

JAN JOHNSON

THE SUCCESS STORY OF KARI FULMEK

it's not  
your  
dream  
if it's  
not  
hard



IT'S NOT YOUR  
DREAM  
IF IT'S NOT  
HARD

Kari Fulmek's Story

Jan Johnson



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*“To believe in the things you can  
see and touch is no belief at all;  
but to believe in the unseen is a  
triumph and a blessing”*

-Napoleon Hill



Kari and her Mom, Faye



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# INTRODUCTION



The parallels and connections between humans and horses are so strong, it's uncanny. People can see themselves reflected in horses' behaviour when they spend intimate time in their company. They can discover their deepest selves when they have the courage to look. So what does it say about those among us who are drawn to work and engage with horses on a daily basis? Are they given insight that the rest of us could use? Are they called to share another level of communication or awareness?

Most young girls have an intense love or longing to be with horses. Where that longing comes from is anybody's guess ... but it's a universal theme and one that can't be chalked up to coincidence. Girls and horses are a synergistic pairing - a mutual flowing of admiration and respect, a heart connection. Ask a young girl where it comes from and she will smile and lose her gaze in a long-ago memory.

As girls grow into women, life's responsibilities take over their deepest dreams and their intense desire to be with horses fades away as if it never existed. Yet, there are women who never let these dreams go. One such woman is Kari Fulmek.

Promised a horse by her single mom as a young girl, Kari believed that somehow, someday she would get her wish. Moving back and forth between the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan some 25 times during her growing years didn't stop her from holding onto her dream. In fact, what she held onto was a \$.25 book her mom gave her to help her wait patiently for the horse she longed for - a horse that could fill her heart.

Now approaching the age of 50, Kari has a herd of 8 horses that reside

with her on an acreage outside of Strathmore, Alberta - in the heart of the last best west in Canada. She still has her book, raggedy and worn, still a treasured and precious gift, as her mom is no longer alive. How Kari got her dream is what this book is about.

It's a story of guts and loss, of passion and perseverance. It's the kind of tale that takes you on a rollercoaster ride of feelings, hoping like hell things will turn out well but knowing that the story isn't over yet.

## CHAPTER ONE

# MOTHER AND SOULMATE



When the word soulmate is tossed around, we tend to think of a man-woman relationship - a loving bond that is divinely inspired and sent for our deepest benefit and growth. It's a beautiful concept - yet it's a narrow way to look at it. There are many ways soulmates show up in our lives. They come to teach us, to challenge us, to love us unconditionally, to help us face our inner demons ... to guide us into our best version of ourselves, even if we don't know it. Soulmates don't always stay with us forever. Many times they fulfill their time with us and then they're gone. Kari Fulmek can attest to that - for Faye, her mother was as deep a soulmate as they come.

Kari Fulmek is a fun-loving, energetic woman - a go-getter by most standards. She is honest to the core and intensely committed to living a life that gives her the freedom to choose who she surrounds herself with, and how her time and energy are spent. She is always on the move, with an eye for what needs to be done next. Delegating and driving goals forward are her primary strengths, developed by taking over the running of her one-parent household as a child.

Kari was born on April 14, 1966 in the small community of Yorkton, Saskatchewan. She was raised by her hard-working single mom, Faye, a Saskatchewan farm girl, who through her determination, work ethic and positive attitude gave her a rich childhood. It wasn't a childhood filled with trips or holidays, beautiful stylish clothes, expensive gifts, or enrollment in sports or extracurricular activities. It was beyond what material luxuries could provide. Poor by societies' standards, Kari felt intensely loved by her mom, knowing she was being given a gift that had no price tag - the gift of sincere

attention.

Working many jobs to keep her children fed and the bills paid, Faye gave Kari and her younger brother Jimmy the resilience to see that life required appreciation, caring and laughter to get through the struggles. Faye's philosophy was - "Get up. Move forward. You can do anything you've ever wanted to do. Just move forward and try it again."

It was through witnessing Faye's persistent and consistent actions to carve out a life and livelihood that Kari built a reservoir of strength within. Faye showed Kari how to value the people in her life by her own generous nature and the way she made everyone in her path feel special. Faye revelled in helping others - it was one of her biggest joys.

Having these values entrenched in her being gave Kari the courage to handle the more than 2 dozen moves she and her mother and brother would make over the years. Continually starting at new schools, making new friends, and often being picked on and teased were hardships that Kari took in stride. Her mom kept her focused on the achievement part of events, leaving no room for feeling sorry for herself.

By her own admission, Kari was a bitchy girl. It was how she protected herself from the criticism and judgment from those around her. Within herself, Kari felt she was unique, and she was determined to defend and prove it by standing up for herself and working hard to get what she wanted out of life.

Over the succeeding years, Kari and her mother Faye remained extremely close. Best friends, business partners, mother and daughter duo ... they did everything together from real estate to tours and lived with each other through most of it. Having fun was the key ingredient in all they schemed and dreamed of doing. For Kari it was the greatest, most defining time of her life, apart from the other challenges she was living with through two marriages, having three babies and honing her career path. Faye was her rock, her soul mate, a gift from above ... and then she died.

