

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & DEDICATIONS

To my Dad & Mom who have been my HOPE & Support to believe I that dreams come true. To my son Kenny (K3) for being an inspiration to be the best father & mentor I can be.

God, for answering my prayers, keeping me in faith & hope.

To Andrea Adams-Miller, a rock star executive director of this movement. Barry Shore, the Ambassador of Joy, Al Granger, the Perfect Printer and Partner, Carolyn Sheltraw for her brilliant design ability.

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Dr. Jim Omps, & Dr. Pauline Crawford Omps for being in instrumental D.O.S.E. of HOPE in 2020!

Keep Smiling D.O.S.E. of Hope: December 2020

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My godson, Lucas Richardson, my best men David Richardson, & John Paul Berry.

The HOPE Headquarters Team: Jorge Cuestas, aka DJ PERSPECTIVE, Brinette Owens, Tanya Waltrick.

And to the 100 authors who believe Hope & Keep Smiling was worthy of their attention and vulnerability to share their journeys to make a positive difference in the world.

To everyone who believes in Heroes of HOPE. ~ Dr. Smiley :)

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PREFACE

What is a D.O.S.E. of HOPE? The first part is an acronym for the happy chemicals God equips us with to enjoy the journey of life. So, you get your daily D.O.S.E. smile often and your brain will reward you with Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin, and Endorphins. They are the best remedy for the challenge’s life presents to us as opportunities in disguise to be more powerful.

This book is filled with leaders who generate positivity through their lifestyle choices, their messaging, and mostly through the sheer number of smiles they inspire.

We believe leaders who amplify goodness should be honored so they can influence even more smiles. Therefore, we created a book that helps you learn who you may want to follow and and support for a mindset ready to attract the best.

In a world in need of more smiles, we believe a D.O.S.E. of HOPE will help in making the world a more positive, powerful and prosperous.

KEEP SMILING CARD... BECOMES A MOVEMENT

It is hard to believe, but a card with 'KEEP SMILING' was handed to Ken Rochon, Jr. on March, 2015 and his life would never be the same. His chapter and story are the final D.O.S.E. of HOPE in this book.

I would like to focus our attention on the man you carried these cards since 1999 and some 16 years later, I was fortunate enough to be the recipient of this magical card.

Barry Shore, The Ambassador of Joy is the gentleman who handed me a 'KEEP SMILING' card. His contagious smile emitted JOY on another level. I felt as if a messenger or prophet had awakened my soul. This energy force was refreshing and I wanted more. I asked the man, why he gave me a card, and his response was simple 'To remind you to KEEP SMILING'.

DR. KEN 'DR. SMILEY' ROCHON, JR.

I knew that moment that this card would become my life... and eventually my identity. I've recently completed my PhD with a desire to now be known as 'Dr. Smiley'.

I requested Barry's permission to alter the back of the card so that I may capture smiles and gift the photos to those who live to inspire. My intention and mission were shared with Barry to create a movement that would shift the world's consciousness to acceptance, love and a mindset of gratitude and JOY.

Barry has been like an adopted father to me, advising me how and why success happens. He is very wise, and through his mentorship, we have a movement that includes millions with Keep Smiling, books, cards and photos.

This book is just what the doctor ordered... a D.O.S.E. of HOPE for your soul.

It is appropriate to start the book off with the man who had a card that would be adopted by a man who would dedicate his life to the mission of bringing more HOPE & Smiles to the world.

THE AMBASSADOR OF JOY RESPONSIBLE FOR HANDING A CARD TO DR. SMILEY THAT STARTED IT ALL. :).



Barry Shore, The Ambassador of Joy with Dr. Smiley :)



Iman Biock Aghay

“Your ability to always smile shows your ability to always thrive”

FOLLOW YOUR DREAM, AND NEVER SETTLE FOR LESS THAN A LIFE OF SMILES

BY IMAN BIOCK AGHAY

I was born and raised in Iran. In 2007/2008, I was looking at people of influence like Oprah, Brian Tracy, and Tony Robbins. I saw how they were an inspiration to so many people. They were making a global impact, and changing the lives of so many people. I had a dream of making a huge impact, like they were, and becoming an international public speaker.

I knew the only way to accomplish my dream was to live in a place that would allow me to travel easily, and where I could learn and speak English. Living in Iran, I could only travel to 13 countries, and most

of them were at war, at any given time. Knowing that immigration was the key to chasing my dream, my wife and I made the extremely difficult decision to immigrate to Canada.

In 2009, we landed in Canada. We thought we would, at least, be financially safe, as we started navigating our way through a new country, new culture, and language. However, soon after arriving, we realized the money we had in Iran was not going to follow us. We had each other, the money in our pockets, and the belief that we could make anything happen.

The first step, in living this new life, was finding a steady income. We knew the money we had wouldn't last forever. As I started to apply for jobs, the reality that the 2008 recession still had a big impact on the market was clear. No business was hiring and those that were had a backlog of applications. However, I still applied for job after job, day after day. Then, one day at Walmart, the person at the counter, who took my resume pulled me aside.

"I'm not supposed to tell you this, but we have received over 500 applications. With limited English, they are all more qualified than you."

My heart sank, and the feeling of defeat was sinking in.

That day in the mail, I received a bill. A bill that, after paid, would've left us with \$2500. That amount of money was significant because \$2500 would've been exactly enough for 2 plane tickets to get my wife and I back to Iran. I was faced with the truth that we could either go back to Iran, or pay what bills we had to in Canada and hope we could find a way to generate an income.

I couldn't make such a decision on my own. I went to my wife. With beautiful determination she asked me

"Have we ever given up on our dreams? No? Then why would we now?"

In this moment, I realized that she believed in me much more than I believed in myself. Have you ever had someone who believed in you more than you ever believed in yourself? We made the decision to pay what bills we needed, buy food, and the countdown to the next month, where we may be homeless, started.

The next morning, I woke up and realized I was insane - I kept doing

the same action over and over again, expecting a different result. I kept applying for job after job, hoping someone would hire me. I kept hoping someone would see something in me, and want to hire me. It was in this moment that I realized that I needed to find a different way to generate an income. There had to be a better way to move towards my dream, and not settle. The absolute truth was that I was homeless, already, and didn't know it.

I wasn't sure what path I would take, but I understood IT and tech. I knew enough about web design, that I knew I could provide a quality product for customers. I knew every business needed a website. It became my goal to learn and become a master at web design. I started watching YouTube videos and studying, every night. Every morning, I would wake up early to get to networking events, and make connections. I got my very first client, quickly. That first client, who took a chance on me, provided me the money I need to pay rent, and buy food.

As I learned more, and started to have a proof of concept, I started to get more clients by referral. Within 18 months I had taken my business to 6 figures. Homelessness was no longer a threat, and I was able to

provide a life for my wife and myself. It felt like success. It felt like I was doing all the right things on the path to success.

Then, in 2010, I woke up and I was bleeding internally. I was rushed to the hospital where I found out I had lost 60% of my blood. The doctor came in to speak to my wife and I

“We can't operate because you don't have enough blood to survive. The only thing we can do is start a blood transfusion and hope we can give you blood faster than you are losing it. Hopefully, I will see you in the morning.”

I sat there holding my wife's hand, knowing it might be the last time I get to hold her hand, see her, be with her, and this might be the last night of my life. I started to reflect on our journey, and I knew one thing for sure: If I died this night, everyone would say “Iman was a nice guy, and web designer”. I did not want to die a web designer. I had not made the impact in the world, like I had dreamed of, and I had settled for something because it was providing an income. I was comfortable. Have you ever settled because it was comfortable?

That night, they gave me 5 bags of blood. It was all they could give me, and half of what I needed. I survived the night, and the next night and the next.... I knew going forward the most important thing I could do was chase the dream I came to Canada to find. I promised myself that I would make an impact, no matter what it took, and I would not die with regrets. I was released from the hospital right before my 27th birthday. My life was the best birthday present I could've asked for.

That year I started Success Road Academy. Through Success Road Academy, I was able to start reaching out to entrepreneurs, who were looking for a better way to run their business. Since then, I have had the privilege to be on over 1,000 stages, throughout the world, and I have had the opportunity to show other business owners what is possible when you follow your dream and never settle for less.

.....

I am an inspiration and mentor through my online programs, seminars, mastermind groups, mentorship programs, social media, best-selling publications, and investments on different products and services.

Book(s) that changed your life:

The Success Principles with Jack Canfield
The Power of Full Engagement
by Tony Schwartz and Jim Loehr

Movie(s) that inspire you:

The Pursuit of Happyness

Your Hero:

My Father

Quote you live by:

You have no idea what people are dealing with in their personal life, be kind at all times.

ABOUT IMAN AGHAY

Iman Aghay is a serial entrepreneur, international speaker and 6-time #1 best-selling author.

He is best known as the founder of Success Road Academy, and has created over 50 courses that help coaches, authors, speakers and entrepreneurs grow their business aligned with their life purpose.

In 2010, Iman founded Success Road Academy, which has become an industry leader in online marketing and training. Through Success Road Academy, Iman has worked with over 150,000 business owners, in various niches, and helped them expand their business and impact. Iman is also the founder of Entrepreneurs International Network, which has a community of over 150,000 members in 5 countries. Iman is also part owner of JV Insider Circle, the world's leading community for entrepreneurs to find partnerships and deals, by utilizing community and connection. He continues making an impact through using community to connect entrepreneurs to their life purpose, and the people who can assist them.

He has become widely successful by helping other people to achieve greatness in their own lives.

Iman's TEDx talk is one of the world's top-rated speeches, which focuses on how to live a life with no regrets.

Iman has mastered creating a successful heart-centered business. He believes that all entrepreneurs can build a business based on their life's purpose. His vision of having a massive positive impact on 100 million people has fueled his love and passion for guiding entrepreneurs to success.

As the Leaders' Mentor, Iman's focus was and always is serving his clients and community with the utmost excellence and integrity.



Dr. Philip Agrios

“A smile is the start to even greater success.”

STOP SELF-SABOTAGE WITH A SMILE!

BY DR. PHILIP AGRIOS

On December 8, 1986, I opened my chiropractic practice. It quickly grew from one suite to the entire left side of a building, a 2700-square-foot clinic that housed medical doctors, physical therapists, nutritionists and other health professionals. It was a thriving health center that helped many thousands of patients. It had MY name on the door—“Agrios Chiropractic and Rehabilitation Center”— I was still only in my late 30s back then. Yet, despite being the owner, my own clinic. It seemed like nothing would “click”. The next nine years...all hell broke loose. It started with an accusation from an insurance company which led to a three-year legal battle. The prospect of jail time, losing my chiropractic license and eye watering fines hung over me for three long years. Little by little, my Health Center had been slowly dismantled. I lost my dream. And it ruined the business financially. In the end, I

was cleared of any wrongdoing without a blemish on my chiropractic license. By that time however, the stress had taken a serious toll on my health. During that time my father...a young 71-year-old who walked four miles a day... was diagnosed with brain cancer.

That someone so warm and giving to others...so full of life...could suddenly experience such a severe life-threatening disease sent me into a full tailspin. By the time he died just 7 months later, I felt lost and helpless. Surviving on a daily basis. Something major in my life had to change. I don't know for certain how it happened. Maybe it was the shock and reality of my dad dying forced me to realize that my own survival depended on changing my problems into learning experiences. Then a frightening reflection occurred to me, one of the most jolting thoughts I'd ever experienced. Life...no matter how good or bad it was, could always be worse.

Financial difficulty, the legal battle, and my dad dying, caused so much stress that I finally broke- mentally, physically and spiritually. I was diagnosed with Thoracic Outlet Syndrome and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome down both sides of my body causing weakness, numbness, and severe pain with limited use of my hands. Conventional therapy

failed and I was told my only option was surgery, which did not have a high success rate. Inflammation raged through my body causing fatigue and pains. Each morning, climbing out of bed, my feet hurt so much it was like walking on broken glass. As my disability worsened... three doctors all told me I'd never practice again. As my life disintegrated around me, I began sliding down a greased mental chute into an abyss.

Without realizing, I had slipped into a depression (only mentioned to me in passing by a psychologist one day.)

