Comfortably Uncomfortable

Why Motivation Isn't Your Problem, and the Unfiltered Truth About Turning Toward What You've Been Avoiding

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A Note From Me

I am not a doctor, therapist, or any kind of licensed clinician. I'm a mentor. My formal education is in nutrition and kinesiology (applied exercise science), along with two years of psychology coursework and certifications in behavioral change and neuroscience. The rest comes from my own healing, years of study, and what I've seen with my clients.

Everything in this book about the body, the brain, medication, mental health, and healing is my experience, my view, and what I have observed. It is not medical advice, it is not proven fact, and it is not a substitute for care from a qualified professional. Where I mention figures I've learned or cited on podcasts, I'm sharing them as my understanding, not as settled science. Please never stop, start, or change a medication without talking to your prescriber. And if you're dealing with a medical condition, keep your doctor in the loop.

This book also talks about suicide, near-death experiences, religion, politics, past lives, and my experience with psychedelic mushrooms. Those are real parts of my story, and I've decided not to hide them. Take what serves you and leave the rest.

If you are in crisis or thinking about ending your life, please reach out right now. In the US, call or text 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, any time. Outside the US, contact your local emergency number or crisis line.

INTRODUCTION

Why This Book Is Unfiltered

I've written other books that are polished enough for a boardroom. This isn't one of them.

This is the version of me you'd get if we were sitting on a couch with a glass of wine and you asked me what I really think. About motivation. About the medical and mental health systems. About God, government, death, past lives, and the time I looked into a mirror on mushrooms and came out the other side of a lifetime of hating my body.

I'm sharing all of it because I've learned something over and over: the more openly we speak about the things people are afraid of, the more permission other people feel to face what they've been terrified to see in themselves. I'm very open about everything. Not "vulnerable" in the trendy way. Just open. Because once everything is out in the light, nothing can touch you. There's no judgment left to fear.

The thread through this whole book is a phrase I use constantly: comfortably uncomfortable. It's the place most people live. Annoyed, unhappy, stuck, but not uncomfortable enough to give up the identity that keeps them there. It's the known discomfort we choose over the unknown one.

I want to show you why that happens, what I believe is going on in the body and the mind when it does, and how to walk out. You don't need more motivation. You need to stop running from the thing.

CHAPTER 1

Motivation Isn't Missing

People come to me all the time saying they lack motivation or willpower. They just can't stop eating sugar. Can't get up at 5 a.m. Can't make themselves go to the gym. Can't start the project. And they've decided it's a personal flaw, some lazy gene other people don't have.

I don't believe that. I used to have an addiction to exercise, and people thought that meant I was incredibly motivated. It didn't. I was running from things I wouldn't face.

What looks like a motivation problem is usually one of two things. The first is misalignment: you're chasing something that isn't actually yours, so of course you can't stick with it. The second is exhaustion. In my view, motivation and discipline can only be accessed from a state of regulation. If your system is chronically stressed and overstimulated, it will literally shut you down. Your body is saying, "I'm exhausted. I don't have the bandwidth for this."

So the real question isn't "why am I so lazy?" It's "why am I so exhausted?"

I see this clearly with food. There's a buzzword right now, "food noise," the constant chatter in your head about eating. People talk about it like it comes from nowhere, like it's a willpower problem. I think food noise is telling you something. In my experience, it usually means you're either not fueling your body well, or you're overstressed and using food as comfort or avoidance.

Same with sugar cravings. I'm not anti-sugar. I compete in grappling, and I'll eat a handful of gummy bears before I step on the mat because it's instant energy. The problem isn't sugar. It's overconsumption, usually in people who aren't active. What I've seen is that chronic sugar cravings often mean your body is stressed or under-nourished and asking for help. When we get clients eating solid meals and dealing with their stress, many of them tell me the cravings just fade. They don't crave it anymore, and their body starts asking for what it actually needs.

I don't put people on meal plans much these days. I had one client drop twenty pounds in eight weeks without me changing anything in her food. We dealt with what was underneath, and she stopped needing to self-soothe. Another client lost a lot of weight in a couple of months simply because he stopped eating to cope with emotions. I've had a client pay off $100,000 of debt within months once their self-sabotage loosened. Those results

didn't come from willpower. They came from not needing to escape anymore.

