

Steph's Big Leap

There are times when you are where you are,
but that's not where you want to be.

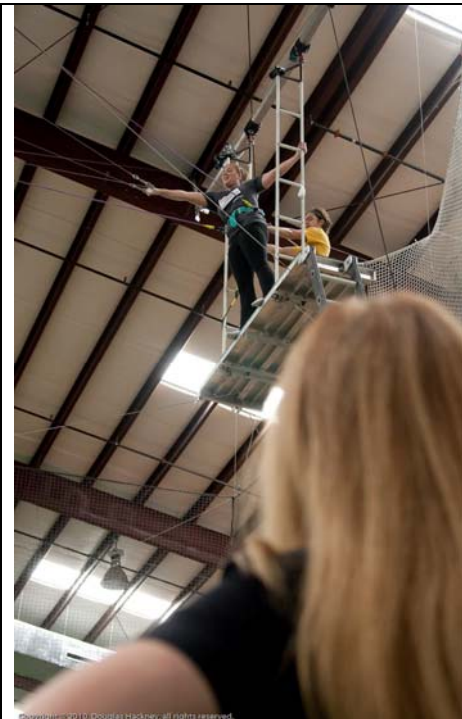


Where you want to be is a different place, up
there, out of reach.



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Steph's Big Leap



And no matter how much you look at where others are,

and where you want to be,



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it is all too easy to be overcome by fears,



wondering, "Can I trust?"

and, always, "Will there be a pair of hands to catch me if I fall?"



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When you're in that place, down here, but want to be in that other place, up there, there's only one way to get there—by reaching out and seizing what is possible,



casting off your fears, and taking the leap out into uncertainty, into the void, into the unknown.

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And that is what this story is about:

- seizing what is possible
- casting off your fears
- and taking the leap out into uncertainty, into the void, into the unknown

Back in 2003, we started on that journey by heading off to explore the world on our motorcycle. We continued the journey by selling our major assets, donating most of the rest of our worldly goods and heading back out to explore more of the world via truck in 2007.

And now, in 2010, Steph is extending the journey by applying those same lessons. She saw what was possible and seized it, she cast off her fears and took the leap.

What were the results?

Within a few short weeks, she wrote her first regular column for a trade magazine and was interviewed by Inc. magazine.



Steph with her interview in Inc. magazine, which came out while we were attending South By Southwest Interactive (SXSW). This shot was taken at the Wired magazine party.

That would be enough for most people, but Steph was just getting warmed up. Sometimes in life the bear gets you and sometimes you get the bear. Steph was definitely getting the bear.

After five intense days at SXSW, we flew to New York for her next opportunity.

This is her story:

OK, this might take a few minutes to read, so grab a cup of Joe, tea or soda and get comfy. Hopefully, you'll find this an entertaining look at the reality of TV.

As some of you know, I belong to a network of people who provide expertise and/or information to the media. The network, HARO (www.helpareporter.com), is a great way for most anyone to share what they know with members of the press, as well as any media outlets looking for experienced/knowledgeable people to assist them in creating a story about a specific subject.

A few weeks back I responded to a query from an anonymous media person looking to speak with people who had experienced long-term digestive issues. At the time, I believed the contact was looking to write a story about digestive issues and what people can do to get help. Since I have suffered from diverticulitis for many years now, and it has had a significant impact on my quality of life, I was happy to share my story in the hopes of: gaining a better understanding about my condition, bringing attention to a condition that many in the US silently suffer from, and to prevent other women from having unnecessary hysterectomies (as I had) when the issue might be something unrelated to the female organs.

Never did I imagine that the person to whom I responded might be a representative from a well-known network show looking for guests for their show. So, when I received a call from a producer asking me to come on their show (and the show would be taped the morning after Doug and I finished our last day at SXSW Interactive, a conference we spent quite a bit to attend and were not willing to miss any days of), I politely declined their invitation. First, I was really not interested in being on TV, and second, I just couldn't see how we could finish out the conference and make it to NY for the taping. But, when I shared my call story with my husband, he assured me that I needed to call them right back and tell them I would be happy to participate, no matter what that meant for us in terms of travel, lack of sleep, etc. So, because I trust my hubby's judgment, I begrudgingly obliged and made the call. My contact, Allie, was elated that I had changed my mind.

