

Stuck In A Truck

A Driver's Guide to Weight Loss

Steve Greenhalgh

Copyright © 2026 by Steve Greenhalgh

All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher or author, except as permitted by U.K. copyright law.



Contents

WARNING	1
A Quick Word Before You Start	2
Foreword	3
Quick Reference	7
How to Use This Book	9
A Note for the People Who Love Them	11
1. The Last Medical	13
2. You Are Not Alone	24
3. The Slow Puncture	34
4. What This Life Does To You	47
5. The Wake-Up Calls	56
6. Judi's Story	67
7. The Four Reasons	78
8. Set Your Target and Make It Real	89
9. You Cannot Outrun Your Fork	97
10. Control Your Environment	105
11. The Drinking	115
12. Habits	124
13. Fear	135

14. Patience	145
15. The Payoff	154
16. What Changed and What Surprised Me	164
17. Don't Wait Like I Did	173
About Steve Greenhalgh	183
Acknowledgements	184

WARNING

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT in this book you will see a few words that may cause offence:

- Diet
- Fat
- Chunky
- Fat Bastard
- Arse
- Fuck

I am a truck driver and I use the sort of language found in most truck parks across the world.

If you are of a gentle disposition, please put this book down.

If you can handle the language - you're in the right fucking place.

Welcome

A Quick Word Before You Start

I'M NOT A DOCTOR, a dietitian or a nutritionist. I'm a truck driver who lost a lot of weight and wants to help you do the same. Everything in this book is my own story and what worked for me. It isn't medical advice, and it isn't a substitute for it.

Before you change how you eat, drink or move, go and see your GP. That goes double if you've got a health condition, take regular medication, or haven't been checked over in a while. If you're a heavy drinker, don't just stop dead on your own. Coming off alcohol suddenly can be dangerous, so get proper help with that.

If you're struggling with your mental health, please don't sit with it on your own. Talk to your GP, or ring the Samaritans free on 116 123, any time, day or night.

Neither I nor the publisher can take responsibility for how you use what's in this book.

Use your common sense, be honest with your doctor, and get the right people on your side.

Foreword

By the Author

LET ME GUESS.

You're parked up somewhere. Services, probably. Or an industrial estate on the edge of a town you've never heard of. It's late, or it's early, or it doesn't fucking matter anymore because the days blur into each other when you're behind that wheel for ten, twelve, fourteen hours at a stretch.

You've got a bag of some crap on the seat next to you. Or you've just come back from the caff. Or you're sitting there with a lukewarm coffee wondering why your back hurts and why you're so bloody tired all the time and why, no matter what you try, the weight just keeps going on and never seems to come off.

I know. Because I was you.

Twenty-five stone.

Fifty-four inch waist.

Couldn't wipe my own backside properly and I couldn't even reach all of my body to get clean in the shower.

Out in the truck on night runs, I was getting through fabric conditioner bottles just to get through the night without having to get out of the cab to go for a piss. Then even when I actually managed a night at home in my own bed, my snoring had become so loud that my wife Judi moved to sleep in another room.

I drank ten cans of Stella a day and half a bottle of spirits on top, just to wind

down. Eating to stay awake on the night runs, then eating the kids' leftovers when I got home, then sitting on the computer until all hours because I didn't want to face going to bed.

I was a mess.

I was a short-tempered, stropky, whale of a man who'd been ignoring how bad things had got.

I'm not sure if I didn't really see it or just couldn't face it.

Either way, I did nothing about it for years while my family quietly suffered. Until the day a doctor sat me down and told me I was pre-diabetic, that my liver was suffering, and that if I carried on the way I was going, I was going to lose my vocational licence.

My HGV Entitlement. The thing I used to earn a living. The thing that put food on the table for my family. And not only that, my life itself was in danger.

That was the day everything changed.

This book is not a diet book. I want to be clear about that right from the start.

If you're looking for a calorie-counted meal plan and a twelve-week fitness programme, put this down and go and buy one of those shiny programmes online. There are plenty of them out there and most of them are, frankly, a load of bollocks for someone in your situation.

Because your situation is not like most people's situations.

You're not working a nine-to-five with a canteen and a gym and weekends to meal prep. You're living out of a cab. You're running on motorway services and greasy spoons and whatever's left in the cool bag from Sunday.

You're doing shift work that messes with your sleep, your appetite, your head. You're away from home when it matters and home when you're too knackered to be any use to anyone.

I know your life. I've lived your life.

And I'm here to tell you that you can change it. Not despite your job. Not by leaving your job. But inside it, around it, within the actual reality of the life you're living right now.

When I finally started to lose the weight, people kept asking me what my secret was. There isn't one. No magic pill, no miracle plan, no moment of divine inspiration. What there was, was this:

I worked out *why* I had to change. Not *why* it would be nice to change, or *why* my doctor wanted me to change, but **WHY** I personally, specifically, desperately needed to change.

For Judi.

For my kids.

For the grandchildren I wanted to be around to see born, let alone grow up.

For being able to walk up a flight of stairs without my heart trying to escape through my chest.



When you know your reason **WHY**, the **HOW** becomes clear.

That's not me being glib. That's nearly eleven stone of weight loss talking.

I'm going to tell you my story in this book. The real story, not the cleaned-up version. The embarrassing bits, the dark bits, the bits I'm not proud of. Because if I sugarcoat it, it's no use to you.

You need to know what it actually looked like from the inside, so that when you recognise yourself in these pages, you know you're not alone and you know it's possible to come out the other side.

I'm also going to give you the practical stuff. What I ate. How I handled the truck stops. What I did about the drinking. How I got my head straight. Real, workable things that fit into the life of a driver, not some fantasy lifestyle that requires you to be someone else entirely.

And at the end of each chapter, I'm going to ask you to do something. Not much. Just something. Because this is not a book to read and put down and feel vaguely inspired by for three days before going back to the old ways. This is a book to work through. To write in. To come back to. To actually use.

If someone who loves you put this book in your hands, or left it on the passenger seat where you'd find it, or mentioned it one too many times until you finally picked it up, pay attention to that. They didn't do it to nag you. They did it because they're scared and they care.

Because they can see what you might not be able to see yet. Because they need you around.

I nearly wasn't around. That's not dramatic. That's just true.

So. Wherever you're parked up or listening to this as you drive. Whatever's in that bag on the seat next to you. Whatever time it is and however long you've been on the road.

Let's start.

Steve Greenhalgh



Formerly 25 stone. Currently not.

Quick Reference

Five things to start with. Today, not Monday.

EVERYTHING IN THIS BOOK matters. But if you want somewhere to begin, here are five things you can do RIGHT NOW. These are not the whole answer. They are five steps of the first day. And the first day should be today.

Tip 1: Cut back on the booze.

Not necessarily stop - cut back. Work out what you're actually drinking, honestly, and reduce it. The calories alone will make a measurable difference quickly. And if it turns out cutting back is harder than you expected, that's information worth having too. We cover this in Chapter 11.

Tip 2: Cut out the high-sugar or high caffeine energy drinks.

Monster, Relentless, Lucozade - they are not giving you energy. They are giving you a spike followed by a crash, followed by reaching for another one (even the zero sugar). Water does the same job better and without the cycle. Swap one a day to start. Then all of them.

Tip 3: Drink a pint of water on waking.

Before the coffee. Before the phone. Before anything else. Your body has been without water for eight hours and it needs it. This one habit, done every single morning, costs nothing and takes thirty seconds and makes a measurable difference to how you feel for the first hours of the day.

Tip 4: Stop eating chocolate and biscuits instead of meals.

A KitKat is not lunch. A packet of biscuits is not a meal. The snacking-instead-of-eating pattern is one of the most damaging things the road does to a driver's eating habits, and it's one of the easiest to address. Plan actual food. Eat actual meals. The snacks fill the gap that a proper meal should fill - and they do it badly and expensively in calories.

Tip 5: Plan your days and meals in advance.

Sunday is the day. Not Monday when you're already on the road and the decisions are already being made at the services. Sunday, at home, when you can think clearly. What are you eating this week? Where are you stopping? What are you taking in the cab? The decision made on Sunday, calmly, is a better decision than the one made on Tuesday at seven in the evening at Stafford services when you're tired and hungry and the Greggs is right there. We cover this in detail in Chapter 10.

**A note on doing the right work.**

Think about a power station. It produces an enormous amount of energy. But if the output is connected to the wrong grid, none of that power gets to the people who need it. The effort is real. The result is nothing.

The same principle applies here. Working hard in the wrong direction produces nothing useful. What matters isn't just the effort - it's doing the right work. These five tips are the right work for day one. They're not the whole plan. They're the connection to the right grid.

Start with these 5 things right NOW. And now let's get into it.....

How to Use This Book

A note before you start.

EVERY CHAPTER IN THIS book follows the same shape.

First, a story from my life - the specific thing that happened, what it felt like, what I learned from it. Then the lesson - what that experience actually means, distilled into clear principles. Then Your Turn - the workbook section, where the real work happens.

******The workbook exercises are not optional extras. They are the point. Each one takes what you've just read and makes it specific to your life, your cab, your situation. You can read about someone else's reasons for changing all day long. Until you've written down your own, they're just words on a page.

Write in this book. Fill in the exercises. Do the bloody work.



Please remember this.....

Trying isn't doing. There is a version of using this book where you read the chapters, nod along, half-fill in a couple of exercises, and tell yourself you're giving it a go. That version produces nothing. Doing is specific. Doing has a date and a time and a first step. This book will ask you to commit - not to perfection, but to a start.

Small things, done consistently. That's the whole plan.

This is not a book you read and put down. Or rather - you can. Nothing is stopping you. But if you do, I can tell you fairly confidently what will happen. You'll finish it, you'll think 'that was good, that Steve seemed like a decent bloke,' and then you'll carry on exactly as you were. Because information, on its own, doesn't change anything. You already know that. If information changed things, you'd have fixed this years ago.

What changes things is doing. And this book is built for doing.



If you're listening to the audiobook version of this book, you'll find a downloadable PDF workbook at stuckinatruck.com (**full link TBC). Every exercise from every chapter is collected there in one place for you to print and work through. The audio will talk you through it, it'll be up to you to use it when you're parked up. Keep it somewhere accessible - the cab is fine, the kitchen table is fine, anywhere you'll actually sit down with it and do the work.

A Note for the People Who Love Them

This bit is for you.

HAVE YOU BOUGHT THIS book to leave it somewhere obvious, hoping it would get picked up?

Maybe you're reading it yourself first to see if it's worth passing on.

Maybe the driver in your life handed it to you and said 'there's a bit in here about you' - and there is. Chapter 6 is about Judi. It's the most honest account I can give of what it was like to be married to me during the worst years, and I'd ask you to read it, because I think it will tell you some things that are hard to say out loud.

But first - this.

What you're living with is real.

The snoring. The moods. The person who is physically present but somewhere else entirely. The weight of carrying everything while the person you married seems to have checked out. The loneliness of being in a relationship with someone who is suffering and won't talk about it and won't ask for help and gets defensive when you try to raise it.

All of that is real. And you are allowed to find it hard.

You are also not responsible for fixing it. That's the difficult truth of this situation - you can see the problem more clearly than they can, you have been feeling its

effects longer than they have, and yet the decision to do something about it is entirely theirs. You cannot make it for them. You can only stay or go, support or step back, and keep deciding, week by week, what you're able to keep doing.

My wife, Judi, stayed. I'm grateful beyond what words can cover. But staying isn't the only right answer, and nobody gets to tell you what yours should be.



If you're staying - here's what helped Judi.

She didn't make it about the food and the weight. She started treating it as what it actually was - a man who was lost and didn't know how to find his way back, and who needed a reason and a structure and an accountability before he could start. She found the bootcamp. She held the line on the sailing. She gave me Zander without knowing she was giving me Zander.

She didn't fix me. But she created the conditions in which I could start to fix myself. That's a different thing, and it's the most anyone can do.

The workbook exercises in this book are written with you in mind as well as the driver. They ask questions about the relationship, about what you've been carrying, about what a bridge might look like. They're not therapy. But they might start a conversation that needs to happen.



One last thing.

Judi's closing words, when she was interviewed for this book, were these: "Don't give up really.....You might not love them anymore but you might still like them."

She liked me enough to stay, and we found our way back to love.

Right, let's get going.....

Chapter One

The Last Medical

I couldn't believe I'd let it get that bad.

It was an ear infection. That's what I went in for.

SOMETHING MINOR, SOMETHING I wanted sorted quickly so I could get back on the road.

I drove to Belton surgery, found a parking space, walked in, sat down and waited with a copy of some magazine I didn't read.

What I got was not what I expected. Dr Mel was my GP by then - she'd taken over from Dr Bevis Heap, who'd had to retire early with heart problems.

You couldn't make it up, a name like that. Bevis and I had a good relationship. He was jocular, and we used to have a laugh together. When the issue of my weight came up, he'd say something dry and I'd say something dry back, and we'd both act like it wasn't really a problem.

Dr Mel was different. She was direct. Professionally, brutally direct.

And when she had me in that consulting room for an ear infection, she decided the ears could wait. She made me get on the scales.



I knew it was bad.

Of course I knew. You don't get to over twenty-five stone without some part of you knowing it's bad. But there's knowing something and there's having someone put it in front of you in black and white, in a clinical room with strip lighting and nowhere to look except at the numbers.

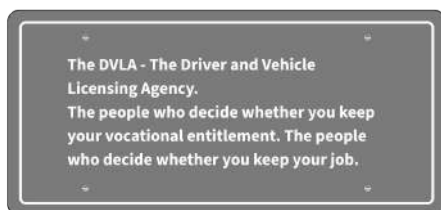
She weighed me. Measured my height. Measured my waist. Listened to my chest and took my blood pressure. Then she sat back down, looked at me across the desk, and started talking.

Pre-diabetic. Liver suffering. Heart under serious strain.

She asked me about alcohol. I told her what I drank in two days and passed it off as a week's worth. She still told me I was massively over the safe limits.

I think about that sometimes. I gave her the edited version - less than a third of the truth - and it was still too much.

Then she said something that stopped me cold. She said that if things continued the way they were going, she would be obliged to notify the DVLA.



She wasn't talking about my health anymore. She was talking about my livelihood. The licence that put food on the table for my family.

The thing I'd built my working life around for decades.

She was telling me that if I didn't sort myself out, someone was going to take it away from me. I don't remember exactly what I said. Something with an expletive in it, I'm fairly sure.

I thanked her for the antibiotics. And then I walked out of that surgery, got in the car, and fucking swore my fucking head off all the fucking way home.



I want to tell you what I actually looked like at that point, because it matters for this story to make sense.

Not just the numbers - though I'll give you those - but the day-to-day reality of being inside that body.

Twenty-five and a half stone. Fifty-four inch waist. I was fat.

Not big-boned. Not chunky. Not carrying a bit extra.

My BMI was well into the forties.

I was so fucking fat I couldn't wipe my own arse properly.

I know that's not a pleasant thing to read, but if you're reading this book, there's a chance you know exactly what I'm talking about, and I'm not going to pretend it doesn't happen. I'd developed a method - a flannel, a kind of pull-through system - because there was no other way to manage it.

Showers were the only way to actually get clean. I couldn't use the bath at home. Standing in the shower, I'd squirt the soap and shampoo on my head and let it run south by gravity, because I couldn't reach.

That's what it had come to.

Out in the truck on nights away, I kept large fabric conditioner bottles in the cab to piss in during the night. Because getting out of the cab in the dark, on some industrial estate, in the middle of the night, was too much - physically and logistically - and so you find other solutions.

Unglamorous, undignified solutions that you don't tell anyone about.

The snoring had got so bad that Judi had moved to the spare room. Not occasionally. Permanently.

I'd killed the sex life, I'd killed the shared bedroom, I was well on my way to killing everything else.

The sweating was constant. Not just when I was moving - just existing was

enough.

At cousin Lucy's wedding I'd gone through my third shirt by half past ten in the morning, before I'd even gone anywhere - I'd broken into a full sweat just putting my shoes and socks on while getting dressed.

Three shirts was standard on a night out. Four on a busy party night. I started carrying them on hangers in the car as a matter of routine.

I started buying lambswool sweaters for any occasion where I needed to look presentable, because they breathed better than cotton and didn't show the discolouration.

I had a system.

I had steadily built an entire wardrobe strategy around managing something I refused to call a problem.

My back hurt. My knees hurt. My feet hurt. Everything hurt, all the time, at a low persistent level that I'd stopped even noticing, the way you stop noticing a noise that never goes away.

I couldn't walk more than a few minutes without needing to stop.

The walk-round checks on the truck - something that should take two or three minutes - would leave me out of breath.

And I drank.

Ten cans of Stella a day and half a bottle of spirits on top, at my worst.

Standard nights I'd have six pints minimum, at a rate that most people would find uncomfortable to watch.

I stopped every January to prove to myself I wasn't an alcoholic. I'd loose a couple of stone without even trying, before always going back on it by Judi's birthday in March.

Every year. For years.

That's the man who walked into Dr Mel's surgery for an ear infection in September 2016. That's the man who walked out forty minutes later having been told his licence was at risk.



Being told something like that does a funny thing to you.

You know, rationally, that the doctor is right. Some part of you has known for a long time that things have gone too far.

The evidence has been piling up - the clothes that stopped fitting, the things you stopped doing, the looks you started getting, the jokes you started making about yourself before anyone else could. You've been ignoring it, but you haven't been unaware of it.

What the doctor does - what Dr Mel did - is make it impossible to keep ignoring it.

I didn't tell Judi about that appointment for a long time.

Not the detail of it. Not the DVLA part. I carried that on my own for a while, which is very me - this idea that if I don't say it out loud, it isn't quite real yet. I went home, said something non-committal about the ear, and sat with it.

But something had shifted. I knew it had. You get to a point where there are enough straws on the camel's back, and this one - the licence, the livelihood, the thing I'd built my adult life around - was a significant straw.

It wasn't the first warning. Not by a long way. This is where I should be honest about that, because the doctor's appointment isn't the beginning of this story.

It's the end of the beginning. The beginning goes back a lot further.



I'd stopped smoking in 2005, when my dad died.

He died of emphysema. The last two years of his life, the circulation had gone so badly in his feet that the skin was dying on them. The pain he was in, every single day, was something I couldn't imagine and couldn't fix.

I watched it. I watched all of it. And when he died, I stopped smoking that day - I had been on forty to fifty cigarettes a day for years - and I have never touched one since.

What I did instead was eat. And drink. Because you have to put something in the gap that forty cigarettes a day leaves behind, and food and alcohol were what I reached for.

Over the five years that followed, I gained a hundred and fifty pounds. It crept on, the way these things do - a bit in winter, not quite losing it in summer, a bit more the following winter.

You stop being able to see it because you're inside it.

There'd been signs before the doctor's appointment. Plenty of them. There was a family trip of a lifetime to Lapland I'll tell you about later. I had to make an embarrassing call to the holiday company before we even left, because of my size.

Think about that. I had to make that phone call. And I made it, and I went on the holiday, and I came home and I did absolutely nothing about it.

There was a day in 2012 that I don't talk about much. I'd been off work for nearly eleven months after surgery on a rotator cuff injury - not driving, not earning, not doing much of anything except watching the money disappear and the bills stack up.

My employer wasn't making it easy. The financial terror of that period is something I find hard to fully describe - I was selling everything I could lay my hands on just to keep the house.

The £18,000 caravan went, with everything in it. The tow car went. Two sailing dinghies I'd loved went to a man who knew exactly how desperate I was and paid accordingly. If it wasn't nailed down, it went.

One morning I had chest pains bad enough that I called the doctor. She saw me immediately, she didn't mess about, called an ambulance while I called Judi. I sat there in the surgery waiting for it, genuinely not knowing whether I was having

a heart attack.

Judi dropped everything, and beat the ambulance to the surgery, spoke to me, squeezed my hand, then followed the ambulance all the way to Leicester General.

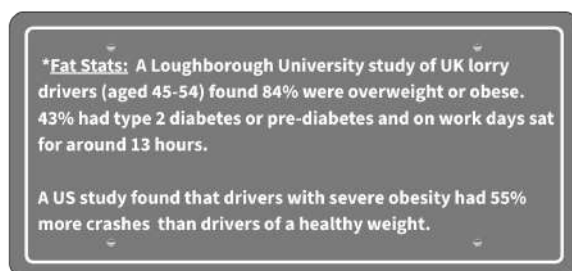
Once I was admitted to A&E, my wife, who I thought I'd lost, never left my side, for the entire time we were there.

