

QUITTING TO WIN

A PROVEN PLAN TO LET GO OF
BAD HABITS, LEARN TO FEEL,
AND LOVE YOURSELF

CRYSTAL WALTMAN

 **AUTHOR**
ACADEMY elite

Quitting to Win
A Proven Plan to Let Go of Bad Habits,
Learn to Feel, and Love Yourself
© 2020 Crystal Waltman
All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

Published by Author Academy Elite
P.O. Box 43, Powell, OH 43035
AuthorAcademyElite.com

Visit the author's website at www.crystalwaltman.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means – for example, electronic, photocopy, recording- without written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

For quantity orders or to book speaking engagements
contact us directly at
info@crystalwaltman.com

Paperback: 978-1-64746-215-4
Hardback: 978-1-64746-216-1
Ebook: 978-1-64746-217-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020905637

Although the author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information in this book was correct at press time, the author and publisher do not assume and hereby disclaim any liability to any party for any loss, damage or disruption caused by errors or omission, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version, NIV. © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. TM. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

Disclaimer

The stories in this book have been documented from the best of my memory. It is with love and respect that I acknowledge the people that have touched my life. Most of the names have been changed to protect everyone's privacy. I fondly refer to the Alcoholic Anonymous Book as The Big Book, and the Bible as The Word.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION xiii

PART 1: QUIT SHUTTING THE
DOOR ON YOUR PAST 1

1. Quit Wishing It Was You and Not Them
Softball, Scholarships, and Suicide 3

2. Quit Wishing You Had Someone Else's Life
Childhood 13

3. Quit Taking the Edge Off
Martinis and Motherhood 25

4. Quit the Insanity
Hitting Bottom. 43

5. Quit Sitting on the Pedestal
Sober Sisters on a Pink Cloud 55

PART 2: QUIT SHUTTING THE
DOOR ON YOUR EMOTIONS 61

6. Quit Using Other People's Versions of God
The Spiritual Side of Sobriety. 63

7. Quit Depending on Others for Your Joy
Happiness Is a Choice 71

8. Quit Eating Empty Calories
Eat to Live, Don't Live to Eat. 75

9. Quit Running Someone Else's Race	
<i>Back Talk</i>	87
10. Quit Turning off Your Inner Voice	
<i>Life Skills Learned from Softball</i>	109
11. Quit the Chaos	
<i>The Peaceful Warrior</i>	119
BIBLIOGRAPHY	123
APPENDIX I: SUICIDE RESOURCES.	127
APPENDIX II: MORE IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO THE TWELVE QUESTIONS. . .	129
APPENDIX III: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	135
ABOUT THE PUBLISHER	139

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my daughter, Liv. May your life be filled with joy and compassion. Learn from my past—there is no need to repeat it. My redemption is in your soul. You are enough, for you are made by God. May you get your worth from *The Word*, not the world. I dedicate this book to my husband, Michael, who reminds me daily to take it easy. There is no one I would rather journey through this life with. To my stepsons, Alec and Jared, God blessed me with you two, and I would not have it any other way. I could not have put these words to paper without all of your unwavering support. For all the times I wanted to quit, and you encouraged me to keep going, I love you all so much. You are my rock, the foundation where everything begins and ends.

This book is also dedicated to the people whose lives were cut short. Instead of getting their names tattooed on my left shoulder in Old English, I decided to put the ink on paper instead and dedicate this book to them.

Scarlett Smith
1979-1997

William Prior
1949-2014

Jennifer Paisley
1963-2017

Sandy Simon
1944-2018

I also choose to share my story in hopes of helping anyone dealing with depression, eating disorders, alcoholism, and other diseases caused by lifestyle-choices. Know you are not alone.

INTRODUCTION

From the outside, it looks like my passions are health and fitness.