Having to part with the person she loved, to the core of her being, broke open Kari's vulnerabilities. Faye passed away on June 1, 2011 after a painful 6-month illness. At 45, Kari could barely comprehend this loss. There seemed no rhyme or reason for her mom to leave at this time. Awash with grief she dug inside for the courage to honour Faye by writing and delivering a eulogy only she could present. Here is a portion of it ...

*"We were never given a trip. We were given a trip of a lifetime with a human being who taught us how to give and not take (give with no expectations of a return) that's truly giving, to not take advantage of people (even those who had lots of money) and to strive to always be better people. Mom had the most incredible look she gave you if we ever did anything wrong and oh my gosh, did we shape up. We were weird kids, Jimmy and I... Thanks for the trip.*

*We were never given a lump sum of money as she always wished to do. We were given the inspiration to become more, to do more and to make a great life. How to make our own money and not ask others for it but make it ourselves and become self-reliant. Your family was always #1.*

*We were not given too many monetary things, the big-ticket items she wanted to give us.*

*We were given the appreciation of life  
We were given manners, please and thank you's were huge in our home.  
We were given respect for people  
Work hard for everything we have  
To love music which fills the soul and to dance because it feels so great.  
To take risks  
To keep your word and not break promises  
To love with all our hearts  
To love God and Jesus as they are number 1 in life.  
To not feel sorry for ourselves  
To have fun  
To not be so serious  
To give encouragement  
To be honest  
Tell the truth, a lie is always hard to keep up  
Not to judge, it is never for us to do so*

*The worth of who she was and what she gave to her kids and others was amazing life skills that will always be in our lives. I truly believe as a parent that the most rewarding of all things on earth is to raise your kids to be good people, appreciate, caring, have empathy and be kind human beings. (how do you know, many compliments). She gave us, everything. Thank you."*



## CHAPTER TWO

### GET BUSY



There are many ways that we can be guided and shown a direction in life. Obviously parents have a great deal of influence - because of their presence or lack thereof. Raised solely by her mother, Kari took on Faye's teachings and values, but eventually, she would be out in the world at large and come under many other influences. A pivotal point in Kari's life came during her youth when attending a Christian summer camp. Her viewpoint was forever altered because of her decision to 'ask Jesus into her heart'.

This was no fleeting decision that she made. It was a 'cross my heart and hope to die' promise that Kari entered into. It substantially changed her viewpoint, because going forward she knew that she was now totally accountable for all her actions. Believing that her life needed to stay on the straight and narrow meant she could no longer lie or sweep things under the rug. And she was now aware of Karma - that what she put into life would come back to her in equal measure.

It was also during this period that Kari first heard of Napoleon Hill's book - 'Think and Grow Rich'. The understanding that life was going to give back to her what she put into it was a significant realization. She interpreted this to mean that she was going to have to work very hard for what she wanted ... and there were a few special things she desired. No stranger to hard work, Kari also decided it was time to create a vision board of a house she wanted to build someday, a home where she could lay down some roots.

Armed with a new sense of possibility, Kari decided to discover what else life could offer - so at 18 she married Dan, the Vice-Principal of a local

school, a guy who was in a band. Kari had the thought during this time that she could prove to her mom that it was possible to stay married for life - a feat Faye had never succeeded in doing.

Having one marriage for life was not going to be Kari's story either. The marriage lasted five years, and when it was over the freedom, she felt was like being released from a cage. Young when she entered into the marriage, and just 22 when she left it - Kari was ready for what was next. It was time to fulfill a childhood dream. It was time to buy her first horse. So that is what she did.

Getting married at 18 was not only a defining moment in Kari's life that year. While working her shift at a local fast food restaurant, Kari stared down the barrel of a gun as she stood face to face with a gunman who came to rob the business. Shaken to her core, Kari realized instantaneously just how quickly her life could end, and simultaneously, just how beautiful and precious her life really was. This realization anchored deeply into her soul as she moved forward with her life.

Unfortunately, having one marriage for life was not going to be Kari's story. The marriage lasted five years and when it was over the freedom she felt was like being released from a cage. Young when she entered into the marriage and just 22 when she left it - Kari was ready for what was next. It was time to fulfill a childhood dream. It was time to buy her first horse. So that is what she did.

Kari also decided that it was now time to do her own thing - she wanted to have control over her life and build a foundation around something she was passionate about. Having worked at many different jobs she knew she had the work ethic to be an entrepreneur. And because growing up with Faye's philosophy of "You can do anything you want to do. Just move forward and try it again." Kari never questioned or second-guessed herself. She set a new path and went for it.

This also applied to her personal life as well, and it was only a few short years before she met and married Tony, the soon-to-be-father of her three daughters. Starting over with Tony meant she had to let go of something near and dear to her - so to purchase her wedding dress, she sold her horse.



