



TNM ADULT GUIDE

How Did I Get Here?

If you're reading this, there's a good chance you aren't looking for another diet, another workout plan, or another person promising to change your life in thirty days. If you're anything like I was, you've already tried enough of those to know they aren't the answer. You're not looking for information. You're looking for something that finally makes sense.

Maybe you've reached a point where you're asking questions you never thought you'd ask. How did I get here? When did I stop feeling like myself? Is this really what the rest of my life is supposed to look like? Those aren't easy questions, and most of us avoid them for as long as we can. We stay busy. We tell ourselves we're just tired, stressed, or just in a busy season. We keep putting one foot in front of the other because that's what adults do.

That's exactly what I did. I spent years building a career, providing for my family, and doing everything I believed I was supposed to do. From the outside, my life looked successful. I worked hard, people respected me, and I helped others build better lives. There wasn't one catastrophic moment that made everything fall apart. That's what made it so difficult to recognize. My life didn't collapse overnight. It drifted, so gradually that I didn't even realize it was happening.

Somewhere along the way, I stopped investing in myself. My physical health declined a little at a time. My energy faded so gradually that each new normal simply became normal. My mind grew louder, my patience grew shorter, and the person I remembered being started to feel more like someone I used to know than someone I still was. I convinced myself this was simply what happened when you got older, took on more responsibility, and spent your life taking care of everyone else.

Then there were days I'd close my office door because I couldn't stop crying. Nothing terrible had happened. My marriage wasn't falling apart. I hadn't lost my job. If you'd looked at my life from the outside, you probably would have thought everything was fine. Thirty seconds later I'd wipe my face, answer the phone, and spend the rest of the day helping other people solve their problems while quietly wondering why I couldn't seem to solve my own.

Home wasn't very different. I loved my wife. I loved my kids. This wasn't about them. Somewhere along the way, I had become everyone's husband, everyone's dad, everyone's provider, everyone's problem solver. I spent so many years trying to be everything everyone else needed that I slowly lost sight of who I was. Looking back, I don't think everyone else stopped seeing me. I think I stopped seeing myself.

Eventually, I reached a point where I couldn't ignore it anymore. A freak illness and a five-day hospital stay made it impossible to explain away what had been happening. My mental health had been deteriorating for years, and my physical health had finally caught up with it. For the first time in a long time, I was forced to look honestly at the life I had built. What surprised me wasn't what I saw in the mirror. What surprised me was that it had all happened right in front of me, with my approval—or maybe just my apathy—because I genuinely believed I was doing what I was supposed to do: taking care of everyone else, no matter the cost. That burden eventually became too heavy to carry. It forced me to realize that while I may have been doing everything I could for the people around me, I had become far less than I was capable of being for myself. Somewhere along the way, I had accepted a version of my life that was much smaller than the one I was meant to live.

The more honest I became with myself, the more I realized this wasn't really about my health. My health was simply the thing that finally got my attention. The real issue was that I'd spent so many years becoming who everyone else needed me to be that I'd slowly stopped becoming the person I wanted to be.

It took me a long time to realize something that feels obvious now. You can't continuously sacrifice yourself for the people you love without eventually having less and less of yourself left to give. I used to think putting myself last was a sign of love. I eventually realized it was the reason I had so little left to give. That's not selfish. It's reality.

Once I saw that, I started noticing it everywhere. Friends who were exhausted. Parents who had completely disappeared into their responsibilities. People who had built successful careers but quietly wondered why they still felt empty. Men and women who laughed, smiled, and showed up every day while privately wondering when life had become something they endured instead of something they enjoyed.

That's why I wanted to write this guide. Not because I've figured life out. Not because I have the perfect routine or all the answers. I wrote it because I know what it feels like to wake up one day and realize how much of my life I'd quietly surrendered. More importantly, I know what it feels like to discover that it doesn't have to stay that way.

Looking back, I don't think the biggest lesson I've learned is how to get healthier, become more disciplined, or accomplish bigger goals because, if I'm honest, I'm still figuring those things out. The biggest lesson I've learned is that no matter how much of yourself you've left behind, you can always choose a new direction. And if that's true, then maybe the most important thing I can tell you is this: your story isn't finished.

You're Not the Only One

For a long time, I thought I was the only one who felt that way. I assumed everyone else had somehow figured adulthood out while I was just trying to keep my head above water. People around me seemed successful, confident, and in control. They were advancing in their careers, raising families, coaching their kids' teams, taking vacations, and posting pictures that made it look like everything was exactly as it should be. I figured I was the only one quietly wondering why I felt so disconnected from my own life.