The next few days were filled with answering questions by email, and eventually speaking with several of the producers about my condition: when it all started, what I was told by doctors, what treatment I had received, what foods I was avoiding, what my quality of life was like, etc. All in all I believe I provided several hours worth of information for them to use. And, because I was unavailable for their film crew to come to my home and tape me prior to the taping of the show, we had to provide a bunch of pictures of me living life since my condition started (for me, this meant Doug had to gather and caption, and make order of, several hundred photos). Making all this happen while we attended an intense conference was a bit overwhelming, but we managed.

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It's important to share that I had never intended to share this experience with anyone. I was not going to tell anyone about the taping or airing, but my husband assured me that members of our family and our close friends might be really hurt if they found out about it and I had not shared it with them. So, here's the rest of the story...

So, after our last session on the last day of SXSW Interactive, we boarded a plane bound for NY. We arrived very late and were greeted by a limo driver holding a card emblazoned with my name: Stephanie Hackney. We arrived at a very nice hotel just after midnight and went about hanging up the clothes we would wear and preparing for the few hours of sleep we would get before our next limo would pick us up at 7:30 a.m. Seven-thirty the next morning came much too quickly! We arrived at NBC Studios just before 8 a.m. and were greeted by a nice young man who would then hand us off to one of the show's "handlers." From there it went something like this:

Steph & Doug head to the NBC Studios building security desk to get badges allowing us access to the upper floors

Doug heads to the Green Room with Steph's change of clothes - he meets the other guests and their family members

Steph heads to the show's offices to meet with the producers and to do a voice-over for her segment

Steph meets Patricia, who is another guest on this segment and they enjoy getting to learn a bit about each other

Steph enters the sound studio, reads through her script, enters the sound booth and does her voice-over (in only two takes!)

Steph then meets with Cathy, one of the show's producers

Next, video footage is captured (this involves rearranging the staff offices so there is no sign that this is their offices, and Steph posing in awkward positions, including clutching her head and pressing on her stomach - very strange indeed)

Steph is taken (by another handler) to the Green Room where she meets up with Doug and gets to meet another guest, Madonna, and her husband, Tom

Too quickly, Steph has to run and change into what she will wear on the show - then, just as she returns to the Green Room, she is whisked off by another handler to the Hair & Makeup Room

Steph's hair is taken care of by Robert (a nice UT fan from Texas who visited NY and never went home!) and her makeup is handled by Gil (who reminded Steph of the catty women she worked with in the make-up industry!)

Then, back to the Green Room for a few minutes before another hairdresser comes in to plaster Steph's fly-aways to her head

Next up, we are all mic'd - the mic is clipped onto Steph's jacket lapel, the receiver is shoved into the back of her pants and the wires are hidden running up the front of her jacket

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Not long after, we are all escorted to the studio where the audience is being entertained by the show's comedian (a stand-up comedian whose job it is to instruct everyone how to behave during the taping)

The comedian starts by talking about the first segment that would be taped – *Toxic Bloating!* As the audience roared with laughter, Steph shares looks of surprise with her two new friends – no one told us about this!

Then just as we are all getting used to the idea that we are the guests on a show about Toxic Bloating, the star enters the set to a roar of applause – *it's official, we are guests on the Dr. Oz Show!*

Now, it's important to reiterate that I, and the other guests, had spent hours composing emails and having conversations about our conditions. And, while I don't know how many pictures the other guests were asked to submit, I know that Doug provided the show's producers with hundreds of pictures of me, as requested.

So, what happened next? Well, here's what we had all been told about what would take place:

I would take the first seat, the seat closest to Dr. Oz.

Patricia would sit to my right and Madonna to her right.

The producers would roll the clips we had all been a part of prior to the taping, and then Dr. Oz would speak with each of us, one by one, about our conditions, how we were doing, etc.

I had been told that I would be standing up with Dr. Oz for my segment, but that was all I was told. So, when Dr. Oz asked me (between takes), while pointing to a metal tray in front of us, if I knew that I would stand up with him for my segment, I said yes. At this point he must have felt confident that I was aware of everything that was going to take place.

Just then, another doctor entered and was seated next to Dr. Oz. We soon found out that she was a well-known gastroenterologist and she would be on stage with us, assisting Dr. Oz in discussing our conditions.

