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Author shares mental health journey in new book

■ Daniel Bushman

Battling through life fuelled by addiction, negative self-image, depression and anxiety, an author with local roots has written about his journey. After experiencing divine intervention that helped save his life, Allan Kehler not only began to pick up the pieces but along the way, found hope and resilience.

Detailing his personal walk with mental illness, addiction and redemption, Kehler's book: *Transforming Pain Into Purpose*, which was just released, chronicles his life's story. Raised in Drake and now residing in Saskatoon with his wife and four boys, the international keynote speaker for mental health and wellness explained how he grew up in small town Saskatchewan with a persona that nothing was wrong.

Through years of navigating dark thoughts, loneliness and self-destruction, Kehler's world eventually came crashing down. "Growing up in a small town it was something we never talked about and I swore I was the only one having these thoughts. No part of me knew what to do with those thoughts and feelings and I kept it inside," shared Kehler.

Turning to alcohol and gambling as a way to mask the issues, through numerous near-death experiences and plodding along through dark valleys, Kehler eventually hit a fork in the road and ultimately made the decision to turn his life around. "The moment I was able to start getting help and walk into groups where other people had similar challenges, I started to hear my story through their story. That is when there was that redemption, that liberation knowing that I am not the only person.

"Life is interesting," said Kehler about his journey and deciding to share his story. "I know it sounds very dramatic when I say I shouldn't be alive after the life I have led, other than I feel like I have been spared to carry a message, but that is true. The process writing

the book was much more challenging than I thought. It reinforced the fact that I am here for something much bigger. My ask is always use me . . . when you know you know and it felt like everything aligned."

While Kehler knew the book had to be written, when he began, "I thought that I had come to terms with a lot of things but I found out quickly that was not the case. When you are writing your story, you are not just reliving it but you are conveying it to the reader so it is almost like another level. I needed to return to counselling and I started working with some spiritual coaches. My greatest support was my rock, my wife Tanya. I had a lot of help writing it and I am so glad it is done for my own mental health. It took me to places that we all have but I had to live in them for a lot longer than I cared to do so."

Despite having to relive his past through the pages of his book, Kehler's strength and redemption has been evident. A firm believer that if a person finds their voice, they will find their power, the author said it is then when hope can arrive. "Hope also requires some type of action and in my case there were clearly a few situations where there was divine intervention but it does not have to get to that point. Our greatest risks have a tendency to lead to our greatest rewards. What I have found not only in my journey but speaking with others, is that when they are able to take that risk, when they are being vulnerable and able to let someone in, they are rewarded by being free from those emotions."

Through that redemption, hope and resilience, after he first began to share his story, Kehler found others who have walked similar paths. The author hopes that by putting himself out there through his book, it will resonate with others. "I think it just speaks to the fact that no matter who we are, where we are, mental health affects us all. I have been given a bit of a platform and it is so humbling



Finding hope and resilience along his life's journey, Allan Kehler not only picked up the pieces following years of addiction, negative self-image, depression and anxiety but in doing so, is sharing his story. Through his new book, *Transforming Pain Into Purpose*, which was just released, Kehler provides readers with hope that can come out of dark and lonely situations.

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being able to hopefully help others out from that darkness and help them try and find their voice."

With *Transforming Pain Into Purpose* available through his website (www.allankehler.com) and on Amazon and eventually sold at Indigo, McNally Robinson, and the Lanigan Advisor office in Watrous, Kehler admitted he is not sure how it will be

received. However, the author said, "I feel like the power of the story can never be estimated. We all have one. If all of us stayed quiet with our struggles, then we all suffer in silence. I think we have to recover out loud so other people don't have to suffer in silence. That is my biggest hope, that we as a society can move to that place where we can celebrate the resilience of someone."



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