

# The Essence of Power Living<sup>®</sup>



*Photo by Nick Ruchel*

The common thread for all of those coming to me is the desire to take control of their own lives, live more authentically, and achieve optimum energy and health—naturally.

# Achieving Purpose With Results™

by Teresa Kay-Aba Kennedy, MBA, Ph.D., RYT

**I**n their search for a better life, many people travel great distances to discover their “guru” or teacher. They go to far away places like India looking for guidance. They may come in contact with great spirits—people who share insights and impart revelations about life. This connection is very important. But let me share with you a secret...*your outer guru may be right in front of you, and your Supreme Guru is inside of you.*

“Gu” means “ignorance.” “Ru” means “that which removes.” So, the guru removes ignorance. The guru acts as translator, helping you realize for yourself the truth of who you are. As Galileo said, “You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it in himself.” It took me almost dying to finally see the light—to recognize the gurus in front of me, and understand that true power comes from within and is realized through a process of consciousness and action.

## The Death Within

I’ve been pretty much a Type-A workaholic since I was three years old. As my Mom tells it, I came home one day from school and boldly announced, “I’m not going back to that school. All they do is play and nap all day. I want homework!” So, I became a nursery school dropout—and my brother and sister gave me their homework. That set the tone for the next twenty-five years.

I skipped a couple of grades in school, started Wellesley College at sixteen and upon graduation became one of *Glamour* magazine’s “Top Ten College Women in America.” Then, I became the youngest staff member at the Harvard Business School, writing case studies and advising *Fortune 500* companies on how to run their businesses. Then, once again, I became the youngest in the MBA class at Harvard. *Do you see a pattern here?*

After a short stint in film development at Universal

Studios, I started my career at MTV Networks and quickly became one of their youngest vice presidents. Over a seven-year period, I started new ventures, negotiated multimillion-dollar deals, and built a very successful business career. Life seemed good.

One day, though, I woke up and realized I had lost 20 pounds in a two-week period. My body was attacking itself. It was rejecting all food and liquid. March 10, 1997, was the day I almost died. *I almost worked myself into an early grave.* My mom found me in my apartment near death, and rushed me to the emergency room. My body was extremely emaciated. I was shaking uncontrollably. Later, my brother and sister told me I looked like a strung-out crack addict.

The doctors told me that if I had not been checked in *that very night*, my organs would have shut down. I was in the hospital for 10 days—praying, crying, and believing I was going to die. On the 10th day, the doctor diagnosed me with Crohn’s Disease, a severe digestive disorder. How could this happen? I had been a vegetarian for fifteen years, growing up in a very healthy household. My mom, Janie Sykes-Kennedy, got into holistic health, nutrition, and yoga in the early 70s when she almost died from a pregnancy. She had to rebuild her health, in fact, *her life* from the ground up...from point zero. When the doctors’ conventional medicine didn’t work, she sought indigenous, traditional practices to heal herself.

We had a host of natural and healthy products in the household—even an industrial wheat grass juicer. My sandwiches were full of sprouts and tofu. *None* of my classmates wanted to trade my sandwich at lunchtime. My form of rebellion was to occasionally sneak Captain Crunch breaks on the back porch. When I hit the corporate world, I left all of my healthy principles behind. *Has that ever happened to you?* I was working almost around the clock. You could usually find me in the office at one in the morning—even on weekends.



**Janie Sykes-Kennedy**  
Kennedy Family Archives

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I pushed my body to the brink by working too much, sleeping too little, exercising infrequently, eating processed foods, playing only occasionally, and not taking time to nurture myself. That's a deadly combination and absolutely not sustainable. I was on a train zooming along and I got to the destination very fast—but arrived at the wrong place. It's not where I wanted to go. *Have you ever woken up and found yourself at the wrong destination?*

Like my mom, I had to rebuild my health, *my life* from the ground up...from point zero. Everything I knew myself to be had changed. My thick hair was falling out; my usually flawless skin developed cystic acne. With my mom's help, I sought indigenous, traditional practices to complement the medicine the doctor gave me to heal. She fed me—both physically and spiritually.

I healed faster than the doctors thought possible and went back to MTV Networks for another couple of years. But *that moment* in the hospital when I realized I could die, *changed my life*.

After nearly dying, I decided to start living. And in learning how to heal myself, I learned about myself and found my Purpose.

### Rebirth

My transformation didn't happen overnight. Over the next seven years, I crafted a new being. It took me one year to leave my small apartment. Two years to leave my job. Three years to leave my relationship. Four years to heal again. Five years to find my Purpose. Six years to start my business. Seven years to begin to see results and live anew. Life is a process. It is all about change. If you remain in one spot for too long, you become stagnant. Your spirit begins to die. Life should *flow*.

