

ROGER ROSS

COME BACK

Returning to the Life You
Were Made For



ROGER ROSS

**COMIE
BACK**

Returning to the Life You
Were Made For

 Abingdon Press[™]
Nashville

COME BACK:
RETURNING TO THE LIFE YOU WERE MADE FOR

Copyright © 2020 by Abingdon Press

All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to Permissions, Abingdon Press, 2222 Rosa L. Parks Blvd., Nashville, TN 37228-1306, or permissions@abingdonpress.com.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020935803
ISBN: 978-1-791-00818-5

Scripture quotations unless noted otherwise are from the Common English Bible. Copyright © 2011 by the Common English Bible. All rights reserved. Used by permission. www.CommonEnglishBible.com.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations noted NRSV are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (KJV) are from The Authorized (King James) Version. Rights in the Authorized Version in the United Kingdom are vested in the Crown. Reproduced by permission of the Crown’s patentee, Cambridge University Press.

Scripture quotations marked (GNT) are from the Good News Translation in Today’s English Version—Second Edition © 1992 by American Bible Society. Used by Permission.

The Cynicism Spiral on page 67 comes from the video course, *5 Days to Your Best Year Ever*, © 2018 by Michael Hyatt & Company. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Excerpt(s) and “Why/How/What” from *START WITH WHY: HOW GREAT LEADERS INSPIRE EVERYONE TO TAKE ACTION* by Simon Sinek, copyright © 2009 by Simon Sinek. Used by permission of Portfolio, an imprint of Penguin Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved.

20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29—10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Contents

ix	– Acknowledgments
xi	– Introduction: It's Not Too Late
1	– Chapter 1: It Was Going So Well
19	– Chapter 2: Coming to Yourself
41	– Chapter 3: The Gift of Guidance
61	– Chapter 4: Hope-Filled Action
81	– Chapter 5: Trust the Process
101	– Conclusion: Coming Home
109	– Notes

Chapter 1

It Was Going So Well

*The longest journey
is the journey inwards.*

—Dag Hammarskjöld

He transcended the game. You didn't have to play golf, like it, or even watch it on TV to recognize his patented fist pump or final-round red shirt. Bursting on the scene like fireworks in midsummer, he ignited polite crowds with his power, precision, and passion on the links.

In 1996, the PGA named him Rookie of the Year. In 1997, he won his first Masters Tournament at age twenty-one—by twelve strokes. He went on to dominate the world of golf in jaw-dropping fashion. During one stretch in 2000–2001, he won four major championships in a row. Only Bobby Jones had won four straight—back in 1930.

By 2008, he had collected fourteen majors, a feat surpassed only by Jack Nicklaus's mark of eighteen. At age thirty-two, he was poised to smash Jack's record and claim the title to which he had dedicated his life: Greatest Golfer of All Time.

As tournament wins stacked up, endorsement contracts poured in like birdie putts. He was the first athlete in history to earn \$1 billion. Beyond extreme wealth, he was on track to become the most well-known athlete in the world—bigger than Muhammad Ali or Michael Jordan.

At the end of 2009, the Associated Press named him Athlete of the Decade, a fit coronation for his play. In September of that year he won the season-culminating FedEx Cup for the second time and was named PGA Player of the Year for the tenth time.

He also appeared happily married to Swedish model Elin Nordegren and absolutely adored their two young children, Sam and Charlie.

To say Tiger Woods's life was going well would have been the understatement of the century.

Then came November 27, 2009. Reports surfaced about a car accident in the early morning hours near Tiger's Florida home. His Escalade ran into a fire hydrant. He incurred facial lacerations along with a traffic citation but refused to see the police. Soon after, Tiger announced on his website he would bow out of the upcoming tournament he was hosting. Something was wrong. Five days later, a cocktail waitress claimed a two-and-a-half-year affair with Woods. Within a couple of weeks, fourteen more women came forward, including a porn star. It was just the beginning.

