

AMY JORDAN



Dance Because You Can

**5 STEPS TO
TRANSFORM TRAUMA
INTO TRIUMPH**

“Amy is the most inspiring person I ever met.
She is about living, creating, doing, and sharing.”

**CHITA RIVERA, TWO-TIME TONY AWARD WINNER
PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF FREEDOM RECIPIENT**

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Dance Because You Can
5 Steps to Transform Trauma into Triumph
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DEDICATION

This book is for you. I know how you feel. I understand your struggle. It is real.

I know you can breakthrough anything. If I did it, so can you.

I had a lot of support.

This book is in homage to those who literally saved my life, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Thank you to my dad and family.

Thank you Jennifer Lill Brown for your brilliant editing.

There are too many of you to name in person but you know who you are.

I want to give a special dedication to the late Dr. Dean Lorich. Dr. Lorich, every step I take is in your honor.

An equally special note to the William Randolph Hearst Burn Center at New York Presbyterian Weill Cornell Medical Center and The Hospital for Special Surgery along with my surgical Dream Team: Dr. Palmer Bessey, Dr. Austin Fragomen, Dr. Barry Hartman, the late Dr. Dean Lorich, Dr. Anil Ranawat, Dr. Aaron Schulman, Dr. Jason Spector, Dr. Hooman Yaghoobzadeh, Dr. Roger Yurt. Also Dr Ann Cohen, and Andy Carboy.

I cannot express in words my gratitude to Janet Horn Miller. Janet, you introduced me to the SGI USA and the practice of SGI Buddhism and chanting Nam Myoho Renge Kyo.

I truly owe you my life.

And, last but not least, my mentor in life whose heart and soul has been with and continues to be with me: SGI President and Global Scholar, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda.

With all my heart,

Amy Jordan

In Loving Memory of my Father
Dr. Robert Baum
September 12, 1931-August 14, 2018

Beautiful People!

As a visually impaired person there are many books difficult for me to read due to the text layout.

You may notice an enlarged text or more line space. This is so others with vision impairment, like myself, can easily read the print.

Thank you all and ENJOY!

Amy Jordan

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INTRODUCTION

Setting the Stage

HAVE YOU EVER HAD one of those moments when you think, “How could things get any worse?”

Maybe something happened and you instantly knew life would never be the same. From a divorce to a financial crisis to a health challenge to some unforeseen traumatic event, there is no shortage of things that could go wrong in this life.

I may not know you personally yet, but I do know this: We’ve all faced roadblocks. We’ve all faced tragedy. We’ve all been broken. We’ve all wondered, “How could this happen to me?”

First, let me say, “Welcome to the club.”

Second, let me affirm, “You are not alone.”

It may feel like you are alone right now or have been alone during those experiences in life that rock us to our core, but I’m telling you, you are not.

Would you also believe me if I told you that embedded within those difficult, seemingly impossible and impassable experiences lies the pathway to your biggest success in life?

My name is Amy Jordan, and I am here to share with you that this hidden pathway exists, and you *can* find it. How do I

know? Because my greatest success in life was born out of my greatest tragedy.

The War of Two Identities

I am a dancer—and I have been since I took my first steps as a little girl. I guess it's in my DNA. I discovered the joy of dancing as a child and never looked back.

Unfortunately, a less pleasant discovery also awaited me at a young age. When I was four years old, I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Growing up with type 1 diabetes was not easy. This was especially true for a kid growing up in the 1970s and 1980s. Back then, without the internet, there was no awareness of the seriousness of the disease. There also wasn't enough research to assure children with type 1 diabetes and their parents that they didn't do something wrong.

It also wasn't easy to test your blood glucose levels like it is today. I wish I could simply use a quick and simple blood glucose-testing meter. I had to stop what I was doing and go pee in a cup every single time I needed to check my blood glucose.

Making a hard situation harder, my parents chose denial as a means of coping. They did not discuss my condition. I was left feeling isolated, weird, and sick all the time. I hated that my mom had to come everywhere with me and bring along that stupid box of snacks.

