

This is the **DO IT SCARED PODCAST** with Ruth Soukup, **EPISODE NUMBER 34**. On today's episode, we are going to talk with author, podcaster, and life coach, Michael Sandler, about daring to shine that light inside you, even when life throws some pretty big hurdles your way.

Welcome to the Do It Scared podcast. I'm your host, **RUTH SOUKUP**, and each week on the show we will talk about how to face your fears, overcome obstacles, and, most importantly, how to take action and create a life you love.

Today's episode is brought to you and made possible by the world's very best tool for managing your time and getting your life in order: the Living Well Planner. Created by yours truly, the Living Well Planner is designed to help you organize your time, manage your budget, plan your meals and your to-do list, and crush your goals, all in one place. It literally is the tool that keeps me sane every day, and it can absolutely do the same for you. You can find it online at livingwellplanner.com. And be sure to use our promo code do it scared to save \$10 on your order in our special offer just for podcast listeners.

Hey, there, and welcome back to the show. As always, my name is Ruth Soukup, and I am the founder of Living Well Spending Less and the Living Well Planner, as well as the founder of Elite Blog Academy, and the New York Times' bestselling author of five, very soon-to-be six, books.

In today's episode, we are going to be talking to the incredibly inspiring Michael Sandler, host of the Inspire Nation podcast. Now, I've had the honor of being a guest on Michael's podcast not once but twice, and he is always so much fun and so positive and so uplifting and so high energy and so inspiring. And so I was actually shocked to learn just how much he has actually been through in his life and how much he has had to overcome to get to where he is today. His story is pretty incredible, and I have no doubt that you will be inspired in ways you never thought possible. And ultimately, that's exactly what this podcast is all about. It's about taking the steps that will help us overcome our biggest challenges and our biggest hurdles so that we can create a life we love, because in the end, courage doesn't mean that we're never afraid; instead, courage is being scared but taking action anyway, despite our fear. It's putting one foot in front of the other, even when we're not quite sure where the path is going to lead.

All right guys, so just a couple more things before we dive into all the goodness of today's episode. First, if you have not done this already, you can download our "Do It Scared" manifesto to remind yourself to start living your own life of courage right now. This manifesto is so inspiring, and it's the perfect thing to tape up on your mirror or on your desk, whatever. It's very cute, and you can get it by texting **DOITSCARED** to **44222**, or you can go to our website and get all the show notes for this episode as well as the manifesto at doitscared.com/episode34. Once again, that's either text

DOITSCARED—all one word—to **44222**, or get the show notes and everything else at doitscared.com/episode34.

Also, if you haven't already, please be sure to rate and review the show in iTunes, and while you're there, be sure to subscribe to be notified of new episodes.

And now, without further ado, I am so, so happy to introduce you to the very inspiring, my friend, Michael Sandler.

RUTH: Michael, it is so exciting to actually be interviewing you on my podcast instead of the other way around, so welcome to the Do It Scared podcast. I am actually so excited to have you here today.

MICHAEL: Well, I'm very excited to be here, too, Ruth. And I've got to say, as I was saying off-air, we're over 950 shows into our show, but it has been years since I've been on the other side of the mic.

RUTH: Ooh. This is exciting, then. Don't know what I'm going to throw at you. I actually love being on the, like, dishing-it-out end. It's so much fun.

MICHAEL: You're in the power seat.

RUTH: I am in the power seat, and it feels so good! Feels so good. Okay, so for my listeners who have maybe not heard all of your 900 episodes, can you just start with a little introduction? Tell us a little bit about what you do, who you are, where you've been, and what makes you tick.

MICHAEL: So, that's a very comprehensive question because I've reinvented myself several times over, so I'll try to give the express version, which is invention number one was a professional-level cyclist, Olympic trainee center-trained speed skater—not the best one but was working on it. Raced in Europe for a few years cycling, got injured, came back to the States, wandered around with PTSD for many years, got better, got things figured out, got healthy again from an injured back—seven years of substantial back pain. Went back to grad school—I was coaching athletes at the time—went back to grad school, got an MBA, got a second masters in computers, came out wanting to help students with learning disabilities of something that I was challenged with was an ADD squirrel on crack and had learned how to deal with that while getting two simultaneous accelerated masters degrees. Wrote a book called College Confidence with ADD to help students with attention deficit disorder, gave national talks on it, was a featured speaker on it, coached on it, then got into life coaching. And then did a 5,000-mile, 40-day solo unsupported bike ride across the country to help people with learning disabilities, and tromped around in Congress with my cycling shoes on for getting help for people who needed it, and then was sponsored by Rollerblade to do an inline skate across the country the following year to help students

with learning disabilities, and ended up with NDE number one in training, after a father stepped out on a bike path in front of me, teaching his baby how to walk.

RUTH: Oh.