Eventually, it turned out to be a panic attack. Which was a relief, obviously. But it didn't feel like one at the time. I came out the other side of that night doing my best impression of a man who'd never been worried. Bravado, bluster, 'I told them it was nothing.' Inside I was shaken.

But still, not enough to change anything. Not enough yet.

These things have a way of accumulating. Each one on its own isn't quite enough to make you move. Together, over years, they build into a weight of their own.

The DVLA threat was the one that tipped it over the edge.



1

This is not a story about one man's choices. This is an epidemic that the industry has been quietly ignoring for decades. I'm telling you those numbers *not* to make you feel bad.

I'm telling you about them because if you're reading this, you're probably in them. I want you to know that being in those numbers doesn't mean you're weak, or

-
1. Sources: Varela-Mato et al., Cross-sectional surveillance study of lorry drivers, BMJ Open 2017 (Loughborough repository)SHIFT study protocol, BMJ Open (84% vs 75% comparison)Anderson et al., Obesity is associated with the future risk of heavy truck crashes, 2012

lazy, or beyond help.

It means you're doing a job that works against your health in almost every way imaginable - the hours, the sedentary nature of it, the food available on the road, the isolation, the broken sleep, the stress.

It means the odds are stacked against you, and it means that changing, in this job, is genuinely harder than changing would be for most people.

I know that. I lived it. It also means it's possible.

Because I'm the proof.



After I got home from that doctor's visit in September 2016, things moved slowly at first.

They usually do. I didn't immediately transform. I didn't go home and throw out the Stella and sign up for a marathon.

That's not how it works for most people, and anyone who tells you it works like that is either very lucky or not being entirely straight with you.

What happened was quieter than that. Something had registered. Some internal alarm that I'd been pressing the snooze button on for years had finally gone off loud enough that I couldn't sleep through it.

In the months that followed, I would go through more before I got to better.

There was a trip to New York in May of that year - actually before the doctor, chronologically, though I didn't register it properly until after - where I needed a seatbelt extension on the flight and the man sitting next to me was moved because I was taking up part of his seat.

There was a trip to Las Vegas in October, after I'd started trying to do something about it, where I nearly proved to myself it was possible and then blew it spectacularly in five days.

There was a cold evening in a village hall in Derbyshire in February 2017 where I sat in a side room and cried before anyone had asked me a single question.

All of that is coming. But it starts here. In a surgery in Belton, with a doctor I'd gone to see about an ear infection, who told me something I couldn't un-hear.

She was right. I just wasn't ready to admit it yet.



YOUR TURN

Question 1 - The medical

When did you last have a proper medical?

Write the date below. If you can't remember - that's your answer.

Date of last medical:

.

If it's been more than a year: book one this week.

You can book an HGV (D4) medical with your GP or a Private provider.

Question 2 - Your warning signs

Write down three things your body is telling you right now that you've been ignoring.

Don't filter it. Don't make it vague. Be specific.

1.

2.

3.

These aren't problems to solve yet.

They're just things to stop pretending aren't there.

Question 3 - The accumulation

Think back. Have there been moments - a warning, an incident, a look on someone's face, something you couldn't do - that you registered and then quietly set aside?

Write them down here. As many as come to mind.

- .
- .
- .
- .
- .
- .
- .
- .
- .

You don't have to do anything with this list yet.

Just stop pretending those moments didn't happen.



Coming up in Chapter 2: You Are Not Alone.

This isn't just my story. It's yours, and 280,000 others.

Chapter Two

You Are Not Alone

This isn't just my story. It's yours, and 280,000 others.

Let me tell you about a typical day. Not a bad day.

NOT AN EXCEPTIONAL DAY. Just a regular day in the cab, doing what I did.

Up before four, cool bag packed for the day.

Four buttered rolls - ham and mustard. Four two-finger KitKats. A pack of Quavers. A pack of crisps. A litre of strong Vimto. A pint of full-fat blue milk.

And I'd make a pint mug of strong coffee - five sugars - plus a flask of the same for the road.

That was the official inventory, that was what Judi knew about.

On top of that - and this is the part I didn't mention at home - if I was doing the Cribbs Causeway run, which I did three times a week, I'd pull in for a McDonald's breakfast by six fifteen.

Full works.

Because I was up at three-thirty and the McDonald's was there and I'd been doing it long enough that it didn't feel like a choice anymore.

It just felt like another day.

And then there was the A10.

On that run there was a lay-by café where a man called Duncan worked. Duncan knew my order without me saying it. Double sausage, double bacon, raw onion, smothered in cheddar, brown sauce - on two thick doorsteps of bread – no butter though, because...

"I'm on A DIET Duncan!"

(the truth is - I just will not eat cheap marg!). I called it the Duncan Special.

I'd eat it in the cab alongside whatever was left of my packed lunch.

I wouldn't mention it when I got home. To add to all of that, I knew where every Greggs was on every via point of every regular run.

I'd started routing through them. Not going out of my way, exactly. Just never going out of my way to avoid them.

That was a regular day.

One day.

All of that was one day.



Judi used to give me a double pack of Jaffa Cakes on a Monday. For the whole week. It was supposed to be a treat, rationed out, something to look forward to.

They were gone before I reached Trowell Services. Trowell services is on the M1 northbound out of Loughborough; about twenty minutes from home!

Twenty minutes, and the week's Jaffa Cakes were finished, and I'm not entirely sure I was conscious of eating them.

They were just there, and then they weren't, and I was already thinking about what came next.

That's not hunger. That's something else entirely. I know that now.

At the time I just called it the way things were.

People talk about truck driving like it's a freedom job.

And in some ways it is - you're on your own, you're moving, you're not in an office under someone's eye. There's a real appeal to it, and I don't want to pretend there isn't.



But the other side of that freedom is this: you're on your own. Hour after hour, day after day, in a cab that's roughly the size of a large wardrobe, with nothing but the road and the radio and whatever's in the cool bag.

You eat alone. You park up alone. You sit in services alone surrounded by people who are all passing through and none of whom you'll ever see again.

And if you're away overnight - which I was, regularly - you do all of that and then you sleep alone too, in a bunk that's fine for its purpose but is nobody's idea of home.

The nights were when it got bad. The motorway services at eleven o'clock at night have a particular atmosphere that I couldn't fully describe to someone who hasn't experienced it.

It's a kind of limbo. Everyone there is in transit, nobody's where they want to be, the lighting is the lighting of somewhere that doesn't close, and you're surrounded by the smell of reheated food and diesel and other people's exhaust, and other people's piss.

It is, AWFUL It messes with your head.

I also ate to stay awake on night runs.

That's something people don't always understand - the eating was rarely about

enjoyment and not always about habit.

Sometimes it was just functional. You're driving at two in the morning, and your body's telling you it wants to be horizontal, and you eat because the eating is a comfort and it keeps you alert.

Crisps, chocolate, whatever's in reach.

It's not a choice you think about. It's just survival.

And if you made it home when the kids were having their tea, you'd eat whatever they left on their plates before you had your own dinner.

And then you'd finally sit at the computer because you weren't ready to sleep and the computer asked nothing of you.

That's the life. That's what it actually looks like from the inside.



This is not a lifestyle choice. This is what the job does to a person, over time, without support.

From the hundreds of drivers I've spoken to over the years, I'd easily say depression and poor mental health is rife.

But of course none of them are talking about it openly, because this is an industry where you get on with it and you don't make a fuss and you certainly don't tell anyone you're struggling.

And so instead you eat. For comfort, for distraction, because it's four in the morning and you're alone in a lay-by somewhere outside Wolverhampton and food is the one thing that's available and doesn't ask anything of you.

You drink, for the same reasons.

You start early. You finish late. You sit for almost the entirety of your working day.

The food available to you on the road is, with occasional honourable exceptions, designed for convenience rather than nutrition - and when you've been driving for eight hours and you're tired and you need something quick, convenience wins

every time.

You're away from home, away from your kitchen, your family and away from whatever routines might keep you on track.

Your sleep is disrupted by shift patterns and noisy service areas and a bunk that isn't your bed. And you do all of this, week after week, year after year, with no occupational health support worthy of the name.

You tell yourself you're fine, you're just tired, it's just the job.

I know all this.

I didn't call it depression. I didn't call it anything. I just called it another day on the road.

The system is stacked against you.

I want to say that clearly, because I think a lot of drivers – me included - carry a private shame about their weight that assumes it's entirely their own fault.

It isn't.

The environment you work in is working against you. That's a fact and although it doesn't excuse it, it does explain it.

And understanding the explanation is the first step to doing something about it.



While I was out in the cab eating my way through the week, Judi was at home.

I want to say something about that, because this book isn't just for the driver. It's for the person at home too - the one who's watching this happen and doesn't know what to do about it.

Judi was managing four children, working part-time, studying for her master's degree by distance learning, and doing all of it without much from me beyond a wage coming in.

I thought providing the money was the job.

I thought that was what a husband and father was supposed to do - keep the income coming and leave everything else to the person at home.

I called that being responsible.

Looking back, I'd call it something else.

I wasn't there, not really. I was present in the house but absent from the family.

She was doing everything alone. And she knew something was wrong, but she didn't know how to reach me, and for a long time she thought about leaving.

I didn't know any of that at the time. Actually - I suspect I knew some of it, in the way you know things you've decided not to look at too closely.

I was on the treadmill, and I didn't know how to get off it, and part of me - the part I'm least proud of - didn't want to.

If any of that sounds familiar to you - from either side of it - you're in the right place.

Keep reading.



When you're very overweight, you develop more than just practical workarounds like the fabric conditioner bottles, the flannel method, the shirts on hangers in the car

There are invisible ones too, and they're the ones that do the real damage.

You stop going to things. Slowly, gradually, without making a fuss about it, you stop going to things where your size will be an issue or an embarrassment.

You don't do the fairground ride.

You don't go to the restaurant where the chairs have arms.

You don't go to the football match because the seats are too narrow and you can feel the person next to you shifting away.

You don't go on the family holiday that involves walking, because the walking will

expose you.

You find reasons. You're busy, you're tired, you've got a job on.

The excuses come easily because they're always at least partially true.

You become smaller socially even as you become larger physically.

And the people around you notice, but they don't say anything, because what would they say? And you don't say anything, because you've got the workarounds.

The workarounds work. Right up until they don't.



There was a moment - it came later, after I'd already started losing weight - when Judi told me something she'd kept to herself for years.

We were at a social event.

There was a bouncer on the door - a big lad, clearly running warm. As we walked past him there was a wave of body odour. That particular smell - hot, heavy, unavoidable. And as we passed, Judi leaned in close and whispered in my ear: "you used to smell like that!" I was horrified.

She'd known since a flight we'd taken years earlier. Sitting next to me on the plane, she'd been aware of it and said nothing.

She'd said nothing for years.

Because there are things you don't say to someone you love when you don't know how they'll take it, and when you're not sure it would help anyway.

I sometimes think about that and all the things the people closest to us know and don't say.

All the ways they accommodate and adapt and quietly protect us from truths we're not ready to hear.

Was she right to stay quiet? I don't know.

But she shouldn't have had to.



I'm telling you all of this because I want you to understand something before we go any further.

You are not uniquely weak. You are not uniquely undisciplined.

You are not a special case of someone who can't get it together.

You are one of 280,000 drivers in this country doing a job that has made your physical and mental health an afterthought, in an industry that has never properly addressed this, living a life that gives you almost none of the conditions that make change easy.

You are also not beyond help.

Not by a long way.

I was twenty-five and a half stone, nearly fifty-eight years old, with a drinking problem I wouldn't fully admit to, a marriage that was struggling, and a body that was starting to give me serious warnings.

I lost over ten stone. I've kept it off. I'm still here, still driving - on my own terms now - and I can walk up a flight of stairs without thinking about it.

If I can do it, you can do it. That's not a motivational poster.

That's just a fact. The chapters ahead are going to ask things of you.

They're going to ask you to be honest - about what you eat, about what you drink, about what you've been avoiding and what you've been telling yourself.

That's harder than it sounds, because most of us have been telling ourselves the same things for so long that they feel like the truth.

But first, before any of that - I'll ask you to accept one thing.

This wasn't entirely your fault, but it is your responsibility.

It isn't too late.



YOUR TURN

Question 1 - The cab inventory

What have you got tucked away in the cab that's not going to help you reach your goals. Or what do you regularly stock up on?

Biscuits, sweets, fizzy drinks, crisps?

.
.
.
.

Question 2 – The Duncan Special

Is there an equivalent 'Duncan Special' for you? Or a Greggs, or a particular stop where you will always go overboard?

.

This isn't about shame, it's about recognition. When you write it down, it's real and you can address it.

Question 3 – For the person at home

If you're reading this as the partner or family member - write down one thing you've known and not said.

You don't have to show it to anyone. But write it down here or somewhere else.

.
.

And then ask yourself: is there a way to say it that isn't about blame?

Because that's the conversation that might actually help.



Coming up in Chapter 3: The Slow Puncture – It doesn't happen overnight. And neither does the decision to stop it.

Nobody wakes up one morning and decides to become twenty-five stone.

Chapter Three

The Slow Puncture

It doesn't happen overnight.
And neither does the decision
to stop it.

Nobody wakes up one morning and decides to become twenty-five stone.

I WANT YOU TO understand that before anything else in this chapter.

There wasn't a day when I made a choice to let my health go.

There wasn't a moment when I thought: right, I'm going to stop looking after myself now, I'm going to drink too much and eat too much and gradually make my life smaller and my body bigger until I can barely get out of a cab without losing my breath.

It doesn't work like that. What it looks like, from the inside, is a slow puncture.

You're driving along fine. Everything seems more or less normal. Then at some point you notice the handling isn't quite right - there's a pull to one side, a heaviness you didn't used to feel.

But you're moving, you're making progress, you've got a delivery to get to, and so you carry on. And by the time you finally pull over and look at the tyre, it's flat to the rim and you've been driving on it for fifty miles.

That's what gaining a hundred and fifty pounds over five years feels like.

You're moving. You're getting there, but the tyre was going down the whole time.



I need to take you back a bit, because the story of how I got to twenty-five stone doesn't start with the truck.

It doesn't even start with the business that collapsed.

It starts much earlier than that - with a boy who knew exactly what he wanted to do with his life and spent most of his adult years doing something else entirely.

I was a grammar school boy from a good family. My father was a remarkable man - a research chemist who taught himself through night school because there wasn't the money for university, and who ended up being responsible for anticonvulsants, beta blockers, Savlon - drugs that are saving lives to this day.

He eventually became managing director of an ICI subsidiary in Southern Africa. He was a brilliant man. Absolutely certain about what his son should do with his life.

His son had other ideas. From about the age of eleven, I was taking apart lawnmower engines, rebuilding push bikes, anything involving spanners and nuts and bolts.

I was good with my hands, good with people, and I had a very clear plan: I'd arranged my own apprenticeship at a local Scania dealership, I'd get my licences, move into recovery and haulage, and have at least fifteen trucks by the time I was thirty.

I could see the whole thing. I announced this at my grammar school careers evening.

The teacher hit the floor. My dad hit the floor shortly after.

When they both recovered, it was made absolutely clear to me that grammar school boys do not become diesel fitters. What I tried to explain - and nobody seemed to hear - was that I wasn't planning to be a diesel fitter.

I was planning to run a transport and logistics operation.

I had the vision at sixteen that most people spend their whole careers trying to find. But they saw a specky kid who didn't want to be a doctor, and that was that.

I failed Chemistry A-level six times. Deliberately.

Not because I was thick - because I just didn't want anything to do with it.

My father was a chemist. You'd have thought he'd have got the message.

Eventually I went to catering college instead. I became a hotelier. I was general manager of a hotel at twenty-five. And I travelled; Kenya where my father had been, Papua New Guinea working for Coral Sea Hotels in Port Moresby.

Five-star hotels, interesting work, interesting people.

It was a good life in many ways. It just wasn't the life I'd planned at sixteen. And I think that matters - the distance between the life you imagined and the life you're living has a weight of its own, even when you can't name it.

It was only in my late thirties that I finally came back to transport. By then I thought it was too late to do what I'd really wanted to do.

It wasn't - it happened later, on my own terms - but that's what I thought at the time.

So I drove. And I was good at it. And the cab became my world.



However, prior to the truck, there was the shop-fitting business.

And before I tell you about what happened to that business, I want to tell you about a moment that has never left me.

We'd gone bust. The business had collapsed - I won't dwell on the details because the details aren't the point - and we were living on state aid.

It was 1992. Judi had just had Sarah. Tom was nearly three years old.

I had thirty pounds to do the weekly shop. I went to the supermarket with Tom

in the trolley and a cheap calculator blue-tacked to the handlebar, and every time we put something in I added it up.

We were buying the basics - the cheap versions of everything, nothing that wasn't absolutely necessary. I got to about twenty-eight pounds fifty and I thought: that's as much as we can have.

Tom had been brilliant - really good as gold all the way round. So I said to him: you've been such a good boy, would you like some sweets?

And he picked up a packet of Maltesers, they were fifty pence; 'no problem' I thought.

We got to the checkout and as things went through the till, the total kept climbing. I was getting edgy, then nervous, until I hit full panic mode when the total was more than my funds could cover.

I must have miscalculated somewhere. It came to thirty-two pounds and some change.

I said to the cashier: I'm sorry, I've only got thirty pounds, we're going to have to put something back.

She went off on one. In front of a queue full of people, this woman took real pleasure in making sure everyone in earshot knew exactly what was happening.

The people behind us were embarrassed. I was mortified. I'm a six-foot-one man who's been a hotel general manager, who's worked in Papua New Guinea, who's run his own business - standing there being publicly humiliated over two pounds eighty-five.

And then Tom held up his packet of Maltesers and said: "you can have these back, Daddy. Will that help?" I wanted the ground to open up and swallow me whole.

We put something else back. We paid. We left. And in that car park, with Tom in his car seat and the cheap shopping in the boot, something shifted in me that has never shifted back.

I swore - and I really swore! And I absolutely promised myself that I would never again rely on a single source of income.

That I would never again hand complete control of my wages and my family's security to someone or something else.

That nobody would ever be able to do to me what had just happened in that supermarket.

Even now, all these years later, I only have to look at a packet of Maltesers and I'm straight back there.

It's the most powerful motivator I have. When people ask what drives me - that.

That moment. That two-year-old boy with his fifty pence packet of sweets.

Sometimes you have to hit rock bottom to bounce back.

That was rock bottom. And it was also, though I didn't know it yet, the beginning of everything that came after.



A word about habits, because this is where they start.

I was working with a group of shop-fitters once - this was during those years, before everything fell apart.

We broke for lunch. One of the lads opened his sandwiches, took one look at them, and threw them in the bin. "Fucking Spam again," he said.

Then Ken, the electrician, did the same.

Opened them and threw them. "Bloody jam again."

Now - Ken was a single divorcee. He made his own sandwiches. Every single day, Ken made his own sandwiches, and every day he was surprised and mildly outraged by what was in them.

I've thought about Ken a lot over the years. The way we can go through exactly the same motions, make exactly the same choices, produce exactly the same results - and somehow still be surprised by it.

Ken wasn't going to change his sandwiches. Ken was going to keep making jam sandwiches and keep throwing them away and keep being annoyed, because that was what Ken did.

It was his pattern, and patterns are extraordinarily resistant to logic.

From the inside, a habit doesn't feel like a choice.

It just feels like life. It feels like Tuesday. I've been Ken more times than I'd like to admit.

And if you're reading this book, chances are you have too.



After the business, I went back to the trucks.

It was steady. It was something I knew. It paid the bills - and after the supermarket car park, paying the bills felt like the most important thing in the world.

So I drove, and I built other things alongside it, and I kept my promise to myself about never relying on a single source of income.

Amway. Affiliate marketing. E-commerce. A small driver agency.

Always something running alongside the day job. But in the cab, the habits were forming.

The patterns were setting. And slowly, over the years that followed, the food and the drink were filling a space I hadn't consciously identified yet.



I mentioned that I stopped smoking the day my dad died. I saw what those cigarettes had done to him over decades - I watched all of it, but it wasn't until that day that I stopped cold.

I have never touched one since. I'd tried to quit before and when people ask how I did it, the honest answer is that I watched my father die in agony and decided I didn't want to suffer like that, or put my family through such emotional pain. That's it – that was **WHY**. That reason was stronger than the hypnosis and the patches ever were.

When your **WHY** is clear enough, the **HOW** takes care of itself - and I'll come back to that later in this book, because it's the most important thing I learned through all of this.

But here's what I didn't understand at the time: stopping smoking doesn't just remove a habit. It leaves a gap. Forty cigarettes a day is forty moments of oral fixation, forty small chemical rewards, forty tiny punctuation marks in your day that suddenly aren't there anymore.

