

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

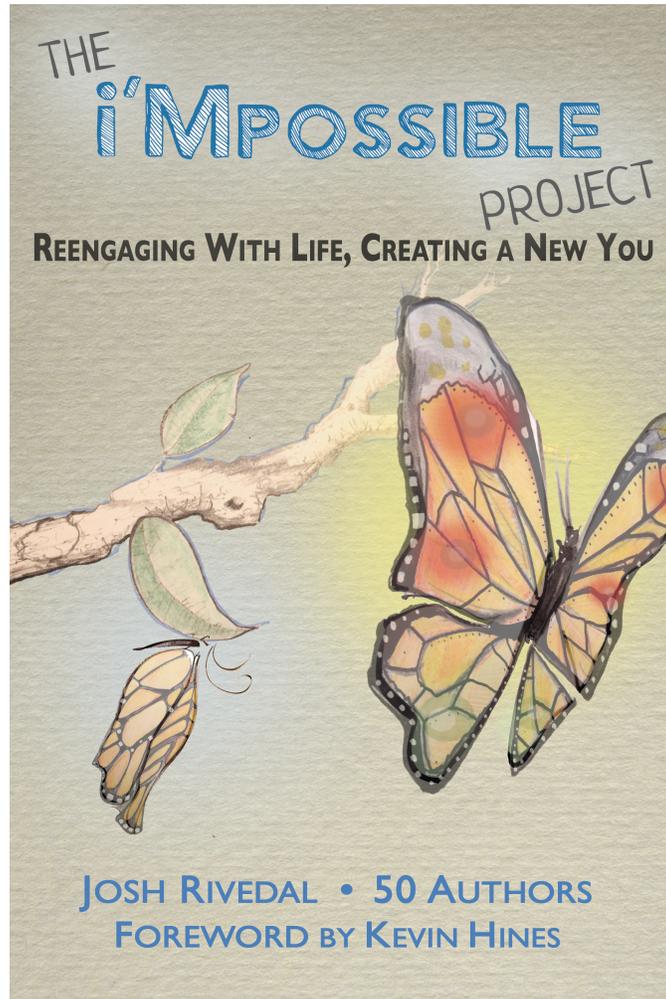


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Book Summary.....	p 2
Sample Chapters.....	p 3
About the Curator and 50 Authors.....	p 13
Pre-order Info.....	p 14

BOOK SUMMARY

Storytelling is one of our oldest traditions—yes, even older than the hokey pokey. Stories can make us laugh or cry... or both at the same time. They can teach, inspire and even ignite an entire movement.

The i'Mpossible Project: Volume One—Reengaging With Life, Creating a New You is a collection of powerful stories. They're gritty, deep, heartwarming—and guaranteed to help you discover new possibilities in your life. Bam.

The stories in this first volume are all about overcoming obstacles, reengaging with life, and creating new possibilities—a son's homicide, a transgender man finding love, coming back from the brink of suicide, finding your funny in the face of overwhelming odds, and more...

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

INSPIRATION FOR THE I'MPOSSIBLE PROJECT

FOR YEARS I'VE BEEN TELLING my personal story via an autobiographical thirty-character, one-man play *The Gospel According to Josh* (yes, I get along with the rest of the cast just fine). I've toured internationally with my *Gospel...* in theaters, high schools, universities, juvenile detention centers, and one unfortunate college biology lab. In my story, following my father's suicide in my early twenties, a lawsuit from my mother over my father's inheritance, and a break-up with my long-term girlfriend; all in the span of twenty months—I fell into isolation, silence, and melancholy that eventually had me hanging out of my fourth floor bedroom window contemplating taking my life.

But I pulled myself back inside and got help—first from my mom and then through trusted friends and professional counseling, all because I took a risk and shared my pain.

Now, after each presentation of my *Gospel...* I talk about my recovery process and how I found a way to reengage with life.

