD WOMEN ON TOP

A healthy woman is much like a wolf: robust, life-giving, territorially aware, inventive, loyal and roving. Yet, separation from the wildish nature causes a woman's personality to become meagre, thin, ghostly and spectral.

Women Who Run With The Wolves by Dr Clarissa Pinkola Estés

Sixteen years ago, I was tired, wrung out, miserable and fighting forty. I was juggling a bunch of common suburban housewife dramas and a dysfunctional relationship when my world disintegrated into a mid-wife crisis.

Then, out of the blue, a friend's personal trainer invited me to climb Mt Aconcagua, the highest mountain in the Southern Hemisphere. This adventure transformed my life and led to the creation of Wild Women On Top, which became a social enterprise that transforms lives.

I never planned to create a social enterprise but I wanted to create a community that helped women get fit in nature. And it was the support and love of this community that led to the creation of a small business which now creates global change. I feel blessed, humbled and incredibly grateful to have found my purpose, my people and my plan.

Little did I know this adventure would help me get my life back and teach me how to lead an adventurous life I love. I got fitter, stronger and gratefully happier than I've ever been. I didn't reach the summit of Mt Aconcagua on that fortieth birthday adventure, but I fell in love with wild adventure and its powers of natural exhilaration.

But I had no idea what lay ahead.

Escaping the sadness of a broken marriage and reclaiming my mental and physical health while supporting my children became my new life.

Six years later, the amazing Lisa Marshall joined my mission of helping women get fit in nature and prepare for wild adventures.

Together we built our team of loving, nurturing, energetic women with complimentary skills who also love bringing smiles to the faces of women who dare to leap outside their comfort zone in the wild.

Then in 2009, my plan to keep our clients adventuring over the summer silly season became a recipe for helping tens of thousands of women get fitter, stronger and happier by hiking. Together we created the Wild Women On Top Coastrek, 30-60km Team Trekking Challenge, proudly supporting The Fred Hollows Foundation.

Since then, over 20,000 people, mostly women, have trekked for fun fitness with friends, while restoring sight to nearly 800,000 people in developing nations. There's nothing more fulfilling than helping women find joyful health or watching a blind mum peel off her eye bandages to see her children for the first time. I feel incredibly privileged to have experienced both many times.

We've developed a unique formula using active adventures in nature to energise, nourish and nurture natural exhilaration. Seeing the exhausted but ecstatic smiles of our trekkers as they cross the Coastrek finish line, hearing the stories of adventure after our girls return from Everest base camp and being inspired by the journeys of our women after wild walks, wild weekends and Trek Training, leaves us with no doubt that wild adventure can transform lives.

Adventurous living makes us strong, resilient, youthful, energized, happy and healthy so we can kick ass in life. Science supports the notion that active adventure in nature can prevent and even cure some chronic diseases, just like medicine. Our stories give this science a female face and our adventures are the "spoonful of sugar that makes the medicine go down." Such is the power of Active Adventure With Friends In Nature.

IT'S ABOUT US

The biggest adventure you can take is to live the life of your dreams.

Oprah Winfrey

Hi gorgeous ones,

You might be reading this because you feel like crap or sh** has happened in your life. Or maybe your partner says you're a moody bitch or you feel like one. Or maybe the idea of natural exhilaration is appealing, you know people who have it and wonder how you can get some.

Well, you can. I *know* you can live exhilaration because it's in your feminine nature.

"I feel sooooo exhilarated" often gushes from the mouths of my clients. These are ordinary women achieving extraordinary goals. And they use adventure to motivate them to action.

They are just like you and me.

You are awesome. You can create a life you love. You can learn how to design your life so you experience natural exhilaration. And you deserve nothing less. We should all feel healthy, happy and exhilarated because it's in our human female design.

Yeah right, you might think. As if! How can anybody else possibly know what I'm feeling and what life is like for me?

Well, women know. We know how you feel because we come from the same genetic code. Most of us feel tired, miserable, wrung out and stressed because we're living a life that's unsuited to our nature. But I've discovered a solution. A way to make you feel better. A way for you to feel awesome. Some doctors call it lifestyle medicine.

I call it natural adventure.

Adventure is an exciting, thrilling or unusual experience – a bold, usually risky undertaking; an action of uncertain outcome. It's a state of mind which can lead to a fulfilling life of exhilaration.

We all have essentially the same biochemistry kit which means what works for me works for you. Whether you're at the beginning of a journey or well down the track, this book will help you find what you're seeking.

This quest is simple. But not easy.

It starts when you decide you don't like how you're feeling and you're ready to take action. When you're ready to take responsibility for your thoughts, your day, your week, your year, your life: responsibility for how you think, how you feel and how you respond.

If you're not ready, that's okay. This quest isn't for everybody. Often we need to hit rock bottom before we're ready for real change. But if it's not for you, please share this book with one of your buddies who needs it.

To help you along the way, I've captured the Adventure Mindset and Daily Rituals of Joy to motivate, guide and energise you. But the simplest of all energising habits is to go walking outside in the fresh air and sunshine; to feel the breeze on your face and the wind in your hair. If you do nothing else, that will make the world of difference. Walking gets you out of your head and into your heart. It feeds your spirit, cleanses your soul and nourishes your body and mind.

