

Nicolas has taught in primary schools in the UK for the past 20 years. In addition to having a Bachelor of Education Honours degree, he has a MBA and the National Qualification for Headship. Nicolas has trained in martial arts for the past 28 years, applying his discipline in the art of the physical fight, to help people realise their inner determination to fight cancer.

Nicolas Goldmeier

FIGHTING SPIRIT

A FIGHTER'S MINDSET IN
HIS BATTLE AGAINST
CANCER

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To all these people I say, 'Thank you', I could not have written this book without you.

Foreword

The diagnosis of cancer has become the most feared by people of today's generation. As other diseases have become more curable, cancer remains stigmatised as a terminal illness, despite the significant advances in its ability to be managed and treated. Nicky Goldmeier's life was dramatically altered 15 years ago when, at the age of 26 and with a young family, he was diagnosed with cancer of the nasal sinus and plunged into a world of invasive medical treatment and faced with his own mortality.

I have known Nicky from the very start of his journey, as part of the Maxillofacial team responsible for his treatment. My role has been to provide the various prosthetic devices and on-going dental support to replace the teeth and parts of his mouth that needed to be removed by the aggressive surgery.

Cancer of the mouth impacts on many important functions of daily life. The chemotherapy and radiotherapy cause intense soreness of the mouth and throat. This can then lead to the mouth becoming permanently dry and restriction in opening. The surgery causes cosmetic issues and

speech is often affected. The medical team involved in the treatment do everything they can to cure the disease and minimise the side effects, but it is likely that most patients will be left with some long-term deficiencies. However, these are the medical aspects that deal with the practical aspects of the process. It overlooks the psychological aspects of the treatment that every patient will have to struggle with, as they move from the diagnosis, through the treatment and the long-term aftermath.

Nicky's book 'Fighting Spirit' is about one man's experience and his development of inner strength, to help him combat both the disease and the treatment. He uses the mental powers he first learnt in martial arts, before diagnosis. Then, during the most difficult times of his initial diagnosis, the hospitalisation, recovery and recurrence of the disease, he expresses the importance to him of the power of his faith, the use of meditation techniques and strong support from family and friends. He illustrates these with analogous incidents from the Bible and the boxing world. He provides a powerful message to all, that this most challenging of diseases can be overcome, with an unwavering determination not to be beaten by, in boxing terms, this most fearsome of opponents.

This inspirational book, should be read not only by those whose lives have been affected by cancer, but all those involved in the treatment and the extended families, so that the importance of the

mental attitude and the support of everyone involved, can be fully appreciated.

Dr Mark Barrett

Surgical Prosthodontist

UCLH Head & Neck Department

As a young man in his mid-teens and a keen martial artist, Nicky exuded enthusiasm when training and was quick to learn and master techniques. Having first met Nicky when we both attended a Kung Fu class in Edgware, I noted that he was exceptionally well mannered and polite; this was a credit to his parents, for as we say in my family, ‘what’s in the bone, comes out in the meat’. I also observed that when sparring (controlled fighting) in the class Nicky used his light frame to his advantage, through speed of movement, precision when executing a fighting technique and was just so difficult to corner.

Following me standing in for the Senior instructor in his absence and running the Edgware class, I was able to appreciate Nicky’s ability to listen and learn regarding martial arts techniques and particularly fighting skills, which was an area that I specialised in. Nicky encouraged me to run my own class, and with his contagiously persistent enthusiasm, he introduced me to the Manager of a beautiful hall in Mill Hill. I walked along the centre of this hall, across newly varnished oak flooring and looking around me whilst inhaling the lovely smell of the treated wood, I thought, ‘how could I turn this opportunity down’? I agreed to run a two-hour class every Monday evening from 7pm to 9pm, with my only stipulation being that all comers should be allowed to attend the class. This condition was immediately agreed to by the Manager of the hall.

With the help of Nicky, the class numbers quickly rose to over twenty with the youngest being 7years old whilst the eldest was 52. The two youngest members of my class were Nicky's youngest brother and his cousin, whom I affectionately nicknamed the two 'hit-men'. These two terrors forced me to quickly learn the technique of keeping my classes interesting and varied in order to maintain their focus.

During the years that I ran this class, I took great pleasure working with Nicky and developing his Kung Fu technique. He very quickly became not only a good friend, but also my right hand man in the class and would help the junior belts with their Kung Fu technique.

Whilst still a young man, Nicky was faced with some life changing challenges that many much more worldly people would struggle to cope with. I recall the day I received a telephone call from one of the students, informing me that Nicky (who was by then training to become a school teacher), had been the victim of a car accident, whilst on his way to undertake his first day of actual teaching experience. I felt my stomach tightening when I was then informed that he was in a coma. On my daily visits to see him in the hospital, I was encouraged (as others were) by his parents, to speak to him whilst he remained in a coma, in the hope that this might spark him back into consciousness. After a few days of nail-biting by his dear parents, we were all relieved when Nicky regained consciousness,

although he initially was unable to speak or walk. I received a call from Nicky's parent who explained that he had written down, that he wanted to see me. I rushed over to the hospital to be greeted by the trademark Nicky smile – He was definitely back with us!

