

Mark



From ***Power to Choose Challenge to Change***,

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Look up www.markhorton.com.au

PART ONE

Background:

- Grew up on a farm about 20kms south of Canberra. Loved playing sport and by the age of 16 was playing first grade rugby union for Queenbeyan and was captain of the ACT Combined High Schools' first rugby side.
- won a vocal scholarship to study at the Canberra School of Music.
- Age 23 married high school sweet heart, was the New South Wales state sales manager for the multi-national food giant Campbells's Soups.
- Age 24 was diagnosed with diabetes which would later go on to be insulin-dependent.
- Age 27 was appointed Australasian group sales director with Campbells's. To reach the milestone age 27 in the Australian grocery industry was almost unheard of.

The tragedy - Mark's story

"My life was perfect. I had a happy marriage, an excellent career with a succession plan in place, I was earning good money and I had a wonderful family and fantastic friends. My dreams were coming true.

Three weeks after my appointment as Australasian group sales director my world came crashing down. My world was about to change forever!

I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. MS is a debilitating disease of the brain and spinal cord (central nervous system). It is called 'multiple' because many parts of the brain and spinal cord are affected. Sclerosis is a Greek word meaning hardened tissue that interrupts the messages travelling down the spinal cord. This interference affects the brain's ability to control such functions as walking, vision,

bladder and bowel functions, sexuality and speech. I'm proud to say I fought on with the disease for 4 more years and achieved three more promotions. But after 6 years of continual recurring attacks and going through rehabilitation numerous times, I was finally convinced by my neurologist to take some time for me."

The **monumental change** in Horton's life involved losing his career, his wife, his health, his capacity to tie his shoe-laces and his ability to talk and write. Horton

- struggled to find energy to face each day, and his suffering has been intense. "From time to time when the pain increases and the disability becomes more pronounced, I do sit and cry. I cry for the life I once had. I want to share the love of a partner that MS has feared away. I want to have a family to love and watch grow up. I want to run once more until I can run no more. I want to be me once more. I feel I've lost what I once was."

PART TWO –the discovery

But **Mark persevered**, developing a method of power talk where he talks with himself and agrees that this is his day, it belongs to him. He says "MS has no claim on me or my life unless I choose to give it the authority. I choose to have a great day".

Horton also **discovered more about who he** is. He explains "It has given me an immediate awakening to all the wonders of the world. I now see the birds and smell the freshness of the air. I love to sit in the park and enjoy being a part of the universe."

Instead of getting bitter about his disability **Mark rose to the challenge**. "MS has changed my life forever. Whether it is a good change or a bad change depends on how I choose to look at it. If MS is going to be a part of my life then I will make it work for me. MS is not going to get an easy ride with me. I have chosen to accept the challenge to change. If what I've experienced so far is anything to go by it will be a rough and tough journey. But I am committed to becoming the person I was born to be. If any obstacles, be they MS or diabetes, stands in my way I will choose to deal with them one at a time, day by day, using a healthy attitude. MS and diabetes are not my most pressing concerns. My most pressing concern right now is I still have hundreds of things to do and only about 40 years in which to do them."

That is a glimpse into the mind of a man dealing with the evil of illness and disability, and choosing to overcome it. His book is an inspiration and he continues to inspire others by speaking at conferences and sharing his wisdom.

The story continues...

Through this Mark met Samantha Permezel (also with MS) and they married. They have Samantha's son Owen and Owen's dog, and they live in the Blue Mountains. Mark has recently lost the use of his feet and has had his car fitted for hand controls. He is still unstoppable.