Unable to practice, my Health Center was shut down. "How could this happen?" I thought..." this practice was my baby". I would never have the opportunity to treat patients again. It felt like one of my kids had died. I had never experienced this type of hopelessness before. As I turned the key to lock the door to my practice and walked through the parking lot for the very last time, it felt like I had lost the biggest game of my life. Fifteen years of practicing plus all the study down the tubes. I had no clue what my next move would be. Thrown into survival mode... I spiraled from one bad decision to another. Was the universe playing some kind of twisted game with me? I just turned 40.

Reading and watching the biographies of other successful people who took devastating situations and used them to better their lives and others intrigued me. Was I at a similar fork in the road? Could it be there was a purpose to all this chaos and loss?

So, I left no stone unturned...searching for answers...by meditating, listening to motivational speakers, and praying. I began journaling about my suffering. It helped with my sanity...but only a little while. Desperate for answers, I dove back into a much earlier discovery. (Made along with a former colleague...about how everything in nature is connected.

I previously discovered a law which not only the entire universe follows, but human behavior as well. I immersed myself into flushing out this previous discovery regarding human behavior. The more I dove into this concept, the more I began to realize why and how my past decisions led me to present-day circumstances. Without them, I would have never discovered nor had the time to fully develop my hypothesis. I began experimenting with ways to climb out of the hole I still found myself in. By applying this discovery to my own situation, along with chiropractic care, specialized nutritional therapy and a specific exercise

program, I was able to start healing myself and return to full fitness. I was even able to start practicing again. However, this time, I was not the same doctor, nor the same person. However, those previous events, while devastating...they were only the tip of a destructive iceberg about to rip my life to shreds. For the next seven years, I became the primary caretaker for my ailing mother who died of a chronic lung condition.

A volatile marriage degenerated into a nasty divorce that became financial Armageddon. To make matters worse... the economic downturn wiped out what was left in my real estate investments. And then, to cap it off... my daughter, attempted suicide and was found ONLY 10 minutes from death. I felt that no matter what I did, who I talked to, or how much I prayed, nothing seemed to help me get through those difficult times. I had many conversations with my Higher Power, including screaming in prayer and asking, "What is happening? How can I get through this?" I was listening to all the personal development and "mindset" Gurus back then, but I was always going back to the same kind of self-sabotage behavior, Year after year, no matter what I did, I kept finding myself back at square one...not realizing what was going on. Frustrated and angry, it forced me to go deeper and deeper into understanding why all these things were happening to my life.

Then this happened. Information continued to magically “show up” at just the right time. More realizations brought greater clarity. I dove into unified theory, quantum physics, the structure of the human body. Slowly I learned exactly what had to be done. And what I discovered amazed and startled me. It had been staring me in the face all along. And so far, much of it was overlooked by “traditional science”.

I discovered the precise predictable cycles that occur naturally everywhere you look. AND self-sabotage was an integral part of it.

The more I uncovered, the more I would ask my family, friends, and patients if they too were going through these same self-sabotaging experiences. When I found what worked for me, I would ask if I could try it on them. Could it be I was uncovering a simple coincidence ... or... something more?

It turns out, the antidote to self-sabotage is way simpler than we believe- WE make it complicated. Actually, nature has installed this as a secret subtle signal mechanism designed to help us grow and evolve. Gradually, my personal life turned around. I started to work again and opened up my practice ... specializing in treating chronically ill patients...guiding

them to find the same clarity within their own illness and life's challenges I did. By adding the new principles into the same method, I used to heal myself, recovery rates of my chronic patients began to skyrocket. Little by little, hundreds of healed patients turned once again into thousands. Moreover, it turned out the personal mentoring component of this treatment being the main reason for the high success rates.

It took another 10 years to refine. But what came next however, was TOTALLY UNEXPECTED. Those who were business owners, executives and sales professionals were having breakthroughs in their businesses. Totally by accident I had discovered that if you learn to read these “self-sabotage signals”, blocks dissolve, breakthroughs happen, and business begins to skyrocket. I told myself that it couldn't be this simple, and I went out to try to disprove it. So, I began talking to everyone I could, to understand their situation. Family, patients, strangers. And working with 1000s of people from all walks of life and ages, I attempted TO DISPROVE IT. But I found I couldn't. It worked 100% of the time. I was floored! Soon, I doubled down on the research into applying these principles to business growth. Running “focus group” workshops with business owners and entrepreneurs, word-of-mouth spread, and I began to mentor professionals one-on-one world-wide.

As I shared with them the underlying principles of self-sabotage and the Antidote to immediately switch it off...they began to have breakthroughs in their businesses. Closing rates for people in sales began to soar. To my astonishment, there was a pattern that everything and everyone was following. By stumbling upon this pattern, I now found a way to guide others to find meaning in their life and how to change it.

My mission is to spread this life changing release from self-sabotage to hundreds of thousands of people worldwide has only just begun. People don't have to keep suffering like I did. I want to unleash personal and professional performance --- to help people neutralize anxiety and stress...and help them get excited about their business and personal life once more. They can discover how to identify their self-sabotage trait and behavior (and with training and practice... to turn it off for good), positively transforming every single area of their business or career, and their life. It's been tested in the field with over 21,547 clients and... for that reason... I can guarantee it or their money back!

By taking a 9-Question quiz, they can receive their Inborn Sabotaging Trait and Antidote for free at www/SabQuiz.com. This to me is the biggest gift I can give someone so they can put the biggest smile on their face.

ABOUT DR. PHILIP AGRIOS

Our next guest is a Business Breakthrough Specialist, successful entrepreneur, international speaker and best-selling author. While working with thousands of people for over 30 years, he was able to discover a revolutionary way to avoid self-sabotage and win big. Tragic events that affected his personal and professional life sparked him on a quest to understand human behavior to its core. He works with business owners, entrepreneurs, and executives worldwide to achieve even greater success in business and in life. Listen closely to our next guest who has discovered a hidden inborn trait that stops you from achieving the success you want and has uncovered a sure-fire way to switch it off immediately for massive success.

Who here today is extremely serious about finally discovering the true reason why they don't advance in their professional and personal life and is ready to uncover a solution that works? Please welcome Dr. Philip Agrios.

Books that changed your life:

Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill; The Magic of Thinking Big by David J. Schwartz; The Greatest Salesman of the World by Og Mandino; As A Man Thinkith by James Allen

Movies that inspire you

The Pursuit of Happyness; Coach Carter; Gandhi; A Beautiful Mind; Rocky; The Grapes of Wrath; Rudy; Gladiator;

Songs that inspires you:

In the Mood by Glenn Miller; Call Me The Breeze by Lynyrd Skynyrd; Freedom by George Michael; Let's Get Loud by Jennifer Lopez

Quote you live by:

"There is no such thing as luck. Luck is when opportunity meets preparedness, and opportunity is always there." Earl Nightingale.



Dr. Reneé Starlynn Allen

“A Smile is Our Universal Language...
IT Heals, Uplifts & Inspires without one word
being spoken!”

CHASE YOUR SMILES UNTIL YOU CATCH THEM

BY DR. RENEÉ STARLYNN ALLEN

AKA: THE PEOPLES EMCEE

TV & RADIO HOST * RETIRED VETERAN

***INTERNATIONAL BEST SELLING AUTHOR * SPEAKER/
COACH/TRAINER * PROUD SINGLE MOM**

I am humbled and honored to be named the DMV Female Influencer. As the eldest of three girls, I have been both a gatekeeper & accountable for my younger sisters due to the pecking order. However, as I became an adult and left for the Navy at age 17; these traits parlayed into my life as a choice to inspire, educate, empower, support, edify, protect others, and connect like-minded people; especially women and children! I absolutely love love love God's extraordinary creation; human-beings! I believe that everything that happens in this world is because of INFLUENCE! Someone has to help someone else to make things

happen! I have been blessed to be part of five huge arenas in my lifetime and I retired in two of them. Throughout my Military, Corporate, Cosmetic, Government, TV and Radio careers I have always been inclusive, kind and always cognizant of others winning, too! Because I have witnessed countless people trying to block others' blessings, I put a lot of effort in helping others. I decided to start a LIVE radio show, Renee Allen and Friends on WLVS Radio nearly five years ago to give a platform to the voiceless, up and coming talent, business owners, entertainers, authors and more. I purposely invite three to five guests per 55 minute show, usually in the same industry so that they will leave the studio with at least one addition resource and/or partner for continual trajectory! Bringing a smile to someone's face, always makes me smile! In 2010, I was featured in the Who's Who in Washington, DC as a Woman of Excellence beside extraordinary women such as Patricia Mitchell, Industrial Bank; Cathy Hughes, Radio One; our former first lady Michelle Obama and other distinguished women. It was one of my most surreal ah-ha moments in life because it showed me that doing for others and having a servant heart is critical and people appreciate it and recognize the behavior. The late Maya Angelou said "It's not what you did that people remember you; its how you made them feel!" My parents Leith & Charlotte Fraser taught me to be respectful to all

living creatures, to help people in need, acknowledges everyone, and be kind and to smile to everyone no matter what because everything will eventually pass! I was taught at a very young age to go for whatever I desire in life as long as it's legal and without hurting anyone! One of my mentors, Dr. Lance London has always expressed the importance of being humble! I have such an amazing family, friends, mentors and so many other great influencers in my life! My biggest personal influencer has been my late Grandma Constance Smith and my outside influencers have been my 4th grade teacher Mrs. Calish, Dr. George C. Fraser, Sisters 4 Sisters Network, CDR Jimmy Bradley, Margo McKay, Dorothy Height, Oprah Winfrey, Ellen DeGeneres, my amazing sisters Lisa Fraser & Sonya Fraser. My beautiful nieces Amber, Arielle and Shayna and awesome son, Chase!

Influence is not your race, income bracket, choice of car or political party; its integrity, honor, ethics, and character mixed up with your core values, experiences and love for humanity! It is critical that each of us take part into influencing others and each-one needs to teach-one, uplift each other whether you're black, white, red, yellow or purple! We are all Influencers and play important roles to others; some of which you may never realize that you played such a role in their lives because, believe

me, people are watching you! I often share with women that if you are ever intimidated or experiencing jealousy by another woman in your presence; simply walk up to her and strike a conversation or give her a compliment. Once that occurs; you will have overcome your lack of power and you will have conquered your fear, insecurity and beyond so that you can grow, glow, show and start to influence! You may walk away with a friend, business partner or more just by taking an influential step to break stereotypes and non-sense which all too often, keeps women apart! It's so important to understand that we are very different women at age 20, age 30, age 40, age 50 and beyond. Through life lessons and growth is where and when we as women (and men) become one of wisdom & virtue! One of my mantras is for Women to be their own best friend first, so that the positive spirit of friendship & sisterhood illuminates from you as you enter any room or continent! You feel better when you serve and will naturally influence with a good heart! I will continue to use my platforms, my parent's tutelage and my board horizon life lessons to connect, collaborate, push, encourage and influence people and organizations to thrive. Once we know better; usually we do better!

Webster's Definition: One that exerts influence. The act or power of producing an effect without apparent exertion of force. The power of

capacity of causing an effect in indirect or intangible ways.

I encourage everyone to pour positivity into our universe and make an effort to truly influence by taking some responsibility in being a force that brings positive and productive-forward change! When I leave this earth I would like to be remembered as someone who worked hard to make a difference in others lives by showing love, influencing women, men & children to connect and win!

@ThePeoplesEmcee #BamBoomPowDow #ReneeAllenandFriends
#ThinkGlobally #HelpConnectPeople #BeAnAnswer #Smile #BeKind
#RespectEveryone #DoSomethingPositiveEveryday #LoveYourself
#LoveOthers #InfluenceIsPower #SistersofallColors
#SmileProjectEmpowers #SmileandInfluence

THE POWER OF A SMILE AND UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

BY DEJA ALEXANDRINO

Deja Alexandrino

“The greatest gift is a smile at the right time.”

