

TOMMY BAKER



**THE
LEAP
OF YOUR
LIFE**

HOW TO REDEFINE RISK, QUIT WAITING FOR 'SOMEDAY,' AND **LIVE BOLDLY**

WILEY

Praise for *The Leap of Your Life*

“A must read for anyone who knows there’s a larger life out there for them and is ready to create it!”

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—**Jay Nixon, Founder, Thrive Fitness**

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For both of my incredible grandmothers, Marjorie and Pepita. For giving me the gift of knowledge, and the belief of possibility.

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Introduction

What are you *waiting* for? There's a leap in your life you've been putting off, and it's *killing* you. Maybe not literally, but it's killing your spirit. It's killing your belief, your enthusiasm, and the thrill of this one experience we call life. It's killing your energy, vitality, and hope for the future. When those are gone, you might as well be the walking dead.

It's draining your life force, and every day you put it off, you're reminded of how it *hasn't* happened for you yet. And now you're questioning if it *ever* will.

The consequences of not taking your leap are real, and they stare back at you every morning in the mirror. They're reflected in bank statements. They're felt in your body language during time with the people you love. They're wrapped on long exhales as you aim to keep it all together.

But worst of all, they're reflected in this tireless voice in the back of your head that won't shut up, asking:

"Is this it? Is this all that's meant for me?"

Now, does this mean I'm certain your life isn't working? No, not at all. Our lives can be working, and we can still have a leap we know we must take. Sometimes, this can be the most precarious circumstance of all: we have everything we've been told we should want, yet something is *still* missing.

And I'm here to tell you what's missing is your leap. But before we get into it all, let's define what a leap is.

The Ingredients of the Leap

You may be wondering: What exactly constitutes a leap? You may be thinking it's abandoning Western life and moving to an ashram in the Himalayas, quitting your accounting gig, launching the new app or parachuting out of a perfectly good airplane at 15,000 feet.

Although all of those sound like fun to me and could be leaps, they don't have to be yours. Sometimes, the leap we have to take seems inconsequential to others and yet leads to a bold moment of no return: reaching out to a recruiter with the hopes of transitioning out of our job, having the tough conversation with our partner, launching the side hustle or finally clicking record and spreading a message with the world.

What matters, then is not necessarily the magnitude of the leap. It's simply that it matters to you, and includes the following:

- **You feel a pull.** You can't explain it, but you feel pulled toward your leap. Much like a magnetic charge, you can try to avoid it, but it comes back stronger than ever.
- **There's a decision.** Your leap involves a decision you've been putting off and will require you to make a bold choice.
- **The stakes are high.** Your leap *matters*. There are real consequences to not making it. There are also endless possibilities by stepping into it.
- **There's an element of risk.** Your leap has a degree of risk, and for now you've chosen to play it "safe" at the expense of your own fulfillment.
- **Not doing it will hurt more than doing it.** Lastly, even though you haven't taken your leap yet, not doing so hurts more than any consequence or perceived failure of taking it.

So, again—what are you waiting for?

If you're here, I already know you're waiting for *something*. Every day you put it off, a part of you withers away, knowing your dreams are on hold as you attempt to live someone else's life. (I use the word *attempt* deliberately, because no matter how hard we try, it'll never quite pan out.)

Playing It Safe Means a Lifetime of Regret

As we begin this adventure, I want you to treat it as such. I'm going to take a wild guess you've read books with similar themes, but you haven't read *this* one. Finishing this book will drive you toward a decision, which won't be shared only between you and me.

There are a few reasons why you may be here right now, and I'm going to tell you why you should stick around:

- **First, you feel a calling for something bolder and bigger for your life**, and you believe it may be possible, but you're finding yourself stuck.
- **Second, you know if you continue on the same path you're on today**, you're going to look back and feel the sinking feeling of regret.
- **Third, you're tired of playing everyone else's game**. For too long, you've done what others told you to do and ignored a part of you that *knew* without question what was right.
- **Last, there's a voice whispering to you during the silent pockets of life** slowly begging you to put yourself on the line and *do it now*.

This voice comes to you when the intensity of life has slowed down. When it can no longer be drowned out in noise, bills, and an unrelenting breaking news cycle, it comes to you. Sometimes it whispers on those long car rides when you're running on autopilot and have the ability to think, during those early mornings right before the chaos of the inbox hits. Or when you're in those in-between moments on the airplane and the perspective of being at 37,000 feet invites some deeper questions.