Kari's daughters Karsyn, Raegyn, and Rylee



## CHAPTER THREE

### IF IT ISN'T HARD - IT ISN'T A DREAM



Kari's marriage to Tony came with three beautiful gifts - Karsyn born in May of 1994; Rylee in August of 1995; and Raegyn in March of 1997. Being married again and now having three babies, Kari was more determined than ever to move forward with her entrepreneurial dreams. She needed to work to contribute to the household expenses that came with her growing family.

As life provides when we most need it, Kari found and began what would turn out to be an eleven-year career with Weekenders - a women's clothing business that she succeeded in greatly. In Kari's words -

*"Weekenders was a direct sales company. I built my team of women to over 100. It was a fabulous company and the fact that you would go to other women's houses I could be a stay-at-home mom because I could put my kids to bed before I went to work. I was able to help other women feel great about the outfits they chose for their figures, to feel motivated, and to feel sexy.*

*When I started doing the business, and everybody saw how much fun it was, other women wanted to own their own businesses as well. It turned out to be a beautiful tax write-off, and I was able to build my team very quickly. In fact, I was the first one out of our unit to become a sales manager. Becoming a sales manager was the greatest thing on earth because the company would fly you away to conferences every year where they would spoil you rotten and make you feel like you were the greatest human being on Earth.*

*They taught us how to help the teams of women we recruited into the business to also become sales managers; to get more recruits, so they too were making additional income. I learned what made women tick. I learned that women were absolutely the most amazing*

*creatures put on this earth, and I saw how determined and strong they are.*

*The things I learned through the training from this amazing company not only built me as a strong, persevering, tenacious woman but also helped other women who were struggling with so many issues in their own lives. I learned that you can't motivate people, you can only help them so that they are motivated to help themselves. I learned that all dreams are absolutely possible in this amazing business.*

*I learned that selling is an attitude and when you keep a great attitude you can sell anything to people who need and want it. I actually think having a great attitude in life and staying positive, with goals you hit and reach is what I learned most from Weekenders. My biggest dream at the time was to be a businesswoman who travelled on an airplane with a briefcase ... and that's what I achieved with Weekenders."*

Kari loved the feeling of inner power she was experiencing with Weekenders, but life at home in her marriage was not the same story of empowerment. Life with Tony was a volatile one - a relationship filled with yelling and constant fighting.

There was no peace to be found in her home ... so Kari began to prepare for her exit from the marriage, strengthening herself to leave with three babies, aged one to three years old. Kari knew that this was not the role model of a relationship she wanted to show her girls.

This was a decision that would prove to be a catalyst for Kari to dig into her deepest resolve. She had reached a point of no return and heading out with 3 children aged 3, 2 & 1 meant that life was going to be tough.

When the relationship had reached its breaking point, Kari simply left one night with her babies loaded in the car, and the clothes on their backs. She could no longer live in such a negative, unhappy household, always feeling like she was walking on eggshells. It was one of the most freeing days when she knew that her girls would never live in that kind of atmosphere again.

It was time to start a new chapter in her life.

*“We attain freedom as we let go of whatever does not reflect our magnificence. A bird cannot fly high or far with a stone tied to its back. But release the impediment, and we are free to soar to unprecedented heights.”*

– Alan Cohen



## CHAPTER FOUR

# ATTITUDE WILL GET YOU THERE



It was time to get some fun and laughter back into her life and Faye provided the backdrop for exactly that. By focusing on what was good and funny about everyday life, Kari was soon able to let go of feelings of failure and the life she had with Tony. Faye helped her to see that regardless of what was going on, there was always the possibility to see it through a humorous lens and the two constantly shared belly-busting laughs over just about anything.

And then along came Sid. It was Faye who introduced Kari to Sid. In Sid, Kari felt that she had found the one person, besides Faye, who accepted all of her, who never expected her to change anything about who she was - a man whom she could trust, respect and appreciate on all levels. Sid was the man who helped Kari drop her defenses and live and breathe the truth of who she was, without any need to defend or define it. In Sid, Kari felt safe and secure. It was a new and welcome feeling. He was the kind of nice guy who thought about her needs - considerate and caring, a man who looked after the little things too like bringing in the groceries. Kari fell deeply in love.

Their relationship progressed quickly, and Sid became the father figure in the lives of Kari's three daughters. He provided stability and nurturing that a man can give to children. Because the girls were all under the age of four, the transition of Sid into their lives was relatively easy as they were still young and impressionable.

Kari saw this as an incredible time in her life. She loved Sid. Sid loved her and her girls. Faye loved Sid. Sid loved Faye. It was a balanced time, a time to live and love life, and that's what Kari did.

Then, around her 10th year with the Weekenders business, Kari felt her passion for the business changing. It no longer felt as purposeful. She wanted something more grounded, closer to her heart, to her home base.

This was when she came across the Strathmore Heritage Days Stampede - the 3rd largest rodeo in Canada - and it was right there in her hometown. Taking her daughters to the Stampede for the first time, Kari expected a fairgrounds with food, and fun, and family events. What she saw was an old run-down snow cone machine and some decrepitated old rides, apart from the usual rodeo events. How could Canada's third largest rodeo offer such a limited experience for families she wondered - somebody should do something about it.