I am a happy and adventurous soul born in Brazil who have been always very curious about the different ethnicities inhabiting this fantastic planet. As an only child, my imagination always run really wild and thankfully, I had a mom who noticed how much I loved to explore all aspects of life including dancing, sports, plays, theater and books. Oh yes, lots of books! She introduce me to “101 Dalmatians” at the age of 3 and couldn’t stop reading one book a week (at least) since then. My father was very absent throughout my life and especially during my childhood. At first his behavior towards us made me very sad and puzzled even at a very young age. I remember during summertime, my mom would reserve a kitchenette room in one of those beach vacation

rentals for two weeks or so. My dad would get very annoyed for driving us to the coast, about one hour and a half from my hometown Sao Paulo. As soon as he dropped us off, he would have a glass of water, said a quick good bye, and left. He couldn't stand the thought of spending some time with us and play with me at beach. I'd ask my mom why he never stayed. She would lie on his behalf and said he was busy with work. Later on in life, I'd find out he couldn't wait to get together with his mistress. My mom had a very difficult life been raised by a very abusive father. She made sure that despite everything she went through, I'd have a beautiful life. Money was tight, we lived in a rental property until was 6 years old, went to the public kindergarten wearing the same pair red pair of sneakers for 2 years. At some point, my feet couldn't squeeze it in anymore and my big toe became exposed as we walked to the school. Luckily, I was not the only kid going through financial struggles. I had two pairs of shoes: one for church and going out and another for school. My mom never hide financial difficulties for me, she kept it real and that was one the biggest lessons I've learned: live by my own means and not to impress others. There are moments I feel my dad cared for me however when you given so many years of absence, my sadness turned into indifference. And from indifference turned into acceptance. By the time I was about sixteen years old, I did not

take any of his behavior as personal and sit there as an observer of my progenitor since. I can not offer a diagnosis to my dad however he clearly displayed narcissistic behavior traits by the way he used and humiliated my mom and put me down every chance he could. On the positive note, he taught me how to drive at age 12 and introduce me to music lessons. He was a gifted musician, playing guitar and mandolin by ear like a pro. When I was about 14 years old, I had to drive a his white VW bug because he was sweating profusely and feeling a described heavy and tight pain to his chest. I basically was witnessing my father having a heart attack. Despite the bad treatment given to my mom throughout his marriage, I've witnessed tremendous unconditional love when my mom took good care of him after this episode. He became very weak and started questioning his lack of relationship with us. I only knew some pieces of his history and unfortunately, he was a strange to me. I have followed my mom footsteps by treating him with dignity and respect. By the age 16, as a good student and dedicated to school, I've passed a Brazilian national university admission test called "vestibular" to one of the best Nursing schools in Latin America, Sao Paulo State University. I left home at 16 to live by myself and it was one the best decisions I've made in my life. When I was attending the second year of University, my dad passed away due to an aggressive liver

cancer. My mom felt so lost and confused and that when I've assumed for the first time the role of protector and caregiver of my mother. I've welcomed myself to adulthood. I've graduated and got my Bachelor's degree and started working for the University hospital and addition to other two private ones to supplement my salary. Despite working many hours a week and burning myself out in the profession quickly, it is a constant struggle to get ahead socially and financially in that nation. A country that does not offer a respectful compensation for your work. I have started to look for opportunities outside the country and worked silently on my manifestation board. Only my mom knew about my dreams. In the year of 2000, I was reading one of those celebrity gossip magazines and towards the end, there were ads for various businesses. One ad stated "Americans want to marry..". For some reason, that ad stand out so I took the magazine home. Now, I know, it was what you call brides for correspondence. A total new concept for me, I was scared and fascinated by at same time. I did not want to end up in some sort of prostitution ring, anyways, I've taken my chances, wrote a letter with a short bio and sweet looking pictures. The letters started to arrive about 3 weeks later, a total of 245 letters received in the year of 2001. One of those letters was from a gentleman called Sandro who was an Aerospace Engineer in San Diego, California. We have

exchanged many phone calls, fax (remember fax machines?), dial tone internet messenger and emails, but, the most special of all, exchanging letters, postcards, and commemorative cards. The value of a written loving message, absolutely priceless. In 2004, I moved to the US under a fiancée visa and we got married at a tropical chapel in Las Vegas, Nevada. My life unfolded naturally when comes to profession, studies, friendships, hobbies however the main reason for making the move to another country was my love for Sandro. We had a telepathically way of communicating and when you are part of such a high standard level of relationship, there is an opportunity for intense healing at all levels for both. Unfortunately, our desire to become parents was never fulfilled despite our greatest efforts. My two pregnancies ended up in miscarriages. The second one left me with some denied grief that turned into depression. It was not an easy season for our relationship, luckily, we had the gift of clear communication. We both practice patience and had silent moments, afraid of saying something we can not turn back and erase it. In 2014, we celebrated 10 years of marriage and traveled to Brazil for the World Cup, decided after our trip, we'd dive into adoption options. Be a mom was a dream not necessarily getting pregnant. A lot of healing took place until I've got to that point and had found peace with it. That same year, Sandro started to get

forgetful, complaining of vision changes, and stating he'd get very confused changing in lanes while driving. He'd mentioned some stress at work and the desire to retire earlier. His performance at his stressful job started to decline and he was aware of it. Another time, he drove to Downtown San Diego with me in the car and on the way back, he could not remember the route to our home despite living over 20 years in San Diego. I've started to get worried and asked him to make medical appointments. I drove him to all appointments. After a questionable brain MRI scan, family history, and psychological evaluation, my fear was confirmed: early onset of dementia Alzheimer's disease at age of 55. My world collapsed. He was everything I had, my best friend, my emergency contact, my emotional support. My role changed and that when the power of a smile and unconditional love propelled me throughout this difficult journey. Friends vanished. Only a couple stayed put with me however beautiful souls show up from most unexpected places to sustain and invigorate you. Despite being exhausted during a 36 hour day it seemed, I remember saving many moments a day to make him laugh. The kitchen is for dancing and we did our thing while he could walk. Even he couldn't walk anymore and had to go through all the indignities of this devastating disease, I've tried to make everything as comfortable as possible. On July 26th, 2021 at

7:38am while "Remember by name" by Bliss was playing, Sandro crossed the bridge. I was holding his hand lying down besides him. Peacefully. At the moment, in all my stages of grief during the past 6 years, I found peace in my heart too.

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I really care for, love and am fascinated by people worldwide. It really excites me to be able to share my personal journey because everyone deserves to live in prosperity and abundance. I truly believe is a divine birth right accessible to anyone. Considering the spiritual gift I have received and this solid foundation under my feet in all aspects considered, my question to my higher self is: how can I be of service to my community? Please show me and allow my best self to flow through as I walk this walk with purpose. I have a zest for life that ignites my soul and can't allow all this energy to die out. By sharing a little bit of me to the world, we can make connections to souls who are operating on the same vibration and therefore, opening new paths to magic and creation.

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I create abundance by live in integrity and gratitude, being “impeccable with your word” as written beautifully by Don Miguel Ruiz in his book *The Four Agreements*, establishing clear communication and setting boundaries. I inspire smiles by taking care and putting myself first, one can't pour from an empty cup. So, by having an over flowing cup of contentment and inner peace, you will be able to generate this genuine vibration of warmth and joy through your smile. Considering the spiritual gift I have received and this solid foundation under my feet in all aspects considered, my question to my higher self is: how can I be of service to my community? Please show me and allow my best self to flow through as I walk this walk with purpose. I really care for, love and am fascinated by people worldwide. It really excites me to be able to share my personal journey because everyone deserves to live in prosperity and abundance. I truly believe is a divine birth right accessible to anyone. I have a zest for life that ignites my soul and can't allow all this energy to die out. By sharing a little bit of me to the world, we can make connections to souls who are operating on the same vibration and therefore, opening new paths to magic and creation. The ability of solving problems daily with more ease and lasting long results started by taking care your physical and mental health. In my experience, going to the gym (bootcamp style) where you can

not only interact with other gym members and coaches but especially concentrate on proper form prior to performing an exercise, gives me mental clarity as a byproduct. Hydration and taking care of your “gut brain” by choosing plant based nutrition also are going to contribute with better attitude towards problems solving and overall well being.

ABOUT DEJA ALEXANDRINO

Deja Alexandrino, Registered Nurse, Author, dog lover, coffee and gardening enthusiast. After a caregiving journey for the past 6 years by taking care of a loved one diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, she embraced it as one the most valuable spiritual gifts of her life. My spiritual journey took me to a retreat in Costa Rica where I have been exposed to the knowledge of plant medicine. My request was to merge my soul at all costs and become the best version possible of myself in order to serve others from my highest potential. "When life gives you a hundred reasons to cry, show life that you have a thousand of reasons to smile" (Stephenie Meyer)

Books that changed your life:

The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho, The Untethered Soul by Michael Alan Singer, The Gene Keys by Richard Rudd, Alzheimer's 911 Help, Hope and Healing for the Caregiver by Frena Gray-Davidson

Movies that inspire you Song that inspires you:

The Pursuit of Happiness, The Blind Side, The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind

Your Hero:

Sandro Missana, loving husband of 17 years, resting in paradise and guiding me through this amazing journey until we see each other again.

Quote you live by:

"A warm smile is the universal language of kindness" ~William Arthur Ward



James Allen, Speaker; Author; Coach; Owner at James Allen Coaching

“Do more of what makes you smile!”

MAKING A MASSIVE POSITIVE IMPACT THROUGH SMILES

BY JAMES ALLEN

Growing up, I had a less than ideal childhood. From the time I was 5-8 years old, I watched my family fall apart from drugs, alcohol, and physical abuse. My parents had an extremely violent divorce and I saw things that a kid should never have to see. My mental and emotional health suffered in the most important developmental stages of my life and it left me angry, depressed, and resentful.

Naturally, this carried on throughout my teen years. Do not get me wrong, my life definitely could have been worse. I still had friends and experienced some great times, but behind the scenes, I was still that angry and upset kid. I would take out my frustration on myself and

the people around me which had a very negative impact on the relationships in my life.

When I was 17 years old, I read the book “The 4 Agreements” by Don Miguel Ruiz and it changed my life. My Mom had been pressuring me to read it for months and I kept blowing her off thinking I could do it on my own. At that time, I was yearning for a guide to show me how to be confident in myself because I was tired of not fitting in and missing out on great opportunities because of my low self-esteem.

I came home, saw the book on my bed, opened it up, and fell in love with personal development. I read that book for about 3 or 4 months every day because I just knew that those 4 agreements would go to help me be a more confident version of myself. I made the agreements with myself every morning and did my best to abide by them daily.

I could tangibly see my world changing as I used these new mental tools in my life and I wanted to share it with everyone I knew. I was helping friends, family and the random people I interacted with learn the things that I learned because I could see the challenges they were facing and I knew that this information would help them too. I was

“coaching” before I ever knew what coaching was because I had been there before and knew it was not a fun place to be. I just wanted to help.

After a few years, I followed my Dad's footsteps in construction work. I had been groomed my whole life to be in the Local 38 Plumbers and Pipefitters Union that he had been a part of for over 30 years. I went in and promised my Dad that I would do 5 years, that way I could be vested and always have a nice safety blanket to fall back on. I was young, making about 6 figures, and had some crazy good benefits that would shock your doctor, yet I could not help but feel like something was off.

After the first year, I realized that I was extremely unsatisfied with my work. But wait! I was making good money, had a secure job, was young, and had the “world at my feet” according to most people. I could not help but have this low, sinking feeling that I was supposed to be doing something else with my life. Trying to justify these feelings, I asked the Journeymen that had been doing this work for years if it ever gets better, and they all looked at me puzzled. At that point, I knew I had to do something different.

I ended up having a conversation with a very successful coach named Al. I realized that you can get paid (and paid well) to become the best

version of yourself and help other people do the same thing. After that conversation, I wanted to be like Al. I began studying the personal development industry from a different perspective. Listening to Tony Robbins, Jack Canfield, Lewis Howes, Bob Proctor, Brenden Burchard and every other amazing soul you see in this book, this thought came up in my head that said, "That could be you".

You can tell how much you enjoy your job based off of how much time you spend in the bathroom; I used to spend a lot of time in the bathroom. It was not because I had a problem or anything. I was in there trying to see if this coaching thing could work for me. I would sit in the bathroom studying what makes a great coach, how to be a better leader, and how to leave this job that was eating away at me from the inside. The more that I read, the more I fell in love with the industry.

