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# FUNCTIONAL

Health is the new wealth.

*From the bush of Timbuktu to the longevity sanctuaries of the Bahamas*

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**Abdoulaye Fadiga**

Founder · Champion Spirit Country Club · Nassau, Bahamas

***"I give you ten million dollars.  
But you die tomorrow."***

The man thinks.

And he says no.

Life holds infinite value.

Even when we have not yet earned it.

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***Health is the new wealth.***

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# PROLOGUE

What No One Can Buy

We live in an age where adults need to be reminded to drink water when it is hot. Where people collapse under the weight of simple stress. Where walking two kilometres feels impossible without a car.

I have seen this with my own eyes. I was born in a world where fragility meant death. In Timbuktu, in the heart of the Malian bush, a child who could not read the signs of nature, listen to his body, adapt to danger did not survive. It was simple, brutal, true.

Rousseau asked the question about modern man and the so-called uncivilised man. Place them in a forest, a mountain, an arena. Who survives? Who listens to his body? Who observes, adapts, endures? Which of the two is truly evolved?

The 2.0 man is afraid of a dog, a bee. He disinfects his hands at every doorknob, collapses at the first virus, consumes medications without understanding what he is swallowing. He can no longer sleep without a sedative, breathe without anxiety, or think without validation. He gets eczema when he is stressed, gets lost without GPS, exhausts himself eating what he cannot digest.

He has lost the knowledge of stars, seasons, medicinal plants. He believes, wrongly, that technology will compensate for his decline. The druids, the sages, the elders have disappeared. In their place, an artificial intelligence we consult for want of consulting ourselves.

I do not say this from an ivory tower. I say it because I have lived in both worlds. I ran barefoot in the red dust of Mali before stepping onto the mats of Bangkok. I listened to my village elders before studying biomechanics in laboratories. I walked through blue zones, those pockets of longevity where centenarians remain standing, functional, alive.

This book is the account of that journey. From the bush to the ring, from the ring to the monasteries, from the monasteries to the centenarian villages, and finally to Champion Spirit, the sanctuary I built to transmit what I have understood.

Because I am convinced of one thing: our ailments come neither from the world nor from others. They come from us. From our comfort turned prison. From our forgetting of ourselves.

We maintain our car, our phone, our home. But our soul? Our body? There is no cleaning service for the interior. Only one person responsible: ourselves.

This body, this perfect machine we disguise and encumber with artifice, thinking we can push back the inevitable. What creativity we deploy to flee what we should embrace.

But nothing works: the machine is set.

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***To be functional, autonomous, upright, free in body and mind, is the only luxury that truly counts.***

***Health is the new wealth.***

PART ONE

# THE ROOTS

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# 01

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## THE BUSH

Where Everything Begins



My name is Abdoulaye Fadiga. My story begins far from cities, in Timbuktu, in the heart of the bush. My earliest years unfolded among frogs, hyenas and elephants. There, every sound, every trail, every season taught a truth: man is first and foremost an animal among others, fragile, yet capable of learning to survive, to listen, to adapt.

In tribal life, no one lives alone. A hunter rarely leaves without his brother. An elder always passes knowledge to the young. A healer trains an apprentice. Living together means sharing the burden and multiplying the strength.

Each person has a mission. One is a butcher, another a carpenter, another a hunter, another a healer. Every role is respected, every function an honour. And honour means responsibility. This responsibility imposes limits. It teaches saying no. No to ease, no to excess, no to wasting oneself.

People did not only seek treatment when illness struck. They observed long before. They listened to breath, monitored appetite, questioned sleep. Prevention was part of daily life. Because losing a man was to weaken the entire clan.

We lived outside. Nature was not a backdrop, but our roof and our floor. Walking barefoot, feeling the earth, listening to the rain, breathing the morning air, all of this recharges a man far more than a glowing screen or a plush sofa.

*"What a man does not harvest himself ends up dominating him."*

I understand this saying now. I understood it much later, watching the modern world poison itself with what it had not planted.

They also said: Only the isolated tree withers. And: He who keeps his house clean keeps his mind clear.