MICHAEL: That radically changed the course of my life. I was on a helping path, but it radically shifted everything. On top of that, I was told I'd be lucky to keep my leg. I'd probably never be able to run again; be lucky to walk again. And it wasn't until I stripped off my shoes and felt the earth and be able to heal and get balanced again, but I couldn't do those things. So I ended up becoming a barefoot runner for no intention other than to heal. Wife came into my life, who I'd heard at a meditation center, Jessica Lee. Knew immediately that she was the one. She told me, "I'm not a runner, you'll never get me to run, and I hate running." And then a few months later, there she was, starting our company RunBare—she was running barefoot—and had us write our first bestseller, Barefoot Running, together, which became the number-one exercise and fitness book on Kindle for nine months running.

RUTH: Wow!

MICHAEL: Got into athletic coaching again, particularly barefoot running, barefoot walking. Traveled all around the country and all around the world doing that, ended up moving to Maui after my service dog Sowa passed away, filmed a DVD on barefoot running there, stayed there several years. Jessica got very, very sick. This'll lead into, I'm sure, all sorts of questions later on. We got crushed, moved back to the East Coast for her to heal. We were financially broken, we were physically broken, and we're going, "What are we going to do?" But we had been recording a program, a beautiful program, called Mindful Running—mindfulrunning.org, in fact—and we had been recording some interviews for what turned out to be I guess some sort of a summit. It was supposed to be just some bonus interviews, and 40-someodd interviews later—and Jessica is the editor—she's going, "Oh god, stop. Please stop." I'm like, "Wow, this is really fun." Fast forward. We're on the East Coast. We're living in her childhood 8 x 10 bedroom so that she can heal so we can get our lives back on track. We're going, "What do we do?" And the idea for Inspire Nation came about, which is a whole story, but the idea to start a show, start a top-level show that will help raise people's vibration, elevate consciousness, and help shift humanity to a next level came about. And we were off to the races. And now I do life coaching with every different type of person under the sun. We are 950 shows in. We've had Who's Who in self-help. We're so glad we've had you twice on the show. And it has been a phenomenal journey. We've turned everything around. We have an incredibly successful business. We've

doubled our income in the last year alone.

RUTH: Wow.

MICHAEL: And everything's just been an amazing rocket ship. It's taken work, but it's been a phenomenal journey. Oh! And somewhere in there, 2013, on book tour number two, I had NDE number two. And that's a whole other story.

RUTH: So, what is NDE?

MICHAEL: Near-death experience.

RUTH: Near-death experience. Okay. I'm not up on the acronym.

MICHAEL: I stopped breathing and started to go away.

RUTH: Ooh. Okay. We're going to talk more about that. Your journey actually makes me feel like I need to take a nap. I was very exhausted listening to it. Like, you're a high-energy person. I mean, I knew that just from having been on your show two times. You have a lot of energy, but listening to some of the things that you do, that you've done in your life, my gosh, you're like really high energy. Where does all that energy come from?

MICHAEL: I really couldn't tell you, Ruth. I guess—

RUTH: It's just the way you're made.

MICHAEL: —we're all gifted with different things.

RUTH: Yes.

MICHAEL: That's what I have. Part of my journey has been how can I bottle that energy or tame that energy, or between you and me—

RUTH: Channel it.

MICHAEL: —and whoever else is listening, my wife is a kitty cat. She's a skittish kitty cat. If I bring this energy to her, sorry, everybody, I will freak her out. So she's been my greatest teacher—

RUTH: Interesting.

MICHAEL: —on how I get calmer—

RUTH: Interesting.

MICHAEL: —how I get quieter. I've meditated for over 20 years now, so I can harness it. I can turn it on and off. But I've had to learn how to meter

that energy.

RUTH: Hm. You know, we all have our own cross to bear, don't we.

MICHAEL: So, but, it works for me, and I do get a lot done, and I'm actually quite proud that I also take a lot of time in the non-doing as well.

RUTH: Oh. So, let's talk about these NDEs, as you call them, the near-death experiences, because these are—you have had some pretty serious things happen. So talk about the first one. What happened exactly? Give us a little more detail about that one.

MICHAEL: So, the first one, I had finished a skating session, and I had taken off my skates, put my feet in a mountain creek to kind of cool them off. I joke and say there's probably steam coming up off of them. And I was praying for safety and guidance for my upcoming journey. In fact I'd been listening to an audio book by Dr. Wayne Dyer, *Inspiration*, talking about how everything in life happens for a reason. Was thinking about that, meditated, laced up my skates, said, "Go slow, Michael. It's a Sunday. You're on a bike path. There may be tourists out now. It's later in the day." And then I rounded the first turn slowly, but it was a slightly downhill turn, and a father had just parked across from the bike path and was stepping out—he didn't even know it was a bike path—while teaching his baby how to walk. And I like to say that I had a choice to make: hit the baby or hit the deck. I'm not sure there was any choice in the matter. I threw myself up and back to try to stop myself from hitting the baby. And it was kind of like an Olympic high jumper. I would have done him proud, you know, up and over the bar. And I landed. I remember being in the air going, "I wonder if I'm still going to be able to do my skate across the country." And before I could finish the thought, I landed on my hip, my body kept rotating, and I exploded everything, basically from my hip down to my knee, and my lower arm as well.