After nearly every show, incredible people, complete strangers who may feel voiceless or worthless or simply unheard confide in me powerful, personal stories on how they've overcome tremendous odds in their lives. These stories not only changed my life for the better, but also the life of the storyteller.

At one point or another in our lives, I, along with millions of other storytellers took a chance on themselves and said “I am possible.” But why do a book about people's stories?

STORIES PROVIDE A TEMPLATE FOR SUCCESS

Whenever I'm feeling particularly uninspired or low, one of my favorite activities is to read the biography of someone famous and look for the part of their life story where they had struggled. I find that I learn a lot more from a person's low points—mine own included—rather than a highlight reel of their greatest achievements.

I'm deeply curious how people reengage with life after a difficult, traumatic, or tragic event. How did they get back on the horse? In what ways did they succeed? What did they do that was “unsuccessful?”

Quick tangent: the word “fail” should be replaced in the English language with “lesson I learned on my way to success.” Boo-yah.

“If that woman can overcome her paraplegia to become a famous painter by using her teeth, then holy cow, I can do just about anything.”

“That guy lost his wife and daughter in a car accident and fell into tremendous grief, but then rebounded, found love again, and became the Vice President of the United States. If he can keep fighting on then, oh snap, I can keep on fighting too.”

When people give of themselves through the telling of their stories it makes the seemingly impossible in our lives tangible and attainable.

STORIES BREAK DOWN STIGMA

The world becomes much smaller. “That black guy,” “that lesbian-chick,” “that snarky-writer-guy who talks about suicide;” they all now have a name. David. Jamie. Josh. Each of these people has wants and needs, to live, to love, to survive and thrive... just like every other human being.

But why include these particular stories in the book? Some of the topics inside this book are not ones typically found in an inspirational-style book: murder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and a transgender recording artist. Each story displays its own beauty and with each the author uncovers a piece of themselves, showing us a moment in their lives where they’ve overcome a tremendous obstacle, transformed, or changed for the better—and by doing so they allow us to peel back and examine a layer of our own soul.

STORIES ARE A DEMAND FOR OUR CIVIL RIGHTS.

Slow down, Rivedal. Don’t get so preachy. It’s only the second page of the book.

I know. I just get really excited about this idea.

Once stigma is broken down because of the courage of the “abnormal” person telling their story, they are now viewed as a human being—they now have a seat at the proverbial table of equality. Jim Crow is repealed. Women’s suffrage is enacted. Mental health laws are passed that empower and aid people with illnesses rather than traumatizing or criminalizing them.

That’s the kind of world that I want to live in. Bam.

A COUPLE OF THINGS TO NOTE

This book is not written entirely by polished authors—some are and some are not. (Some of the authors might want to kick me in the shins after reading that last sentence... but I’ll take my chances) Each story is unique, powerful and inspirational; a love letter of sorts to you, the reader, on how they’ve dealt with a tremendous hardship and found a way to reengage with life in the aftermath.

I’ve edited each of the stories to a certain extent—not to fit my writing style, but rather to make sure the story arc of each is crystal clear. I hope I’ve done you a service with this.

Each story is no more than one thousand words. Sometimes we get bogged down in unnecessary details not imperative to the heart of what the story is actually about. The word limit is to give the story a laser-like focus and is for the reader with a short attention span (like me).

How should you read this book? Some of these stories are lighter and some are pretty heavy—take your time with it. Read it out of order. Focus on one story a week, and savor the deeper meaning, figuring out how it speaks to you... or not. Read it however you want. If one (or more) of the stories inspires you and you want to pass it along—go right ahead.

QUIT YOUR YAKKING, JOSH

I actually had ten more pages and a couple of haikus to share but fine... without further ado, I present to you forty fantastic authors and *The i'Mpossible Project: Volume 1—Reengaging With Life, Creating a New You*.

