

A close-up, profile view of a woman with long, wavy hair, wearing a textured knit hat. She is looking downwards with a gentle, serene expression. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

The Trauma Therapist Project

*a manifesto for taking action:
how I stopped waiting and started doing.*

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The Trauma Therapist Project: A Manifesto for Taking Action

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1. What this is:

This is a manifesto. A reawakening of the creative spirit.

This is a reinterpretation of what it means to get an education, get lost in that education, be impacted by the trauma of a sibling, study the psychology of trauma, get inspired, finally pursue the work I love, and share my story in order to help others do the same.

This is not a doctrine about how I have all the answers and I'm going to share them with you.

Nor is this a prescription for how to make a million dollars, because I haven't.

Or a step-by-step about how to sell a NYT best seller, because I haven't. If that's your interest, that's fine, and I would direct you to Google.

This is not even a map of how to be a great trauma therapist, although you can certainly use what's inside here to help you achieve that goal.

This is, however, a short exploration of how I got off track, lost my way, and a map of how I rediscovered my inspiration.

This is also ultimately a call to action to myself, and to you, to once and for all stand for something meaningful, take action, and fire on all cylinders in whatever field you happen to be in.

2. Who this is for:

This is for anyone who's got a fire in their belly and isn't doing anything about it, and hasn't for a long time.

This is for those of us who know we have something to give, know we have something to share, but have been waiting for that perfect time to let it out; essentially waiting for someone else to give us the go-ahead, waiting for someone or some thing else to hit us over the head with a 2x4 before we can take any action.

Is any of this hitting home? Read on.

Question: Do you have the feeling that you could be doing more, or being more than you currently are?

And are you frustrated because you haven't been doing anything about it?

That's just where I was. It sucks on the one hand, but on the other, that's the perfect time to begin taking action because you're building

3. What you'll get out of this:

Welcome to your 2x4.

My hope is that this will be that incentive, that nudge over the edge and the motivation to take the smallest of actions which will then send you moving in a forward direction. Finally.

My hope is that by reading this, essentially by reading the description of my mistakes and the interminable period of utter inaction in which I existed for so long, that you will be propelled to get off the metaphorical couch and launch into being who you truly are or doing what you truly want to do.

It's an allowance, of sorts. Of course, I don't for a second believe that I'm actually giving you anything you don't already have. But sometimes that's the form in which we best receive this type of information.

We first need to hear someone else's story and struggles. Then we need to hear an additional person's struggles. Then we need to hear it again, and on and on. Then, and only then can we begin to say to ourselves:

*Wait a minute. This person did it. He's no smarter or richer or better than me. He did it, so can I. (think: **Roger Bannister** and the 4-minute mile.)*

As I write this I realize this may be a tall order. And the truth of the matter is—it is. Of course it is. Any time we're asked either by ourselves or someone else to move from inaction to action, it is a challenge.

So that is precisely what this manifesto is:

A challenge for us to be who we are and to live our lives according to our innermost beliefs.

A challenge for you to take action now with the knowledge that you will probably fail along the way. And to know that failing is part of the process.

Simple? Yes. Easy. Maybe not so much.

But, get ready. Here comes the 2x4.

So Why now?

There's a great quote by the amazing [Leo Buscaglia](#) which goes something like this:

If you're ever wondering how you can help, don't ask "What is there to do?" because to that question there are too many answers, which becomes paralyzing.

Rather, ask yourself "What can I do?" And to that, there is an answer.

And What did I do?

On Monday, July 21, 2014 I launched [The Trauma Therapist Podcast](#).

That was the accumulation of me re-discovering and then re-igniting my creativity.

That's my answer to the question, What can I do?

Why? Because it's allowed me to reconnect with who I am, with what I love to do, and with what I like to consider as my strengths.

In the time since the launch it has become so clear to me that everything leading up to that seemingly simple act of the pushing of that podcast publish button has been supporting and paving the way.

Steve Jobs in his now famous [Stanford Commencement](#) speech speaks so eloquently about this experience when he says that it is only when we look back on our experiences over the course of our lives that we can truly connect the dots and things begin to make sense.

That isn't to say that prior to the podcast there had never been a joyous or fulfilling moment. It's only that this particular action, and the project in and of itself, contains within it the fullness of a realization, which for me is that

I have found my path.

There, I said it.

The podcast has reconnected me back to my self and my creativity which used to be a core component of my life.

Now, it's back—or I should say: *I am back—in full force.*

- The podcast has provided a platform for my writing (case in point!)
- It's allowed me to engage with amazing master trauma therapists from all over the world and on a level I would have never otherwise had.
- As a result, I am learning so much about trauma, and about what it means to be a therapist.
- Producing the podcast has also allowed me to reignite my visual artistic muscles by working with graphic design (eg on my website and the blog posts).
- It's provided me the opportunity to interact with the people all over the world who are listening to the podcast. A wonderful and unexpected byproduct. The last time I checked, just a minute ago!, the podcast was being listened to in over 43 countries.