There are many paths to health and happiness. I am only an expert in one: the adventure goddess journey. The adventure goddess lives natural exhilaration because she reconnects with nature to design a lifestyle that's in sync with her ancestral origins.

After 35 years of seeking health through exercise I discovered the magical powers of adventure because I hit a wall. Like many women today I was exhausted, overworked and run ragged. We are insanely

busy bees, rushing around madly being all things to all people with no time to nurture ourselves, often working long hours for lifestyles that don't bring us real happiness and raising kids in a toxic world.

We have been seduced by a culture which tells us Botox, eye lifts, thigh gaps, acrylic nails, and Brazilians bring happiness and that the doctor will fix us when we get sick.

We know we can't buy happiness but we still think somebody else will repair us when we break. We want a magic potion or pill to make us better. Our overworked doctors are desperate to help but no matter what they try, the tide of chronic disease keeps rising.

We've lost our way.

Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, said "If we could give every individual the right amount of nourishment and exercise, not too little and not too much, we would have found the safest way to health... walking is man's best medicine... healing is a matter of time ... and natural forces within us are the true healers of disease." But it's only recently that scientists have actually proven Hippocrates' genius explaining why a natural lifestyle is the best medicine of all.

Our inactive urban existence is making us anxious and depressed. While attempting to make life funner, fuller, freer and fabber, we have outsourced responsibility for our own health. We prefer pills, potions, supplements, fad diets and quick fixes for our global health crisis. The World Health Organisation calls it an epidemic.

We've believed terrible tantrums in toddlers, irritable tummies in teens, anxiety in adolescents, depression in dads and misery in mums is normal. And that losing a loved-one to heart disease, obesity, cancer, diabetes, dementia or even suicide is just part of life. This is not okay.

Globally, lifestyle diseases could send more of us to an early grave

than the Black Plague, which killed 75 million people in the 14th century.

Nearly nine million Aussies are obese and overweight and nearly one million have diabetes. A quarter of our kids and two thirds of adults are too fat for healthy body function and seventy percent of us will die prematurely of a preventable chronic disease.

We're leaving a toxic world to our teens: toxic beauty products, toxic cleaning products, toxic food, toxic air, toxic water, toxic soil and toxic lifestyles.

We live in a world where most of us don't think about health till we're sick. Then we expect the doctor to heal us. Many of us feed and exercise our pets and service our cars better than we do ourselves.

We've been taught to believe drugs are the best remedy. Many of us use Dr Google to self-diagnose then tell our doctor what medication we need. Doctors have little time to educate us about alternative options and even if they did, we're not interested. We want a quick fix then back to work. We're busy. But even doctors are now seeking alternative methods of healing.

One of Australia's top cardiologists once told me that his patients not only expected to be medicated after surgery, but insisted.

In their post op consultation, he said, "The best medicine is daily exercise." Almost all of them nodded and asked what drugs they needed. He said, "You need daily exercise."

They said, "What drugs do I need?" He said, "The best medicine for you is daily physical activity, like walking."

When they continue to insist on medicine he said, "Not only is exercise the best medicine for a healthy heart, but it is also the only medicine with no negative side effects." Many of his patients still chose drugs over exercise.

Many of us have no understanding of our personal role in prevention of disease. Thus, the federal government spends less than two percent of the health budget on prevention. Most of us don't understand that up to 80% of our ailments can be prevented with lifestyle changes.

We need to take responsibility for our own health and well-being, seek help from experts who understand our biochemistry and relearn what brings us health, happiness and fulfilment. And we need fun physical activity that is social, inexpensive, exciting and time efficient.

Research shows that one of the hardest things about leading a healthy lifestyle is the motivation to move. For most of us, the gym sucks. Even the thought of it makes us reach for a Mars Bar or recline with a wine. We're great at finding excuses not to exercise even though we know it's good for us. We're brilliant at finding more important things to do: our families, friends and work mates need us and then there's housework, pets, shopping, the hairdresser, hair removal, facials and nails.

But without a healthy body and happy head, we can't enjoy any of these things.

Best-selling author and neuroscientist Dr John Medina says rule number one for a healthy brain is exercise. But, despite the mountain of research proving physical activity underpins physical as well as mental health, almost 70% of us don't get enough exercise. Because of this and other lifestyle factors, one in five of us has mental health problems and millions of us are medicating our emotions without realising there's an alternative.

In her book Moody Bitches, Dr Julie Holland says being sedentary is our biggest health hazard. After 20 years of helping women reclaim their health and happiness, she says there's healthier ways to live our lives: by walking in sunshine, eating natural food and sleeping soundly.

“Our bodies are far wiser than we ever imagined... Overmedication has robbed us of our sense of control and modern life has separated us from the restorative rhythms of nature. We need to tune into our discomfort, not turn it down... It’s time to embody the wisdom inherent in nature and in our natural animal selves.”

