

the

FIRE



within her

Allison Massari's triumphant story of overcoming adversity through inner strength and unabashed spirit

BY TRACY FRIESEN

ON JUNE 3, 2009, ALLISON MASSARI'S LIFE CHANGED FOREVER.

For 20 years, Massari had built a thriving art business, Massari Fine Arts LLC. On a professional level, she had made it and achieved international recognition. Among her accolades were commissions negotiated for *Fortune* 500 companies, including Lockheed Martin, General Mills and US Airways.

Throughout Massari's career, the impetus and passion for her work stemmed from her innate ability to express her own experience through her art, and her profound commitment to support humanity. Yet, she felt compelled to give more. She wanted to share what she had learned, to help others find deeper purpose and happiness, and fundamentally affect lives. And until that moment, she hadn't discovered just how she would do it.

On that summer day three years ago, Massari was sitting on her deck overlooking the San Francisco Bay, bursting with an ardent sense of joy, appreciation and clarity. She felt so alive and grateful to be alive. She had overcome tremendous obstacles and found a deep peace. She had learned secrets about life. In that moment, with unshakeable conviction, she knew she had found her mission on this earth: to dedicate herself to sharing those life-changing secrets with others.

The force of this revelation rocked her world. From that moment forward, Massari transformed her life and livelihood and began her new career as a private coach and professional speaker.

With characteristic vigor, Massari hit the ground running.

Within months, she was coaching CEOs on how to create success in their businesses, and she was preparing to appear in an international documentary focused on overcoming challenges. Within a year and a half, she had been invited to give a TEDx talk in Spain. And within two years, she was voted the “Rising Star” in the National Speakers Association’s “So You Think You Can Speak” competition at the 2011 NSA Annual Convention, and was traveling internationally, speaking and coaching full time.

Massari has an uncanny ability to make things happen. She radiates warmth and ease, but the bedrock of her success is in her never-say-die spirit, rock-solid work ethic, entrepreneurial expertise and her extraordinary life experiences.

Massari asks, “What is it we all want? We want to live with excellence, clarity, passion and focus. We want success, genuine well-being and inner peace. We want to be powerful in our lives, armed with the capacity to handle the unexpected, the tools to deal with difficult people and challenging circumstances. But it’s more than that; we want to feel like we’ve come alive ... that we’re living our mission, walking in the world—and vital.”

Her work requires wisdom, compassion, precision and strength. But these were not easily won. Massari’s spirit was challenged—violently.

TRIAL BY FIRE

In 1998, Massari’s growing international fine arts business *and* her life were put to the ultimate test. She was in a near-fatal car accident, hit head-on at 60 miles per hour, trapped inside her car as it burst into flames. She nearly burned to death. Fifty percent of her body had second- and third-degree burns. Her fever was so high that doctors worried about seizures, brain damage and kidney failure. There were more than 300 staples in her back alone. Her sister says, “Allison was so bloody and swollen, we didn’t recognize her.”

Massari recalls, “The agony was inescapable. I remember thinking, ‘I just want a two-minute break. Just two minutes.’” But for months, there was no relief from the pain.

Two-and-a-half years later, after a long and grueling recovery, she was in yet another serious car accident, this time suffering a severe closed-head brain injury. Top experts told her that she would never recover. They said, “Go home and mourn. The Allison you knew is gone.” When she insisted that she would prove them wrong, her primary doctor very lovingly said, “Allison, if I amputated your foot, would you tell me you were going to grow it back?”

Massari refused to give up. She sought further advice, pursuing every expert until she found the solutions that worked. “I refused to be assigned to a diminished life. I decided that somebody on this planet was going to know how to help me.”

She has always believed in miracles. Her fiery determination and her love of family and friends helped bring her to a full recovery years later. “But

GIVING BACK:

in honor of a hero

Massari founded and developed the “Roger Pepper Adventure Camps” for teenagers with severe burn injuries, named after the man who pulled her from her burning car. It is based at Adaptive Sports Center in Crested Butte, Colorado. The mission is to break perceived boundaries and transform young people’s lives through outdoor sports, like ice-climbing, snowboarding and skiing.

“Even a severely burned child with no fingers can go ice-climbing. We have adaptive equipment and a staff that is extraordinary.”

For over 10 years, these revolutionary programs have been changing lives. Participants do not pay anything to attend. To learn more, visit www.adaptivesports.org.