For his part, Woods publicly admitted "transgressions" and expressed sorrow over how he had let down his family and hurt his wife. It was too little too late.

As salacious details of infidelity hit headlines everywhere, Tiger's carefully cultivated reputation evaporated. Longtime sponsors including Accenture, Gillette, AT&T, and Gatorade dropped him like a rock. Studies showed that shareholders associated with

Woods lost over \$10 billion. The following year, Tiger and his wife, Elin, divorced.

It was the greatest fall from grace in modern sports history. Its speed and severity were at once breathtaking and heartbreaking. The most brilliant fourteen-year run in sports came crashing down in a matter of weeks.

Undoubtedly, few people on the planet can relate to a fall of this magnitude, but all of us know what it is like for things to be going well until one day they don't.

In *The Sun Also Rises*, Ernest Hemingway describes this uniquely human experience:

“How did you go bankrupt?” Bill asked.

“Two ways,” Mike said. “Gradually and then suddenly.”

In four words, Hemingway explains the nature of self-inflicted falls. While some tumbles are beyond our control—wars, pandemics, economic downturns—self-inflicted falls follow this pattern precisely: gradually, then suddenly.

It's the subtleness that catches us—like the frog in a kettle. Place a frog in a pot of hot water, and he will immediately jump out. Replace it with room temperature water, and he will sit there with a smile. But if you slowly turn up the heat, one degree at a time, he'll sit there until he's boiled. Gradual adjustments are often imperceptible until it's too late.

“I have to work late again tonight. She'll understand.”

“A few puffs on a cigarette won't kill me.”

“Another credit card would really help me spread my spending around.”

It's gradual. On any given day, choices like these would barely move the needle. But slowly, over months and years, they

create an invisible force that eats away at the foundation of our lives like termites. When a “sudden” fall hits, we almost never see it coming.

Jesus tells a story like this. A younger son gets bored down on the farm. Desperate to find a life, he makes a shocking request. “Father, give me my part of the estate.” Jesus’s original listeners would have gasped at these words. In effect, he was saying, “Old man, I wish you were dead, but you’re not. I can’t wait any longer, so give me my share of your money now.”

Stunningly, the father complies. The younger son promptly sets off on the road trip of his life to find himself. With cash falling from his pockets, friends flock to him. For a time, he lights up the town in what one Bible version calls “riotous living.”¹ (Fill in your own blanks.) Before long, the money runs out, and so do his friends.

Just then a major economic downturn hits. Broke, starving, and far from home, he convinces a local farmer to hire him. As a final indignity, he finds himself feeding pigs, the most disgusting job a Jewish person could imagine.² Every day he goes to work thinking, “No one back home knows where I am or what I am doing. They probably don’t even care.” Each day he feels a little further from himself than the day before. He doesn’t know where to turn. The younger son could never have imagined falling this far this fast.

Can you relate? People say experience is the best teacher. That’s only half true. Evaluated experience is the best teacher. Taking the time to reflect on what happened, dig into what caused it, and feel the full range of emotions around the fall are how we leverage an experience and create a new future.

Let's break that down. Most of us are blindly unaware of the feelings that drive us into poor decisions or destructive behaviors. All we know is we want to feel good, so we pursue those things we think will help us achieve that goal. For Americans, this shouldn't be a surprise. It's written into our national DNA—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Naturally, when we fall, we feel bad. Sometimes we feel so bad, we don't know if we will ever get back up. In nearly all cases, our feelings will either sabotage a comeback or be the stepping stones to a new future.

One of my favorite windows into the power of our emotions is Pixar's incredibly creative movie *Inside Out*.

The heroine of the story is eleven-year-old Riley. Her birth sparks the first emotion, Joy. As she grows, other emotions emerge to help her navigate life: Sadness, Fear, Anger, and Disgust. They all have a crucial role to play, but it is Joy who takes charge of the team to ensure Riley's happiness at every point.³

The emotions live in a control room in Riley's mind and are responsible for making sure her core memories are protected. As the movie opens, everything is going along quite well in Riley's life. She lives with her mom and dad in a quiet country home in Minnesota where happy memories multiply like rabbits in the spring.

