



by Herb Drill

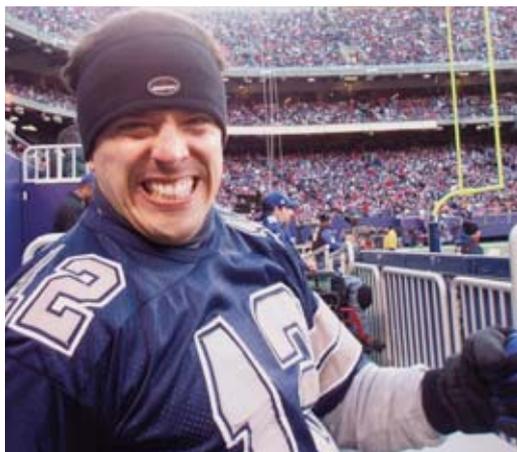
LIFE

at its

Fullest

ABOVE: Scott Chesney is ready for his close-up as an international speaker.

It's important to be a warm football fan and tailgater.



Scott Chesney's wheelchair recently crossed the goal line after another season—of tailgating.

A world traveler as a motivational speaker and corporate coach, Chesney has been paralyzed for two decades. Still, this past football season he chowed down and cheered at National Football League games such as the New York Giants versus his favorite Dallas Cowboys and the New York Jets versus the Miami Dolphins.

An athlete at 15, Chesney was strong, with high hopes. He had career plans and thoughts of fathering children. Today, after dealing with spinal-cord injury (SCI), he says whether it's SCI,

“Words are the voice of the heart.”

– Chinese educator Confucius

polio, multiple sclerosis (MS), muscular dystrophy (MD), or any other condition or disease, “What I realize is, no matter what your disability may be, there is always room for growth and happiness.”

Master Teachers

According to Chinese tradition, Confucius was a thinker, political figure, and educator. His teachings form much of Chinese thought on education and how a person should live and interact with others, forms of society, and government.

Similarly, Chesney has been described as a master of living life to its fullest, while addressing more than a million people in 38 countries. After awakening to paralysis from a sudden spinal stroke, he’s become a well-recognized workshop and keynote presenter, and his insights have been applauded by Fortune 500 corporations, hospitals, rehab centers, associations, and a United Nations audience.

In 1997, after Chesney spent years struggling emotionally, mentally, and spiritually, he had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity—a chance to travel the world. This self-discovery, or “self-recovery,” took him to 15 countries in 15 months. “I explored alternative or complementary medicine,” Chesney says. “A newly-found self-awareness evolved slowly, which led me to explore the depths of pain, anger, and sadness I had suppressed for so long.”

As old emotional and mental wounds were addressed and healed, “a new outlook on life began to take form,” Chesney admits, and when he returned from his first global tour, he spoke at numerous corporations, universities, and hundreds of schools across the U.S.

Chesney says that after the “tremendous response from people of all ages and walks of life, it was suggested I take this message of hope, inspiration, and motivation back around the world to help others.”

As a “life student,” Chesney has examined transformational techniques of the world’s exceptional teachers of human behavior, such as Tibetan spiritual leader the 14th Dalai Lama. Chesney believes he has tied these leaders’ wisdom with his to create a personal blueprint for

navigating life as a personal empowerment coach for adults, teens, and families.

With his wife, Pratiksha (Pat), Chesney journeyed to 26 countries from July 1999 to July 2000.

“Our message was heard by more than 40 million people. Sounds like a great excuse to write a book...a work in progress,” he says.

On September 13, 1999, the Chesneys had a private audience with the 14th Dalai Lama in his home, high atop the mountains of Dharamsala, India. That aligns with Chesney’s favorite writer, Dan Millman (*The Peaceful Warrior*) and Chesney’s favorite quote: “Be the change you wish to see in the world” (Mahatma Gandhi).

Chesney, of Verona, N.J., holds a communications degree from Seton Hall University (South Orange, N.J.) and a “master’s degree in life experiences.” He’s a trustee of Children’s Specialized Hospital in New Jersey; sits on the advisory boards of the New Jersey Disability, Health, and Wellness Program and the Northern New Jersey Spinal Cord Injury System; and co-chairs the New Jersey chapter of the Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis.

Start Your Journey

For years Chesney has coached people from all walks of life to “face and embrace adversity.” He begins with two prescient questions:

- Do you seek a change in your life?
- Are you ready to change your life?

If the answer to one or both is “yes” or even “maybe,” the time is right to connect with an



Scott Chesney says his disability gives his son Ray life lessons daily.



Time with his wife Pratiksha (Pat) and their children, Nia and Ray, is most important to Scott Chesney.

experienced life coach so you can reconnect with yourself and:

- Create dreams/turn them into reality.
- Manage your emotions.
- Love your body.
- Create/manage a rewarding and successful career.
- Build/manage fulfilling relationships.
- Manifest financial abundance.

At an annual World Congress and Expo on Disabilities, the author of *Maximizing Life with a Disability* targeted making peace with the past, facing/embracing fear, managing emotions, living with an attitude of gratitude, and living with power, passion, and purpose. When speaking, he discusses such topics as disability awareness & sensitivity, overcoming adversity, balancing professional and personal lives, self-esteem, leadership cultivation, conflict resolution, and communication.

Chesney says, “Even if you don’t know exactly where you want to be, your journey of self-discovery [only needs] the courage to begin.”

Parenting Advice

For eight years, Chesney has offered parenting workshops for people with/without disabilities.

“I begin by telling them I believe parenting is the perfect combination of heaven and hell. If you’re a parent, no matter how old or young your children are, you have visited hell once or twice in your lifetime. You have, more than likely, experienced heaven on a more consistent basis.”

Parenting with a disability is “tricky, on-the-job training. The training is endless, but it really can enhance life and give you such profound insight to your own lives,” he advises. Parenting will “bring any unresolved issues to the surface. People with disabilities are masters in patience. Just because we are doesn’t mean we’re lock-ins for the gold medal in parenting.”

Can patience from living with a disability help in parenting? “Absolutely,” Chesney says. Can it be the boiling point for something we thought was dormant but brewing deep within us? “Absolutely.”

With two young children, Chesney admits “challenging times with Nia and Ray have helped me to learn more about myself and others.”

He wishes he could do many physical things with his kids. “Then, I think about the life lessons my disability teaches them daily. They have questions and will have more as they get older, but I believe the life lessons of my wheelchair will have tremendous impact on my kids,” he says.

Chesney says as he ages he finds himself communicating more with people with disabilities, “specifically those who have lived 30-plus years with their disabilities and still get out there, travel, work, and make the most of their lives. Their determination, perseverance, and courage drive them to keep showing up for life to the fullest.”

Words to Live By

Chesney offers this recipe for aging gracefully with a disability:

Simplify life. You don’t have to do everything, be everything to everyone.

Communicate what you need. Do you allow others to help you?

Care for your mind, body, and spirit daily. Remind yourself what you’ve achieved, endured, and learned about yourself and others.

Have an “attitude of gratitude,” even for your disability for all it has brought into your life, taught you, and the everyday challenge to move against adversity every morning.

Chesney’s primary advice is: “Never give up hope—and always remember, life is a journey, not a destination.”

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