



Gratitude in Motion: A True Story of Hope, Determination, and the Everyday Heroes Around Us

Colleen Alexander , Jenna Glatzer , Bart Yasso (Foreword)

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It was a beautiful fall day in Connecticut when Colleen Kelly Alexander, a lifelong athlete, rode her bike home from work. She had survived both a diagnosis of lupus and brain surgery, had a fulfilling career, and was married at last to the love of her life. Everything was good as she coasted along, meeting the eyes of a truck driver as he approached the stop sign beside her.

He didn't stop. The truck hit Colleen, running over her lower body with front and back tires and dragging her across the pavement. As she bled out in the street, nearby strangers surrounded her and the driver attempted to get away. An EMT herself, Colleen knew she had to stay awake. "I've just been reconnected with my soulmate," she told the medic. "We want to have a baby. I can't die now. Please don't let me die."

Five weeks in a coma and twenty-nine surgeries later, Colleen survived. Rather than let the trauma and PTSD control her life, she became determined to find a way to make something positive from her pain. She decided she'd run again and dedicate her race medals to the everyday heroes around us, including the medical staff and blood donors who saved her life. Since then Colleen has run fifty races and completed forty triathlons, including four half-Ironman events. Now a spokesperson for the Red Cross, Colleen shares her incredible inspirational story to encourage others to take that first step forward.

Gratitude in Motion: A True Story of Hope, Determination, and the Everyday Heroes Around Us Details

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From Reader Review *Gratitude in Motion: A True Story of Hope, Determination, and the Everyday Heroes Around Us* for online ebook

Christine says

What a pleasure to meet and hear Colleen speak last year at the ACMA conference in King of Prussia, and now to read her story of survival and gratitude.

Live your life with purpose and the way you want and always with Love.

Jaina Rose says

This review and many more like it are available on *Read Till Dawn* .

What an inspiration. Truly, Colleen survived the unthinkable and managed not only to regain her will to live despite horrific injuries but to find inspiration and strength in overcoming it.

First, a word to the more squeamish readers: she spares no punches. Her descriptions of her injuries and treatments are brutally specific. Much of her body was completely ripped to shreds, and she underwent lots of excruciating and humiliating treatments. She was also in a very dark place emotionally for a while after the accident. As the daughter of two doctors I didn't mind hearing the gory details, but some might not take it so well.

I thought it was amazing that Colleen was strong enough to not only survive such a horrible situation but also to find grace and gratitude through the ordeal, to continue marathoning, and to turn herself into an advocate for blood donation and being grateful for the people around you.

But really, if anyone was going to overcome this accident so gracefully, it would have to be Colleen. The first few chapters of the book are about her childhood, (three) marriages, and early career. She'd literally built a career around working at community centers, helping and advocating for disadvantaged youths. She was on the way home from a meeting with her boss at the center when she was run over. Colleen's clearly always had a loving and open heart.

It's hard to say much more in my review, because I'm honestly just inspired by Colleen's story and her gracious attitude about it. I've had several joint injuries over the past few years which have made me stop doing some activities because of the pain/risk of reinjury. Reading about Colleen's drive to go back to marathons, even when she was literally bleeding by the end of the races, was so inspiring. As soon as I know that I can't do any more damage by stressing my ankles, I'm going to go out and be active again because there's no way my small amount of pain is anything approaching what she has to go through. If she could overcome it, I definitely can.

The word I keep coming back to when reading Colleen's story is *inspiring*. I don't often wind up loving the memoirs I read, but this one is definitely the best one I've read by far—it's really touched me on a more personal level. I highly recommend it to any and all, as long as you have the stomach for the gorier details.

Disclaimer: I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest

review.

Carol says

Gratitude In Motion Is a story of loss and strength, a story of restoration and Faithfulness. A story of suffering and healing. This book is a dichotomy and I love it so much. Can you imagine being run over by a freight truck and all that entails for her? All the trauma that she had to go through and rehab? Will she have anyone special in her life to help her through it? Will she be able to hold strong and make it through it all? Will she find answers with GOD? I received a copy of this book from the Publisher and Netgalley; all of the opinions expressed in this review are all my own.