Since I was very young, I was taught to be physically competitive. I started playing softball at ten years old and received a college scholarship to play at the highest level. Winning a national title by nineteen, I felt so blessed to receive these honors and opportunities that playing competitive sports gifted me with.

Between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five, I either trained for something important or overindulged in things that could take it all away. As far back as I can remember, I had based my worth on my outer appearance and performance, instead of character. This left me feeling empty and insecure. My body weight yo-yoed, and as it did, so did my feelings of self-worth. I rode on the emotional roller coaster that came with it, experiencing the rise and fall that comes with every young girl's identity. Because I could not see middle ground between the two extremes, I felt as though I was either really high or really low. Although I had even won a competition for low body fat and physical symmetry, when I held that first-place trophy, I remember thinking this can't be what health and fitness feels like. I should have felt proud and accomplished, but I still felt like something was missing.

I spent hours in the gym and also trained women one-on-one to continue my career in physical fitness. But outside of the gym, I found it hard to engage anyone in small talk. It always seemed to flow for many other women, but I came across stand-offish because that kind of connection never came naturally for me unless I had something to take the edge off.

QUITTING TO WIN

Again, I couldn't help but feel there was always something missing. What was missing was my spiritual connection and the right intentions of inner physical and mental health. Instead of leading with my accomplishments, I find it creates a greater bond when I lead with progress. I strive for progress, not perfection. Lord knows I am not perfect by any means.

As a young adult, I couldn't picture myself past the age of forty. Surprisingly, when I made it to my fortieth birthday, I finally jumped off the emotional roller coaster. I realized the value of emotional sobriety, and I worked to strengthen and maintain my spiritual fitness. That is what drove me to write this book, because I felt if I could step outside my comfort zone to write my story, then maybe I could inspire others to work on their own spiritual fitness.

When you work on the inside, the
outside will follow.

—Kim Dolan Leto

In the appendix of the book, I attached discussion questions to go along with each chapter. This is to help you pause and reflect on what is going on in your life to see how to reconcile the past, and live in the moment. These discussion questions are meant to be used for a small group study or book club.

PART 1

QUIT SHUTTING THE DOOR ON YOUR PAST

The stories I share with you are stories that have been buried deep inside my soul for many years. I never wanted to let anyone know this less-than-perfect part of me. Thankfully, my perspective has changed, and I choose to tell my stories. My experiences molded me into who I am today, and I am set free by sharing. If my stories help one young athlete, sexual assault victim, wife, mother, or daughter find her serenity, it is all worth it. The stories that follow are some of the moments that defined who I am today, and I share them in hopes that they might inspire you to start looking at your own.

I don't regret the past or wish to shut the door on it.

—*The Big Book*

CHAPTER 1

QUIT WISHING IT WAS YOU AND NOT THEM

SOFTBALL, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND SUICIDE

We are only as sick as our secrets.

—*The Big Book*

It was a winter night in Phoenix, Arizona, and the skies were clear and dark with bright stars. I felt the cold air on my face and the alcohol running through my veins. The familiar scent of the mesquite smoke floated in the air from those households fortunate enough to have fireplaces. A high school best friend and I were together once again. Scarlett and I had gone to separate colleges to play softball. I always wished I was her with a doting father, a little sister who loved her, and a mom who was involved in every part of her life.

We started our winter break with laughs and hugs. A couple of compadres reunited for Christmas break at my parents' house where we shared stories about college, coaches, teammates, and boys. The zing of cocaine was warmed by shots of vodka. We shared smokes, laughs, and the light of the full moon. The night was bright and so were our futures.

QUITTING TO WIN

As if no time had passed, we picked right back up with our partying ways. We caught up on epic events of the last few semesters. Scarlett's life was so dreamy, right out of a story book. Her parents had given her all the best opportunities and material things money could buy. We felt no pain, and we both had a good buzz going. Because we had both achieved our dreams of making it to college, we felt like we were on cloud nine. Back then, you had to make plans in person. There was no *friend finder*, *location sharing*, or last-minute *texting*. But still, we had an internal instinct that helped us find our friends at a moment's notice.