(Cue the thunderous applause)

MAKING IT BIG
JAMES LECESNE

YOU WILL NEVER MAKE IT,” the man says.
“Not big, not in this business.”
Though what business it was of his I can’t recall.
His name?
His name was...
His name is gone.
But his words burned tattoo like into my brain.
“No, you will not make it big.
And do you know how I know this?” he asks me.

And I say, “no, no, I don’t know.” Noting that I say *no* twice in the same breath.
And that can’t be good. No, no. As though something deep down in me doesn’t really want to know. But
never mind, here he goes, he’s on a roll, the man.

“Because,” he says, “you are too gay.”

And that gay word slices clean through me like a bullet through butter.
But hey, I grew up with people saying worse than gay to me.
They raised fists, sticks and once a boot to make their point.
They called me faggot, sissy, girly boy—and that was just to get my attention.

“I hate to say it,” the man says in that way that some people just love to say, “but
Gay will get you nowhere.
Gay is your Achilles heel.
Gay is not the universal formula for success.”
And just like that, I’m done for, discarded, plucked from the running and transformed into a common
loser without my say-so.

So I say, “fine,

But let me get this straight.

Are you suggesting that in order to succeed I will have to be less gay?"

"No, he says, that's my point. You? You couldn't be less gay if you tried."

And then in a manner that astounds me to remember even now, the words tumbling from my twenty-something year old mouth, I tell the man, "Well then I guess I'll have to change my definition of success."

This will not be the last time that it happens.

Others will come along offering sidelong glances and outright statements;

they will be there at every turn, reminding me

to tone it down,

butch it up,

watch my back,

don't dance so much,

gesture less,

lose the lisp,

straighten up,

buckle down,

wear a tie,

don't be such a girl.

In short, they will want me to be less myself –

as if such a thing were possible.

A New York agent will kindly agree to represent me as an actor, but not before he offers this: "Are you aware that you come off a little gay?"

A little?

Yes, I will tell him and then I walk out of that office head held high,

but his word will bang in my ear for years, "A little gay."

It's faggot, sissy, girly-boy all over again.

A woman with a big desk will caution me about the dangers of declaring my self.

She will list the casualties, recount the missteps of others in the business of show who showed too much, dared to say, went that way, were themselves.

Then she'll end her speech by saying: "In this town, if you want to live by the sword, you must die by the sword."

I will get the point.

It's the raised fist, the big stick, the boot—all over again.

Others will be subtler.

But it won't just be the show biz folks who flick an eye or quick clear their throat to keep me close in check. Everyone will try to rein me in, shut me down; signal me to just get over it already—as if such a thing were possible.

It will go on like this for years.
And yet despite how hard they try,
Despite the many warnings, threats, prizes, perks
They offer me to be something other than my Self,
I will never stop.
It just won't happen.
Turns out, people come and go.
Self sticks true.

Now that I am so much more my Self, I know that making it big
Means making more and more myself.
Making it big means expanding self to include everything skin-out, the whole damn world in fact. Can I
make it mine?
You too. Yes, even you.
Whether you are lesbian, gay, bi, transgender, cisgendered, two spirit, androgyne, questioning, queer,
intersex, asexual, pansexual, hetero or just some undeclared freelance super hero on the fly, can I make
you mine?
Is there room enough in me for you?
Is there love enough?

Can I convince each and every one of you that though I am standing here, right here, and you are there,
right there, together WE are the universal formula for success.
And that—
That togetherness is what works and is
What allows us all to stand and in one voice say to the Man,
Please, step it back a bit so you can see what's what and what
It looks like to, yes, yes, truly make it big.

PASSING A PARENT

NIKKI MACCALLUM

IT'S NOT UNTIL I'M CLOSING IN on him that I realize the man hobbling slowly in front of me along the path beside the Cape Cod Canal, is my father. Feeling more shocked than surprised, I stop running about fifteen feet behind him, begin jogging in place, and look at him. His legs look brittle, like he could be knocked over if a bike passed too close to him or if the wind blew too hard. He does not look like a man who has run thirty-two marathons, including Boston in two hours and forty-six minutes. He ran those thirty-two marathons when he was in his thirties and forties, before he embarked on a nearly-twenty-year-long battle with alcoholism.