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W. Whalin says

An Amazing Story Captured in the Pages of this book

It is a miracle that Colleen Kelly Alexander is alive much less living a full and vibrant life. This story is a page-turner from the opening pages until the final page. I loved reading this book.

Here's a short example of some of the extra-ordinary insights in this book:

“We all bleed red. It was a statement that encapsulated this journey. As someone who had grown up a bit afraid of anyone different from me, it now felt like a giant hug from God to realize that I had at the very least 180 people's blood flowing through my veins, pumping through my heart....Gratitude swelled in my heart. How would I ever say thank you to all these people? I could, and did, say it in persn to the heroes I knew about, but there are so many more I would not even recognize if we were standing next to each other. Strangers who had pulled together to save another stranger, just because. And that's when I started feeling the exact opposite of cursed: I felt blessed.” (Page 154-155)

The writing is excellent GRATITUDE IN MOTION. I highly recommend this book.

Sarah says

"Gratitude in Motion" is one of the most inspiring books I have ever read. I connected with Colleen and her struggles on such a different level. I was in awe of her dedication to never give up, to keep fighting and to keep going. She is an inspiration to us all. I found her memoir to be heartbreaking, raw, thoughtful and honest. She makes no excuses for her life and will live it to the fullest. You can't get through this book without tissues. I think what I loved most about this book, is it will teach you how to be human again. It will pull you from the things that you think are important, and help you to re-focus on what is important. I also loved the transparency and authenticity of Colleen and her husband. They both were willing to be so transparent in this memoir holding nothing back, which I loved. If you get queezy, she does explain the medical procedures, so you may not want to read all of it word for word. It didn't bother me, but it might bother you.

This book will help you fall in love with Jesus more and more as you seek what things are about His Kingdom and not yours! Grab this book. You'll read it in 3 hours or less. I read it in one sitting and loved it. I give this book 5/5 stars.

Beth says

Emotion without action is irrelevant

Graphic and horrifying Colleen was gutted and did not give up or give in. The strength of love and the human spirit exemplified.

Susan Mills says

What an inspirational woman. I heard about Colleen a few weeks ago at a pre-race dinner for the wineglass Half Marathon I was running. She was the speaker for the dinner and when I briefly read that she had been in a horrific accident and was going to talk about her recovery I thought it could be interesting as running does not come easy to me.

Her talk left me in tears as she talked about her accident and what it did to her. To come back from such devastation is nothing short of a miracle. I knew I wanted to hear more about her story. I immediately bought her book and read it in 1 day. The perspective she shares is remarkable. She wallows in self pity then brings herself out of it time and time again. Her ability to see good in situations is extraordinary and her perseverance is inspiring. Her work with the Red Cross is so important and she shares a message that must be heard. This book is very worth it, if only to see how much someone can achieve with determination and an excellent support system.

Joe Rohaly says

Stories about people who overcome personal adversity are among my favorites. The latest such story that I read is *Gratitude in Motion*, by Colleen Kelly Alexander. As many biographies do the author begins describing her life as a young person. She describes her first love, and her faith in God. Her parents were very strict Baptist and conveyed their own faith beliefs to her. She does little to describe her athletic prowess but does mention that her father taught her to love bicycles because he ran a bike shop.

The biggest problem she met as a teen was having to give up her first love because his faith was not the same as hers. This trauma sent her into a personal dilemma and she wound up wondering what to do with her life. She did eventually find a passion in counseling troubled teens. She learned that she was good at what she did, and was able to write grant proposals to get funding for her work. This usually gave her a salary too, albeit a small one.