The more people I've met over the years, the more I've realized how wrong I was. I began noticing it everywhere. People who looked like they had everything together often carried a quiet exhaustion that had nothing to do with being tired. It was the exhaustion that comes from spending so many years meeting everyone else's expectations that you slowly lose sight of yourself.

I don't think most adults are struggling because they're weak or ungrateful. I think they're exhausted. They've spent years carrying responsibilities that matter. They've poured themselves into their spouses, their children, their families, their careers, and everyone else who needed them, until there was almost nothing left for themselves. Somewhere along the way, they convinced themselves that putting their own life on hold was simply part of being a good spouse, a good parent, or a good person.

The problem is that we don't just postpone taking care of ourselves. We slowly stop making ourselves part of the equation. Everyone else has a claim on our time, our energy, and our attention, and we willingly give it because that's what good parents, good spouses, good children, good friends, and good employees do. Somewhere along the way, we become the one person we stop showing up for. The things that once gave us energy disappear. The hobbies we loved become memories. The dreams we had get replaced by responsibilities, and after enough time passes, we stop noticing what's missing because we've adapted to living without it.

I think that's one of the loneliest parts of adulthood. You can be surrounded by people who love you and still feel like nobody really sees what you're carrying. Not because they're ignoring you, but because you've become so good at hiding it, and so have they. You smile, you go to work, you make dinner, you pay the bills, you show up for everyone else, and so do they. Eventually, we all start believing that the version of ourselves everyone else knows is the only version that still exists. It isn't.

If you've ever felt like you're the only one wondering where your motivation went, why you feel stuck, or whether life is supposed to feel like this, I want you to know that you aren't. You're one of millions of people who have spent so much time building a life that they slowly stopped building themselves. Realizing that isn't something to be ashamed of. In fact, it may be the most important realization you'll ever have, because you can't begin moving in a new direction until you're willing to admit you've been standing still.

The Stories We Tell Ourselves

One of the hardest things about being an adult is that the stories we tell ourselves become harder to recognize. When we're younger, our doubts are obvious. As adults, they sound reasonable. They sound responsible. They sound like the truth.

I became incredibly good at explaining why I wasn't taking care of myself. Work was demanding. Life was busy. My family needed me. I'd get serious when things slow down. None of those reasons sounded like excuses because, in many ways, they were true. The problem was that they were only part of the truth. The other part was that I had stopped believing I was worth the same investment I made in everyone else.

That's how these stories work. We tell ourselves we're too busy to take care of our health, that we'll start when work settles down, when the kids get older, or when life gets a little less chaotic. We convince ourselves we'll get back to reading, exercising, traveling, or chasing that dream someday. The problem is that "someday" has a way of becoming next year, then five years from now, and eventually something we stop talking about altogether.

Along the way, we begin believing things about ourselves that were never meant to become permanent. We tell ourselves we're just getting older. We tell ourselves we've missed our chance. We tell ourselves this is simply what adulthood feels like. We stop expecting to have energy. We stop expecting to feel excited about the future. We slowly trade possibilities for predictability, dreams for responsibilities, and fulfillment for survival. The saddest part is that it happens so gradually we barely notice what we've lost until we can't remember what it felt like to have it.

Looking back, I can see that none of those stories appeared overnight. They were built slowly, one compromise at a time. Every time I chose convenience over growth, every time I convinced myself I'd start next week, every time I ignored another quiet warning from my body or my mind, I became a little more comfortable settling for less than I was capable of. I didn't wake up one morning and decide to stop growing. I just stopped expecting more from myself. Over time, I lowered the standard so gradually that I didn't even notice it was happening. By the time I finally looked up, I wasn't mourning the life I'd lost. I was mourning the person I'd slowly stopped becoming. But if those stories were written one decision at a time, maybe they could be rewritten the same way.

The truth is, most of the limits we live within were never placed there by someone else. They were built one excuse, one delay, and one compromise at a time until they eventually felt permanent. After living with them long enough, I stopped questioning whether they were true. I stopped seeing them as choices I'd made and started believing they were simply who I was. Looking back now, I think that's one of the greatest tragedies of adulthood. We become so accustomed to living beneath our potential that we eventually mistake it for our identity.

The story that changed everything for me wasn't, "I can do anything I set my mind to." It was much quieter than that. I realized I didn't have to keep believing the stories I'd been telling myself for years. If I'd slowly learned to believe I wasn't capable of more, maybe I could slowly learn to believe that I was. Hope didn't come from believing I could become someone extraordinary. It came from believing I hadn't actually lost the person I used to be.

