

Helen Owen Biography

I was brought up in a family where survival and competition was a way of life. From a very early age I was privileged to hear stories about sheer determination and strength of character as my parents and grand parents recounted their experiences in living through two world wars. Through all their arduous times with no money or possessions, their primary focus was on keeping the family safe and together. It was casual conversation to them, but as I listened it laid a blue print for the woman that I would grow to be. The same character traits that my parents had gained in their pursuit to survive wars were also transferred into everyday life, especially sport. My father played first grade football and my two older brothers forged their own athletic careers in the NRL. I loved watching my brothers play rugby league and enjoyed the excitement and jubilation shown by the spectators. I knew deep within me that I would never be satisfied just being a spectator. I wanted to know the same adrenaline filled excitement that my brothers had experienced when competing.

As a result I played every sport that at the time a girl was allowed to play. I had athletic ability and natural strength for a female and that gave me the edge in most of my sporting pursuits, however it was my ability to focus single-mindedly on my goal that enabled me to represent my State in multiple sports. I excelled in many sports because as I achieved my goals in one, I became bored and looked for an even greater rush of excitement from the next.

In terms of my personal life I only dated men that had achieved success and recognition on the sporting field. My first serious relationship was with a Rugby Union player, and then the next was with a European boxing champion. On reflection it can be seen that I was pursuing the same adrenaline and excitement that I experienced on the sports field from my relationships. Being in love and all the euphoria that comes from romance was exciting. Not only could I have the admiring attention of these athletes, but I could live vicariously through their sporting endeavors as well as pursuing my own fitness goals.

I married my triathlon coach in 1989, and then under his guidance competed and finished three World Cup Triathlons. Then in 1991 I competed in the QLD Bodybuilding Championship. Then in 1993 we had a son. I remember that even through my pregnancy my desire to compete at sport and achieve success never swayed. When possible I resumed training and I competed at the highest level of outrigger canoeing. Boredom set in again. I was dissatisfied and needed more excitement in my life. I then found a sport that challenged all parts of me. Not only did it push me to my physical limits but also pushed me to discover parts of myself that I can only liken to the stories of determination and survival that

I had heard from my parents. From the moment I walked into a Muay Thai gymnasium I was hooked. There was no judgment, all were treated as equal and everyone was expected to give their all when training.

During this time I had become a Personal Trainer. I completed my studies through the International Sports Science Association, specializing in strength training; training for contact sports as well as performance nutrition for athletes. I used my academic qualifications and personal knowledge to forge a successful career in the Health and Fitness industry. Conversely my marriage started to fall apart. My husband and I had both become complacent in nurturing the relationship. The excitement and connection that I felt with my husband was gone. I tried to recapture those feelings but the adrenaline rush and excitement of kickboxing overrode any value and meaning that our marriage had. I left my marriage and shortly afterwards started a relationship with a world champion kick boxer. I was now able to experience the exhilaration of being in a relationship with a world class athlete. Any sadness and disappointment that I felt over my marriage breakdown was quickly overturned by the relationship that I had started with my new coach. My expertise in weight training and nutrition for athletes and his knowledge of kickboxing made us appear to be the perfect couple. In spite of this my relationship to the world champion kick boxer was short lived. It was filled with turmoil and regret. Questions started to flood my mind. How could I not see what was going on and what I had gotten myself into? His previous wife had left him because of emotional and physical abuse and his constant infidelity. Through his kick boxing career he had a string of one night stands and other promiscuous sexual romps. I was now seeing it was common for women to flaunt themselves at him because of his high profile and athletic stardom. Yet as so many women do, I stupidly believed that after he proclaimed his love to me, I was going to be the woman that would tame this wild beast. Wisely I made the decision to leave this short and very intense relationship.

I was now left on my own. I was confused and shocked that I had let my life turn out this way. I had to refocus and turn my life around so that it would provide me with the emotional satisfaction and success that I desired. Once again my strong family upbringing directed my focus to the things that mattered to me. My son was five years of age and I had protected him well from the turbulent relationship that I had just had. My last partner had fathered three children to two different women and through our time together I had witnessed the devastating emotional effects that separation and parental instability had on his children. My son's well being and emotional development had always been a focal point in my life and now that I was on my own, I drew on my strong striving force to protect, motivate and encourage him, to pursue his own success.

Although I was a successful Personal Trainer, my lust for success found me looking at new endeavors. I found an advertisement for The Australian College of Applied Psychology that detailed a course about studies in sport and performance psychology. The first day I attended the College I found that to specialize in sport and performance psychology I had to complete counseling and psychology modules. To my surprise I had accidentally stumbled upon what became my new career path. I studied to become a counselor with a major interest in relationships and sport and performance counseling. As I studied I spent a lot of time contemplating my own life. I had a strong yearning to learn more and to try to understand why I had made the choices that I had in my life. I could easily relate to the academic theories presented to me and I readily identified with the case studies that in many ways reflected my own life experiences.