She was living in Connecticut working at a counseling service, and rode her bicycle to work. One Saturday, she went in to catch up and on her way home she encounters a large truck at an intersection. The truck ran a stop sign and ran over her. Both the front wheel and the rear wheels crossed over her abdomen. She remembers looking into the driver's eyes as he proceeded to run her down. The truck squished her insides out of her abdomen, broke many bones and stripped muscles from her pelvis, gluteus and thighs. That is

when this story really gets going.

The fact that Colleen survived is one thing, but the process she went through to survive is another. She describes her injuries in vivid detail, and it is demoralizing. I felt myself wincing throughout.

I love this kind of story because it relates to my experience with polio at age fifteen. It is not fun laying in a bed with IV's and machines all around in a stupor wondering what the hell happened here. Colleen is a trooper and has courage beyond a normal human being. I won't go into any details of her injuries except to say it wasn't pretty. What is important is that she recovered and channelled her frustration and pain into positive healing. Not only did she recover, but she has gone on to become a revered motivational speaker, and an advocate for the Red Cross blood drive. They used seventy-eight pints of blood during her emergency surgery and many units of plasma. She believes the blood to be one of the many things that helped save her life. She is also back to running, swimming, walking, and bicycling. to the extent that she competes in Iron Man competitions.

Read this story, it will fill you with positive energy, and a wish to help humanity.

Ron S says

A memoir about positivity and gratitude in the face of incredible, incomprehensible loss. Run over by a freight truck while riding home from work, Colleen Alexander beat impossible odds to return to participate in running events and triathlons, fundraising and acting as a spokesperson for the Red Cross on the way. The injuries Ms Alexander has had to endure are unfathomable; if she lived the rest of her days a bitter opioid addict she'd have every right to do so. And yet inspired by Nobel laureate mentor Jody Williams' quote "Emotion without action is irrelevant," she's managed to live a positive life and try to help others. Note that the book begins with enough romance and religion that it might be seriously off-putting to some. I'm glad I kept at it and read through this incredible story.

Lila says

I don't think I've ever felt more motivation, inspiration, and thankfulness for what I have in one single book before! "Gratitude in Motion" is absolutely amazing. I recently was diagnosed with a stress fracture, and not allowed to run for about a month. For me, that seemed totally devastating. Colleen's story put that all in perspective. Imagine not just being able to run, but not being able walk, get out of bed, dress, or even use the bathroom on your own - and to get to this state after being a healthy, competitive athlete your whole life.

Summary:

This memoir is the story of Colleen Alexander, a young, athletic woman living in Connecticut. Cycling home from work one day, she is run over by a multi ton freight truck that accelerates at a stop sign. Colleen's lower body is essentially ripped open. She goes into cardiac arrest. She loses nearly all of her blood. But somehow, by what can only be described as a miracle, she survives. This is her story of her long, painful road to recovery. Not only does Colleen recover, however, but she goes on to thrive and compete again in races and triathlons. She also does amazing good in the world - spreading awareness for blood donations and bike safety, among many things, and giving every medal she earns at a race to a "hero" - her doctors, and others who helped her through her worst nightmare. I guarantee Colleen's story will touch your heart no matter who you are, and inspire you to go after your goals, and do good in the world.

What I Liked:

- Everything, essentially. The amazing story, learning about who Colleen is as a person and all the good she has done and continues to do, her perseverance and the selfless, gratitude filled tone of the story. Also, the honesty of the story! Colleen doesn't hold back on details of her accident, or the painful recovery process - and that really helps to be compassionate for her situation and grateful for the people that saved and helped her out.

When I review a memoir, I don't like to include a "what I didn't like" part - because someone's story is their story - they can't control if there is a part you don't "like"! I guess if I had one piece of criticism for this book, I would say I wish that Colleen had included more about her athletic background before the accident. She emphasizes how she has always been competitive, and I wish the reader learned a bit more detail about this so we could really understand the extent that getting cycling taken away from her was a life-changer.

I LOVED this book - I flew through it, and so will you! Whether you need motivation, or just a great book, "Gratitude in Motion" will teach you a lot about getting through tough, even impossible circumstances, and coming out stronger from these experiences.