As long as you fit one, two, or all of those descriptions—you've come to the right place.

By the end of our time together, one of two things will happen:

You'll think everything I said sounded nice, but you won't make the commitment I'm daring you to make—so this might as well be a video game. Except there's no fantasy land, and I'm not nearly as entertaining.

Or, you'll have the spark, the insight, the push required to create something so powerful that the current version of yourself can't imagine it. You'll be brought to your knees (except this time, in an is-this-really-happening way.)

You'll finally take the *Leap of Your Life* and you'll never be the same.

But I've Already Taken a Leap... Is This for Me?

You may be saying to yourself: but I've *already* taken the leap. You launched your business, you moved cross-country, you took the big chance. This can't be for you, right?

Wrong. The fastest way to slide back to mediocrity is to believe life and business are about *one* leap. The truth is, life and business are a series of leaps and micro-leaps as you continue to expand on your journey. Most people assume if they already did a leap, they'll be better prepared for the next one, right?

What I've found is the opposite. In spite of making bold choices in the past, they can feel just as stuck and in fear about their next leap. Often, those with something to lose are less likely to take a leap: taking a chance is easy when you don't have much to lose, but what about when things are working (to a certain degree)?

In working with countless thought leaders, industry trailblazers, and entrepreneurs who have made bold decisions in the past, I've noticed they need a constant reminder to push toward their *next* leap. Otherwise, they slide back to mediocrity, the passion and challenge they once had fizzles, and what once felt like a riveting life has now vanished and become mechanical.

The Greatest Risk (Is Not Taking One)

Starting your own business is risky.

Moving cross-country with no plan is risky.

Asking him or her out before you're ready is risky.

Taking a bold chance on your dreams is risky.

Right?

But what if we're wrong? **What if the real risk is putting our dreams on hold, placing them in a box labeled "someday"?**

We've been told to play it safe, to stay in line, and to not dream *too* big, or else we may fail. Follow the secure path and you'll be handsomely rewarded. Since those around you have also bought into this narrative, they'll support you. You'll fit in, and your life's path will be etched in certainty.

And yet, so often we find ourselves on someone else's path, living someone else's dream and trying to live up to the expectations (and approval) of others. **We trade in our calling for our ceiling, our purpose for a paycheck, and our enthusiasm for exhaustion.**

You wake up one day, only to realize you're in the wrong movie wondering how the hell you got there.

Our inability to tolerate even the smallest of risks has led us to live an unfulfilled life. The illusion of security has drained our life force. The calling you felt deep within you started as a wildfire and is now nothing but ashes. What was once a six-lane open highway of possibility has now become a cemetery where dreams go to die.

Reading this book will challenge you to have an open mind, no matter if you consider yourself a brazen risk taker with an entrepreneurial mindset, or your definition of risk is passing someone on the right-hand side of your local freeway at a brisk 66 MPH.

The problem with our perception of risk is simple: we don't take chances during the low-stakes moments of life, so we'll never take them during the high-stakes moments—which means that every single day

we're wiring ourselves not to listen to what we know we have to do, so we are unwilling to face the task(s) at hand.

And through that process, we miss facing ourselves.

“Someday” Is Holding You Back

I wrote this book because I have been where you are. I have been stuck and riddled by fear. I have walked the path others wanted for me. I have turned a blind eye to what I knew I had to do, and followed what people told me I should.

It nearly broke me.

Until I *woke up* one New Year's Eve 13-degree night in New York City with tears streaming down my face, painting a vision for a life. For the first time, it felt real. With no plan, no blueprint, and no seven-step system, I took the leap.

Fast-forward to today, and my former life is completely and utterly unrecognizable. I am living every part of my vision, and then some. My obsession is now helping others identify their *leap* and make a bold decision. I've spent over 3,500+ hours in the trenches coaching and consulting others.

I've interviewed over 250 of the world's most accomplished and fulfilled entrepreneurs, leaders, athletes, spiritual teachers, and creatives, and here's the common thread I found among all of them:

They had the courage to listen to the voice inside and take a bold step into the unknown.

Without any guarantees, they bet on themselves. They put their chips in the middle of the poker table known as life, going all in.

