



Feel the pain once and for all.

Feel the pain once and for all.

Feel the pain once and for all.

That's what I chanted over and over again while rocking my body back and forth.

I was doing this on what I used to call "The Big Black Couch." The Big Black Couch was one of those black leather couches that furnish many unimaginative bachelors' living rooms.

This took place during one particular Christmas holiday season. I basically rocked back and forth on that couch from Christmas Eve all the way until January 2nd repeating those words . . .

Feel the pain once and for all.

Feel the pain once and for all.

Feel the pain once and for all.

I bet I didn't get up more than a dozen times during that ten-day stretch.

That's probably not what you'd expect from a six-time national champion who had fans all over the world who benefited greatly from his passion, knowledge, and success in bodybuilding, is it?

I certainly didn't.

The truth is that many of my Christmas holiday seasons were similar. My life ran in predictable, structured patterns when I was a competitive bodybuilder.

This was just the downside of my predictable, structured patterns.

Everything that happens in our lives can and will serve us in one way, shape, or form. It's just a matter of time before we realize it.

I saw these challenges as part of the price I was forced to pay in order to become successful. The real value in what I learned from my challenges came many years later.

That's why I'm so passionate about sharing my story with you. If you can relate to any of the experiences I share, you'll benefit greatly. I want you to benefit from my experiences sooner than you would on your own.

"How did I end up in this place?" I'd often ask myself on the Big Black Couch.

Soon, my contest preparation would begin. I'd cheer up. Become passionate and focused again. Then, I usually met a woman who was drawn to that powerful, charismatic side of me. She'd enthusiastically and willingly go on the contest preparation journey with me.

She had no idea what she was getting into. She'd start hating it within a few months and begin to resent me.

I'd start resenting her too for not letting me do what I do best. I'd keep it to myself though.

I'd say whatever I needed to say so that she'd stick around. I feared that the stress caused by a breakup too close to my big show would undermine all of my hard work. A breakup would disrupt my predictable, structured patterns.

I was driven to be the best. Those predictable, structured patterns were far more important than any relationship I was in.

I'd resent her for it though. You can insert any woman's name for the woman in my life back then. It didn't matter. I resented her for forcing me to cave in to her "unfair" pressure. But I had to do what I had to do to be my best onstage.

Being the hardest-working champion was my identity, after all. I was the "Mass Machine." I earned that nickname because my life operated with machine-like precision.

Predictable, structured patterns.

A person will do almost anything to stay consistent with their identity. A person must be careful how they choose to see themselves. Along with all the awesome qualities that come with any identity, there will always be some qualities that aren't awesome. The only question is if this is planned or just happens without a person realizing it.

This pattern happened from January until my contest in July almost every year for 10 straight years. It wasn't like I was a young kid either. My competitive bodybuilding career stretched from my late 20s all the way until my early 40s. Things just didn't intensify to the outrageous level they did until the last ten years.

I'd come back from the contest, eat up a little, and be in a better mood as a result. I was relieved of the incredible pressure I put on myself to be a champion bodybuilder. I'd halfheartedly work on the relationship I was in. I don't know why I even bothered. I was bitter inside thinking that no woman who really cared about me would put me through all of this.

That's what I believed back then.

It usually took a few months for us to break up. It wasn't because I tried to keep us together. It was usually because her effort. Regardless of what I might have believed back then, getting emotionally close to people wasn't one of my strongest qualities.

I'd learn why I was uncomfortable getting too close years later.

I'd learn why pushing away the love and connection I said I wanted was so easy for me.

She wanted to get a return on all the time she invested in me. She went through that rigid schedule where I'd basically starve myself for my "trademarked" striated glutes. I couldn't have been in a good mood. That's impossible. The brain doesn't function well in that calorie-deprived state that I was in for months, regardless what any high-achieving bodybuilder tells himself. The brain needs more food. "What about the drugs bodybuilders take? Couldn't that have affected your moods?" you might be thinking. Nope. I was a drug-free, natural bodybuilder my entire career.

Again, at least ten different names could be inserted everywhere you've previously read the word "she." It didn't matter who she was. I never allowed myself to get close to any of them. I just didn't know why back then.

We'd finally break up in about October. I'd be all alone and back on the Big Black Couch for the holiday season.

I'm sure glad I didn't meet my wife, Carrie, back then. The loving, warm, amazing woman she is wouldn't have stood a chance against the "Mass Machine."

About the rocking back and forth.

That was a nervous habit that I had for as long as I can remember. It was called "bumping my head" by my family members growing up.

Bumping my head was highly discouraged when I was a little boy. I was threatened with severe discipline if I was caught. "Getting a whoopin'" is what it was called. It was just a nicer name for a physical beating. My brother and sisters were recruited by my mother to tell her if I was doing it.

Eventually, they gave up. It was a good thing they did. I needed to sooth myself as a young child. Bumping my head was the way I chose to do it.