Within a few weeks of gaining consciousness, although unable to walk at that stage, Nicky was able to speak, and insisted on being a spectator during the running of his beloved Monday evening Kung Fu lesson.

Nicky was to recover from the car accident, go on to successfully achieve his black belt and eventually take over the running of the Mill Hill class.

A few years on, by which time Nicky was both a husband and a father, I received a message that he had been diagnosed with Cancer. I spoke to Nicky on the phone and he told me about the tumour in his face.

I recall shortly after this announcement, attending the wedding of a former student of my Mill Hill club. Nicky also attended this wedding, and it was clear that he was in severe discomfort following receiving what I believe was his first dose of chemotherapy and radiotherapy that same day.

I can say with confidence that Nicky is a modern day Gladiator, a fighting machine and a gentleman with deep beliefs and integrity. He has squared up

to some major life challenges and has overcome them.

Nicky's account of his life's journey and his tenacity to overcome adversity, will not only hit you emotionally, but will inspire you.

Stephen (Friend and Martial Arts Instructor)

Prologue

The Force of the Fighting Spirit

I want to inspire you. I want to help guide you through circumstances that may seem impossible to overcome, but with a strong faith, coupled with an inner spirit of determination, you can overcome so much of what is put in your way. Do you want to know how? The ‘Fighting Spirit’.

As I sheepishly entered the brightly lit hall, for what was to be my first taste of martial arts, I surveyed my surroundings. The décor on the walls and the ceiling. The shiny, smooth, but hard floor and of course the people who were all wearing martial arts suits, made up of coarse black trousers and white jacket-like tops, with an emblem in the corner next to the chest. Then there was the belt to top it all off; a range of colours, but most noticeably

the black belts stood out, as I eyed these characters with a sense of caution and trepidation.

I made it through the first class, the second and the third and I began to feel less of a stigma attached to my clean white belt which hung around my waist. It was during the eighth or ninth martial arts class which I attended, that I had my first meeting with someone who would change my outlook on life, forever.

The class started as it always did, with a set of quick warm-up exercises, followed by stretching exercises that were always done with a partner. ‘Nic, you pair up with him,’ I heard my instructor say and as he pointed in someone’s direction, I looked up and there in front of me was a tall, heavyweight figure of a man, with a large and muscular build and wearing a black belt. As he placed his leg on my shoulder, it felt like someone had put a sack of potatoes on to a rather flimsy shelf, hoping it would hold, but not honestly thinking it would. As I grimaced from the pressure the leg was putting on my shoulder, my partner introduced himself and I in turn told him my name, as I placed my comparatively matchstick leg on to his broad and muscular shoulder. ‘Nice to meet you Steven.’

Steven is the kind of person who people warm to immediately and I was no exception, as we became life-long friends. Steven has a towering, gentle-giant-like stature, along with a face which exudes kindness and he has exceptionally good manners.

This makes Steven somewhat of an enigma when having to face him during a sparring session. One would not equate this gentle, kind, caring and polite human being, as one who was a heavyweight martial arts fighter, par excellence. I remember watching a video of him fighting two people at once and the way in which he had 'dealt' with the first person within the first ten seconds of the fight. I also recall a particularly enjoyable part of our training together, when we would stand facing each other, put our right shoulder leaning against the other's right shoulder and try to exert as much energy as possible, to push one another past a certain point, behind us on either side. I cannot recall anyone, ever pushing Steven backward, even one step. Although he certainly let us try!

Steven was a deadly fighter and could clearly distinguish between the art of fighting well and being caring and gentle when he didn't have a pair of boxing gloves on! He trained me as I went through all my 'belts' and achieved one colour after the next. I suppose the most daunting thing of all for me, was the actual fighting or free-sparing as we called it. At the end of each class, I would stand in front of my opponent, bow and then begin sparring, always with a sense of anxiety and nervousness.

The feeling of butterflies whirling around in my stomach, was a regular feature of free-sparing for me and try as I might, I simply couldn't get rid of this feeling, which was now becoming a feature of my preparation for battle! A regular feature, until

one episode changed the way I sparred and in fact, the way I dealt with so many other things in my life. As I lined up to face, none other than, Steven himself, this tall, huge, muscular and in-shape figure of a man was looking down at me. The instructor gave the order to bow and then spar and as he did so, Steven said to me, ‘Fighting spirit, Nicky...fighting spirit.’ Those two words gave me the same strength, as would a gladiator being told that his opponent doesn’t have a weapon. It was a message to me to keep going, keep pressing, keep moving and keep fighting, even when all odds are against you.

Those words meant so much to me at that moment and they have continued to help me carve my path through life’s hurdles. I am a guy with a strong faith and I believe that there is someone watching over us, at all times. For reasons unbeknown to me, here was a friend, a mentor, who, unbeknown to him, was to be a guiding light and a source of inspiration through troubled times. Yes, Steven was often by my side through the hard times, but it was those words he uttered that evening as we trained and the same words which I would be told countless more times, which I was to take with me on my various journeys through the next 25 years. I regularly reminded myself, whatever comes my way, always remember the ‘Fighting Spirit’.