

# PRODUCT OF HEROES

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## GRATITUDE

*noun* \gra-tūd\  
a feeling of appreciation or thanks

Many have asked me: “why do you smile?” How can I be happy when so much was taken from me? After I have endured so much pain? The answer is held in this one single word.

Time heals all wounds. And for me, it was only a matter of time, once I awoke from that five and a half week coma, before I would begin to realize how blessed I was and how many people participated in helping me to regain my ability to be alive.

**BREATHING IN** - you are fueling your body with LIFE. Every cell has the chance for renewal.

**BREATHING OUT** - you have the ability to rid your body of toxins, fear, negativity, and release your energy to the universe!

You are constantly breathing!



## Motivational & Authentic Public Speaking

Prior to the trauma, my life’s work was encompassed by public speaking, public relations, advocacy, and I was heavily involved in the non-profit sector. Since the trauma, my life’s work has taken a different path. The core focus of what my passion hasn’t changed; however, the flames that fuel it have been stoked. I have always had a desire to help break down social and societal barriers and to empower others to tap into their own passions.

After the trauma, I realized that I was alive as a result of the selflessness of others – no longer in a proverbial sense, but literally. Countless blood donations and heroes had brought me back to life. The message I strove to send before is still true, and becomes even more relevant with every breath I take. The humanitarian message that “we all bleed red” resonates loudly with every audience I have the honor of speaking with. Over the last couple of years I have had the honor of speaking throughout the country to diverse audiences, including medical conferences, athletic venues, schools, and businesses. It is an incredible gift to be a product of heroes. With one of those heroes being myself, it is important not to forget that we all have the ability to be heroes and change-makers.

## Fueling Our Bodies for Strength and Healing

Starting October 8, 2011 my body was put on a feeding tube for five and a half weeks. My breath was controlled by a ventilator and my body was continuously pumped full of antibiotics and other chemicals needed to keep me alive and let me get through surgeries and out of critical condition. During that time I lost a lot of weight and became toxic. My dear husband stood at my bedside month after month, even after I awoke, after seeing my color change, my body's mangled composition, sunken eyes, and stale breath. As soon as I could breathe on my own and ingest fluids he began juicing organic fruits and vegetables for me. Sean had plenty of time to research what I needed to allow my cells to regenerate detoxify and help my skin and muscles have the best fighting chance of healing and not getting additional infections.

My body went from 130 lbs the morning of October 8th to under 100 pounds at the end of November. The first time I was wheeled in front of a mirror and able to see myself I sobbed at the skeleton I had become. I no longer looked like a strong woman and athlete; I was frail and fighting. My body was wired to an ileostomy bag, catheter, and a wound vac that was attached to me for months. I bled for over 1 year from open wounds requiring constant wound care. My body depended on nutrition. I had struggled with body image issues and eating issues since I was a teenager. The fight was about to take a wild turn. Thin was no longer appealing.

OUR BODIES ARE MACHINES. They are constantly healing themselves, and working to maintain. My rehab hospital at Gaylord was willing to accommodate me by making a variety of fresh leafy dark greens, organic nutrient dense foods with good fats, and limited artificial ingredients. Over the last three years my husband and I have strived to eat well. Our bodies and souls rely on our brains to make healthy choices. When we cannot make those choices on our own, it is good to have an advocate in your corner. I am thankful for my husband. Because of our dietary choices I grew over three feet of skin in two years with minimal infections and incredible energy, able to rebound from over twenty surgeries.

Remember: Food = Fuel.

For more information on foods that heal visit:

<http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-7752/9-foods-that-healed-my-body-belong-in-every-kitchen.html>

or ask that this be a topic when I come and speak at your event!

### September Daily Suggestions:

1. dark leafy greens
2. fresh hot peppers
3. egg whites
4. avocados
5. raw and local honey
6. raw sea salt
7. water
8. nutrient dense grains
9. nuts
10. lean organic meats in moderation
11. seasonal fresh organic fruits

### Exercise For The Body and Soul

Exercise every day! Did you know physical activity releases the same chemicals as anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medications?



## More Surgeries Ahead

Boy, am I thankful I live in a state with exceptional medical care!

So far, I've had over 20 surgeries to repair my body.

**November 12th, I will return to Yale for another "spa session," as I like to call my surgeries. I get to have an IV for hydration, catch up on some sleep, wear a bathrobe, and have people take care of me.**

(insert sarcasm)

My next set of surgeries will be for expanders. The lower part of my body has grown new skin, but it contains no pores, is dense with scar tissue, and very fragile. In order to have more "functional and dependable skin" doctors will expand the good skin over a series of months and then remove the new skin dense with scar tissue and literally pull the skin I grew with expanders over the affected parts so I have functioning skin. They will then remove bone mass from my hip that developed due to osteocalcification. I will then be back working steadfast with my trainers at Pursuit Athletic Performance to help my body regain strength with walking, running, cycling, and swimming again.

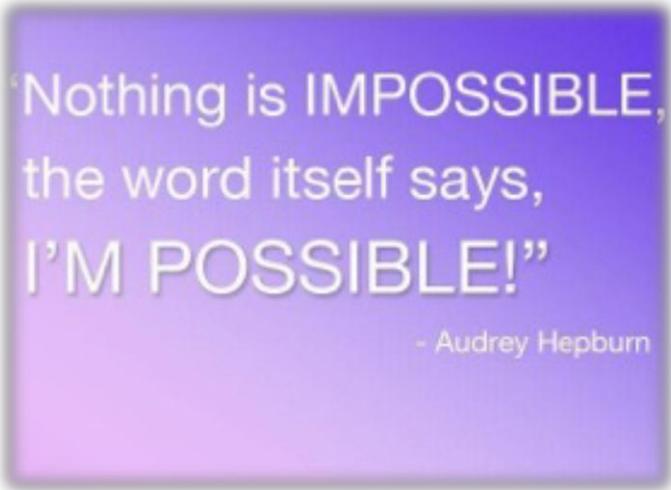
Visit <http://pursuitathleticperformance.com>



## What Is Your "Mantra?"

While recovering, I read the book *The Long Run* by Matt Long. His story of survival and his words "I WILL" resonated within me and convinced me to believe that, one way or another, I would get through every painful day of recovery.

My personal mantra has now become "Product of Heroes." This mantra not only represents the many heroes who worked tirelessly to recover me, but also myself and the work I have accomplished.



## Will I still be speaking during my expander process?

I will still speak, advocate, and volunteer within reason (and within the New England area) during my reconstruction phase. I will simply be a bit "bulbous" and a bit slower than usual. Email me at [colleen@colleenkellyalexander](mailto:colleen@colleenkellyalexander) to schedule a talk.