



How This Diet Helped

These Ladies Launch Their Business

Arts & Culture

When it comes to starting a successful business, there is no source of inspiration more powerful than our own personal challenges. Though it can be a vulnerable place to start, when we overcome a challenge or obstacle, we are taught valuable lessons that can be worth sharing. The ability to persevere and emerge from the trying time in a positive way connects us to the problem in a meaningful way and creates an authentic and enduring passion for finding a solution.

My mother, Amelia Kirchoff, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2003. It was devastating news, but I remember thinking at the time that there had to be a reason that this was happening to our family – and that some good would come out of it. Rather than move forward with the doctor-recommended five-year regimen of Tamoxifen – and its potentially harmful side effects, my mother opted for an all-natural remedy. She chose to make the lifestyle switch to a macrobiotic diet featuring healthy, whole foods grown mostly on her farm in Wisconsin. I joined her in solidarity and, eventually, the diet helped her achieve recovery. We chose to remain committed to the macrobiotic diet, but began incorporating special, macrobiotic cookies and bars that my mother homemade. One day my husband suggested that we sell them and that was the moment it clicked – this was the good that would come from our struggle.



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At the time, I was living my dream designing and implementing a Latin program for grade school children in Chicago. I would have never imagined willfully walking away from the career I had worked so hard to achieve. The thought of walking away from my schoolroom had never crossed my mind. With a bachelor's degree in classical languages and a master's degree in education, I took a chance on taking the homemade macrobiotic snacks to a local health food store. That store became GoMacro's first retail customer!

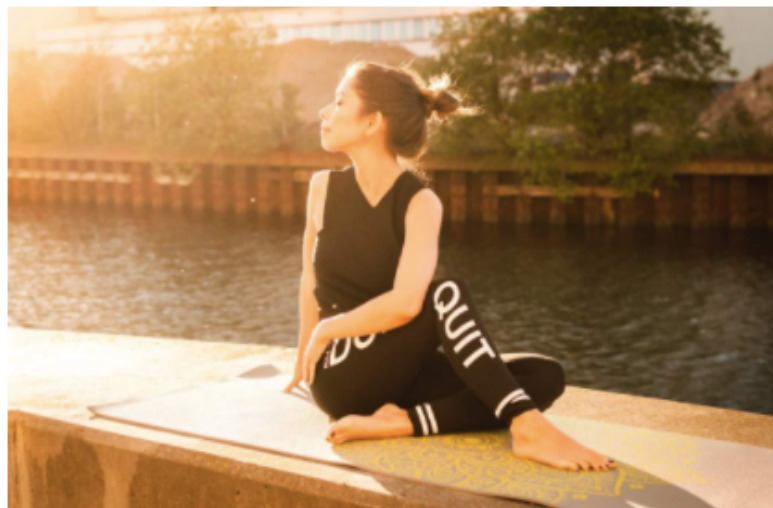
Today, more than 13 years later, my mother and I are co-founders of GoMacro, a 100 percent privately-owned and funded, clean nutrition bar company. We have successfully expanded to more than 20,000 health food stores, grocery chains and fitness centers both in the U.S. and internationally. Along the way, we have seen first-hand how powerful a diet full of plant-based, wholesome nutrition can be and have worked tirelessly to bring those benefits to more people through our bars. Our goal is to ensure that we make the nutritional benefits accessible for everyone to experience what we are so thankful to have discovered. As female business leaders, we want to encourage all women to think about their own struggles or challenges, what they have learned along the way and how they can use those lessons to bring something good into the world. While this is easier said than done, I've outlined a few helpful reminders that help keep me grounded and focused on along the journey.

You are not what happens to you

When faced with a setback in life – a sick parent, financial loss, personal rejection, career disappointments, and so on– it can be easy to let what happened to you start to define who you are or detract from your self-worth. It's important not to fall into the trap of feeling like we are a victim of our circumstance! Keep these things separate and constantly remind yourself that you are valuable and have a lot to offer. If we let outside voices drown out our own, it can be impossible to listen to that voice telling you what can be gained from this experience.

Take time to meditate

One way to quiet those voice is through meditation, which both my mother and I practice regularly – both through stillness and the meditative exercise of yoga. Whichever method is most beneficial to you, try to carve out at least 10 minutes each day to focus on breathing, being still and noticing your thoughts without judgement. It will help you recenter yourself so you can direct your energy toward positive growth and keep your focus on your ultimate goal. It's so easy to become distracted by internal battles and external disruptions in today's world. A brief moment to realign can make all the difference in making the most of the remaining hours in any given day. Again, each of our experiences have vested us with the knowledge and power we need, meditation just helps us tap into the everything garnered along the way.



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Stay focused on helping others

Once you discern how you can best utilize what you have learned to create a solution for others facing similar challenges, it's important not to lose sight of the gift you can now pay forward. Human beings are social creatures and it comes naturally for most of us to want to help out in our community. If we lose sight of that goal as our careers grow increasingly more demanding, we will lose sight of what we need to be truly successful – and equally fulfilled. With a foundation the rose from adversity, we understand the impact positivity can have on lives. For us, it remains of utmost importance to remember our root as we grow to affect change in an increasing number of lives. At GoMacro, in addition to creating better access to clean, plant-based nutrition for more people, we remain committed to donating proceeds of our various “Give Back” MacroBars to certain philanthropic organizations we believe in. In 2017, we were fortunate enough to raise \$53,000 for a variety of charitable causes and we hope to continue to increase that number in the years to come.

In my experience, remembering these simple guidelines has helped me turn a negative moment into a lifetime of positivity. It has been a life altering change that neither of us could have predicted – and a profitable one at that! Businesses born from struggles and setbacks are the ones most able to connect with consumers on a human level and create real solutions to real problems that can affect our world.