So, if you’d like to lead a life you love by connecting with your genetic blueprint for health and happiness this book can show you how.

I can’t promise you it’s easy. But I can promise you it works. And if you follow the lessons contained here, and never, never, never give up, you’ll find the answers you seek.

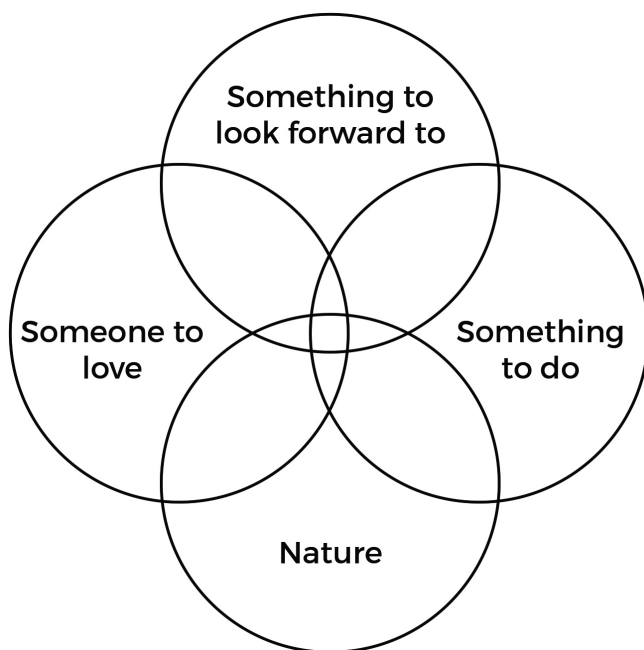
I’ve created a lifestyle solution that’s helped tens of thousands of women, underpinned by medical science and reinforced by inspiring stories to help you experience natural exhilaration.

But you can’t do it alone. You need people and a plan. This book will show you how to find your purpose, get your people, create a plan and energise it with pleasure, power and productivity so you can create an adventurous life you love.

I’ve learned the secret of happiness the hard way: through slip-ups and stuff-ups. But you can avoid the worst of the pain on your path to sustainable pleasure by learning from others.

I’ve known extreme sadness, moodiness and anxiety but now, as I soar to sixty, I create natural exhilaration every day. I understand the key ingredients and how to get them. And so can you. Psychologist Dr Gordon Livingstone identified three keys to happiness:

1. Something to do
2. Someone to love
3. Something to look forward to



In our tribe, the “something to look forward to” is adventure. And when adventure leads you into nature, you connect with your natural instincts and you’re motivated to move.

Natural movement makes us happy. Nature helps us thrive. Nature energises mind, body and spirit, creates healthy food and provides active adventures.

As I farewell my fifties with a fit, healthy, resilient body and mind, leading a business that supports a family of four on Sydney’s northern beaches, I feel not just happy, but fulfilled. I can still wrestle on the bed, go upside down, climb trees, leap puddles, ski with my kids and dance on tables. And so can you.

But this doesn’t mean I don’t have bad hair days. I sometimes wake up teary too. Life can be tough. Hardships hurt. But having daily habits or rituals which trigger your happy hormones gives you a

system to get back on track faster. It's like taking your medicine. And every day you get another chance to get it right. Practice makes perfect. But having an active adventure to look forward to inspires you to act and keeps you on track.

If you create an adventurous life and take your daily medicine, life's hardships strengthen you. There'll still be times when you can't face the world after eating that entire box of Cadbury Roses chocolate but you'll know how to bounce back when life hits you where it hurts.

You'll learn to use the Adventure Mindset to motivate and daily habits to heal. You'll see every day as a fresh start; a new opportunity for your Daily Rituals of Joy.



MY MID-WIFE CRISIS

Live as if you were to die tomorrow; learn as if you were to live forever.

Gandhi

I crashed, burned and bumbled my way to an adventurous life I love but I am sharing my story in the hope that you'll find an easier path.

For baby boomer kids like me, outside play was normal. "Don't come inside till dinner," was the rule. But I didn't discover the daily joy of physical activity until my swimming teacher, who was also a gym coach, selected me for his gymnastics squad. Gymnastics made me happy so I flipped, flew and forged my way through childhood tumbling around the garden with friends.

From the age of eight, at 6.30 every school morning, I rode my bike for a hilly half hour to and from the gym, even in the freezing

Canberra winter. Despite the disappointment of always being three kilos heavier than my best gym buddy Anne-Louise, I won lots of medals and never missed a training session for fear of missing out. (FOMO still motivates me to move today.)

But my passion made me some enemies. By 13, I'd outgrown the primary school gym program so I joined the local YMCA. Within months I got chunked out of the club. While the other girls were busy talking boys and Barbies, I'd jumped onto the parallel bars for extra turns. The girls dobbed and the coaches banned me from training. No warnings, no counselling, just "You're banned".

I spent two days crying in the foetal position. With nowhere to train except my backyard, my dad built me a make-shift beam and bars. I got really good at flipping without landing on the rose bushes or the open-air compost heap. But I was melancholy.