One day, sitting in the porta-potty, I ended up finding a coaching institute called "Life Mastery Institute" (Now the Brave Thinking Institute) that was founded by Mary Morrissey. I made my investment, went to L.A. and got certified as a DreamBuilder Coach. I had all of my ducks in a row to start this coaching thing to speaking on stages across the

world, having my own podcast and interview amazing people, and to start making a massive positive impact in the world!

But there was one problem; I was still in construction.

You see, I was about 4 years into my 5 year apprenticeship at this point and knew to my core that construction was not going to be my life. I did not want to be there now, and I did not want to be there in the future. I realized that, if I was going to be a speaker and coach, I had to BE a speaker and coach. I was working so much in my construction job that I did not have a lot of energy to do that PLUS build a business. After negotiating with my doubts and fears, I came to an agreement with myself. I was going to finish the next 3 months of school in the union, work as much over-time as possible, then take a leave of absence in case (for some weird reason) I wanted to go back.

I stuck with my plan, shared it with my Mom, my business agent in the union, and my Dad. Naturally, my Dad was the hardest one for me to break the news to, especially because I had one year left in my apprenticeship. He told me, "James! You ONLY have one more year left!" and all I heard was, "James! You have an ENTIRE year left!"

As much as he tried to convince me to stay, I knew that I had to stick to my dream. It did not take me very long to realize that this was not the right path for me. I did not want to do construction now, and I did not want to do it in the future. I knew there were other ways to make money doing something that I loved and that did not leave me feeling like I had 100 pound chains on my ankles.

Since leaving construction work, I have had the honor of speaking across the United States, working with some of the biggest names in the industry including Mary Morrissey, Marshall Sylver, Ken Rochon, Les Brown, Manny Lopez and all of the other amazing podcasters you see in this book. I get to live my dream of making my own Massive Positive Impact in the world by being the most authentic version of myself.

But most importantly, I get to see my clients achieve success in their lives and businesses that they never thought they could. I get to see them find work that they really love. I get to see them create a fun and engaging workspace for their employees and teams. I get to see the relationships inside of businesses thrive with connection and trust. All because I made the decision to go for my dream and to never give up on it.



The reason I do what I do is not just for me.

It is because when I was in the Union, I would talk with people about their lives, and so many of them were not happy. They would not speak proudly of their spouses, most did not actually enjoy their work (but they stayed in because it was “good money”), and they were not healthy. But it was not only in the Union. I noticed people’s discontentment in the grocery stores, at restaurants, the local markets, in bookstores, etc. People all around the world are not satisfied with their results in life and, just like I was, they are yearning for a guide to help them.

The Massive Positive Impact that I want to see, create, and be a part of in this world is to see a society of people that love the work that they do. That have authentically beautiful and loving relationships (intimate and non-intimate). People that are healthy mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. And also that have the time and money freedom to do what they love with the people they love.

I believe that the way that is achieved, is by each of us becoming the most authentic versions of ourselves and living into our full potential. Think about it, when you see someone that has all of the above happening in their life, it is not common. Yet, when you see someone like that, it is so inspiring! I know what it is like to have a job with great pay, all the benefits, all of the “perks”, and to still be dissatisfied. To still feel empty inside. I know what it is like to be unhealthy mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. And I know what it is like to not have beautiful and loving relationships because I witnessed that first hand early on in my life. The truth is that if we can do it, so can you. Once we live into the most authentic versions of ourselves, we are beacons that inspire everyone around us.

It all starts with you.



My primary focus is on helping driven and passionate leaders achieve High-Performance so they can make a bigger impact in the world. The way that I do this, is through my podcast (M.P.I. Radio), self-paced coaching programs, group coaching, 1-1 coaching, and customized team-building days for corporate clients.

High Performance is about living into your true potential in every area of your life so that you experience more joy, vibrancy, and excitement in your day-to-day without burning out. Through our work together, you will begin experiencing unshakeable confidence, inspiration, focus, increased energy, and an inatiable ability to lead others and serve.

When I work with people, we work to make an impact in the lives of others. We, as High-Performners, strive to be exceptional human beings. I am deeply passionate about helping my clients be better role models, develop magnetic charisma to attract quality relationships, have steady energy throughout the day and just get more done throughout their day. That way, they can enjoy their lives in the areas that matter most to them while making their impact.

ABOUT JAMES ALLEN

James Allen is an international High-Performance coach, author, and podcaster.

James helps his clients live into their highest potential so they can feel more alive, engaged, purposeful, and free.

He takes a very holistic approach to success by helping his clients create a life and business that surpasses their expectations in their health, wealth, and relationships.

To James, success is an inner game. This is why he helps his clients with things like mindset, confidence, health & well-being, courage, leadership, high-performance, manifestation, on top of business strategy.

He believes that, in order to succeed at a high level for the long term, which is what High Performance is all about, you will need both a strong mindset coupled with an effective strategy.

Books that changed your life:

The 4 Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz

Movies that inspire you

Remember The Titans;
The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

Song that inspires you:

Simple Man - Lynard Skynard

Your Hero:

Spiderman

Quote you live by:

"Do what gives you life"



Orly Amor

“Focus on giving smiles away and you will discover that your own smiles will always be in great supply.”

WHEN OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS... ANSWER WITH A SMILE! BY ORLY AMOR

“When Opportunity Knocks, Say YES and Figure it Out Later.”

– Sir Richard Brunson

I am told I do too much, get too many projects and events going at the same time, too many companies to handle by myself and so on and so on.

I go back to my virtual mentor Sir Richard Brunson who owns over 300 Companies or is involved in many companies and it fascinates me. How does he do it?

Many of my friends, colleagues and family members are saying the same thing about me. How does she do it? Or ask me directly “how do you do it?”

I think back on my mission and purpose which came clear to me in 2010 where my business coach at the time told me to write down what my personal mission is? I responded without hesitation “I would like to impact the lives of 200,000,000 (Two Hundred Million) People in the next 10 to 20 years.” He responded, “you need to be more specific.” I said “Ok, I will meet you half way. By 2025.” He replied, “You need to put a date on it Orly” so I said “Ok, by April 24th, 2025.” Knowing in my heart he was expecting me to say by January 1st, 2025.

It is amazing what happens when you have a very clear vision and mission for your personal and your professional life, because all that you need to manifest that vision and mission starts to manifest and come into your life unexpectedly or expectedly if you know and believe in the Law of Attraction. So here we were in January 2010 when I made that declaration about my personal and business mission and vision.

In June of 2010, before I ever considered coaching public speakers on the business of public speaking, I attended a conference in Arlington, TX. During one of the breaks I went to the speakers break room for some tea. While I was standing there, three speakers approached me. One of them said “*Aren't you Orly Amor?*” I felt very badly because I did not recognize him, so I said “*I'm sorry, do I know you? I really don't remember.*” He said “*No we have not officially met before, but I've seen you on the circuit. That's how I know who you are.*”

All four of us became engaged in conversation and one of them asked, “*Just out of curiosity, how did you get this gig?*”

I replied as if it were common practice, “*I called; I told them what I speak about; they paid, so I'm here!*”

All three of them looked at me as if I had three heads and said, “*You got paid?*” I responded “*Yes, didn't you?*”

They replied, “*We got our **expenses** paid but **we** did not get paid.*” I said, “*Oh, I got my expenses AND I got paid.*”

All three looked at me and said, “*We want to know how you did it?*” and I jokingly said, “*If I tell you I will have to charge you.*” Without hesitation, all 3 said, “***Name your price.***” I was floored.

I asked one of them to show me his Speaker Sheet and he said, “*What is that?*”

I asked, “*Do you have a flier or something you show event planners to get booked?*” and he said, “*Oh, a Media Sheet.*”

He gave me a beautiful 4-page folded flier printed on 8.5 x 11 glossy paper. I looked it over for about 10 seconds and said, “*This is garbage.*”

He was so insulted, “*What do you mean? I paid over \$500 to get this done by a professional!!*”

I responded, “*I understand that, but the event planner won't even look at your name before it hits the garbage can.*”

I continued “*There was a survey done of the 100 Most Stressful Jobs in America. Number one was Cardiologist. Number five was Event Planner.*”

Do you actually think that they have the time to read all that you have put into this 4-page Flyer? Do you think they have the time to search for your topics and contact information? The answer is No.”

On my way back to New York where I was to meet a client, I was thinking about the conversation with those guys and it came to me “Maybe that is what's missing in the industry, maybe speakers just don't know how to do the business side.” My heart and mind started racing at the same time.

“The How is Not Your Business.”

– Les Brown

I remembered the declaration of my mission back in January 2010 where I want to impact the lives of 200,000,000 People by the 24th of April 2025 and it hit me. If I help Public Speakers, Authors and Coaches how to get paid and make money from Public Speaking and get their message into the masses, we can all do it together. Suddenly the vision and the mission became clear. How I was going to do it was never discussed, but in the back of my mind I was panicking. That quote from Les Brown just jumped into my mind and there was the Opportunity of how I was going to achieve that.

Fast Forward into 2013 I was offered an opportunity with an organization to run and start a chapter in NYC. This organization was started on the west coast and I was introduced to the founder by a friend. At the time it seemed like a great Idea and just another opportunity to connect with people.

Fast forward into the end of 2014, I had just been blindsided by the founder of that organization and a business colleague and a close friend both of which conspired together and just pulled the rug from under me. They shut me down and out. It was not only ill intentioned but done maliciously. The reason I did not see it coming is because I am not like that and I would never cause any harm to another human being.

After my colleague and friend and the founder of that organization pulled the rug from under me, I was devastated. One of my closest friends Hara, said just start your own thing. I thought it was a good idea but what? How? Where? Just wanting to answer those questions was overwhelming.

I went to a Chamber of Commerce Networking Event and saw what seemed to be a nightmare in Networking. There was segregation. Health

and Wellness professionals on one side of the room and Corporate Professionals on the other side of the room. I thought exactly of what was the problem? Those two spheres need to communicate with each other. They are missing countless of opportunities to do business with each other and to help each other grow each other's businesses. I went home frustrated and exhilarated at the same time. I thought of what Hara said and decided to create a Mastermind where I would invite a few people from each sphere to meet once a month and connect and help each other while increasing their spheres of influence and grow their respective businesses.

Well, being in New York for now over four years, I realized that New Yorkers are very last minute, so I decided to create a Mastermind on MeetUp.com and put the event as a networking event in 10 days on Eventbrite.com and send one email to my contact list and see what happens.

The day before the event only Five people signed up and I was very happy. Because the last-minute people would probably sign up the day of and if 10 or 12 people show up that is a great mastermind group. So, I thought.

The day of the event, one of my girlfriends from Pennsylvania dropped by to surprise me as she was in town anyway for another event the next day. As I am setting up for my first mastermind people started showing up and to my shocking surprise over 62 people showed up. I asked my girlfriend to help with registration and I became the hostess making introductions.

After about 30 minutes of open networking, I asked everyone to take their seat and told them my mission and vision to what is called the Health and Wellness Network of Commerce Corporation Inc. Its mission is to be a Platform for Health and Wellness Professionals, Practitioners, Product and Service Providers to network with corporate professionals while providing a sustainable system for both. While I explained my own vision and mission I said the following:

“Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming here tonight in such a great number some of you I know and some I don’t, but I really did not expect this great number of people to show up for a Mastermind. So, we are going to treat this first time as a networking event. Please put away your Cell Phone for just the next 30 minutes and listen to each other. You will each introduce yourselves in 30 Seconds in the way

that I will instruct you to. Afterwards, when we go back to the Open Networking section of this event you will see how the energy in this room will go through the roof. We are all here to support each other and we are here to Serve not to Sell.”

Everyone got to introduce themselves and afterwards it was exactly as I said the energy was so loud I could hardly hear myself think. At this point everyone is Networking and I am catching up with my friend Susan from Pennsylvania. One of the attendees comes up to me and says, “Can I start a group like this in Brooklyn?” I was floored and responded “Huuuu I don’t know, let me think about this.” Another girl came up to me and said, “Can I start a group like this in Westchester?” Again, I was floored and replied, “Where is Westchester?”

As a side note, I have an MBA and a Law Degree and none of this was coming to me as even a possibility until my girlfriend says “I can start a group like this for you in Punxsutawney, PA.” I am floored yet again and then I say “does that place really exist? I remember it from the Movie ‘Groundhog Day’ but I did not know it’s a real place?” She said, “yes it does exist.” At this point my head is spinning yet again and then I remember both quotes at the same time. The one from Les Brown “The How is

Not Your Business” and the one from Sir Richard Brunson “When an opportunity knocks say YES and figure it out later.”