And *everything* changed.

In crossing the threshold, they found themselves on the other side with conviction, courage, and a confidence that only comes through stepping into who we really are. We all want to give this experience meaning. We all want to live a purposeful life, engulfed with fulfillment.

The way we get there is simple, yet never easy. **We listen to the calling inside, knowing exactly what we need to do.** We take the jagged, rough, edgy path instead of the perfectly trimmed one. We take the leap calling us, and we never look back. We know there is no guarantee on the other side, except the greatest one of all: **knowing that we played full tilt, all out, and gave it a chance.** We bet on ourselves. We not only had a belief there was something greater out there, but we also had the audacity to step into it.

We lived, dammit!

That's why you're here, and why I'm here. This book will challenge you, and if I do my job, it will force you to answer the tough questions you've been avoiding. It won't be comfortable, because nothing in life that changes us is. I believe you and I have the right to turn this cosmic, blink-of-an-eye experience into a canvas for the world to see. A story for generations to read. I want your life to be the greatest story ever told.

This book is broken down into four parts. Part I is where we examine the infinite cost of not taking your leap, and what's *really* holding you back. Armed with a new perspective, you can prepare for your journey in Part II and learn about the essential toolbox you'll need. Part III is about the leap and the different kinds of leaps available to you. Last, Part IV is about ensuring your leap isn't something you do once but instead becomes who you are, while sharing your gifts. You'll create a declaration you'll be sharing to set you off to sail. Throughout, you'll find essential leap tips in each chapter, as well as *#NotesFromTheLeap*: stories from everyday people just like you who radically transformed their lives.

You're here, and you don't know exactly where you're going. *Good.* The unknown is waiting for you, and we've got no time to lose.

If you do it right, you will never be the same.

PART

I

Leaning on the Edge

There are moments in our lives when we summon the courage to make choices that go against reason, against common sense and the wise counsel of people we trust. But we lean forward nonetheless because, despite all risks and rational argument, we believe that the path we are choosing is the right and best thing to do. We refuse to be bystanders, even if we do not know exactly where our actions will lead. This is the kind of passionate conviction that sparks romances, wins battles, and drives people to pursue dreams others wouldn't dare. Belief in ourselves and in what is right catapults us over hurdles, and our lives unfold.

—Howard Schultz

Chapter 1

Daring to Dream

Rate: 833.9 miles per hour. When you're freefalling at this speed, you're only thinking about one thing—the desire to live.

The lead-up to this moment had been a lifetime of bold decisions and redefining risk at every turn. However, none of that mattered now. The radio was silent as the spin became more violent. This silence was deafening.

At 128,000 feet, *everything* is precarious. During an uncontrolled spin, there are only a few possible outcomes. One, blood rushes to the limbs and rids the brain of oxygen. A total blackout results. Unconsciously spinning in space. The alternative is too much blood rushing to the head—and then the pressure inside the skull builds like the pressure in a beer can that's been left in the freezer for too long. Eventually your blood has only one way out—your eyeballs.

No good. When you're spinning uncontrollably for 67 seconds, it feels like an eternity. Alone, every second is your life flashing right before your eyes.

Felix Baumgartner is still here to tell his story—and he regained control in time to accomplish one of the biggest feats in the history of human free fall.

Was it risky? It depends on who you ask.

The Dream of a Lifetime

Just 67 seconds earlier, Felix had been standing on the edge of a custom-made space capsule. Decked out in a handmade spacesuit adorned with the Red Bull logo, the whole world was watching—including his girlfriend, a mother who couldn't bear to watch, and a close circle of friends, all waiting for him 24 miles down. He was about to embark on a lifelong dream—flying. Literally. Ever since he was a little boy, Felix had dreamed of flying. That dream had led to his being known as one of the most accomplished daredevils and stuntmen in history. But *this* was different.

The training had been the most grueling challenge of Felix's life. Several mishaps, technical issues, a nearly fatal training mistake, and a total anxiety shutdown were part of the story. But something was pushing Felix to take this leap. Something within him was guiding him through the dark moments and the sleepless nights.

It would have been easy to rest on his laurels and the YouTube highlights of doing the impossible. He was already a living legend, with nothing to prove. Yet something was pulling at him, and he couldn't afford *not* to listen.

