



I was born and raised in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, and grew-up in the Real Estate industry, with my father a broker and my mother his right arm. My father came from a small French-Canadian community and my mother was born in Germany, having immigrated with her family when she was 5 years old. I have a brother who's a couple of years younger than me.

Due to my parents' business background, it was a "given" that my career would be in business, in one form or another. I was good at math so when it came time for me to go to college, it made sense for me to take a three-year business administration program. I enrolled at St Clair College in Windsor and majored in accounting my first year.

I did well but accounting turned out too dry for me, so I switched to computers my second year and enjoyed that more. I excelled at it, but it still wasn't what I was looking for. Those first two years of college I lived at home. I decided to switch schools in my last year so that I could leave home and enrolled at Durham Collage in Oshawa, Ontario where I took human relations and psychology for my third year. I just loved it!

My first job out of college was as an office administrator. I enjoyed the work but felt like I wanted more so I went to night school to get my real estate license. When my boss found out I was going to school to pursue a new career, my employment was terminated.

I didn't realize at the time that the pressure and pace of real estate was not for me. Once I'd been licensed for six months and still hadn't made any money, I decided to return to office administration and accounting.

It was during that first year out of college that I met the man that would be my husband in years to come. Ernest (now retired) was a maintenance mechanic originally from New Brunswick, Canada. It turned out that he was a fair bit older than I was but by the time I found how much older (17 years), it was too late. He'd already stolen my heart.

I was twenty-one and he was thirty-eight, but he didn't look a day over thirty. I remember the day I went to him to tell him that my employer had terminated me, and he said, "so you'll find a better job." From day one Ernest has always had the utmost faith in me and my abilities and the vast potential for my future.

In my mid twenties I started experiencing severe depression. I was diagnosed with Major Depression shortly thereafter. In hindsight I can see that I'd been experiencing depression since my early teen years. This illness would prove to be a life-long issue for me to contend with.

Thank goodness for computers! They would be one of my enduring passions for life. I bought my first back in 1983. My employer at the time gifted employees with the opportunity to buy a PC on payroll deductions when the company upgraded to the first version of an office PC network.



Over the next ten years, I never stayed anywhere for more than three years at a time. I would go into a company and find their accounts a mess, clean up the books and get their receivables collected. I found that once I got the books to a maintenance level there was no challenge for me. I would find myself a new position and a new challenge.

From 1991 to 1994 I gained a great deal of experience as a Credit Manager managing a long series of small claims. I learned how to manage small claims lawsuits, litigation, conflict management, negotiation, mediation, and problem solving in an exceptionally large way.

I was ahead of my time in credit management and collections as I preferred to focus on debt reduction strategies instead of harassing people for money. I did very well at bringing down their accounts "over 90 days past due" from 40% of the receivables when I started to 6% by the time, I left there almost three years later.

In 1993, while in this position, my vision started to go and over a period of two months, I went blind in my left eye. Over the next seven months, I had three acute attacks of abnormal neurological symptoms and two hospitalizations leading up to a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis.

Three days after my diagnosis, my employer cut my hours, my pay and my benefits in half stating that I was not healthy enough to work full time. I was told that this action was taken based on my extensive time off due to illness over the last six months.

This event was immediately preceded by my manager calling my neurologist trying to strong-arm information from him about my prognosis over the phone. Within minutes, my doctor called to warn me that he'd had this inappropriate call from my employer. I called the Human Rights Commission right away to file a complaint and continued to work there while my claim was processed.

Going through the process of diagnosis was an exceedingly tough time for me. I was worried about my health but more concerned about losing my job. Between my failing health and my job in jeopardy, I felt as though I'd lost total control of my life and my future. My depression was barely concealed, even with the medication that I was taking faithfully.

By this time Ernest and I had been living common law for ten years. We'd made plans to get married the following summer. The prospect of having a wife with a disability didn't deter Ernest from wanting me to be his wife.

Throughout the whole ordeal with my employer and the Human Rights Commission he was a solid support for me. He never failed to be there to hold me when I returned home crying after a day of harassment at work. Ernest and I were married on our 10th anniversary in 1994, a little more than one year after my first symptoms had begun.



Two months after I filed the complaint with the Human Rights Commission, my employer terminated me. That was in the late winter of 1994. I was devastated. One thing was clear to me: self-advocacy was vital when you've been discriminated against.

Following through with that complaint was one of the most stressful things I have ever participated in, but I knew that I had to proceed, for the benefit of my financial future as well as my self-esteem. Thanks to those computer skills, I was fully prepared with every document I needed to defend myself and prove my case.

