

## Executive Director's Column

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# The Way of Warriors: Jenny McCarthy and Dan Millman

I wondered if Jenny McCarthy and Dan Millman know each other when I heard them both speak at conferences this fall. Despite differing backgrounds these two unlikely authors have much in common besides their diminutive size and contrasting big voices. By sharing their personal stories they have changed the lives of countless individuals and families by giving them hope.

**Jenny, the Mother Warrior:** Most know her story. Formerly a successful Playboy model, comedian, actress, MTV host and author, she is mother of Evan, born in 2002, and significant other to funnyman, “autism whisperer” Jim Carey.

History: Evan develops a seizure disorder following a vaccine. Jenny fights doctors’ refusal to investigate possible causes. Evan regresses developmentally, and is diagnosed with autism. Jenny discovers a bio-medical approach through a Generation Rescue Angel, and goes public. Goals: Educate parents about vaccine ingredients; help families learn about treatment alternatives; oppose a one-size-fits-all vaccine schedule. Now: wildly popular autism activist/warrior.

In the past few months McCarthy has appeared on the covers of dozens of magazines, on television talk shows, and sold millions of copies of straight-forward, laugh-out-loud books, including her newest best seller *Mother Warriors: A Nation of Parents Healing Autism Against All Odds*.

**Dan, the Peaceful Warrior:** Once a world-champion gymnast, martial arts professor, and an inspirational guru speaking internationally and writing on health, psychology, sports, business and the arts. Millman began his odyssey through a chance middle-of-the night encounter at a gas station with an old guy he named Socrates, who became his wise powerful, balanced mentor and role model. Out of his mouth came lessons from his heart.

For the past 25 years Millman has imparted Socrates’ wisdom through his five “Peaceful Warrior” books (including one for children) and the “Peaceful Warrior” movie, starring Nick Nolte. Often turning to quotations that he started collecting as a young man, Millman has shown millions how to become Peaceful Warriors in difficult times.

These modern-day icons offer us sound principles and practices for responding to today’s changes and challenges. Some of Millman’s favorite quotes:

- **“Pain and adversity come with hidden gifts”** – Surely Jenny would have preferred that Evan not become autistic. However, look at the doors his autism has opened by allowing her to extend her writing, speaking talents, humor and generosity of heart. While the biomedical treatment movement struggled for years to get out the message that “autism is treatable,” Jenny has been able to do it quickly and almost single-handedly.

As Millman reminds us, “our daily lives, while sometimes seeming like dreams, are our classrooms.” Those who have faced serious challenges realize how much adversity teaches you about yourself. The trick is to turn what you learn into something useful.

- **“When you learn, you benefit only yourself; when you teach, you benefit others.”** – Many experts communicate their wisdom by teaching. In *Louder than Words* Jenny teaches parents how to navigate safely through myriad autism therapies. In *Warrior Mothers*, parents relate the unique paths they took to find their own children’s “remedy of interventions.” While a college gymnast, Dan felt he was “called to teach.” He realized that only he benefited from self improvement; if he could positively influence others, then his life would be more meaningful. Over time he studied many systems of human development, and his interest shifted from developing talent for sports to developing talent for living. Millman and McCarthy now spend many days on the road bettering the world by sharing what they know.

- **“Everything is difficult until it becomes easy.”** – Watching a baby struggle to walk, a toddler to talk, a first grader to read and write, and a family to learn to follow a GF/CF diet can be painful. Results come only after days, weeks or months. Support from someone like Jenny and Dan can give you the strength to persevere.

- **“Science is the religion of the left brain. All the best discoveries come from intuition, not science.”** – Jenny has inspired mothers who know their kids best not to back down. They know what they saw, what was lost in their kids, and that they are not crazy or stupid.

Mothers’ and fathers’ intuition is what has led scientists and researchers to understanding autism as an immunological, not a psychological disability. Veteran parents, such as Bernie Rimland of the Autism Research Institute, Jon Pangborn of Defeat Autism Now! and more recent pioneers like Portia Iverson of Cure Autism Now (CAN) and the Wrights of Autism Speaks, lead important organizations that fund research to heal our children.

- **“The past and the future are nice places to visit, but you don’t have to live there.”** Dan and Jenny focus on being in the present. As Dan relates, “We can only live happily ever after one moment at a time.” A developmental approach always starts where a child is NOW. No one has a crystal ball to the future. While dreams are fine, fretting about a possible poor prognosis never helped anyone get well. Which leads to:

- **“Heroes and cowards experience identical fears... they just respond to them differently.”** Action is the core of both the peaceful and the mother warriors’ way. People rarely regret what they’ve done as much as what they haven’t done. Peaceful warriors engage life fully every day. Use these principles to join the Peaceful and Mother Warrior movements: you can make a difference.

Follow Jenny through [www.generationrescue.org](http://www.generationrescue.org). Jump start your day with Dan’s four minute, powerful fitness routine, combining Hatha yoga, martial arts, dance, gymnastics. His DVD and books are available at [www.danmillman.com](http://www.danmillman.com). See Upcoming Events for a chance to hear Dan speak.