It was time for my friend to share the rest of her night with her ex-boyfriend, so I said good-bye with a warm embrace. No matter where Scarlett was, someone was missing her and waiting for her to come back. Before she left, Scarlett suggested, "Let's hang at the river bottom tomorrow night!" We smiled at each other and begrudgingly, she left.

I had agreed with a grin to meet the next night. The Sonoran Desert was our river bottom. Out there, Arizona nights were at their finest. With the closest housing development six miles away, it gave us a sense of freedom to spend time away from the world. Surrounded by peace and quiet, there was nothing but the sounds of four-wheeling trucks, country music, and the smell of burning pallets to make a bonfire. As long as we did not burn car tires, the cops rarely showed up.

"Great!" Scarlett had said. "I'll pick you up, and we can go for a day drive." She had a love for driving, whether it was her sports car, truck, or SUV. It was an escape for her—the loud music and the windows down with the wind in her hair. This gave her a sense of freedom. She took pride in her vehicles by keeping them clean, waxing them by hand in her driveway on a Sunday afternoon in jean shorts and a bikini top as she simultaneously tried to get a suntan. "See you tomorrow," I had said to Scarlett as she waved goodbye and drove out of the cul-de-sac. I was happy to see her but sad to see her go; I wished we had more time together. As she drove away, I smiled and laughed as I thought of how grown we were. I remembered all the silly things we had done, most of

QUIT WISHING IT WAS YOU AND NOT THEM

them involved vehicles from four-wheeling mudding to crashing a car while she was attempting to race, to submerging a vehicle, to a boat sinking. We were fearless together.

Before she headed home that night, Scarlett made one stop at a high school boyfriend's house. He was a real piece of work—violent, tempered, angry, and very controlling. None of her close friends and family liked him. He could never let go of Scarlett, and he couldn't stand to see her success at college—a path he didn't take. I'm not even sure if he ever graduated high school.

I yawned and went inside to bed.

Several hours later, the house phone rang. I staggered to the phone, wondering who would be calling in the middle of the night.

It was my best friend's little sister. She said, "Come over ... it's Scarlett."

"What?" I asked. A dial tone was the only reply.

I dropped the phone, flustered. I put my shoes on and ran to her house, which was down the street and around the corner. Dawn was breaking, and there was a glow in the cold air. The sun was on the horizon. I ran through the neighborhood park alongside the concrete racquetball courts and quickly came to a halt as police cars surrounded Scarlett's perfectly manicured suburban front lawn.

Her sports car was in the driveway.

A symbol of her success, it was a brand new 1997 Camaro SS, white with orange racing stripes. She was very proud of the gift her parents had given her as a college *signing bonus* for the scholarship she had earned.

I have tons of happy memories at Scarlett's house. Her family welcomed me into their home, and I admired and adored them for that. Scarlett's father was a hardworking man who loved his family. He showed his love by providing for them, and he coached their teams to spend that extra time with them. Scarlett's mom, Lisa, was a stay-at-home mom and always knew what was going on. I don't remember her ever not being there for her family; the girls never came home to an empty house. The house was in

QUITTING TO WIN

order, and she was the boss of it. As teenagers, we were welcome to relax, eat food, or sit around as long as we picked up after ourselves and left the house in the condition we found it in. Sophia, her cute little sister, would pop in and out of the room to see what we were doing. She was all smiles and happy to be in her older sister's presence. They were competitive on and off the field, which made for fun family banter. I often spent the night on their bunk beds and went night swimming with them after we'd finished hitting softballs in their backyard batting cages.

Scarlett set many records as a softball catcher. She was the team captain and fun company. Her physical and mental strength was unparalleled. From a young age, she was groomed and determined to play college ball, and every move she made was in line with this goal. She excelled at both basketball and softball. Down to her core, Scarlett was a phenomenal athlete with blonde hair, blue eyes, and a great physique.