That realization didn't instantly change my life, but it changed the direction of it. For the first time in years, I stopped asking whether I could become someone different and started asking a much better question: What if the person I'd been searching for wasn't someone new at all? What if he'd simply been buried beneath years of responsibility, neglect, and beliefs that were never true in the first place?

Change didn't begin the day I exercised again or made a better decision about my health. It began the day I stopped assuming my future had to look exactly like my past. I didn't become this version of myself all at once. It happened one compromise, one excuse, and one story at a time. It only made sense that the journey back would happen the same way—one decision at a time. That's the hope I want to leave with you. No matter how many years have passed or how much of yourself you feel you've left behind, you are never one decision too late to begin coming back.

The Turning Point

The turning point wasn't something that happened to me. It was the moment I stopped waiting for my life to change on its own. I'd spent years believing that someday I'd feel more motivated, more energized, or more ready. The day I stopped waiting for someday was the day my life finally began moving in a different direction.

For years, I believed the next season of life would be different. Work would eventually slow down. Stress would ease up. I'd have more time. I'd get back into shape. I'd start taking better care of myself. I'd reconnect with the person I used to be. I wasn't lying to myself, I genuinely believed every one of those things. The problem wasn't that they were impossible. It was that I had quietly handed control of my future over to circumstances I couldn't control. As long as I was waiting for life to change first, I never had to make the harder decision to change myself.

What I finally realized was that the life I wanted wasn't going to appear because my circumstances became perfect. It was going to be built one decision at a time, usually while my circumstances were still messy, stressful, and far from ideal. That wasn't discouraging. It was freeing. It meant my future wasn't waiting for permission from the rest of my life.

Ironically, I started with my body because it felt like the one thing I could control. I wasn't trying to build a business or change my career. I wasn't trying to reinvent myself. I was simply trying to become a little healthier than I had been the day before. At the time, I thought I was working on my physical health. Looking back, I can see that every workout, every walk, every better meal, and every promise I kept to myself was quietly rebuilding something much deeper. My confidence started returning. My discipline returned. My hope returned. Somewhere along the way, so did I.

That was the part I never saw coming. I thought changing my body would improve my health. I never imagined it would change the conversations I had with myself. I started trusting myself again because, for the first time in years, my actions and my intentions finally matched. Every small promise I kept became evidence that I wasn't the person I'd convinced myself I'd become.

Nothing about my life changed overnight. I still had responsibilities. I still had difficult days. I still questioned myself. I still do. The difference is that those moments no longer convince me that I'm moving backward. They remind me that growth isn't a straight line. Some days are better than others, but they're all part of the same journey.

My turning point was the day I decided to get healthier. It was the day I realized I wasn't trying to build a different life. I was trying to find my way back to the one person I'd been missing all along. I was trying to find my way back to myself.

Becoming You Again

If there's one thing I've learned through all of this, it's that renewal doesn't come from becoming someone else. It comes from finding your way back to the person you were always capable of being.

For a long time, I believed the answer was somewhere outside of me. I kept looking for the thing that was going to fix me. I thought if I could just find the right plan, the right motivation, or the right set of circumstances, I'd finally feel like myself again. What took me far too long to understand was that nothing around me was ever going to change the stories I believed about myself. My life didn't begin changing because my circumstances changed. It began changing when I started seeing those stories for what they really were. They weren't truth. They were fear disguised as logic, comfort disguised as contentment, and perfectionism disguised as preparation. Once I could see them for what they were, I no longer had to let them decide who I would become.

That realization didn't transform my life overnight. It changed the decisions I started making every day. Once I stopped believing those stories were true, they stopped making my decisions for me. I began keeping promises to myself because I no longer believed I was the kind of person who never followed through. I exercised when I said I would. I made better choices when no one else was watching. I learned. I reflected. I became more intentional about how I spent my time and who I spent it with. None of those decisions seemed life-changing on their own, but together they slowly became evidence that the old stories were no longer true.

Somewhere along the way, I noticed something I hadn't expected. Life didn't suddenly become easier, but it began feeling lighter. I laughed more. I had more patience with my family. I stopped feeling like I was constantly trying to survive each day. I started looking forward to the future again instead of simply hoping to make it through another week. My circumstances hadn't changed nearly as much as my perspective had. Once I stopped carrying the weight of those old stories, I realized how much energy I'd been spending believing them.