I've learned why a person does this type of self-soothing. Through my years of working with men through one-on-one coaching, I've discovered that this is something that's quite common in hard-driving achievers. Maybe these men didn't "bump their head" like I did, but they had some other way they soothed or comforted themselves.

When you are young child, the world makes absolutely no sense to you. It's not your fault. You have no perspective. That comes through experience. Experience you just don't have yet.

Your parents are your protectors. Your parents are perfect in your eyes. You have nothing else to compare them to. They help you makes sense of the world.

They make you feel safe.

Or, they don't.

You'll only keep on relying on them if they are there to make sense of the world.

You'll only come back to them if they make you feel safe.

If they don't, you rely on yourself.

You may develop a pattern of behavior that soothes your fears all on your own.

A self-soother is what it's called.

Imagine getting threatened with a beating as a child because you needed to emotionally soothe yourself. That was the horrible place I was in.

When my mother met my wife for the first time, she asked my wife if I still bumped my head. The weird things is what my mother had to say never really surprised me. But even I found that question to be odd. She told my wife a story I never heard before. She told my wife that she would come into my room as a baby and my crib

would be on the other side of the room. I would bump my head to soothe myself even as a little, helpless baby and I'd move the crib across the room doing so.

I went numb hearing that story as it was told to my wife. I cried inside for the little Skip who needed so badly to be comforted back then. I could pretty much imagine the chaos that was going on in our broken family back then. Although it was never talked about, I honestly was surprised.

A self-soother is born.

In many cases, an achiever is born at the same time.

That's something good that can come out of it. Usually, there's always something good that comes out of every situation in life.

The ability to focus without relying on others is an important quality in an achiever. It's the people who worry about what people think too much who have trouble getting things done.

Achievers are successful. Achievers are driven and disciplined. Achievers love structure and predictability.

Achievers often have a challenge getting close to people too. They often have a challenge putting their faith and trust in other people. They'd rather do things alone whenever possible.

My first memory of life was when I was four years old. I was living with my mother's first husband, for some reason. He was at work. I was there with his son who couldn't have been more than 10 years old and my biological brother, who was 11 months older than me. There was no adult supervision. "Latch key kids" is what we were called back in those days.

There was this raging fire outside our home that sat at the base of a hill. I remember peeking outside a bedroom window and seeing lots of thick, white smoke. Both children and adults were outside making a lot of frantic noise. Loud fire engine sirens were going off.

I was terrified.

I could have ran to wherever the other young boys were in the house. Instead, I jumped on the bed in that room, started bumping my head on the pillow, and yelled "Mom-my . . . Mom-my . . . Mommy" in a rhythmic, structured, predictable pattern.

My mother never came though. She was living 500 miles away with her current husband. I have no idea where my biological father was. He wasn't in my life.

I believe in that moment an achiever was born. Certainly, a self-soother.

I'm certain this was also the birth of the "Mass Machine" inside of me too. I'm certain this is where I developed the mentality that made me a focused, six-time national champion bodybuilder who is admired all over the world for his discipline, work ethic, and ability to focus.

I'm also pretty certain this is what contributed to me sitting all alone on this damn Big Black Couch every Christmas holiday season.

I spent a lot of time on that couch. I spent a lot time trying to figure out why a guy like me always ended up here. I had so many awesome accomplishments behind me and so many promising opportunities in front of me. I just couldn't seem to figure things out.

I was responsible for cultivating my disconnected, arm's length relationships. I wasn't a victim. It wasn't because people don't have your back in life. It wasn't because you just can't trust other people and they'll probably always let you down.

It had nothing to do with other people. It was my own doing. I didn't realize all of this until much later.

In that moment, I could have surrounded myself with people. I had plenty of emotionally distant relationships that I cultivated.

How did all of this hard work and "success" always have me end up here?

I had enough of the empty "is this all there is" feeling inside of me. I knew I had to make some changes. I didn't understand exactly what I needed to do but I was determined to find out.

Just like when I was four years old, I had choices.

I knew I couldn't just put a "band aid" on my challenges any longer. I knew I couldn't resort to my usual quick fixes to make myself feel better.

I knew I couldn't bury myself in my training and eating disciplines. And being a workaholic just for the sake of working hard was no longer going to be option for me either.

So, I sat on my couch all alone. Bumping my head for almost the entire time chanting in a rhythmic, structured, predictable pattern over and over again . . .

Feel the pain once and for all.

Feel the pain once and for all.

Feel the pain once and for all.

Skip La Cour is a coach, speaker, and entrepreneur. He is the creator of the MANformation Confidence and Leadership personal development program for men and was a six-time national champion drug-free bodybuilder. La Cour helps ambitious men understand and execute effective confidence, leadership, and influence skills so that they reach their biggest goals in life with more control, clarity, and focus. Feel free to email Skip at any time at skip@skiplacour.com with your questions and comments.



Would you like to talk privately for 10 minutes absolutely FREE? Schedule 10 minutes to talk with Skip on the phone. Again, it's FREE. He scholarships about four of these 10-minute private phone calls each day. See if there are any time slots available today at www.TalkWithSkip.com.