When I arrived on the Cape last night, for a weekend visit, he was already in bed and my mom warned me that his walking has gotten worse. Years of alcohol abuse have given him permanent nerve damage. I got up early this morning and decided to go for a run, secretly hoping to avoid seeing him. Plus, I wanted to get in a training today because I've only got two months left until my first marathon. I have a love-hate relationship with running.

Actually, I hate it, but I'm oddly addicted to it. Really all it's gotten me are some free t-shirts, a lot of shin splints, and something to share with my dad. We used to run together on this very strip of land when I was a little girl. I was always frustrated that I couldn't keep up and I'd fake assorted sports injuries, hoping to get his permission to slow down.

Now I'm afraid to pass him. I continue jogging in place, trying to stay with the beat of Lady Gaga's "The Edge of Glory," playing on my iPod. My dad stops moving forward completely and coughs, trying to catch his breath. He looks old and fragile and breakable. I watch him struggle, and for a second his condition feels like justice to me. After all, he did this to himself: wrecked his ability to walk, not to mention run; ruined his career as an attorney; completely self-destructed. My mother had to pay all the bills on her music-teacher salary: his medical bills, office bills, bills from car accidents and unnecessary parking tickets. I've watched him die so many deaths, yet he's still here, and suddenly I'm angry that I have to stop behind him and see him this way, that *I'm* the one who's running in place. My anger turns to annoyance that I'm losing valuable seconds on account of him; when you're training for a marathon every second counts. He taught me that. Can't he just go faster so I can go faster?

My anger turns to guilt. It must be difficult for him to barely be able to do something he once loved and did so successfully. I don't want to rub that in, to cause him shame, by passing him. How would it make him feel to have me—the daughter who used to fake shin splints to get out of running with him because she couldn't keep up—pass him, and not because she's fast now? Then again, I can't jog in place forever.

Guilt turns to compassion. This is the same man who took me running every Saturday as a little girl, on this very same seven-mile stretch of land. The man who coached my middle-school soccer team and even let me dress him up as a woman for Halloween one year. This is my friend and dad. Now here I am, training for my first marathon, following in his footsteps, and for that I'm proud.

Up until this moment, even with all his drinking and self-destructing, I've always thought of my father as immortal. His outfit today features a pair of spandex neon yellow shorts that shouldn't be worn by anyone over the age of twenty. He's always tried to dress the way he thinks young people do. It wasn't until I was twelve that I realized my dad had turned twenty-seven for the past six consecutive birthdays.

I guess you always know that in the circle of life your parents will grow weaker and you'll grow stronger and a moment will come when you'll trade places with them, but I never imagined it happening quite like this. Maybe I'm afraid to pass him because I don't want it to be true. I'm no longer the child in this relationship. And I can't give him back his legs. He loses his balance for a moment and stumbles on the path and I'm surprised that my instinct isn't to run and help him; instead I feel paralyzed like my own legs don't work. It comes to me that I'm not supposed to help him. The greatest gift I can give him, as unnatural as it feels, is to pass him.

In this second, I realize, I totally accept him for who he is, with all the drinking and everything that went with it. Maybe not permanently, maybe not even an hour from now. But for just this moment I'm okay with it all, free of resentment, because I love my father. And I will do what he can no longer do himself.

I turn up Lady Gaga as loud as she can go, and I run. I don't look at him when I pass him. I don't know that it's ever easy to pass a parent. All I can do is the one thing he taught me. *Run.*

THE REAL STORY OF ALADAR

KELLY WILSON

THERE I STOOD, with feelings of helplessness almost impossible to avoid. In the center of my son Collin's bedroom, I stood still while Collin kicked my shins in the same yellowed spots that he had bruised last week. He was screaming "I hate you" and "you're stupid" in a voice that sounded so frightening it had occasionally prompted my neighbors to call the police.