In the late nineties, the majority of full-ride softball scholarships from Arizona State University were awarded to either girls in California or girls who lived out of state. Coach Scott, Scarlett's dad, and Coach Rob created a winning softball program and wanted to keep the girls in state, so they would continue to have the support they needed from parents and the community.

Because of Scarlett's phenomenal ability as catcher, Coach Scott was adamant to keep her in state and turn Arizona State University into a winning program. Scarlett was the first in-state player to receive a full-ride scholarship. Her Storm teammates were soon to follow, and a new trend started.



The driveway looked like a crime scene, and I was baffled as to what could have happened. We were together only a few hours ago. I approached the house slowly, where I found a somber group of authorities. "What happened?" I asked them.

"There was a homicide," the police officer stated.

Scarlett was dead.

QUIT WISHING IT WAS YOU AND NOT THEM

Split in two by the pain, it felt like my mind had left my body. Shortly after, the authorities painted a picture of my best friend's death. Scarlett hadn't been murdered—they had ruled her death a suicide. I closed my eyes and imagined her sitting alone in her prized white Camaro with orange racing stripes. She held her dad's gun in her hand in her last moments, and I wondered how alone she had to have felt when she pulled the trigger. The white Camaro with orange racing stripes—once symbolizing a successful future—turned into a painful symbol of death. I always thought she had everything, but that moment showed me there was an entire world of pain that lived underneath the surface of the Scarlett I knew and loved.

Scarlett's death did not make any sense to me—how, what, and why?

Not in any way whatsoever did Scarlett *ever* mention suicide. Though we never talked about suicide, we had shared feelings of rage. We bonded so many times over the rage we both felt, but we were both haunted by different demons. Even when we were hitting a softball as hard as we could, that wasn't enough to release our rage.

I had a car tire in my backyard attached to a pole. The tire had a cut through it, and I used it for batting practice. I would swing a heavy bat through the cut, one hundred swings a day to keep in batting shape. When I returned home the night of Scarlett's death, the sun had risen, and I hit it for hours without batting gloves until my hands were blistered and bloodied.



Numbed by the pain of Scarlett's death without a connection to God, a negative spiral began to brew a perfect storm. The stages of grief were unbearable. I was angry! Why wasn't I with her? Why her and not me? I thought I knew her. She was my god-damned best friend. So many questions ran through my head that I couldn't find the answers to.

QUITTING TO WIN



This unthinkable event rocked the small town of Glendale—and the club and collegiate softball communities. Although the day of the funeral was bright, a somber mood fell over the day. I looked around and saw tons of people gathered to mourn for the unexpected loss of my best friend. Then, Scarlett's younger sister read the most beautiful poem:

*If dreams could build a staircase,
Hers would have no end,
In her ambitions to be a success,
the world became her best friend,
But a sis means more than just a best friend,
especially the kind I've lost,
I'd pay any price to see her once again.
I just wish I knew the cost.
She was the person I wished I could be,
She was wonderful inside and out,
which everyone who knew her could see.
She could light up a room with her smile,
And make everyone else smile, too,
There were endless possibilities to the things she could do.
I know we'll all remember her, and miss her every day,
I wish there were words to make this hurting stop,
but I don't know what to say.
I do know she's looking down on us from heaven up above,
To see that she's the person who we all miss and love.*

I LOVE YOU SISTER!!! – Sophia

Everything was a blur for me at the funeral and after. When I woke up two days later, I was still in a fog. Perhaps it was because I had taken a full bottle of pills the night before in the hopes of not waking up. It felt like a bad dream, but it was a new reality. *The pills did not work*, I thought. *I will never have a best friend*

QUIT WISHING IT WAS YOU AND NOT THEM

again. No one will ever accept and share the special moments we shared together. Who will protect me from myself or stop me from hurting others?