Eventually my mum came to the rescue. Feeling my pain, she re-wrote my essay which got me a part-scholarship to study gymnastics at Walnut Hill Performing Arts School in Boston, USA.

It was heart-breaking and frightening to leave home alone at 15, but I will always be grateful to Mum for this amazing emotional and financial sacrifice and opportunity.

I returned home from a year of intensive training to win the Level 10 Australian National Gymnastics title. It was a thrilling achievement. But then at 16, I tore my hamstring muscle off the bone, convinced myself that my gymnastics career was over and quit.

This powerful experience was both a blessing and a curse: a blessing because it taught me that I could achieve extraordinary goals, but a curse because I no longer had a purpose. Without something exciting to look forward to in my life, I was miserable.

I lost my sparkle and found a food addiction. I went into a slump that would last for years. I gained weight, binged and fasted. I tried

the Beverly Hills Diet, the Atkins Diet, the Lettuce Diet and then I tried bulimia.

Like many women I found a solution to my food addiction with exercise: dancing, jogging, weights and aerobics. I always thought I was fat so I exercised obsessively throughout the late eighties following Jane Fonda, big hair, little G-strings, shiny tracksuits and Olivia Newton John's "Let's Get Physical," until I saw a poster at the gym advertising an aerobics competition.

I knew I'd found something to inspire me. Entering the competition gave me a new purpose and with an active goal to train for I found focus and fulfilment. I connected with a healthy community and helped train other athletes as we immersed ourselves in a world of one-arm push-ups, aerial leaps, Lycra and leggings.

Then I had the joy of winning the Victorian state aerobics titles followed by the disappointment of losing the national championships. One of the judges consoled me saying I was "beautiful in bigness", which I interpreted as "you're too fat." So, I quit.

Soon after, my policeman turned wild-boy-actor husband got a gig in Sydney so we moved interstate. I got an office job – eeeeeekkkkkkk – and a pregnancy – oooohhhh!! Being pregnant gave me a powerful reason to change habits because my baby's health depended on it. So, I stopped fasting, bingeing and punishing myself and started nourishing my body.

I ate three healthy meals a day for the first time in fifteen years.

Within two years, I had another baby while supporting my husband's career and putting my career on hold. My own fitness fell by the wayside in favour of childcare so I was often exhausted, emotional and teary.

Then one day I had a complete melt-down. A Mid-Wife crisis.

Fortunately I found a solution to my misery in the thrilling Mt

Aconcagua adventure. Mt Aconcagua in the Andes, is the highest mountain in the Southern hemisphere. To give you some perspective: Mt Kosciuszko is 2,200 meters high, Everest Base Camp is about 5,400m, Mt Aconcagua is nearly 7,000 meters high, 1.5 vertical kilometres higher than Everest Base Camp and higher than most jets fly.

Climbing a serious mountain was thrilling and seemed like a good way to get motivated to regain my fitness and health: an exhilarating, if somewhat scary, goal. However, a few days after I signed up, mother guilt kicked in. Then came fear. Friends told me it was dangerous, I was a bad mother, I was selfish, I could die. “Why take such risks?” they asked.

But I had to do something to get me out of my madness and away from the sadness of my marriage. I needed emotional first aid and I knew if I didn’t get it, I’d need intensive care. But it wasn’t easy. Just like divorce, I’d swapped one set of problems for another. In fact, it was really difficult juggling work, kids, friends, my home and my trek fitness. It was exhausting but exciting. The call to adventure gave me a quest; a dream.

Six months later I flew to Argentina with my best girlfriend. We were excited and nervous, like kids on the first day of school. But we were in for a shock. It wasn’t like they said in the brochure.

Imagine that right now, you’re my best girlfriend... picture this...

We had NO shower – just wet-wipes.

We had NO water – just snow.

We had NO toilet – just a zip-lock bag.

But what we really didn’t expect was the level of danger. At night, we had to wee into our zip-lock bag because it was too dangerous to

leave our tiny tent. There were crevasses, colossal cliffs, blizzards and gale force winds.

So, imagine being in a capsule the size of a single bunk bed, shimmying out of your cocoon sleeping bag by torchlight, sliding your leggings down while kneeling, then manoeuvring the zip-lock bag into place to catch your wee, zipping the bag before you pull your pants up, all without spilling a drop on yourself, your bed or your sleeping buddy.

And don't dare think what happens if you get diarrhoea. The good news was, for the first time in my life I had no appetite. We survived on nothing but Milo, sugar and powdered milk for three days.

It got scarier. Four climbers fell off the south face, one died at Base Camp and another guy got a frost-bitten bum from sliding down the icy summit. We got lost in a whiteout and were too frightened to even consider the summit.

We failed completely.

It was this failure which eventually transformed my life and awakened the phoenix of my future. I found exhilaration. For the first time since winning the gymnastic title at 16, I felt awesome. I'd leapt out of my comfort zone and experienced magic moments. I'd feared for my life and overcome that fear.

This experience taught me courage and mental toughness.

It taught me that most of my fears are inside my head and the ones that are real can be overcome.