RUTH: Oh my gosh. So, then what?

MICHAEL: So, instant bliss. It's the craziest thing.

RUTH: Really?

MICHAEL: There was no—as far as I know, there was no moment of blacking out. In fact, all the, excuse me, EMTs, when they came, they're like, "Did you hit your head? Who's president? What's the date?" And I'm like, "I didn't hit my head." But it was like time stood still, and it was a moment of—just the most beautiful moment in the world. Everything was perfect. Everything was incredibly special. Everything was amazing, which is wild to say because I had to then, as I came to, take my left leg and flop it over my right because there were pieces

of bone sticking into my femoral artery, and if I didn't do that, it would have pierced it, and I'd be gone. But I look and the baby's okay, the dad's okay, the sun's still shining, and I had the most beaming ear-to-ear grin in the world.

RUTH: Really.

MICHAEL: It was a complete shift of my beingness. I went back for a good seven years to that spot afterwards. In fact, there's in the bark, it looks like a handprint, where I would go to this tree right by where I fell, and I would put my hand there and pray each year and give thanks, because as far as I can tell in my beingness, in my wisdom, in who I am, Michael 1.0 ended, and Michael 2.0 came about.

RUTH: Interesting. So, obviously, you had a huge healing process after that. Did that feeling stay with you the whole time? Like, there was never a moment of just being angry or upset or why me, why did this happen to me, why do I have to deal with this; it's not fair. Like, none of that?

MICHAEL: No, no, no. None at—for the accident itself, none of that. And I was gifted with a titanium rod through my femur, a titanium rod through my hip, and all sorts of other fun stuff. But, no. I did have a fiancé who had been overseas. She was a professional athlete. She was out of the country at the time, and two weeks later she broke up with me—

RUTH: Oh.

MICHAEL: —in the most weirdest, bizarre, third-person fashion. That left me reeling for a bit. So I call that time period in my life “the festivities.” But the accident itself I knew was an incredible gift, and I knew—I'd been listening to Wayne Dyer, talking about how everything in life happens for a reason. Here I am, you know, a few minutes later, broken on the trail; there must be a reason for it.

RUTH: Wow.

MICHAEL: And so I fully believe something incredible would come out of it, one; and second, something incredible had to come out of it if I was to survive. I had to make a choice that this would be incredibly positive to have the energy to be able to rally the troops of mind and body to overcome this accident.

RUTH: Mm. So you made that choice.

MICHAEL: Yeah.

RUTH: Obviously. That's incredible. Okay, so let's talk about NDE number two.

MICHAEL: So, number two, I was on a book tour for Barefoot Walking. So, Barefoot Running had been outrageously successful. We had a two-book deal with Random House. And it's interesting; the book was beautiful to write. Loved it, loved it, loved it. But then a series of events took place, starting with a very bizarre book cover. I call it the Headless Horseman. The first cover, Jessica and I are running together, light and free. It's amazing for Barefoot Running. The second cover, they used a driveway shot of me from the neck down of just me walking. And I'm going, "What is this?" And I couldn't get my agent to do anything about it. She's like, "Oh, Random House knows what they're doing. It's fine." And I'm like, "But there's no joy. There's no anything. There's a headless person on the cover!"

RUTH: Book covers are fun conversations, aren't they?

MICHAEL: Oh my god. And it was just a photo, supposed to be a photo of me walking barefoot, showing form. It was never supposed to be—that was the start of one thing led to the next, led to the next, to where it felt like water flowing uphill. For this book tour, we had organized with a national chain of stores who would bring me in, organize everything, take care of everything. They laid off all of the employees who were organizing the event.

RUTH: Oh my gosh.

MICHAEL: That's a bad sign.

RUTH: Yeah.

MICHAEL: We had an RV that we were going to be using for the duration. The transmission broke on it.

RUTH: Oh no.

MICHAEL: That's a bad sign. Thing after thing until finally Jessica's like, "I'm out. You're doing it alone."

RUTH: Really? Like, she just could not deal with it anymore.

MICHAEL: She knew. She was listening to her heart, which said, "This is water flowing uphill. You need to heed these things." I was listening to my head, which said, "This is so important. This is what we need to do. We need to slay the dragon. I need to martyr myself. I need to go out and put myself out there." Everything went wrong on the tour that could have. There was engine problems, electrical problems. There're three days, there was no heat in the vehicle where I'm in below-freezing temperatures in this RV that I did rent. It got broken into; all my electronics stolen. Two car accidents the same day.

RUTH: No way.

MICHAEL: I said I surrender; I'll quit. Then the next day I was convinced to keep going. A few days later, the vehicle's teetering on two wheels in a national forest and almost tipped over. And on and on until I finally got the message, and I called Jessica, and I said, "Come help me get the RV back. I give up."

RUTH: Mm.