The bush taught me that the body is our first home. That we respect our tools, our hut, our land, but that the first thing to protect is ourselves.

The only people seated were women actively grinding millet after having walked hours to fetch water from the well. The very idea of sitting for hours doing nothing did not exist. People walked, carried, climbed, dug. Moving was breathing, moving was living.

In the evenings, the fire was put out early, letting the night do its work. No artificial light, no ambient noise, no disruptions. Everything was rhythmmed by nature. The sun dictated our days, the moon our nights. It is there, in that radical simplicity, that I understood the foundations of longevity long before I knew the words to name them.

# 02

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## THE RING

The School of Useful Suffering

**9x**

CHAMPION OF FRANCE

**4x**

WORLD CHAMPION

**63/68**

VICTORIES

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Then boxing entered my life. It gave me discipline, a taste for effort and the science of combat. It led me all the way to Thailand, to Lampang, where I lived among the warrior monks.

Can the adage "you must suffer to be beautiful" be adapted to athletic performance as "you must suffer to be great"? From "hard training, easy match" to "no pain, no gain" there is an obvious relationship between the obligation to suffer in training and the longed-for performance in competition.

I learned there that beyond strength, everything rests on the mind: breathing, mastery of pain, endurance. The monks showed me that the body can go far beyond what the mind allows it.

The explanation of this obligation to suffer is found in the sources of performance: physiology and psychology.

Physiologically, the foundation of physical training rests on the principle of accumulated stimulation over time: the supercompensation process. When a training load close to maximum capacity is applied to the body, the state of energy potential after recovery becomes superior to the initial state. The judicious and calculated repetition of new loads allows the athlete's potential to increase.

Psychologically, it is the stress absent during training but present in competition that must be counterbalanced by another anxiety-inducing source. The athlete must experience situations where the hardness of training is greater than what will be encountered in the match.

Accepting this pain is a strange thing, especially in a society built for maximum comfort. The ordinary person cannot understand why one would inflict suffering on oneself. The champion knows it: no progress can be gained without suffering.

Pushing the body to its limits, creating efforts of high intensity or prolonged duration, generates biological disturbances. The depletion of energy reserves, the accumulation of toxic waste and the tearing of muscle fibres are painful but indispensable to destabilise the organism.

The body does not intend to be flogged without fighting back. Excessive biological precautions, very far from the limit threshold, are put in place, like cushioned barriers. The role of repeated training loads is to eliminate this false biological protection.

Continuing an effort when one feels at the end of one's rope is possible thanks to the encouragement of the trainer, partners or spectators. This is proof that the body's limits have not been reached.

I remember an old Thai master. Every morning, he began with small movements of the arms, the hips, the knees. Nothing extraordinary. But day after day, those gestures kept him supple, mobile, young.

*"Water that flows never stagnates."*

Thai Master, Lampang

It is in these training camps that I understood an essential truth: pain is a strange and personal sensation. Sensory feedback to the control centre exists but the athlete may or may not take it into account. It is a subjective and momentary opinion. The athlete must perceive the hardship as a destabilising passage, but not one that is inadmissible for going to the very end of oneself.

Training exists for this: to modify the interpretation of suffering and push back its limits. Nine times Champion of France. Multiple times World Champion. These titles did not come by chance. They came because I learned to transform pain into

information, suffering into fuel, fear into concentration.

*"Be like water, my friend."*

Bruce Lee

Calm in the heart of the storm. That is what the ring taught me. A man without self-control is a man who loses before the fight has even begun.

# 03

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## THE SCIENCE

Understanding to Transmit

From boxing, I moved toward science. I wanted to understand: the mechanics of the body, the psychology of performance, the biology of stress, that cortisol that silently exhausts us. I studied biomechanics, psychology, physiology, the chemistry of living systems.

Because it is not enough to feel. One must name. One must measure. One must be able to explain why what works, works, and why what destroys, destroys.

## **Cortisol The Invisible Poison**

Cortisol is the hormone of urgency. A precious jolt when one must flee, defend, react. In nature, it saved our ancestors from predators or hyenas. But today, our predators are invisible: screens, bills, deadlines, noise, notifications. And our cortisol, instead of coming down, stays elevated, day and night.