Your body and your brain notice. They go looking for something to fill the space and I filled it with food. And drink. Not all at once. Not dramatically.

Just - a bit more here, a bit more there. An extra beer in the evening because the evening felt empty without the cigarettes.

An extra roll at lunch because the hunger that the nicotine used to suppress was suddenly real. A biscuit, a bag of crisps, something sweet after dinner that I hadn't needed before.

That's what a slow puncture looks like. That's how it happened.



I want to be clear about something, because I think it matters for where you might be right now.

I knew.

I always knew it was too much. I wasn't walking around in blissful ignorance of the fact that I'd got too big - I was aware of it, in the way you're aware of a damp patch on the wall that you keep meaning to deal with.

It was there. I could see it. I just kept not dealing with it.

Every January, I'd stop drinking. Not because I thought I had a problem - oh no.

Because I wanted to prove I didn't have a problem. There's a difference, and it matters.

I'd stop, and within a few weeks the weight would start coming off - remarkable how much of what I was carrying was just the beer - and I'd feel better, and I'd think: right, this is it, I've got this.



*The annual 'Alcohol Free' looser
fit trousers!*

And then Judi's birthday would come around. On March the eighteenth I'd think: well, it's her birthday, I can't not have a drink on her birthday.

And then it would be a weekend, and then it would be someone else's birthday, and then it would just be a Tuesday - and there I was, back where I started.

Every year. For years. I told myself I could lose weight whenever I wanted.

And in a way it was true - the January experiment proved it every time. The problem wasn't that I couldn't lose it. The problem was that I kept finding reasons to put it back on. And I was very good at finding reasons.

I did try other things in between. Atkins - which worked briefly, and made me extraordinarily unpleasant to be around and produced an aroma that Judi has described with some feeling on more than one occasion. The 5:2 - didn't sustain it. Various combinations of starvation, fruit-only phases, super fasting, and things I'd read about in random magazines.

I bought two Nutri Bullets. They're on eBay now, if anyone's interested!

The pattern was always the same. Start with enthusiasm. See some results. Hit an obstacle - a holiday, a birthday, a bad week at work, a reason - and stop.

I'd tell myself I'd start again Monday and then I'd start again the following month instead.

Gain back what I'd lost, plus a bit extra for good measure.

This is the yo-yo. If you've been on it, you know exactly what I mean.

It's not a lack of willpower - or at least, it's not only that.

It's a lack of the right reason. Every time I lost weight in those years, I was losing it because I thought I should, or because Judi was worried, or because my clothes didn't fit, or because it was January and that was what I did in January.

None of those are reasons. They're observations. There's a difference, and I'll explain it properly in a later chapter.

For now, the point is this: I spent years knowing I needed to change, occasionally trying to change, and never quite managing it.

Not because I was beyond help. Because I hadn't yet found the thing that made change feel necessary rather than optional.



Here's what accumulates alongside the weight, and this is the part not enough people are talking about.

The things you stop doing are so gradual that you barely notice each one.

You stop doing the long walk because your knees hurt.

You stop going to the thing because the seats are too narrow or you're not sure you'll fit or you'll sweat through your shirt.

You stop suggesting holidays that involve walking, beaches, anything active.

You stop being the one who organises things, who makes plans, who says yes.

And the people around you adjust. They stop suggesting the walks.

They stop booking the active holidays. They stop asking if you want to come to things where they think you'll be uncomfortable.

They love you, so they accommodate you. And between your avoidance and their accommodation, your world gets a little smaller every year.

You don't notice it happening because it happens slowly.

You just notice, one day, that you're not doing things you used to do.

And by then it feels normal. By then the smaller life is just your life.

That's the slow puncture. Not just in your body - in everything.

The weight is the symptom. The smaller life is the damage.



I want you to map your own version of it.

Not to feel bad about it. Not to wallow in it. But because you can't fix a puncture you haven't located yet.

You need to know where the air went out - when it started, what fed it, what kept it going - before you can do anything useful about it.

The workbook section is going to ask you to do exactly that.

It won't take long. It might feel uncomfortable. Do it anyway.

You're a driver – you know that slow punctures are fixable.

Every one of them. You just have to pull over first.

YOUR TURN

Question 1 - When did your puncture start?

Think back to when things started to shift - not when you noticed, but when it actually started.

Was there an event? A change? A loss, a job change, a relationship, a bereavement?

Something you stopped doing, or started doing? Write it down - as much as you can remember.

If you're not sure, start with: 'It was around the time that...' See what comes after that. .

.
. .
.

Question 2 - What's your Ken sandwich?

What's your version of Ken's jam sandwiches? The thing you keep doing the same way, getting the same result, and somehow remaining surprised by it.

Be honest. Be specific. Nobody's reading this but you.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Question 3 - The pattern Have you tried to change before?

How many times? Write down what you tried, how long it lasted, and what stopped you.

What I tried:

How long it lasted:

What stopped me:

What I told myself afterwards:

Look at that last line. That's the story you've been telling yourself. Is it true?

Or is it just what you've got used to saying?

Question 4 - The smaller life Write down three things you've stopped doing in the last few years.

Not big dramatic things necessarily - small things, quiet withdrawals.

Things you used to do and gradually stopped.

1.

2.

3.

Now write down one of those you'd genuinely like back.

That one:

Hold onto that.

It's going to matter later.



Coming up in Chapter 4: What This Life Does To You - it's not weakness.

The system is stacked against you.

Chapter Four

What This Life Does To You

It isn't weakness. But it is real.

I want to talk about something that doesn't get talked about enough.

WE'VE COVERED THE FOOD - what goes in the cab, what gets eaten on the road, the routes planned around Greggs and the Duncan Specials and the Jaffa Cakes gone before Trowell Services.

We've covered the drink. We've covered the weight and the waist size and the physical things the body starts doing when you've pushed it too far for too long.

But there's a layer underneath all of that. And it's the one that's hardest to talk about, and the one that I think, for a lot of drivers, is doing the most damage.

What this life does to your head.



By the time I got to my worst - over twenty-five stone, excessive drinking, not sleeping and with Judi in the spare room - I had been on the treadmill for years.

And not the one I should have been on. I don't mean a treadmill in the sense of a boring routine. I mean the thing that spins under you and keeps you moving without you going anywhere.

You're putting in the hours. You're earning the money. You're keeping the plates spinning.

And we had a lot of plates, more than anyone I knew. Not only were we both working flat out, we were building businesses on the side - Amway, which demanded time and energy from us both, plus Judi was building her own training company.

On paper it looked like ambition. From the inside it was the kind of chaos that you just can't see clearly when you're in the middle of it.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing.

Whatever way you look at it, you're not actually getting anywhere, and somewhere inside you know it, and that knowledge sits in you like a stone.

I was always the victim. That's the honest version of it and I'm not proud of it. When something went wrong - the job, the money, the relationship, whatever it was - my first instinct was always to find a reason why it wasn't my fault.

Why I was the one being hard done by. Why everyone else had it easier. I'd slam doors, withdraw, disappear into the computer or the cab or the bottle, and I'd tell myself that nobody understood what I was dealing with.

I was sorry for myself and more than once I said to Judi "Why am I here? What do you even need me for?"

But, the wife I'd convinced myself had become distant and uncaring *had* dropped everything and followed an ambulance across Leicestershire and never left my side when I had that suspect heart attack.

She was there.

She'd always been there.

I was the one who'd been absent.

As if providing the wage was all a husband was supposed to do and I was otherwise useless. It wasn't anywhere near how a father and husband should show up for their family.

And the worst part is that I knew it and I couldn't stop.



When he was just 11 years old, our son Max became ill.

In four years of tests and hospital stays, I barely did a single sleepover. I'm not going to dress that up or explain it away.

It's just the truth. I was there in the ways I was there, and I wasn't there in the ways I wasn't.

All through those years I was out providing, doing what I thought I should. Oblivious to what Judi was feeling.

Judi held the family together with a tenacity I couldn't match and didn't deserve.

I haven't forgotten it. If there's someone reading this who recognises that pattern - present in body, absent in the ways that actually matter - I'm not here to judge you.

I'm here to tell you it's possible to be a different person.

Because I am.



I want to be honest about how dark things got.

Not for the drama of it - there's no drama in this, just the plain truth of what happens when a man spends years not dealing with what's going on inside him.

The drinking was part of it. Not just the volume - though the volume was serious - but what the drinking was for. It wasn't enjoyment. It wasn't sociability. It was insulation.

It was a way of not feeling what I was feeling, of getting through the evening, of sleeping despite the snoring and the sweating and the weight of everything pressing down.

The computer was part of it too. Hours and hours on screens, working on the online business, always chasing the next thing, always looking for the answer in the next course or the next mentor or the next strategy.

Focused on everything except what was right in front of me.

Judi has called it being a caveman - providing in the most basic financial sense, but absent from everything else.

She's not wrong.



During my lowest periods - and I'm not going to put a date on this or dress it up - the Samaritans were an important part of what kept me going.

I'm not ashamed of that. I'm grateful for it. They were there when I needed someone to talk to, no judgement, no agenda. Just a kind voice on the end of a free phone call. They kept me going when I needed them, they could do the same for you.

After one very dark night in the Lake District (Judi had taken the kids to her parents), I called the 'Sams', I'd never been worse. They asked if I had a friend close by who could come and be with me. Honestly I felt my only true friends were a couple who lived just outside Newark, Rob and Jane. They had sponsored us into Amway and I'd known Rob since my early hotel days. He's someone who is still a close friend to this day.

When I spoke to them, I just broke down. Rob dropped everything and drove all the way to Shap in Cumbria to come and listen to my 'pity party'. He took time I know he couldn't afford, to sit with me and set me straight.

Realistically, he stood me back up again and along with my wife, is one of the only people I will never be able to properly thank, I just do not have the words.

I would love to imagine I would do the same for another person if I ever have that opportunity. It is never far from my mind.

To Rob – Thank You

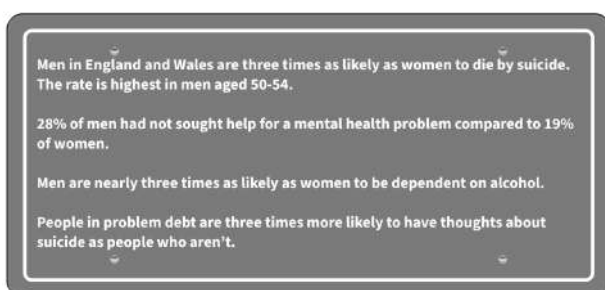
I'm telling you this because I think there are men reading this book who are in that place right now and who haven't told a single person.

Men who are driving a forty-tonne truck up and down the country every day holding everything together on the outside and falling apart on the inside.

Men who would rather sit alone in a cab at three in the morning than admit to anyone that they're not okay.

You don't have to do that alone. That's the point. You genuinely don't.

Who would you call?



1

The combination of isolation, physical health decline, financial pressure and the culture of 'getting on with it' that runs through the haulage industry creates a perfect storm that too many drivers are navigating entirely alone.

I'm not a mental health professional and I'm not going to pretend otherwise. What I am is a man who has been in that storm and come out the other side.

And what I know - from experience, not theory - is that the physical stuff and the mental stuff are not separate problems. They feed each other.

The worse you feel physically, the worse you feel in your head.

1. ONS, Suicides in England and Wales, latest releaseMen's Health Forum, Key data: mental healthMoney and Mental Health Policy Institute, debt and suicide press release, 2018

The worse you feel in your head, the worse the physical stuff gets. Round and round.

You don't fix one without addressing the other.

That's why this book isn't just about food and exercise.

It's about everything.



Judi has been honest with me, over time, about what those years were like to live through.

She doesn't dress it up. I was smelly. I was grumpy all the time. Volatile. Short-tempered and she shielded the children from my moods for years.

She was looking at places of her own and seriously considering leaving me, because she didn't know how much longer she could do it.

She knew things needed to change. But she recognised that I didn't have the tools to help myself and that I didn't have many positive influences in my life.

Change needs help and means taking responsibility.

Change means no more excuses.

Change means having to be a different person, and being a different person is terrifying when you've been the same one for so long.

I'm not telling you this to be hard on myself. I'm telling you because if any of it sounds familiar - if you recognise that part, the part that doesn't want to find the way out - I need you to know that recognising it is not the same as being stuck with it.

It's actually the beginning of getting unstuck.



This is the darkest chapter in the book.

I want to acknowledge that, but we are about to turn a corner.

The next section of the book is about the decision - the moment things started to shift, the **WHY** that made the **HOW** possible.

But I didn't want to get there without first being honest about where the rock bottom actually was.

Not just the weight and the waist size, but all of it.

The full picture. Because if you're in it right now - the treadmill, the drinking, the not sleeping, the being there but not being there, the dark three o'clock mornings in the cab - I wanted you to know that I've been in it too.

Not a version of it. The actual thing. And I got out.

The rest of this book is about getting out.

PLEASE REMEMBER



MAKE A NOTE OF THIS NUMBER

YOUR TURN

Question 1 - Name the treadmill

Not just the food and drink - the whole thing.

The pressure, the isolation, the feeling of being stuck.

The things you're carrying that nobody else knows about.

What's on your treadmill? Write it down. All of it.

The financial stuff, the relationship stuff, the work stuff.

The thing you haven't said out loud to anyone.

.

.

.

.

.

.

You can't get off something you haven't admitted you're on.

Question 2 - The absent present

Be honest with yourself about this one.

Are you there - physically present - but absent in the ways that matter?

Write down one thing that's been going on at home or with the people you love that you've been on the periphery of rather than properly in.

.

.

You don't have to fix it today. Just acknowledge it. That's the first step.

Question 3 - Are you okay? Simple question. Harder to answer than it sounds.

If the answer is genuinely yes - good. Keep reading.

If the answer is no, or not really, or you're not sure - write down one person you could talk to.

Not to fix it. Just to say it out loud to another human being.

That person:

If there isn't one - the Samaritans are available 24 hours a day. 116 123.

Free. Confidential. No judgement. They kept me going when I needed them.

There's no shame in using them.



Coming up in Chapter 5: The Wake-Up Calls - three moments I almost ignored.

Nearly.

Chapter Five

The Wake-Up Calls

Three moments I almost ignored. Nearly.

Nobody changes because things are going fine. I know that sounds obvious when you say it out loud.

BUT IT'S WORTH SAYING, because I think a lot of people - I was one of them - spend years waiting for things to be going fine before they make a change.

I'll sort it out when the pressure eases. I'll deal with it when the kids are older, when the job settles down, when I've got a bit more headroom.

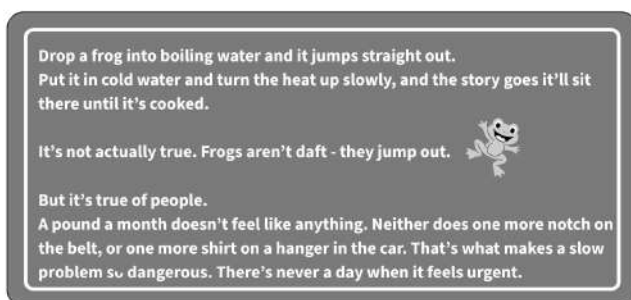
When things calm down. Things don't calm down. And change doesn't wait for the right moment.

What actually happens - what happened to me - is that the moments come to you. Not gently, and not on your schedule. They arrive, and you either hear them or you don't, and if you don't, they come back louder.

I had three major wake-up calls before I finally did something. Three moments that should have been enough, each one on its own, to make me stop and change course.

I ignored the first. I half-heard the second. The third one I finally listened to.

This chapter is about all three.



So many people who know their health is deteriorating continue to do nothing about it - not because they don't care, but because the brain is genuinely not designed to treat a slow emergency with the same urgency as a sudden one.

It usually takes a shock. In other words: it's not that you haven't noticed.

It's that your brain has been telling you there's still time.

Still a bit more road left on these tyres. There isn't always and you often don't notice until it's almost too late .



WAKE-UP CALL ONE:

Lapland, around 2009.

We went on a family holiday to see Father Christmas in Lapland.

The kids were excited. Judi had organised it. It was going to be a proper family trip of a lifetime - the kind of memory you're supposed to keep forever.

However, before we even left the UK, I had to make a call to the holiday company to check something that was bothering me .

I had to ask if there was a ski suit big enough for me.

I also worried whether I'd need two seats on the plane.

Think about what you have to be carrying - physically and emotionally - to have to make that call. That was a memory I didn't want to keep.

I'm not talking about a bit of extra weight. I'm talking about being so far gone that the basic logistics of a family holiday require a separate conversation with the company about your size.

I made the call. I went on the holiday. I sat on the plane, in my seat, and Judi sat next to me.

She hasn't told me this until much later - she smelled me on that flight.

Said nothing. Not a word. Because what do you say? And when do you say it?

And would it have helped? We had the holiday. We came home.

And I did absolutely nothing to change. Zero. Not a single action.

I filed it somewhere in the back of my head under 'things to deal with eventually' and carried on exactly as I had been.

That's what ignoring a wake-up call looks like. Not dramatic.

Just - continue as normal.





In between the big moments, the smaller ones were stacking up.

I mentioned earlier the sweating. By this period, I'd developed a system for managing it on nights out.

Three shirts on hangers in the car - that was standard.

Four if it was going to be a busy night. I'd get through them one by one as the evening went on, nipping out to the car between pints to change, hoping nobody noticed or if they did that they'd have the decency not to mention it.

I'd wear the lambswool sweaters for any occasion where I needed to look smart and disguise the dampness and discolouration.

I had adapted, quietly and methodically, my entire wardrobe around managing a problem I refused to face up to .

My best friend and greatest confidant Chris Taylor watched all of this.

Has known me for years. Still does. There are things you share with a friend like that - the dark stuff, the things you'd never say to anyone else.

He was witness to more of those years than most. He never stopped being my friend.

That matters more than I can say. But even with Chris, I wasn't listening to what the evidence was telling me.

Three shirts. Four shirts. Lambswool sweaters. The evidence was loud.

I'd just learned not to hear it.



WAKE-UP CALL TWO:

New York, May 2016

I was flying to a business event in New York.

A digital marketing conference - this was during the period when I was building the online side of things alongside the driving, always trying to keep that promise I'd made to myself in a supermarket car park in 1992.

I nearly didn't get on the plane. The seatbelt wouldn't fasten. I had to ask for an extension.

The man sitting next to me was moved to business class. Not dramatically, just moved. Because my fat was taking up part of his seat as well as my own.

I sat there for that entire flight in a way that I find difficult to describe.

Not humiliated, exactly - I was past the point of feeling humiliated by individual incidents, I'd adapted too well for that.

Just aware. Unavoidably, inescapably aware of what I'd become and what it was costing me.

When I got to New York, I didn't do any sightseeing.



All I saw of New York!

I couldn't. Not because of the money - though money was tight - but because I couldn't walk far enough.

The city that everyone talks about walking everywhere, the city you're supposed to just throw yourself into and wander for days - I couldn't do it.

I was too heavy. My feet hurt, my back hurt, my lungs hurt, and the gap between what I wanted to do and what I was capable of doing felt enormous.

At the event, a mentor of mine took me to one side and he said something I've never forgotten.

'Success won't make you happy, Steve. You've got to be happy to achieve success.'

I didn't have an answer for that.

I still think about it. I came home from New York and booked a trip to Las Vegas for another event.

Not because I'd sorted anything out. Not because I'd changed.

But because I needed a goal - something specific, something real, something with a date on it.

The Las Vegas trip was booked for October 2016. And I decided that I was not going to need a seatbelt extension on that flight.

That was the first flicker. Not a decision to transform my life - just a specific, concrete, short-term goal.

A line in the sand.



I did it. By October 2016 I'd got myself from a fifty-four inch waist down to forty-eight inches.

Six inches. I sat down on that outbound flight, fastened the seatbelt without an extension, and felt something I hadn't felt in a long time.



No Extension & room!

A certain amount of triumph, but also a feeling of oh , so it is possible.

And then I went to Las Vegas and blew it.

Not a little bit. Properly, comprehensively blew it.

The buffets, the drinking, the complete abandonment of everything I'd been doing for four months.

Five days, and it was gone. On the flight home, the cabin crew automatically brought me a seatbelt extension.

In front of a full plane. Walked it down the aisle and handed it to me, as you do, as part of the job, without drama - but in front of everyone.

I could practically hear the whole cabin thinking it. Fat bastard.

That pissed me right off. And being pissed off - genuinely, viscerally irritated at myself - turned out to be more useful than being ashamed had ever been.

Because shame makes you hide. Anger, the right kind of anger, the kind that's directed inward at your own behaviour rather than outward at the world - that kind makes you move.