This is what Kari has to say about it:

*"It was like going to Las Vegas without the lights. It just didn't make any sense to me. So, as I was walking home, I decided that I was going to write a letter to the Strathmore Standard, which is our local newspaper, and complain about the situation. But as I started walking, I decided - "Kari - what are you going to do about it? Why don't you just create something on the side, like an old-fashioned Country Fair with a pie eating contest, dunk tanks, sheep shearing, hay bales to sit on, face painting ... all those great things, plus a little tradeshow with homemade items."*

*I knew tons of people in Strathmore because of my Weekender business so I went and I visited as many companies as I knew in this town, and asked them for their help. I actually ended up with \$20,000 in sponsorship money; three ticket booths were donated at no charge, and of course, I got everything else donated to create this family country fair.*

*I then go into the office to meet with the Stampede General Manager, and I tell him everything that I've done and that I really want to implement this into the third largest rodeo in Canada. He's like - "Are you seriously telling me I have to pay no money?" I said, "Yep - exactly!" He says "Well, you got yourself a deal - as long as you handle the whole set up."*

Kari was off to the races!! She succeeded in promoting and elevating the once-a-year Strathmore Heritage Days Stampede into a sought-after family event for Strathmore residents and families from all around. After her first year putting the Country Fair idea into play, Kari was offered a year-round position with the Ag Society as assistant general manager. What was once an

event for cowboys, cowgirls and spectators became fitting of the title of 3rd largest rodeo in Canada. From 2004 until 2010, Kari managed over 700 volunteers and 42 committee heads - a feat indeed.

Kari learned that consistency was huge for all of her volunteers, sponsors, committee heads, clients and the people who actually came out to enjoy the family fair. She saw that listening was a huge part of really focusing in on and helping everyone achieve what it was that they were looking for. Being a leader, Kari knew that every person on her team had something wonderful to bring to the table, their gift. She let them take charge rather than micro-managing them.

As Kari was heading into her sixth year with the Heritage Days Stampede, things began to change. The Ag Society management began requiring her to be in the office more, instead of out in the community. For the entrepreneurial Kari - this was like having her wings clipped. It began to, as she puts it - "Kill my whole spirit"- so she began looking for something purposeful again, that one last career that would satisfy her deepest purpose. She didn't know what 'it' was, but she was motivated to discover it.

Kari had always wanted a career with horses, the first love of her life, but because she wasn't a horse trainer or specialized in an equine discipline, she didn't think it was possible for her.

One day, however, while looking through a horse magazine, Kari came across an ad for an Equine Assisted Learning program, where the horses are the teachers. E.A.L. could help youth build life skills while working on the ground with horses - and it would be a great addition to the community. This looked like the ultimate dream business to Kari. It would give her the purpose she was looking for, and she could become certified in it as well, giving her credibility. This was the answer to her prayers because she was feeling completely lost, unsure what to do with the rest of her life. She was sold in a heartbeat. Kari bought into the training program right away, with the support of the Ag Society, and then gave a one year notice. She now had one foot out the door.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# HORSES AS TEACHERS, WHO KNEW?



The first part of moving into this new business and career direction had been easy for Kari. Saying 'Yes' to working with people and horses couldn't have been a better fit, or come at a better time in her life. Kari was ready to take on the learning curve it would require to become certified, knowing she could figure out how to build it into a business as she went along.

Kari began the Equine Assisted Learning course as an online learning experience. It wasn't long before she began to question whether this was the right path for her. She had gained horse experience throughout the years but wondered if she needed more of it to fully understand what the EAL curriculum was built upon. Doubt crept in as she felt stifled with the impersonal learning style and she couldn't understand how horses could teach within the programs.

Now in her early 40's, Kari felt she was positioning herself for one of the last businesses she would undertake, and it felt very uncomfortable to be questioning the rightness of it now when it was so aligned with her values and goals.

So before any new decisions were made Kari went to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan to see firsthand if this program could be built into the right business for her. Told she could get her money back if she changed her mind - Kari knew there was nothing at risk except the time she had put in already.

Kari would end up making two more trips to Saskatchewan to finalize things in her mind and learn more about EAL. The changes she saw in the kids taking the programs proved how powerful this way of learning was for helping people learn life skills experientially. The horses truly were the teachers. And Kari knew in her heart that this was for her, which gave her a renewed purpose.

It took Kari a full year (2009) to become a Certified EAL Facilitator. She needed to keep her focus strong because she would complete her work with the Strathmore Ag Society in August of 2010. This was exciting and scary at the same time. Her new business, Equine Connection would be the only one of its kind in Alberta with this unique EAL Building Block program. So gutsy Kari rallied all her resources and moved things forward!

One of the first challenges was to find the right 'teachers' for her programs. The horses that work best for the EAL programs must be seasoned, stable horses; horses that will not over-react to the varied emotions and stimulus coming at them from kids and adults.

Kari's first two years in EAL were done with two of her own horses. She rented other horses along with an outside space, as she herself had no facility. During this time four more horses came to Kari's possession and completed her EAL team.