Monica says

Gratitude In Motion is the true story of Colleen Kelly Alexander. Alexander is a regular person like you and I--except she has survived some truly big challenges in her life. Alexander survived both a lupus diagnosis and brain surgery. Then, not long after marrying the love of her life, Alexander was riding her bike home from work when a truck driver ran a stop sign and then ran her over. I can't imagine surviving that, but she did. Not only, did she survive but she went on to continue her athletic challenges in various races. Gratitude in Motion is her story of survival through unbelievable life challenges--and is nothing short of AMAZING.

Through Gratitude in Motion, Alexander's story is told candidly and shows just how resilient a human being can be. I have a bit of a squeamish stomach when it comes to medical details so some parts were a bit too detailed for me. However, in telling those details, it is clear how much Alexander truly went through and survived. I have no doubt that this book could be encouraging and uplifting to other people who have survived deep traumas and need inspiration to continue to go on through further medical challenges. However, Gratitude In Motion is also inspiring to all of us who need reminders to see the gratitude and beauty in every day life. Alexander's story also drives home the need for us regular people to do things to help those around us--like giving blood. When she had her accident, they gave her 78 units of blood in just the first 72 hours after her accident, thanks to blood donors. At the end of this touching memoir, there is a section entitled, "How to Be a Hero." We can all be a hero in someone's life by doing basic things like giving blood or learning CPR. I would also add that Alexander had a lot of friends and family to help her through these challenges. It was wonderful to read how people helped stay with her and did other things to help when she was hurt and her husband had to go to work. I think it is also a good reminder to help those we know and love whenever we can.

I received a copy of Gratitude in Motion from Hachette Book Group/Center Street Books. I was not required to write a positive review in exchange for the book.

Rose Griffith says

Gratitude in Motion is not as attitude-changing as reading a non-fiction like Randy Pausch's *The Last Lecture*. However, this book was a page turner because you want to understand how Ms. Alexander lived through getting run over by a freight truck—both front and back tires.

Yes, run over. Not hit, not blown off the road by the wind force of a big truck. The driver literally looked her in the eye, pulled in front of her, ran over her and tried to flee the scene.

There were times I found the narrative a bit confusing as she would state the medical challenges she was currently experiencing and then tell about a 5k race she completed. It was difficult to reconcile the physical issues with the ability to walk or “wog” five kilometers.

There are people in our lives whom we have watched find the silver linings in terrible circumstances. Can't you name three of them right now?

This woman went so far beyond what any of us can imagine in order to overcome a dire prognosis, being in a coma for five weeks, having her insides on the outside and more than twenty-five surgeries, that it's an amazing journey to read.

Ms. Alexander is very open, honest, and revealing as she describes the most personal of issues she faced (faces).

The most telling part of her personality is not about her honesty in discussing her injuries or even what she overcame, it is in her seeking out the heroes who helped her and recognizing what they did—from voices speaking to her during her coma time to the good man who ran into the road to help her and keep the driver from escaping.

She met these people with hugs and gratitude, enabling them to see her as more than a medical problem. Perhaps that helped them see all their patients through new eyes.

Ms. Alexander made the decision to give every medal she won to someone she recognizes as a hero. What a delightful way to show someone what their actions have meant in your life.

Notable moments from the book:

Page 31: “I learned from Jody (friend) that when you're doing something that matters, you matter.”

Page 108: A nurse asks, “What's your goal for today?” She states, “There's an adjustment that goes along with life-altering events; you have to learn to celebrate everything, even things that sounded ridiculous to celebrate before. Rolling over. Eating a piece of food. A decent sleep. The fact that you woke up that day still breathing.”

Page 127: She quotes Jody Williams, “Emotion without action is irrelevant.”

Page 146: “It's wondrous how many things you can find to be thankful for when you look for them. My life seemed to overflow with both—sources of stress and things to be grateful for, often overlapping.”