Another line in the sand. Another layer on the pile.



WAKE-UP CALL THREE:

Belton Surgery, September 2016

You already know this one from Chapter 1.

The ear infection. Dr Mel. The scales, the measurement, the conversation about pre-diabetes and the liver and the heart. The DVLA threat.

What I want to add here - because I think it matters for understanding why this one finally landed when the others hadn't - is that it wasn't the health stuff that did it. I'd been told about the health risks before. Not as bluntly, not by Dr Mel, but I wasn't ignorant of the risks.

The weight, the drinking, the sedentary life - I knew what they were doing. Knowing hadn't been enough. What was different this time was the licence.

The HGV entitlement. The thing that made me a driver.

The thing that paid for the house, the food, the family's security.

The thing I'd been building my working life around since I'd first sat in a cab.

She was telling me that if I didn't change, she would notify the people who could take that away from me. That hit a different place. Not the place that worries about health in the abstract - that place is remarkably easy to ignore, as it turns out.

The place it hit was the one connected to 1992 and a supermarket car park and a two-year-old boy offering back his Maltesers.

The place that said: nobody takes control of my livelihood away from me.

Nobody.

Swearing my head off all the way home, I didn't tell Judi what had been said. I carried it on my own. But something had changed.

The three wake-up calls had done their work. Not elegantly, not on any sensible schedule, not without a great deal of wasted time in between.

But they'd done it. I was ready to listen.



This is what I've come to understand about wake-up calls, looking back.

They don't announce themselves as wake-up calls when they happen.

They just feel like incidents - a difficult phone call, a humiliating moment on a plane, a conversation in a doctor's surgery.

It's only in retrospect that you can see them for what they were: the moments when the universe was trying to get your attention.

And the reason we ignore them - the reason I ignored them, again and again - isn't stupidity or laziness.

It's that responding to them requires admitting something. It requires standing still long enough to look at what the evidence is saying, and that is genuinely frightening when you've been moving fast enough not to look for a long time.

But the trouble with wake-up calls is that they keep coming (if you're lucky!).

They don't give up on you.

They just get louder. The question is whether you hear them before they become something you can't come back from.

You're reading this book. That's a kind of wake-up call in itself. Something brought you here - something you've seen or felt or been told or quietly suspected.

Don't ignore it. The next chapter is about what to do with it.

YOUR TURN

Question 1 - Your wake-up calls

Think back.

What have been your wake-up calls? Not the ones you acted on - the ones you almost ignored.

The incidents, the moments, the things people said.

The physical limitations you quietly accommodated. The looks on people's faces you pretended not to notice.

Write down as many as come to mind.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Now look at that list.

How long have they been accumulating? And what have you been telling yourself about each one?

Question 2 - The one that's nagging

There's usually one that keeps coming back.

The one you push down and it resurfaces. The one that woke you at three in the morning and then you talked yourself out of it by morning.

Write it down here.

.

You know what it is.

You've known for a while. Write it down. Stop pretending it isn't there.

Question 3 - What would it take?

After years of ‘incidents’ it took me three wake-up calls before I truly listened.
Some people need more.

Some people need fewer.

What would it take for YOU to hear it?

What would have to happen before you decided enough was enough?

Write it honestly.

.

.

Now ask yourself: Do you really want to wait for that to happen?

Or is right now - this moment, this page - enough?



Coming up in Chapter 6: Judi's Story - what it looked like from the other side.

Chapter Six

Judi's Story

You think you're the only one suffering.

There's other people in this story, there always are.

I WANT TO STOP the story for a moment. We've spent five chapters in my head - my habits, my wake-up calls, my slow puncture, my treadmill. That's as it should be, because this is my journey and what I learned from it.

But this chapter is about someone else – actually, the most important someone.

Because if I tell you my journey without sharing this, you'll be missing out on a big piece of the story.

This chapter is about Judi.



I'm not proud of a lot of what's in this chapter.

But I'm telling it anyway, because I think there's a partner reading this who needs to know that what they're feeling is real, and that they're not alone in it.

And I think there's a driver reading this who needs to hear the same things I had to hear, even though they're uncomfortable.

This is the woman who was at breaking point and booked the bootcamp.

This is what those years actually cost her. What she was living with while I was busy telling myself I was doing my best.

So. Here it is.

I'm going to start with something Judi said - not softened, not edited, exactly as she said it.

"I didn't want the sex. I didn't want to be kissed because he was fat and smelly. Being demanded upon like that isn't right when you're being shouted at and you're next to a beached whale."

It's not a kind thing to say about your husband, but it was the truth of what it was like to be Judi during those years.

And if you're the partner reading this and any part of that landed - I'm glad she said it, because it needs to be said. The people who love us deserve to have their experience acknowledged, not sanitised.

I was grumpy. Volatile. Short-tempered. I came home from days on the road expecting to walk back in as the returning provider - the alpha male who'd been out earning, expecting the house to be grateful and the dinner on the table.

What I gave in return was very little. In my version of those years, I was out on the road earning, keeping the mortgage paid - and it was a serious mortgage, the kind you end up with after a bankruptcy when the only lenders who'll touch you charge rates that make your eyes water.

I was keeping the family afloat financially while also trying to build something on

the side so we'd never be in that position again.

That was my job. That was what I understood a husband and father to be. Men of my generation weren't taught to talk about what was going on inside them. You fixed things. You provided. You got on with it.

When something wasn't working - the business, the weight, the gap between where you were and where you wanted to be - you didn't sit down and have a conversation about it.

You went quiet or you went short-tempered or you went to the pub, and the people around you absorbed it, and nobody ever really said what was happening.

And Judi absorbed it. She's since said I was a caveman.

I kept the income coming in and the roof on - but was emotionally absent from everything that actually makes a family work.

The conversations. The decisions. The evenings. The 'being there'.

She was doing everything alone and quietly running out of road.

I look back and can see that now. Working part-time, studying for her master's degree by distance learning, managing four children, running the house.

There's a diary entry she wrote in January 2007 that she still has.

An ordinary week - burning dinner, nit-checking the kids hair! a dissertation deadline - and me coming home and complaining about the colour she'd painted the hallway.

A colour she'd chosen herself because I wouldn't engage when she showed me her ideas.

Because I engaged with almost nothing.

I felt, in those years, a deep sense of uselessness that I didn't know how to articulate. The business pressures, the feeling of not being where I wanted to be, the gap between the life I'd imagined and the life I was living - it all came out sideways.

As irritability. As withdrawal. As drinking and eating and making myself the victim of my own situation and projecting it onto everyone around me.

Judi was close to leaving. She had been seriously looking at places of her own.

She had been running out of patience for years, and I had no idea.

Not because I didn't care - I did, deeply, but because I wasn't paying attention.

Because I was too wrapped up in my own frustration to notice the damage I was doing to the person standing right in front of me.

We were two people in the same house experiencing completely different marriages.



As I mentioned, during those years our son Max was seriously ill for an extended period.

He was in Year 7 when it started (eleven years old) - what should have been a straightforward case of hand, foot and mouth that didn't resolve the way it should have.

What followed was four years of hospitals. Thirteen lumbar punctures. Two spinal shunts. In and out, test after test.

It was a long and frightening time for the family.

Judi managed all of it. The hospital visits. The overnight stays. The conversations with consultants.

Every form, every school meeting, every moment when one of the other children needed something and she had to somehow be in two places at once.

Judi made sure she was always by his side for 4 years. It felt to her that I did very little.

I was working. I was providing the income. I told myself Judi was better at the hospital stuff than I was, that she had it covered, that I needed to take care of the rest of the family.

That felt true, but maybe I just got so good at not being present that I'd stopped noticing when it mattered most.

It's sad when I look back; I thought I was doing my best, she knew I wasn't.

All those years, Judi carried so much and it says everything about who she is and nothing flattering about who I was.



The thing about being the partner of someone in the state I was in is that you can see clearly what they can't.

Judi could see that I was stuck and didn't know how to get unstuck.

"He just didn't have the tools. There was nobody in his life that was positive apart from me. He was frustrated with himself. He'd forgotten how to get off the treadmill and he didn't want to find his way out either. It was almost as though he enjoyed the struggle, enjoyed being broke and was comfortable being uncomfortable. Like he felt so used to it, it became 'normal'.

This is generous beyond what I deserved and took me a while to sit with.

She's right. The frustration was real - with the weight, with the business, with the gap between where I was and where I wanted to be and frustrated people lash out. They make the people around them smaller so they don't have to feel so small themselves.

And she saw what I didn't – the part of me that had got comfortable in the victimhood, the part that had convinced itself that this was just how things were and didn't actually want to change.

She absorbed it. For years, she absorbed it, shielded the children from it, and kept the family together by sheer force of will.

I am aware, now, of what that cost her. I wasn't aware of it at the time.

That's the honest version.

Somewhere later in those years, something shifted between us.

By now our son Max was working abroad and having a difficult time. He called for help, so Judi and I flew out together - it was an emergency trip and things were chaotic.

We hadn't realised he'd decided to leave right away, so we arrived to find he'd already departed. We ended up with a few unexpected days in Menorca , just the two of us.

Judi calls it our first bridge. Away from the noise, away from the routine, away from the weight of everything at home.

A few days of being a couple again. A glimpse of the people we'd been before everything got so heavy.

It didn't fix anything. But it was a crack in the wall. And sometimes a crack is enough.



The bootcamp was entirely Judi's doing. She told me we were going on a romantic break to Bournemouth.

We drove down, checked in, and then she told me what it actually was.

A four-day fitness bootcamp. I threw a proper tantrum.

Judi had laryngitis at the time and couldn't speak.

She produced a thunderer whistle from somewhere and blew it directly at me , finger outstretched.

I went to class. The instructor was Mo - a former kickboxing world champion, built like a small tank, not remotely interested in my excuses.

He did me more good than he'll ever know. I was last on the first walk, I came fifth out of twenty on the last walk .

I started at the back. I finished fifth. That was the first time I understood that the body I'd been managing and accommodating and working around for years was capable of more than I'd been giving it credit for.

Left to myself, I'd have stayed in the car. That's the truth of it.

Judi made that happen.



Bournemouth Bootcamp Feb 2017

Around this period Judi found a rock and roll dancing class on Tuesday evenings.

She asked if I'd come. I said yes. I won't pretend it was purely selfless - I didn't want her dancing with someone else.

But I went, and it turned out to be one of the best decisions I've made.

Not because I'm a natural dancer - I'm really not - but because of what I saw.

Judi on a dance floor is something worth turning up for.

The joy on her face is genuine and uncomplicated. That happiness cuts through everything else.



Later, after the weight was gone and life had settled into something better, the world stopped. Covid came, and with it something that hit our house hard - Judi developed long Covid and was seriously unwell for a long time.

I became the one who had to hold things together. And for the first time in our marriage, I understood - properly, from the inside - what that actually meant.

The noticing what needs doing and doing it. The being there when someone can't look after themselves.

The quiet, unglamorous, daily work of keeping someone you love going when they haven't got the reserves to do it themselves.

Judi had done that for our family for years. For decades. I'd watched it without seeing it. Now I was living it, and I understood it in a way I never had before.

She eventually recovered. We got through it. But I came out of that period a different man to the one who went in - or rather, more fully the man I'd been trying to become.

The dancing started again when she was well enough.

We go when we can. It matters to her, so it matters to me.



The change in me, when it finally came, wasn't something Judi saw all at once.

It was gradual - the same way the weight had gone on, degree by degree over years, it came off the same way.

Judi said it wasn't all about the weight loss though. She said that I was no longer this arrogant man with a chip on his shoulder.

The volatility eased. I started noticing things I'd stopped noticing. I started being in the room rather than just occupying it.

I was there, properly present, and people could feel the difference.

The kids felt it, Judi felt it and I felt it. There was quiet pride not just for the physical change, not for the waist size, but for the man I'd become on the journey.

And that's what it's for.



I asked Judi what she would say to partners who might be reading this book - the ones in the middle of it, the ones who are worn down and wondering whether it's worth staying.

She said this:

"Don't give up really. Hold the unit together and you will be rewarded. They're human beings - it's just a hand to hold. You might not love them anymore but you might still like them. And that person - if you left - there might be nobody who will help them. His life would be totally different. You can't do that to the person you married."

She's not telling anyone to stay in something harmful.

She's not asking partners to absorb things they shouldn't have to absorb.

What she's saying is that the person you fell in love with is still in there, somewhere; stuck, frustrated, not knowing how to get off the treadmill. But still there.

I was still there. It took a very long time to find my way back. It cost Judi more than it should have. But I got there.

And she was still there when I did. I will never stop being grateful for that.



If you're the driver reading this chapter - don't deflect.

Don't minimise. Don't find reasons why the version of events described here doesn't quite apply to you.

Just let it land. Sit with it. Because the people who love us see things we can't see.

They carry things we don't know about. They stay when they probably shouldn't, and they do it quietly, and they rarely get thanked for it.

The next chapter is where we start doing something about it.

YOUR TURN

This section has two parts - one for the driver, one for the partner.

For the driver

Think about the person at home. What do you think they would say if they were completely honest about what these years have been like for them?

Not your version of their experience. Their version.

Write it down as honestly as you can.

.

.

When did you last ask them how they were doing?

Not as a formality.

Really ask. Date you'll do that:

For the partner

This one is just for you.

Write down one thing you've been carrying that nobody knows about.

Not to show anyone. Not to use as ammunition. Just to get it out of your head and onto paper (any paper, doesn't have to be right here)

.

.

And write down one thing - just one - that you could do this week that isn't nagging.

One small thing that moves toward rather than away.

That thing:

For both of you

A bridge Judi and I had was Menorca. An unexpected few days. A crack in the wall that let some light in.

What would your version of that look like?

Not a holiday necessarily - just a moment of being together again rather than two people in a difficult situation.

.

Could you make that happen in the next month?

Yes / No / Maybe - and if yes, when:



*Coming up in Chapter 7: The Four Reasons - when you know your **WHY**, the **HOW** becomes clear.*

Chapter Seven

The Four Reasons

When you know your WHY,
the HOW becomes CLEAR .

Before we go any further, this is where it matters.

EVERYTHING IN THE FIRST six chapters of this book happened before the change.

The doctor's appointment, the New York flight, the Vegas humiliation, the years of Judi holding everything together while I was absent in the ways that mattered - all of that is the before.

We've been in the before for six chapters because I wanted you to understand it properly.

Because the before is where most people are when they pick up a book like this, and I didn't want to skip past it as if it was just a brief introduction to the interesting part.

But this is where it turns.

Not because something magical happened. Not because I woke up one morning transformed. But because at some point in late 2016, I finally stopped talking about changing and started understanding *WHY* I had to.

Those are two completely different things.



The country is drowning in information about how to lose weight.

You can find it everywhere - online, in magazines, from your GP, from the coaches and celebs who've done it themselves and want to tell you exactly how.

Low carb. High protein. Intermittent fasting. Slimming World. Weight Watchers. Calorie counting. More exercise. Less alcohol.

The how is freely available. It has been freely available for decades.

And yet the obesity rates in this country - and specifically among HGV drivers, as we've established - keep going up.

So it isn't the how that's the problem.

We ALL know the **HOW**.

Most of us have tried the how, multiple times, in multiple forms, and abandoned it somewhere around March.

The problem is the **WHY**.

Not *why* it would be nice to change. Not *why* your doctor thinks you should, or *why* your partner's worried, or *why* your trousers don't fit.

Those aren't reasons - they're observations.

A reason is something that belongs to you. Something personal and specific and non-negotiable. Something that makes the how feel necessary rather than optional.

I'd been trying to lose weight for the best part of ten years.

I'd had some success and a lot of failure and I'd always found my way back to where I'd started, because none of the things I was doing it for were real reasons.

They were observations dressed up as motivation. When I finally found my reasons - really found them, wrote them down, looked at them and understood what they meant - everything shifted.

Not overnight. Not without effort. But it shifted. Because I finally knew what I was doing it for.

I had four reasons. Here they are.



Reason 1: Don't die.

Not 'improve my health' or 'reduce my risk of serious illness.' Don't die.

Specific, blunt, non-negotiable. Dr Mel had made it clear enough that my body was under serious strain.

The pre-diabetes, the liver, the heart - I was heading somewhere I wasn't going to be able to come back from if I left it much longer.

That was reason one.

Reason 2: Don't lose the licence.

The DVLA threat. The thing that made the doctor's appointment different from every other warning I'd ever had.

My HGV entitlement - the thing that put food on the table, that I'd built my working life around, that I'd gone back to when everything else fell apart.

Nobody was taking that from me. Not if I had anything to do with it.

Reason 3: Walk Sarah down the aisle.

My daughter Sarah was getting married on 26th August 2017.

I wanted to be in a 36-inch waist suit on that day.

The same size I was when I got married - a *specific* number, a *specific* date, a *specific* moment.

Not 'be slimmer for the wedding.' Walk her down the aisle in a 36-inch suit.

That's a reason .

Reason 4: Never need a seatbelt extension again.

The New York flight. The seatbelt extension. The man moved to business class.

I was not doing that again. Ever. That image was seared into me and I used it - deliberately, consciously, whenever I needed to remember *WHY* I was doing what I was doing.

Four reasons. Not vague intentions. Not observations about the state of my health.

Four specific, personal, non-negotiable things that belonged entirely to me and that made the idea of failing feel genuinely unacceptable.

That's the difference.



I came home in June 2016 and told Judi I needed help.

Three words that I should have said years earlier and couldn't, because saying them meant admitting something I hadn't been ready to admit.

That I couldn't do it alone. That the thing I'd been telling myself I had under control - that I could lose weight whenever I wanted, that it was just a matter of choosing to - wasn't true.

That I needed someone. Judi didn't say I told you so.

She rallied the troops. She called a family meeting.

And the flight, which had been taxiing round the runway for years, finally lined up for take-off.

The wedding was the target. August 2017. I had just over a year.

Sarah's day was going to be the day I showed up as the man I wanted to be, not the man I'd become.



A few months earlier, at a weekend in Blackpool, I'd met a man called Zander.

Ian 'Zander' Alexander was a tramper - living in his cab five or six nights a week, the kind of life that makes healthy eating feel genuinely impossible.

And he was losing weight on Slimming World. Steadily, visibly, from inside a truck cab on the road.

My first reaction, I'm not proud to say, was to take the mickey. "Do you mean you go to a village hall with a bunch of women and get weighed every week?" I had another beer and carried on with the evening.

But Zander had done something important without knowing it.

He'd removed my best excuse. Because my excuse - the one I'd been using for years - was that my life was too difficult for this.

The road, the hours, the services, the lack of a kitchen, the nights away.

I couldn't do what normal people do because my life wasn't like normal people's lives.

That was the story. That was Ken's jam sandwich. Zander was living the same life and doing it anyway.

He was living in his cab and losing weight and showing up to meetings in village halls and not caring what anyone thought about it.

Every excuse I had, he'd already disproved. The seed was planted.

I wasn't ready to act on it yet. But it was there.



New Year's Eve 2016, I committed, once again, to going dry until Judi's birthday in March

I'd done this before - the January experiment, the proving I wasn't an alcoholic.

But this time it was different, because this time the reasons were real.

I wasn't stopping drinking to prove something. I was stopping drinking because one of my four reasons was don't die, and I understood, finally, that the drinking was a direct route in that direction.

The weight started coming off almost immediately. January is always like that when you stop drinking - there are a lot of calories in beer!

By February I was down to a forty-six inch waist and the momentum was building.

And then Judi took me away for our 'romantic Bournemouth break'!

We've covered the bootcamp already. What I want to add here is that the timing mattered.

I was already moving. The reasons were in place, the dry month had shown me what was possible, the body was responding.

The bootcamp didn't create the momentum - it caught it and accelerated it.

And then, later that same month, I walked into a village hall in Melbourne, Derbyshire, on a cold dark evening, and I did the thing I'd mocked Zander for doing.



Melbourne Village Hall.

A Thursday evening in February 2017.

I sat in a side room waiting to be called in.

Six foot one, a man who drives over-size loads and heavy chemicals and has survived two motorbike accidents.

Terrified.

Actually, genuinely terrified - not of the scales, not of what the number would say, but of what walking into that room meant.

It meant this was real. It meant I was doing it. It meant I had to follow through.

The group leader came to get me. She was warm, matter of fact, completely unfazed by the large man sitting in her side room trying to hide his tears.

I was in the middle of an emotional storm, but I surfaced from it, held on, and went in.

I weighed twenty-two stone that night. Forty-six-inch waist.

BMI 40.8.

Clinically obese. I had already lost weight from my worst - I'd been over twenty-five and a half stone at my heaviest - honestly closer to 26 stone - but I still had a very long way to go.

