

## 5 MINUTES WITH ...

# DAME KELLY HOLMES

## Olympic gold medallist and author

**C**AN determination and motivation be learned? I believe that, to a degree, you are born with real hunger and a desire to achieve. I can't explain why I'm so driven, I just am. I do think too, though, that people are often negative about approaching things. They either have negative people around them or just find the negative in everything, rather than say: "Okay, I actually did quite well there ..."

**Everyone has a talent.** It can be something small or basic, such as always being punctual, or it could be being a good writer, great at drawing, brilliant with numbers or a very caring person. Everyone has something, but often people don't know how to identify it.

**My motto is** to never give up trying, be willing to learn and to gather a team of people around me who can help things happen. I have always had the philosophy to never live with regrets. You might not like what happens sometimes or fulfil everything you want to achieve, but don't go down the "if only" road.

**A year before I won** my Olympic gold medals [in 2004] I was at my lowest ebb. I chose to speak out [in her autobiography, Holmes talked about self-harming] and the response I had from people was generally fantastic. Everyone is human and no one is invincible.

**I retired from athletics** five years ago and I don't really miss it. I achieved everything I wanted to. I don't miss the pain, the hard graft, the constantly pushing my body to extremes or the emotional roller coaster. It was my life and what I wanted, it wasn't a hobby or something I did for fun.

**Being name-checked in Doctor Who** was bizarre, likewise walking on to the set of EastEnders. There is a sketch in the Catherine Tate show where she is in a gym and shouting at an instructor, who is telling her to run faster on the treadmill: "Do you think you are Kelly Holmes?". That made me laugh.

**Being in the army** shaped who I am today. It gave me

the confidence to be who I wanted to be. I learned a lot about myself through the challenges I went through being only 5ft 3in, a woman and mixed race. Being a physical training instructor put me on a level where people had to listen to what I said and I gained respect. I was in the army for nine-and-a-half years and a sergeant when I left.

**I own six alpacas**, all boys. They are from the camel family and look a bit like llamas. I have a field in front of my house, wanted to put something in it and thought: "Why not alpacas?" All of them are named after sweets: Fudge, Toffee, Liquorice, Polo, Creme Caramel and Truffle.

**I'm pretty fearless.** I like doing outbound activities such as rock climbing and abseiling. I enjoy motor sports too. I'm going to be on the Channel 4 show Famous And Fearless.

**I'm a bit of a perfectionist** so when someone gives me something half-hearted it does annoy me. Lack of attention to detail bugs me. I can't help myself, I have to fix it.

**Sebastian Coe was my** childhood hero. It feels funny saying that now because we've been working together on the 2012 Olympics. Like me he was an 800 and 1500 metre runner and I was inspired by watching him win Olympic gold in 1984. I knew then it was what I wanted to do too.

*Just Go For It: Six Simple Steps to Achieve Success* by Dame Kelly Holmes is published by Hay House on Thursday, priced £10.99

**Interview by Susan Swarbrick**



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