- Here are some:
 - The United States
 - Russia
 - Ireland
 - Slovenia
 - Germany
 - Canada
 - The Netherlands
 - Israel
 - Australia
 - South Africa
 - Norway
 - India
 - Turkey
 - Sweden
 - Denmark
 - Peru
 - Pakistan
 - Italy
 - Japan
 - Croatia
 - Iran
 - Iraq

How cool is that?!

Okay, so what happened and what were my mistakes and the realization which led me to finally push through the muck?

4. Getting Off Track & Finding My Way Back

Mistake #1: Waiting. And waiting some more.

Imagine if you will...

a diagram describing the relationship between *waiting* and *action*. *Waiting* is on one side of a continuum and *action* on the other. Separating them is a long gap, a long time, years let's say. And accompanying *waiting* is a very comfortable chair.

Waiting.....*Action*

I've spent much of my time on the left side there, over by *waiting*. Sitting in that chair.

Some might argue that these are two sides of the same coin. However, for me, and especially during these last several years, *waiting* and *action* have been polar opposites.

Waiting can be many things to many people. For example, waiting is often disguised as going to school, working, traveling, taking courses, or reading and reading and reading. For these purposes

*Waiting is anything that interferes with
or aids in the procrastination of your goals or
plans.*

For myself, it was school. Or rather, it was myself allowing school to get in the way.

But it wasn't always like that.

The Phone Call That Changed My Life

In 2000 I was living in Los Angeles, working at a restaurant and writing a novel.

One day as I was sitting there, with the sun going down, the phone rang. It was a woman I used to work with several years prior whom I hadn't seen in a long while.

She was calling people to let them know that she had AIDS and was saying good-bye.

She explained to me that she actually had been living with AIDS for nine years but had only shared that with a few close friends. She was okay but just wanted to touch base and say thanks for being a friend. She was in the process of moving back home to be closer to family and to a specific medical center.

I hung up the phone and sat there in shock. I was deeply saddened, and at the same time blown away by this woman's courage in the face of what she was going through and what she was describing as her imminent death.

Right then and there, amidst the sadness, I could feel in the pit of my stomach the realization that I was no where near as strong or courageous as I knew I could be.

Right there I had the realization that I had the courage within me, somewhere, but that it had been dormant for so long, and now I desperately needed to uncover it.

5. Finding Courage: 101

That realization led me on a quest to find and ignite my own strength and courage.

Over the course of those next two years I was relentless.

- I took part in a [vision quest](#).
- [I mountain climbed](#).
- I went on a [winter-backpacking and dogsledding](#) trip.
- Then a [two-week survival course](#) out in the middle of nowhere.

The point for me was to challenge myself in ways I never had. And these trips did just that.

Re-discovering My Passion

It was on the survival course that I realized how I wanted to spend the rest of my life.

We were out in the middle of the Utah desert. There were fourteen of us, a two-week trip, the first three days of which we spent hiking, without food.

During day 3 one of the members, a young man, became sick and dehydrated. Myself along with another member carried this guy as we hiked.

We spoke to him, encouraged him, made sure he stayed out of the sun (when possible), and lugged him around, up and over hills in the blazing desert sun.

*It was right then that I realized that what
I wanted to do with my life was to
help others who could not help themselves.*

When I returned home from that trip, newly armed with a direction, passion and purpose, I made arrangements to head back to school to finish my undergraduate degree. I made the calls, made the plans, and at 36 years old moved back to the east coast to finish what I'd started some eighteen years prior.

Four years later with a Humanities degree in my hand I jumped right in to phase two: Earning a PhD in clinical psychology. And thus began that six-year process.

Mistake #2: Stuffing My Passion & Creativity Down. Way Down.

With those six years behind me, I began my years of pre and post-doc training. One year of training, another and another and another. Throw in some years of commuting, and allowing my creativity (music, writing and drawing) to wallow and fester.

Add in the pressure of student loans, the pressure of earning an intern salary, the joys and pressures of marriage and a son and you have the perfect storm for frustration and the unceasing question ricocheting in your head:

What the hell am I doing with my life?

All of which I went through.

You cannot omit an integral part of your life for as long as I did without it having an adverse effect on you.

Look, don't get me wrong, I truly enjoyed school and love psychology, and especially the specialization of trauma psychology. I am happily married to an amazing woman and have the cutest kid in the world.

But the puzzle pieces I stacked together to create my professional life and the decisions I made along the process were not the best for me.