Wishing I had kept this upstairs window closed on this hot summer day, I had to force myself to let go of the fear of my neighbors and their actions, and focus on Collin. As he continued to scream at me, I kept telling Collin quietly and calmly "I love you", while tears streamed down my face.

I'd like to say I was crying because of the physical pain that comes from being kicked in the same bruised places, but the reality was more related to that feeling of helplessness—I was trying to help Collin, but I wasn't impacting his behavior enough. It was challenging to get him to his room at age five, what would I do when he was sixteen or twenty, and much bigger than me? Would I need to be afraid of him? Panic set in.

The tantrum began downstairs when Collin took a matchbox car from his younger brother Sean. Not only did he take the car from Sean's hand, but he hit him as well. I had to do something, so I took Collin to his room and a full-blown tantrum erupted. Standing there instead of making dinner, I knew I needed to shift my focus from what I was feeling to what I could do to help Collin. I wasn't reaching him. I wondered, "what am I missing?"

I had been focused on teaching Collin exactly what he was supposed to be doing, you know, the appropriate behavior; and sometimes Collin used new skills, sometimes he did not. Because Collin could repeat what he was supposed to do, and could sometimes do it, many told me he was being manipulative. Certainly he knew the rules and how to ask for a toy, and yes he could repeat it, but yet he did not seem to get why it was important. That is what I was missing—how to teach the importance. I needed something concrete, something Collin could relate to.

I was now staring at the ceiling with my thoughts swirling, still unable to stop my own tears, with Collin still kicking and screaming. Then Collin made a noise that reminded me of his favorite movie, a Disney movie called "Dinosaur." An idea popped into my head and I began speaking.

As you may know, Disney movies create good and evil with such clarity, there is no crossover. The good guy is remarkably good, and the bad guy, respectfully, is totally bad. Hoping this example might be concrete; I said firmly, "Collin is Krone kind and nice? Or is he mean? Does anyone like Krone? Does he have friends? Does he use nice words? Does anyone hug him? Does his mom cook him dinner and smile

at him?” Okay, so the mom cooking dinner part was totally based on the fact that I needed to make dinner an hour ago.

Pausing to chuckle at myself, I realized the quiet. Collin had completely stopped; it was like he was on pause. OMG—I thought—I just discovered the magic kid-remote controller and hit pause. I looked down to see what Collin was doing. And then it happened...

Collin looked up at me and said “mommy, I want to be Aladar!” Then he began to cry giant crocodile tears, and reached out to me for a hug. As you may have guessed, Krone was the classic bad-guy dinosaur, and Aladar was the exceptional good-guy dinosaur. But I hadn’t even mentioned Aladar. And I really did not think Collin was listening to me anyway. But still it happened—Collin made the connection, a great break-through with the help of a Disney movie. He got it.

I fell to the floor and held on to my Collin. Though he and I cried, I knew that an important connection had been made, something clicked, I saw it, I felt it. Collin made a connection between his actions and consequences. Hitting people looked like Krone, asking for a toy using nice words looked like Aladar. This affected the way others treated you. It was empathy and understanding. Now Collin and I had a foundation to work from; he could learn about making choices—Aladar vs. Krone choices of course. It was magical, and of the greatest importance!