There was only one other man in that room and I remember thinking: if Zander can do this, I can do this.

If a man who lives in his cab can walk into a village hall and ask for help, so can I.

I walked out of Melbourne Village Hall that night with a Slimming World book, a food diary, and a clearer sense of purpose than I'd had in years.

The reasons were real. The journey had started.

my items for the week ahead

date	weight	change -A-	total weight loss	my plan of action
23/2/17	21-10 $\frac{1}{2}$	-3 $\frac{1}{2}$	-3 $\frac{1}{2}$	BMI: 40.8
2/3	21-3 $\frac{1}{2}$	-7	-10 $\frac{1}{2}$	(1/2)
9/3	20-11	-6 $\frac{1}{2}$	-1-3	(1)
16/3	20-5	-6	-1-9	(1 1/2)
23/3	19-13 $\frac{1}{2}$	-5.5	-2-05	(2)



I want to say one more thing about the WHY before we move into the practical chapters.

The WHY isn't a one-time thing.

You don't find it once and then carry it with you effortlessly for the rest of the journey.

There will be weeks - and there were, plenty of them - when it fades.

When the effort feels disproportionate to the results, when someone offers you something you've decided not to have, when it's late and you're tired and the old habits are right there, warm and familiar and very persuasive.

In those moments, you go back to the WHY.

You read it.

You say it out loud if you have to.

You remember the man in the New York airport with the seatbelt extension.

You think about the wedding and the suit and your daughter's face.

You remind yourself of what you told your family you were going to do.

That's not a weakness.

That's how it works.

The WHY is something you return to, again and again, for as long as the journey takes.

When you know your **WHY**, the **HOW** becomes clear .

The work maybe doesn't become easy. But it becomes possible. And possible is enough.



YOUR TURN

This is the most important exercise in the book.

Don't rush it. Don't write the first things that come to mind and move on.

Sit with it. Come back to it if you need to. Get it right.

Your Four Reasons

Write your four reasons below. Not 'to be healthier' or 'to lose weight.' Those are observations.

I want your reasons. Specific. Personal. Non-negotiable.

Yours. Ask yourself: if I don't change, what specifically do I lose?

What moment will I miss? What will I not be there for?

What will be taken from me?

Reason 1:

.

Reason 2:

.

Reason 3:

.

Reason 4:

.

Now read them back.

Are they strong enough? Are they specific enough? Would they get you out of bed at six in the morning when you don't want to?

Would they stop you ordering the second portion? If not - rewrite them until they

would.

Sign your name here when you're happy with them:

.

And write today's date:

.

You're a witness to your own commitment now. That matters.

Your Zander

Is there someone in your life - or someone you've heard of - who is doing what you want to do, under similar constraints?

Someone who has already disproved your best excuse?

Write their name or describe them here.

.

If you can't think of anyone - I'm here.

I've already done what you think can't be done from a cab.

I drove a truck for decades, I lived on the road, and I lost over ten stone.

If you want to talk to someone who gets it - really gets it - come and find me on my socials.

You don't have to do this without a Zander. Find one.

Let them remove your excuse.



Coming up in Chapter 8: Set Your Target and Make It Real - if you don't know where Cornwall is, you can't get there.

Chapter Eight

Set Your Target and Make It Real

If you don't know where Cornwall is, you'll never get there.

You wouldn't set off on a journey to Cornwall without knowing where Cornwall is.

THAT SOUNDS OBVIOUS WHEN you say it about a place on a map.

Nobody gets in their cab, points it vaguely south-west and hopes for the best.

You'd put a postcode in. You'd know roughly how many hours it would take.

You'd have a destination. And yet most people trying to lose weight do exactly the opposite.

They set off with a vague sense of direction - lose some weight, get a bit healthier, feel better about themselves - and no actual destination.

No postcode. No way of knowing when they've arrived because they never decided where they were going.

I'd done that for ten years. Vague intentions, no target.

This chapter is about how I stopped doing that.



My target had a number on it. Thirty-six inch waist.

Specifically, a thirty-six inch M&S suit, bought for Sarah's wedding (in the end, I actually had to take to a tailor to bring the waist in to thirty-five inches!)

The same size I'd been on my own wedding day. Not 'smaller.' Not 'slimmer.' Thirty-six inches, on the twenty-sixth of August 2017, walking my daughter down the aisle.

That's a target. A number, a date, an event. You could write it on a piece of paper and there would be no ambiguity about whether you'd hit it or not.

Compare that to 'lose weight before the wedding.' How would you know if you'd succeeded?

Any amount of weight loss would technically count. You could lose two pounds and tell yourself you'd done it.

A vague target lets you cheat yourself, because there's nothing concrete to measure against.

A specific target doesn't let you get away with that.

Either you're in the thirty-five-inch trousers on the day or you're not.



Here's something that helped me more than I expected: I stopped trusting the scales and started trusting my belt.

The scales are a frustrating way to measure progress. Water retention, time of day, what you ate the night before - the number ignores the bigger picture and whether you're actually moving in the right direction.

I'd weigh myself some mornings and feel like a failure for things that had nothing

to do with anything I'd actually done.

The belt didn't lie like that. Fifty-four inches. Forty-eight inches.

Forty-six. Thirty-six. Each hole I moved in was a fact, not a fluctuation.

I could feel it. I could see it. Nobody could argue me out of a belt that fit looser than it had the month before.

If you're the kind of person who gets discouraged by the scales - and a lot of us are - I recommend a belt!

It's something physical, something you can feel, something that tells the truth without the noise.



At Sarah's wedding, I was given a pair of shoes I genuinely believed wouldn't fit me.

Narrow Italian shoes, the groomsmen were all given the same ones .

A hundred and fifty pounds a pair. I'd spent years needing wide-fitting footwear - the kind of shoe shop conversation where you ask if they do anything in a G fitting and a velcro fastener .

I assumed these would be totally off the cards for me.

They weren't. I'd actually lost enough weight off my feet alone that I wore those shoes the entire day without a single problem.

No pinching, no discomfort, nothing. I stood there in the church in shoes that, eighteen months earlier, wouldn't have got past my toes.

Judi noticed. A couple of months later she made me buy a similar pair to wear for dancing.

I still wear them now. Every time I put them on, I'm reminded of a very specific, very concrete piece of evidence that the man I used to be and the man wearing these shoes are not quite the same person.

That's what a good target does. It gives you moments like that - small, physical,

undeniable proof that something has actually changed.



I want to tell you about a pair of jeans I've owned for thirty years.

Thirty-two inch waist, a pair of Pepe jeans I bought as a young man and have never thrown away, despite the fact that for the better part of two decades there was no realistic prospect of them ever fitting me again.

They sat in the wardrobe through all of it - the weight going on, the business collapsing, the years of yo-yo dieting, the twenty-five and a half stone.

I kept them anyway. I'm not sure I could have told you why, at the time.

But looking back, I think those jeans were doing something important without me realising it.

They were proof that a different version of me had once existed. Proof that the body I was carrying wasn't the only body I'd ever had or ever could have.

Getting into those jeans became, at some point during the journey, almost as important to me as the health stuff.

Not because of vanity - because of what they represented.

A return. A version of myself I'd assumed was gone for good.

If you've got something like that - an object, a piece of clothing, a photograph - that represents a version of yourself you'd like to find again, hold onto it.

Don't throw it away in a moment of frustration. It might end up meaning more than you think.



Targets need rewards. And the reward matters, because what you choose to reward yourself with says something about what you're actually trying to do.

Mine was a set of Japanese chef's knives. Properly good ones - the kind you save up for rather than the kind you pick up in a supermarket.

I decided early on that when I hit my target, that's what I'd buy myself (and these days, I still add to that collection when I hit my new long-term targets).

Not food. Not a blowout meal or a case of beer. A set of knives that I use every time I cook, as a silent reminder of what I did to earn them.

This matters more than it sounds like it should. If your reward for losing weight is a takeaway and a few pints, you're rewarding the exact behaviour you've been trying to change.

You're telling your own brain that the destination and the old habits are the same thing.

They're not.

Pick a reward that has nothing to do with food or drink - something that represents the achievement itself, not a return to what you were trying to leave behind.



Cornwall again, for a moment. You wouldn't just know that you wanted to go there.

You'd know roughly when you wanted to arrive, what route you were taking, what you'd do when you got there.

A target without those details isn't really a target.

It's a wish. Mine had all of it. A number - thirty-five inches.

A date - the twenty-sixth of August 2017. An event - my daughter's wedding.

A way of tracking progress that I trusted - the belt, not the scales.

And a reward waiting at the end that had nothing to do with the thing I was trying to leave behind.

That's what made it real instead of aspirational. The difference between wanting to go to Cornwall and actually getting in the cab and driving there.



YOUR TURN

Set your target Fill this in properly.

Don't be vague. My specific target (a size, a number, something you can measure):

My target date:

The event or moment that date is tied to:

.

Find your belt

How will I track progress? If the scales discourage you, find a physical alternative.

A pair of trousers. A belt. A ring. A piece of clothing in the wardrobe you haven't been able to wear for years.

What's your version of the belt - or the thirty-two inch jeans?

.

Where is it right now?

.

Could you put it somewhere you'll see it - in the cab, on the wardrobe door, somewhere it can do its job?

Choose your reward.

.

What will you give yourself when you hit your target? It cannot involve food or alcohol. Choose something that represents the achievement, not a return to the old habits.

My reward:

.

Why this, specifically:

.

Where will you keep a note of this, so you don't forget?

.



Coming up in Chapter 9: You Cannot Outrun Your Fork - food is eighty per cent of this.

The rest is everything else.

Chapter Nine

You Cannot Outrun Your Fork

Food is eighty per cent of this.

Stop pretending exercise will save you.

I'VE SAID THAT LINE in videos, on the website, to anyone who'll listen, because it's the single most useful thing I worked out during this whole journey and it took me far too long to understand it properly.

Here's the maths. An hour on a cross-trainer, worked hard, burns somewhere around five to six hundred calories.

A large sharing bag of crisps on its own can run to four or five hundred.

Add a chocolate bar on top and you've undone the entire session in the time it takes to fill the tank.

The exercise doesn't stand a chance against the food.

It never did. I wish someone had told me that clearly, years before they did.

Instead what I got, over and over, from well-meaning GPs and well-meaning everyone else, was 'eat less, do more' and just 'eat sensibly'. Which is true in the way that 'spend less than you earn' is true for someone in serious debt - technically accurate, completely fucking useless without any practical detail about how you actually do it.

So this chapter is about 'the how' . Not someone else's system - my own changes, the actual things that shifted for me.

Take what's useful and leave the rest.



I didn't transform my diet overnight. I want to be honest about that, because if I told you I went from the rolls and the KitKats and the Duncan Special straight to clean eating and meal prep, you wouldn't believe me, and you'd be right not to.

What actually happened was smaller and slower than that.

The buttered rolls became wraps. Less bread, more filling, easier on the waistline without feeling like deprivation.

The five sugars in my coffee became sweetener - which I hated for about a week and then stopped noticing.

The full-fat blue milk became green. One pack of crisps instead of two.

Small adjustments, repeated daily, rather than one heroic overhaul that was never going to survive a bad week.

I joined Slimming World in February 2017, and I'm still a member now.

It gave me structure and a place to be weighed and held accountable every week, which mattered more to me than I expected it to.

I'm not going to walk you through the mechanics of how their plan works, it's not mine to explain and I am not promoting them, this is just my story - but I will tell you what mattered for me.

Having somewhere to show up. Having a weekly weigh-in that kept me honest.

Having people who'd notice if I stopped turning up.



And I think one of the most important parts of turning up at a group meeting each week is that it gives you an hour and half 'you time'.

Time where you can quietly sit and look at your choices and reflect on the past seven days.

Which were better?

Which were not quite so good?

Don't beat yourself up over it – just remember, make a plan for the next week and implement it from when you leave.

Plan your meals and plan when you intend to prepare them.

Have you got any special occasions to negotiate in the next week? What is your plan to deal with those?

Even just going with it and having an off plan meal with drinks; that is a plan. If you do this knowingly and are mentally prepared to come straight back after the celebration the impact will be minimal.

One off-plan meal out of twenty-one? So what.

BUT...

If that meal knocks you out of kilter for the next seven days be aware and be very careful. Just remember... if you get a puncture, you stop, repair it and carry on.

You don't get out and slash every other tyre and the spare for good measure do you?

So do not throw the rest of the week away after that one special meal.

Again.....remembering your reasons **WHY** will always help to re-centre your sense of purpose

Whatever you use - their plan, a different plan, no plan at all and just the principles in this chapter - the structure matters more than the specific system.

Find something that gives you a place to be accountable, and stick with it.



In February 2021 I nearly lost my job after a mistake with the truck.

I'm not going into the details because they're not the point.

What matters is what happened afterwards, because it's the clearest example I can give you of what had actually changed in me by that point.

The old version of me - the twenty-five stone version - would have gone home from a day like that and had a serious binge.

Food, drink, the works. A bad day demanded a bad night, that was the old logic.

Punish the day with the evening. What I actually did was have three Moretti beers, put some music on through Alexa, had a dance round the kitchen on my own like an idiot, and then prepped my food for the next day before bed.

That's it. That's the whole story. No drama, no grand transformation moment.

Just a different response to a bad day, built out of months of smaller different responses to smaller bad days.

The habit had changed before the crisis came along to test it, which is exactly when you want a new habit to be tested - not while you're still building it.



Around the same time, I ordered a pizza on Valentine's Day.

The old me would have demolished it without a second thought and gone back for more.

I ate it. And I didn't really enjoy it. That stopped me in my tracks more than almost anything else in this whole journey.

Not because I'd developed willpower - because my actual tastes had changed.

The thing I used to want, when I finally had it again, wasn't what I wanted anymore.

That's not discipline. That's just what happens when you give your body and your habits enough time to reset.

It surprised me completely, and it's one of the best pieces of evidence I can offer you that this gets easier, not just more bearable, the longer you do it.



Judi has a different view of the food side of things, because she was watching it from the home end rather than the cab end.

At home, we always ate as a family round the table - budget meals, mince and chicken, nothing fancy because we couldn't afford fancy.

Her view was that my real damage was done outside the house. The pastries, the chocolate, the drink.

Home was never really the problem. The road was.

When you're depressed and on a spiral, you tend to snack and eat.

She's right, and it connects back to everything in Chapter 4 about disconnection and not having the tools to deal with what was going on inside me.

The food wasn't really about hunger most of the time. It was about filling a gap that had nothing to do with my stomach.

Understanding that didn't fix it overnight. But it helped me stop treating the food as the whole problem, when really it was a symptom of something else.



You cannot outrun your fork. I'll say it one more time because it's worth repeating.

Exercise matters - we'll come to that. Habits matter, environment matters, all of it matters.

But if the food stays the same, none of the rest of it will get you where you need to go. The maths simply doesn't work in your favour.

The good news is that the food doesn't need to change all at once, and it doesn't need someone else's complicated system imposed on top of an already complicated life.

Small swaps, repeated consistently, do more than one dramatic overhaul that collapses by February.

Start there.

Start small.

Start today.

YOUR TURN

Your daily food audit

Write down everything you eat and drink in a typical day.

Everything. Including what nobody else knows about.

Not to judge it. Just to see it clearly, possibly for the first time.

Before you leave the house:

.

Morning:

.

Afternoon:

.

Evening / overnight:

.

Now look at what you've written. Is any of it a surprise?

Three small swaps

Don't try to overhaul everything at once.

Pick three small swaps you could make this week - not drastic changes, just small ones.

Rolls to wraps. Five sugars to two. One bag of crisps instead of two.

Swap 1:

Swap 2:

Swap 3:

Small and consistent beats dramatic and short-lived.

Every time.

Why you're really eating

Think about the last time you ate something you didn't really want or need.

What was actually going on right before that moment?

Bored? Stressed? Lonely? Tired? Something else entirely?

.

Food isn't always about hunger.

Sometimes it's the easiest thing to reach for when something else needs addressing instead.

What might that something else be, for you?

.



Coming up in Chapter 10: Control Your Environment - if your environment is working against you, you will fail.

Full stop.

Chapter Ten

Control Your Environment

If your environment is working against you, you will fail.

There's a reason people fail diets in January that has nothing to do with willpower.

JANUARY IS FINE FOR the first few days, when you're motivated and the fridge is still full of good intentions.

But then Tuesday comes and you're at Stafford services at seven in the evening, you've been on the road for twelve hours, you're tired and hungry and the only options in front of you are what they always are - and the willpower that felt so solid on the first of the month is a lot less solid when you're standing in front of a Greggs at closing time.

Willpower is a limited resource. It runs out. And if you're relying on it to get you past every bad food decision and every difficult moment on the road, you are going to fail.

Not because you're weak - because you're human, and that's just how humans work.

The solution isn't more willpower. The solution is to stop needing it so often.

The solution is to design your environment so that the good choice is the easy choice, and the bad choice requires more effort than it's worth.

That's what this chapter is about.



By April 2017 - a couple of months after I'd started properly - we went to Malta.

Before I'd started getting my weight under control, a holiday like that would have been permission - a week off from everything including whatever vague intentions I'd had about eating better.

Everyone does it. You're on holiday, you've earned it, you'll get back on it when you're home.

This time was different. Not because I was rigid or miserable about it - I wasn't.

But because the habits had started to stick, and habits travel with you.

I walked everywhere, which I couldn't have done eighteen months earlier.



I made decent choices without turning them into a project.

And I came home four pounds lighter than I'd left. On holiday.

Four pounds gone. That was the moment I understood that this wasn't a diet anymore.

It was just how I lived now. And the environment - the hotel, the sunshine, the walking - had been working for me rather than against me, because I'd stopped treating every environment as a reason to abandon what I was doing.



In June 2017 I went to a business conference in Toronto.

I knew the environment before I got there ; presentations and networking that revolved around food and drink breaks.

And so I made one decision that changed everything about how that week went.

I booked my hotel forty minutes' walk outside the city. Not in the conference hotel.

Not even nearby. Forty minutes out, in a quieter part of town, which meant getting to the event required an Uber or a walk and getting to the bar after nine o'clock in the evening required a deliberate decision and a journey.

Not impossible - just inconvenient enough that I didn't bother.

I lost seven pounds that week. In Toronto. At a business conference.

Not because I had superhuman willpower. Because I had made it harder to make the wrong choice than the right one.

That's environment control. That's the whole principle in a single story.



For a driver, the environment question is more complicated than it is for most people.

You don't always have control over where you park overnight.

You don't control what food is available within walking distance.

You don't control the culture of the truckstop, the layout of the services, the fact

that the healthiest option is usually the most expensive one in the worst possible location.

But you control more than you think. Over the months and years of getting this right, I developed a set of habits around truckstop nights that I still use now.

Not rules - habits.

Things I do automatically because I've done them enough times that they don't require a decision anymore.

Here's what they look like in practice.

- Eat before you park. If you arrive at the services hungry, the services have already won.
- Sort food before you stop for the night, and you'll park full rather than looking for something.
- Shower early. Get it done, get changed into comfortable clothes, and close the cab down. The longer you leave it, the more likely you are to drift back out to the caff or the vending machine.
- Park away from the crowd. Not always possible, but when it is - the further from the fuel station and the main building, the quieter your night. Less noise, less temptation, less reason to wander.
- Walk the long way back. If you do go to the facilities, take the long route back to the cab. It sounds trivial. Over a year of doing it, it isn't.
- Curtains round early. Once the curtains are round and the bunk is out, the night has started. It's psychologically harder to get up and go out again.
- Tell your friends. If you're parking with mates and they're heading to the caff, say something. You don't have to make it a thing - just say you're sorted, you've eaten, you're going to get your head down. Most of them will respect it.
- Water first. Before anything else. Hunger and thirst present identically. A pint of water and five minutes will tell you which one it actually is.



I want to say something about where you park, because it matters.

Over the years I've built up what I can only describe as a legion of parking spots from Reading to Rosyth.

Places near supermarkets in particular are worth considering. You're near real food rather than whatever the truckstop is offering.

Crucially, little by little, I've built up spots over the years where there's no truckers' caff twenty steps from your cab serving everything you're trying to avoid.

Some of them I've been using for years. Some people know my truck.



It sounds like a small thing. It isn't - over a long journey, knowing you're going somewhere familiar and quiet rather than fighting for a space in a busy motorway services at eleven at night makes a real difference to how the evening goes.



Once the habits started working, I had an unexpected ally.

My son Max worked with me sometimes on the caravan deliveries.

And Max, having watched what I'd done to sort myself out and what it had cost everyone along the way, appointed himself what I can only describe as the Greggs police.