I also understood what had been missing from my life. I needed adventure to inspire and motivate me to prioritise my own self-care, and at the same time, to connect me with a community of women.

And I needed a purpose beyond my small suburban life, my white picket fence, gourmet dinner parties and the first-world problems

of whose husband was having an affair and whose kids were class captains. I needed a quest, an active adventure in nature to help me prioritise my own health and well-being.

I spent the next eight years helping other women prepare for adventure before returning to climb Mt Aconcagua. This time we summited together. It was like standing on heaven's doorstep.

Soon after, I realised that we could apply the lessons of natural adventure to other aspects of life to build mental toughness, resilience, confidence and power.

Surviving in the wilderness gave me physical, mental and emotional strength. I used this power as I struggled to protect my children from their father's post-traumatic stress disorder and divorce. This skill stopped me drowning.

And now I use it in business as well.

I've also learned that we need not just a purpose but *people* and *a plan* to be happily successful. And when we connect our purpose, people and plan we get pleasure, power and productivity.

I call this the Adventure Mindset. The Adventure Mindset is like a mind map to help you not just survive, but thrive in the game of life.

Unveiling our best purpose drives us to do the things we love. For me this means helping women lead adventurous lives through trekking adventures.

What started as a hobby became a way of life.

My purpose helped me focus on my unique special skill set, doing what I love, with people I love, while adding value.

I discovered that our Coastrek challenge is a great way to reach out to tens of thousands of women with the power of the Adventure Mindset.

But I didn't do it alone and neither can you. You must seek and connect with people. Find your tribes. As Oprah says, "Surround yourself only with people who are going to take you higher."

I managed to do just that.

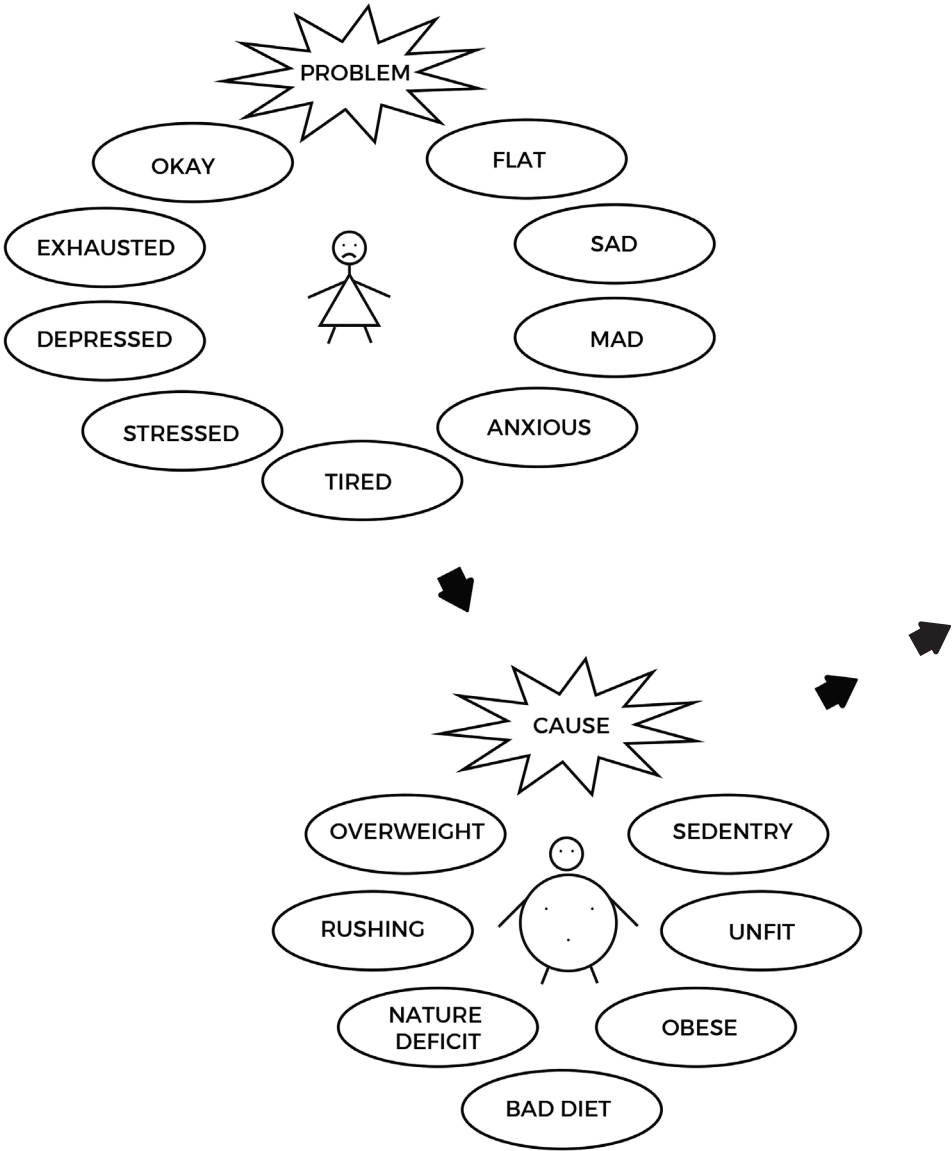
I learned that once you've got your purpose and your people, you need a plan. You need a written document starting with your purpose and working backwards to uncover the little steps that guide you there. It's like a treasure map or one page business plan.

