

Believe

The closing argument: you are not broken, and it is not too late.

This book began with a man trying to get his life back. It ends with a man planning how to use it. So, I am not going to spend this last chapter looking back down at the struggle - we have already walked every mile of that road together. I want to spend it up here, at the top, doing two things: showing you what the view is actually like, because the view is the payoff and you deserve to see it clearly, and then pressing the map into your hand. Because this was never really a book about me. I am just the proof. This whole book, especially this chapter, is about you and what you do the morning after you close it.

One warning before we start, and it is the most important sentence in the chapter: everything that follows runs on a single fuel, and the fuel is belief. Not my belief in you, though you have it. Yours, in yourself. I will show you the system one last time, folded small enough to fit on an index card. I will give you your first thirty days, hour by hour and week by week. I will answer the doubters, including the one who lives in your own head. But none of it moves an inch without the thing this chapter is named for. Hold that

thought. We will end where everything has to end - and begin.

The View from Up Here

People ask me what I see now when I look back down the whole road, from this summit to the recliner at three hundred and ten pounds. The honest answer surprises them. I do not see that man clearly at all anymore. I see a grey, hazy, undefined space - like looking into a fog bank. I know he is in there; I know that inside that haze is me on that boat deck, and I can still call up the photograph any time I want, and I never want to lose it. But when I stand where I stand today and look back, the old life has gone soft and shadowed, the way a hard winter does once you are deep into spring. That is not forgetting. That is distance - and you earn it one ordinary day at a time.

Here is what the view is made of instead. It is made of mornings. I open my eyes; the sun is coming up; my feet hit the floor; I say Get up - and I am overjoyed, genuinely overjoyed, to be here for another day. Ten years ago, I feared, for real, that I would wake up dead. I have said that in this book, and I meant it literally. I never feel that anymore. I love the mornings now, every single one, end to end, and I love the evenings for giving me the chance to rest up and do it again.

And it is made of moments like the week Debbie and I just spent. We took a cabin on a lake in Maine - no television, no internet, no computer, barely a cell signal. The entertainment in that house was a stack of CDs from the seventies and eighties, a deck of cards, a cribbage board, and a window by a trail where the deer walked past. Ten years ago, if you had described that vacation to me, I would have told you that you were out of your mind and we were not going - that is not a vacation, that is a sentence. This year? I was counting the days. We played board games. We listened to our own generation's music. We sat on the deck in the morning with nowhere to be. It was one of the best weeks of my life. If you want to measure how much a man has changed, do not weigh him. Ask him what he now calls a perfect week.

The other thing I brought home from that cabin I have not said out loud to anyone, so you are hearing it first. Something has changed in the way my wife looks at me. It is in the little glint in her eye, the way she squeezes my arm, the way her hand lands on my shoulder - and the way she says "I love you" that has changed. It is warmer. There is more to it. We have been openly, loudly in love for our whole lives, so I am not telling you we found something we lost. I am telling you it deepened this year, after everything - after the expert phase I had to apologize for, after the

conversation about compliments, after all of it. That is the cherry on top of this entire decade. And happiness itself works the same way now: it is not that different things make me happy. The same things do - my wife, my kids, my grandkids, a frisbee in the yard, forty-five minutes in the pool that I jumped into just so I could hang out with my grandson on a nice Summer afternoon. I just love them more. The list did not change. The intensity did.

There Is No Finish Line - and That Is the Point

Ask anybody on a diet how they will know they are done, and you will always get the same answer: I'll be done when I get to the weight I'm supposed to be. Fine. And then what? Then, they tell you, they stop. Think about what that actually means. It means: then I will go back to living the way I lived before - the exact way of living that made me need the diet in the first place. Nobody wants to say it out loud because, when said out loud, it is ridiculous. But that is the plan almost everybody is running, and it is why the weight almost always comes back. The stopping is built into the design.

So let me say, one last time, the thing I have said in every chapter of this book: I am not done, I will never be done, and that is the good news. You are finished when you are finished - and what "finished" means is that you now live

this way for the rest of your life. There is no timeline and no deadline. This is not a diet book, an exercise plan, or a program with a graduation day. All I have drawn for you in these twelve chapters is the shape of the box - the structure, the guidelines. You have to climb inside it and bend it until it fits your life, and then you live there, happily, forever.