This was the first part of the equation. Next came location. Quotes from neighbouring horse arenas to board and rent facilities were pretty costly, \$2500 - \$3000 per month. For a start-up business - this wasn't going to fly. It was Sid who came to Kari with the idea to build a small arena on their three acres where they had built her dream home, the home Kari had designed on her dream board at 18 years old.

With a start-up loan of \$100,000 from the local Community Futures lending organization in the first year and \$50,000 a year later - Kari got her teaching facility (arena) built. This was going to work!!

As soon as she became certified Kari had students for her EAL program - a local First Nations enrolled their youth. It was remarkable confirmation from the community; however one paying contract was not enough to sustain this business.

Taking on extra jobs to pay the business expenses, Kari pursued her marketing strategy with the help of former Strathmore Heritage Rodeo marketing specialist, Carolyn Charles. It was a hard push to educate and gain

acceptance for this unique way to deliver life skills to youth, but they persevered.

Although the challenges continued, and they were numerous, Kari felt confident that the business was going to take hold and grow into the successful venture she was envisioning. Little did she know that this was going to be one tough business to market and sell to potential clients. She was in for a steep learning curve.

2010 was a game-changing year, and the future looked promising. Support from Kari's closest family was tremendous. Sid was on-board with all the changes, building and improvements. Faye was a constant driving force in supporting Kari's dream come true. A frequent visitor, she loved seeing her daughter pull together the elements to build her new business. It was a huge source of pride for Faye.

Kari's three daughters were engaged and excited about the new career their mom was so happy with. The family had expanded with the new horses they all loved dearly, grazing within view of the windows in their home. Some of the new equines were for riding, some weren't, and it made an interesting herd for the family to enjoy and of course for the EAL school programs.

2010 also brought Eppie Borger into her life. A true horseman from the Peace River area in Alberta, Eppie wanted to work with and be a part of the EAL Building Block program. His research had led him to Kari. He offered his knowledge and expertise to help Kari learn more about horses so they could move her program forward globally. Things just kept getting better and better.



Kari and her horse, Faye

## CHAPTER SIX

# A YEAR FROM HELL



Kari Fulmek was living life in the present moment. That's what you do when you love life and savour the moments. Through her EAL programs Kari had continual reinforcement that life was constantly offering up learning opportunities, and at any moment there was a beauty to be found in accepting what was right in front of her.

Because life is ever-changing and unpredictable, you can't ever really prepare yourself for the events and situations that will come along and rock your world. Kari could have never predicted what would enter into her life experience. Having fought her way back from two marriage failures; worked her way to the top in several career opportunities; supported and sustained her three daughters - Kari was feeling confident that she was mastering life, and doing a pretty good job of it. Well, life was not finished with her just yet, and the road ahead was going to bring her to her knees in ways she couldn't imagine.

2010 had been an event filled year. Overcoming the challenges of a start-up business, Kari was looking forward to what the future held for her. It was in December of 2010 that Faye became very ill. Faye had always been an energetic woman and all of a sudden she began losing weight, falling a lot, and now was making trips in and out of the hospital because she was so weak.

Torn between taking care of her mother and keeping the indebted new business running, Kari did her best to manage her time between the two. For

6 months she helped Faye in every way she could, heartbroken to see Faye's body dwindling and becoming frailer weekly. Faye, though, continued to be a bright spot in the lives of others even as she was moved to a hospice. Nurses and patients alike loved her caring and humorous attitude which she kept alive and well.

June 1, 2011 began as a typical working day for Kari. And then her life changed forever ...

Here is Kari's re-telling of her story -

*"Wednesday, June 1, 2011 was definitely the absolute worst day of life on earth. Sunday night, May 31, I called the vet as I looked out and saw that Buddy didn't look right. I went to examine him and I knew there was something seriously wrong. He had mud completely on the one side of him so the vet thought maybe he had fallen and to give him some bute.*

*Wednesday June 1, I go to get the horses for my program and I see Buddy lying there and I know in my heart he is dead (he was only 17). This is 15 minutes before my EAL class is to arrive. I shake myself and run to the phone to call the vet, and they give me a number for the processors so they can come to pick him up. My heart and head cannot believe that this has happened. How am I going to be able to do my program?*

*The school calls 5 minutes before they were supposed to come and cancels thank goodness. I go back up to the hospital to tell my mom my one last problem. She was really gone that day, as her body was doing some pretty horrible things, and I could hardly bear it, but I do believe she heard my one last story.*

*I come back home to meet the processing truck. The guy tells me he cannot go into my field to get Buddy as there has been so much rain, that he could sink. He said I could drive the tractor and pull Buddy to the place that he could get him. I told him there was no way I could do such a thing. I asked him if he'd wait and I'd see if a neighbour could hook up Buddy to pull him to a place that the truck could get him.*

*No neighbour was home! As I was driving back, I asked myself, "Kari, do you really want to look at your dead horse all day and night?" You know the answer, I did not! Then I asked the fellow from the processing truck if I do this please don't let me see you hooking up Buddy with a chain and he promised I would see nothing!!! So I didn't have to see him and then I had to drive the truck towing Buddy behind.*