This invisible poison exhausts everything. Too much cortisol blocks sleep, fatigues the immune system, promotes low-grade inflammation, and silently installs weight gain around the abdomen. Few people know that a stressed belly is often more hormonal than dietary.

I have seen it dozens of times: one can eat perfectly, move every day, but if stress is not tamed, the body keeps a reserve, by survival instinct.

## **Sugar The Invisible Weapon**

Sugar has become an invisible weapon. In my vision, forged by my African roots, I have always thought there is something deliberately addictive in modern food. In my village, they said: What a man does not harvest himself ends up dominating him. Today, that is exactly it. We are sold sugar to soothe us, reward us, keep us quiet, and then we are sold the remedies to treat what it destroys.

In the past, sugar was a luxury, a rare treasure. Today, it is an omnipresent commonplace. Technical progress? Yes. Silent trap? Also.



Scientifically, everything is clear. Sugar feeds a silent epidemic: excess weight, obesity, diabetes, chronic inflammation. It disrupts mitochondrial health. These small factories that produce our energy break down, exhausting our cells, weakening our immune system.

I like to tell this story. One day, during a training camp with a group of young boxers at a research and performance centre, we were shown two photos: a perfect human body seen from the outside and, next to it, the same silhouette as a thermal image, inflamed in red, clogged by an excess of sugar. With this simple and famous phrase written below: Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are. The silence was total. Because on the outside, everything can appear solid; on the inside, everything may already be collapsing.

Studies have confirmed it. In a recent experiment, sugar dependence was tested on rats. Offer them a choice between cocaine and sugar: they end up choosing sugar, again and again. Sugar activates reward circuits like a drug. The result: a soft, invisible, profitable dependence for those who cultivate it.

## **The Maslow Pyramid Back to Basics**

To understand longevity, one must return to the essential: the Maslow pyramid. Abraham Maslow, American psychologist, showed that man can only flourish if his fundamental needs are met: breathing, drinking, eating, sleeping. Then comes security. Then the need for belonging. Then esteem. And finally self-actualisation.

Modern man has forgotten that he is a global system. Body, mind, environment: everything is connected. The holistic approach puts each piece back in its place.

Whoever wants to last must honour each level: nourish the body, protect the mind, maintain relationships, fulfil oneself. One cannot live long and remain functional without balance between these needs.

## **The Meeting with Dr Bezot**

I had the chance to learn these principles early, thanks to one of my mentors, Dr Bezot. He is one of the French pioneers of functional and preventive medicine. Researcher, clinician, visionary, he transmitted a simple truth to me: before treating, one must understand; before curing, one must prevent.

In a short time at his side, I discovered homeostasis, the language of precise assessments, the importance of the microbiome, the influence of hormones, the fine reading of markers that say everything before illness even appears.

With him, I understood that a coach, a doctor, a healer imposes nothing: they guide, translate, educate. Health cannot be delegated; it is built every day through simple, repeated choices.

The 4P medicine, Preventive, Predictive, Personalised, Participatory, gives this power back. Preventive, because it acts before the problem appears. Predictive, because it anticipates through data, analyses, regular assessments. Personalised, because no body resembles another. Participatory, because each person remains the actor of their own health.

In Africa, in Asia, they say: He who tends his fire needs no great flame. Health is the same: regular maintenance avoids great emergencies.

PART TWO

# THE BLUE ZONES

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# 04

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## THE CENTENARIAN VILLAGES

What I Found There

**Sardinia** Italy

**Okinawa** Japan

**Nicoya** Costa Rica

**Ikaria** Greece

**Loma Linda** California

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My path then led me to those who live long: the blue zones. Okinawa, Ikaria, Sardinia. I walked there, observed, questioned. Why there? Why do people live to a hundred, and above all, remain functional?

What I observed in the blue zones is striking. There, people live old not because they are better treated, but because they fall less ill. Raw food nourishes the microbiome, that silent army watching from the intestine. Physical activity stimulates circulation, the lymph, cleans the body from within. Sleep regenerates, repairs, recharges.