People say what they want all day long. But they vote with their screen time and their bank statement. When you're not doing what you say you want, don't call yourself lazy. Get curious about what you're running from.

CHAPTER 2

What I Believe About the Body

This is the chapter where I tell you what I think, and I'll remind you again: this is my view and my experience, not medical advice.

My first master's degree was in nutrition, and the more I studied and worked with people, the more convinced I became that you cannot separate the mind from the body. When I talk about this on podcasts, I usually start with the gut. What I've learned is that a large share of the neurotransmitters that affect mood, sleep, motivation, and drive, including serotonin and dopamine, are tied to the gut. On some shows I've cited figures like 85 to 95 percent. That's my understanding from my studies, and you're welcome to look into it yourself. The point I'm making is this: if your gut is a mess, I don't believe your brain has what it needs to rewire, and you're going to struggle to change long term no matter how hard you push.

I also talk about brainwave states. The way I explain it, most people walk around in what's called high beta, a stressed, narrowed state. In that state your perception narrows, your stress hormones run high, and you're just trying to survive. My view is that real change happens much more easily when someone is calmer, in what's called alpha or theta. So in my work, we stabilize the body first: food, breath, nervous system, sleep. Then we go after the deeper patterns.

I believe stress isn't just what happens to you. It's how you perceive what happens to you. And I believe that when emotions get pushed down over and over, that energy doesn't just disappear. It has to go somewhere. In my experience, long-term emotional suppression shows up in the body, often in the gut and in the immune system.

I want to be honest about what I've seen. I've worked with a couple hundred people who are living case studies of this. Clients have come to me with autoimmune and gastrointestinal issues: gastritis, IBS, colitis, rheumatoid arthritis. I've seen each of those conditions go into remission in my case-study clients as we addressed their stress, their gut, and what they'd been carrying. That includes at least one person with a serious diagnosis that most people would never expect to change. I don't diagnose or treat disease. These are observations from my own client work, not clinical trials. But I've seen it too many times to stay quiet about it.

My own story is part of this too. I had chronic anxiety and panic, and I was diagnosed with generalized anxiety, social anxiety, PTSD, and panic disorder. I had gastritis and IBS. I was on medication for years. When I finally faced what I'd been running from, the anxiety went away, and I came off medication. That was my path. It is not a recommendation for anyone else to stop theirs.

Here's my honest view on medication, and I want you to hold it as a view: I believe many medications and even supplements were meant to be short-term supports, not lifelong answers. I think our culture has been conditioned to want a pill for everything, a quick fix. I think trauma care in emergencies is incredible; if you cut your arm open, go to the ER. I don't have a problem with doctors. I think most of them believe what they've been taught. But I don't believe normal is healthy anymore, and I don't think you should be striving for normal. I think you should be striving for the best version of yourself, and that means asking hard questions with your providers, not just accepting a refill forever.

I also work with an addiction detox facility as an outside contractor, using my approach alongside their care. I tell those clients they're the courageous ones. At least they admit they have an addiction. Most people won't.

One book I often recommend is *Biology of Belief* by Bruce Lipton. It shaped how I think about how much our environment and our perception affect what happens in our bodies. Read it and decide for yourself.

CHAPTER 3

Labels, Boxes, and the Powers That Be

When I was twenty-two, I walked into my third therapist's office. By then I had witnessed death, witnessed a murder, seen drug overdoses, and been homeless. I had chronic anxiety, panic disorder, gastritis, IBS, the whole list. After our first hour, she looked at me and asked, "How old are you?" When I told her, she said, "Oh my God."

I remember thinking, you should not be saying that to your patients. Every therapist told me I was remarkably self-aware. And I'd say, "Yes, I know what's going on. Help me." Over years of traditional therapy, nothing really changed. That's my experience, and I want to be fair: other modalities can be helpful, and therapy is great for being heard. But for me, it was great for talking about things and not great for changing them.

What I took from that season is how much I dislike labels. I believe labels create a lack of ownership. They can create a victim mentality. Once you're boxed in as broken, it's very hard to see yourself as the person who can change your own life. I was raised by parents who were diagnosed as narcissists, and even then, I'd rather look at what's happening than live inside a label.

