HEALTH & HAPPINESS

Fully Alive

by Timothy Shriver

Tim Shriver of Special Olympics tells how the people the world overlooks taught him what a full life is.

BEST POINTS FROM THE BOOK

01 **Everyone has a gift. Look for what people can do.**

Shriver says he first learned it from his aunt Rosemary: his mother started Camp Shriver to find out what children with disabilities could do, not what they could not.

02 **The world's most overlooked people can be your best teachers.**

Shriver calls it the 'school of the heart': athletes and friends with intellectual disabilities taught him more than presidents, scholars, or fame ever did.

03 **We are all totally vulnerable and totally valuable at the same time.**

The book's central claim: needing help never lowers a person's worth, because vulnerability and value live together in every one of us.

04 **Power and fame do not fill the hunger inside.**

Raised in one of America's most powerful families, Shriver learned early that power and celebrity were not enough to satisfy - meaning came from service and love.

05 **Winning can mean going back for a friend.**

At the first Special Olympics, a runner close to the finish line stopped, turned around, and ran back to comfort a fallen friend. 'Who won that race?' Shriver asks.

06 **Grit can look like three small steps.**

Treveon Wimberly, who uses a wheelchair, trained every day for a year with a friend so he could walk at graduation - and took three steps with a walker as the crowd erupted.

07 **Plan for the most vulnerable, and the world works better for everyone.**

Eunice Shriver's operating principle: her research push for children with disabilities helped inspire Head Start and a new era of disability policy under President Kennedy.

08 **Shame lives on secrecy. Bringing hidden people into the open heals everyone.**

After Rosemary's lobotomy, the Kennedys hid her away for decades - her father never visited again. Facing her story honestly is what freed the family to serve others.

09 **Faith grows near those the world pushes aside.**

From Jean Vanier's L'Arche homes, where people with and without disabilities live together, to Rosemary's hidden life, Shriver learned humility by staying near the margins.

10 **Joy is a discipline the athletes practice daily.**

Special Olympics athletes like Loretta Claiborne embody grit and joy: they compete with full hearts and celebrate others. That joy is a choice anyone can copy.

11 **A full life starts with paying attention.**

Again and again the book returns to listening: slow down and really see the person in front of you. That attention is where love and purpose begin.

THE BOOK, IN SHORT

Timothy Shriver - son of Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who founded Special Olympics, and Sargent Shriver, the first Peace Corps director - became chairman of Special Olympics himself. His memoir makes a surprising claim: his greatest teachers were not presidents or scholars, but people with intellectual disabilities, the world's most forgotten minority.

The story starts in his own family. His aunt Rosemary Kennedy had an intellectual disability in an era of eugenics and institutions. After a disastrous lobotomy arranged by her father, Rosemary was sent away to Wisconsin; he never visited her again, and her siblings did not see her for twenty years. Shriver tells this honestly - the secrecy, the shame, and the denial that shadowed a famous family.

His mother answered that hidden pain with action. Eunice directed the Kennedy Foundation toward disability research, pressed her brother President Kennedy into new policy, and finally broke the family secret in print. In 1962 she started Camp Shriver at their Maryland home to discover what children with disabilities could do; it grew into the first Special Olympics Games in Chicago in 1968 and a movement of millions of athletes in some 170 countries. Her principle: when you plan for the most vulnerable, you make the world work better for everyone.

Shriver's own search for meaning took him to many teachers - saints and thinkers like Jean Vanier, founder of the L'Arche communities, Dorothy Day, and Bernard Lonergan, and leaders like Nelson Mandela. But the deepest lessons came from the athletes: the runner who turned back for a fallen friend, Treveon Wimberly's year of training for three steps at graduation, Loretta Claiborne's grit and joy. Along the way he wrestles openly with his Catholic faith and with why society fears and hides disability.

His conclusion is simple and demanding: we are all totally vulnerable and totally valuable at the same time. A fully alive life is not built on winning or being impressive. It is built on attention, belonging, and love shared with people the world too often pushes aside.

DO THIS WEEK

This week, practice Shriver's core move: pay full attention to someone the world tends to overlook - an elder, a coworker in a humble job, or a person with a disability. Start one real conversation, ask what they love doing and what they are good at, and just listen without rushing.

By Timothy Shriver, first published 2014 (Sarah Crichton Books); subtitle: Discovering What Matters Most. Kirkus gave it a starred review. Read it if success feels empty and you want a memoir that finds meaning in service, faith, and overlooked people.