My parents started asking questions instead of demanding I keep to my rigorous practice schedule. “Honey, are you feeling okay?” they would ask. “Is this too much pressure with practice and school?” Wow—what a change. Up until Scarlett’s death, my parents had constantly applied the pressure of their expectations onto me, my brother and step-sister to be self-sufficient. They wanted us to be more than *happy kids*. They didn’t have money to send me to school, so they needed me to get a scholarship. They viewed playing softball as a ticket to college. Anything short of going all in all the time was frowned upon because I could blow my chance. How different could my life have been if my parents had stayed together—or if we had more money?

My mom was and still is super religious. But the only God I was familiar with was a God of performance. When I performed, my parents loved me. But when I failed, my mother’s silence shunned me for days or weeks.



My parents handled me with kid gloves for the remainder of the school year. I returned to college for my sophomore year and finished my last season, but I had no intentions of playing softball ever again. During freshman year, we won the NJCAA National Championship, and during sophomore year, we were runners-up for the National Championship. The sport had left me physically and emotionally broken.

The school provided a support group for students who were affected by suicide. According to the American College Health Association (ACHA), the suicide rate among young adults ages fifteen to twenty-four has tripled since the 1950s, and suicide is currently the second most common cause of death among college students. When I attended the support groups, we shared stories of recognizing or ignoring the signs.

QUITTING TO WIN

I heard when college students are away from their home, their family, and their friends for the first time, it can lead to suicide. They're living with strangers, far from their support systems. Working under intense pressure with disrupted sleep, eating, and exercise patterns also adds to the chaos. You could hardly design a more stressful situation, particularly when depression or other mental health issues enter the picture.

But this wasn't the case for Scarlett. She was a trailblazer and determined in all she did. I still had no answers as to why her life had to end so soon. As I sat with the support groups and listened with my young ears, I didn't find any comfort. Even though Scarlett was blessed with exceptional athletic talent and was liked by everyone she met, I learned that mental illness has many faces.



There were still so many unanswered questions. Scarlett was survived by her father, mother, and sister. They disagreed with the authorities about the suicide. They launched their own private investigation, which made the whole town talk. Everyone was on eggshells about what to believe. Did her boyfriend kill her? Who else was at the crime scene?

I was unaware of the epidemic of suicide before Scarlett's death. Knowing what I learned in the support group about the signs of suicide, her aggressive behavior could have been a sign. (See Appendix 1) Our behavior was common among many teens in our area. We were very destructive. When the lights went out, there was no telling what would happen. We were like Jekyll and Hyde. By day, we earned good grades and played for winning teams. By night, we roamed the streets, going on sprees of destructive pranks with no regard to who or what we damaged. I knew where my rage came from, but she never mentioned why she raged.

Mailbox baseball was a favorite of ours. All we needed was a truck—sometimes a Chevy or sometimes a Ford—but never an import, a metal bat, and it was *game on*. If the mailbox was

QUIT WISHING IT WAS YOU AND NOT THEM

knocked loose, we earned a base hit. When we knocked the mailbox completely off, we earned a home run. The one with the lowest points earned the thrill of *lawn jockey*. The lawn jockey was the one who had to jump out of the bed of the navy-blue Chevy truck, go in the front yard to quickly collect lawn ornaments, and jump back in the truck. We traveled only a block or two and then placed the ornaments in another yard. It was our version of ridiculousness.

First, the authorities questioned me. Then, the family's private investigator questioned me months later. Scarlett's blue-collar boyfriend was the last to see her. They had a volatile relationship, and Scarlett's only way to escape him was when she left for college. Christmas break brought them back together and right back into their old patterns, which usually ended in violence. They were so young and restless.

The case finally closed and was once again ruled a suicide.

I buried the memories deep down and went on with my life, but I will always carry a special place in my heart for Scarlett. She will always be the angel on my shoulder.

I will forever be asking *Why her and not me?*