

# Beyond the Mask: How My Tragedy Sparked an Incredible Life: Lessons I Might Never Have Learned by Brian P. Walsh

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Minutes before Brian Walsh, then just a teenager, heard his beeper go off, calling him to help put out another fire, he was on top of the world. An hour later, after a freak flashover and confusion that sent the junior firefighter into the inferno against regulations, Brian had suffered such profound burns to his face that he was unidentifiable to his fellow firefighters.

Nearly everyone expected him to die that night.

He did not.

Nearly everyone expected him to die in the burn unit where, over the next month, every other patient died. Nearly everyone, including family and friends, expected Brian to choose a professional life that would keep him from showing his face, and the personal life of a hermit.

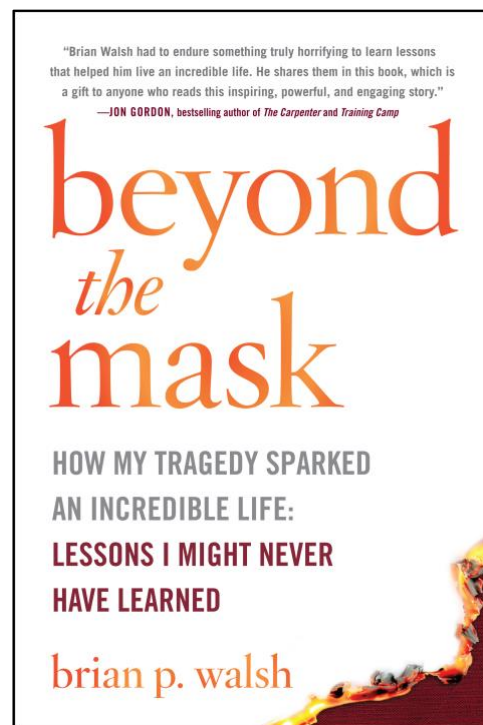
He did not.

Boldly forging a path forward with courage, grace, and determination, Brian silenced his doubters and defied all expectations. Decades later, Brian is an extraordinarily successful and renowned financial planner, family man, community fixture, philanthropist, motivational speaker, and industry leader. In this stirring autobiography, he tells his incredible story, sharing the lessons that only tragedy could teach and how they helped him—and can help anyone—achieve greater success, inside and out.

*Beyond the Mask* is the moving and inspirational story of how one horrific moment can define a human being forever—in the most life-affirming way.

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**Beyond the Mask: How My Tragedy  
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by Brian P. Walsh

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As a seventeen-year-old volunteer firefighter, **Brian Walsh** had so much to look forward to—then, in an instant, caught in a burning building where everything went wrong, he found himself clinging to life, his face burned beyond recognition. Even loved ones encouraged him to pursue a career and life that would keep him largely hidden.

Brian chose another route.

At eighteen, from behind the mask he wore for two years, he met the love of his life. At twenty-one, he became an insurance agent, one of the most “face-to-face” jobs imaginable. At twenty-six, he co-founded Walsh & Nicholson Financial Group, which today serves over 1,000 clients in wealth management, estate and retirement planning, and more. He holds the esteemed designation of Certified Financial Fiduciary, serves as Vice President of the Million Dollar Round Table Foundation Board, and is deeply involved in charitable pursuits, including finding a cure for juvenile diabetes and supporting firefighters.

Brian lives in Haverford, Pennsylvania, with wife Mary Ann. They have three children and a beautiful granddaughter.



## **A Conversation with Brian Walsh:**

**Q: What inspired you to write *Beyond the Mask*?**

*A: People that both knew me well and some I only met recently kept asking me to write a book. I finally relented when I realized what an impact my story had on them. I would hear things like, "What an inspiration you are. Can you speak to my children about what you went through? Your story changed my life." All of this was very humbling, and I decided the best way to help more people was to get my story out there!*

**Q: What do you hope is the biggest takeaway from the book?**

*A: That any person holds the key to their personal outcome in life no matter the obstacle. You owe it to yourself to put in your best effort regardless of setbacks and be the person you want to be. Hopefully this book allows you to adapt my lessons to your situation.*

**Q: After healing from your burns, what were some of your fears about the future?**

*A: There were too many to write here. The biggest one was acceptance, I assumed people would be accepting, but they are not. My lesson learned was that I had to accept myself and what happened to me before anything else. Then I could continue on with the new reality.*

**Q: Who in your life provided you with the greatest support, which allowed you to pursue a "normal" life after your incident?**

*A: At first my family and my parents and siblings. My wife, who I met several years after my accident really allowed me to have faith in people. As we grew our family and my business she was my greatest supporter and cheerleader. And... there is no "normal" for anyone!*

**Q: Why did you decide to go work in insurance knowing it would be a very face-to-face business?**

*A: I really liked the industry and how it is there for people at their absolute worst moments. What better way to continue to serve people and really be in a position to help them? Knowing I was never going to be an active firefighter again, it was the next best career.*

**Q: What advice would you give to your teenage self, who is worrying about how this tragedy will affect the rest of his life?**

*A: I would love to have gone through life without the excruciating pain and long recovery I endured, however, I would not trade it in for the world. This accident gave me great perspective, which revealed tenacity and resilience I may never have had to tap into. Bottom line it made me better and I have the scars to prove it!*

**Q: With the Covid 19 pandemic, many of us are wearing face masks when out in public. When these masks have come off for good, what do you hope people will have learned from this crisis?**

*A: Well first, I never thought I would ever have to go out in public wearing a mask again, I guess history does repeat itself! LOL. I hope people feel that they can get through anything. This virus was put in our laps and we dealt with it. People should learn that whatever is dealt them, they have the strength to overcome the situation no, matter how devastating it may be!*



## **Advance Praise for *Beyond the Mask*:**

“Brian Walsh had to endure something truly horrifying to learn lessons that helped him live an incredible life. He shares them in this book, which is a gift to anyone who reads this inspiring, powerful, and engaging story.”

— Jon Gordon, bestselling author of *The Carpenter* and *Training Camp*

“This book is filled with real life wisdom that can help you be more, do more, and serve more.”

— Nido Qubein, President of High Point University

“Sometimes the best life lessons are learned from people who have gone through unimaginable hardship. Brian Walsh pushed through his tragedy to become one of the best leadership teachers, and his reflections and advice are invaluable.”

— Dana Perino, former White House Press Secretary

“I’ve been telling Brian Walsh for years that he needed to write a book. He did not just write one, but wrote a great one. My friend learned to live a life with a new face. And he now teaches us to do the same...to put our down our masks, face ourselves and ignite a fire in our hearts to live, lead and love in a more burning way.”

— Tommy Spaulding, New York Times bestselling author of *The Heart-Led Leader* and *It’s Not Just Who You Know*