I'll go a step further, because this is the unfiltered book. I believe the powers that be don't like things they can't box in. So they create labels and narratives that keep us conforming, in mental bubbles, in loops. I think society is set up as a grand marketing scheme: a pill for this, a program for that, everybody comparing themselves to everybody else, because that keeps people buying. The question I want everyone to ask more often is, "Who told me this, and why did they tell me?"

COVID was a big revealer for me. When the government labeled me non-essential, I lost the job that had been my identity for eight years. Training and racing were on hold for a long time because of the rules here in California. I'm not going to relitigate all of it. But I will say that being told by the system that you're non-essential is one of the most clarifying experiences a person can have. It forced me to sit down and face over a decade of what I'd been running from.

If you've ever been close to ending your life, please know you're not alone. In the US, you can call or text 988 anytime.

That season brought me closer to ending my life than I have ever been. I tell that story fully in *Checkmark Syndrome*. What I'll say here is that the thought of leaving my sister alone after

our mom passed is what made me try to face it instead. It was the hardest thing I've ever done and the best decision I ever made. I healed it, I haven't had any issues since 2020, and my entire behavioral profile changed. That healing is the work I do now.

About politics in general, I'll say this. Force is loud; power is quiet. Many people in positions of authority are very loud, but they aren't very powerful, and you can see that as more people stop believing the illusion. My brother sent me one of his last TikToks before he died suddenly in the fall of 2021. It was someone saying that American politics is pro wrestling for adults. I think about that a lot. Most of the time, people think they're thinking, when really they're just reinforcing their programming. Every time you act on a narrative, you make it stronger.

CHAPTER 4

The God I Was Handed

My mom took us to church. She didn't push it hard, but we went. And I remember, from a very young age, asking: how did any one book get it right? How is any one book *the* book?

By the time I was twelve, I was looking at the pastor and thinking, he's a human. He's inherently flawed. Why is how he perceives the Bible any better than how I perceive the Bible? That made no sense to me.

My mother was a Christian, and I loved her. She once told me she was just going to wait for God to save her. I couldn't understand it then, and I still struggle with it. I believe in God. I just don't believe in handing all of your power to someone in the sky and sitting still. I believe we were made in His image, which means we were made to create. Whatever you believe in, God, source, the universe, I think you still have to do your part.

I'm a firm believer in the middle path. I see a lot of spiritual people converting to Christianity right now, and I understand why. They're craving groundedness. Spirituality without any grounding can get wishy-washy. Christianity offers structure, routine, and discipline. But structures are boxes too. The internal informs the external. It's both, not either.

I do believe this life echoes. I believe we carry things from one life to the next, and that what we do here matters beyond this lifetime. I believe I'm only disconnected from spirit as much as I allow myself to be. Living from that understanding changes every decision you make.

Your beliefs are yours to choose. What I'd ask is that you actually choose them, instead of wearing the t-shirt you were handed and defending it without ever asking where it came from.

CHAPTER 5

Fear Is a Story

In 2022, I hit the median barrier on an Austin, Texas freeway, and my car flipped three times.

I remember leaving my body. It felt like going down a rabbit hole into a giant gray void. There were beings on either side, but it wasn't scary. I had no body. It was just consciousness, a feeling of floating, and it felt like love, almost like a womb. I remember thinking, I like this. Then I heard: "It's not your time yet." And I was very rudely sucked back into my body.

When I came back, the peace stayed. My arm was ripped open to the bone. The car had collapsed in on itself. I couldn't feel my leg. And I remember calmly thinking, okay, maybe we walk again, maybe we don't. It's okay. The EMTs offered me fentanyl, and I said, isn't that the stuff people are addicted to? They said, "Well, that looks painful." I said I'd try it. It was a crazy twenty-four hours.

A month later, I was bitten by a rattlesnake. Before I stepped onto that trail, I literally heard: do not go on this trail. My ego mind said, you'll be fine. Then I felt a sharp pain in the back of my ankle, turned around, and saw a six-foot rattlesnake recoiling. I ran a quarter mile, jumped a barbed-wire fence, and by the time I got help, it was up to my knee. I spent hours paralyzed waiting on poison control, then days in the ICU. My family friend was freaking out, and I was laughing. I said, "Okay, God, I get it. No more pursuing egoic thoughts."