MICHAEL: "I really do give up." And so she flew out to Colorado, met me there. We're driving it back to California where it's rented, and then the day before we returned it, my "I got to get 'er done" gene or something started kicking back on, and I'm scheming and I'm planning and I'm coming up with ideas, and I leave this beautiful place we could've camped at night, because I'm now back in slay-the-dragon mode. And the next day I went out on a hike with her, Horsetail Falls, just outside Lake Tahoe. And I swam in the most blissful underwater, freezing water, a little cavern as snowmelt runoff that would come off of this waterfall and created this cavern over millions of years. And so I was freezing cold, so I put on my slick, soled, leather-soled sandals to hike back to the RV. At one point we stopped. I told Jessica how much I loved her, how much I was looking forward to having kids with her. She hops across the creek in front of me. I hop across the creek. I step onto a rock. I guess I had sand on the bottom of my moccasin, and my feet went up into the air, and I landed on a pyramid-shaped rock, on my right thigh, just below my hip, and it exploded all of the bones.

RUTH: Oh my gosh.

MICHAEL: And I watched my hip stop and my leg continue. It was like a cartoon. And I knew what had happened, and then my body stopped breathing, and I yelled to Jessica before I stopped breathing, I said, "Oh no. Not again."

RUTH: Really.

MICHAEL: And—

RUTH: Did you remember saying that, or did she tell you later that you said it?

MICHAEL: I remember screaming that, and then I stopped breathing. And there was no booming voice. There was a bright light, but I'm figuring that was the sunlight. I couldn't tell you. I stopped breathing, and I had a choice: you can go into bliss—life is good, everything will be fine, life not as you know it—or you can fight to come back and be with Jessica. And I had just yelled to Jessica, "Oh no. Not again," and I know she's coming back, running for me, and I couldn't leave

her. And I had to fight to get myself breathing again, and I had to consciously—my body, it wasn't deep, but my body was stuck from the waist down in a freezing-cold creek for an hour until the first rescue workers could get there. And I had to force myself for every single breath. I would look at the sun, and I would breathe in light, send out love; breathe in light, send out love. And I just kept doing it to keep myself going. I remember a whole bunch of bystanders came. And at one point, I guess I'm high on light and love, and I'm trying to sing, "I Can See Clearly Now." "I can sing clearly now..." And if I stopped—

RUTH: Oh my gosh.

MICHAEL: —focusing on the breath, I stopped breathing. When the EMTs got there, they couldn't get a blood pressure on me.

RUTH: Oh, wow.

MICHAEL: It took two helicopters to get me to the hospital to save my life. It took at least five transfusions of other people's blood. And the wildest, craziest thing out of this: after my first accident, I had the titanium parts—titanium rod through the left leg; titanium rod through the hip—and I had an inch leg-length discrepancy. After the accident, the doctor came in the next day, or doctor's assistant, into the hospital room and said, "How did you get up the x-ray so fast on your website?" "What do you mean? We don't have an x-ray." And he goes, "Yeah. I was just taking a look at it." Well, it turns out—zero odds of this—before the accident, titanium rod, all the titanium parts; after the accident, identical titanium hardware in the second leg and no more leg-length discrepancy. Identical procedure—

RUTH: No way.

MICHAEL: —identical scars, identical everything.

RUTH: Huh. That's incredible. And now your legs are the same length.

MICHAEL: Bingo. The doctor said the accident itself is a one-in-a-million chance, and the odds of—

RUTH: Wow.

MICHAEL: —two of that accident are one to infinity.

RUTH: That's amazing.

MICHAEL: And I look at that as if ever I needed a clear sign or synchronicity that something was meant to be and that there's something more going on here, that was it.

RUTH: I guess. So, after that accident, again you're facing huge recovery time, did you maintain your positivity through that all, or did you go through a low point? How did that all play out?

MICHAEL: That's a great question. Now, the accident, and the reason I think these accidents happened to me is because whatever your belief system is—God, universe, source, inner wisdom, whatever you want to call it—the volume gets cranked up on us as we're not listening, heeding the messages. And it gets cranked up and cranked up until you basically get hit over the head with a 2 x 4, or in my case, the thigh. And after that second accident, I had been really out of balance in life and pushing too far too much. The second accident happened. It was an extremely profound experience, yet I still couldn't fully live in my heart. I was still in my head. And so we got the trifacta. Not an NDE, but I was able to get back on my bike six or eight months later. We were finishing Mindful Running at this point. I'm out on a bike ride. I remember, like, the last thing I want to record for, like, the last video. I'm riding down the hill. We're in Maui, so I lived on the side of a mountain, Haleakala volcano, and I'm riding down this hill, and I don't know how it happened, but my front wheel—I was a professional cyclist, so I was really good handler—the front wheel on my bicycle floats up into the air, I slammed down into the ground, and I broke all the ribs in front of my heart, all of the bones above my heart, and all of the bones in the back, behind my heart. In other words, I was broken open around my heart. That did it. That shot stopped me cold from striving, from driving, from trying to steer the ship. Since then, I'm a radically different person who—I work hard. I work very hard. But I try to stay in flow rather than to work harder or smarter. I try to get in flow. I take steps back. I'm in a continuous state of prayer. I prayed before this interview, I prayed during this interview. I'm continuously trying to stay in that heart space now and to never forget both what happened and, at least for me, what can happen if I don't stay in my heart-centered space. So I have a mantra now: kind, gentle, easy, good. May everything in my life happen kind, gentle, easy, good. And I'm always saying, I'm listening. I hear you. Whatever that means. I'll listen, I'll listen, I'll listen. Kind, gentle, easy, good. Kind, gentle, easy, good. Thank you.