The blue zones confirm the Maslow pyramid: food is simple, local, minimally processed. Movement is natural, daily. Stress is channelled, mastered through spirituality and rituals. Social bonds are solid, deep, intergenerational. And above all: each person maintains a purpose, a usefulness, until the end.

## **Food The First Medicine**

Today, we eat too much, too fast, too processed. What was meant to be fuel has become a distraction. The body, however, has not changed. It remains a living machine that needs quality, simplicity and respect.

In the centenarian villages of the blue zones, I observed the same truth everywhere. Food is local, raw, almost unchanged for generations. People cultivate, gather, share. Vegetables, legumes, whole grains, some fish, sometimes a little meat, and above all, time to prepare, chew, digest.

Vegetable diversity nourishes the microbiome. This invisible world in our intestines is a precious ally. It protects, regulates inflammation, supports our immune system. A poor microbiome is a fragile body. A rich microbiome is a living armour.

I have always insisted on a simple idea: eating is not filling a void, it is maintaining a high-precision machine. The wrong fuel clogs an engine. It is the same for the body.

African traditions taught me respect for the meal. One never ate alone, never standing, never without giving thanks. Today I tell my students: take your time. Chew, smell, savour. Nourish yourself to remain functional, not to fill a psychological void.

## **Movement Move to Stay Alive**

The human body is made to move. When I arrived in the city, I saw the opposite: modern comfort had imprisoned bodies. Hours seated at desks, glued to screens, the body frozen when it is designed for action.

In the blue zones, no one talks about sport as we understand it today. No gym, no treadmill. There, movement is integrated into life. People garden, walk to see friends, carry loads, go up and down without a lift. It is simple, natural, constant.

I always tell my students: you can have the best diet in the world, but if your body does not move, it rusts from within. Inactivity is one of the greatest modern poisons. It blocks circulation, smothers muscles, slows the heart, puts joints to sleep.

Physical activity is not a punishment, it is a freedom. It is what allows us to remain functional, upright, capable. Without it, everything else loses its meaning.

## **Connection Stay Linked to Stay Alive**

Modern man has everything to be connected, phones, networks, messages, but has never been more isolated. Yet the body and mind do not forget: they demand warmth, words, contact. Without connection, one deteriorates faster.

When I studied the blue zones, I saw a common thread: no one is left alone. Meals are shared, generations live under the same roof, people invite each other, talk, touch, look at each other. No screen between two silences: real conversations.

This invisible cement nourishes the mind. It soothes, reassures, motivates. A man surrounded sleeps better, eats better, handles stress better. He knows he is not alone in carrying the burden.

*"To live old, you need a family and a reason to get up."*

Old master, Okinawa

The greatest luxury is knowing that you matter to someone. A body can be solid, but without a living heart it extinguishes faster. Taking care of one's emotional needs is maintaining one's inner engine. Staying connected is staying functional until the last breath.

*"Longevity is not the goal. It is the consequence of a life that makes sense."*

PART THREE

# THE PILLARS

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# 05

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## THE GOVERNING MIND

*"Know yourself and you will be invincible."*

Lao Tzu

The body can be powerful, trained, disciplined, but without inner peace, it exhausts itself quickly. The mind is the engine of everything. In the bush, they say: The man who sleeps badly is good for nothing. I heard this from my grandparents, then verified it in every boxing gym, every clinic, every laboratory.

Chronic stress is the silent enemy. It feeds cortisol, that hormone useful in immediate danger, but destructive when it remains elevated too long. Too much stress destroys sleep, disrupts digestion, inflames the body, corrodes the mind.

In the blue zones, stress management is ritualised. People pray, meditate, garden, take time to talk, laugh, share. No one runs after everything, all the time. Slowness is a health tool.

I remember a training camp I ran in Thailand. A young boxer, athlete's body, perfect technique, but every fight was a disaster. At night, he did not sleep; during the day, he doubted everything. Together, we did not add punches. We worked on his breathing, his rhythm, his mind. We learned to calm his spirit. In the end, it was his calm that made him dangerous.