I understand how foreign that sounds, because it would have been a foreign language to me too, ten years ago. That is not a figure of speech. Everything I now know - how I eat, when I eat, how slowly I eat, how I move, how I sleep, why a shopping list matters - was a language I could not speak ten years ago, and I have spent a decade learning it word by word. If you sat the me of today across a kitchen table from the me of ten years ago and let me explain this chapter to him, I know exactly what that man would do, because I knew him well: he would stand up, say something I would rather not print, and walk away. So if any of this still sounds impossible to you - good. You are exactly where I was. The language can be learned. I am not a special man. I am a stubborn one, and stubbornness can be learned, too.

The Whole System on One Index Card

If everything I know had to fit on one index card taped to your refrigerator, here is what would be written on it, in

order. Consistency. Mindfulness. Nutrition. Movement. Recovery. Five words. Underneath them, one instruction: plan and schedule it all. That is the entire machine. Twelve chapters, folded five times.

Consistency comes first because it is the practice that powers all the others - if I could leave you only one, this is the one. Do the same things, the same way, at the same time, every day. Show up for every workout you scheduled, whether you scheduled three a week or six - no negotiation, just show up. Mindfulness is how you do them: eat slowly and think about every bite; lift slowly and think about the muscle doing the work; the mind-muscle connection is real, and so is the mind-meal one. Nutrition is the fuel - eat real food, mostly plants, not too much, and remember you can be a fat vegan; I wrote you a whole chapter on how I managed it. Movement, every single day, hard on some days and gentle on the others, because a body that does not move is a body deciding to quit. And recovery - which is bigger than sleep. Sleep is the engine room, but recovery is the whole umbrella: the reading, the coloring, the hobby, the hour in the recliner, the walk on the beach, the doing of nothing on purpose. Schedule it like it matters, because it matters as much as the barbell does.

Now, let me prove to you that the card travels, because I am not writing this section from my kitchen table. I am

writing it - literally, this conversation is happening - from the deck of that cabin in Maine, on vacation, and here is what the system looks like on the road. My TRX straps are hanging from the deck rail six feet from where I sit, set to height, ready for tomorrow. My blender made this morning's smoothie because the blender comes with me. My log will take its usual ten minutes - there is no scale in this cabin, so across the top of the week my log simply says vacation, and I do not care, because the only two weights that matter are the one from the morning I left home and the one from the morning after I get back. Draw the line between those two numbers, and you have the truth; everything in between is noise I cannot measure and refuse to worry about. We will eat out a couple of times, and I will order what I want to eat - not as much as I can eat - take my time, enjoy every bite, and send the rest back. Be as regular as you can be, forgive yourself the rest, and get back to the full routine the day you walk in your own front door. That is maintenance on the road, and it fits in a duffel bag.

Consistency. Mindfulness. Nutrition. Movement. Recovery - planned and scheduled, every day, wherever you are. That is the whole machine. Everything else in this book is just me showing you how the five words fit together - and proof that they run just as well on the deck of a cabin in Maine as they do in your own kitchen.

Your First Thirty Days

Now the map. You closed this book last night; it is tomorrow morning. Here is your first month - and notice that it asks you to change exactly one thing per week, because the biggest mistake I made in my own first month was changing everything at once. I went in one day from a whole box of Hamburger Helper to a fraction of it, cut my portions to ribbons, swapped my foods wholesale - and those first days were the hardest days of the entire ten years. My body was reeling, learning to run on less fuel and a different fuel at the same time, and it was physically miserable. It never got that hard again, because I never again tried to do everything in one leap. Learn from me: too much, too fast, is how beginnings die.

Week one belongs to your kitchen. Pick the direction you are going to eat - I have shown you mine; yours only has to be real food, mostly plants, not too much - then open the pantry, the refrigerator, and the freezer, and take out everything that does not belong. All of it. The cookies, the crackers, the whatever-it-is: donate it, give it away, get it out of the house tonight. Then go shopping and restock with food that matches the life you just chose - and put your treat on the list. This is not optional; it is the load-bearing wall. Whatever you love - Oreos, strawberries, chocolate - find it in a small package or a hundred-calorie

pack, and write it into the plan every single day as the last thing you put in your mouth at night. A planned treat is a reward you look forward to all day. An unplanned one is the first of nine. You will change more in your kitchen than you will ever change in your sneakers, because you cannot outwalk your Oreos - nobody can. Do the work where the work counts. That is week one. Change nothing else.

PREVIEW ENDS HERE

This free preview covers the first 10 pages of the chapter. The rest is in the book. To order Volume II - From 310 to Thriving, email metabojoe@gmail.com.

metabojoe.com - The Metabolic Engineer by J.F. Kilty