I wanted to feel normal. I also wanted to eat sweets and candy like the other kids. So I began sneaking them. This secret, dangerous obsession started me down the path of developing an eating disorder that would plague me throughout my life. I wanted to eat what I wanted to eat, but the diabetes had other ideas. I chose bulimia as my way of having my cake and eating it, too.

Through it all, dance was there. Whenever I needed a

pick-me-up, dance would save the day. It became both my escape and my identity. It also provided me with an outlet for expressing myself and acquiring discipline. Dance has been my savior, time and time again.

Despite this love, I always feared that these two labels in my life—*dancer* and *diabetic*—would go to war one day. Sadly, I was right. In my early twenties, I was in Los Angeles, California, doing something that so many people never do: I was living my dream! I was dancing professionally with choreographers who worked with the likes of Michael Jackson, Madonna, and Paula Abdul.

My dreams were finally becoming reality, but then reality became a nightmare.

As a result of my eating disorder and an overall lack of attention to my health, I had drastic complications with my diabetes. After forty eye surgeries, I had to stop driving and was declared legally blind. I was in and out of hospitals, and my budding dance career ground to a screeching halt.

It was time to stop and regroup. This wasn't the first time I had to do this. My life has been filled with events that knock me down and force me to make a choice: to either stay down and give up or stand back up and keep moving forward. As a naïve twenty-something, I didn't realize that the decision to press on, time and time again, helped me develop critical life skills that would prove to be instrumental many years down the road.

Fast forward to 2009. I was living in New York and starting to find my place in the dance world again as a choreographer and producer. I was teetering on forty and terrified that crossing that age threshold would render it impossible for me to leave a legacy. This made me more determined than ever to press on. Once again, life was about to remind me that its chosen path and the one we envision are rarely, if ever, the same.

Pinned Under WHAT?

Friday, May 1, 2009, was a beautiful spring day in New York City. After a long, harsh winter, the warm sun and gentle breezes of springtime can be a literal and figurative breath of fresh air. The promise of spring revives your body and soul. It's as if suddenly everyone is happier and life seems better.

I was heading back to my office in a fabulous mood. I had been helping to choreograph and produce a performance for New York City Dance Week, and the return trip was just a few blocks. It was a journey I had made so many times, since New Yorkers tend to walk everywhere.

On this sunny, delightful afternoon, I was in no particular hurry, which is unusual for anyone on the streets of New York. I even turned off my phone and put it in my pocket, content to unplug for a few moments and soak in the rays.

I neared a crosswalk, stepped up to the curb, and looked both ways. That's what our parents taught us to do, right? I checked and saw I had the walk sign. It was my turn, and off I went.

Life is funny. Literally in the blink of an eye or the snap of your fingers, your life may never be the same. No warning. No signs. No time to prepare. Just—BAM!

In one moment, I was a girl pursuing her deferred dreams and soaking in the sun.

In the next moment, I was face down on a busy city street.

I couldn't move. I felt stuck to the ground. I also couldn't feel my right leg.

Minutes passed as I was in and out of consciousness. The sun felt warm, but the pavement felt cold. A brief springtime rain shower had left a layer of dampness on the ground, and I remember feeling dirty as I lay there in the middle of the road. I wanted to stand up and wash off all the grime, but something was holding me down.

Suddenly the need to sleep was overwhelming. In that moment, the damp New York City pavement felt like my bed. *Maybe I should take a quick nap, and when I wake up, I'll be able to move.*

A muffled voice jolted me back down to earth.

“Ma'am! Ma'am! Can you hear me?”

“Huh? What?” I abruptly replied, irritated that someone was disturbing my nap.

“Ma'am, do you know what day it is? Do you know how old you are? Who is the president of the United States?”

“President? Who cares about the president?”

“I am a paramedic. My partner and I will take care of you.”

“Huh? What?” I asked again.