That day at 12:06 p.m. Felix took the *leap of his life* with the entire world watching.

You Have a Quest to Take, Too

I know what you're thinking: you have no plans to jump out of a space capsule and break the speed of sound anytime soon. You're not a daredevil, BASE jumper, or extreme sport athlete. I'm not either, and I'll stick to my two, run-of-the-mill skydiving experiences for now. They were fun, even if the pilot did look like a knockoff version of the guitarist from Metallica and made way too many "this is my first day" jokes.

However, you have a lot more in common with Felix than you think: there's a quest you've been waiting to take. *And every day that*

passes without you taking it is another chance you'll wind up thinking about what could have been.

I don't want that for you, but most importantly—you don't want that for you. You're here to take the quest, the ride of a lifetime. And your leap is the catalyst to light that quest on fire and write the life story you can't wait to experience. The life you look forward to coming back to after a vacation, *because the thrill of living it exceeds the fantasy of escaping.*

This is exactly where I found myself on a frosty New Year's Eve night when everything changed.

December 31, 2014—10:36 p.m. New York, New York

I'm sitting at a big table in a Manhattan restaurant, surrounded by friends and the sounds of clinking glasses and belly laughter. It's New Year's Eve and the energy is palpable, with busboys gunning in and out at exactly the right time so as not to knock into the waitress who's taking one too many orders.

I'm seated at the table, but I'm not *there*. Something is missing. I've felt this way for a little while now, and I don't know what to do. It's easy to admit you're lost when things *aren't* working. But what about when people think they are? I've had trouble waking up over the past 14 days. For the first time since high school, all I want to do is stay in bed when morning comes around.

The drinks start coming, and I'm on the hook for a ribeye. Bone-in, flown in from Nebraska—or so they say—for a cool \$57. I excuse myself, although I'm not sure that any words come out of my mouth.

I find myself walking. It's 13 degrees out, and I'm supposed to be in the bathroom and rejoining the dinner table soon. Except that I'm headed in the opposite direction. I feel the burn of the cold on my face and the windchill in my bones. I don't know where I'm going, yet I know *exactly* where I'm going. I need space. I need to find myself.

Desperately.

I walk until I find an open patch of land—something that looks like an old football field—and instantly I'm drawn to it. Maybe I simply want to relive the glory days that *didn't* happen, but I walk into the field. And without thinking, I'm now sprinting for my life with everything I've got—Michael Kors pants and shirt included. I repeat the cycle of walking and sprinting a few times, not thinking about who may be witnessing this: it is *New York*, after all.

Once I've expended every ounce of energy, I take a seat. And that's when I lose it—the flood of tears come rushing out of me. I can't stop. I feel alone. I feel tired. I feel disconnected. The tools I've used for so long no longer work. And for the first time, I get honest with myself. I hate where I live. I hate the people. I hate the energy. I hate the attitude.

I need to get out.

Without thinking, I pull out my iPhone and hit the big red button. The recording starts. For the next four and a half minutes, I let it flow. I'm detailing where I'm going to be in one year. And for the first time, I can *see* and feel it. It's real. And it's time.

I lay out what's deep inside on the recorder, frame by frame. As the words roll off the tip of my tongue, I'm impressed by how *good* they sound. They feel right. I'm making grand plans to change where I live, start a new business, meet the partner of my dreams, and rediscover the passion that I used to experience daily. I'm outlining my quest in a tantalizing, 4K-resolution picture.

Except there's a problem. Not just any problem: there's a Fort Knox-sized obstacle in the way. I recently signed my name to a five-year lease. Quick math says I'm on the hook for \$422,000. Oh yeah, forgot about that. I've got 11 employees. I've got a bricks-and-mortar business. My family is here. Everything I've known and created for the last decade is here. I have no blueprint. I have no prospects. I have no plan.

And yet, I believe. Somehow, someday, it's going to happen. It has to, right?

The Edge Is Your Invitation

What I experienced that night was the *edge*. The edge is the place where the hair on the back of your neck stands up. In a split second, you've achieved a level of clarity unlike any other. You know *exactly* what you must do. There are no excuses, and there's no space for anything except unapologetic belief. The edge engulfs every part of who you are.

And then it's *gone*. Only a few moments later, what was once clarity is now confusion. What was an uplifting life force is now a prison cell. What felt limitless now feels risky. What once felt possible is now a fantasy.