But the greatest secret is often ignored: to be strong outside, one must be at peace inside. The home, the hearth, are the first places of management. Managing one's family well, one's relationship, one's intimacy, one's domestic schedule is more important than any business plan.

A home that is organised, clean, reassuring, calm is the first rampart against stress. Simplifying daily life: that is the real luxury. A tranquil mind governs a body that obeys. And a body that obeys remains functional.

## **Mental Preparation The Champion's Tools**

Optimising the psychological state for performance requires a psychological preparation corresponding to a set of methods. High psychological qualities are indispensable for training hard and raising initial potential, as well as for restoring this evolution on competition day.

Psychological preparation concerns the analysis of factors, people, elements, situations interacting on the athlete's sports project. It is a broad preparation that goes even beyond the purely sporting context.

Mental preparation designates the work done on the athlete's relationship with himself in the context of his preparation for performance and the management of results.

Ideally, an athlete possessing certain capacities is psychologically able to perform: self-confidence in relation to realistic goals; mental calm in relation to activation level; absence of parasitic tensions; concentration on the present moment; level of energy mobilisation; sense of self-control.

These capacities are not reserved for athletes. They are the same that each person needs to remain functional in daily life.

# 06

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## SELF CONTROL

Discipline and Freedom

Self-control is the silent force that separates the free man from the man enslaved to his impulses. Without discipline, nothing holds. Everything collapses.

In my journey as a boxer, then as a coach, I have always seen the same truth: true freedom is born of mastery. A body obeys the mind, but the mind must know how to command. Without control, man gives in to everything: sugar, alcohol, screens, anger, and the worst disease of all, laziness.

My vision is simple: discipline is not a punishment. It is a gift one gives oneself. Getting up early, tidying one's home, choosing what one eats, deciding when one trains, all of this forges a solid mind, worthy of the mission one has set.

I have seen champions lose everything because they did not know how to say no. And I have seen ordinary men accomplish the extraordinary because they learned to impose limits on themselves. Self-control is the root of success in every domain. It is not imposed: it is cultivated, every day, through small acts. Knowing how to delay a reward. Refusing the easy for the sake of the lasting.

## **Respecting One's Body**

The body is our first home. We neglect it often, we repair it too late. Respecting one's body is first of all listening to it. Pain is never there for nothing. An injury is a signal, not a simple obstacle. But in our modern world, we prefer to mask, push back, ignore. We wear out faster than we repair.

In the blue zones, I saw men of ninety still upright as young trees. Their secret: they move, but without excess. They eat, but without abuse. They rest, but remain active. They never confuse performance with brutality.

Honouring one's body is knowing how to dose. It is stretching, walking, resting. It is knowing how to stop before breaking. It is understanding that a functional body is not built in permanent pain, but in regularity and listening.

He who respects his body respects his mission. He remains capable, available, upright.

## The Gaze of Others Build from Within

We confuse too often appearing and being. We seek to please the mirror rather than remain upright.

In our modern world, this society of spectacle, the trap is there: living too much for the image. Wanting to please the external gaze more than one's own conscience. Networks, mirrors, photos: everything pushes us to build a body to seduce, not to last.

But a body that shines outside and collapses inside serves no purpose. Perfect pectorals, defined abs do not protect against a fragile mind or tired organs. I have seen too many athletes sacrifice their health for a few photos. And I have seen men with round bellies but solid minds live to a hundred because they kept the essential: being functional until the end.

Psychological needs are nonetheless real. Man needs to be recognised, respected, loved. But recognition must begin with oneself. If the gaze of others becomes stronger than your inner voice, you lose control.

Cultivating one's strength, one's mission, one's balance: that is what gives value to the gaze of others. Not the reverse. One respects the upright man, not simply the decorated one.

*"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is not an act, but a habit."*

Aristotle

# 07

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## THE INVISIBLE FACTORS

Remaining functional does not rest only on what one eats or the strength of one's muscles. It is often the simplest, most invisible things that truly extend life.