They say God whispers, and if you don't listen, He shouts. I've had more brushes with death than most people. Since that last one, the narrative in my head never dictates my choices. What does? Knowing. It's a feeling, a sensation, a draw. My thoughts may lay out logical steps, but the decision comes from that felt sense.

Here's how I explain fear now. Everything in life can be broken into phases. First comes the experience, and the experience is inherently neutral. A split second later comes the sensation or emotion. Then comes the thought overlay, and the thoughts pile up into a story that either fits or fights your sense of identity. Fear is a story: something old projected onto something new.

You are not your thoughts. If you can watch a thought come and go while you're still present, how can it be you? The stories, the monsters, the previous experiences, they're all transient. They only become reality when you act on them.

The mind only knows what it has already experienced. It doesn't know what's possible. That's why living from the mind keeps you stuck in your past, and living from knowing opens up your future.

CHAPTER 6

The Book of Life

After the rattlesnake bite, I messaged my very first mentor, the man who changed my life. Years earlier, he'd told me I wasn't from here, and I'd never understood what he meant. So I asked him. He told me to email a woman he knew.

That's how I had my first Akashic record reading. The Akashic records come from Hindu tradition. Some people connect them with the Book of Life in the Bible. The idea is that your soul carries a record, with stories from previous lives attached to it, and in a deep meditative state you can read it.

I got my own reading, and later I learned the practice. What I found in my record wasn't pretty. I believe I lived lives where I was a mercenary. I killed. And I would bet very good money that my first twenty-some years of this life, the chaos, the violence, the loss, was me resolving that karma.

I know how this sounds. I studied nutrition, kinesiology, and psychology, I hold certifications in behavioral change and neuroscience, I read the science, and I'm telling you about past lives. But I've stopped hiding it, because when I talk about it openly, people open up. I was at a mastermind once, talking about this, and it gave one of the members the space to open up with me completely. It ended up helping him shift dynamics in his marriage that had been issues for years.

I now offer readings for certain clients when they want that space. Not everyone wants it, and that's completely fine. It isn't required to do this work, and it isn't how I start with anyone.

What past-life work taught me is the same thing everything else has taught me: it's never about the thing. The story you're living in this life is often bigger and older than the one you're consciously aware of. And when you understand that, you can stop taking every trigger so personally. You can get curious about it instead.

CHAPTER 7

The Mirror

A note: psychedelic substances are illegal in many places and carry real physical, psychological, and legal risks. Some people should never use them. I'm sharing my experience, not recommending that anyone use them. If you're curious, talk to a qualified professional first.

I resisted plant medicine for a long time. I wanted to do a solid portion of the work before I touched anything. Then I finally got the hit: go do a mushroom journey.

I'd never done mushrooms in my life. I took two grams. At one point I looked into a mirror, and I still remember it. I fell into the mirror, and I came back out.

I had dysmorphia my entire life. I hated my physicality. That hatred created an eating disorder and years of punishing my body. In my experience, coming back out of that mirror is when my dysmorphia healed.

Here's my warning, and I take it seriously. A lot of people in the plant medicine community get addicted to the medicine and never integrate any of it. They have big experiences and then don't know how to navigate this world. They can't ground back into the body, can't go to work, can't hold a relationship. The medicine becomes another escape.

I believe in the middle path. The experience matters far less than what you do with it afterward. The integration is the work.

I'll also say what I've seen with dysmorphia in general, medicine or not. In my experience, dysmorphia is very often manifested shame. When people deal with their shame, the dysmorphia tends to dissolve. Running into the exercise addiction, the restriction, the mirror-checking: those are attempts to control a feeling that needs to be felt.

CHAPTER 8

Run Toward the Thing

Everything in this book comes down to one instruction: run toward the thing.

The pain, the fear, the trigger: that's your indicator. If you're sitting there saying, "I don't know what to do," look at what you're avoiding. That's where you go. We show our brain and nervous system that something isn't a threat by confronting it, not by hiding from it.

This is how I work with clients, and it's what I do myself. I'm all about exposure. Just like with diets, I'd rather it suck really badly, very quickly, and then be done.

Here are the practices I use most.

Breathe first. If you're stressed, the first thing you always do is breathe. Five seconds in, pause, exhale for seven seconds. Do that for three minutes, then come back to whatever is going on. In the moment you feel triggered, roll your shoulder blades back, breathe, and lean back. It's the foundation of everything I do.