When I left my lucrative media career to become a wellness activist and entrepreneur, people thought I had lost my mind. All of a sudden, what I wanted wasn't a part of "the plan." I trained in holistic health counseling, yoga, fit-

ness and lifestyle management, and even did doctoral work in World Religions. I started blending mind, body, and spirit practices such as meditation and integrative nutrition, with proven principles of success in business and life such as planning and active communication. I opened the Ta Yoga House—one of the first yoga studios in Harlem, eventually becoming known as the "Type-A Yogi." I gave talks on personal prosperity and sustainability—how to be successful over the long term, on your *own* terms.

Now, my clients range from overworked executives (as I was!) to overscheduled stay-at-home moms. I've also helped clients with a variety of ailments, ranging from adult ADD, asthma, anorexia, and diabetes to hypertension, obesity, IBS, and leukemia. The common thread for all of those coming to me is the desire to take control of their own lives, live more authentically, and achieve optimum energy and health—naturally. *It's about having the clarity of vision to see your Purpose and the energy to fulfill your destiny.*

What had been *my thorn in the flesh*—an out-of-balance existence—is now my gift through the learning I share. I rebuilt my life from the ground up using spiritual and holistic health principles, and now I help others do the same.

### The Three Core Questions

There is a well-known Hindu saying: "When the disciple is ready, the guru comes." After I left the corporate world and began my yoga teacher training, I realized that my parents were my outer gurus.

My mom, in addition to being an accomplished journalist and entrepreneur, taught me how to live a holistic and spiritual life. I grew up reading self-help and spirituality-related books. It started when Mom gave me *The Little Me* and *THE GREAT ME* by Lou Austin when I was four years old. From then, every year she would add

to my collection, from *Emerson's Essays* by Ralph Waldo Emerson and *The Science of Mind* by Ernest Holmes to Raymond Charles Barker's *Treat Yourself to Life* and Og Mandino's *The Greatest Salesman in the World*. These books were different than the ones today. They didn't claim to have invented something new. In fact, they were drawing upon principles that were very old—wisdom from the *Bible*, the *Tao Te Ching*, *Shambala*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Going back helped me to move forward and come home to my Self.

My dad, Dr. James Scott Kennedy, was a professor, philosopher, playwright, and preacher. Two concepts that he spoke about ALL the time now form the foundation of the Power Living® Practice. Seeing my own mortality and then coming to terms with his, made me grasp the importance of his teachings. The first is the concept of "specificity." Growing up, I couldn't stand hearing that word. He would say, "Honey, it's about specificity, *being specific about your thoughts, words, and actions.*"

Now, I understand. It comes down to choice. One of the greatest gifts given to us by our Creator is the ability to make choices. You have the right to choose what you wish to experience. If you choose destructive behavior, you are likely to experience suffering. If you choose loving behavior, you are likely to experience joy.

Think about Romans 9:17: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." *Are you allowing this power to flow through you or are you blocking that flow by your very thoughts, words, and actions?*

According to the Yoga Sutras: "Every action will leave its result; every cause will bear its effect—known as *karma*." Our everyday success is dependent upon making good choices, and aligning those choices with our personal vision—being very specific about your thoughts,

words, and actions and understanding that negative thinking and speech, as well as non-action are also choices that may have long-lasting results.

The second thing Dad would ask us to ponder was his *Three Core Questions*:

- Who Am I?
- Where Am I?
- What Must I Do To Be Me?

I understand them to mean: Who am I at my Core? Where am I along my path? What MUST I do *every day* to be authentically me? Not what *should* I do...or what *could* I do...what *MUST* I do! Dad was very specific when he chose those words. In using these three questions, I help clients envision their Core Self, take an honest look at where they are currently, and then create very specific habits to close the gap. That's the essence of the Power Living Practice.

When Dad passed away in 2005, I realized that by honoring these Three Core Questions every day and by being very specific in his choices, he led a full life...in fact *he truly lived ALL the days of his life*. He was 100% authentic, 100% of the time...a little eccentric, always original. That was his greatest gift to the world. "No double-layered human being here" as he wrote in his play *Africa is a Woman*. He let his light shine as in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Dad always spoke his mind. If he had something to say, he would tell you directly to your face. He's the only person I know who, when a dog barked at him, he would bark back...and scare the dog! He kept us on our toes. Sometimes, we didn't know what he was going to do in a given moment. Other times he was very predictable in his encouragement and love. As a writer, producer, and composer, Dad epitomized pure creativity—always with a pen and paper in hand in case a thought, song, or poem came to mind. He honored his inspirations by

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Dr. James Scott Kennedy  
Kennedy Family Archives

Delve deep into  
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and on Purpose.

instantly writing them down. Although he was covered by the media through the years and taught many famous students—from tennis great Althea Gibson to movie star Denzel Washington, he was not thinking about the money his work would generate—he was simply being a divine conduit. Together with Mom, he produced over 100 plays around the world. Dad let his light shine.

