



TAKING IT TO THE **EXTREME**

By Mary Nearpass

EXTREME: Extraordinarily Talented Ray of Ever-Motivating Energy – and this doesn't even do him justice – but the founder and owner of Extreme Fitness located in Lower Bucks County, Fairless Hills, PA, is whom I have the pleasure to feature in this month's article.

Marty McLaughlin, and his wife Dawn, have been changing lives and physiques since 2001 at Extreme Fitness personal training. Their primary focus is on providing goal-oriented training, custom tailored to the individual, which is then designed to put the client in their greatest shape ever.

Their services include: Strength training and yoga, cardiovascular conditioning, sports-specific training and youth training, weight loss OR gain, post-rehabilitative training, T.R.X. suspension training, nutritional counseling and agility/flexibility training. They see clients as young as twelve with Autism, to seventy plus, all sessions are one-on-one by appointment only. www.extremefitnesspa.com.

Marty has always loved SUPERMAN, and wore a bright royal blue, red and yellow tee shirt with a huge "S" on his chest the day of my visit. The entire gym reflects his passion for these colors as well as the inner belief that everyone who enters his doors can become a super man or woman.

In addition to a cheery ambience, you'll see motivational quotes scattered throughout the entire gym. No matter how UN-motivated you may be feeling on any given day, you will definitely find your groove within five minutes.

What I really found to be unique about *Extreme Fitness* isn't the equipment or approach to physical fitness; it's about Marty McLaughlin. He EXUDES a captivating charisma that is so electrifying; you can't help but *want* to come back for more. Turns out that Marty, too, has had more than his share of life challenges that he has not only overcome, but embodied into his essence, and serves to even further motivate himself to help others to BELIEVE that not only CAN they achieve feeling fabulously, but it is part of his MISSION of paying it forward.

Marty and his beautiful wife, Dawn, have been together for thirteen years with their home being right around the corner of their gym. One of Marty's passions in his "free" time is riding his BRIGHT RED motorcycle. Those of you who are avid bikers

can appreciate the freedom, power and vitality that are achieved while riding. This one particular evening, July 10, 2007, Marty's life was changed in an instant.

After leaving his home to do a quick errand literally around the corner, Marty and his motorcycle had a head-on collision with a mini-van. He was making a left hand turn, with his signal on, going a mere 25–30 miles an hour, when this woman in the van, pulled out from the bar where she had been imbibing and hit Marty head-on. It was one of those moments in life that appear to be going in slow motion; like in a dream, when no matter how hard you try, you can't seem to get where you are desperately seeking to go. In Marty's case, that desperation was to avoid this unexpected van.

Upon impact, Marty was ejected like a missile off his prized possession landing on his occipital, the base of his cervical spine; C1 and C2. – disoriented, numb and completely disassociating for about 10 seconds. Marty miraculously was able to pick himself up off the highway intersection, walk across the two lanes into the parking lot where the three times the legal limit, intoxicated female departed, and fell to the ground. Still semi-conscious, he was aware of his surroundings enough to note that the very same mini-van that had just struck him with such force, was turning around to return to the scene of the accident – only to pull up, stop, stare, and TAKE OFF as fast as she could, without even calling 911!

Luckily, a guardian angel, eye witness came to his side and immediately called 911. When he was wheeled into the Emergency Room, the medical team had a déjà vu moment, all proclaiming, “Marty, is that you? Weren't you just in here?” —A noteworthy sidebar, Marty spent three days in St Mary's hospital of Langhorne in their Cardiac Rehabilitation Unit two months earlier. One of the fittest young men I have ever had the pleasure of meeting, weighing in at 150 pounds, 5'8”, about 2 percent body fat, achieved oh naturale – no steroids in this guy's system, or anything impure for that matter. At that time, Marty was experiencing episodes of Tachycardia (rapid heart beat) which caused him to pass out periodically. Their frequency increased quickly and while in the E.R., Marty flat lined (his heart literally stopped) numerous times due to an irregular, vagus nerve response. (The vagus nerve conveys sensory information about the state of the body's organs to the central nervous system. After a series of nuclear stress thallium tests and studies, the doctors were able to pinpoint and correct this heart irregularity. His family physician was also extremely influential in numerous consultations with the hospital staff.)

Fast forward to July 10th, 2007. Marty, quite frankly, was lucky to be alive. Upon a complete history and physical, Marty was diagnosed with a broken left lamina, (thin, flat layer of membrane which is part of the vertebral arche) both the left and right side, requiring a full restriction collar, in layman's terms, *Marty broke his neck!* A seventy five percent tear with extreme inflammation in his Erector Spinae muscle, (major muscle running vertically along the superior aspect of the spine), and the nerve endings in the C-5 vertebrae, (upper part of the spine/neck), completely damaged. On top of all this, the pain was unimaginable. Everyone has a different pain tolerance and threshold, but if you knew Marty, he is no stranger to pain. This was exorbitant. His life was literally touch- and-go for the next twenty four hours.

You know the saying, “Life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you react to it?” Well, it is my strong belief that

Marty's will for life and desire to be here for his wife, son, clients, family and friends is what pulled him through these initial life-threatening hours.

The next four months were “hell on wheels,” not only physically, with all of the physical therapy and rehabilitation, but mentally. Most of you reading this know how you feel when you haven't been to the gym for awhile. Now multiply that mentally with a guy whose very essence is physical fitness, and his physical limitations precluding him from doing what comes so naturally; that was Marty's biggest challenge and hardest hurdle. Yet he discovered the art of surrendering periodically, and letting the body heal by simply being still.

We all, for the most part, function much better with routine in our lives. It gives us a sense of predictability in an unpredictable world. Yet change is inevitable while going with that change is optional. Change is a curious thing. In most areas of life we dread it, yet in others we pine for it.

We are told that change is hard, that it takes time. Think about it – how many people do you know who struggle with their weight? They want to make a healthy change by getting in shape, but the change never seems to take hold.

Whether you want to change, or change is thrust upon you, I believe that three key ingredients are essential in order for anyone to be successful toward making and maintaining change. Marty McLaughlin eats, sleeps, walks and talks the following:

Belief #1: Something **must** change. In order to make a lasting change you must be convinced that the time is right.

Belief #2: I must change it. It is vital that you take full responsibility in making the change. In the end you are the one who is going to make it happen. You have to want this change enough to make it your personal mission—no one else will do it for you.

Belief #3: I can change it. Don't let past failures get in your way. The truth is that you can do amazing things when you put your mind to it. Believe that you are capable of losing weight or making any other positive change in your life.

After bouncing back completely from a hit and run accident, leaving him with a broken neck, Marty McLaughlin has become more FOCUSED than ever and is taking his training to the next level.

You are capable of making a big change in your life – as well. I'll leave you with Marty's mission statement: “You can do anything that you put your mind to.”

—NEVER, NEVER GIVE UP



Mary has an extensive background in both the traditional and holistic health-care settings. The first part of her career focused on teaching, sales and marketing, and training and development. She has worked in the classroom setting (from elementary to the college level), for a major weight loss corporation and a leading hospital in the Philadelphia region. Her focus began to shift, as did her hunger for knowledge in the numerous aspects of complementary modalities, and how they assist in both the preventive and healing components toward health. With several certifications in Massage Therapy and Yoga, Mary also holds two master's degrees in Health Education and Behavioral Psychology. With an almost equal number of years experience in both traditional and alternative healthcare, she brings a working knowledge from both sectors. Mary's current passion focuses on the union of Mind/Body medicine and it's role towards health and wellness. Contact MaryNearpass@phillyfitmagazine.com