RUTH: So, you think maybe because you were so high energy and so intense with everything that you were doing up until that point, your message had to be a lot more intense also.

MICHAEL: That's a good way to put it. That's a very good way to put it. Yeah. I would say that, and I was, yes, so much energy that I wasn't able to fully step back. We now teach—one of the programs that we teach is on automatic writing. It's a way that you kind of free-form journal in prayer, and words come to you. To do automatic writing, you need to pause in your life and allow space for something to come in. Until

those accidents happened, I wasn't allowing space. There was no room to hear my inner wisdom.

RUTH: Mm-hmm.

MICHAEL: After that, and as I like to talk about healing on the couch from those experiences, I learned to appreciate space, and I learned to invite that in.

RUTH: Hm. And how long ago was the last accident? Several years?

MICHAEL: That would have been, I believe it would have been, was it 2014? Maybe fall of 2013. It was either fall of 2013 or '14. It's all a bit of a blur because that time period was incredibly painful and trying, and then Jessica got walloped being—

RUTH: So, let's talk about Jessica. You guys have been through the wringer, so whap happened with her?

MICHAEL: What happened with her is she was not able to speak her authentic voice, not able to speak her truth. We were going full speed ahead. I admittedly was piling on the work on her. I was doing the work too but piling on her, and we were both out of alignment. And so we made this Mindful Running program about going quiet, focusing on the breath, diving in on the inside, and bringing two precious things together: physical movement with meditation together. Should have been a joyous experience. Supposed to be a month-long process. It turned into a yearlong process with well over 100 different videos, and it was completely draining us. At the same time, she had been getting sick without us knowing it. Now, on Maui—Maui's the next island over from the Big Island. Big Island had new vents opening on their volcano over there. And so there was this occasionally sulfuric acid—they called it vog—coming over in the air to Maui. You'd want to close off your windows, shutter in tight, put a wet towel over a fan so that it would soak up the sulfuric acid out of the air, and kind of hunker down. When she would get sick, she would get brain fog. She would get exhausted. She would have problems with her lungs. We would think it's the vog and seal her up in the house. It wasn't until near before where we left, we realized if we brought her down to town, we thought we were just getting below the level of the vog, particularly if we take her into, like, an air-conditioned Whole Foods or something. She'd feel much better. She'd be like—what do they call it?—a Chatty Cathy. Talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. And then we'd get her home and she'd be a zombie and have to sleep for the rest of the day.

RUTH: Huh.

MICHAEL: It turns out, we found out a couple weeks before we left—at this point, we're wiped out financially because we couldn't run the business with, like, 0.5 of us. A healing Michael going and no Jessica at this point. We're wiped out financially, we're going to have to leave. It's my—I think in one of your pre-questions you talked about a worst nightmare, a worst situation. I said, "Anything but New Jersey. Anything but New Jersey." That's where she grew up.

RUTH: Oh no.

MICHAEL: And here we are going to New Jersey. What you think about—what you resist, persists.

RUTH: Mm-hmm.

MICHAEL: We found, as they were cleaning the house, an inch-thick carpet of black mold. The whole upper level of the house with these vaulted ceilings. And so we were living, and it had been really rainy that year. Even our coconut tree died of black mold.

RUTH: Oh, wow.

MICHAEL: We were living in—and so every time that there was vog or bad weather, we would seal her up in a black-mold environment.

RUTH: Oh, man. Oh, wow. So, you left, and then she got better, then. As soon as she was out of that environment, she got better.

MICHAEL: It was a process. She did. She bounced back quickly. It was about eight months until the light was really on. But we got back to her childhood home. We were literally living in her 8 x 10 or so childhood bedroom. She has good old-school Chinese parents who were living on two separate mattresses in her childhood bedroom.

RUTH: Oh my gosh.

MICHAEL: And then, once we started the show, her brother—he'd moved out many years before. It was just strange that we're back, living in her childhood house—we used her brother's room as the "studio" to start—

RUTH: For the—to start the show. So, I would think that that would have to have been your real low point, if you're to look back. I can look back and go, "Mm, yeah. That was rock bottom for me," at, like, one point in my life. Do you feel like that was for you?