I didn’t want to just heal. I wanted to feel peaceful. I became relentless in my pursuit to find the answers to life and to master it in totality.”

The triumph of her physical and emotional recovery inspired Massari to propel her business to pinnacle achievements. She revived her art business with a 100 percent increase in sales and was awarded placement in the permanent collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Navigating extreme challenges, building two successful businesses, and consistently maintaining joy for life makes Massari an anomaly. It also makes her a tremendous asset to her clients because she can deftly impart her clarity, understanding and determination.

THE FUTURE OF HAPPINESS

In November 2011, Massari delivered a TEDx Talk in Spain on “The Future of Happiness.” In that talk, she said, “In order to be truly happy, we must be very brave. Instead of resisting our pain, we need to pour our compassion into it. Once we stop judging our faults or our suffering, the mind becomes quiet: We create space for happiness. This foundation of willingness and acceptance causes real transformation to be exponentially powerful.”

Named the “Ambassador of Happiness,” she has dedicated her speaking career to employee engagement and well-being, inspiring employees with tools to more effectively manage their lives.

Massari also delivers programs to healthcare audiences to heal burn-out in medical workers and enhance patient-centered care. Her message focuses on the power of the human connection. In her own words, “Compassion heals the places that medicine cannot touch.”

The response to her programs has been overwhelming. Medical professionals flood her with gratitude for reviving their passion for their work. “I decided I could have the greatest impact in healthcare if I could bring healing to the healers. I knew it would ripple out from there.”

CHANGING LIVES ONE-ON-ONE

As a sought-after private coach, Massari specializes in rapidly transforming peoples’ lives and businesses. She is a trusted confidante to CEOs, small business owners, entrepreneurs and private individuals. Her work touches on every aspect of the person. Her business coaching often acts as a starting point to help her clients achieve wholeness and happiness in all facets of their lives.

“SO YOU THINK YOU CAN SPEAK”

RETURNS TO 2012

NSA ANNUAL CONVENTION

In 2011, Allison Massari was named “Rising Star” in the first-ever “So You Think You Can Speak” competition at NSA’s Annual Convention in Anaheim, California. She represented the Northern California NSA Chapter.

Most of the NSA chapters held their own contests to nominate a representative. Then, 29 entrants submitted videos for judging by Randy Gage, Roxanne Emmerich, CMC, CSP, CPAE and Glenna Salsbury, CSP, CPAE. The top six point-getters were invited to take the stage as finalists at the Convention.

Patrick Henry, 2012 Convention Chair, says, “We’re not reinventing the wheel for the Indianapolis Convention in July. We’re following the same format and featuring it on the main stage Saturday night.”

This year’s contest organizer, Jon Petz, says, “It will be hip, cool and entertaining—filled with live action for contestants and the audience.”

Each chapter may submit one candidate, from which five finalists will be selected to participate after judges review their videos. Two participants will catapult into the final round, with a chance to win the title that evening.

Candidates must be members in good standing of a local NSA chapter, with no more than five years of professional speaking experience. They must submit a video via a private YouTube link by May 1, 2012. Nominees will be selected by June 1 and notified via email.

Questions? Contact Karen Emery, NSA’s manager of chapter relations, at (480) 968-2552 or Karen@nsaspeaker.org.

Massari says, “For high levels of achievement in anything, we have to be willing to look inward. The path to success and happiness requires rigorous commitment, and compassion for the parts of us that feel lost or stuck. There is no short-cut, but the results are worth it. I am deeply dedicated to bringing my clients to total aliveness, and completely invested in their professional, financial and personal success. Together, we find the tools they need to live their lives with confidence and purpose.”

UP IN LIGHTS

Massari will make her mark on the big screen in 2012. She is one of only 10 people in the world chosen to teach how to successfully overcome challenges in the international documentary film, *ReSolve*, by Polaris Global and hosted by the Head of Special Forces for the U.S. Military in Afghanistan. The

director, Greg Strom, hired her as the keynoter in Australia for a Polaris Global conference in 2011.

Massari has always lived life by her own rules. “I am quite rebellious. Every day I wake up and follow my heart. I have an unbending belief in the power of love and in the power of guts. It’s the synergy of these two elements that creates total aliveness. My life has exceeded my heart’s desires, far beyond my wildest dreams. My commitment is to help create miracles in the lives and businesses of others.”

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