



# **You Are Up to You.: Innovate a New Self for a New Life. Feel Spiritually Whole Again After Trauma and Disability.**

*Ed Penniman*

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What does it take to go through physical trauma and have everything taken away from you and come back to be a better you than before with more joy in your life? Ed Penniman did this and tells you how with art, stories and unusual but powerful recommendations. Although aimed at people who have had physical trauma, this book can help anyone who has challenges and has to face dramatic change.

Author's comments:

This book is about not falling prey to a negative self-concept after trauma. It is about redefining how you see yourself, how to take your personal challenge and learn the valuable embedded lesson it may offer. I evolved as a person because I was made aware that I could be a better me after being stripped of my limited ideas of myself. I was given an opportunity to renew and rebrand myself - to live from a deeper and evolving image of who I am.

Come to grips with vulnerability. The past, the present and the future--these are all things I had a lot of time to think about when I was in the hospital. It took me a few weeks until what was happening to me started to sink in. There was so much activity surrounding me in the hospital that I got caught up in being a patient, rather than being myself. I slowly started to understand that I was a quadriplegic.

Self preservation. Coming to terms with your disability means losing your innocence. It is a rite of passage and an initiation into a new and higher level of awareness and sensitivity. While in the initiation process the moment-to-moment unfolding of events requires one to rely on one's self, measure the situation carefully, get information and safely guide the self through obstacles as they present themselves.

Courage, patience and self-reliance. I needed to learn how to say "no" for my own welfare and to stop acting like I was OK. At that point I started to be more realistic about my time for visits. I visited with those who I knew, wanted to see, and only when I wanted to see them. It was empowering to be able to control, at last, my expenditure of energy.

Feel comfortable in your own skin. Early in my disability, I turned feeling sorry for myself into an art form. Being confined not only to a hospital bed, but to a body that had no response was a completely foreign experience. It was like double paralysis. And it was taking its toll on my mind as I tried to make some kind of sense out of my situation. I found myself trying out a multitude of personality coping styles and behaviors.

Positivity, re-branding and your new self. Your attitude is like the breath you choose to take. If you unconsciously take shallow breath, you will feel weak, but if you consciously breathe in full, nourishing breaths, you'll feel instantly clear-headed and healthy. You can automatically dwell on the past and scorn fate, or you can mindfully gather up what you have left, claim your strength, and go forward with the belief that not only will you be OK, but you will prevail and perhaps even inspire others to see that one can have dignity in the face of a life-changing trial.

Others may call what you do heroic. So perhaps the most heroic action is the choice to make the best of your

situation. We either adjust to our new circumstances or we don't. If we do make an adjustment and reinvent our self-images within our new world, then survival becomes much easier. You must have vision, learn, create, dream, and feel; you must innovate a new self for a new life. If we don't adapt, we will live in the past, measuring our new world by our old one. What is truly heroic is your decision to pivot, to change, and to embrace your struggle and the unknown ancillary gifts it may bestow upon you. You may now choose to pick up the remaining pieces of your life and go forward to build a new one.

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