Today the HWNCC is in 6 Countries and 12 States of the USA with over 40 Chapters around the world and growing daily. This was all done with No Marketing just word of mouth.

So, for all those who say I am crazy to take on another project and or start a new Company. I will say in the words of one of my Mentors and the Author of the Foreword to this Book Bert Oliva “Cray People Succeed.” To those who think and say to me daily that I need to slow down I say, “You need to catch up.”

Opportunities knock on our doors every day and all you have to do is say **YES**.



Dr. Dan Amzallag, PhD

“A smile is happiness you’ll find right under your nose.” –Tom Wilson

THE ATTITUDE AND ALTITUDE OF HAPPYNESS BY DR. DAN AMZALLAG, PHD

My name is Dr. Dan Amzallag and i am one of the many, possibly among the 7.1 billion living humans in this planet, experience both depression, happiness and everything in between. Being a foreign naturalized American citizen, i have had the opportunity to live in different countries, experience different cultures and of course, think with different mindset. Being born in Morocco, then moving to France, then Canada and finally, the United States of America, I have experienced lots of ups and down all through my life, living with depression, managing my negativity and of course, allow myself to reach my ultimate happiness, despite all the hurdles. Life will throw you lemons, it is up to you to dodge them, get hit by them, or grab them and make the most delicious lemonade to share with others. The choice is yours.



After experiencing myself the challenges and struggles of life and successfully found my happiness from within, i decided to share my knowledge and personal experience to others, by furthering my studies into my doctorate degree and provide my services to everyone who needs it. Happiness can be both a feeling and a choice, but based on how far up you want to go in life and the attitude you may have during your journey to happiness, always remember that your journey is yours ONLY, and no one else lives an identical life. Everyone else experience different issues and they all manage them in different ways. Never expect anyone to fix your own issues, unless you seek the assistance of a therapist. The changes must start from within, and this is how you can start noticing changes. After completing my degree, i was lucky enough to know what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, and that was helping others. My passion lies on seeing others feel better, able to grow to becoming better people for themselves and their friends and families. As i see the positive changes they are implementing, i find joy and happiness in my own life. This represent my ALTITUDE in happiness.



Thoughts becomes the things you want in life. Implementing positive thoughts will render positive outcome, as long as you put in the belief and actions behind your thoughts. Nothing can really happen in life if you just think of something while laying in the couch expecting wealth to come fall in your laps. This can be a huge misconception many do not understand and can't accept why it doesn't happen. Because of this attitude, they feel that the laws of attraction are erroneous, have no value and easily give up on being consistent with their thoughts. Action and belief are crucial ingredients to create the abundance you want in life, and positive attitude is what will help you solve the problems you face every day. Positive energy is addicting, and many who feel it in others will be attracted to that energy. On the other hand, negative energy can be destructive, and for some, they feel more attracted to misery because they live in misery themselves. Depends on what spectrum you want to fall in, always know you must work towards implementing changes in your life that will allow you to get out of this toxic environment and focus more on your mental well being.

ABOUT DR. DAN AMZALLAG, PHD

We at DMV counseling and life coaching services provide a solution to many problems, which can include but not limited to: marriage/relationship, bipolar, anger management, depression, anxiety, professional career assistance, and so much more. We can be the best guides to insurmountable obstacles. Lacking self esteem can block your progress and it is crucial to tackle the issue prior to letting it get worst. Ignore it won't solve it and this is why seeking help is the first part to recovering. Do not be afraid as no one is judging you and our team of experts are here to provide you with the assistance you need to get you out of this predicament. Take control of your own future and get the help you need with our services. Give yourself the gift of life by seeking the help you need to make a positive change from within and find happiness and serenity in your life.

Book that changed your life:

Power of Now from Eckert Toll

Movie that inspire you

Pumping Iron: Arnold Schwarzenegger Documentary

Favorite musician:

Ed Sheeran

Your Hero:

Zig Ziglar

Quotes you live by:

Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall. – Confucius

Magic is believing in yourself, if you can do that, you can make anything happen.

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The secret of getting ahead is getting started.

– Mark Twain

Setting goals is the first step into turning the invisible into the visible. – Tony Robbins



Robert Angel

“When we smile, we conquer doubt, fear, sadness and worry.”

KEEP SMILING

BY ROBERT ANGEL

The one thing that has made me who I am is that I have been very authentic throughout my life. I am authentic of what nourishes me and what makes me happy. It's never to the detriment of anybody else. It's all that I'm comfortable with for myself. When I am a happier, better person, I smile more. Isn't that the idea?

When I go against that line, I tend to lose my smile. Also, I lose my smile when I push too hard. For example, when I don't pay attention to how I'm feeling, sometimes that leads to sadness. Sometimes in not paying attention, it leads to me needing to getaway. When I push, and I push, I find I'm not getting anywhere. It is somewhat more helpful to take a timeout, to take a break. When I do that, that's when I get my smile back.

I know that my business will be there when I get back. The relationship will be there when I get back. The coffee will be there when I get back.

So for me, the biggest way to get my smile back is to take a little break. The break could be for a minute, an hour a day, or even sometimes a week.

When I do that, I come back refreshed. I come back ready to go, and I look at things from a new angle. That's when I start to smile again. That's when I'm feeling good about being productive again, and it works well for me. I've done it my whole life.

In reality, it is about using my intuition. Because we all have a glimmer of intuition, we all know what's good for us and what we shouldn't do. But when we don't listen to it, things go astray. For me, I start getting a little stressed when I don't listen to my intuition. So, I know what I should be doing.

It's the little things as well. I know if I'm not doing what I should be doing or doing what I shouldn't be doing, the results give me a little bit of a bite. So, I try to do well and listen to my intuition.

In a way, it's simple. In life, we pay it back, and we pay it forward. Smiles are contagious. They're not that complicated; they are free

and easy. Even if you're don't feel like smiling and you fake a smile, that's okay, too. What I tend to do is acknowledge people. I recognize them, whether it's the clerk, the policemen, or the business executive. It doesn't matter, as long as they feel acknowledged. You look them in the eye with a smile on your face. Because it is contagious, they can't help but smile back. That's the easiest way that I pay it forward. The easiest thing that I ever do is to pay smiles back and keep smiles going.

The reasons for smiling are built-in from my intuition; I have always had it. I've always been that way. When I was a kid, we had a great neighborhood. Our area had a lot of kids growing up at the same time. I always had this sense of right and wrong, more to what was right and wrong for me. It was that way my whole life.

I grew up in Spokane, Washington. Here I lived in this very great neighborhood, with great parents and a great family. They were very supportive. It's one of those situations where I always felt loved. They let me be me. I don't know how that worked to support my intuition, but I always felt the ability to be who I wanted. I knew that whatever I was feeling and thinking, I didn't have to hold back. That was very helpful growing up.

After college, I moved in with three buddies. We started sketching words out of the dictionary. One of my roommates had played the game in college with us. He suggested we make it short, so we took a dictionary and pointed to a word. The four roommates started sketching and guessing words. We would stay up late having a ball night after night after night. It was so much fun.

Something told me that all the fun I was having with my roommates would serve the world if other people could have fun. Other people would enjoy it as much as I did. That's what I wanted to have happen. That wasn't based on research; that wasn't based on anything else than intuition. In 1982, when the light bulb went off, my intuition said, "Hmm, this might make an excellent board game for everyone to play at home!"

Yet, over time, I started pushing myself too hard. I had too many expectations of things going this way or that way. Instead, the focus to serve me best was to have the intention of people having fun with Pictionary. Since I had not figured that out, the stress started wearing on me. I was anxious. My anxiety levels were high. When I was pushing too hard, I wasn't authentic to myself. That misalignment manifested in terrible ways. I went into a depression. It wasn't me.

As I said, I had to take a break from the business to recalibrate, as I said earlier, to take a timeout to recenter. It was not the most productive or happy time in my life. Fortunately, I had great partners. It was what I had to do to get my mind right, so I had to take that leave of absence. Whenever I go against the long-term plan, my intuition goes against what I know is the authentic me. That's when I start losing my smile.

When I was in the middle of my issues, I wondered, like we all wonder, how do people not understand what's going on? I mean, isn't it evident that we've got some issues and problems? Can they know and see it? Then, that negative self-talk turns to "I am all alone." Nobody can see it, and 'oh, woe is me.' I would ask myself, "Why should I ask for help? How do I know I can't do this on my own? Nobody else has got this problem." So the back and forth conversation in my head was a catch twenty-two in some regards.

My shift in mindset likely came from the support from my family and friends. It started when they could finally see that it wasn't me being quiet or moody or sad. They saw it was more profound than normal life anxiety. My business partner was very supportive. Without reservation, they told me to take a leave of absence. Once the depression

was evident, everyone else, my ex-wife, family, and siblings agreed. When they realized it was more significant than usual, everybody was very supportive. That was a big, big help. I saw a therapist and kept working at it to relieve my anxiety, stress, and depression.

Back then, I didn't have all those outlets available today. Now, there is the availability of meditation, readings, and ways to reach out to talk to other people. There are outlets with choices. There are people and organizations that you can speak to about it. One of the biggest things to help people is to let them know they're not alone. Now, you're never alone if you have a cell phone with connections, apps, and products to help you. It makes help more accessible. Having a conversation doesn't make your situation end. But, it sure makes the problem easier to deal with as you have choices for a resolution.

Right now, I'm working towards taking the book, the Game Changer, and turning it into a docudrama or a movie. That's my new focus, to try to make that happen. All things happen for a reason, and I'm in the early process. I'm not sure what it all looks like in the end, but more conversations and people in the business will guide me.

The book Game Changer is about the process and about what is next. The process right now is why I need to speak with people who are in the industry. I'm sure every Producer and Director would have a different opinion. So I have my ideas, but I'm not in the business. We can take the book, as is, spanning four years, even though it was a 20-year journey. Then, there is the journey after I sold the company in 2001. That is also a movie. The two are intertwined, as opposed to an adventure picture separate from a biography. But that's my idea and what I'm looking for in my life to complete my next level of smile!

Book that changed your life:

The Four Agreements.

Movies that inspire you

Tombstone and Rudy

What is the song that gets you jazzed?

September by Earth, Wind, & Fire

Quote you live by:

"It's never too late to be who you might have been."

When you were a child, what is what did you want to grow up to be?

An entrepreneur and innovator

Any mentors?

My father, my business partner Carrie Langston.
Both my children, Sam and Ben



**Carrie Ann Angrisani, Transformation & Leadership Coach, Speaker,
CEO Shelter Within Coaching, Energetic Alchemist**

“The smile of transformation is lit from within.”
– Carrie Ann

THE MIRACLE OF GRATITUDE BRINGS A SMILE

BY CARRIE ANN

In my heart of hearts I've always known that I was special. Knowing and believing are two very different things. I've faced the repeated challenge of being around people who saw me as ordinary. It began with my family long ago. It's hard to believe in your specialness when a family member is literally telling you you're a piece of shit.

I grew up in the Maryland suburbs of D.C. to a writer and a homemaker who were fine and loving people in their own way. Unfortunately, they didn't have the awareness to recognize the impact of their behavior and the harsh effect it had on a sensitive kid like me. I joke that my family values were blame, shame, and guilt. Jokes always have a shred

of truth and the truth was there has always been one of us on the outside because there just wasn't enough love to go around. Random faults (blame and shame) would be found with each of us constantly. Mom couldn't love my brothers and me all at the same time. It just wasn't in her. She didn't have the capacity because she was raised by an alcoholic father and a mother who was more interested in impressing her customers (a.k.a lovers) than she was in raising her daughter. That meant that mom just never learned how to love and she certainly didn't get what she needed. So she didn't have much to pass on to us. It didn't make for a very hopeful environment and so by the time I came along – the youngest and only girl - the hope had run thin.