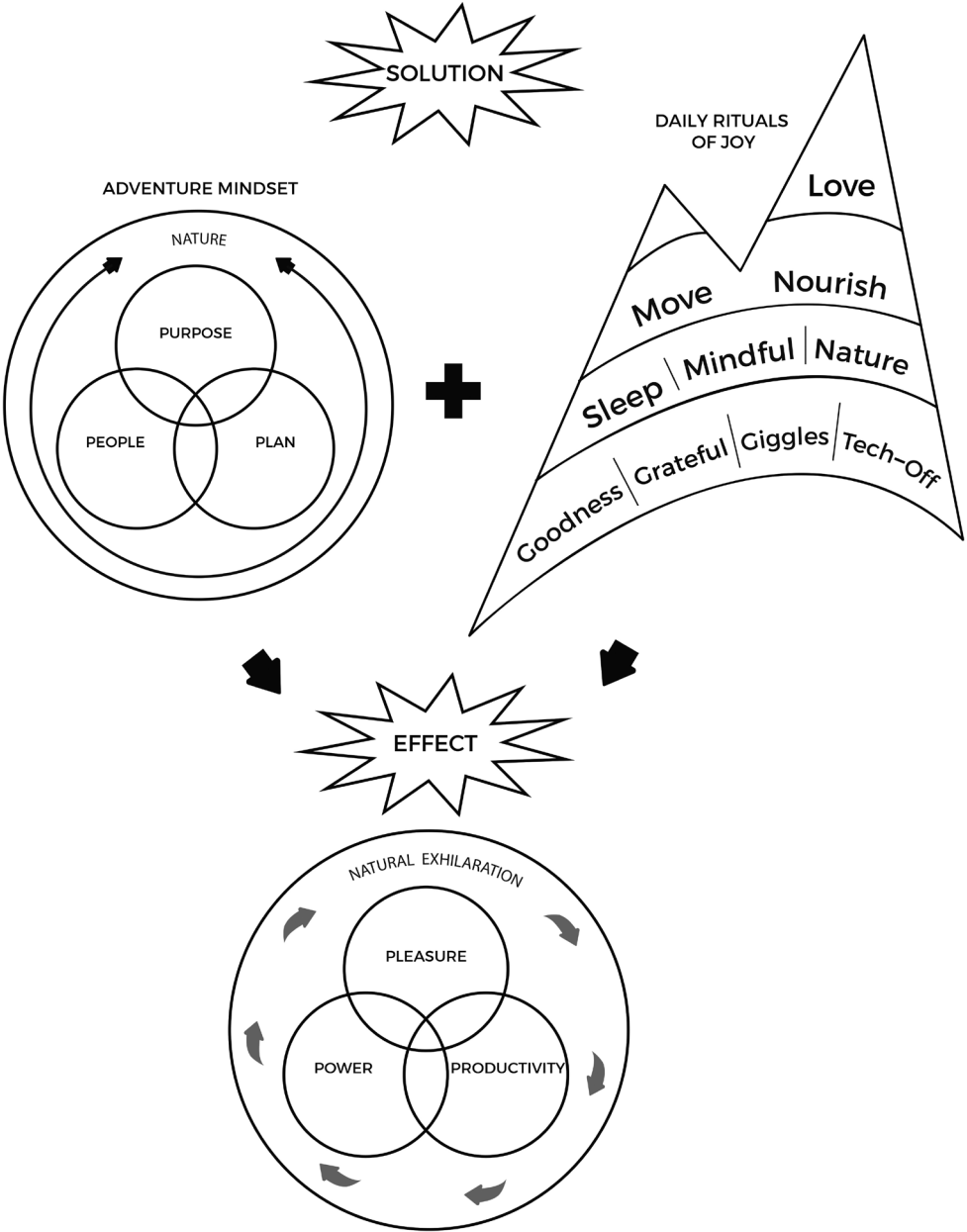
If I am happy, energised and thriving, I know I've got the right mindset and rituals. And I've learned that this requires nutritious food, daily exercise in nature, mindfulness, laughter, hugs and deep sleep. When I eat right I have lots of energy, no gut guilt, perfect poo, no body shame and I can lift myself and others higher.

If I get my daily dose of lifestyle medicine, my Rituals of Joy, I feel good. I've stopped worrying that my thighs have cellulite, my calves bulge, my arms are too fat and my tummy is soft.


But if I get headaches, tummy pain, sore eyes, pain in my joints or I can't keep up with my kids on a bike, climb trees in the park or scramble around the rocks at the beach, I re-focus on Active Adventure With Friends In Nature to get my mojo back.

NATURAL EXHILARATION JOURNEY MAP









1. Adventurous Living

Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure.

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.