We'd pass a Greggs on a run - and there was always a Greggs on the run, because I'd spent years making sure of that - and before I could even think about it, Max would be there...

"No, Dad. We've had a meal out this week. We've got food in the cab. Leave it. Crack on."

"You're no bloody fun anymore."

"Good. It's for you. I'd love one too, but you can't have it. Come on."

It shouldn't work. A grown man being talked out of a sausage roll by his son.

But it did work, because having someone with you who knows what you're doing and WHY - and who will gently and firmly hold you to it when you're tired and the Greggs is right there - is worth more than any amount of planning.

Not everyone has a Max. But if you can find someone who will be your Greggs police - a mate, a partner, even a community online - it's worth a great deal more than going it alone.



The most powerful environment change I made wasn't about where I parked or what I walked past.

It was what I put in the cab before I left on a Monday morning.

Sunday became the day I sorted the week's food. Not elaborate meal prep - nothing that required a kitchen full of equipment or hours of cooking.

Just making sure that when I left the house on Monday, I had what I needed for the first few days in the cab, and I'd thought about where I was going and what was available on the route.

The principle is simple: if the good food is already in the cab, you don't have to make a good decision when you're tired and hungry.

The decision was already made, on Sunday, when you were at home and thinking clearly.

The Monday morning version of you just has to open the cool bag.

This sounds almost insultingly obvious when you write it down.

But it's the difference between the way things were - when the cab was full of whatever happened to be in the house plus everything I picked up en route - and the way things are now.

The environment changed.

The decisions got easier.



If your environment is working against you, you will fail.

I said that at the start of this chapter and I want to repeat it at the end, because I think it's the most important practical thing in this book.

Not because you're weak. Not because you don't care enough.

But because an environment that constantly requires willpower is an environment where willpower will eventually run out.

The job we do is not set up to make this easy. The services, the laybys, the conference hotels, the truckstop cafs with the full works breakfast on the counter at six in the morning - none of it is designed to help you.

You must design your own environment inside the one you're given.

And the good news is that the changes that matter most are not complicated ones.

- Eat before you park.
- Know where you're going to stop before you need to stop.
- Keep the good stuff in the cab.
- Have one person who holds you to it.

Small adjustments, made consistently. That's all it takes.

YOUR TURN

Question 1 - Map your danger zones

Write down the three environments that are hardest for you.

Not vague answers - specific places, specific times, specific situations.

Where does your environment work against you most consistently?

1.

When:

Why it's hard:

2.

When:

Why it's hard:

3.

When:

Why it's hard:

Question 2 - Your parking strategy

Think about your regular runs.

Where do you currently park overnight? Is it working for you or against you?

Current overnight spots:

.

.

.

.

Are there better alternatives on those routes you haven't tried? (Supermarkets, industrial estates, quieter roads away from services)

- .
- .
- .
- .

Pick one run and plan a different overnight stop for next week.

Write it here so you commit to it:

Run:

New stop:

Question 3 - Sunday prep

What would you put in the cab on Sunday if you planned it properly?

Not a diet plan - just the basics that would mean Monday morning you're not starting the week on the back foot.

Three things I could prepare or pack on Sunday:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Will you do this coming Sunday?

Yes / No If no - what's stopping you?

Question 4 - Your Greggs police

Who in your life could be your accountability partner?

Someone who knows what you're doing, WHY you're doing it, and will hold you to it without making a big deal of it.

That person:

.

If there isn't one - could you find one online?

Social media might be a good place to search and you can always join our group on FB – Stuck In A Truck?

You're not the only one. Where I'll look:

.



Coming up in Chapter 11: The Drinking - I wasn't drinking to enjoy it.

I was drinking to survive.

Chapter Eleven

The Drinking

I wasn't drinking to enjoy it anymore, I was drinking to survive

I want to be straight with you about this one.

THE FOOD WAS A problem. The weight was a problem. But the drinking - the drinking was the thing that had its fingers in everything else.

The mood, the sleep, the relationship, the weight itself.

You can't properly address the food without addressing the drink, because the drink was the thing that made every other bad decision easier to make and every good one harder to stick to.

So this chapter is about that. Not a lecture - I'm not qualified to lecture anyone about alcohol, and even if I were, a lecture is the last thing you need.

Just an honest account of what it was, what it was doing, and what changing it actually looked like for me.



At my worst, as I mentioned earlier, I was drinking ten cans of Stella a day and half

a bottle of spirits on top.

That sounds like a lot written down. It was a lot. On a standard night - not a big night, just a standard evening - I'd have six pints minimum, at a rate that most people would find uncomfortable to watch.

I was putting away more units in a week than most people drink in a month.

The thing I told myself - the story I'd constructed very carefully and repeated often enough that it had started to feel like the truth - was that I could stop whenever I wanted.

I proved it every January when I stopped until March; I'd lose a couple of stone over those months without even trying. I'd feel better and smug.

Every year. For years. I stopped every January to prove I wasn't an alcoholic.

Looking back, that's not actually a great argument for not being an alcoholic.

But it felt convincing at the time.



There was a friend I used to drink with. Carl. Judi wasn't a fan, and with the benefit of hindsight and distance, I can see why.

He wasn't a positive influence. He was a drinking friend rather than a real friend - the kind of person whose company is great when you're drinking and whose presence in your life doesn't do much for you when you're not.

I'm not blaming Carl for any of it. He didn't pour the drinks down my throat.

But I think it's worth being honest about the environments and the people that kept the pattern going, because that's relevant to understanding what changing it actually required.

What the drinking was for - and this is the part I've had to be most honest with myself about - was insulation.

It wasn't enjoyment. By the worst of it, there was nothing pleasurable about sitting in the cab at eleven o'clock at night with a can of Stella.

It was just something I was doing. A way of getting through the evening.

A way of turning the volume down on everything that was pressing down, just enough to sleep.

That's not drinking. That's using alcohol as medication.

And like most self-medication, it worked just enough in the short term to make you do it again and made everything worse over time.



Judi knew I drank in the evenings in the cab. She knew there were cans in the truck overnight.

What she didn't know - what I was very careful to make sure she didn't know - was the full extent of it.

There was gin at home that was fairly well hidden. She found out the real picture much later.

She's said since that she noticed fewer beer cans in the bin after the Menorca trip, which was the first thing that shifted between us.

Which means that before that, there were enough cans in the bin regularly for the reduction to be noticeable.

I don't think she knew how close to the edge it had got.

I'm not sure I fully knew.



New Year's Eve 2016, I committed to going dry until Judi's birthday.

I'd done this before, as I've already said. But this time the reasons were real.

Not to 'prove I'm not an alcoholic', but the actual reasons - don't die, don't lose the licence, walk Sarah down the aisle.

Those reasons (my **WHYs**) made the drink feel genuinely incompatible with the life I was trying to get back, rather than a habit I was temporarily suspending before picking back up again.

The weight started dropping almost immediately. The first few weeks of going dry are like that - the calories alone make a significant difference, faster than you expect.

By February the waist was moving and the momentum was building.

The hard part wasn't the weeknights in the cab. I was tired enough that getting to bed without a drink was manageable.

The hard part was the social occasions. The dance nights.

The times when everyone else had a drink in their hand and I was standing there with a Vimto feeling faintly ridiculous.

What got me through those was simple: Judi . Standing there with my Vimto while everyone else was drinking, was a very small price to pay for what it meant to her.

It sounds almost too tidy to say that loving someone enough got me through the dry months.

But it's true. The reasons were real. And one of them was her.



Have I stopped drinking? No, don't be fucking stupid.

But there's a difference - a significant one - between what drinking looks like now and what it looked like then.

Then, it was automatic. A mechanism. Something I did because not doing it left a gap I didn't know how to fill.

Now, when I drink, it's because I actually want to.

I notice the flavour. I notice the occasion. I have a couple of pints and I'm done, because I got what I was actually after - the pleasure of it - without needing to

keep going until the volume was low enough to sleep.

That shift - from drinking to forget to drinking to enjoy - is one I couldn't have articulated while it was happening.

It happened gradually, over months, as the reasons got stronger and the habits got different and the thing I was using the drink to insulate myself from started to get smaller.

You fix the underlying problem, the self-medication becomes less necessary.

That's not a revolutionary insight. But living it is different from reading it.



I'm not going to tell you to stop drinking. That's not what this chapter is.

What I am going to ask you to do is be honest - with yourself, nobody else - about what the drinking is actually for.

Whether it's pleasure or whether it's something else.

Whether you could take it or leave it or whether the thought of leaving it makes you uncomfortable in a way you'd rather not examine.

Because if it's the latter - if it's insulation, medication, a way of getting through rather than a way of enjoying - then it's worth knowing that, clearly and honestly, before you try to change anything else.

Because the food changes and the exercise and the environment and all the rest of it will be working uphill as long as the drinking is doing what the drinking was doing for me.

You don't have to fix everything at once. Nobody does.

But you do have to be honest about what's there.



The drinking, once it changed, made everything else easier.

Not just the weight - though the weight moved fast when the drink came down.

But the sleep. The mood. The relationship.

The sense of being a person in control of their own life rather than someone being carried along by it.



That's worth more than the Stella ever was.

YOUR TURN

Question 1 - The honest audit

Not the version you'd tell a doctor. The real version.

How much are you drinking on a typical weeknight?

.

A weekend night?

.

At worst - the nights when it's more than usual?

.

Now look at those numbers. Is any of it a surprise?

Question 2 - What is it actually for?

This is the important one.

When you drink - are you drinking to enjoy it? Or are you drinking to get through?

Write your honest answer here. Nobody is reading this but you.

.

.

If the answer is 'to get through' - what is it that you're trying to get through?

.

You don't have to fix that today. Just name it.

Question 3 - The January experiment

Have you ever tried stopping or reducing?

What happened?

.

What I tried:

.

How long it lasted:

.

What pulled me back:

.

Now ask yourself: when it pulled you back, was it because you actually wanted the drink - or because something else needed dealing with?

.

Question 4 - The people and places

Is there a Carl in your life?

Someone whose company mostly happens around drinking, and who isn't much of a positive influence beyond that?

You don't have to do anything with this answer. Just think about it honestly.

.

And is there a Judi - or a dance night? Something or someone that could get you through the occasions when everyone else has a glass and you're working on not having one?

That thing or person:

.



Coming up in Chapter 12: Habits - Habits keep you going when motivation disappears.

Motivation is overrated.

Chapter Twelve

Habits

Motivation gets you started.
Habits keep you going when
motivation disappears.

Motivation is overrated. I know that's not what you expect to hear in a book about changing your life.

BUT I THINK THE obsession with motivation - with finding it, keeping it, waiting for it to arrive before you start - is one of the main reasons people fail to make lasting changes.

As a driver, you already understand habits better than most people do.

You maybe just don't think of them that way. Think about your hookup routine.

If you're a Class 1 driver, think BLACK.

B - Brake

L - Legs

A - Air / Suzies

C - Clip

K - King Pin

You go through that sequence the same way every single time.

And if someone comes over for a chat in the middle of it - if the pattern gets broken for any reason - you go back to the beginning.

Not because someone told you to. Because you know from experience that an interrupted habit is a habit that might not have worked, and the consequences of that are not something you want to find out on the road.

Here's what I want you to notice about that routine: you don't think about it.

You don't motivate yourself to do it. You don't remind yourself why it matters or give yourself a pep talk before you start.

You just do it, in the same order, every time, because you've done it enough times that it's wired in.

It runs on autopilot. That is a habit. And it is keeping you safe every single day.

Rigid drivers, the same applies. Your morning checks, your tail-lift procedure, your load strapping - if your instructor was worth anything, they drilled the same rule into you: if interrupted, start again.

Same reasoning. Same result.



I had a reminder of what happens when you break these habits once, and it cost me the best part of an hour.

I was dropping a trailer when the the goods-in manager came out - and I'll just say that she was extraordinarily distracting, and leave it at that.

First and only time in over twenty years of dropping artic trailers that I forgot to put the legs down.

Forty minutes to wind the legs up high enough to get the unit back under it.

Forty minutes, because the pattern was broken and the habit didn't run.

I've never let that happen again.

The same principle - in a very different context - proved itself when Max and I were working the caravan deliveries together.



Between us we had the loading and unloading down to a system.

Each of us knew exactly what we were doing and in what order.

We could back up to a caravan, load it, and be driving out in under thirty minutes - just the two of us.

When the boss or his son came to help, it took over an hour.

Not because they weren't trying. They were. But their well-meaning assistance broke the pattern.

Things went in the wrong place.

The routine that Max and I had built through repetition - the habit that made us fast and efficient without having to think about it - fell apart the moment someone started improvising around it.

The lesson there is the same one as the hookup routine and the trailer legs: habits work because they run without requiring decisions.

The moment they require decisions, they slow down.

The moment the pattern is broken, you're back to thinking, and thinking takes time and energy that the habit was designed to save.



Don't be afraid of habits. That's the point of all of this.

They're not something that happens to you - they're something you build.

And once you build them, they work for you in the background, the same way your hookup routine works for you every morning without you having to remind yourself why it matters.

However – the ones that are hurting you are habits too. They run on the same loop, the same automatic wiring.

But they can be replaced. That's what the rest of this chapter is about.

Motivation is a feeling. Feelings come and go like waves on a shore - powerful while the storm is blowing, gone when it passes.

The feelings are at their highest on the first of January and considerably lower by the third Wednesday of the same month when it's raining and you're tired and the old warm and familiar habits are right there.

Habits don't depend on how you feel. That's why they work when motivation doesn't.

This chapter is about how I built them - and more importantly, how I replaced the ones that were killing me with ones that weren't.



Every habit runs on a loop.

1. A cue - something that triggers the behaviour.
2. Then the behaviour itself.
3. Then the reward you get - the thing your brain gets out of it, that makes it want to do it again.

The loop is automatic. It doesn't ask your permission.

Once it's established, your brain runs it with minimal conscious input, which is exactly why habits are so hard to break.

You're not fighting a decision every time - you're fighting a piece of wiring.

Understanding that changed how I approached things.

Because if you know the loop exists, you can work with it rather than against it.

Even when you think you've broken a habit, the 'wiring' still exists in the brain, so one of the most effective strategies is to change what sits in the middle of it. Keep the cue, replace the behaviour, your brain still gets a 'feel good' reward.

That sounds simple. It isn't always. But it's more honest than 'just stop doing the bad thing,' which is what most advice about habits amounts to.



Let me tell you about some of mine. The petrol station on the way home from a run.

Every time I passed it, I'd pull in. Not because I needed fuel - I knew before I left whether I needed fuel.

But because that petrol station was a cue, and the behaviour it triggered was picking something up from the shop, and the reward was a few minutes of mindless pleasure before I got home and the evening started.

I didn't think of it as a choice. It was just what happened when I drove past that petrol station.

The loop ran itself. There were others. The chocolate behind the market - another route, another cue, another automatic stop I barely noticed making.

Rolling in and telling Judi I'd only had my lunchbox, having eaten the lunchbox and the petrol station and the chocolate behind the market and possibly a Greggs somewhere en route.

The cues were geographic. The roads themselves had become triggers.

I'd driven those routes enough times that my brain had built associations I wasn't conscious of.

You might recognise your own version of this. The particular service station you

always end up in.

The vending machine at the depot you visit at the same time every day.

The route home that takes you past the chippy. These aren't coincidences and they're not weaknesses.

They're loops, running on autopilot. And once you see them for what they are, you can start to interrupt them.



In Chapter 9 I mentioned the day in February 2021 when I nearly lost my job.

I won't repeat the whole story, but the relevant part here is what I did that evening.

The old habit loop - bad day, big binge - would have run automatically.

It had run that way for years. What actually happened was different: three Moret-tis, a dance round the kitchen, food prep done for the next day.

A completely different behaviour in response to the same cue.

The cue was the same. The reward I was after - relief, release, a way of closing out the day - was the same.

The behaviour in the middle was different. And the reason I could make that switch wasn't willpower.

It was that I'd spent months building a different response, in smaller moments, until it was available to me when I needed it on a bigger one.

That's how habits work. You build the replacement in the quiet times so it's there in the hard ones.



The exercise habit I actually stuck with was fifteen minutes on a rowing machine.

Not an hour in a gym.

Not a training programme.

Fifteen minutes, five days a week, in my own space, with my headphones in and my eyes closed.

I row down a river in my head. Swans, ducks, fishermen on the bank, sunlight on the water.

When I've been going for about seven and a half minutes I turn round and row back.

When I take my headphones off, I'm done. It sounds ridiculous, but it works.

The skin was a consideration too - losing a lot of weight quickly can leave you with more of it than you'd like.

So, I exercised.

I did planks, two to three minutes morning and night from early on, and sit-ups using the rower as a bench.

I'd seen people I followed online end up needing surgery for loose skin, and I wanted to avoid that.

I did avoid it.

Whether the planks were the reason or I was just lucky, I can't say for certain. But I did them and I'd do them again.

The point about the fifteen minutes isn't the fifteen minutes.

It's the showing up five days a week, whether I felt like it or not, whether I was tired or not, whether motivation was present or absent.

The showing up is the habit. The rowing is almost incidental.



At some point during this process, something unexpected happened.

Remember the Valentines Day Pizza?

I ate it. And I didn't really enjoy it.

That sounds like a small thing. It wasn't.

It meant that somewhere in the months of doing things differently, my actual preferences had shifted. The thing I thought I wanted, when I finally had it, wasn't what I wanted anymore.

Not because I'd forced myself to not want it - but because I'd genuinely changed.

That's the promise of habits done long enough. You don't just change your behaviour - eventually, if you stick at it, you change what you actually want.

The struggle gets lighter. The old cues lose their pull.

You drive past the petrol station and the old loop doesn't run, because the behaviour in the middle has been replaced enough times that the old cue has faded.

It takes longer than you want it to. But it happens – I promise you.



Motivation is where you start.

Habits are how you win.

You will not feel motivated every day. There will be days - weeks, sometimes - when the reasons feel distant and the effort feels disproportionate and the old habits feel very close and very comfortable.

That is not a sign that you're failing. It's just Tuesday.

And on Tuesday, what gets you through isn't how you feel about it.

It's the small things that you've built into your routine.

The fifteen minutes.

The Sunday prep.

The long way back to the cab.

None of them feel significant on their own. Together, repeated day after day, they become the difference between the person who made a start and the person who actually changed.

You're trying to be the second one. Build the habits.

They'll be there for you when the motivation isn't.



YOUR TURN

Question 1 - Map your loops

Think about your bad habits - the ones you keep repeating without really deciding to.

Pick one. Write down:

The cue (what triggers it):

.

The behaviour:

.

The reward (what your brain gets out of it):

.

Now look at the reward.

That's what you're actually after. Is there a different behaviour that could get you the same reward without the damage?

Possible replacement:

.

Question 2 - The fifteen minutes

What is your version of the rowing machine?

Not what you think you should do - what could you actually do for fifteen minutes a day, five days a week, without it requiring a gym membership or a complete lifestyle change?

My fifteen minutes:

When:

Where:

Start this week.

Not when the weather improves. Not when you've sorted the other stuff first.
This week.

Question 3 - The replacement habit

Think about the bad day scenario.

When things go wrong - a difficult run, a row at home, a frustrating day - what do you automatically reach for?

What I reach for:

.

What could I reach for instead - something that gives me the same release without undoing everything I'm working on?

My replacement:

.

You don't have to wait for a bad day to try this.

Try it on a medium day first, when the stakes are lower.

Build the response when you don't need it so it's there when you do.



Coming up in Chapter 13: Fear - Feel It and Go Anyway.

Ready, Fire, Aim.

Chapter Thirteen

Fear

Feel It and Go Anyway

Ready, fire, aim. There is no perfect moment to start.

I KNOW THAT SOUNDS like the kind of thing people say on motivational posters and you've heard it before and it bounced off you, as it should, because most motivational poster wisdom is precisely as useful as it looks.

But I want to say it a different way, because I think it's actually the most practical thing in this chapter.

The perfect moment isn't coming. Not because life is cruel, but because the perfect moment requires conditions that don't exist - sufficient motivation, sufficient preparation, all the other stuff sorted first, the right week, the right month, the stars aligned.

And while you're waiting for those conditions, the same things are happening that have always been happening.

The only moment you actually have is this one. So it's time for MIA – Massive Imperfect Action.

And taking imperfect action means you get off your arse first.



I've told you about that Thursday evening in February 2017.

The day I walked into my first Slimming World meeting.

I sat there waiting, I was sobbing and I was scared.

But I knew that the only way out of where I'd ended up was to walk into that room, get on those scales, and ask for help.