So, the taping resumes and there I am, sitting next to Dr. Oz, watching the segments about Madonna, Patricia and me. Next thing I know, I am standing on stage, next to Dr. Oz, donning purple exam gloves and facing the rolling metal tray I had seen earlier – a tray carrying something covered with a medical towel...a tray carrying a little "surprise" just for me! Little did I know that I would soon be "fondling" a human intestine! Yes folks, you heard me correctly, a human intestine! I only wish the exclamation points I used in the previous sentence could adequately express the shock I was feeling inside when Dr. Oz whisked the towel off that tray and exposed the surprise they had in store for me. Unfortunately, the English language has no punctuation marks appropriate for what I was feeling at that very moment, uh well, except for maybe, "Oh @#%&!" At that very moment I remember thinking how interesting it looked, and also that I was very glad I have a strong stomach! I also imagined someone standing there and losing their breakfast all over the stage. Now, you might

think that fondling an intestine on national TV is about as bad as it gets, right? Well, you'd be wrong...it can get worse, and it did! You see, this was no ordinary intestine – this one was from someone who had suffered from my condition, and it had not been completely cleaned out! OK, here's where this is needed - !!!!!!!!!!! Why would they not have cleaned it out completely? Well, if you know anything about Dr. Oz, you know that he likes to show people the reality of medical conditions, as gross as they may be, or as uncomfortable as people might be hearing about them. So, there I stood as he showed the audience exactly what a diverticula contains. I wasn't even able to look up at the audience for fear of the facial expressions I would see staring back at me. Believe me, the groans I heard were enough to tell me that they were as shocked as I was, and I needed to just keep looking down until my portion of the segment was finished.

I'm not sure whether or not it will be perceivable when watching the show, but I could tell that Dr. Oz was expecting me to participate in a more engaging manner than I was. But again, I believe he thought I had been told about this portion of our segment.

The segment continued with the guest doctor sharing the symptoms of diverticulitis, and a clarification of the difference between Diverticulosis and Diverticulitis. I remember hearing her speak, but to be honest, it was a bit like listening to Charlie Brown's teacher at that point: "Wha, wha wha wha wha, wha wha wha wha wha wha." Only when the focus was off me and I was hearing Patricia and then Madonna share their stories, was I able to come back to earth. End segment and we were back in our seats in the front row of "the pit."

As I breathed a sigh of relief that the worst was most definitely over and that at least attention had been brought to this condition, as well as to my having had an unnecessary hysterectomy, one of the audience members sitting next to me - one of four young girls from Mississippi who were visiting NY - asked me, "So, you're all better now that you had surgery for your condition?" Argh! The fact that I had had an unnecessary hysterectomy, and that I was still living with this condition, was apparently not at all clear! Frustrating to say the least.

So, folks, there you have it, the whole story. What did I learn from this? Well...

1. Trust your gut (no pun intended) – when you make a decision about something you feel strongly about, don't sway. Stick to your decision.
2. Whenever you are part of someone else's story, especially a TV story, you are simply content and will have zero control over how your story is portrayed.
3. It's great to have a loving partner who is supportive and able to keep you from being yet another NY suicide statistic! Kidding of course, but seriously, Doug was great. He helped me to see that I had accomplished at least one of my goals, which was to get exposure for this condition, a condition about which very little is communicated and for which there is little to no support. And, he managed to do so when I was feeling a great deal of remorse for having participated.

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If after all of this, you still want to watch the show, it will air, on Fox, on March 31st. Here's a link to the show's website – simply click on the Wednesday tab on the right side of the screen and you can see a preview, featuring yours truly! ;)

<http://www.doctoroz.com/>

Doug took a lot of photos and can share his perspective on the experience as the supportive husband, a role he plays very well. Love you, sweetie.

Steph

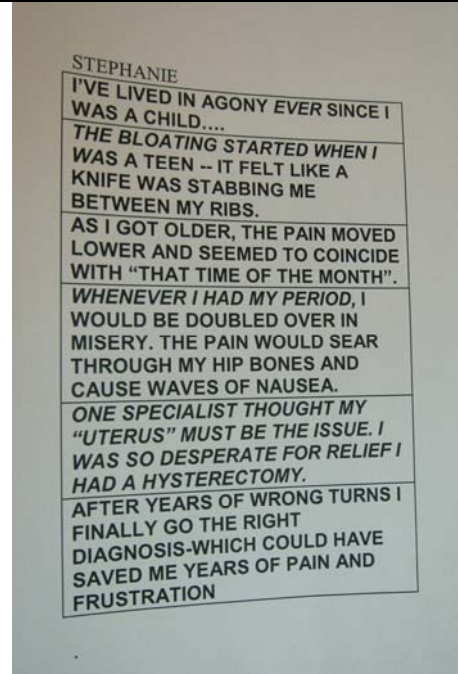
Following are some shots of the experience.