One of the biggest surprises was realizing that confidence doesn't come from achieving big goals. It comes from collecting evidence that the stories you've believed about yourself aren't true. Every promise you keep to yourself becomes another piece of evidence. Over time, those small decisions begin to accumulate until they tell a different story than the one you've believed for years. Confidence doesn't suddenly appear one morning. It grows quietly as your actions begin proving that the person you thought you'd lost has been there all along.

I still have days when those old stories come back. I still hear the voice that says tomorrow would be easier, that I've already fallen behind, or that one missed day doesn't matter. Sometimes I even listen to them. The difference now is that I recognize those thoughts for what they are. They aren't truth. They aren't prophecy. They're simply old stories asking to be believed again. When I do believe them for a day or two, I don't see them as failure anymore. I see them as a reminder that growth isn't about being perfect. It's messy. It's rarely linear. The goal isn't to never believe those stories again. It's to recognize them sooner, learn from them, and choose a different path the next time. I don't have to argue with those stories anymore. I just don't have to keep following them.

I don't think I was ever trying to become someone new. I was trying to uncover the person who'd been buried beneath years of responsibility, stress, fear, and stories that were never true. The greatest surprise of this entire journey is that he was never actually gone. He'd simply been waiting for me to stop believing he was.

I think that's true for more people than they realize. You're probably not nearly as far from yourself as you feel. The life you're looking for may not begin when you become someone else. It may begin the moment you stop believing the stories that convinced you that you already had.

Where Do We Go From Here?

I don't know where this guide finds you today. Maybe you're feeling motivated and ready to make a change. Maybe you're exhausted and wondering if you have one more attempt left in you. Maybe you've started over so many times that you're afraid to believe this time could be different. Wherever you are, I want you to know that you don't have to have everything figured out before you begin. I certainly didn't.

For years, I thought change was about finding the perfect plan. I was always looking for the workout I'd finally stick with, the routine that would solve everything, or the moment when I'd suddenly feel ready. What I've learned is that readiness rarely comes first. Action comes first. Clarity comes later. You don't build a better life because you finally feel motivated. You build it one decision at a time, and somewhere along the way, motivation begins to follow your actions instead of waiting for them.

If you take nothing else from these pages, I hope you remember this: your past explains you, but it doesn't define you. The choices you've made, the mistakes you've lived through, the opportunities you've missed, and even the years you feel like you've lost are all part of your story, but they don't get to write the ending. That decision still belongs to you.

I won't pretend the road ahead is easy because it isn't. I still have many days when I question myself. I still have many moments when old habits seem easier than new ones. I still hear the same quiet voice telling me to wait until tomorrow or convincing me that one bad day somehow erased weeks of progress. The difference is that I don't believe in that voice anymore. It still shows up from time to time, but it no longer gets to decide what happens next.

If someone had told me a few years ago that I'd one day leave a career I'd spent decades building to dedicate my life to helping other people find their way back to themselves, I probably would have smiled politely and changed the subject. At the time, I was simply trying to survive. When this all began, I thought I was trying to lose weight, improve my health, and feel a little better. I had no idea those small decisions were leading me somewhere much bigger. What started as a journey toward better health quietly became a journey back to myself. Along the way, I rebuilt a relationship with the person I'd neglected for years, and in doing so, I began discovering the purpose I'd always hoped my life would have. Everything that exists today—including this guide—grew out of that journey.

That's why I wanted to share my story with you. Not because I've reached the finish line or because I've somehow figured life out. I haven't. I'm not even close. I'm still growing. I'm still learning. I'm still becoming. I wrote this because I know what it feels like to believe the stories that tell you it's too late, that this is simply who you are now, or that the best parts of your life are already behind you. I also know what it feels like to discover those stories were never true. I never want someone else to spend years believing they've become someone they were never meant to be.

Maybe that's where you are today. Maybe you've spent years believing you've become someone you barely recognize. If that's true, I hope you'll consider one possibility before you close this guide. What if the person you're trying to become isn't someone new? What if they're simply the person you've been missing all along?

One day, you may look back on this season the same way I do now. Not as the chapter where everything fell apart, but as the chapter where you finally stopped believing the stories that kept you from yourself. You may discover that renewal was never about becoming someone different. It was about uncovering the person who'd been there all along.

Because maybe that's what renewal really is. Not becoming a new person, but remembering the one who was there before fear, responsibility, perfectionism, and years of believing stories that were never true convinced you otherwise.