



INSPIRED TO INSPIRE

By: Sara Hopley Boatz

Have you ever met someone who you thought really needed your help but you ended up receiving much more than you gave? That happened to me recently and was life-changing. It all started the day I turned 49 years old – one year away from the big 5 – 0. To me, 50 seemed really old!

This made me take a long hard look at myself and I had to admit, I felt good about everything I had accomplished thus far. Then, in the same breath, I found myself asking, “So, now what?” I had met or was close to meeting all the goals I had set for myself. What else was left? Was this as good as it gets? I think I was experiencing a mid-life crisis. I said to myself, “Who am I now and what do I want? There has to be more.”

It was time for a reinvention. My career had been spent helping companies, leaders and teams create strategic plans to take them to the next level. So, I asked, “Why can’t I do it for me?” I took myself through the planning process so many of my clients had success with. I was able to articulate some personal dreams and create a plan with a new set of goals that would take me to that next level. The hard part was keeping myself motivated to follow through.

I decided that I needed to start with something physical, so I signed up to work with a personal fitness trainer to keep me motivated and moving toward some of these new goals. I started just one month into this “50 is coming” thing and was assigned to work with Eddie as my trainer.

Eddie was very unexpected. What I saw was not what I got. And, what I ended up getting out of it was much more than I expected. Dark eyes, a heavy brow, and built like a brick shit house, the first day I met him, he kind of scared me. This guy was, upon first impression, a good-looking, young beef-cake, body builder type, ultimate athlete that was going to HATE training someone who was anything but. It looked like he was perfect and had everything together. So, I braced myself for a quiet, intimidating first session. And, while it did start off pretty quiet, it also turned out that he was anything BUT intimidating.

Eddie watched intently and listened (and put me through some torturous exercises) and then he spoke. In just ½ of a training session, he figured out the physical strengths, weaknesses and problems I would have to overcome to meet the physical goals I laid out for myself. He had my attention. But, it turned out to be an amazing ride because I received MUCH more than the physical training he promised. Eddie not only helped me become more physically fit, he inspired me to meet a life-changing goal – to one day write a book that would inspire others.

Eddie was very quiet and seemed pretty serious. Very professional, wicked smart and extremely good at his craft. He fixed physical pains that plagued me for years, enabling me to get stronger, more flexible, completely physically aligned and on my way to meeting fitness goals that I thought could never happen at this stage in my life. But enough about me. Wait, one more thing about me. I LOVE a challenge and through our time together, I found out Eddie was the poster boy for a challenge. His problem – low self confidence – and that bugged me because I didn’t know why. As much as he helped me physically, I felt compelled to see what I could do to pay him back by helping him. And, how convenient. Now I could focus on helping him instead of about me turning 50.

Eddie was introverted and very guarded. Professional to a fault and didn't seem to be the type to let people in. To me he seemed unhappy and moving through life on a slow paced treadmill with little purpose. It seemed as though, among other things, he lost his joy for life. His lack of self confidence didn't go with his well-sculpted physical appearance. Well, I'd have none of that. I decided that I was going to bring him out of his shell and use my skills and abilities to get inside his world and make him comfortable, and hopefully, somehow, more self confident and happier. Eddie was my new project. (I'm sure he'd be mad at me if he knew that's how I classified him at one point.) Someone I could positively impact. But in the end, I got more out of it than he did.

He wasn't the hard, dark, tough guy that his exterior exuded at all. I did get one thing right – he was unhappy and lacked purpose and self confidence. He was, in my opinion, existing – and I had to see if there was anything I could do to change that. Over time, I gained his trust and he started talking to me. His story is quite amazing. I won't tell it in detail because I don't think he told me to have it published for all to see, but the basics are these: He had a very hard and lonely childhood. I would characterize his situation as one that meets the definition of neglect and abuse. He didn't have parents that inspired or lead him. Instead, they did things that, for most others, would break a spirit and put them on a path that would certainly result in another bad statistic. That's the amazing part – they couldn't break him. He was – and remains – too strong.

On his own with no parental guidance – other than an example of what NOT to be – Eddie bootstrapped his way through life driving forward against all odds. He graduated from high school and enlisted in the military. He served in the U.S. Army as an airborne ranger for 8 years, some of them on the front lines during war-time. Lord knows what he experienced there. But wait, it gets worse. While deployed in the war, his young wife cheated on him and left him, taking his only daughter who now lives more than 1,000 miles away. He diligently pays his child support, but longs to be with her to influence her, giving her the love and support he never received.