I remember being very young and feeling joyful, special, blissful even, and wanting to share that with other people. I assumed that this was how everyone felt. Once I shared this good feeling, I quickly realized that it's not where many people live day to day. At least not the people I was exposed to. So for the first time I began to feel 'other'. Being an outsider my needs and wants weren't important, or even relevant, to the people around me. I saw that in order to fit in I would have to get smaller, shrink from my joy, be quieter, less of who I was. Being a good student I went along with it. I desperately wanted to belong so I knew

if I was going to fit into this family, I'd have to hide not only my aspirations but also my basic needs. So I hid and soon I began to forget myself as well. I felt joy and specialness drain out of me. Eventually, after denying myself for so long it became routine. I was bereft and lonely.

By the time I hit my teens, I had forgotten all about my specialness. Between all the negative talk that I'd heard from my family and the material girl messages of the late 80's I had adopted the idea that I had to squeeze into someone else's mold in order to conform. Wanting to belong, I went along with the ideas everyone else had for me. This self-compromise created a schism in me that wasn't easily remedied. I had lost all hope and this was the basis of the lack of self-esteem that spurred me to seek relief in alcohol and drugs.

I needed an outlet, some way to feel better, feel something. So I drank. I drank to numb the feelings of hopelessness and despair. Before I knew it, I was headed down a dark awful road. All of that could've ended very badly but Thank God, I found another path! There were some bad things that happened that shook me into realizing that I better straighten up or my life would have been over. Or worse than death, I'd have wished it was over. So I reached out for help.

Walking into a 12 step recovery group was not fun. It was excruciating but it seemed like there was a glimmer of hope in these places because people like me were walking out smiling. I knew the way I was doing life sucked- it just didn't work. So being open to listening to how others were doing it and succeeding didn't seem such a bad Idea. I decided that if they could figure it out, then it must be possible for me. That is where I first felt hope. It's also where I was introduced to gratitude as a practice.

Gratitude has been the path to hope for me for many years. The first time I was introduced to this process I wasn't at all grateful. It seemed like an indulgent platitude that could never really supersede the pain that I was feeling. Since I was in such a desperate place, I tried it. Lo and behold, it worked! Once I actually felt gratitude in my body it shifted my perspective so that I began to see gratitude all around me. Through seeing and feeling gratitude, I began to feel hopeful as well. This process has worked for me ever since.

The first time I used this tool I was in a pretty dark place. I had run my life into the gutter. Learning how to take responsibility for myself and protect myself in the world eluded me. I am sensitive and feeling everyone else's emotions set me up for a lot of pain and overwhelm

because I had yet to discover that sensitivity was actually a huge gift. Learning that I had a choice in my thoughts and actions hadn't come yet. Like my family before me, I fell into the victim role that kept me from really experiencing life. The good news is it brought me to my knees pretty quickly. So I was able to discover recovery early on and not ruin the rest of my life.

One of the first things they teach you in the 12-step world is about gratitude. I'm lucky that the oldtimer/elders that I came into contact with taught me that gratitude is a practice. It's an action that you take and one of the benefits of that action is hope and there are so many more! For example, if I am grateful for my car, I take care of it. I get regular oil changes. I clean it. I take regular action to remind me of how appreciative I am of it. If I'm grateful for my relationships, I take the actions of sharing love and appreciation with my friends and family on a regular basis. This boosts my happiness and allows for hope to flow through me out into my relationships. If I'm grateful for my body, I take loving care of it by feeding it well and exercising regularly.

When I do these things I am reminded the still small, special voice exists. I can feel it. In fact, whenever I've spent time by myself, especially

in nature, I'm reminded of my specialness. This amazing tool has been a bright spot in my life that has brought many smiles. In the darkest times I learned that there is always something to be grateful for. Whether it was the Sun rising, or a flower blooming, or the softness and coolness of my pillow as I slept, or my car and the freedom to drive anywhere I want whenever I want to (which is not a given for women across the world), gratitude is there if I look for it.

Gratitude allows for a hopeless situation to become hopeful. When I pause during a really painful and troubling time and I'm grateful for the pain and sorrow, new thoughts and ideas come to me. One instance was when my father was sick and dying from cancer. It was pretty horrible to watch him wither away and suffer. I was so grateful for the opportunity to have such love that the thought of losing him and missing him caused pain. I was so grateful for the time that we had together and I was grateful for the ability to reconnect with a man who I had had much conflict with over my lifetime. By the time he passed all of the trouble and animosity, all misunderstanding that we had between us was washed away by gratitude. Being present in the moment allowed me to see more and more to be grateful for so that I felt full and free by the time he took his last breath.

This gratitude process has especially served me well during the collective trauma of the Covid pandemic. There have been dark times for all of us. During those dark moments when it feels like there's no end in sight, gratitude definitely eases the harshness of it.

I'm a hugger, touchy-feely kind of person. During the many months of the pandemic living without a hug or human touch was especially hard. It was traumatic because it affected my mental health and my relationship to myself and other people. What I discovered through the lens of gratitude was that there were other things I could touch and feel that were comforting and soothing. Some of these things I was taking for granted. The heat and pressure of my shower, the softness of the water, the weight of my quilt, the weave of my wool socks, the coolness of the spring and fall air in the Rockies, were all felt as if for the first time. I was grateful for these things before but now having been stymied by the inability to hug other humans they became even more poignant and intense.

I remember one day feeling particularly troubled and stressed and lonely. I paused and took the time to feel gratitude for my computer, my internet connection and all the people I had seen on Zoom that

day. I felt a smile come over my face. My whole perspective shifted and I was able to feel a lightness that wasn't there previously.

If I set an intention to notice more to be grateful in the morning, then the rest of the day is a treasure hunt to find more things to be grateful for. This reminds me of my specialness. We each have it. There is something unique and special about each one of us. When I pause, reflect and reach for the gratitude it spills over into my relationships and my interactions throughout the day. Expressing gratitude for what makes us special each day brings more peace, perspective and joy! When I become aware that there is always something to be grateful for no matter how dark things get, I am given the keys to a life of Hope, Peace, and Expansion - beyond my wildest dreams.

One of the greatest blessings along the way has been coming into contact with people that were able to see my specialness and tell me about it. While I didn't get what I wanted or needed from my parents early on, I did finally receive it from some very beautiful friends. My gratitude flows over when I think of the unexpected ways love, attention, and compassion come to me without my having to do anything.

From 'piece of shit' to self love and self acceptance is a long journey to walk. It takes tremendous dedication to uncovering the truth, gentleness, patience and discovering gratitude when all seems hopeless. From knowledge to belief takes practice and attention to that internal voice. The belief comes from practicing that truth in all of my actions and relationships one day at a time. Doing this allowed me to accept myself, my gifts on a whole new level. Sensitivity which was once a burden has now become my greatest strength and the cause of my joy and success.

Overcoming great despair and pain has been the inspiration for my work. I am passionate about empowering sensitive people to recognize their strengths and end their suffering. An intuitive mentor gave me the book, 'Highly Sensitive People' by Dr. Elaine Aron, nearly 2 decades ago. Reading that book allowed me to transform my perspective of sensitivity and empowered me to own my strengths of intricate observation, creative problem solving, imaginative visualization, cumulative insight, and a highly conscious ability of deep knowing which allow me to combine ideas in creative ways. Through decades of observation, insight and practice I've developed a practice of coaching and workshops that allow for Highly Sensitive professionals to master intuitive leadership and claim their sensitivity as their superpower!

My wish for you is to feel gratitude in your body and heart for the pedestrian and the miraculous. One of my favorite definitions of miracle is Mariane Williamson's 'a miracle is a shift in perception.'

Gratitude is the one sure perception shifter that allows my life to get better and better. Savoring life's daily miracles through gratitude opens the door for more abundance, grace, and happiness to appear. I wish for you to know how special you are. That there is no one else on the planet like you. You came here to be you - and that in itself is an immensely hopeful thing! You have a lot to be grateful for!

I'm grateful to you for reading my story and hope that it gives you a taste of the ingredients necessary to create a wonder-filled life.

ABOUT CARRIE ANN ANGRISANI

Carrie Ann Angrisani, Transformation & Leadership Coach, Speaker, & CEO Shelter Within Coaching, assists Highly Sensitive professionals to lead with confidence and clarity while sidestepping anxiety, overstimulation, overwhelm and putting themselves on hold. She's creating a movement to get perceived weakness out of being sensitive and claim it as a Superpower instead! Carrie Ann has been serving clients for over 25 years as a Certified Life Coach, a Mentor and a Social Worker. She uses her intuitive gift to connect to the heart of the matter as well as certifications in Emotional Freedom Technique, a Roaring Fork Leadership Graduate, 1000's of hours of Facilitation, and a Reiki Master. Carrieann is devoted to her spiritual practice and dedicated to continued personal growth. Her home is in the beautiful Roaring Fork Valley where she loves to share her leadership skills with her community and be outside in the bright Colorado sunshine!

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Books that changed your life:

Return to Love by Marianne Williamson
The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho

Movies that inspire you

The Truman Show & The Adjustment Bureau

Songs that inspires you:

Take Six's Biggest Part of Me and Strength
Courage & Wisdom by India Arie

Your Hero:

My 12 Step Sponsors

Quote you live by:

"I've learned that people will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did, but people will
never forget how you made them feel."

Dr. Maya Angelou



**Jamin Armstead, Owner of J. Dishon Financial LLC./
Host of Everything ChaChing Podcast**

Smile through everything, overcome anything!

DAUGHTERS' TRIUMPHS MEANS SINGLE DAD SMILES

BY JAMIN ARMSTEAD

I am Jamin Armstead, Father of two beautiful daughters, and a Business Owner. I was born and raised in Richmond, IN, a small rural community located on the East Central Indiana/Ohio border.

As I reflect on my childhood, I definitely had a very blessed and privileged upbringing. I was raised in a community void of any major crime, raised by parents who are still married to this day, nearly 50 years strong. They provided my siblings and I a great quality of life, chock full of love, guidance, discipline, strong faith and the foundation for a solid relationship with God.

As any typical kid, I had zero clue what I wanted to be when I grew up. I had strengths such as writing, but I was too busy cracking jokes and being silly to focus on anything serious. Early on, many of my mistakes and hardships were my own doing, despite having great parental guidance.

Once I was in college, I had independence and an unlimited selection of parties and pick up basketball games to choose from. So much so, I partied and hooped my way right out of school, failing the majority of my classes and earning myself a fateful visit with the Dean of Admissions, Dr. Rozelle Boyd. I'll never forget that man, an older, nonsense Black gentleman, who spared no words in sharing how I squandered the college spot of a more deserving student. Truth be told, I couldn't deny how accurate he was.

Upon returning home, expelled, embarrassed, and fed up with school, my Dad helped me secure a job at his employer back then, a local machine shop and foundry. Life was good, I was a 22 yr old kid working the graveyard shift alongside Dad, making \$15/hr. My sole responsibility was to maintain the payment of my brand new car. I was young, had quite a bit of savings, a new car, and was dating the woman of my dreams. All was great.....until I got hurt on the job.

My foot had been burned quite badly from 20 gallons of 2500 degree molten iron being accidentally spilled on it. During my recovery at home, while collecting workman's comp, was the first time in my life that I truly questioned myself, my aspirations, my goals, my purpose. What am I doing with my life?

My parents had always told me to work hard in school, be the best student I could, and reap the rewards later. I always heard them, but never really listened. So with my family's encouragement and the searing words of Dr. Boyd still echoing in my ears, I decided to trade my nearly paid off vehicle in for an absolute bucket and return to school. I moved back to Bloomington, IN., with my girlfriend, along with renewed motivation, maturity, and focus. I was going to make myself and my family proud while simultaneously making sure Dr. Boyd "ate" his choice words.

Everything was going great on campus, I was back in class and doing well. I was on the road to redemption! Then, one year later, my girlfriend and I discovered that we were pregnant. We were absolutely devastated! Our worlds came crashing down! How would we finish school and raise a child? How in the world are we going to tell our parents???

After surviving the nightmare of sharing the news with our families, we decided to do the “honorable” thing, we married two months later. I was totally scared out of my mind, but tapping into the faith I was raised to practice, I knew things would be ok, we were starting a beautiful life together.

Our first 7 years of Union had its ups and downs as does any marriage. By this time, Dr. Boyd had “eaten” his words, we had two daughters, good jobs, and were homeowners. In 2006 we decided to visit my Aunt Debbie in Phoenix, AZ. and were totally smitten by the weather. We had to relocate, the desert paradise was calling our names!