Through my own experiences and my formal academic studies at the college I gained insight into the character qualities that my ex-husband had which I had not seen before. Thoughts came flooding back, why did we let our marriage slip away? We were both stupid and ignorant not knowing what to do to protect and develop our relationship. He was a good man. He was honest, decent and honorable. Through our divorce he treated me and my family with respect and dignity and was an admirable father to our son. He didn't need the excitement or adrenaline filled feelings that I strived for. He was content in enjoying pleasures from a simple life. There was a part of me that admired him for this and another part that knew he was so different to me, but considering all, I knew that only by reestablishing a relationship with my ex husband would it provide the stability and security needed for myself and our son. With a history and a love that hadn't been fully extinguished, I began to spend more time with my ex husband. Unfortunately what I didn't fully understand at the time was that I still craved adrenaline filled excitement and as I continued my training I was being drawn to competing in a kick boxing ring fight. Boxing and kickboxing in NSW was illegal for women at that time so I knew it would be a difficult path for me to fulfill this dream. My ex husbands honorable and supportive nature encouraged me to chase this endeavor because he knew me well enough to know that my determined nature was going to pursue my dream with a, "nothing will get in my way attitude". My kickboxing fight was an experience that I will never forget. I have only now mentally documented the emotions, thoughts and feelings that I experienced through the course of events that took place the night I had my fight. From the preparation, warm up, the fight and then ultimately the aftermath, I have never experienced such a polarity of emotions. The feelings associated with looking across the ring and knowing that the person eyeing you up and down has one undivided purpose to do you grievous bodily harm is unsettling. I remember that on the night of the fight my body was flooded with adrenaline. I now knew what it felt like to reach the pinnacle of excitement coupled with fear and the need to survive. Just

like the feelings that I imagined my parents experienced when they lived through a war, I too felt the same.

A few weeks after the fight my ex-husband told me that he was leaving me because his needs were not being met in the relationship. I was shocked but at the same time I knew that we had not resolved the problems and the issues that caused us to divorce. Like so many couples it had been easy to rely on the immediate feel good emotions of rekindling a relationship that had once been. We had unknowingly re-entered a relationship for the second time but the same deep rooted problems had eventually resurfaced. Once again I found myself alone but I was still confident that I had a strong driving force to survive on my own. I had finished college and now started counseling. At first I was undecided whether to continue academic studies or break away from the institutional type learning and do my own research through my clients and life experiences. I searched for people that I respected and admired in the fields of counseling, psychology, metaphysics, spirituality and philosophy. Drs Bruce Wilson, Alicia Kirk and Ernie Kriklowicz became my personal teachers and mentors. With their help I devised my own learning path and used their knowledge to help develop my own ideas and concepts on relationships. I developed a strong passion for learning about the quintessential thought that made people choose a behavior that would either enhance their lives or destroy it. My own counseling practice attracted people from all walks of life but there was one common denominator with all my clients and that was they all wanted a life that was pleasing. Everyone had selfish needs and desires, but found it extremely difficult to admit it because of the strong societal beliefs that being selfish was bad.

Finally my pursuit to seek adrenaline type sports and romantic relationships that mimicked the same feelings had come to a halt. I had had enough. I was tired both physically and emotionally. I was single and decided that I wasn't going to even entertain having a relationship for some time until I was sure that I totally understood the dynamics that constituted a happy and rewarding relationship. I absorbed myself in my work in the pursuit of unraveling people's selfishness in all areas of their lives. I wanted to know what was the nature of motivation and what influence did this have on peoples drive to seek love, verification and success?

Two years later my ex-husband who I saw regularly because of our son approached me to discuss the possibility of giving our relationship another go. I was shocked but at the same time I didn't totally disregard the idea. He had all the qualities that I admired in a man and he was the father of our child. By this stage I had become a relationship expert and I had achieved much success in my counseling practice with people that wanted to make their relationships work. I knew the ins and outs of relationships and I knew how to educate people into learning the dynamics of how to create a

happy and successful relationship. My biggest challenge was could I apply everything that I knew and preached to others to my own relationship?

This time my ex husband and I had a common goal; we not only wanted to make our relationship work and for both of us to be happy, but we wanted to learn together what it would take to do it. Failure this time was not an option. There had been too much hurt and disappointment in the past to go through it all again if the relationship failed. I had the knowledge and the experience to make it work and my ex husband had the willingness to learn and challenge old thinking patterns.

There were difficult times and there still are, however we have grown and developed. We now have gained a mutual respect and admiration for each other as a result of the Selfish Self process. This in turn has created a rewarding, safe and emotionally stable relationship. Re-building a relationship with a turbulent history is difficult but it is possible if you know what to do and you have the desire to work at it. Ten years on our relationship has grown and we both have evolved not only as individuals but as a couple. Our relationship is our most precious possession which we nurture and take delight in as it grows.

It has taken me a life time to finally discover what the value and meaning of love is. It didn't come easily, but I can now say that I know without a doubt what love is. Love is selfish, love is freedom and love is bliss. Everybody strives towards satisfying their own selfish needs. Sometimes we don't know what these are and the decisions made are based on our feelings and not on our true desires. Understanding, knowing and pursuing these selfish desires is what leads us to happiness and contentment in all areas of our lives.