Not when it felt right, not when other things in my life were sorted, but right now; I was getting off my fat arse.

It was a full reckoning with the gap between the man I'd thought I was and the man sitting in that side room, and it was enormous.



Back at school, I was the kid who did his homework on the bus on the way in.

Scribbled, illegible, just enough to scrape through.

Never properly done, never properly committed to. Just enough to avoid the worst consequences and no more.

Here I was again. Fifty-odd years old, having left it all to the very last 'imperfect' minute.

But this very last minute, sitting there in the side room ashamed, this particular last minute was also the first minute of the rest of my life.

And then I thought about my four WHYs .

- Don't die.
- Don't lose the licence.
- Walk Sarah down the aisle in a thirty-five inch suit.
- Never need a seatbelt extension again.

Those four reasons were bigger than the shame.

They pushed me out of that chair, through that door, and onto those scales.

That's what your WHYs have to be. Big enough to either pull you forward with desire - or push you forward through fear.

Because there will be a moment like that side room for you.

A moment where the shame or the discomfort or the fear of being seen is almost enough to make you turn around and go home.

And in that moment, the only thing that gets you through the door is the thing you're doing it for.

That's what fear actually is, most of the time. Not fear of the thing itself - fear of what the thing means.

Fear of being seen trying.

Fear of commitment.

Fear of what happens if you start and then can't sustain it.

I sat in that side room and I felt all of that. And then I went in anyway.

That's the whole lesson, really.

Feel it and go anyway.



MIA – Massive Imperfect Action.

I want to come back to the word IMPERFECT.

Not massive - though committing fully is better than half-committing.

Not action - though obviously doing something beats doing nothing.

Imperfect – because the pursuit of the perfect start is the enemy of any start at all.

I see this constantly in the people I talk to. They want to get everything right before they begin.

They want the perfect plan, the right time of year, the ideal set of circumstances.

They're going to start when they've done more research, when the kids are a bit older, when work calms down, when the weather improves.

The weather does not improve.

Work does not calm down.

Kids and life do not get easier.

And the research, if you do it long enough, starts to produce contradictory results that justify not starting a little while longer.

Ready, fire, aim.

Get moving first.

Adjust as you go.

The alternative - aim, aim, aim, never quite fire - is where most people stay.

It's comfortable there, because you haven't failed yet.

You're still in the preparation phase, which means the attempt is still ahead of you and the possibility of success is still intact.

But the possibility of success is worth nothing. Actual progress - messy, imperfect, inconsistent actual progress - is worth everything.



Early on in this journey I found a video online of a man who'd been told by his doctors that he'd never walk again.

He had damage to his body that was severe - the kind of prognosis that most people would accept, because what else do you do when a doctor tells you something like that with certainty?

He didn't accept it. He found yoga. He committed to it with a stubbornness that looked almost unreasonable from the outside, working at it day after day against everything the medical profession had told him to expect.

And he proved them wrong. Not partially, not a little bit - he walked again.

He ran. I watched that video and I thought: if he can do that, from that starting point, with those odds against him - what exactly is my excuse?

I didn't have one.

That was the point.

The video didn't tell me what to do or how to do it.

It just removed the last comfortable refuge of the person who tells themselves their situation is uniquely difficult.

Because uniquely difficult was what that man was dealing with.

And he went anyway.



Remember Zander the tramper who was losing weight on Slimming World while living in his cab five or six nights a week?

What I want to re-iterate here is the specific function he served, because it's relevant to this chapter.

My excuse had always been that my life was too complicated for this.

The driving, the hours, the services, the nights away.

Other people could do it because other people had kitchens and routine and sensible hours and a life that looked nothing like mine.

Zander's life looked exactly like mine. And he was doing it anyway.

He'd disproved all my excuses. I couldn't claim my lifestyle was the problem when there was a man doing the same as me, on the road and losing weight.

Zander had removed the last structural argument I had for not starting.

Which left only the real reason.

Fear.

Fear of starting and failing.

Fear of trying and being seen to try.

Fear of commitment and what it meant if the commitment didn't hold.

Fear is always what's left when you strip away the excuses.



The bootcamp in Bournemouth - the one Judi tricked me into attending - was one of the best things that happened to me during this whole process, and I went into it furious - I wasn't ready, I hadn't prepared.

I've told you about the tantrum. The thunderer whistle. The sitting in the car making reasons.

What matters here is that I went anyway - imperfect, resistant, thoroughly unready.

And by the last day I finished fifth out of twenty on the final walk, having started at the back.

Not because I was suddenly transformed. Because I showed up, imperfectly, and let the doing of it teach me what I needed to know.

That's MIA. You don't wait until you're ready. You go in anyway and find out what you're capable of on the way.



Think about removing a plaster. You know the fast way is better.

Everyone knows the fast way is better - one sharp pull, over in a second, on with the rest of your day.

And yet so many people, when it comes to it, still default to the slow peel.

A millimetre at a time, each individual moment just about bearable, the whole thing drawn out far longer than it needs to be.

Why?

Because the slow peel never requires you to commit to the moment of maximum discomfort.

You're always just about to do it. You're always in the preparation phase.

Starting is the plaster. And most people have been slow-peeling it for years.

The sharp moment of actually beginning - the booking of the appointment, the walking through the door, the stepping on the scales, the first honest conversation - is the worst it gets.

Everything after that is the rest of your day. You already know this.

The question is whether you're going to act like you know it.

Get off your arse, grab the plaster and PULL!



I walked into that first meeting terrified, and I went in anyway.

I came out with a Slimming World book and a slightly lighter feeling that I

couldn't quite name.

Not confidence - it was far too early for confidence.

Something smaller than that.

Just the knowledge that I'd done the thing I was afraid of, and I was still standing, and the thing had turned out to be survivable.

That's all MIA requires.

Not that you're ready.

Not that you're confident.

Not that the conditions are right.

Just that you do it anyway, imperfectly, in the moment you have rather than the moment you're waiting for.

The moment you have is now.

GO!

YOUR TURN

Question 1 - Name the thing you're avoiding

There is something specific you've been putting off.

The GP appointment. The scales. The Slimming World meeting.

The conversation with your partner. The first day of actually doing something different.

Write it here.

Be specific.

.

Now write down why you haven't done it yet.

The real reason.

.

Is that reason going to be smaller or larger in six months if you keep not doing the thing?

Question 2 - Strip away the excuses. Write down your three best reasons for not starting yet.

1.

.

2.

.

3.

.

Now ask yourself honestly: is there someone out there with those same constraints who is doing it anyway? (There is. There's a Zander or me for almost every excuse.)

What does that leave you with?

Question 3 - The imperfect start

What would a Massive Imperfect Action look like for you this week?

Not the full plan. Not when everything is sorted. One thing.

This week. Imperfect. That thing:

.

When specifically:

.

Write it down.

Tell someone. Both of those things make it significantly more likely to happen.

Who I'll tell:

.



Coming up in Chapter 14: Patience - The steel pops up. But first you must dig the foundations.

Nobody talks about patience.

Chapter Fourteen

Patience

The steel pops up. But first
you must dig the foundations.

Nobody talks about patience. Every book, every programme, every plan promises results.

FAST RESULTS, VISIBLE RESULTS, results that will keep you motivated. And some of them deliver - in the short term, in the right circumstances, with the right person.

But none of them spend much time on the part that comes before the results. The part where you're doing everything right and nothing is happening yet.

That part is real. It's the part that stops most people.

And nobody prepares you for it.

This chapter is about that part.



Think about how a skyscraper gets built. You walk past a building site in the city.

There are hoardings up, there's noise, there are lorries coming and going.

But for months - sometimes the better part of a year - there's nothing to see above street level.

Just a big hole in the ground getting bigger. Just foundations going in, deep and slow and invisible to anyone passing by.

Then one day the steel starts coming up. And once it starts, it goes fast.

Floors appear in weeks. The shape of the building becomes clear.

What looked like nothing for so long suddenly looks like everything.

The months of nothing weren't nothing. They were the foundations.

Without them, the steel has nowhere to go. The building that goes up fast does so because someone spent a long time digging before anyone could see what they were doing.

That's what the early weeks of this can feel like. You're digging foundations.

The results may not be visible yet. The people around you can't see the difference.

The scales might not be moving the way you want them to.

And every day you're doing the right things and waiting for something to show for it.

Keep digging. The steel is coming.



Everybody's journey with weight loss is different. I had a lot of weight to lose and results were actually pretty fast to start with.

I was slimmer of the week for four weeks running.

Slimmer of the month. Two stone in four weigh-ins. Club 10 - losing ten per cent of my starting body weight - in five weeks.

The fast start was the easy bit, like the big hole you dig for the foundations – gratifying and exciting.

But once things settled into more modest progress, that's when showing up to that cold village hall, got really challenging.

That's when the mental work really started. Keeping doing the right things, when the numbers got more steady and fluctuated.

When the concrete is being poured, but nothing looks like it's changing. These weeks don't feel like progress.

They are progress.

They're just the kind you can't see yet and they require the kind patience I'd never had before.

I never doubted the process - I'd committed to it, but that doesn't make it easy.

There were things I never quite believed until my body really started responding.

After what felt like months of patience 'the steel started popping up'.

It wasn't just the weight anymore.

It was the energy.

The sleep.

The way I felt in the morning versus the way I'd felt for years.

Things I hadn't realised were wrong stopped being wrong, and that was its own kind of revelation.

But you don't get that if you quit before the steel starts coming up.



In 2019 I was given the Greatest Loser Award at my Slimming World group.

That was two years after I walked into a meeting for the first time.

Two years of showing up every week, of being weighed whether I wanted to know the number or not, of having good weeks and bad weeks and weeks where the number went the wrong way and I had to decide whether to fold or to keep going.

I kept going. Not every day felt like progress. Most days felt ordinary.

But two years of ordinary days, strung together one after another, produced something that turned out to be extraordinary.

You don't get the Greatest Loser Award in week three.

You earn it by still being there in year two.

For me, this Award wasn't just for the weight I'd lost, it was for all the evenings when I could have stayed home and didn't.

That's what gets recognised, in the end. Not the spectacular effort.

The quiet, persistent, undramatic effort of simply not stopping.



When Dennis Thomas, one of the founding members of Kool and the Gang, died at seventy years old, it really shook me.

When I heard about it, it really made me stop and think.

I was sixty-two at the time, only eight years younger than Dennis.

Eight years away from three score and ten and I had a long bucket list with very few ticks on it.

The canal trip to Llangollen with Judi on a narrowboat - number one on the list, still not done.

There were things I'd been meaning to get around to for years.

Adventures I'd been saving for later, when there was more time, when things calmed down, when the moment was right.

The right moment never arrives.

That's the thing about being sixty-two and thinking about a man who died at seventy.

The future is real, but it's also finite, and the gap between now and the end of it

is shorter than it used to be.

Patience doesn't mean waiting.

Patience means doing the right things consistently, for as long as it takes, while also understanding that 'as long as it takes' is not an unlimited resource.

I got away with it. I'm certain of that.

I'm certain that the body I was carrying for those years was heading somewhere I wasn't going to be able to come back from, and that I got out before I reached it.

Not everyone does.

Some of the people I drove alongside, ate alongside, drank alongside during those years aren't here now.

I'm still here.

And there are things on the bucket list that still need ticking.



I want to be honest about where I am now, because I think it's useful for you to know that this doesn't end at target.

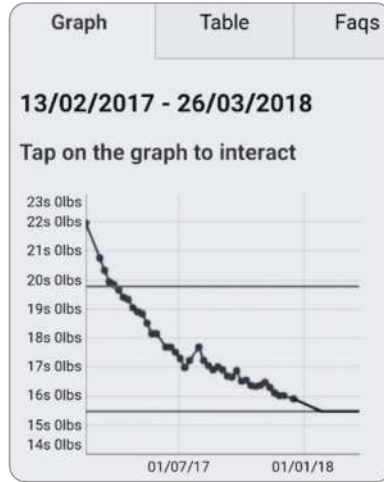
My current weight is fifteen stone nine.

I aim to manage between fifteen six and fifteen nine.

I do partly through habit, partly through still showing up to Slimming World, and partly through a system that involves wearing enough layers to weigh-in before a holiday to give myself a little buffer.

I'm not going to pretend otherwise.

I'm chasing Diamond - twelve consecutive months within my target range.



I was two pounds over after a Cornwall holiday and a birthday week. If I have to starve myself and cut a leg off I'll be back in target, but I won't do either of those things because I know by now that it doesn't work like that.

What I'll do is what I always do.

- Show up.
- Do the right things.
- Trust the process.
- And give it time.

Because the other thing patience taught me is that this is not something you do until you hit target and then stop.

It's just how you live now. And living that way - with the habits, the weekly accountability, the awareness of what I'm putting in - has become so normal that the alternative barely registers as an option.

That took time. Longer than I expected.

But it happened.



Patience is the skill nobody talks about because it doesn't sell.

It doesn't have a moment of transformation you can point to and say: that's when it all changed.

What it has is the two-year award I didn't expect to still be chasing when I walked in the door to that first meeting.

What it has is a man who is still here, still showing up, still working on it nine years later.

A pound a week for ten weeks, or half a pound a week for twenty weeks. Either way, that gets you to where you want to be.

Slow approach, nothing drastic, nothing stupid, manageable.

That's it.

That's the whole plan.

Because the point isn't to lose weight as fast as possible - the point is to carry on living a life that's worth living, without giving everything up, and to still be on the right track in year nine.

Keep digging. The steel is coming.



YOUR TURN

Question 1 - Where are you in the build?

Think about where you are right now in your own journey.

Are you contemplating the build? Are you still digging foundations - doing the right things without visible results yet?

Or are you starting to see the steel come up?

Write honestly about where you are:

.

.

If you're still in the contemplation phase - what would it take to start digging some foundations?

.

Question 2 - Your bucket list.

Write down three things on your bucket list. Things you've been saving for later. Things that require you to be healthier than you currently are.

1.

2.

3.

Now ask yourself: how much later is later?

Is there a Dennis Thomas number for you? An age, a date, a moment that makes 'later' feel less reliable?

.

Question 3 - Your slow approach

A pound a week for ten weeks gets you ten pounds.

Half a pound a week for twenty weeks gets you the same place.

Neither requires anything drastic. Both require consistency.

Work out your own version of that. What's a realistic, manageable, nothing-stupid weekly target?

My target:

.

At that rate, where will I be in three months?

In six months?

Slow. Manageable. Nothing drastic.

That's the plan.

Write it down and trust it.



Coming up in Chapter 15: The Payoff - what it actually felt like to get there.

Chapter Fifteen

The Payoff

What it actually felt like to get there.

I want to tell you about a belt. Not a metaphor. An actual belt.

IN CHAPTER 8 I told you about my belt.

It's leather, fifty-six inches at its longest and I wore it for years because I had no choice - because a fifty-four inch waist needs a fifty-six inch belt and that was simply what my body required.

I still have it and I even show people sometimes.

I hold the buckle end and let the other end drop, and I show them the notch I used to fasten it on, and then I show them the notch I fasten it on now.

Thirty-two inches. That's twenty inches of belt. Gone.

That belt is the whole story in one object.

Not the scales, not the BMI number, not the before-and-after photo.

Just a piece of leather that tells the truth about what happened, and how much of it there was, in a way that no number quite manages.

This chapter is about the moments like that. The physical, specific, undeniable evidence of what the journey produced.

Not just the big day - the small moments too, the ones you don't expect, the ones that catch you off guard and matter more than you think they're going to.



There are things you stop being able to do when your body gets to a certain point, and you stop noticing you've stopped, and then one day they come back and you notice that too.

My wedding ring. I couldn't wear it for twenty years.

Not because I'd lost it or stopped wanting to wear it - because it didn't fit.

The weight goes on your fingers the same as everywhere else, and at some point the ring just wasn't going on, and after a while I stopped trying.

When it went back on, I sat with that for a moment.

My grandfather's watch. He'd worked for British Rail and when he retired they gave him a watch - a good one, a proper one, the kind of gift that meant something.

It had a spelling mistake in the engraving, which broke his heart a little, but he wore it anyway.

When he died it came to me. And for twenty years I couldn't get it on my wrist.

I kept it, because you don't throw away your grandfather's watch, but I couldn't wear it.

I wear it now.

These things - the ring, the watch, the belt - are not about vanity. They're about things that belonged to your life that slipped away, one by one, so gradually you stopped expecting them back.

And then they come back. And you understand, in a way you couldn't when they were just gone, what it was that you'd lost.



The twenty-sixth of August 2017. Two days before the wedding, I weighed sixteen stone thirteen pounds.

I had lost five stone and one pound since my first Slimming World weigh-in in February.

22.6	17st 10st M	-4st 4lb
29.6	17 7/2 -2.5	4. 6 1/2
6.7.17	17st 4 1/2 -3	4st 9 1/2 lb.
13.7.17	17st -4 1/2	5st
20.7.17	17st 3 1/2 +3 1/2	-4st 10 1/2
3.8.17	17-10 +6 1/2	-4st 4lb
10.8.17	17.3 1/2 -6 1/2	4. 10 1/2
17/8	17.1 -2 1/2	4. 13
24.8	16.13 -2	-5st 1lb.

I was in a thirty-six-inch M&S suit that had been taken in to thirty-five inches at the tailor - my own wedding day 'size'. And I was wearing the slim Italian brown leather groomsman shoes I mentioned in Chapter 8.



The difference: Sarah's 21st and Sarah's Wedding!

I'm not going to try to describe the day in a way that does justice to what it was. I'll just tell you what I noticed. I was in every photograph taken that day without having changed my shirt.

That sounds like nothing. It was everything. For years, photographs had been something to think about - whether to be in them, where to stand, how to position yourself.

On that day I stood where I was asked to stand and I smiled when I was asked to smile and I didn't think about any of that.

More people didn't recognise me than did. People who'd known me for years - introduced themselves to me as if I were a stranger, until I spoke.

I wasn't the man they'd last seen. I was someone else.

The someone I'd been trying to get back to for a long time.



Shortly after the wedding I did something I'd been wanting to do for thirty years.

I put on that pair of Pepe jeans I told you about before. Thirty-two-inch waist, bought when I was a much younger man.

Getting into those jeans was almost as important to me as not dying.

I know how that sounds. But there's something about a physical object that witnessed your past self - that has been there through all of it, sat in the wardrobe through twenty-five stone - that carries a weight no scale can measure.

And now I was wearing them.



I go to Truck Fest every year. Have done for a long time.

The year before I started losing weight, I was there in the way I'd been everywhere for years - managing it, working around it, not walking further than I needed to.

The following year I walked in wearing a T-shirt and thirty-six-inch jeans.

I strolled. I didn't need to be looking out for the next bench or seat I could rest on.

I didn't think about any of it. People who knew me came up and asked if I was ill.

They meant well. They'd seen the change and gone straight to the most alarming explanation, because a change that significant didn't compute as good news on first sight.

I wasn't ill. I was better. And other drivers wanted to know how!

The fact that my story might help them, felt worth more than any award.



August 2020. Tom's 30th birthday party. Both Tom and Sarah, my eldest two children were born in Penrith in Cumbria.

We had lived in Shap for the first five years of Tom's life.

Both his and Sarah's christening party had been on our special beach on the banks of Lake Ullswater.

That beach had been our go to spot for sunny afternoon barbecues, both children had such happy memories of playing there, catching what they thought were baby tiny fishes in their nets and taking them home in jam jars! (Actually, sycamore seeds that had fallen off the overhanging trees!)

So, for his 30th we all trooped up north, the whole clan.

Me and Judi, all four children, their partners. The single grandchild at that time Dexter, Judi's brother and his wife and Judi's Mum & Dad.

We rented a house in Pooley Bridge and we all piled in and had a really fun time.

On the day of the party the weather gods smiled down on Tom and the day was glorious.

We spent the majority of the day there barbecuing meals, cooking on open fires, toasting marshmallows on sticks. Now on that day I was at my lowest weight, 14 stone and 9 lbs.

Toned and at a very healthy point in my life. I spent most of the day swimming in the lake, chasing my kids about playing with a frisbee.

You name it, we had an absolute blast. To put that in perspective I was sixty-one years of age, at that age my own father could not have walked from the car park down to the beach.

I'm not too ashamed to say that if I had not got control of my weight AND my drinking I have little doubt I would not have made the beach, even if I had even got to that age.

The memories of that day especially keep me on track even to this day.



August 2021. Tom's wedding, at Plymouth Hoe. Another huge milestone.

A different suit, a different day, a different set of people seeing the man I'd become.

By then the change wasn't new to the people who saw me regularly - it had become just how I was.