Helen Keller

I know how it feels to be stuck at home with adorable kids, a loving partner and gorgeous friends, feeling like crap, feeling guilty for feeling like crap without knowing why. But I'm not alone.

My friend Carole, an only child who'd been wrapped in cotton wool and never allowed to climb trees or play on the monkey bars, also struggled as a professional working mum. She had two babies in her early twenties and ran herself ragged juggling work, nannies, jobs, babies, cleaners, gardeners, renovations, house moves and housekeeping. Her wealthy husband was often away on business and she got resentful, angry and annoyed. When her kids were teenagers she went wild.

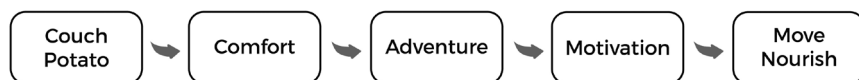
She took up mountain climbing and heli-skiing and trekked to Everest Base camp with her daughter. Together, they fell in love with adventure, taking exotic, extreme holidays, climbing many of the world's highest mountains and skiing across Antarctica.

Now, although her kids are adults and she can do as she pleases, she

still leads an adventurous life because it keeps her happy hormones flowing and relieves the stress of her busy urban life. Most mums know the feeling.

But exercising regularly requires an iron will and we're wired to chill and wait for hunger or fear to move us. When there's no hunger or fear, we crave comfort. But comfort is killing us.

We need motivation to move, nourish and thrive.



My dear friend Julie McCrossin used to be a couch potato. When we met ten years ago, after she interviewed me for her travel show, she spoke about how she hadn't moved her body in years. She said she marvelled at me squatting deeply beside her because her own knees refused to bend past 90 degrees. She decided she was ready to change.

She joined Wild Women On Top, and after six months of dedicated walking with a personal trainer she was able to keep up with the group. Within two years she climbed and camped near the summit of Mt Kosciusko, Australia's highest mountain, carrying a 20kg backpack. Then she trekked the ancient indigenous trails of the desert and walked the 55km Sydney Coastrek with her friends. She said walking with women in nature made her feel exhilarated and transformed her life.

Julie was thriving when throat cancer appeared and she had to battle for her life. Cancer treatment requires mental and physical fortitude and endurance. Julie feels the fitness and mental toughness she learnt with Wild Women was crucial for her survival. Like many cancer patients, she lives with the daily stress of recurrence but she's back walking with women and inspiring others to get into nature.

In nature, human beings were motivated by physiological survival: fresh air, water, food and shelter.

The chemistry kit of our bodies evolved to ensure that we gained a sense of fulfilment from our daily activities.

We worked together to ensure our safety and well-being, which enhanced our feelings of belonging, promoting self esteem and in many cultures, self-actualisation and even self-transcendence. Those of us who thrived reproduced.

This chemistry kit hasn't changed, but the world around us has.

Maslow's heirachy of needs is still a widely accepted explanation of human motivation, but now we have neuroscience to explain a lot more about our behaviour and it's telling us there's more to learn about what makes us happy.

The world around us is changing faster than ever which impacts our health like never before. We are getting sicker and sadder.

Many doctors now believe that behaviour changes can prevent up to 80% of chronic disease. But we're programed to stick to the status quo, to buy stuff that's dangled in our faces, to love sugar, fat and salt and to avoid exercise.

And who wouldn't rather chill with cake than workout with watercress?

We eat food that's quick and easy to get, flop on comfortable couches, work in concrete jungles and embrace the digital delights of virtual worlds without thinking for a moment that all these things might be making us ill.

We know sitting, stress and inactivity is bad for us but we don't think it will kill us. Many of us don't connect lifestyle and disease. But sometimes the first symptom of disease is death and your doctor can't fix that.

We have to learn to prevent disease and heal ourselves. It doesn't have to be hard and horrible, healthy living is about nurture and nature.

In his book *The Nature Principle*, acclaimed journalist Richard Louv says, "In an age of rapid environmental, economic and social transformation, the future will belong to the nature-smart – those individuals, families, businesses and political leaders who develop a deeper understanding of nature, and who balance the virtual with the real."

We need to get nature smart or suffer catastrophic consequences. But in the mean time, lets focus on the things we can change, which is our mindset and daily habits.

YOUR KEYS TO ENDLESS MOTIVATION

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So, throw off the bowlines.

Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails.

Explore. Dream. Discover.