*I went up to the hospital several times that day but couldn't handle seeing my mom like she was. That night at 7pm my beautiful mom passed away. Even when you know it's going to happen, you are still not ready. My beautiful girls said Buddy died for grandma to*

*ride into heaven on horseback.*

*And this was only the start of horrible times to continue to come...*

*We held mom's Celebration of Life on Friday, June 3. That day we received the call that a friend of ours that we met through the hospital had also died.*

*Sunday, June 5, I have to start clearing out mom's house. My brother is here for the celebration so we all work together to get as much as we possibly could get done, but I will be doing this big job mainly on my own.*

*Monday, June 6, my brother calls me to tell me our Uncle Macie has passed away. He was born on the same day as my mom. (Completely bizarre) First thing I do after I hang up from Jim, my brother, is I go to call mom ... then it hits me! She is gone!*

*Tuesday, June 7 is our friend Arlene's funeral, which I did attend - but really kind of lost it. I guess I should not have gone. I could hardly catch my breath.*

*Friday, June 10 I discover that Charlie (my horse) has a, so I call the vets out immediately. He hasn't been acting the same. The vets come immediately as they definitely don't want the same thing to happen as what happened with Buddy. The vets assure me that this horse will not die, and they are sure all is going to be okay.*

*Poppy, my other horse, becomes super lame. He started to go a little lame last fall, but I just thought all will heal over the winter. I have had 3 different vets, massages, chiro's, have done x-rays and nothing showed. Then I had two of the vets ask if he's had an internal, so they proceeded and discovered he had a fractured pelvis, which means, no more riding horse.*

*Charlie is still not getting better. He now has puss-y, yellowy, snotty stuff coming out of his right nostril all the time. We have done the drugs, I have bought the herbs, I have had the vets out several times, and then I get him x-rayed, but still nothing. Then my vet suggests a scope to go up his nose. I figure what's another few hundred bucks, I have gone this far, and Charlie by far is my most incredible, beautiful, 'I love with all my heart' horse.*

*On July 12, we take Charlie in to get scoped, so we know exactly what we are dealing with. Charlie has a major fungal infection in his guttural sack on the right side. This is very serious. The vets say this is so rare and fluky they too don't believe it. Surgery and medical would be well over \$5000 and no guarantee it would work. So, I'm asking what is now going to happen with Charlie. They tell me one morning you will wake up and he'll be dead in a pool of blood. Something I definitely don't want to see!*

*But life is moving fast, and I am supposed to be getting this EAL business of mine*

*working as I don't have income coming in and am in some significant debt. I am over the \$200,000 mark. "What is happening?" I ask myself. I know I am a strong person, but I cannot take any more! Is this my sign, did I mistakenly believe I was supposed to do this business, and now everything is hitting me flat in the face?*

*July 23 is the burial of my mom's ashes out in Springside, Saskatchewan. I have asked to do the eulogy as I truly believe I knew her so well and wanted her eulogy to really mean something. I was so incredibly scared that I would break down and not be able to do it, but I was strong, it indeed was a great tribute to her. I think I was so strong as that morning the rain came and came, and it didn't stop, so we had to do a plan B (which my mom was always famous for - the next plan - as she was so flexible).*

*We get back from burying mom's ashes on July 25 to a beautiful day, having a wonderful BBQ and there's beautiful Charlie with nothing coming out of his nose.*

*I am beyond ecstatic that my prayers have definitely been answered!*

*July 26, it's around 5am, and I'm having my first cup of coffee, and I could see even in the dark that blood was everywhere!! It was Charlie! Charlie bleeding out! I called the vets in to put him down. My beautiful Charlie was bleeding to death. It took the vet 3 needles to put him down and right up to the end Charlie was still grazing the grass. The vet just couldn't believe it and apologized that this was happening and said she has never seen this in a horse before.*

*Then it hits me after everything is said and done, could the dogs die if they lick Charlie's blood that is full of the shots Charlie got? I call the vets immediately, and they tell me to get the dogs away cause if they lick the blood where they put Charlie down, they too will die. Oh. My. Gosh! I just cannot believe this. I call the dogs in and go outside in the pouring rain. I hook up 3 hoses so they can reach where Charlie was put down, and I wash away all the blood so now my dogs won't die.*

*I am yelling, I am bawling, I am screaming, "WHY??? I do not understand!! Why? How much clearer does it need to be that I am not supposed to do this EAL business? God!!!! Seriously this is a horrible way to show and tell me not to do this business! Is this what you are telling me?"*

*Then the next day arrives, and I think of all the amazing things that had happened to be able to just get to this point of my EAL business. This just does not make sense. All my life I have believed that you have tons of obstacle, challenges and solutions and with the grace of God if you are supposed to be going down a certain road, things seem to move out of the way, so it is possible.*

*All things were moving out of the way so why now, when I've lost the most precious person in my life and then these incredible horses? What am I supposed to be learning? Do*

