

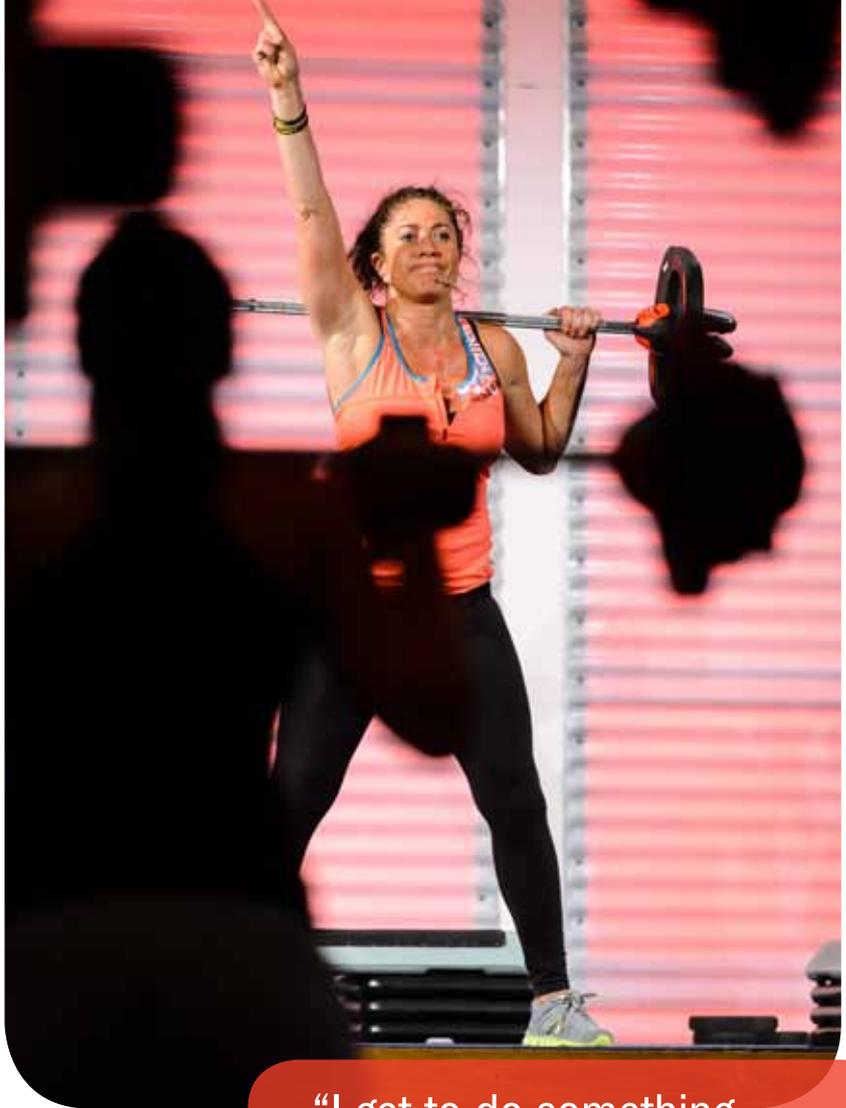


STORIES OF
CHANGE

MID

This is
who I am

I want to start at a good place, which is where I am today. I'm the mother of two beautiful girls. I'm very successful in my career: I get to do something I'm completely passionate about, every day, which is to help create change in other people's lives. I finally have a husband, and that may be my biggest accomplishment. That's where I'd love my story to start.



“I get to do something I'm completely passionate about, every day, which is to help create change in other people's lives.”

My grandmother was sexually abused, I was sexually abused, and though my mother wasn't abused as a child, she was as an adult. But my earliest memories, as a child, are very loving. My mum was only seventeen when she had me, and she just loved me. She started my heart good, and I'll be forever grateful for that.

My adopted father primed us from the beginning by being very controlling and manipulative. The actual abuse began when I was eight and didn't end until I was seventeen. I've always believed God gave me gifts. I'm physically very able, I have a good brain, I have a lot of empathy. As a child, and my adopted father reinforced this, I believed the abuse was compensation for my gifts. But my faith also helped me survive, and I did survive...

But everything finally broke down in seventh form. My adopted father had managed our family so that no one was allowed close to me – not friends, and not even my mother. The first time we sat down and really spoke was

in seventh form. My mother told me we needed to leave, because she was being abused, and she was worried he was abusing my younger sister.

I tried to tell my school that we were moving away because Mum was in an abusive relationship, but the counsellor picked up on something. He asked me if I was being sexually abused, and I broke down. I'd never thought people could see it. I'd always had a kind of perfect life at school, on the surface.



“I realise now that this is who I am. I’ve accepted myself, with all the kinks.”



Then it was just a matter of process. He accepted the charges and got ten years. One month later I sat my bursary exams, and somehow passed.

I was a broken girl. I didn’t know how to live. I’d spent 17 years of my life being told exactly how to behave, what to say, and when to say it. My life from 18 to 25 I call The Dark Ages. I was a big bundle of pus, that’s the only way to describe it. I hated men, but I also needed a man to control me.

I met the man who is now my husband. Our relationship was a roller coaster of pain. I manifested the cycle I’d had with my adopted father over again in my early twenties.

The Dark Ages ended when I had my children. I made a decision that they wouldn’t live my life, and that meant a lot of things – not just abuse, but poverty, a lack of choices, and feeling like they weren’t good enough. It was the first time in my

life I had something to live for. Up until then I hadn’t really ever wanted to live. You can’t live for a partner. You have to live either for yourself, or your children.

At 26, penniless, I moved with my twins to Auckland to find a job. In a year and a half I’d become a studio manager, discovered I had real entrepreneurial skills. I’d been teaching group fitness since I was 15. I never realised it, but I’d kept myself mentally and chemically balanced, through all the highs and lows, the depression and the post-traumatic stress, because of exercise. A club manager job came up and I took it - to work in the fitness industry was my dream job. Not so long after that Les Mills made me a National Trainer, and then National Manager. Les Mills is amazing. They’ve catapulted me into the future, even though I’m not yet halfway to where I want to be.





It was while working for Les Mills too that I realised I had the power to help others. A woman stopped me on the stairs one day and said 'You saved my life. What you said to me made me believe I could do it. If I hadn't joined I wouldn't be here today, because I was suffering chronic depression and this gym has given me renewed hope.' That was a moment that stands out. I know I've inspired thousands to be actively involved in exercise.

But at 34, even though my career was going great, and I had great kids, I was still stuffing up on every level as a human being, especially on the relationship front. I hadn't healed. I finally broke up properly with the man I had been in a very rocky relationship with, and it seemed like that moment of really letting go was what we needed.

A few months later he asked me to marry him. It wasn't instant, but something inside me finally said, "I trust you. You'll look after me forever. Yes."

My goal in life now is to be able to say I made a difference for a lot of people. That's why I'm not fearful of my story. Still, I've also finally learned that the only thing I should be honestly concerned with is me. I want to help everybody, but first I need to accept everything I am. Meditation helps me do that – it's both an anchor and a trigger. I meditate as much as I can and I know that when I don't want to meditate, it usually means I don't want to face myself. It's made a huge difference in my life.

I often do seminars and trainings now, and I start a lot of them by saying, "I stand before you as a flawed, broken human being, and bloody happy about it." A part of me was always afraid that if I dealt with my abuse I wouldn't drive myself as hard, because I'd suddenly be content. Another part of me thought the goal was to heal so completely the scar itself disappeared. But I realise now that this is who I am. I've accepted myself, with all the kinks. ●

