

MINDSET

“PROVE PEOPLE WRONG AND SHOW THEM THAT YOU CAN” – PARA-CYCLIST DENISE SCHINDLER

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Spin setbacks into challenges with inspiration from this
Paralympic medalist.




by Denise Schindler | Guest

I was two years old when I accidentally slipped in the city streets of Chemnitz, Germany. The timing was terrible luck – just at that moment a tram came around the corner and struck me. After the first days in the hospital, the doctors had to make a decision with my parents in order to save my life. My right leg had to be amputated below the knee.

This devastating injury changed my life forever. So, you may be surprised to find out that I'm a world-class athlete who's won two silver medals in the Paralympic Games, a World Championship and a German Championship, among others. I now have my sights set on Tokyo 2020.

“As a para-cyclist, I keep my wheels spinning because persistence and grit propel me to new heights.” 



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lives. It has definitely changed mine. ©Friedemann Vogel/Getty Images

I travel around the world sharing the story of my transformation because it is a universal one. We all have our setbacks and our struggles. I share my journey of overcoming the odds to lift people up. In this way I connect with people in a unique way, setting them on fire with my experiences and inspiring them to excel.


The first two months after my accident, I was in intensive care. Then every year until I was 14, I underwent surgery. During holidays when other kids were traveling or with their family, I went into hospital, making it back to school right in time after the break was done.

There have been many moments when I was about to give up, but then I refocused. These were painful times but, thanks to my parents' unwavering dedication and the outstanding medical expertise, I am standing on my own 'two' feet again. I now wear a prosthesis and bear the impact of metal rods in my left ankle.

Affirmations for transformation

But this story is not about my devastating setback alone. It's about how I transformed through it and after it. This unique challenge put me in a situation to not take anything for granted, not even walking. I had to fight back for my own two legs.

And fight back I did. I went on to become a world-class athlete, competing around the world. I became the first female Paralympic cyclist to finish the Transalp Tour over seven days.

The reality is we're all fighting back. The choice is yours not to tap out. 
My goal is to show you that you can always get back up after falling down.


Here are three mantras that will keep you strong when the going gets rough.

1.


Prove the doubters wrong and show them you CAN

My path to performance took many detours, but since 2011 I have been training with a clear goal in mind – to become the best cyclist I can be.

Considering my physical setbacks, it would be easy to let doubt from others or myself erode my ambitions to take para-cycling to the next level. People would say, forget it – this is not possible. But that's where transformation starts – through the process of swimming against the stream you become unbelievably stronger.

 Denise Schindler
working out in adidas gym,
training, paralympian,
para-cyclist, energy,
exercise, sports
marketing, adidas,
GamePlan A

Just like every other athlete, I love
my sport, my training and I'm
energized by the highs it gives me.

I'm standing up against the odds in a society
that has reinforced certain norms.  One
of them is the idea that as a disabled woman
I can be happy that I am just walking; why
go for elite-level sports? Another is the fear
that heavy athletic exertion will harm me.

I am also navigating the general perceptions
around people with disabilities. I want to
show that it's ok to not have a leg. I can still
be confident, feel feminine and sexy. I can
still achieve the extraordinary. This is a


unique kind of confidence – this is loving yourself unconditionally.

2.

If you never try, you will never know

Still now I love to take on challenges and prove people wrong. The biggest challenge in my life so far was finishing the Transalp Tour, one of the hardest stage races in the Alps, 865 km long with 18,000 meters of vertical climbing. It was a game-changer for women with a prosthesis. I was the first female to accept and complete this challenge. I hope I have paved the way for other women to follow.

During the Transalp, I was physically and mentally at my limit multiple times. I remember well after stage 3 wondering how I would make it the next day. But my stubbornness and grit took me to the finish line day after day.


“Determination is what counts when you want to transform.” 



I learned how strong I could be. This is what happens when you have faith and jump! Life is a crazy balancing act. Learn from your downfalls and, with grit, pull yourself back up again. Each step into the unknown builds your character, confidence and resourcefulness.

3.

We are not born winners. We choose to be winners every day.

 Denise Schindler winning medal, proud, celebration, para-cyclist, paralympian, paralympics, Germany, winner, GamePlan A

The lows are a necessary part of reaching the highs. Standing on the podium made everything worth it.

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You have a choice, actually you have hundreds of them! Every day you choose how you react to things that happen to you and what to do proactively to become better.

The big lesson is that we must take responsibility for this journey called life. I believe that great rewards await anyone prepared to earn them, but I also happily admit that it's not easy.

Failure is an essential part of the human condition. Even though we all will fail at some point in our lives, we hold the greatest fear towards it. As scary as it is, we learn the deepest lessons from failure.

The key is how we react to mistakes and misfortune. When we get back in the game after a pitfall we are making a statement, to ourselves and the world – I'm committed to the way and the way is committed to me!