*I give up?? It's not in my blood to do so especially when the road worked to get here. Why? Why in an 8 week period have I lost so, so much - my mom, 2 other important people and 4 horses? WHY??*

*Then I have my program the next day, and my youth arrive with flowers and a hand-drawn card of Charlie. They all give me hugs and I know how truly blessed I am. I go to their graduation at the youth centre. These kids/youth admit themselves to the program to help themselves get off their addictions of solvents, drugs and alcohol.*

*They stand up and tell everyone their thanks and their dreams and their hopes that they will be able to go into the world and do it without addictions. They talk about how we have all been a family and that some of them don't even have families to go to now that the program is over. I am overwhelmed with all these emotions for these most precious people.*

*I cannot stop crying, trying to catch my breath, I feel love, and I think that yes, Kari, you are supposed to be helping with your EAL business. You have a purpose with your program to help as many youth/adults as you possibly can because it does work. To give up will never be an option. I am here with my EAL horse program to deliver one of the most remarkable programs that affect people immediately."*



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### I CAN ... I WILL



Kari made the decision to continue on with her business, still feeling immense grief and numb from the recent losses. It was now fall, 2 months after her mom had died, and she was doing her best to pick up the pieces of her life.

One day an email arrived from a woman named Katie. Katie wanted Kari to have a black horse who was recovering from a severe accident where a wooden horse shelter had fallen on her back and split it open.

Here is the email -

*"Hi, my name is Katie, and I have been an avid horse rider most of my life. I currently have two horses but am sadly looking for a loving home for one of my girls. She is only 4 years old and has already been through a great deal. 3 years ago I rescued her, and two years ago she was in a terrible accident. I chose to rescue her again. Since her injury, she has learned to be a horse again who thrives for human contact. I don't know if she will be able to have a rider on her back as that is where the injury was, but I know that she enjoys the company of people and has given me my own therapy by just working on the ground and playing.*

*She has an incredible soul and one that would be hard to part with, but if I can find the kind of home where I know that others will learn from and heal from her, I would be more than grateful for the time I have had with her. Faye is extremely mild and willing. She will follow you like a puppy and stand with you for what seems like hours. She has had a lot of handling and even lunging. I've put a saddle on with not even a care in the world. I know that she would be an incredible member of your team. I'm not in a rush,*

*and I see that you are not accepting new horses right now, but I do hope that you will consider meeting her in the near future. I will be moving next year and might not have the means to take her with me.*

*Thank you for your time.*

*Katie"*

Kari's immediate response was 'NO WAY'. After the losses she had faced already that year - she was not open to having any more tragic happenings enter into her life. That was until she found out the horse's name. It was Faye - spelled the same way her mother's name had been spelled.

Faye, a beautiful black mare, has become a beacon of hope for youth in the EAL program because of her ability and spirit to overcome tragedy. Faye has a strong purpose in Kari's EAL programs, and like Kari's mother Faye, she is a reliable and resilient being.

What next?

Struggling with her raw feelings, Kari went into self-protection mode. Her supportive business partner, Carolyn, did her best to keep her engaged - it was a difficult task at times.

As the months progressed, Kari began to talk more with Eppie. Eppie, a calm and quiet man, had an uncanny ability with horses and his encouragement and knowledge helped Kari to entertain some different ideas about the kinds of horses she would bring into her herd next. He also worked with Faye to help her become a riding horse. Eppie did not treat Faye as though she had a disability and worked what appeared to be a miracle with her. He was gifted!

In Kari's eyes, Eppie was the male equivalent of her mother Faye - supportive, non-judgmental and giving. He was helping her to heal her broken heart.

And then the unthinkable happened. Eppie died suddenly and tragically due to an accident on his ranch in July 2012. The loving and gifted man that Kari adored was gone in the blink of an eye. It was crushing in every way.

Who could she turn to now?

It was her horses that saved her. Kari began to spend more and more time

with her herd, implementing the wisdom she had learned from Eppie in their short time together.

The only movement she had was forward because, with all she had been through, there was no going back. Somewhere in her bleakest moments, Kari was still in touch with her deeper purpose - and that was to help others.

The love and help Kari needed she was getting from Sid, Carolyn, her girls - and her horses. She found strength and solace in her beautiful horses and their amazing power to be present to her.

Horses had shown her that moving forward releases stuck points, both in the body and the brain. Because horses live in the present moment, they don't look to the past for answers. Their eyes are on the future and what is coming next.

And now it was Kari who needed to go forward without Faye's love and support, and without Eppie's quiet guidance. She had to trust herself completely. She had her horses, and she had the power of her EAL program -and that was enough. She was enough.



Kari facilitating EAL



## CHAPTER EIGHT

# PAY IT FORWARD



The tricky thing about life is how little control we have over the events that flow into and out of it. We are continually adjusting to circumstances we haven't asked for, nor want. We can be humbled and feel broken inside, yet if our intentions and actions are heartfelt and progressive, we eventually find our way back to a path that has our name on it.

Kari cried, screamed, and fell down many times in the midst of her darkest times ... yet it was her purpose and vision that led her forward. The challenges had given her more strength, more courage, and the will to live each day as if it was her last - because as she had witnessed, it just might be.