But everything changes when the family moves from Minnesota to a townhouse in San Francisco. Riley is distraught over the loss of her friends and former life, and she begins to rebel against her parents. This throws her emotions into a tailspin.

Joy is consumed with preserving the happiness of Riley's core memories and does everything she can to keep Sadness from tainting them with her touch. But in a scuffle, Riley's core

memories (contained in large, shining balls) fall all over the control room and are accidentally sucked up a tube that goes to long-term memory. Joy and Sadness get vacuumed up the tube with them. This leaves Anger, Fear, and Disgust in control of Riley's life. You can imagine where this is going.

We all know how difficult it is when our emotions are all over the map. One day I met with a family who had lost their beloved father and grandfather. As we planned the memorial service, a stream of precious memories poured out. There were so many happy times, so many amazing stories of his life, we all felt the sadness of losing this dear man.

Two minutes later, another family came in with their bouncing baby boy to talk about baptism. The parents let me hold this seven-month-old, twenty-three-pound bruiser on my lap as he smiled a toothless grin and played with his feet. (He had just discovered them the week before.)

Talk about an emotional head jerk. In the span of minutes, I went from real sadness to pure joy. Maybe you've had days when your emotions took you on a wild ride.

Let's assume for a moment that Pixar is on to something and that there are various emotions vying for a front row seat in the control center of your brain. Each one would take you down a very different path if it got the chance. How do you manage these crazy characters?

There are four basic ways people deal with their emotions.

Run with Them

Some people just run with their emotions. Whatever they feel, they do. Some might say they wear their heart on their sleeve.

They laugh, they cry, they get mad—all in the blink of an eye. You never have to wonder what they are feeling. There are lots of good things about that. These people tend to be more natural and authentic. They can be easy to trust because they are not trying to hide anything.

The downside of turning our lives over to our emotions is a lack of impulse control. We see something we want, we buy it. We get bored with a relationship, we jump into another one. Someone says something we don't like, we blow up at that person on the spot. We feel sad about something, we barricade ourselves in our room for three days.

Our lives are spent reacting. It's like living on Disney's Space Mountain roller-coaster ride. We have no control over whether we are going up or down, left or right; and it's too dark to see what's coming next. We're just holding on for dear life, hoping we will get to the end in one piece.

When we run with our emotions, our emotions end up running us.

The opposite end of the spectrum is to hide them.

Hide Them

Some people see emotions as dangerous. *E-motions* have a way of “energizing motion,” so you never know what they might lead you to do. Rather than embrace their emotions, these people shun them. They try to lock them in a closet in their heart, hoping to hide them from view. This often happens in Christian groups because people are afraid of what others might think or how it would look if “unacceptable” emotions were expressed.

Chapter 1

John describes a poignant turnaround in his own spiritual journey:

Although I had been a Christian over ten years, I hid from my wretchedness, my defenses, my broken parts, even the abuse I suffered as a young boy. In fact, I was always hiding—hiding my anger, jealousy, arrogance, conditional love, selfishness, brokenness, mistakes, weaknesses, and inadequacies. These things were unacceptable in the Christian circles I knew, especially among leaders. I didn't think I would be liked or accepted if I was not strong and together. Who would then listen to me? I had to prove myself capable, strong, perfect, and confident.

. . . I unconsciously had what people call the daisy mentality—"He loves me, He loves me not. He loves me, he loves me not"—based on how well I was doing in my spiritual life.

Through a study of Galatians (in the Bible), I received a fresh and powerful grasp of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I don't have to prove myself to anyone—which is how I was unconsciously living my life. I am perfectly loved and accepted by God because of Christ's life, death, and resurrection for me. . . . I can actually be free to be me. I can come out of hiding!