In chapter 13, *We all bleed red*, she delves into the importance of the American Red Cross's blood banks. With her arrival at the hospital, she received 78 units of blood and 25 bags of plasma and platelets—which means over 180 people had to donate blood. I appreciate her paragraph as she tries to imagine the people as individuals, “I saw black, white, and brown, of all different ages and backgrounds. In my mind, I saw an amazing group of diverse people all conspiring to help a fellow human whom they'd never know, for no

reason other than to save a stranger's life.”

A good reminder that if you are able, health-wise, to donate blood, please do so.

This chapter contains the quote, “I am the product of heroes.” Is that not a great way to think about yourself? Your life?

Chapter 15, *Light Creeps In*, was insightful because during her first time driving a year after the accident, she came across a duplicate of the freight truck that hit her. Bless the driver of this vehicle because he paused in the midst of his deliveries and allowed Colleen to scream, tell him what the other driver did, show him her wounds, and embrace his truck—physically. And he let her hug him before they parted ways. There are amazing people everywhere.

Page 219, I love when her urologist, discussing how she was doing post-his surgery, said, “Live the life you were meant to live.”

How many of us are doing that now?

And finally, on page 250, “Life is precious.”

Yes, it is and if you every doubt it, read Colleen's story and let me know what impact it has for you.

I received this book for free from Hachette Books in order to provide an honest review.

Joan says

I cannot imagine being hit and then run over by a freight truck – both front and back tires – hearing the truck accelerate away. Her body ripped apart, she died twice, had 78 pints of blood, was in a medically induced coma for a month (she had nightmares during it), and had surgery after surgery. She suffered through wound care and infections. And then? She competed in the disabled section of the Timberman half Ironman event in Hew Hampshire, even though she had to change her wound dressings between events and wear compression shorts to hold her body together so she could run.

Alexander's memoir is amazing. Her life got off to a tough start, two marriages and divorces. Then she reconnected with her high school sweet heart, the man who would see her through her trauma. An avid bicyclist, she was on her bike when a freight truck driver blew through a stop sign and changed her life forever.

What an inspiring story!. Alexander shares her experiences and her feelings. Besides the physical pain were the anxiety attacks, the fear of getting in a car, being in a coma, questioning God, knowing her life would never be normal, and finally, her feelings when she and the hit and run driver were in the same room.

My favorite part of the book was the point where she had the sudden realization that she was alive. She'd had seizures and brain surgery. She'd been run over by a freight truck. She realized there had to be a reason she was still alive. There was a way she could be a light in the world again. (127)

Her encouraging story is amazing. We all have big challenges, Alexander writes. We also have choices in how we approach those challenges. (259) She hopes that her story will encourage those whose life did not turn out the way they had planned. This book is not for the squeamish. Alexander is frank in her descriptions

of her injuries and how the tragedy changed her life. It is an encouraging story from a very brave and strong woman.

I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher. My comments are an independent and honest review.

Bp says

Gratitude is such an important part of my life so I was intrigued by the title. Then when I read the description of what this lady had been through I wanted to read it. Colleen does a good job sharing her story. I cannot even imagine the pain both physically and emotionally that she has endured. What a remarkable story of perseverance! Colleen has many amazing heroes who have played a role in her story. Now Colleen shares her story and encourages others to be heroes, like through donating blood. It is clear how easy it would be to be depressed if you were in this situation so it is inspiring to see her attitude and positive outlook. This doesn't mean she doesn't have hard days and ask questions. But her perspective has changed and she looks for the positive and ways to help others.

It will change your perspective when you read this book!

I received a copy of this book from Hachette book group for my honest review. Thank you.

Briana Ehnes says

Inspirational story, compelling narrative, and optimistic feel good vibes - even though Colleen has been faced with more adversity than many could bear. I really enjoyed this book and liked her message...life is precious, and gratitude really is the key to happiness. Also makes you appreciate all the unsung heroes in the world (nurses, physios, EMTs and other first responders, etc.)! Definitely worth a read if you're looking for a dose of motivation!