MICHAEL: Both. It's a great question. It's a brilliant question. It was both rock bottom, completely wiped out. We didn't even have—we were gifted with a car by my cousin a few months after there. We didn't

even have the means to drive any place. We had her old car there, but we'd been in Maui and so it wasn't registered and there was this whole hoops to get this out-of-state vehicle registered in a different state. So we were literally living on her parents' dime, in her childhood bedroom, with just about nothing. All of our possessions still basically on Maui. We didn't have the money to ship them back. And you could say, "What in the world happened to us?" At the same time, out of that, came the greatest gift in the world. I wasn't as clear of how long it would take to take place, but at that point I had such a strong belief system, and I was doing my automatic writing every day, that this will be a magnificent turnaround for us, and we are exactly where we're supposed to be. Easy? No. Humbling? Yes. Between you and I, humiliating? Yes. When her dad or parents are coming, talking to me about how are you going to take care of my daughter, or our daughter, and I'm like, I, you know, it was just—

RUTH: Yeah, and it's going to be great, because people really understand when you want to start a podcast. Everybody's always so supportive of things like that.

MICHAEL: Oh, yeah. Well, they wanted me—I love them dearly, and the show wouldn't exist without them, and we are tremendous now, but we couldn't have gotten there without them. They wanted me to either become an elementary school or high school teacher. They said, "We know you can teach. You write books." Basically, they actually wrote it out in a contract to me: life is hard; you can't have what you want; you need to give up your dreams.

RUTH: Really. That's amazing. So, how did you—

MICHAEL: They were old school, from immigrants, which means—

RUTH: Yeah.

MICHAEL: —they know how to work very hard.

RUTH: Right.

MICHAEL: They know what it takes.

RUTH: So, I can totally picture this. I mean, they've got this guy in their house, who basically has—now their daughter is penniless with this guy, and he wants to start a—how did you, like, most people would not have kept going. Most people would have gone and got—if you wanted to stay with Jessica, which you did, you loved her, you knew she was the one, most people at that point, especially given everything that you had been through and just having things not turn out and one thing after another, most people would have gone out and got the

teaching job. What was the single catalyst, if you can even pinpoint one? What kept you going despite all those odds?

MICHAEL: A belief in who I was or what will come forth if I stay on path, or who is inside of me that gets to come out and what I am here to do.

RUTH: So were you ever just terrified? Did it keep you up at night, or was that belief so strong—

MICHAEL: Oh, I was terrified, and beyond terror was shame and humiliation. You know, these talks were the most uncomfortable talks in the world. And I had nothing I could say. What's my track record? I'm wiped out.

RUTH: Right.

MICHAEL: Your daughter is very sick. I can't say, "Well, I'm a ..."

RUTH: You had nothing.

MICHAEL: Okay, you were a bestselling author. Where are you now?

RUTH: Wow.

MICHAEL: So my belief system kept me going. The automatic writing kept me going. The time in the forest kept me going. Jessica believed in me, too. She was scared out of her mind, but she was sleeping 90 percent of the time, so it was just more on me to figure this out at this point.

RUTH: Wow.

MICHAEL: And so I did what I do know very well, which is whether it's in sport or in life, I'm a heck of an ultra-endurance athlete. And so I said, "All right. What's it going to take to have one of the top shows out there?" And I said, "All right. We've got to get to the top of the leaderboard, the top in the New and Noteworthy right away. What's that going to take?" It's going to take loading the queue with dozens of interviews and being ready to go and having it a strong strategy. And so I was recording one to, crazily I think, a couple times, three-a-day shows over that summer. They gave us six months to be income positive. And then we started the show. I was scared to start. We had to finally choose a date. We were stringing along guests who said, "When's it going to air? When's it going to air?" We chose September 11 to bring some light to the world as the day we would upload to iTunes. We looked at the Chinese calendar, at the Zodiac, at the Farmer's Almanac. September 14 is when it would go live, which was considered a very auspicious day. And in fact, her dad looked at the Chinese calendar and said, "Good day." So we're like, cool. We launched. We became right away one of the top shows out there in

self-help for New and Noteworthy. We grew quickly. From then, show took off, but six months in, no income yet.

RUTH: Not cash positive.

MICHAEL: So, podcasts aren't exactly cash cows, particularly—

RUTH: They're not.

MICHAEL: —in the beginning.

RUTH: No, no.

MICHAEL: You're not making millions right now from your podcast?

RUTH: You know, not from the podcast. The podcast is 100 percent a passion project for me right now.

MICHAEL: So, and people say, "Who are your sponsors?" And to this day we say, "We are."

RUTH: Yes.

MICHAEL: So, you know, we could have Burger King or something, and, no, we are our sponsors. So, six months in, Jessica's mom—a little over 70 years old, working full-time-plus at her job—comes to us and says, "Am I going to have to get a second job?"

RUTH: Oh, that hurts.

MICHAEL: Oh, Ruth.

RUTH: Oh, that really hurts.

MICHAEL: That was the fire I needed under my butt.

RUTH: Oh, well, bless her, then.

MICHAEL: I had been saying, and I had the track record of being an extremely successful, helpful coach. But I believed in one thing at a time. If you coach, coach. If you run a show, run a show. And we started the show at a daily show so that we could get to the top of the charts. We continued at being a daily show, and we had a second meditation show on top of it. So we were producing 14 shows a week.