I am free to fail, to share my weaknesses and needs with others, to admit if I have a problem, to say "I don't know," to admit "I was wrong, please forgive me," to recognize that I don't have all the answers, and to relax and have fun, not thinking I have to take care of everyone else.⁴

Ever known someone who had a daisy mentality with God? The truth Jesus came to share is that you and I don't have to prove ourselves to anyone—not even to God. I like the way Max Lucado says it:

If I'm better tomorrow, I won't be loved more.
If I'm worse tomorrow, I won't be loved less.
God's love does not ebb and flow or come and go.⁵

That's grace—God's unmerited favor. It means there is nothing you can do to make God love you more—or less—than God does right now. We are treasured and loved in God's eyes. We need only to accept that love. That's how we come out of hiding.

However, you may not run with your emotions or hide them. You may prefer to run from them.

Run from Them

Do you know people who are always busy, always overcommitting, always overworking? When they come to the end of one activity, they dive into two more. Or perhaps you know people who are constantly distracting themselves. They're in sports leagues four or five nights a week, always in the next play or musical, consumed with a hobby, or out with their friends every night. Maybe they spend a ton of time at church or their favorite pub. When they're in the car, their playlist is always cranked. When they work out, their headphones are always on. When they come home, the first thing switched on is their TV. And no matter where they are, their nose is in their phone.

Outwardly, there's never a time when they are alone and still. What's driving that? It could be they are trying to escape their emotions.

A wise professor of mine used to say, "The busiest people in life are the deadest."

I thought, "That can't be true. Busy people are the ones who get things done. They bring things to life!"

Only later did I realize what he meant. They may be creating a whirlwind of activity on the outside, but they are dead on the inside. They stagger through life like zombies, no longer alive but relentlessly on the move. They don't take time to slow down, to feel, and to listen. That's what makes this final approach to our emotions so powerful.

Listen to Them

In *The Cry of the Soul*, Dan Allender and Tremper Longman explain the power behind listening to and dealing with our emotions:

Ignoring our emotions is turning our back on reality; listening to our emotions ushers us into reality. And reality is where we meet God. . . . Emotions are the language of the soul. They are the cry that gives the heart a voice. . . . However, we often turn a deaf ear—through emotional denial, distortion, or disengagement. We strain out anything disturbing in order to gain tenuous control of our inner world. We are frightened and ashamed of what leaks into our inner world. *In neglecting our intense emotions, we are false to ourselves and lose a wonderful opportunity to know God. We forget that change comes through brutal honesty and vulnerability before God.*⁶

We don't often talk about this, but emotions play a crucial role in a person's spiritual journey. It's through our emotions that we feel the presence of God, sense the sorrow over our own wrongs, experience the inexpressible joy of forgiveness, and feel our heart break with compassion for those who are far from God spiritually, those who are suffering physically, and those who are hurting relationally.

Without emotions, our faith would be as dry as toast. Watch where this story leads.

A little girl was sitting on her grandfather's lap as he read her a bedtime story. From time to time, she would take her eyes off the book and reach up to touch his wrinkled cheek. Back and forth she would stroke her own cheek, then his again.

Finally, she spoke up, "Grandpa, did God make you?"

"Yes, sweetheart," he said, "God made me a long time ago."

"Oh," she paused, "Grandpa, did God make me too?"

"Yes, indeed, honey," he said, "God made you just a little while ago."

Feeling each of their faces again, she said, "I think God's getting better at it."

What are you feeling right now? Joy. How does that compare with dead seriousness all the time? Would you like to make that trade?

Did you know there used to be laws in some states saying ministers could not tell jokes in church? That's what the eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers did to Christianity. They sucked the emotions right out of faith.

They believed what makes a person human is one's rational ability, and they belittled emotions. Their mantra was: "I think, therefore I am." As a result, for over two centuries in the West, Christianity was something you did from the neck up. It was all about right doctrine, getting people to think the right way about God. Emotions were suspect, somehow subhuman.