Kari's Equine Connection business continued to grow; she found new horses, or they found her, and her dream of using horses to teach people life skills began to get deeper roots.

It was time to add another component to her offerings. Because of what she had encountered in the previous two years, and her continued desire to help other women grow businesses of their own, Kari became a Certified Master Instructor for the EAL Building Block program. From this platform, she could help other women, who also loved working with horses and people, have their own Equine Assisted Learning businesses, and have a positive impact on others' lives. It was a passionate pursuit.

Kari's vision to help other women start their own businesses put her on a learning curve again. As she knew herself, being an EAL facilitator would develop the skill sets of the facilitators themselves, as well as being

instrumental in the skills development of their program participants. She had to create a format that would give facilitators the tools and information they needed to succeed. So the wheels were set in motion once again.

Kari now offers travelling EAL Schools around the world for interested and passionate women (mostly) four times a year, as well as multiple EAL schools from her home base in Strathmore, Alberta. She uses her story of survival and comeback to inspire, to show that if you have a dream, you are going to face some tough challenges to bring it to life. Period. That's how life is.

For Kari, this is the most purposeful job on Earth. It drives her every day. She knows she will never be monetarily rich from her EAL business, her riches come in seeing people's lives change every time they encounter one of these results-oriented programs.

As Kari says ...

*"I commit to doing this every day for myself - I commit to asking myself "You breathe in this beautiful air, Kari because you don't know if it's your last day, so how are you going to make this a great day for everybody that you encounter?"*

*I do this not only for other people and strangers, and those who come to take the programs, but for my family and for myself. This helps me to always be on top of my game, and the bonus now is I have 8 beautiful horses in my life."*

## CHAPTER NINE

### I AM DYING



Has Kari changed? Of course, the obvious answer is 'Yes'. When we are broken open, we alter our ideas and approach to life. In order to develop deeper understandings about life, love and our purpose there must be entryways into our being. It is during our most vulnerable times that we are responsive to these deeper understandings sinking into our psyche.

From the small girl who dreamed of having a horse someday ... Kari has done a remarkable job bringing her dream to reality. Horses and their extraordinary ability are part of her full-fledged purpose. She knows she has been given a beautiful gift in the life she feels privileged to live. Knowing that she can bring the power of horses to help people become empowered in their lives has a deeper meaning now than it did eight years ago when she began her business.

Where is Kari headed next?

Plans are already in motion to purchase 40 acres of land and rebuild. This would allow this forward-moving entrepreneur to have up to 10 horses, in a more private setting away, from the big city life. Being surrounded by nature and living a more natural, harmonious life is something Kari is aiming for.

She would love to have one of her daughters grow and build the family business with her. It looks like her oldest daughter Karsyn is stepping into that role.

Kari holds to her vision that the majority of people who go through the EAL facilitator training will become certified and grow successful businesses. Her larger dream of empowering others is still tied to providing this amazing experiential learning format with horses as powerful teachers. And for Kari, her horses will continue to be soulful life partners, always showing her that the path is forward.

Kari lives life to its fullest every day and believes she has lived an amazing life. If she took her last breath on any given day, she knows she has done a good job helping others - with horses by her side. In her heart she knows that God and her mom, her biggest cheerleader, would be proud of her ... and that's what really matters.

*“As a person thinketh in their hearts, so are they.”*

– Napoleon Hill



Faye

*“Time goes, you say, Ah, no!  
Alas, time stays, we go.  
Remember that the stream of  
plenty always flows towards  
the open, expectant mind.”*

– Napoleon Hill

*“You may not have a  
tomorrow!! ”*

– Napoleon Hill

*“Enthusiasm is that certain something that makes us great. It’s that something that pulls us out of the mediocre and commonplace. It builds into us power; it glows and shines; it lights up our faces.”*

– Napoleon Hill

*“Today is the greatest gift that I can have, how I use it tells my gratuity.”*

– Napoleon Hill



Kari's girls

*“What you make of your life  
is up to you. You have all the  
tools and resources you need.  
What you do with them is up to  
you. The choice is yours.”*

– Napoleon Hill

*“Remind myself that I am  
capable and free,  
And my success and  
happiness are really  
up to me.”*  
- Napoleon Hill



Kari and her family

*“88 percent of Success is  
ATTITUDE.”*

– Napoleon Hill

*“To the question of your life  
you are the answer,  
and to the  
problems of your life  
you are the solution.”*

– Unknown

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Life itself is easy ... deep breath in; deep breath out. It's everything else that challenges us, deepens us, and breaks us down - that makes life hard. Kari Fulmek had a dream that fueled and fulfilled everything she ever wanted in life. Stepping into her dream was easy, she just said 'Yes'. It's what came after the initial affirmation that would take her on a ride through hell.

**It's Not Your Dream If It's Not Hard** is a story of guts and loss, of passion and perseverance. It's the kind of tale that takes you on a rollercoaster ride of feelings, hoping like hell things will turn out well, but knowing that the story isn't over yet.

Kari Fulmek



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