

# Living An Optimized Life: The Dr. Jack Kruse Story



Dr. Jack Kruse

Greetings, my name is Jack Kruse. I am a neurosurgeon and I would like to share some ideas with you. These ideas are very important to me and I have been considering them for quite a while now. Why do I want to share it this way, you may ask? Well, the “**WHY**” is the actual answer to that question! Let me explain.

As doctors, our medical training in school and residency really focuses in on **HOW** we do things and **WHAT** we trying to help you with. We spend very little time explaining **WHY** we do what we do for patients. This may seem trivial to you now, but it is critical to understanding why patients often get frustrated with us, physicians.

For five years I have been fortunate in being able to meet, examine and operate on people of all types. In that time I noticed something was radically changing before my eyes in those patients. At first, I thought it was a quirk finding – a coincidence if you will – but then one particular disease kept popping up in all age groups and in all sexes. It also became increasingly common in all types of cases I was involved with in neurosurgery. Something this ubiquitous and unexpected had to have an explanation, I thought. After looking for practice-wide clues, then expanding the search for community-wide causes, I ironically stumbled upon the truth when I injured *myself*! The “**HOW** and the **WHAT**” of what I found really are not important to this story, but I believe the “**WHY**” really does matter to us all.

This blog’s purpose is to share, with all of you, my beliefs in supporting health. I believe if I can help you stay

healthy, or regain your health that you may be able to help your own physician see that fostering health is a better option than treating a disease after it occurs. These beliefs will cover many subject areas, some old hat to you, and some totally new. I believe the prism through which I view the world is a completely new way of looking at an old problem. My beliefs will not focus on a “normal” healthy life but on an **Optimized Life**. I do not believe in settling for a grade of “C” or even “D” when I know I can get an “A.” I see life through the optic of health and not disease, contrary to what they teach in medical school. I believe if you can incorporate some of these ideas into your daily lives that you will not only remain healthy and free of disease but that you might completely avoid all major chronic diseases that currently plague our civilization.

I specialize in complex spine surgery in my private practice and I have extensive training in peripheral nerve surgery and brain surgery. This blog, however, will not be about my day job. It will be a place to come to share ideas worth sharing, and trying to avoid all disease and reversing the ones you may currently have. Many of my friends have commented that it is awfully hard to find physicians to keep them healthy instead of treating them when they are sick! I hope to share my beliefs so that you can help your own healthcare practitioner become the physician you really want. **YOU** can help your doctor transition in the same fashion. I will share with you how to do so here.

I want to take you back to the “**WHY**” I originally mentioned. I have often wondered why we seem to get results in medicine and surgery that are often unexpected. I must explain to patients what happened when things do not go as planned. In medical school and residency training, we spend an unbelievable amount of time learning “*how*” to figure “*what*” to do and the methods that entail, but very little time focusing in “*why*” we are doing it. When we enter into the private practice of medicine we meet a legion of new faces – referring physicians who send

us their patients to perform what we learned for years and to show them how we learned to do it in modern ways.

The funny part is that the physicians sending us patients never ask us why we do what we do either! It is as if it is completely understood why we do things just that we do things. The one group who really wants to know why we do things to patients are – surprise – the patients themselves! I know because they have been telling me this since I arrived in private practice. The ironic thing about this relationship is that physicians are very skilled in the two things patients really do not care to talk about. Physicians love to tell their patients about things that patients really don't care about....the *"What"* and *"How."* It never dawned on me in my early career to explain the *"WHY"* because I knew so much about the *"How and What"* of what a neurosurgeon does. Then a very interesting thing happened to me. I became a patient in a very freak way. I was at a spine meeting in Alabama and stood up while discussing a new technique I was developing with a fellow surgeon. I then immediately felt a tremendous pain in my right knee. I could not even walk back to my room! I knew something was very wrong, but I could not fathom why this occurred because all I did was stand up. I was 6'2" and 350 pounds at the time. I covered this injury the podcast interview with Jimmy Moore if you would like to hear the context more fully.



