
THE
CrossFit JOURNAL
VIRTUOSITY

Virtuosity 12: Reconnecting

Jill Zamoyta finds friends and fitness help her rebuild the mind-body link that was severed when she was abused.

By Jill Zamoyta

November 2015



Andie Lopez

I have held this story in the cells of my body for nearly a lifetime. I've questioned every word, wondering whether it should even be said. I know now that I have to speak for those who are still muted by fear, unacquainted with their strength.

I am no longer afraid.

1 of 2



Andie Lopez

Jill Zamoyta (right) found a safety net at Stellar CrossFit in Big Bear Lake, California.

When I was 10, I was molested daily at school by my fifth-grade teacher. I am strong enough to write this because of my journey in CrossFit and the power of love and true acceptance through an extraordinary community that's vastly diverse but also profoundly united.

As a survivor of abuse, it's a common protective mechanism to be able to disassociate your head from your body. While that ability allows one to endure certain horrors, it is ultimately destructive. Disconnection breeds disregard, dissolves faith; I have spent most of my 47 years feeling betrayed by and distrustful of my body.

As CrossFit itself creates strength of body and mind, Serena Carvalho, the head coach and owner at Stellar CrossFit, has likewise forged a sacred space. She expects nothing less than excellence—and not just in our numbers on the board.

The environment at Stellar CrossFit is so transformative because she expects each of us to live the soul of CrossFit every day. This expectation has created a community that heals, inspires and strengthens.

At Stellar, we have a 12-year-old who has a depth of character beyond his years and touches everyone who meets him. He'll even high-five you while fighting through a workout, with a "good job!" to keep you going. Multiple sclerosis does not stop another of our athletes from showing up at 6 a.m. despite deep pain and two hours of sleep. After a grueling shift, firefighters arrive ready to go with the last traces of their adrenaline.

Each of us walks through the door with his or her own story, and we are met with compassion. Embodied by Serena and our coaching staff, this balance of encouragement and grace allows us to rise from the ashes of our former selves on a daily basis.

Recently, I was working a one-rep max. I felt the pain, pushed through, heard the voices cheering me toward success. And I understood, finally. I had spent all these hours in the box building a bridge between my spirit and my body. I was no longer broken, no longer alone. I smiled quietly to myself, acknowledging the safety net we provide for each other, and I picked up the bar for one more rep.

I realize I will fight this daily battle for the rest of my life. There's still the voice that tells me I will never get better and that I am not worthy, that convinces me of inevitable failure. But the roar of the blood rushing through my veins is drowning out the dark sound of that voice, one WOD at a time, allies by my side.

The Virtuosity call for writing submissions is now closed. The CrossFit Journal will release details of a new opportunity to share your CrossFit story shortly.