RUTH: That's a lot of shows.

MICHAEL: And I'm going, "How in the world am I going to coach?" But when Mom comes to you and tells you this, you reevaluate everything.

RUTH: Yep.

MICHAEL: The meditation show, gone. We love you, everybody, but we're going to mix in meditations into our main show; we have to focus. I flipped the switch on for coaching. Everything changed. It was like we were green lighted from the universe.

RUTH: That's amazing.

MICHAEL: Took a little while for the coaching clients to come along. We had to figure out our structure and everything. I had to figure out my balance. And eventually I went down to a five-day-a-week show, so I have weekends. And now I actually have weekends to play, which is just crazy to me, and I'm still getting used to this. But everything took off. We've made programs since then. I've written several books, but I'm waiting, actually, to put them out until I can get some more help, to get more of the team on board. But that last fire under my butt, from my mother-in-law, was just what I needed.

RUTH: I love it. I love it. Oh my gosh. That would probably light a fire under my butt, too, I've got to tell you.

MICHAEL: Not a happy moment. And it's the second time in our lives. After we released Barefoot Running and it became the number-one exercise and fitness book on Kindle worldwide nine months straight, we came back from a tour of Southeast Asia to find that our book sales had been completely stopped on Amazon.

RUTH: Hm.

MICHAEL: Amazon had flipped some switches which helped to make more of a profit—won't even go there—but our book was squashed. Just gone.

RUTH: Oh no.

MICHAEL: And for several months, we were—first off, we came back before Christmas with no income, and we were just a mess, and that spring we're going, Jessica's like, "You're going to have to stop writing your next book. We're going to have to sell the first book." And I'm like, "I'm a failure if I do that. I can't do it. I can't do it. No, no, no." Then I allowed into the idea, like allowing into New Jersey, and we ended up having a 10-publisher bidding war—

RUTH: No way.

MICHAEL: —for a two-book deal, which was off the charts.

RUTH: Wow.

MICHAEL: It was amazing.

RUTH: Wow.

MICHAEL: So, out of those moments when you're saying, "No, I can't. No, I can't. Anything but that," if you allow into it, "No, not New Jersey," and then you get to New Jersey and you go, "All right. I'm open. Let's just go for it," magical things happen.

RUTH: Mm. So true. I love that. So, wrapping up, couple questions I want to ask you. First of all, what is the best piece of advice that you've ever received, and why?

MICHAEL: That's from Jack. He was my best man at 89 years young, and he passed away. He said that most men passed away six months after retirement, so he would never retire. A little after 93, he "retired"—I guess I'll put that in quotes— from driving the youngsters around, in his words, from the nursing home bus. He drove the bus until 93.

RUTH: Oh my gosh.

MICHAEL: He retired. Six months later, he checked out. Before he checked out, he watched our lives on Maui out of alignment, and in his words, he said, "Damn it, Michael." Something to the effect of, "You've got to get your life in order." And he wanted us to go and stop working, and go—he wanted us to visit Colorado—actually where we're living now—and to visit a monastery and see if we could volunteer there for six months to hit the reset button on our lives.

RUTH: Really.

MICHAEL: We visited. And it was a profound spiritual experience, which I think saved our marriage because we were not in the healthy, happy place we are now. We did not hit the pause button at the time. I got hit over the head with a couple more 2 x 4s, but now I get it, and I understand that when you are out of alignment, you need to get your foot off of the gas as fast as you can and pause for as long as it takes. And the fight-or-flight response of this system here says you must go, go, go; that's the way to succeed; that's the way to survive. But we learned it's the opposite. It's getting out of the going, getting out of the doing, and going into the being, the pause, you're going to find the answers and the next step.

RUTH: I love that. So, what are you working on right now that has you super fired up?

MICHAEL: Two projects, because one is never good enough. So, you know, we have our daily show, of course. We have our coaching. We're

releasing in just two weeks our Magical Evening Routine program, because the best way that you can jumpstart your day is to get a great night's rest and to set yourself up for success the night before.

RUTH: In the evening. Oh! Okay, let me ask you about this.

MICHAEL: Yes.

RUTH: I believe that to be true, or to have a super-positive morning, because I'm very much a morning person. I get up at 4:00 a.m. I jump out of bed. I don't even have to set my alarm at 4:00 a.m. every day. But I have always wanted to do things in the evening to set myself up for success the next day. Cannot get myself to do it. Come 6:00, I am basically a zombie. How do you do that? How do you—

MICHAEL: Sort the zombiness. Sort the zombiness. You've got the most amazing Day-Timer or organizer in the world. Look at your organizer before 6:00, before the energy goes down, first and foremost. Surf the wave of your evening energy. Eat earlier so that your body has time to rest and digest before you go to sleep.

RUTH: Okay.

MICHAEL: And then you can do some wind-down activities. Make your evening a ritual. Make it like a Zen-zone ritual. There's a time I turn the lights down. There's a time I do some gentle journaling, maybe even by candlelight.