To make money, Eddie got certified as a professional trainer from the National Academy of Sports Medicine in California. This certification not only taught him his career craft, it also gave him the ability to reinvent himself physically, transforming his own body from overweight and average - to lean, sculpted, high-performing and strong. But that wasn't enough. Haunted by his upbringing, he was determined to get the right training to help kids to not have to endure what he did and have a better life. So, he went to college and graduated with a 4-year degree in psychology. He ran out of time and money to obtain the advanced degrees needed to fulfill his dream as a child psychologist (for now) and jumped on the treadmill called life that gets him from pay check to pay check, giving him the ability to support and stay in touch with his daughter – but that's it.

Enter Sara Boatz.

Once I got to know Eddie, he proved to not only be a great teacher, but also quite a special guy. He taught me so much about the details of my physical abilities – and inabilities, I couldn't believe it. He made me understand how things work together and why I had pain and how to alleviate it so my body could perform the way I want it to and stay healthy. He inspired me to get on a weight loss program (down 25 lbs. to date) and helped me get ready first for a 10K run, then a sprint triathlon. (I used to run triathlons in my late 20s and set a goal to run one more before I left my 40s. I was turning 50 in just a few months. Tick tock.) His training style and technique became metaphors for many aspects of my life.

All the while Eddie was training me, I was pushing him to think differently and believe in himself. As he trained me to be ready for my upcoming triathlon, I worked to build his confidence enough to take advantage of

all the good that was already in him. I told him he needed to start with one single achievement. Then one day, he surprised me. Eddie went with me and my family skiing at Vail. Sitting at the top of Vail Mountain he said he made a decision to work hard to be sure people’s lives were better because he was in them. He wanted to make a positive impact on people and was determined to find a way to do that. Today, he is thinking about joining the mentorship program with Big Brothers and Big Sisters of the Pikes Peak Region. He says he wants to impact a boy in a similar situation that he was in growing up so that boy won’t have to endure the same challenges. AWESOME! Who better to fill that void than someone who has been in it himself and emerged successful?

Eddie’s epiphany inspired me so much. As I looked back over those eight months of training with him I realized that he helped me get through a very big change in my life. The “What’s Next” thing that many people go through at my age. When I thought I had it bad, his story reminded me that I must depend on myself and soldier through to get what I want. His attention to detail and demand for perfection in every exercise he trained me on has reminded me that staying the course, being patient and working consistently WILL make a difference. In my new life venture to reinvent myself, his work has pushed me to strengthen and consistently lean on my core. A strong core - really knowing the details of who I am and what I am made of - gives me the foundation I need to achieve. Eddie has inspired me to keep up with the basics. Build core strength. Practice consistently. Don’t cut corners. Get results.

That’s all I needed to move to my next level. Today I am almost finished with the book I dreamed of writing. It will be called: *“What if? What else? What now? An Interactive Guide to Reinvention and Living Forward.”* It is a workbook designed to walk with the reader, side-by-side through exercises to inspire him/her to set and attain goals. The book will help the reader develop a plan and take action that will enable him/her to engage in life mentally, physically and socially. Really LIVE life – on one’s own terms, the way one wants to, in a manner that makes one happy and engaged in the right situations, with the right people and in the right places. Live to realize one’s dreams. Live Forward.

Writing this book has been a huge personal undertaking and it has given me the confidence I need to embark on a new career to become a professional speaker. I couldn’t have figured out how to get it started without the life lessons I learned from Eddie. Because of him, I truly was inspired to inspire others.

Since this was written: As a quick update, writing and submitting this story a little over 3 months ago even further inspired me. Just putting this on paper got me excited about really turning on the after-burners to get my book done. And I did it! It is published and available for sale online. I also started marketing my book by sending out over 600 email solicitations to speak to area groups and associations and booked 5 speaking engagements in the first week! Looks like my own reinvention is working.

About Sara Boatz

Sara sees things others don’t or can’t see. Her talent is looking at relevant information and developing solutions to issues that get her clients off the dime and moving forward in a purposeful manner. Sara turns everything on its side, looks at issues from every angle and approaches client information with a fresh perspective. She has been practicing her craft for nearly 30 years. The secret – it’s all inside the client. She perfected the process for getting it articulated and analyzed then creates the focus necessary to take action and achieve. Owner/operator of SARAstrategies, Inc., a communication strategy consultancy, Sara enjoys an active, outdoor lifestyle with her husband and two daughters in Colorado Springs, CO.