That is, for ten years I had effectively zapped out of my life a very crucial, integral piece of myself—different for each of us—which was *creativity*.

And I could feel it every day.

- I felt like I wasn't tapping in to my fullest potential.
- I felt weak.
- My confidence wavered
- I felt like I had lost part of my identity.
- I felt I didn't have the strength to get it back.
- I felt directionless

My Turning Point.

Well, as with pretty much everything else in this life, it was not just one thing but a confluence of events and influences which helped me turn things around.

- First off, even though I had effectively been squashing and starving my creativity, I never truly lost contact with it completely. It was always there, if even in the far, far off distance, and even though I sometimes couldn't recognize it or it was speaking a different language.
- getting older and no longer in a stage of my life where I could afford to wait.
- My wife and I had a baby!
- I was continually becoming more and more frustrated and pissed at my situation. At the thought that I was allowing myself to live below my potential.
- I allowed myself to continually be inspired. By books, videos, and podcasts.

These things together created a tipping point for me.

Mix in frustration, a brand new baby boy, and the searing need for creativity, and you've got something akin to an explosion!

Jump and Construct Your Wings on the Way Down: The Steps I Took.

Below you'll find the steps I took to get the podcast going, beginning from frustration, to more frustration, to inspiration, to procrastination and then to taking action.

I include them here because they are the same steps that can be applied for pretty much any endeavor you want to begin. Or are beginning!

1. I became psyched!: Each day I listened to podcasts (such as [Entrepreneur on Fire](#), and [Living Outrageously](#)) about people doing amazing things and doing what I wanted to do which was essentially to start a business.
2. I kept myself psyched!: I constantly listened to or watched inspiring and encouraging CDs and videos like: [Les Brown](#). [Anthony Robbins](#). [Eric Thomas](#). [Sir Ken Robinson](#)
3. I solidified the idea of what I wanted to do and crystalized the belief in myself that I could do it: I kept telling myself: *I can do this. I can start a podcast about trauma therapy.*
4. I did the work: I started a website. Trashed it. Began a new one. Trashed that. Then settled on my current one.
5. I sought accountability and outside support: I joined a mastermind group: [The Bold Life](#).
6. I wasn't perfect: I kept procrastinating on the podcast.

7. I listened to on-point feedback: Other Bold Life mastermind members encouraged me to get off my butt saying, What the hell are you waiting for? Start!
8. I got direction: I went online to Entrepreneur on Fire and [Pat Flynn](#) and followed step-by-step videos on how to start a podcast.
9. I spent some money for the necessities: I signed up for a [Libsyn](#) account (they host the podcast)
10. I spent more money: I signed up for an [Aweber](#) account (to organize my email list)
11. I spent even more money: I bought [ID3 Editor](#) software (check it out here)
12. I created great content: I wrote information to offer for free to people who signed up for my email list.
13. I took the leap: I began sending interview invitations out. My first email was to a master therapist who runs the consultation group I'm in. I got my first Yes.
14. I searched and googled: I looked through all of the major psychological organizations (eg [ISTSS](#), [ISSTD](#)) and found individuals who'd been in the field for decades, got their email addresses and contacted them.
15. I looked in my own back yard: I scoured LinkedIn for master trauma therapists and emailed them.

16. I was scared along the way!: Many times I thought to myself, Eeeek! I'm actually going to do this?! Still, the Yeses began to pour in!

I spent more money: I went on Amazon and bought podcasting equipment:

- [microphone](#)
- [mic cover](#)
- mic stand

18. I used the software I already had because I couldn't afford higher end products: I used Apple's Garage Band to edit the interviews.

6. Now it's Your Turn: A Call to Action!

If you have the feeling that you could be doing more or being more than you currently are, great.

Do something now!

- get a book.
- take a class.
- make a call to someone who knows something.
- write that story or idea you've had on your mind.

Take a chance here. Dare! Do!

If you have identified a part of yourself that you've lost contact with, great.

Now it's time to feed that part, to nurture it back to life.

- go out and get a sketch pad.
- fire up the coffee, get quiet and write something, anything.
- go online and book that trip you've wanted to take, the one that's going to change your life.
- Or simply call that person you've been thinking about and tell them what you've been wanting to say.

If you can honestly say to yourself that you've been waiting and waiting to take action on something, great. The first step is complete.

- Now, go and do whatever that thing is.

Take action!

If you haven't truly challenged yourself in a while, great.

- Take a sheet of paper, number it from one to five and write down the five things that you want to do that take you soaring outside of your comfort zone.
- Choose one and do it by the end of the week or month.

Do Something!

Jump and build your wings as you soar!



Thank You.

Thanks for taking the time to read this.
If you have any questions or comments feel free
to contact me here:

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-Start Now!