When you experience an event like this, you know immediately life has been changed. It is epic. This was a game-changer and one of our most celebrated accomplishments. This was so important and immediately changed his demeanor; instantly I knew I did not need to be afraid of Collin growing up. Collin is now twenty and still has Fragile X Syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Yet he brings such positive energy to all. I knew that hot summer day, sitting on Collin’s floor hugging him that he would be okay. I guess the “magic” of Disney exists in my family; it just looks a little different. But then, many things in our family are magical; yet often look a little different.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/CURATOR

Josh Rivedal is an author, actor, playwright, and international public speaker. He has spoken about suicide prevention, mental health awareness, and diversity in more than ninety locations across the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Australia. He has served on the board of directors for the New York City chapter of The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. He wrote and developed the one-man play, *Kicking My Blue Genes in The Butt* (KMBB), which has toured extensively throughout the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. His memoir *The Gospel According to Josh: A 28-Year Gentle Bar Mitzvah*, based on KMBB and published



by Skookum Hill in 2013, is on The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s recommended reading list. He writes for the [Huffington Post](#). He is the founder and executive director of The i’Mpossible Project—a non-profit media company designed to entertain, educate, and engage on suicide prevention, mental health, diversity and social change. Coming soon in conjunction with The i’Mpossible Project: *Living Mentally Well and Crushing it While in College*, and *Winning the War on Depression and Living Mentally Well*.

A BRIEF NOTE ABOUT THE 50 AUTHORS

“The authors in this book are some of the strongest, most resilient people I have ever met. They have overcome their son’s homicide (Jenny Rietveld) and started an LGBT youth suicide prevention hotline *and* won an Academy Award (James Lecesne). They hold top positions at some of the best colleges and universities across the U.S. (Judy Thrasher, and Jenn Burton). They are out, proud and starting mini and macro movements because of their story (Claire Kaufman, Matthew Shaffer, and Ryan Cassata). They are managing physical health challenges and starting online followings to benefit others who are dealing with their same challenge (Mariagrazia Buttitta, Holly Bertone, and Megan Starshak). These folks are remarkable and I’m honored to have them in this book.” - Josh Rivedal

PRE-ORDER THE BOOK

It's finally ready.

I am excited to share that the first [i'Mpossible Project book *Reengaging With Life, Creating a New You*](#) (January 13, 2016) will be available for pre-order on September 16, 2015

At all the major outlets where books are sold...

Autographed Paperback

E-book: Kindle B&N Indiebound CBD.com Books a Million

I'll be honest: This is pretty big. I've been curating this book for more than two years—fiddling with the right combination of stories, authors, and concepts. If you've followed along on the [blog](#) then you know the truth already: I put my everything into this book. Absolutely everything. And you're getting a little of me and fifty incredible authors and stories when you get this book. It was exhausting and wonderful and a once-in-a-lifetime process to produce this book and I am just now getting the confirmation I hoped for: *It was all so incredibly worth it. Thank you for that.*

So Here's the Nitty McGritty

Pre-order sales matter a ton. They show booksellers and publishers that there is interest in what I and these 50 authors have written. It would mean the world to me and to these authors if you would [preorder a copy](#)

As a thank-you for pre-ordering, the first 200 people to pre-order will get a "thank you" in the book—forever, in the front where everyone can see. #booyah

Not satisfied with a "thank you" in the book? I'll also send you a credit for a free copy of *The Principles of Possible* coming out in the Fall 2016.

Still not satisfied? I'll also send you a free download of my first book *The Gospel According to Josh: A 28-Year Gentile Bar Mitzvah*.

#holylguacamole ... that's some good readin'

All you have to do is send in a proof of purchase—a scanned receipt, a screenshot, a selfie with your receipt—to tony@skookumhill.com

You have no idea how much the fifty authors and I have been encouraged by your comments, your tweets, your emails, and letters. Thank you for inspiring me, and us, to keep pushing forward with this book. I'm so grateful to have you in this community and I don't know if I say it nearly enough. Thank you... and thank you for helping make this "i'Mpossible" book, possible.

Click here to preorder an autographed paperback copy

Click here to preorder an ebook copy

Paperback ISBN/SKU: 978-0-9860964-7-1

E-book ISBN/SKU: 978-0-9860964-8-8

Publication Date: 1/13/2016