	
	<p>The dressing room next door to Steph's used by celebrity chef Rocco Dispirito, who appeared in a different segment on the show.</p>
	
<p>Steph's security badge</p>	<p>Hall workstation used by production assistants.</p>

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Steph in the voice over sound booth.



Steph's script for her voice over.



Dressing Room Assignments							
Show #1-123 Tape Date: 3/17/10 Show Time: 10am							
Room	Guest Names	Producer	Segment	Pick Up	Arrival	Make Up	
Dressing Room #1	Yves Dustin Lefrier Eriq La Salle Stuart Zimmerman Amy Corley						
Dressing Room #2	Jake Ross	Stacy	2&3	Tam	7:45am	TUM	TUM
Dressing Room #3	Patricia Pentz Stephanie Hackney Madonna Kilcollum Pamela Parsonf Tom Kilcollum Ronnie Blaisdell	Rosalyn	1	7:30am	8am	TUM	TUM TUM TUM
Dressing Room #4	Rocco Dispirito Ashley Sandberg	Lindsey	6	N/A	8:30am	TUM	



Robert preps Steph's hair.



Gil applies some touch-ups to Steph's makeup.

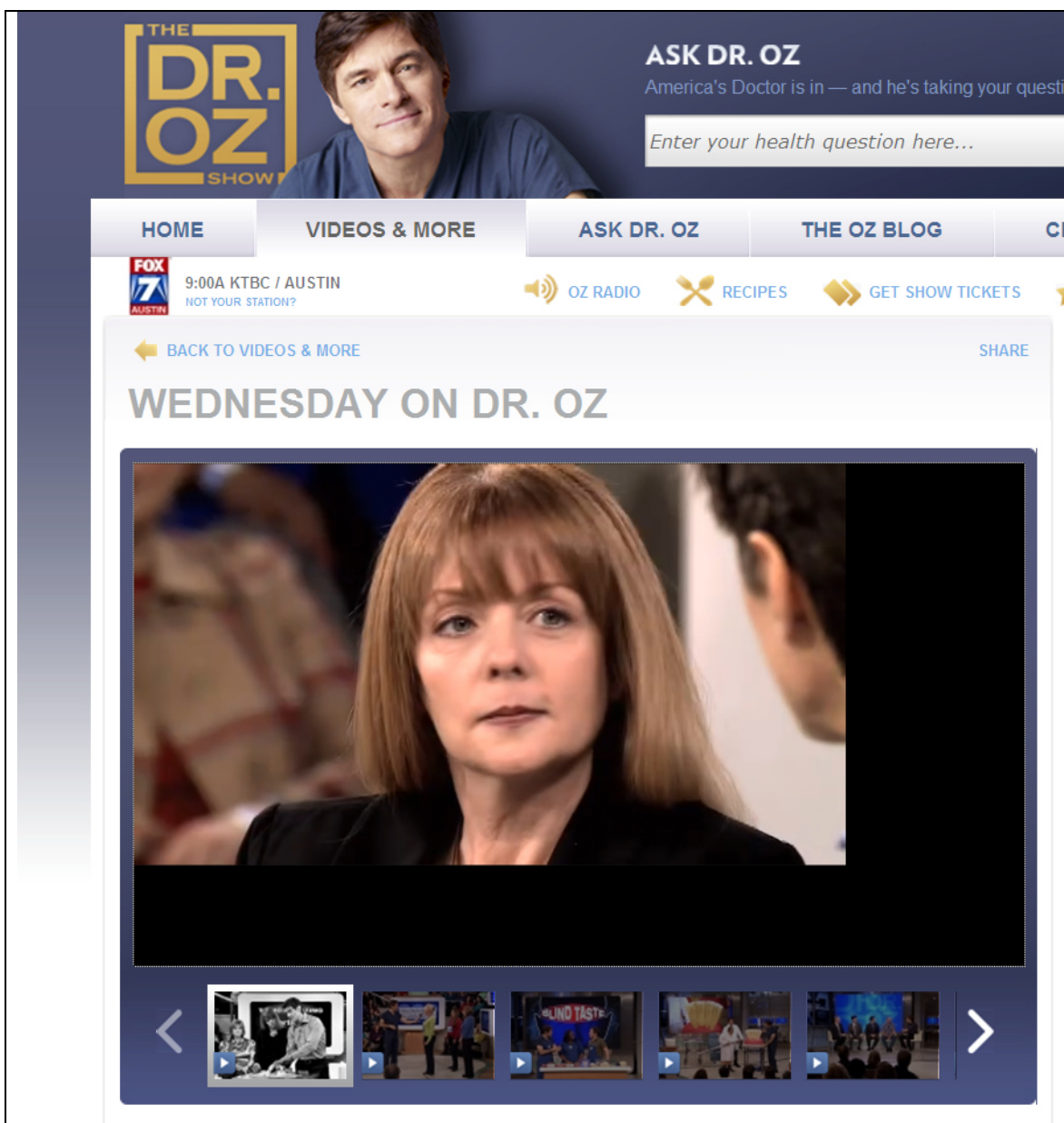
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Steph, Madonna and Patricia, who appeared with Steph in her segment.



