

## AUTUMN CLEVELAND

### IFBB Figure Pro

*For anyone who has followed my journey, you know how long it has been. For those of you who have not, let me fill you in a bit.*

I started bodybuilding when I was 15 as a result of being bullied for being skinny. At my first competition, I set a goal to turn pro as a figure competitor when I was 16 years old. After 15 years of challenge, I finally obtained my IFBB Figure status at the age of 31. Fifteen years is a lot of time to question, doubt, and to fall prey to giving up. I learned so much about myself, the sport, and achievement in that time. If I had to condense it down to the most valuable core, here is what I feel played a major role in getting what I want in life.

#### 1. Clear Vision.

This point has bled into all areas of my life, although it stemmed from my obsessively artistic need to visualize. At a young age, I created vision boards on construction paper, which now I still do digitally, but it is a tool that helps me get very clear about what I want. I capture images, phrases, and ideas for the image of happiness and success that I would like to have for my own, and I look at them often.

#### 2. Identify With Yourself.

You would be amazed at how effective a simple shift in the way that you perceive yourself can truly be. I used to say "I'll be a Pro someday," or "I'll get there eventually, but I'm not there yet." Once I shifted that to "I AM a pro every day," and "I already live like a pro," that fast-forwarded my belief in myself, and how I carried myself long before the pro qualification.



#### 3. Build Your Team.

I learned through some hard lessons that not everyone deserves to be in your circle. I constantly evaluate those who I want to be on my team to ensure that we share the same goal, vision, trust, willingness, and respect for us all to be successful. There is no way possible that I would be where I am now without my support team of amazing people building me up, and those people are the ones I want to celebrate those special moments and highlight with gratitude when I reach my achievements. Choose wisely - like-minded people with good integrity, and everyone will go far in their success.

#### 4. Invest in Yourself.

It took me a few years to feel like I was ready to invest in my success as a competitor. This meant looking at things with a long-term perspective, not a short term. I knew where I wanted to go in this sport, so I chose to put my time, energy, and money into only the things that would make me better in the long run. For me, this meant selecting a team of other professionals for coaching, posing, tan, makeup, hair, and suits. I also constantly try to learn everything that I can about this entire sport to become a more educated competitor.

#### 5. Practice Persistence.

I'm blessed that persistence is part of my nature, and I'm not quick to give up on anything, but this is a hard one to master. I had to learn what NOT to listen to, how NOT to compare too much, and how to tune the voices out that said "You can't do this." Every day that I suffered for my sport came with a reward, so I would ask myself, "Would I quit right now if that meant erasing my experiences?" The answer is always "No." Each day that I've put into this sport & lifestyle had contributed to my growth, and I'm not willing to give up on myself. Every day, I practice overcoming my adversities. I protect what I've built within myself and I fuel it. I'm not perfect, but I practice being perfect every day. If I mess up, I just try again tomorrow.

“ When starting your journey, whether it's your first show, or first attempt at your pro card, I highly suggest you do your research on the industry itself and look for a coach who fits your 'style'. ”