What is *your* edge? Own it and reap the rewards—or watch it disappear. Inspiration is quickly replaced by worst-case scenarios. Possibility is traded for avoiding the unknown. Belief is swapped for the reason you can't do it. Potential is transformed into “being realistic.” *A moment of radical insight is shoved into a convenient box labeled “someday.”*

The edge is your invitation. It's the launchpad for your quest. This is the moment. Often we hear of life's most defining moments. These usually tend to be *big* life events society has laid out for us: school, college, marriage, career, the birth of a child, a big accomplishment, and so on.

I'd argue that there is no such thing as a defining moment, because if right now is the only moment, then naturally it is the most defining. What I'm really saying here is simple: everything counts.

Especially when you're at your edge.

The Edge Is Daunting, Yet Beautiful

The edge is daunting. You're exposed. You're on the hook, and there's a decision to be made. There's no space to think it through: you do it or you don't.

The edge becomes a bookmark in our lives. The place where we either take one more step into the unknown, betting on ourselves, or run back to safety. It's the place where your heart and head are battling it out in a winner-take-all tug-of-war.

Too many times you've let your head win. The head *loves* to win. It thrives off keeping you comfortable, safe, and stuck. It'd much rather you live a complacent, soul-sucking, safe life than one full of riveting passion created through stepping into the unknown.

Even if that unknown includes a jaw-dropping future or provides you with an opportunity that brings you to your knees (in a great way). The edge is uncomfortable because there are no guarantees on the other side—except the greatest guarantees we could ever have, including:

You won't look back with regret. Regret is heavy. We've all been there. It eats away at our spirit and makes us long for *what could have been*. When you lean into your edge, you'll be able to look back and know you went all in when it counted. This alone provides the inner peace we're so often seeking.

You'll experience wonder and awe. The edge is your threshold, and on the other side is wonder and awe. It's the life force we've always had, designed light up our imagination. In contrast, what's known is boring and zaps our curiosity.

You'll give your life meaning. We're not here for happiness: we're here to have meaningful lives. Lives that matter and are significant. Most importantly—it matters to *us*. Stepping into your edge is how you get there.

You'll have the adventure of a lifetime. Adventure makes us feel alive—and your edge is the ultimate adventure. There's nothing else like it, because you're writing a story about an adventure that most people will only experience through examining the lives of others.

You'll feel immense self-reliance and trust. Self-reliance, as defined by Ralph Waldo Emerson, is the trust we place in ourselves. By leaning into your edge you begin to be able to trust yourself in a world where we've been conditioned to trust others.

You'll be able to tell a riveting story. We all want our life stories to be *worth telling* and worth being remembered for. It's our legacy—what we did during our short time here.

How to Know That You're at Your Edge

Standing at your edge is much like looking out to a distant horizon that separates the world you've known from the world waiting for you. You can feel it, and *this time* it's different. It's unlike anything you've experienced before.

The edge in your life can materialize in countless ways but will include a common set of elements, which will help you to know when you've reached it. These elements include:

You feel a pull. Your edge feels like a magnetic pull—because it is. It's calling on you to grow, to step into a more powerful version of who you are today. When your edge calls you, often you'll find yourself moving toward it with little to no idea as to why.

You're in a painful place. Your edge can come from a place of pain, and that's a great thing. Hear me out: pain is a great motivator, designed to remind you what truly matters.

You can't explain it. Your usual self loves to explain things and figure them out. This is how you stay stuck. In this case, though, logic wins but is also a feedback mechanism to let you know you're getting closer to your edge. You can't explain why, but it's calling you and you *must* go.

It's daunting and beautiful at once. While it's daunting to step closer to your edge, every step builds you. It's beautiful, riveting, and audacious. You feel alive. You feel courageous and bold and have a level of clarity you've never felt before.

If you had no fear, you'd sprint right to it. Your edge is going to come with fear. And that's a great thing—otherwise, it wouldn't be your edge. We must break the conditioned thinking of “If I feel fear, then it means I should back off.” No—not here. If you feel it, embrace it.

Arriving at your edge is one thing, but what you do afterward will determine everything. We're not lacking for moments on the edge: what we're lacking is the courage to step into them fully. To stop waiting,