Our home sold in 2 months, barely missing the housing collapse of '08. I thought wow...this was definitely meant to be, everything was happening absolutely perfect, or so I thought. My life, our lives and our families' lives were about to change and would never, ever, be the same.

A few months after settling into our cross country relocation, I started noticing some markedly eerie changes in my wife. She started to speak incoherently, stayed up all hours of the night, walked around the house aimlessly, and talked about being unworthy of her life and how I

“deserved” better. This went on for quite some time and became progressively worse. Being none-the-wiser, I chalked it up to anxiety from the move. Until, one day, I came home from work and found her attempting to hang herself in our bedroom closet. I knew then, this was serious!

I was frantic, holding her, crying and praying, I called 911. They took her to the nearest hospital, but once they had finished the examinations, they explained to me that behavioral health services was the type of treatment that was needed. Episodes such as these, some worse, some less severe, occurred regularly, off and on for another 7 years. Nothing therapeutic seemed to work, counseling, medication, nothing. Things would be “ok” for a month or two, and then BAM, another terrifying experience.

It wasn't until a final episode occurred, one that I still have difficulty discussing to this day, that led me to the hardest, most gut wrenching decision of my life. I had no other recourse, I had to choose my daughters well being and dissolve the marriage. Knowing in my heart that none of what was happening within my wife was actually her fault, I could, in no way, blame her or think disparagingly against her. I just knew I had to file for divorce and joint custody.

A few months after the divorce was final, my former wife told me that she needed to return home to Indiana permanently. She needed her own family's support to survive, she could no longer live in Phoenix. I understood her sentiment. I also understood this meant I was going to be alone to raise our daughters, who at the time were 13 and 12. After their Mother's departure, every literal single night, for what seemed like an eternity, my daughters would endlessly sob for their Mother, their soul crying out for her. Having no band-aid to heal those wounds and feeling completely helpless, I had no other recourse but to simply curl up in bed next to them, all of us would just cry together. The only thing I could think was, "Why was God letting this happen, why?"

Not long thereafter, I started noticing some eerily similar behavior in my youngest daughter that my former wife had displayed in the very beginning of her illness. The void of their Mother's absence was taking its toll, hopelessness and feelings of abandonment had set well within my girls. But there was no way in hell I was going to lose my daughter to the same conditions that besieged their Mother, so we got my youngest the help she needed, immediately.

I admitted her to a top notch behavioral health facility in Scottsdale, literally handing the care of my daughter over to absolute strangers for a period of weeks. As she was being led away, knowing I could only see or speak with her for a single hour per day, I remember her cursing me and telling me how she couldn't believe I was doing this to her. She asked angrily, "What kind of Father would treat their own kid this way?" I was an emotional wreck, totally unsure if I was doing the right thing!

After all we had gone thru with my former wife, only now to fight a similar battle raging within my kids, specifically my youngest daughter, was almost more than I could bare. I struggled with the fact that this was happening again, that these circumstances continued to maintain a grip on my family. I can't remember a time, ever in my life, that I was more devastated, terrified, or angry. I was flat out pissed with God! I decided, spiritually, I was done! For about 2 years, I quit praying, I quit reading the Bible, I completely shut down. In my mind, it seemed He had left me.

The only comfort I felt was from my family, who had literally uprooted their entire lives to relocate to Phoenix because they knew I was falling

apart. My Father, Mother, Sister, and Brother all converged on Phoenix from different parts of the country to lend support. I am still, and always will be, forever grateful!

As time went on, recovery for the girls went as well as can be expected, counseling and the whole bit. We did our best as a household of three. The kids survived my cooking and I survived all of those late night emergency trips to Walgreens to replenish their feminine pads, which always seemed to run out when they were in the shower. We survived many miscommunications and arguments while managing our wide range of emotions. We survived a real family tragedy, along with the regular demands of a normal family life.

In the end, our 3 person family transitioned from surviving to thriving. I eventually returned to God, praying, reading, and strengthening my spirituality after a few years. Once my emotions were no longer in the way, I gained an understanding and appreciation for the fact that things happen. Many times, there's no rhythm or reason. It's not an indictment of whether we are good people or not, it's about the manner in which we acknowledge, embrace, and overcome our challenges.

So I want all of the single Fathers out there raising their children alone to know that it is ok to be scared, to cry and show emotion. It is absolutely ok to be vulnerable and ask for help, or to lose Faith. It is absolutely ok to stand in the Walgreen's feminine hygiene aisle, with no clue of whether your daughters need night time thick or daytime thin pads. It is literally ok to wait for the Walgreen's attendant to rescue you! There is nothing to be ashamed of!

To this day, I always tell the girls of how deeply proud I am of them! I tell them that similar circumstances break full grown adults every day and that our outcome could have turned out a million different ways. Not all of them good. But my girls fought, they persevered, they learned to love and embrace themselves in spite of their reality. They also maintain a deep love and understanding of their Mother.

I share with my girls that when they were younger, it was my job to keep them healthy, to keep them alive, at any cost. The truly beautiful thing is that so much goodness, perspective, and personal development have manifest where, so easily, bitterness, feelings of abandonment, and sadness could've remained.

Their change and transformation has come from within themselves and has permeated our family. My daughters read books such as “The Power of Now” and “Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself” by Dr. Joe Dispenza. My girls now embody and exemplify healthy seeds of self development to such a degree that I have also started reading these books.

Now I am learning new life skills, such as living on a higher vibration, the laws of attraction, and the practice of meditation and gratitude. My daughters are literally teaching me a better perspective and improved quality of life. I tell them quite often, in a way, you are now keeping me alive!

I am truly the most grateful Father walking the Earth, because my two young ladies are thriving, smiling angels, they are myDoses of Hope!!!

ABOUT JAMIN ARMSTEAD

I was born and raised in Richmond, IN. and graduated from Indiana University with a B.A. in Economics.

As a kid, I had always been infatuated with the stock market and how the financial industry worked. That infatuation guided me to 12 year corporate Advisory career and ultimately to starting my own firm, J. Dishon Financial LLC., where we offer, simple, transparent, consumer driven services and solutions.

We tailor solutions based on our clients' goals and concerns. We focus on Tax Free Retirement Income Planning, Wealth Strategies, Health Care Solutions, and protecting assets and families with Life Insurance Planning.

I am also the Host of podcast “Everything Cha-Ching,” which consists of conversation on a variety of everyday financial topics and can be heard Apple, Spotify, Google, and everywhere podcasts play! We take pride in helping clients reach their financial goals, J. Dishon Financial LLC. is where goals are borne to succeed!

Books That Changed My Life:

The Bible
The Power of Now
Think Like a Monk

Movies that Inspire Me:

Remember the Titans
The Pursuit of Happyness

Song that Inspires Me

Love Yourz- J. Cole

My Hero

Kim Armstead - There's no better man than my
Father!

Quote I Live By:

Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of
value." — Albert Einstein



Dave Austin

“The world always looks brighter from behind a smile.”

KEEP SMILING

BY DAVE AUSTIN

I've had only one lifetime, but some people say I have had ten lifetimes; you will see why as I share my story. As the starting point, I will go back to my heritage and my driving force— my dad, a war hero, a navy chaplain. His team hit the beach in WWII, a very bloody battle, wave after wave of advancement. At seven waves, the admiral said it was time to go ashore. They didn't need my dad but led the charge with only his Bible as his weapon, taking along his communion sack. As they fought the fierce battle, a team went up Mount Iwojima to mount the flag, our symbol of freedom. Honorably, my dad lying low on his belly to avoid machine-gun, the fire gave the men communion. Later when the firing stopped, a larger, more significant flag was set up, photographed by Rosenthal. Interestingly, my dad, a photo buff, helped take the photo.

A humble man, we only found out about these types of stories over time. His heroism was witnessed in Korea, too, as he was honored as

one of the most decorated chaplains of all time. When he was asked why he did it all, he said, "Because that is where I was needed most." Therefore, I have dedicated my whole life to answer the question, "Where am I needed most?" I make my decisions based on my dad's courage of my dad being willing to take on gunfire for his faith.

Additionally, my grandfather adds to my belief in the possibility of the unknown. At one point in his career as the Executive Vice President of Bell Telephone, he had two brothers come to him for help, a dreamer and an accountant. Although they were 40M in debt, my grandfather said yes to them. Once the biggest company said yes, the other companies came on board. For that reason, we have Disneyland, as my granddad said yes to support Walt Disney and his brother. That story amazes me, leading me to be a true believer that we only need one, yes. If we believe in something we are passionate about, we must follow it through to the first yes. And, once the first yes comes, the rest come like dominoes.

For myself, as a little kid, it turned out I was very gifted in sports. With passion, hard work, and a little bit of a gift, you can do anything. So, I was a star football player and a star baseball player. However, since we often moved with the military, my gift seemed to ebb and flow based

on what my coaches said to me. For example, in South Carolina, I was fast and sharp, and my coach told me I was fast and sharp. In a move to North Carolina, I was told I was slow, so I became slower. Another move to Hawaii, the coach decided I was fast again, and I was fast again. Even at that time, random thoughts ran through my mind as I realized I was letting the outside world tell me who I was rather than allowing my 10-year-old self to say to me how well I could play.

I became very fascinated with what motivates us and how we move forward to be the best part of ourselves? In hindsight, I used intrigue in my athletics. I went to college on a football scholarship as I'd been a star player in high school. Then, between my college freshman and sophomore year, I was in a horrendous accident. I don't talk about this much, but admittedly, I was killed in the accident. I had that whole out of body experience, the entire thing. I wasn't willing to tell anybody that fact. So, I didn't. It just so happens that I met the first person I ever said about the whole experience to 19 years later when I told my wife, Kathy. Prior, it was just too hard for me to understand, to grasp what took place, as it was such an incredible miracle. But I had a hard time accepting it.

It was challenging to accept because, at 65 mph, I flew through the

air like Superman without a cape. Pinned to the ground, the car had landed on me. Miraculously, I was revived. At the first hospital, despite badly bleeding internally, my legs crushed, my hip broken with multiple other bones broken, I was rushed to O'Connell Naval Hospital where my dad was a navy chaplain for the hospital. Given this was the hospital for life-threatening injuries, I was transported there. However, on the ride there, I was healed. It's remarkable. It's the truth. It's what it is, but I didn't want anybody to know. Somehow, the prayers that I was doing were answered, as they couldn't find any broken bones at the second hospital. I still had to have an operation, and it was still really tough to come back and even walk. It was a challenging situation.

I ended up not playing football that sophomore year in college. However, I did go and play baseball. I was destined to play professional baseball, but I had a challenging year getting back physically. Therefore, I started playing tennis to rehabilitate myself. I transferred to San Diego State as a walk-on in tennis. I went on to earn a scholarship and then go on to the world tour to receive world ranking while traveling the entire world. It was as if the accident never happened, while it lingered within me, causing me to relive that miracle and attempt to understand what happened.

Travel was probably one of the most significant gifts I received from sports. Just getting a chance to travel worldwide allowed me to dive into what makes us tick, and with each person in a new part of the world, I learned something new. I used that knowledge to my advantage. Whenever I lost in a tournament, I would use the next day to explore and learn. That exploration was my learning ground. I graduated with a degree in psychology, and what I do now is so far beyond our sports psychology. Interestingly, I train many sports psychologists on what I have been doing for the last 20 years.

When I came back from playing professional tennis, I got involved in real estate as my brother's an architect and mom was a real estate broker. We started developing and had excellent properties, but the housing market crashed with interest rates of 20% to 22%; I had signed personal guarantees for all those loans. I lost everything, every penny I had. We had 160 acres and a ranch in Santa Fe, 26 acres on the ocean in Cardiff. You're talking about hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars worth of property, and I was stone broke. I probably got the most significant gift out of that situation because my head was in the wrong place.

I was just starting to date Kathy. We just celebrated our 34th wedding

anniversary. We've been together 39 years, and with nothing, she still wanted to go out with me. In my head, I was going, "Why would you go out with me?" Prior, everyone was about what I had done and my money. But here, I had nothing, and she liked me for me. It was probably the greatest gift I was ever given. I mean, I wouldn't wish this upon anybody else, but, in this case, to lose everything like that and find myself led me to have Kathy and the child we have together is priceless.