Sit in the silence. I've watched clients over forty-five go quiet on a Zoom call, a deafening level of silence, because they've never actually heard it before. I've had people tell me, "Oh my God, I can hear myself think." Start with five quiet minutes. No podcast in the car. Sit with yourself and notice what comes up. When I feel tension in my body that isn't actively showing up as an emotion, I sit down, center on it, and let it speak. I ask: Why is this here? Is it trying to teach me something? Is it trying to release, or do I need to act on it?

Write the story out, all the way. I often have clients write out a story they've been carrying. Especially the guys, and some women too, will tell me, "I wrote it out. I don't think I need to read it. It's good." Without fail, those are the ones who text me the next morning: "What the hell? I woke up at 3 a.m. sweating, like I was detoxing." That's what happens when something you've been holding finally moves.

Interrupt the pattern. Don't try to change the pattern first. Become aware of it. Put a sticky note where you go into default mode. Take a different route home. Anything that pulls the unconscious into the conscious. On one of those sticky notes, write: "What am I afraid of right now?"

Give the brain a cookie. Each week, pick two or three things you can let go of. Small ones. Notice that nothing collapsed. The brain wants evidence that the new way is safe, and every

small win gives it some. Start small, because that creates a positive feedback loop.

And expect resistance. I had a client who cussed at me for eight sessions in a row. Eight weeks. Then one week she just stopped. Resistance doesn't mean it isn't working. Often it means it is.

I've also had clients come to me for things that sounded small. One woman signed up because she just wanted to be able to get up at 6 a.m. That was her thing. It's never about the thing, but the thing is usually the doorway.

You are not a victim of circumstance. You are the master of your own destiny, if you decide to face it and do it anyway.

CLOSING

The Uncomfortable Is the Way Through

There comes a point when staying comfortably uncomfortable will kill you, slowly or quickly. I've been close enough to that point to know it's real. And I've been on the other side long enough to know that the discomfort of facing yourself is temporary, while the discomfort of avoiding yourself never ends.

You don't have to believe everything I believe. You don't have to share my faith, my politics, my experiences with medicine, or my views on past lives. I'm not asking you to. I'm asking you to look at your own life without flinching and ask who told you the stories you're living in.

Invite me to speak. I share this unfiltered material on podcasts, at retreats, and with communities that want the full, honest conversation. If your audience is ready for that, reach out through arielzeigler.com or call 661-400-8672.

If you want to do this work with me. At Heart N Sole Wellness, home of Rewired mentorship, I walk alongside people as they stop running and start facing. **Wellness From Within** builds the foundation: steadying your body, your breath, and your day so change becomes possible. **Rewired** is my mentorship for high performers ready to go into the patterns underneath and come out the other side owning their lives. I don't take everyone, and I won't drag anyone through it. But if something in here hit you, I'd love to hear from you.

With love and no filter,

Ariel

Reminder: this book shares my personal experience and views. It isn't medical, psychological, or legal advice. If you are in crisis, call or text 988 in the US, or your local emergency number.

FOR EVENT PLANNERS

Keynote Summary

Talk title: Motivation Isn't What You Think It Is

The big idea: What looks like a lack of motivation or willpower is usually misalignment or exhaustion. People stay "comfortably uncomfortable" because the known discomfort feels safer than the unknown. The way out is to steady yourself, stop running, and turn toward what you've been avoiding.

Three takeaways

1. **The 5-7 reset.** Five seconds in, pause, seven seconds out, for three minutes before any decision that feels urgent.
2. **Ask "What am I afraid of right now?"** Put it on a sticky note where the avoidance happens: the desk, the car, the fridge.
3. **Give the brain a cookie.** Pick two small things to let go of this week and notice that nothing collapses.

Ideal audiences: Podcasts and live shows; retreats and wellness gatherings; entrepreneur and mastermind communities; recovery-adjacent and personal-growth communities; open audiences who want the full, unfiltered conversation. (For corporate stages, the mainstream talks *Checkmark Syndrome* and *Put Your Own Mask On* are the better fit.)

Format: 45 to 60 minute talk, fireside conversation, or 90 minute experiential workshop.

Booking: arielzeigler.com | 661-400-8672