“Don't move!” he commanded. “We need to pull you out from under the tire of this bus.”

“Under the tire? What tire? What bus?”

It seems everyone knew something I didn't. What was the big mystery? What happened is something you only see in movies. It's some mythical worst-case scenario that only exists in clichéd reminders to always wear clean underwear.

While walking across a crosswalk on a downtown city street, I had been hit. Not by a bike or a car, though. All 124 pounds of my body was pinned under the tire of a fifteen-ton New York City express bus.

I had literally been hit by a bus.

“Stay still and calm,” the paramedic continued.

“Well, if I'm pinned under the tire of a bus, I don't think I'm going anywhere.”

As the reality of my situation hit, I instantly felt in my heart that I would never dance again. Choreography, the shows, my dancing—it was all over.

I had no feeling in my right leg, and I wondered if it was still attached. I also sensed I was close to death. Consciousness

came and went like ocean tides. Somehow, those paramedics were able to get me out from under the gargantuan tire and into an ambulance, still breathing.

On the way to the hospital, I was too scared to ask if my leg was there. I couldn't have asked the paramedics even if I wanted to after they placed a thick, suffocating collar on my neck to prevent spinal cord damage.

One minute I was living my dream; the next I felt my dreams were over. Then, just a few minutes later, when I could have easily allowed my spirit to slip away, a strange thought came to me.

I found myself chanting two words aloud over and over again: "Victory Dance . . . Victory Dance . . . Victory Dance."

The paramedics must have thought I was hallucinating, but I had never had such a clear vision of anything in my entire life.

Not knowing whether I was paralyzed, believing my right leg might be gone, and unsure whether I'd survive the night, I made a vow.

If I survived, somehow, some way, there would be a Victory Dance.

Just because You Can

Odds are you have never been pinned under the tire of a fifteen-ton bus—but have you ever faced a struggle? Have you ever encountered an insurmountable obstacle? I imagine there is something in your life that has made you feel pinned down and helpless, with no hope in sight. Now imagine taking your biggest struggle and turning it your biggest strength.

You can! All you need to do is create your Victory Dance.

How do you create your Victory Dance? That's what this book is all about.

I am a professional choreographer. My job is to tell a story by putting dance steps in a succinct order that makes sense

and conveys emotion, feeling, and passion. Together, you and I will move through the five steps of DANCE, and I will show you how the hardest, most challenging events in life can create unreal and unbelievable victory. Your Victory Dance includes the following five steps:

Determination

Acceptance

Never Give Up

Courage

Enthusiasm

Creating the five steps to your Victory Dance is much the same as crafting the steps for any dance. You come up with specific moves and then put them in the order that tells the story you want to convey. Learning the steps may feel strange, or you may have challenges executing certain moves. And yet, with time and intention, the steps become normal, innate, and solid.

The process of building a Victory Dance is no different. It may seem strange or uncomfortable in the beginning. People may not respond as you thought they would, or you may slide back into old habits. The process will test all your limits—physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and mental.

As my Victory Dance came together, the experience gave me the opportunity to examine my life up to the present and ask: *What do I really want for my future? What do I deserve?* I found that I want MORE. I deserve to live out my dreams until the day I die! That is no cliché for me.

But with so many obstacles standing in our way, how do we get there? It starts by realizing that in those moments when life tries to defeat us, we have little to no control over what happens to us. We do have total and complete control over how we react to what happens to us.

Through my own reactions and counteractions, I have created victory. Now I want to help you learn how to bridge the gap between the tragedy and the triumph.

Fortunately, you don't have to be hit by a bus to learn this dance. Everything is relative—and whatever it is that you find yourself pinned under, you can climb out victorious on the other side.

Thank you for picking up this book. I am honored that you would spend some of your valuable time reading my words to you. It is my sincere hope that moving through these steps will bring you tremendous value, beneficial information, and most importantly, JOY.

I am thrilled that we get to do this together.

It's time to start dancing just because we can!