But Plymouth Hoe was a beautiful day and I was there for all of it, present and comfortable and not thinking about any of the things I used to have to think about.

That's the thing you don't expect to miss until it's back.

Not the weight loss itself - the absence of the management.

The constant low-level effort of existing in a body you're working around.

When that goes, there's a lightness that has nothing to do with the scales.



One final milestone. On 19th July 2026, still at my target weight, after nine and a half years with Slimming World.

We took our two grandchildren, Dexter and Theo, to Gulliver's Valley just outside Rotherham.

For dedicated fun fair buffs, not the most thrilling of rides. But for two small boys seven and four, it was an absolute blast and a great way to get them into the whole rollercoaster scene. (I was brought up with annual outings to the pleasure beach in Blackpool, especially the 'Fun House')

We had booked a chalet on site, and we had meals there as well.

The chalet was exceptional, the catering was average, but just perfect for the two boys, with evening entertainment that was just right for their ages.

Is it exceptional to take your grandchildren away for the weekend?

No not really, I suppose.

But for me, having suffered the indignities of being refused on the Grand National, The Big Dipper, and a couple of other rides on the Pleasure Beach when we had taken Max and Molly, to Blackpool in 2012 – "Sorry sir if you cannot get the bar to lock, you cannot go on the ride!", it was fantastic to be able to fit into the tiny, tiny seats of the kiddy rides at Gulliver's.

That I was able to keep up with a seven and four year old for two days at all is a HUGE achievement.

I did it all, without getting out of breath, or just saying to Judi "I need to sit out for the afternoon" and then gone off and found beer; I was present, I was really having fun and giving two special little people some really happy memories. (The boys loved it and are super excited for our next trip now.)

If I am honest and I think about the journey and the struggle of getting to grips with all the challenges, I look at Judi and we both just know... old me would not have even bothered going with her, assuming of course I had even been alive.



So, is the struggle worth it?

Is the lemon worth the squeeze?

You bet your bloody life it is!

Please understand this - the payoff isn't one moment.

It's the belt. It's the ring. It's the watch. It's the shoes that shouldn't have fitted but did.

It's the photograph you're actually in, without planning where to stand.

It's the person at Truck Fest who doesn't recognise you.

The family parties you actually get to go to, the days out with special people you have yet to meet.

It's the stroll across Plymouth Hoe on a summer afternoon.

It's the things you didn't know you'd stopped doing until you started doing them again.

All of that is waiting on the other side of the decision you've already made, or the decision you're about to make.

It doesn't look the same for everyone.

But it's there.

I promise you it's there. You just have to dig the foundations first.



YOUR TURN

Question 1 - The things you've lost

Look at what you wrote in Chapter 3 and write down three more 'undramatic' things that have slipped away from your life as your weight has increased; you might have to dig deeper than you think for the small things.

The ring that stopped fitting. The activity you stopped suggesting. The photograph you stopped appearing in.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now write down what it would mean to have even one of those back.

Not vaguely - specifically. What would that moment feel like?

.

.

Question 2 - Your milestone

Beyond the target weight - what is the milestone that will tell you you've actually arrived?

Not a number. A moment. A day. A specific thing you'll be able to do or wear or experience that you can't right now.

My milestone:

.

How will you mark it when it happens?

Not with food. Something else.

.



Coming up in Chapter 16: What Changed and What Surprised Me - I thought losing the weight was the point.

It wasn't.

Chapter Sixteen

What Changed and What Surprised Me

I thought losing the weight
was the point.

When I started this journey, I thought the goal was to lose weight. It wasn't

THAT SOUNDS OBVIOUS - of course that was the goal, it's right there in the name of the thing.

But what I mean is that I thought the weight loss itself was the destination.

Get the number down, fit in the suit, walk Sarah down the aisle.

Done. The number came down.

I fit in the suit. I walked Sarah down the aisle.

And then I kept going, because it turned out that wasn't the destination at all.

It was just the address I'd put in the sat nav to get me started.

The place I actually ended up was somewhere different, and better, and I couldn't have known it was there until I'd made the journey.

This chapter is about what was waiting on the other side, beyond the payoffs we've already looked at.

The changes I expected, and the ones I didn't.



The first time I really understood that something had fundamentally shifted was that trip to Malta in April 2017, that I mentioned previously.

I came back four pounds *lighter* than when we left home, which surprised me at the time.

But that's not the part I want to talk about here. I walked everywhere.

Not because I had to. Not as a calculated exercise decision.

Just because we were somewhere beautiful and there were things to see and my body wasn't giving me reasons not to.

We walked in the mornings and we walked in the evenings and we wandered without planning a route around where I could sit down next.

Judi said it was like being young again. I knew what she meant.

Not young in the sense of a number - in the sense of a feeling.

A relationship with your own body where it mostly does what you ask it to without complaint, where you're not constantly negotiating with it, where you can just go somewhere and be there without the weight of it being its own project.

I hadn't felt that for so long I'd forgotten it existed.

And then it came back, in Malta, on a morning walk to somewhere I can't even remember now, and I noticed it.



I still drive.

I want to say that clearly, because some people assume the story ends with getting out of the truck - that the weight loss was the first step in a complete reinvention, a new career, a different life altogether.

It wasn't. I still drive. I've always loved it.

The cab, the road, the independence of it - that hasn't changed and I wouldn't want it to.

What changed is how I feel inside it. The job is the same job, but I am a different person doing it.

And those two things together make for a very different experience than the one I was having at twenty-five stone, planning routes around Greggs and getting through nights on fabric conditioner bottles.

When you take control of your health, you start to notice other places where you've handed control over.

And you start to want it back in those places too. The weight was one thing.

The drinking was another. The relationship with the job was another.

They were all part of the same reclamation.



The sailing came back. I'd taught people to sail in Salcombe as a young man.

I loved it - genuinely, deeply loved it - and when family, work and finances took over, it disappeared.

Years passed. More than I'd realised. And then we did something about it, and we became the Greenhalgh sailing family, all of us at the club, the children discovering something they hadn't known they loved.

I've had to make peace with some limitations on that front recently - a car accident has meant I can't sail in the way I used to, and I told you the boat I loved had to be sold. I'm not going to pretend it doesn't sting.

But the point isn't the specific activity.

The point is that when you're twenty-five stone and managing everything and negotiating with your body all the time, the things you love get put down because you don't have the capacity to carry them.

And when the weight goes, the capacity comes back. And you can pick things up again.

Some of them come back differently than they were before.

That's fine.



I didn't expect my tastes to change.

I mentioned the pizza in the habits chapter - the Valentine's Day pizza I ordered and didn't enjoy.

That wasn't an isolated incident.

Over the course of the months of eating differently, the things I used to want shifted so gradually I barely noticed it happening until one day I noticed it had happened.

The Stella I used to drink by the ten-can. I can have a couple of pints now and I'm done, not because I'm exerting willpower but because two pints is genuinely enough.

The flavour is there. The occasion is there. The need to keep going until the volume comes down is gone.

Food I used to reach for automatically stopped having the same pull.

Not all of it, and not all the time.

But enough that meals became something I actually paid attention to rather than something I consumed without noticing.

I didn't know any of the science at the time. I just know it happened.

And if I'm honest it was one of the most surprising things about all of this - that the body, given enough time, changes not just what it can do but what it wants.

Taste preferences are shaped by what you eat regularly - the gut microbiome (the bacteria living in your digestive system) adapts to the foods you consume most, and in turn influences what you crave.

Eat processed, high-fat, high-sugar food consistently and the bacteria that thrive on those foods multiply, sending signals that reinforce those cravings.

There's growing evidence that if you change what you eat the cravings shift with it. This is not willpower. It is biology - and it works in your favour if you give it enough time

Something I want to mention, because people ask about it and I touched on it before – I never needed surgery for loose skin.

Losing a significant amount of weight can leave you with more skin than your body knows what to do with.

I watched people I followed online go through that, and some of them had to have surgery, and it really affected them.

I wanted to avoid it if I could. I don't know with certainty whether the planks and the sit-ups and the rowing made the difference, or whether I was just lucky, or some combination of both.

All I know, is that I was determined to do what was in my power and I did those things consistently, from early on, and the skin wasn't a problem.

I'm not making medical claims here.

I'm just telling you what happened in my case, and what I did, and leaving you to draw your own conclusions.



One thing that did surprise, but I guess shouldn't have, was the drivers who started getting in touch.

Through the website and through social media - people who'd seen the progression photos, or watched a video, or read something I'd written, and who wanted to know how it was possible.

Not how in the technical sense - we've said there's plenty of 'how' available if you

want it.

But how in the sense of: is it actually possible for someone like me, doing this job, living this life?

And the answer I could give them, because of everything I'd been through, was: yes.

Not because I'd read about it or theorised about it.

Because, just like Zander, I'd done it. From inside a truck cab, on the road, with the hours and the services and the nights away and all the rest of it.

I'd done it. That turned out to matter enormously.

Not to me - to them.

The proof of concept. The evidence that it was possible from exactly where they were standing.

I hadn't set out to be that for anyone.

I'd set out to walk my daughter down the aisle in a thirty-five-inch suit.

But somewhere along the way it became something else as well and that something else - the being the person who proves it can be done - has turned out to be one of the most meaningful things in my working life.

You don't always know what the journey is for until you've made it.



The last thing I want to say in this chapter is about Judi.

We've danced on Tuesday evenings. We've sailed together.

We've been to Malta and to Menorca and to a beach on Lake Ullswater for Tom's birthday and to Plymouth Hoe for Tom's wedding and to Gulliver's Valley with two grandchildren who wore us both out completely and loved every minute.

We've done all that as two people who can do things together, rather than one person managing their limitations and the other person adjusting around them.

I thought losing the weight was the point.

I was wrong.

The point was getting my wife back. Getting the partnership back.

Getting the version of us back that existed before the years of me being a problem to be managed rather than a person to be with.

That's what was on the other side of the decision.

I just hadn't known it then.



What changed: almost everything, eventually.

What surprised me: that the things I thought were the point turned out to be the route, and the actual destination was further on and better than I'd imagined.

The weight was never the point.

The weight was the door.

What's on the other side of it is up to you.



YOUR TURN

Question 1 - What do you think will change?

Before you've done it, you can only imagine what the other side looks like.

So imagine it.

Specifically.

What do you think will be different about your life when you've made this journey?

Not the obvious things. The things underneath.

The relationship. The energy. The things you'll pick back up.

Write here the version of yourself you'll be able to be.

.
.
.

Hold onto that.

Come back and read it when you get there. See how close you were.

Question 2 - Who is this for?

I set out to walk my daughter down the aisle. I ended up with something much larger than that.

Who is your journey for? Not who you're trying to please - but who will actually benefit?

Whose life gets better when yours does? Write their name(s) here, or describe them.

They don't need to know you've written it.

But you should know.

.

.



Coming up in Chapter 17: Don't Wait Like I Did - Now.

Not Monday. Not January. Now.

Chapter Seventeen

Don't Wait Like I Did

Now. Not Monday. Not January.

I want to tell you something I haven't said in quite this way anywhere else in this book.

SOME OF IT MAY sound cheesy and a little bit airy fairy, but as we approach the end of my part, I want to make sure nothing goes unsaid.

I abused this body. I mean that. I really abused it.

I started smoking at approximately nine years old.

Both my parents were heavy smokers, my sister, six years older than me, smoked too, and to make sure I couldn't tell tales on her when she had a cigarette while our parents were out, she gave me a drag and then a whole one.

She taught me to inhale. Everything. I was nine.

For nearly twenty years I smoked twenty to forty, sometimes even fifty cigarettes a day, with cigarillos mixed in.

I didn't quit fully until all four children were born, and it took watching my dad dying in pain from the side-effects of a lifetime of smoking, before I managed it.

Until I came to lose weight, I thought quitting smoking was the hardest thing I would ever have to do.

It was not.

Not even close.

Then there was the drinking.

Then there was the food.

You know all of that by now.

So, twenty-odd years of cigarettes.

A decade of serious drinking.

Twenty-five and a half stone.

The body I'm carrying around today was put through all of that, and it is still here, and it is still functioning, and I am standing at the other side of it in reasonable health writing a book.

Every day I am conscious of just how lucky I am.



A while after I'd started losing the weight, I was lying in bed one morning doing what most of us do - checking the usual bits and bobs, making sure everything is still where it should be.

I found a lump. Right in the middle of my chest. I had no recollection of ever feeling it there before.

To say my blood ran cold is an understatement. I phoned the GP and asked for an emergency appointment.

For a lump in the centre of my chest, she agreed to see me later that morning.

I went to the surgery stressed, worried and genuinely frightened.

I was thinking: I've got away with everything I've put this body through. I've made the changes. I've done the work. Is this the payoff? Is this what I get for all those years?

In I went and stripped my shirt off.

"Here - feel this" I said to the doctor as I guided her hand to the lump.

I'm not sure what reaction I was expecting.

Laughter was not high on my list.

"You absolute idiot" she said, when she'd got her breath back.

"That lump is your sternum." I stood there, and I'm not entirely sure which emotion was stronger - the relief, or the feeling of being an absolute plonker.

What I said was: 'I'm sorry. I genuinely haven't been able to feel that for so long that I didn't know what it was.'

And that's true.

It is completely, literally true. The sternum - your breastbone, the thing that runs down the middle of your chest and holds your ribcage together - had been buried under so much fat for so long that I'd lost track of it entirely.

The bone that had been there my whole life felt like a foreign object.

Think about that for a moment.

Then think about whether you've been waiting for the right moment to start.



I've got away with it. I don't mean that casually. I mean it in the fullest sense.

The cigarettes, the drinking, the weight, the blood pressure, the pre-diabetes, the liver - any one of those things, sustained for long enough without being addressed, could have taken a very different course.

All of them together, for as long as I let them run, should probably have done more damage than they did.

But here I am.

I'm not a religious man. I'm not going to tell you that something up there was

looking out for me, because I genuinely don't know what I believe about that.

What I do believe - and this is the airy-fairy bit I warned you about, so brace yourself - is that getting away with it comes with a price.

A debt to something.

A responsibility.

My way of paying that debt is this:

The website. The community. The coaching. And this book.

My second chance, my getting away with it unscathed, becomes your chance to find out how.

That's the deal. I didn't earn this luck by keeping it to myself.



There's a trip I've been meaning to take for years.

Judi and I, on a narrowboat, through the canal to Llangollen.

Slowly, no hurry, just the two of us and the water and the Welsh countryside going by at four miles an hour.

That's my number one bucket list item. Still not done.

Every time I think about Dennis Thomas from Kool and the Gang- I think about Llangollen.

About the things that are still on the list. About the gap between now and the end of the road, which is shorter than it used to be, and about the things that still need doing before we get there.

The canal trip will happen. That's not wishful thinking - that's a commitment.

But it's also a reminder that the bucket list has a finite amount of time attached to it, and every year I didn't sort myself out was another year that list stayed unticked.

I know you have a list too. You may not have written it down.

But you know what's on it.



I cannot do the work for you. I know this because I tried to do it for myself for years without actually doing it.

I became obsessed with self-improvement - the books, the courses, the programmes, the next system that was going to be the one that finally clicked.

I spent years getting better at preparing to change rather than actually changing.

You can spend so much time learning how to do the thing that the thing never gets done.

That's not preparation. That's avoidance with a better name.

I cannot make the choices that need making on your behalf.

I cannot feel your reasons or live inside your life or know what specific combination of fear and desire is going to be strong enough to move you.

Only you know that.

What I can tell you - what this whole book has been building towards - is this.

The **HOW** will become clear when you define your **WHY**.

Everything in this book - the food, the environment, the habits, the patience, the fear, the drinking, all of it - is the HOW

And the how matters. But the HOW without the WHY is just information.

Information you already have, somewhere.

Information that hasn't been enough on its own, or you wouldn't be reading this.

The WHY is the engine. The WHY is the thing that gets you out of the side room in the Village Hall when every part of you wants to go home.

The WHY is what makes the Vimto at the dance night feel like a perfectly acceptable trade.

The WHY is what you go back to when the habits wobble and the week goes wrong and the old familiar options are right there waiting for you.

Go back to Chapter 7.

Read your four reasons. If you haven't written them yet - write them now.

Before you read another word of this.

Because everything else in this book is scaffolding, and the reasons are the building.



There's a story about a child walking along a beach after a storm.

The beach is covered in starfish that have been washed up by the tide - thousands of them, as far as you can see.

The child picks one up and throws it back into the sea.

An adult watching says:

"There are thousands of them. You can't save them all. What difference does it make?"

The child picks up another one, throws it in and says: "It made a difference to that one".

I can't reach every driver who needs to hear this. I can't change the industry or fix the services or make the road a healthier place to be.

I can't save everyone. But if what I've done gives one person the confidence that it's possible - if this book ends up in the cab of one driver who needed to know that it can be done from exactly where they're sitting - then that's enough.

That's more than enough.

That one person might be you.



So here we are. The last few pages. You know my story now.

The twenty-five stone and the fifty-four inch waist.

The fabric conditioner bottles and the flannel method and the shirts on hangers in the car.

The doctor. Slimming World and the Village Hall.

The thirty-five inch suit. The sternum I'd forgotten I had.

You know what it cost, and what it took, and what was waiting on the other side.

And now you're at the moment I was at, in one form or another.

The moment where the information is all there and the question is just whether you're going to do something with it.

I waited too long. Years too long.

I'm telling you that not to make you feel better about where you are, but because it's true, and because the years I waited are years I can't get back, and I don't want that for you.

Don't wait like I did.

Not Monday.

Not January.

Not when the pressure eases or the kids are older or the job settles down or the time feels right.

Now.

The time is now.

The moment is this one.

The version of you that's on the other side of this decision is already there, waiting.

You just have to start walking towards them.

GO!



YOUR TURN - THE LAST ONE

Question 1 - Go back to Chapter 7 Find your four reasons.

Read them. Have they changed? Are they stronger now than when you wrote them?

Or do they need rewriting with everything you now know?

What are your final four reasons, right now, today:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Signed:

.

Dated:

.

Question 2 - What are you waiting for?

Honestly. What is the actual thing that is stopping you starting today?

.

Now ask yourself: will this thing look bigger or smaller in six months if you don't start today?

.

And: what is the cost of waiting?

Not in abstract terms. In specific things. The event you won't be able to attend.

The grandchild you won't be able to chase. The trip that keeps not happening.

.

What is the one thing you will do today that is different from what you would have done before reading this book?

Not a plan. Not a programme. Not a full overhaul.

One thing. Today.

Write it down:

.

Now do it. That's the whole instruction. The rest follows.

The 'Stuck In A Truck' community and I are there if you need us.

You don't have to do this alone.



About Steve Greenhalgh

I SPENT OVER TWENTY years driving long distances for a living, and for most of those years I was slowly falling apart.

Twenty-five and a half stone. Fifty-four-inch waist.

Ten cans of Stella and half a bottle of spirits at my worst.

I am not telling you this to shock you - I'm telling you because if you're reading this, there's a reasonable chance you recognise some of it.

And I want you to know that the man who was in that state is also the man who wrote this book.

I lost nearly eleven stone. I'm still a Slimming World member.

I sail when I can.

I dance with my wife on Tuesday evenings when life allows.

I chase my grandchildren around theme parks, and I fit in every seat.

I built stuckinatruck.com because drivers kept asking how I'd done it, and I figured the least I could do was tell them.

This book is the long version of that answer. I live in the East Midlands with my wife Judi. (And I'm still driving artics)

Acknowledgements

THIS BOOK WOULD NOT exist without Judi.

Not just because she agreed to be interviewed for it, or because her honesty in that interview gave Chapter 6 the truth it needed.

But because without Judi - her patience, her stubbornness, her refusal to give up on a man who gave her plenty of reasons to - there would be no story to tell.

She held the unit together. She booked the bootcamp.

She blew the thunderer whistle. She danced on Tuesday evenings and waited for me to become the person I was always supposed to be.

I got there in the end, but life is always a work in progress and I'm still on my way.

Judi - I will never stop being grateful. Thanks also to my son Max, who as my second man for nearly five years moving static caravans, kept me in check when needed, stood there between me and another McDonald's breakfast, or another beer or just another anything.

I doubt I would have taken that intervention from anyone else!

To Tom, Sarah, & Molly, for putting up with me, tolerating my behaviour (up to a point). Drawing a line when I crossed one, and standing by that line.

Again, I will be forever grateful to Zander and to Slimming World, and the many consultants who have helped me stay on track over the years. I stuck to Slimming World as opposed to every other plan I had tried over the years. Personal accountability is key, but group support is essential.

And again to the Samaritans and to Rob, who stopped the worst outcome.