Looking back, will you be able to say that you've lived ALL the days of your life? Are you living every day *full in* or *spread thin*? Are you living your divine destiny? Do you even know what it is? Do you have the physical energy to achieve your vision? The Bible says in Acts 13:36: "For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep." If this were your last day, would you have fulfilled your Purpose in this lifetime?

### Purpose With Results™

*Power Living is being spiritually connected, mentally focused, physically energized, emotionally engaged, and environmentally supported.* It is a way of being that allows life to *flow*. It is committing your energy to what you care about on a day-to-day basis.

On a practical level, Power Living is knowing who you are and what you value and then organizing your life around it—what you do for work, who you choose to love, when and what you eat, how you communicate with your Self and others. It is about *specificity*—being specific about your thoughts, words, and actions. On a deeper spiritual level, it is living *on* Purpose, not just *with* purpose, allowing you to uncover and release your innate power. This is summarized in The Power Living Manifesto which follows.

We are moving toward a New World...a world where POWER is not defined by how much control you have over *others*, but how much control

you have over your *Self*. It's not about how many things you *acquire*. It's about how many people you *inspire*. The Old World valued *conformity*. This New World values *uniqueness*. In this New World, you drop the "O" (approval from *Others*), and drop the "E" (attachment to *External* things), and realize true PWR®—Purpose With Results!

We're talking about Purpose with a big "P"—that overarching vision that drives your life, that allows the essence of YOU to shine through; Thought and Action resulting in a Positive Willful Reaction.

This PWR is:

- available to all,
- unique in each of us,
- allows you to project an energy that attracts, and
- comes with a Lifetime Guarantee.

Your ultimate goal is to activate this PWR. The only requirements are that it comes from *within*, and it must be charged and released *every day*.

In addition to the Three Core Questions, the Power Living Practice is based on these Five Guiding Principles:

- 1. Live on Purpose** - Delve deep into your own values and beliefs, and align your spiritual energy to be fully Present and on Purpose.
- 2. Tune Your Mind to the Positive** - Check your thoughts and language, and learn how to focus your mental energy to create positive manifestations and spur inspiration.
- 3. Honor Your Body** - Learn your own PWR Foods, and how to exercise, breathe, and sleep to maximize your physical energy for peak performance and optimum health.
- 4. Be a Humble Warrior** - Lead with your heart, and learn how to engage your emotional energy to cultivate an attitude of gratitude and build intimate connections, steady joy, and strong faith in your path.
- 5. Sanctify Your Surroundings** - Practice

simplicity and specificity, and learn how to detoxify your environmental energy to sustain your flow and support your vision.

It's all about closing the gap between who you are and who you are meant to be—moving you toward *self-awareness* and *self-control* and getting you in the habit of *consciousness* and *action* so you can achieve Purpose With Results.

### Tap into Your Gurus

Wisdom can come from a variety of sources, if you are ready to receive. Your outer guru may be a grandparent, a friend, or even the taxi driver. Be open to hear.

There is an African proverb I love: "If a person dreams alone, it remains nothing but a dream. But when a people dream together, that dream can become a reality." Having supporters and a few good friends are crucial to your success. This is your Circle of Support. Look for people who understand your life vision and will bring out the best in you.

A true supporter believes in you when you don't believe in your Self, listens without judging, shares joy in your success, prays for you when you're in pain, encourages your dreams, and offers constructive advice. Honor their intentions, welcome their encouragement, and show gratitude for their existence. And as Matthew 7:13 says, "Enter through the narrow gate." In other words, keep the circle tight with just those few people who will be your coaches, cheerleaders, and reality checks. Keep the doubters out!

Your Supreme Guru is that still, small voice inside of you. It is your Core Self (the essence of who you really are) that often gets drowned out by your Social Self (the Self that wants to please others). As Lao Tzu said, "Knowing others is wisdom, knowing yourself is enlightenment." The

most successful people engage in a "reflective practice"—the ritual of *careful consideration* of their lives, their decisions, their relationships, etc., and then the discipline of *taking action* with what they have learned.

Develop your own reflective ritual. Every morning, set your intentions for the day. Say thanks for at least three things and meditate on the Three Core Questions. Every evening, reflect on the day. Ask yourself what you've done to further your Purpose and live your values. Write down your intentions for the next day including the things you want to accomplish. Be specific. Once you take responsibility for your own destiny and begin the process of systematically removing the blocks to your flow, you will be well on your way to Power Living!



*This article includes excerpts from 40 Days to Power Living: Think, Eat & Live on Purpose by Teresa Kay-Aba Kennedy © 2006. Dr. Kennedy is President of Power Living Enterprises, Inc. ([www.power-living.com](http://www.power-living.com)), a business and life coaching company, and founder of Ta Yoga ([www.tayoga.com](http://www.tayoga.com)). A former vice president at MTV Networks, she has an MBA from Harvard, a Ph.D. in World Religions, and certifications in holistic health, yoga, and fitness. She is Chair of the Board of Yoga Alliance, and is featured in media around the world, including Oprah's book, *Live Your Best Life**