Dr. Kruse Before &  
After

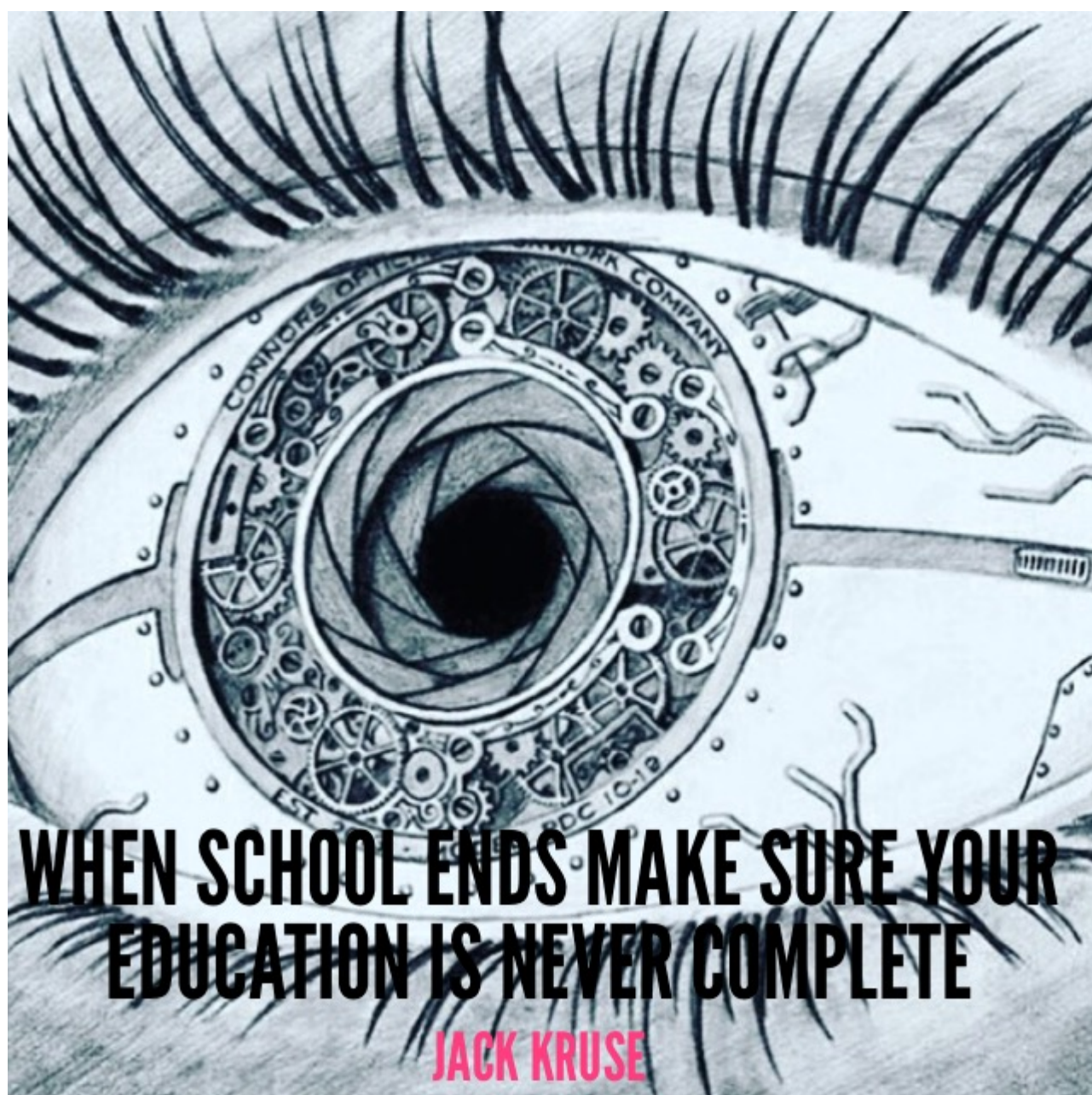
As soon as I became an injured person and not a doctor I joined a new group. I joined the people that I'd been helping – **"The Patients."** A thought immediately occurred to me. "Why did this happen to me?" I did not care about how and what at first. This thought also struck me because it was not what I

usually thought of with patients. For the first time, I felt a bit helpless in a surgical decision-making process. This inconsistency made me very self-aware. It fueled my quest to find out why this really happened to me. Well, I did find out why it happened eventually. But I did not discover this from the four surgeons I consulted or from the surgeon who I eventually selected to operate upon me. Instead, I found out from another patient who is a family friend!

While I was driving to work one day I had an epiphany. Maybe there was no irony in how I found out “*why*.” Maybe...just maybe, I could not easily find out why because none of the physicians really knew why it happened. So I started asking many of my brethren questions in surgery and in the hospital lounges – why did they do the things they do. Most struggled to find the words to answer me. Then I had my next epiphany: If they did not know why they did all they were trained to do, then maybe I don’t know why I do all I do as well. It was then clear to me I had to find out why for everything I could!

I began to read everything I could...and I read...a lot. I applied this knowledge to myself, as I learned it, in real time. Every day I posted a new bit of information as a status on my Facebook page that I would then apply to myself. I began to practice what I preached. My transformation occurred very quickly because I did everything I could at once. This certainly drove my family nuts, but the results spoke for themselves. I lost 77 pounds in 3 months and 133 pounds in eleven months applying my new beliefs. The more I read about my knee meniscus tear, the more I saw the parallels to my injured spine patients. If I could do it anyone could. This thesis has guided my practice of neurosurgery since that fateful day that I became one of you, a patient. That day I was reborn. I became a new surgeon who saw things as a patient does – but through a surgeon’s eyes. I became far more perceptive and intuitive, and I began to care little about the “*What and How*” and focus my entire practice on “**THE WHY**”.

I went back for more education and received extra training in nutrition, exercise and age management medicine. This led me to begin to write two books – one on nutrition and the other on next-generation spine surgery, using a paleolithic approach. I have most of those books complete, but about 3 months ago a fellow physician, told me that I had to stop the writing books and put this knowledge to use helping people now. He said, “Why keep it a secret? Share it.” So I started writing content for this blog. In the process, I found a light within me that I thought blew out long ago. It was passion returning to me.



So I wrote **THE QUILT**. It is a collection of ideas, laid out in one place, that will be the skeleton of my theories. That way as I add pieces to the quilt (via blogging) it will grow – morph into something much more understandable for everyone. The exploration of “**THE WHY**” will begin with the quilt of longevity. It is my hope that you understand that health is our new perspective – *not disease*. I also realize that many people will find thirty levees daunting at first. Rest assured that implementation will not be difficult. Just start at the top and work your way down. I designed it that way. At the end of each blog is a number. This is the order I posted the blogs. The categories tie the blogs back to the QUILT Don’t rush through this. It will take some time, but together we can get you back to your **Optimal Self**.