But that's changing now. Author and professor George Hunter says:

With the fading of the Enlightenment and the rise of post-modern thought, it is becoming apparent that the Enlightenment was wrong by almost 180 degrees. We are not basically rational creatures who sometimes feel; we are basically emotional creatures who sometimes

Chapter 1

think. Even what we think about is influenced by our background emotional state, and how we think about it is influenced by our feelings at the time.⁷

To anyone connected to the Methodist faith, this isn't new. John Wesley, Methodism's founder, talked almost daily about what he called "religious affections," our feelings about God. He defined Christianity as essentially "a religion of the heart."

The new frontier in education is not a person's IQ but one's EQ—emotional quotient. Great leaders these days are judged not simply by their knowledge or vision but by their awareness of their own strengths and limitations, how well they understand their own feelings and manage them, and how well they can show empathy and connect with others.

Of course, the best leaders have always understood their emotions and known how to integrate them into their lives. Jesus gives us some classic examples.

One day he went to the home of a notorious tax collector named Zacchaeus. Through the course of the meal, Zacchaeus was convicted of his greed and converted to God. He stood up and said, "If I have cheated anyone," which he had, "I will pay them back four times over." The room fell stone silent. This couldn't be. People like him don't change. After the shock wore off, I can imagine his dinner guests cheering and applauding. Do you know what Jesus said?

Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.

Luke 19:9 (NIV)

What were Zacchaeus and his guests feeling in that moment?

Joy!

When Jesus came to the tomb of his close friend Lazarus, he saw Lazarus's sister Mary weeping along with many others. Scripture describes what happened next.

Jesus wept.

John 11:35 (NIV)

It's the shortest verse in the Bible, but these two words speak volumes about Jesus's emotional health. He wasn't afraid to openly express the deep **sadness** of loss.

When Jesus came to the temple in Jerusalem, he saw people who had traveled long distances to worship God. Greedy for gain, merchants charged these poor travelers outrageous prices for birds and other animals used for sacrifice. In a scene for the ages, Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and drove them out with a whip, shouting:

Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it "a den of robbers."

Mark 11:17 (NIV)

The emotion on display for all was **anger**.

On a different day, Jesus was hungry:

Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!"

Matthew 21:19 (NIV)

What emotion was that? **Disgust**.

In the garden of Gethsemane, just hours before he would die a horrific death on the cross, Jesus literally sweat blood as he begged with every ounce of his being:

“Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me.”

Mark 14:36 (NIV)

Understandably, what gripped his heart that night was **fear**.

Those who follow Christ believe that Jesus was not only fully God. He was also fully human. He experienced the full range of human emotions. By doing so, he set the pattern for us.

Transforming Practice: Listen to Your Emotions

In the midst of a fall, the fastest road to a comeback is listening to your emotions and integrating them into your life. Try these practical ways to tune in to your feelings.

Schedule Alone Time

Block off a morning, an afternoon, or an evening. If that seems like too much, make an appointment with yourself for one hour in a place free from interruptions. Retreat centers, libraries, and public parks are great for this kind of thing, but any quiet room away from others will do. When you arrive, shut down everything. No phone, no computer, no internet, no TV or radio, not even a book or magazine, nothing outside of a personal journal to write your reflections. Your goal is to disconnect, to slow down, and to let what is inside come up. Let yourself feel. To be honest, your first feeling may be guilt over “wasting” precious time. Don’t be fooled. The

value of this exercise is beyond estimation. Time alone is the single most powerful practice to reconnect with your true self.

Journal

If you struggle with your mind going in twenty-three directions at once (as I often do), a simple practice to slow your mind and focus your thoughts is journaling. Whether you pick up an inexpensive notebook, buy a specially designed journal, or start pounding away on a keyboard, the only requirement is to write down what is going on in you. Since I journal before going to bed at night, I often find it helpful to review my day, writing down the highs and lows, the places where God's presence was palpable, and those times when I felt alone or made mistakes. It's amazing what this basic practice can reveal. I have been journaling daily for many years now, and to be honest, sometimes I don't really know what I'm feeling until I start to write. It's like someone turned on a faucet, and what's deep inside comes pouring out.