## **Breathing The Silent Weapon**

Breathing is silent medicine. In every culture, I found this same secret: in Thailand with the warrior monks, in Africa at dawn, in the blue zones during prayer. Breathing truly, deeply, soothes the nervous system, reduces stress, calms the heart, clarifies the mind.

A mastered breath restores control over the body. It is the simplest weapon against stress and yet the most neglected.

## **Nature Our First Roof**

Nature rebalances what our walls close off. Walking barefoot, feeling the earth, listening to the rain, breathing the morning air, all of this recharges a man far more than a glowing screen.

Exposing oneself to light, listening to one's circadian rhythm. The sun dictates our internal clocks. To disregard it is to disrupt the machine.

## **Spirituality The Anchor of the Soul**

Spirituality is another pillar. Whatever the form: prayer, gratitude, meditation, intimate ritual. Man needs to believe he is not alone at the centre of everything. This trust soothes the mind, dissolves fears, supports the body in difficult moments.

In the tribes, every important act began with a giving of thanks: to the sky, to the earth, to the ancestors.

## **Joy The Silent Vitamin**

And then there is joy. Laughing, playing, dancing, sharing. In the blue zones, centenarians still sing, gather for simple celebrations, laugh at small things. Joy is



a silent vitamin: it extends the breath, lightens the soul, keeps the child in us alive.

We often believe that longevity is a complicated equation. But sometimes, it comes down to a few words: being outside, breathing, giving thanks, laughing. All of this helps to remain functional, and above all, fully alive.

PART FOUR

# THE SANCTUARY

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# 08

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## CHAMPION SPIRIT

A Bridge Between Worlds

Everything I searched for, everything I learned, everything I applied from Timbuktu until today led me to one simple idea: there must be a place to remember how to live.

Champion Spirit in the Bahamas is that. A modern sanctuary that brings everything together: science, tradition, movement, right nutrition, 4P medicine, breathing, nature, joy and respect for the mind. A place where each person can find what they came to seek.

For some, it is a retreat to repair. For others, a camp to surpass themselves. For others still, a living laboratory where data is captured, where one observes, where knowledge of longevity is constantly refined.

In this ecosystem, everything is designed to remind man that he is first and foremost a functional being. One moves, breathes, laughs, reconnects to one's mission. One learns to eat better, sleep better, organise better. One rediscovers the pleasure of effort, but also the joy of rest.

Champion Spirit is not simply a club or a clinic: it is a land of experience where each person becomes the actor of their own health. A place where data is gathered to understand what works, what truly heals, what slows or accelerates decline. An open laboratory that blends technology, ancestral knowledge and a demand for results.

And of course, it is also a showcase: because all of this must live, inspire, create desire. We create unique programmes, tailor-made retreats, experiences one takes with oneself. A memory, a method, a way of life.

I dream that this place becomes a reference for those who want to extend life, for those who want to push their limits, for those who want to transmit to their children something other than a fortune: the capacity to remain standing, free, dignified and functional.

That is my project. Champion Spirit in the Bahamas: a bridge between what I received, what I understood, and what I want to share.

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***Where the ancient and the modern converge.***

# 09

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## EPILOGUE

The Machine Is Set

I began this book with a question: what are we becoming?

I end it with an answer: we become what we choose to become.

The machine is set, yes. The body has its limits, its clocks, its deadlines. But within the margins of this biological destiny, everything remains to be written.

I left the bush, I fought, I searched, I found. And what I found comes down to a few simple truths:

Eat what nourishes, not what fills. Move every day, even a little. Sleep as if life depends on it, because it does. Breathe truly. Surround yourself with those you love. Keep a reason to get up. And above all: listen to your body before it has to shout.

To be functional is that. To be able to move, breathe, think, transmit. To preserve autonomy, dignity and freedom of the mind.

No one will give ten million for mere pectorals. But all the gold in the world to remain functional.

That is my mission: to transmit, to apply, to protect. That is my work: to make possible the only luxury that truly counts.

*"Health is the new wealth."*

Abdoulaye Fadiga, Nassau, Bahamas

***And no success has meaning if body and  
mind no longer hold.***

***Health is the new wealth.***



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## **Abdoulaye Fadiga**

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