Mark Twain

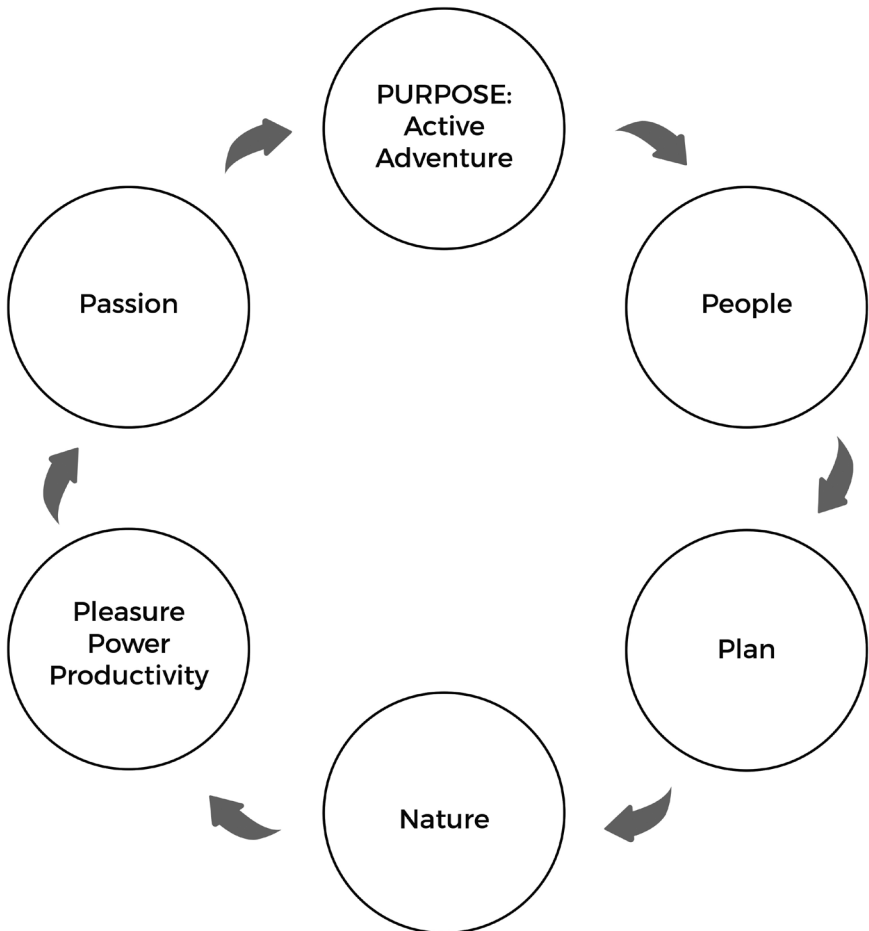
There's nothing like a big hairy audacious adventure challenge to launch us out of bed to train in the rain. Without a second thought, you throw off the doona, lace up your runners, grab a coffee and get outside, doing the stuff that's tough.

And it's the same for the rest of life. Whether it's finding love, starting a business, applying for your dream job, buying a house or climbing a mountain, an adventurous journey is a motivator which pushes us through obstacles in pursuit of opportunity.

It's sometimes hard to start an adventure but it is even harder to do things that hurt – like exercise.

But doing hard stuff with friends in nature makes motivation easier.

This is the principle behind using the Adventure Mindset to drive motivation, not just to move more but to achieve anything in life that's challenging.



Back in our cavewoman days we were motivated to move a lot to find food and escape the tiger. But now 85% of us are too busy, too tired, too full, too fat or too frantic to move and we think exercise is too hard, sweaty, painful, boring, expensive or just plain yuck.

A desire for wellness or weight loss isn't enough to motivate most of us to move and puff regularly.

Active Adventure is a great motivator and when you add friends, a plan and nature you get pleasure, power and productivity.

This creates passion and endless motivation.

The keys to endless movement motivation are:

Purpose:

Adventure is the purpose that drives your motivation to action.

People:

Friendliness and fear of letting your friends down motivates you to action.

Plan:

Your plan tells you what to do which motivates you to action.

Nature:

Nature wraps the whole package in fun, surprise and thrill which motivates you to action.

Pleasure, Power and Productivity:

This is what you get when you align your purpose, people and plan which motivates you to action.

Passion:

Pleasure motivates you to do it all again because you love feeling fit and fabulous.

In nature, every day was an adventure of survival. Paleo woman didn't choose adventure, it chose her. Finding food, water and shelter motivated her to run, climb, leap, bend, bound, think, plan, innovate and thrive making her healthy, happy and exhilarated.

Adventure no longer chooses us, but we can choose it.

Active adventure motivates us to get outside, to get moving, to eat nourishing food and to feel exhilaration without the drudgery of diets, the torture of training and the guilt of time out.

Like playtime at school, adventure engages fun before fitness. But the result is the same. Active adventure in nature improves fitness, health, happiness, sleep, memory, immunity and longevity while reducing stress, rumination, heart disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes, anxiety and depression. That's why some doctors call it lifestyle medicine.

You don't have to climb Mt Everest to feel adventure's results and benefits. Just going outside and climbing a tree works wonders.

Physical activity in nature is not only healthier, it's also a time-efficient way to get a mind, body and spirit workout. Playing with the kids in the park, walking along the beach with your buddy or hiking with friends in the forest builds power while reducing stress. It provides both the yang and the yin, the social and the meditative. Fitness in nature is healthy on the deepest level. For busy women, it's a winner.

For me the Adventure Mindset has been both the motivator and the recipe for having a life I love, with people I love, while doing good. And if you immerse yourself in the stories and lessons that follow, it will be the same for you, as it is for tens of thousands of women across the planet who have discovered the power of adventure.