As you become aware of your emotions, name them. When you say, "I'm feeling anxious," it takes you out of the state of anxiousness and gives you some control. Instead of being run by that emotion, you can now choose any of a hundred ways to handle it. One surprisingly effective option is to pray it.

Pray Your Feelings to God

Once you get a handle on the feelings swirling inside, you can talk to God about them. Author C. S. Lewis said, "We must lay before him what is in us; not what ought to be in us."⁸ There is no need to be afraid. You are not going to surprise God. Just let what is inside come out. It may be messy. It may involve a tangled ball of anger, joy, disgust, fear, and shame. Just let it fly,

unfiltered. God can handle it. Sometimes it helps to say it out loud. Maybe something like, “Lord, this what I’m feeling right now, and it doesn’t make sense. I don’t even know why. I’m mad. I’m sad. I’m scared. I’m at my wits’ end! What are you trying to tell me through these feelings? Do I need to own something and apologize? Is there some truth you are trying to teach me? Or are you asking me to just sit still and feel it, so I can let it go?”

You may wonder, what real good could come from pouring out your jumbled emotional life before God? Alice Fryling explains it beautifully:

The goal in focusing on our feelings is not to wallow in them. Nor is it just to clarify thinking. The goal is to notice and embrace the presence of God in this experience. When this happens, the peace that comes “transcends all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). In other words, we cannot think our way into God’s peace; it’s beyond our understanding. The Bible also says that the love of God “surpasses knowledge” (Ephesians 3:19). No matter how much we know, God’s love is deeper, so sometimes the route to this peace beyond knowing is through our feelings.⁹

How many times have we missed the presence of God by focusing on what we know instead of laying out how we feel?

Not long ago, I talked with a young woman who saw the movie *Inside Out* just for fun, and it totally caught her off guard. At one point in the movie, she began to weep.

She, too, had moved as a little girl. Her family quickly dove into their new community, but it wasn’t as easy for her. When she longed to go back, she was told to leave it behind and be happy in her new place.

She tried. She really did. But she missed her friends and her former life. She had lost a big part of her world and was never

allowed to grieve it. Over time, stuffing her sadness resulted in physical illness.

Eventually, like the character Joy in the movie, she realized she didn't have to be happy all the time. The other emotions in her life were also crucial to her well-being. In a reflective moment, she shared, "I think I was creating a false sense of joy when I suppressed sadness. I thought it was happiness in the moment, but it couldn't have been because of how I was manipulating my feelings. It was when I allowed myself to actually sit in the sadness and 'feel' that true joy came out, because I felt free. Some of my deepest and most precious times with God have been a result of me learning to sit in the sadness with Him. It's very healing!"

Real faith is not something you do from the neck up. It never has been. We can't let emotions run our lives, or they will ruin them. But if we hide our emotions or run from them, it will lead to spiritual deadness. God created us with a full range of feelings. If we will listen to them, they can reveal a depth of love and a peace beyond understanding that only God can give.

Years ago, I ran across a prayer by Thomas Merton that's helped me in those times when I had fallen and didn't know which way to turn. If you find yourself there, try praying this as sincerely as you can:

My Lord God,

I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself. And the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does, in fact, please you. And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road. Though I may know nothing about it.

Chapter 1

Therefore, I will trust you always. Though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death, I will not fear. For you are ever with me. And you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

—Thomas Merton¹⁰

Sooner or later, everyone has a fall. It's terribly disorienting. The road ahead is unclear, and we don't know where it might lead. Naturally, that stirs a host of emotions. In that moment, we have a choice. We can intentionally ignore our feelings for fear they might slow us down or take us off track, or we can learn how to listen to our emotions without letting them control us. Feeling our feelings and listening to them sets us up for the next stage of the comeback journey.