RUTH: Oh.

MICHAEL: You know, maybe there's a time that I take a salt bath or have some aromatherapy going on in the house.

RUTH: So you're not talking necessarily about planning your day the next day and doing all that stuff. You're talking about actually having a wind-down routine.

MICHAEL: Earlier in the evening.

RUTH: I like that.

MICHAEL: The planning for the day has to take place earlier because everything is a stimulant. So, what is that? Everything brings you up or takes you down.

RUTH: Yes.

MICHAEL: If you go to plan right before going to bed, you've now kicked your brain into high gear. Your body knows better. It's like, "No, Ruth. We

want to get up and be happy at 4:00. If you have our gears spinning at 7:30, looking at that at the last thing, if I'm doing a Ben Franklin exercise, and the last thing I do is look at the Day-Timer, then I'm going to be staring at the ceiling for hours because my mind is going to be going to work on it." So you plan that in earlier. However, if you go to bed and you instead want to daydream about the future and visualize this magnificent future and the essence of it, not necessarily the details, but the freedom you're going to feel, how much positivity there is in being able to help others, and be able to travel the world, and you start putting these magical things into your mind right before sleep, well, now instead of your subconscious first keeping you awake worrying about things and then when you go to sleep it still work on your Day-Timer, instead it's going to try to help to build the most positive world possible for you.

RUTH: I love it. I'm going to try that. Okay, so, this is the what program?

MICHAEL: Magical Evening Routine program.

RUTH: Magical Evening.

MICHAEL: And it can be found at inspirationuniversity.com—

RUTH: Okay.

MICHAEL: —where we also have our automatic writing program, and people like you and me, because I am such a strong believer in a morning routine, where you can also find our Magical Morning Routine program.

RUTH: Ah! There we go. Magical Morning, Magical Evening.

MICHAEL: Yes.

RUTH: Awesome. And then, we can find all of that at inspiration.com?

MICHAEL: That would be at inspirationuniversity.com.

RUTH: inspirationuniversity.com. Okay.

MICHAEL: That's where we have all our classes. And then inspirationshow.com is where you'll find the show. And the second piece, I'll tell you real briefly what we're working on, is a 52-week program, starting in January, 52 weeks of happiness.

RUTH: Ooh.

MICHAEL: So that you'll get a class weekly, you'll get minor homework weekly, we make everything so it's flowing like water downhill. We want to

make it as easy as possible—

RUTH: Nice.

MICHAEL: —to set you up for your greatest year ever.

RUTH: I love that. Happiest year of your life, 2019.

MICHAEL: Woohoo!

RUTH: All right. Well, Michael, thank you so much for being on the show. It was so good to hear your story, and all the stuff that you've been through is so inspiring, and the work that you're doing is so amazing in the world, and you're bringing so much light and joy to people everywhere, and it's just really amazing to see everything that you've been through and how you've channeled that—finally found a way to channel all that energy into something so incredibly positive, and so grateful for you. And all of your stuff we will make sure we include on the show notes, all the links to everything that we talked about—

MICHAEL: Thank you.

RUTH: —so you can definitely check that out. And thank you, again, for being here today.

MICHAEL: And thank you for being such a gracious host, such an amazing host, and for guiding me so kind, gentle, easy, good through these waters, Ruth.

RUTH: You're so welcome.

MICHAEL: You are shining bright.

RUTH: Thank you.

Okay, guys, so don't forget that if you would like to grab our "Do It Scared" manifesto or to get the show notes for this episode, with all the links that we talked about, you can find it all at doitscared.com/episode34, or you can get just the manifesto by texting **DOITSCARED** to **44222** right now. Once again, get all the show notes at doitscared.com/episode34, or get just the manifesto by texting **DOITSCARED** to **44222** on your phone right now.

And then, before we go, I just want to say, as always, that I love hearing from you. I love getting your emails. I love getting your messages on Instagram. So if you have any questions about what we talked about today, or any topics that you want to see addressed on the Do It Scared podcast, please feel free to reach out via email by filling out our form at doitscared.com, or you can follow me on Instagram at [@RUTHSOUKUP](https://www.instagram.com/RUTHSOUKUP).

And that about does it for this episode of the Do It Scared podcast. Thank you so

much for joining me today. And if you liked what you heard, once again please be sure to leave a review on **ITUNES**, and then, if you're really feeling motivated, share a screenshot of your review at **doitscared.com** for a chance to win our fabulous "Do It Scared" T-shirts or mugs. And then, while you're there, be sure to subscribe to be notified of upcoming episodes.

And speaking of upcoming episodes, be sure to join me next week as we talk about self-care and about what it means to actually make time for self-care in your life. We're going to talk about some practical things you can start implementing, and perhaps, most importantly, we're going to talk about how to stop feeling guilty about it. Now, if you've been feeling overstressed and overwhelmed and on the verge of burning out, then this is one episode that you do not want to miss. And I will catch you then.