After about two years, the complaint was finally settled in my favour. I felt vindicated. Ernest and I used the money as a down payment to purchase our first home. Sometimes you can make lemonade out of lemons! <grin>

I'd been unemployed for just weeks when I started volunteering for the MS Society of Canada, facilitating self-help groups. I was one of their founding board members in northern York Region, starting a brand-new chapter to provide support for people with MS.

Seven years later I was volunteering up to twenty-five hours a week providing advocacy, supportive counseling, and self-advocacy coaching and I just loved it. I served on that board of directors for 11 years, the last four as Chapter Chairperson.

In 2004 the MS Society honoured me with two awards, top volunteer in Ontario and then top volunteer in Canada. I resigned my position in 2005 as my coaching practice began to grow.

Back in 1995 I was appointed to the Board of Directors for Georgina Mobility Transit, an organization local to where I live that facilitates the provision of accessible transportation to people with disabilities. I served on that board for 9 years before stepping down in 2004.

My tech skills had by then grown to include building processes associated with organizational development, data collection, database management, digital security and reporting responsibilities.

During those first seven years after my diagnosis, the course of my disease had been a rough ride. I was averaging 2 to 3 acute relapses per year. That first time I went blind wasn't to be the last. I later experienced blindness in one eye or the other (thankfully never in both eyes at once) another 5 or 6 times over the years.

I spent time in a wheelchair more than once and had one relapse that left me with no equilibrium for 9 months! Gratefully, the accumulation of residual damage left behind by countless attacks has been minimal.



Aside from ongoing neurological pain in my hands and my arms, some colour-blindness, moderate to severe numbness in various parts of my body, right leg weakness with drop-foot and ongoing fatigue, I am relatively healthy, despite everything. I continue to need medication for depression but manage my treatment and my life well.

Late in 2001 I started taking an injectible, disease-modifying drug for the multiple sclerosis. Within 3 months, my energy had increased very quickly! Within 6 months I was feeling so empowered that I decided to quit smoking, start exercising and improve my general lifestyle.

I began to feel so good the volunteer work just wasn't enough for me anymore. My ultimate goal was to return to the workforce after being home on disability for almost eight years.

Because the nature of MS is very unpredictable, and the fact was that I had no idea how long this feeling of wellness might last, Ernest made me promise not to do anything about returning to work until I'd been in remission for a full year.

Twelve months later, in the spring of 2002, I walked into the office of Job Skills (a local vocational assistance program) and was introduced to a Business Coach. I shared with her my story, my business background, my tech skills, and my final termination as a result of my health.

I told her that the only way I could see myself professionally successful with a disability was if I could be self-employed. I vowed never again to feel guilty for being sick. After a fair bit of conversation and one or two follow-up visits, that Business Coach recommended that I investigate the field of Life Skills Coaching.

While researching this option online I found a course offered through the YWCA that I could take part-time. Right up my alley as my health wasn't going to afford me the luxury of getting involved in a full-time program. I received my certification in November of 2002.

My first role as a Life Coach was working with youth at risk of homelessness. I thoroughly enjoyed that contract but was disappointed to learn that the funding for this government-supported program had not been renewed. Once again, I felt as though my future was in the hands of those other than my own.

When that contract ended in March of 2003, I decided that the only way for me to build an autonomous career was to start my own private Life Coaching practice. So, on April 1st, 2003, I "hung up my shingle" and started **CHANGING PACES**.

During that same year I was appointed to the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee. This is a committee of people with disabilities as well as people who work



with people with disabilities, who are tasked with the function of advising the Region of York on accessibility issues. My tenure on that committee was 7 years, finishing as Vice Chair in my last year.

The committee was appointed at the direction of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA). The ODA is a piece of legislature that mandates that all Ontario municipalities and other public organizations use due diligence to identify and remove barriers to people with disabilities within our communities. I was honoured to be advocating for others like myself at this level of government.

In hindsight I see that Life Coaching is something that I've been doing all of my life. I've always been the person that people come to talk about their challenges. When I was in Credit Management, I was actually a debt counselor, while volunteering for the MS Society all those years, providing supportive counseling, I was actually coaching them on finding the resources and the support that they needed to survive and thrive beyond their illness.

I am a staunch advocate and a passionately committed life & business coach. I empower my clients to become sustainable entrepreneurs by giving them the shortcuts they need to skip through multiple learning curves. If you've been struggling with your health and your business, feeling lost and powerless or even if you're ready to give up, I'm here to tell you that there is hope and there definitely is help.

The only things you need are a desire to build a stable income and a willingness to ramp up your well-being. If you have those two criteria nailed, then let's setup a [complimentary strategy session](#) (link to booking page that I'll create) for you and get started on the rest of your life!

Till then, take self-care seriously & God bless.

Trish 😊