

THE POWER OF THREE:

How to make 2014 MATTER

What could you achieve with encouragement from a little black book of contacts? *Gabrielle Lane* sought out the experts in their fields who are inspiring others to accomplish meaningful lifestyle goals this year, to ask for their best advice

Mission: GIVE BACK

Mentor: ALLYSON KAYE MBE, founder of Ovarian Cancer Action

Allyson says: Doing things for a good cause or for other people is extremely rewarding. It doesn't matter if it's for a charity, your neighbourhood or a best friend. If there is something you want to improve on or something you feel strongly about, then you should consider what action you can take. I went to Ethiopia this year and was intrigued to learn that UK charities were helping teach irrigation techniques to the agricultural regions and replanting deforested areas. Getting involved with a charity brings you in contact with a wide range of people; you can learn from others and it broadens horizons.

When looking to support a charity, it is easy to go on to The Charity Commission website and see how your money will be spent: will it be research, perhaps a phone line support or only printing material? People wouldn't invest in a company without looking into it, but when they give to charity they often do so without comparing like for like. I remember meeting a woman who worked for a charity that prevented blindness and was shocked when she told me that the biggest national charity for the blind did not invest any money in research.

Time and money are very different commodities. Giving time is a huge commitment but it can be extremely enjoyable and rewarding. You can learn and you can do things for others that you wouldn't ordinarily feel were within your comfort zone. Those kinds of things, that stretch you, can be the most memorable. In terms of giving funds to a charity, that can only be good, although it is worth checking if the charity needs the funds and how they will use them. In terms of ovarian cancer, it is a cancer that is underfunded and the only way you are going to change the future is with first class scientific research. That's why we have set up the Ovarian Cancer Action Research Centre at Imperial College. I am a trustee of a couple of other charities and this is a great way to give your expertise. I also admire those people who can cycle to Brighton or run up three mountains in a day. It's helpful, it's communal and rewarding but it's not for me: I used to say "I want to save the world from the comfort of my own lifestyle." There are so many generous people out there; it is the young people or those who cannot afford it who often surprise me with their generosity.

One of my proudest moments was the establishment of the Ovarian Cancer Action Research Centre. It started out as about five people scattered around a campus, but now we have more than 70 scientists making a difference.

More information about the work of Ovarian Cancer Action, along with details of how to donate to the cause, is available online at ovarian.org.uk

Mission: WRITE A BOOK

Mentor: ALYSOUN OWEN, editor of *Writers' & Artists' Yearbook* and *Children's Writers' & Artists' Yearbook*

Alysoun says:

THE IDEA Ideas are quick and easy, translating these into fully-fledged concepts is much harder, not to mention writing them in a style that captivates an audience and that sells. It's good to be able to sum up your book in a couple of clear and concise sentences as a way to clarify what the book is to yourself and to 'sell' it to the publishing professionals or potential readers: this is the germ or essence of your idea. Publishers and literary agents will ask to see a synopsis of your book – in fact most will want one before reading sample chapters – this is the development of your initial idea into a broader narrative.

THE DEVELOPMENT The key thing is a book that is readable, has a strong storyline and will appeal to readers of the genre in which it is written. An average first-time novel is usually around 100,000 words and that's probably good to aim for (something between 80,000 and 100,000 words). If it's shorter than that it risks becoming a novella or (long) short story. Structurally, try not to be too wacky or complicated. A clear narrative with a range of voices, possibly timeframes and moments of tension or drama, if handled well can follow a simple, well-trodden structural path (i.e. one that is broadly chronological). Don't forget that all good stories have a clearly defined beginning, middle and end – especially an end!"

ACHIEVING PUBLICATION For novels and general non-fiction it's nearly always necessary to work through a literary agent to secure a publishing deal. For specialist, educational and professional and academic books it's still more usual to go direct to a relevant publisher.

Attract an agent by:

1. Following their submission guidelines to the letter. Agents usually advise a cover letter / email, synopsis and two to three sample chapters
2. Sending in text (sample chapters) that is the best it can be, without typos, grammatical errors or bad formatting
3. Giving your book an arresting title
4. Selling your idea and yourself in your cover letter / email and including your two sentence idea
5. Meeting them at literary events and agent lunches such as those we run at *Writers & Artists*

Read articles and posts in the 2014 edition of the *Writers' & Artists' Yearbook* and online at writersandartists.co.uk for more advice

Mission: IMPROVE FITNESS

Mentor: MATT HODGES, Body Transformation Specialist at The MPH Method, which has studio facilities in Hampstead and St John's Wood

Matt says: The key to a new fitness regime is to do it properly. If you are willing to put in the hard work you will often get what you want. It's important to find someone who can guide you through getting a good programme sorted and who can keep an eye on you while you do it, whether that's with personal training or with some form of mentoring method.

A good personal trainer will know how to integrate a person into training and get them eating properly from the start. 99 per cent of us need our mindsets re-wired to get on the right track. Our two-, three- and four-month programmes are designed to not only get the client into fantastic shape, but to ensure that those who finish the course are left with a greater understanding of training and nutrition in order to successfully maintain their results for the future.

As a general rule, for fat loss I'd aim to do at least four weight sessions a week with a further two to three cardio sessions. For muscle gain, I'd do five sessions a week and for strength work I'd aim to do at least two to three sessions per week. Training needs to have time made for it, just like you would for anything else. If you make a specific and regular time to train it'll suddenly become part of your routine and you won't even have to think about it.

Everyone should have a goal and work for it until it's achieved. This gives a greater sense of satisfaction.

When you start exercising, learn more about what it is you're a going to do rather than just choosing an activity from a magazine; if you are embarking on starting Zumba then go to a few classes; you have to choose something that you enjoy doing otherwise you'll get demotivated pretty quickly.

Most people jump onto the treadmill at the gym because it's the only thing they know, but running long distances is a very ineffective way of losing fat. Getting a nutritionist to sort your diet out is also a small expense considering the bigger picture. I see people working out for hours who are still eating badly at home and therefore getting poor results.

Females need to start lifting weights; the general attitude that lifting weights will make you bulky is so far wrong that it should be illegal. With the right coaching you can go from having a normal body to being strong and powerful – there is nothing more empowering.

More information on The MPH Method, a five-stage health and fitness transformation course designed by renowned personal trainer Matt Hodges, is available online at themphmethod.com or by calling 020 8748 0514