Crew badge, which I was unable to talk my way into receiving.



Still frame from the show promo trailer on the Dr. Oz web site. This is where he is asking Steph what her actual, final diagnosis was after countless incorrect diagnosis by a parade of doctors and unnecessary and irrelevant procedures and surgery.



ASK DR. OZ

America's Doctor is in — and he's taking your quest

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THE OZ BLOG

C



9:00A KTBC / AUSTIN
NOT YOUR STATION?

 OZ RADIO

 RECIPES

 GET SHOW TICKETS

← BACK TO VIDEOS & MORE

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WEDNESDAY ON DR. OZ



←











→

Still frame from the show promo video on the Dr. Oz web site. This is the point where Steph and Dr. Oz are examining the intestine and Dr. Oz is saying “People die from this condition.”

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Steph's Dr. Oz show airs Wednesday, 31 March, 2010, on your local Fox network station.

The two of us who knew about the show taping on 17 March, 2010, my cousin Chris and I, were both sworn to silence, with threats of revisiting the Dr. Oz intestine if we as much as breathed a word about it before Steph shared her story.

So, for those of you who I've been emailing or texting instead of calling, and for those I've been avoiding entirely, it was because I didn't want to either a) let something slip or b) have to choose between lying to you or the wrath of my wife. For those who suspected, but said nothing and didn't pry, you have my eternal gratitude.

For our friends who are regulars on television, an appearance like this is no big deal. It was Steph's first time, so it was a big experience for her. Although she wasn't nervous, she was taken by surprise by the difference in how it played out compared to what she had been told to expect.

The show was filmed at NBC Studios at 30 Rockefeller Plaza in historic studio 6A, where the original version of the Jeopardy! show, hosted by Art Fleming, was taped. The studio was also home to late-night hosts Conan O'Brian, David Letterman, Johnny Carson, Jack Paar and Steve Allen, each of whose groundbreaking shows originated from 6A or next door in 6B.



The last time I had been in 6A prior to Steph's show was doing a gig for NBC back in the 1980s. I didn't get the chance to check out any of the engineering or control rooms, so I can't comment on how much they have changed.

For me, it was great to be in the studio audience with nothing on the line. I wasn't in front of the camera or behind it directing or producing anything. It was a relief to remind myself I wasn't responsible for any aspect of the show's production. It was a busman's holiday that I really appreciated. It was a lot of fun to just sit back and watch the crew work and imagine the headset chatter. However, it was not enough to make me want to get back into media production.

For those who have wondered why Steph has been such a picky eater and have pondered about all those mysterious "stomach" pains and episodes, this television appearance might give you some insight into what the cause has been and remains. Although she's developed a set of coping strategies and manages her chronic condition even when we're eating lunch in a goat hair tent with a bunch of Bedouins in the middle of the desert, it remains a day-to-day thing. The next time it's one of those days and you're around, this segment might change your perspective.

For Steph's perspective, you'd have to look up, because after we came back from New York, she almost immediately went to trapeze school to check off another accomplishment on her "life list."

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<p>And even though she hurt her finger badly on her very first dismount,</p>	 A man with a shaved head, wearing a black t-shirt, is assisting a woman with long blonde hair. She is wearing a black t-shirt and a yellow and blue safety harness. They are in an indoor setting, possibly a gym or training facility, with a ladder visible in the background.
<p>she still took that leap of faith required to reach your dreams.</p>	 A woman with long blonde hair is captured in mid-air, performing a leap over a series of ropes. She is wearing a black t-shirt and black pants. The background shows a wooden floor and a brick wall.

And reaching for her dreams is what she is working on right now, dreams that surpass anything here.

But that's what is next.

And that's another story.