At the time, I was struggling, so I went off to Hollywood to become an actor. What a better time, you know, go out there and try--broke wine is already broke, so why not? Again, I was blessed as I could get in some of the greatest movies and television shows. I was in movies with Jeff Bridges. Glenn Close, Gene Hackman, Patrick Swayze, and a TV show with Paul Savino. I was in a mini-series, Robert F. Kennedy's Life and Times, where I played Kennedy's aid. Commercially, I did so many national TV commercials, and one of them was Diet Coke. It's funny to think back to those things Burger King, Chevron, Olympia beer, and the lottery. It was a part of my life that most don't know about, but today I am giving it all. I don't share it because I often feel it is just too much as now I am known as a mental performance coach.

Part of me says we don't need to go back, but you are getting it all. For example, I was very passionate about music and was writing songs. You may not know that I was married before I met Kathy for seven years and divorced for two when I met Kathy. From there, I got into songwriting as it was the way that my emotions were coming out. Plus, I was in Hollywood as an actor, so why not go ahead and perform, too.

Believe it or not, I had a Billboard hit on the radio. I was blessed because I got the best of the best to record with back then. Previously, I met Philly Hart, who founded the rock group Kansas, and he's the drummer for them. We decided when a friend of ours came down with cancer to do something. We had a meeting in New York because Kansas was on the road and huge at the time. We had the president of CBS there, and they commended us for a great concept but declared that we would never get a musician to donate their time.

We walked out of the meeting, deciding that we were crazy enough to do it. Where? We agreed in Atlanta, Georgia, where the band Kansas lived. So, with one tennis player and one band, we started reaching out. We got every major hit artist as we were their peers, not a promoter.

And, they loved that there was a cause, a reason. We changed the course of the music industry.

We had all these hits. We had a few dates to rehearse, I was Emcee, and this guy kept bugging me to go on next. I kept ignoring him as he hadn't been at rehearsals. All of a sudden, I see Queen, here I was missing Roger Taylor, their drummer. Oh my gosh, that would have been a big mistake. So, here we just blew the music world upside down, and we were wondering, will they ever do this again? We did one every year, then Live Aid happened, and Hands Across America. We Are the World guys came from our event, and the guy who put that all together was Ken Kragen, a friend. He was Kenny Rogers's manager, and we had lunch. After seeing what the two crazy guys did, they knew they could pull such an event off.

Then in 1989, the Grammys came to me. The Recording Academy put on the CEO to say that they wanted to start the Grammy foundation and wanted me to put on a concert for them. By 1991, they gave me the Grammy's Presidential merit award. I feel proud that I could start something where music raises money for causes because of how much music means to us.

During all of this, acting was going well; I had the record on the radio, Play On. It was so perfect and is so much of who I am now. When you're struggling, "Play On, baby, Play On." Many great memories like multi-Platinum Mac Pablo Cruz, the band I used in the studio; I was blessed to have many great connections. When I'd perform live, I'd have Santana, Journey, and others. I had the biggest bands because I was friends with all of them.

About this time, I started serving on the board of the music industry for the City of Hope, which researches cancer. As the heads of record companies and the head of universal asked me to run a label, I agreed as I loved music. So, I ran an independent label with universal. While I love music on that journey of my life, I did not like running a record company. Even then, since I was 10-years-old, I knew someday I would be a coach. I can remember going out into my yard one day and just saying, "God, how am I going to do this?" I knew I was meant to coach, so I stopped doing the music industry. Additionally, I stopped doing real estate development again despite rebounding from those earlier days. That was not my calling.

There is this knowing inside of me as I have a mission and a calling. I remember we had a nice home. Meanwhile, I'm thinking that I don't

know how I'm going to afford this home. However, I knew that all I was going to do as a coach. That's what I started my journey. Luckily, my four boys, who I've been coaching in sports all their lives, are superstars. I knew I had something, and then I got asked to coach a major league baseball player that went on to become MVP. I remember thinking, "Oh, my gosh, what I'm doing works!" Then I got asked to coach a US Olympic team and go to the World Cup where we had the best results ever in the sport's history. I had four players go on to become MVPs for their teams and Major League Baseball; they had been stuck in minor league baseball. I've had tennis players in the Guinness Book of World Records who climbed faster on the pro tennis tour than any player in the sport's history. Again, I am super proud that the US Olympic team had the best results ever.

I don't want to boast about this. Yet, I want just to say it's happened. For a long time, I couldn't do it; I couldn't share. I just asked for divine wisdom to gain that more remarkable power of opening up, which caused me to start speaking at significant events. From there, I started realizing I had to have products to sell from the stage. Fortunately, I amassed over 1000K worth of product the first time I sold from the stage.

This was when I started writing books. In 2000, my first book, *The Unfinished Cross*, came to light. I had this awakening; Jesus began to speak to me in the middle of the night. I'd be woken up and was given life lessons from him; it became so impactful. One of those lessons was the miracle of our fourth son, taken by c-section seven weeks early due to complications that would have taken my wife's life as well as our unborn child's. It was challenging. I questioned God, "Is this what you do?" The response, "You have such little faith. With the faith of the strength of a mustard seed, you can move a mountain."

At that moment, I knew I had to move a mountain. The doctors had given up; I went to Daniel, my newborn son's side, touched his leg, saying, "Daniel, feel my love. Feel the healing grace of God." As if a jolt of electricity went through him, he jerked, his eyes opened, and he looked as if he was saying, "Game On. I'm here. Let's go." He closed his eyes again and drifted back into a coma, but he was breathing now. The doctors said, "He won't make it through the night." They put him in the NICU. However, I said, "I'm not a doctor. And I don't need to be. That's a sign. And we're going to build on each little sign." Each day, a new miracle took place.

This story all lead to that first book, *The Unfinished Cross*. When the book came out in 2005, years after his birth and this occurrence, a Hollywood producer asked if we could do a TV special on his story. Telling Daniel's story was incredible, and it started me in the writing world.

So, so anyway, that started me in the writing world. Divinely, self-publishing was a rarity, and getting a publisher was equally rare. Again, God provided for me, giving me multiple publishing choices. When the book came out, I didn't have an agent. Interestingly, *The Unfinished Cross* became so popular that one of the biggest agents helped me.

Publishing was a fascinating experience. Due to my agent, my outreach expanded. I went to the World Cup with the Olympic team to come back to be asked to do the Los Angeles Dodgers. BTW, we won the pennant that year. Excitedly, I was writing a book about that experience when my agent calls, "Oh, hey. I got you an advancement on this new book deal. You're just going to say yes, too. You're writing *Songwriting for Dummies*."

"Whoa, wait a minute," I thought aloud, "Are you talking to the wrong client?" While he admitted it was a little off the path, he said, you know

so much about music. While I had written songs and had a hit song on the radio, I hadn't written that hit song. Resistant, I was against it until I hear the advancement! Okay, I was in! I called Jim, a good friend of mine. We did two records together, and he had 27 Top Ten hits. How couldn't it be anything but impressive? We even brought in my wife, who is a fantastic ghostwriter. To date, it has sold over 600,000 copies worldwide.

After that, I wrote "Be a Beast: Unleash Your Animal Instincts for Performance Driven Results" with Roger Anthony, one of the greatest men ever. The book came out after he passed away from cancer. He was from Australia, so it was beautiful when the day it came out. I got an email from the marketing director saying you're number one in Australia. It hadn't even come out in the United States yet. Then, a notice came to announce your number 100

Japan, then you're number one in Germany, you're number one in the UK, and now worldwide. Ironically, Dan Rogers always said, "This work is going to be world known." I thought, "Sure, someday." It just blew us away as Roger was so important to us, then to see the success, like it was in his honor. In 24 hours, it becomes number one in all

those countries and the US, and number one in twenty-two different categories. The other ironic fact is that I was concerned about how much was paid to create this marketing. They checked the budget, and we only spent \$36. This book has allowed me to speak at the UN at the global summit, Harvard, and The Pentagon.

Many cool things happened because it's such a unique book about mental performance triggers and how to do it. I have been blessed. Now we live in Utah. I never thought I would live away from the ocean. We live next to this magnificent mountain that is on the other side of the forest. We have a stream running through; we have waterfalls. There are two ponds and a two-bedroom cabin on our property. I feel blessed that I've been able to live the life to which I said yes.

And most don't just because of how I didn't know how I know that when I remember walking in the garden going God how the house is going to go because I have a particular lifestyle now that we love, and I want from my family. How is coaching going to make me that kind of lifestyle? Well, you know what, you just have to go, and faith the How will show up when you have a will behind it. A will is so strong that no matter what you go through, you'll find your way, and that's what I do for so

many clients now I work with them because we all have challenges. We all have things that you know like Walt Disney could have said no.

You know, there are millions of dollars in debt in the 40s. Think about that. Yeah, brother, he wanted to say no. He said, When his brother goes, we're so you know, we've so many millions of debts and while it goes, really, how cool is that we have that many people who believe in us that they would put that kind of money, a different type of attitude, right? Yeah, different that kind of attitude. But in the time that we're stuck here right now, I'm creating things that I would have never created if we didn't have the kind of challenges we're having. I believe anybody can do that. I'm not special. I just get quiet. You know, Emerson said, you know, you want true wisdom. Take a walk in the woods.

Einstein said I didn't have a bigger brain. I had a better connection. So, take the time to get connected. That's probably the most significant gift. I give to people – to help them get connected to something greater than themselves. Connected to something that's in them already, but they can't see it. They've got different blockages. And for me, it's so exciting to bust wide open and then fill that subconscious mind with new winning habits. We need them, and it's nonstop.

You know, it's one thing to know something; it's another to do it. But then you have all the way to be it. That takes daily practice. When I became a world-ranked tennis player. I didn't go, "I'm a well-known player." I don't need to practice. I realized now you need to practice even more. Well, that's the same way in life. When you take the time. Most people tend to be too busy to be successful. Well, yeah, I don't have time to take an hour, get myself grounded, and get myself set. Well, here's your most significant, most expensive real estate you have is in between your ears. When you learn that and you're willing to allow yourself to go there, and then You know, I give tools that you can use anything is possible. I think I live a life pretty well shows it doesn't mean I don't have challenges. It's just how I take on challenges.

Other things happen unexpectedly in life. For example, I went to Nashville last year, and some people in Nashville have a huge music community right. They found out I was coming. And so, I this guy calls me goes Hey, will you speak at an event tomorrow night? I said, Well, I something cancel. I am available tomorrow night says great. I said what's the event and says, Oh, I'm just going to put out the urine town.

What is that? That's how many Nashville. So interesting. They put this they sold out in 10 minutes. And not because I'm not you know, this guy's very connected and when a celebrity comes to town, they, they just put it out and people know, right. So, I was telling my son, I have four boys and the one that's 24 I was in Nashville in Nashville and said, Hey, this thing's so loud. He goes, and I told him about when a celebrity goes, Oh, who's the celebrity is going to be there?

I said, I'm gonna have a hard time believing this but Nashville kind of respects what I've done in the music industry. And he goes, I know it's not you. No way. I said, No, who's the celebrity?

I said, Well, I won't call myself It's just that people are interested because what I've done in this industry, and so that's why it's sold out. He's still in this game shakes his head. That's our kids.

Got it. You know, keep us humble. Right?

It's so beautiful and tell us how can we find you How can people find out how do they can participate in the smiles that you bring to the world? Just come you know find the in the closet no I'm coming out of

the closet no I say that I met you know in faith you know like with the unfinished cross it was challenging for the best-selling book but a lot of arrows attitude because when you start talking about faith people can get very serious but I I'm really proud that I'm can move past that now.

Extreme focus his name and my company so da, dog Apple at extreme focus, calm, that's my email. Reach out. I've got a really cool thing going on when I said I created something during this time. So, if you go to www.extremefocus.com/game-time I decided that, you know, I want people to experience what I've done on the firing line.

For the Superbowl for the Olympics for whatever, you know, navy seals. Yeah Army Rangers I've been blessed to work with they meet pressure face on. So in in business we always we have based on pressure right but how do you deal with that and turn it into your ally rather than your distraction? How do you take on fear and embrace it in a way you know, courage is not the absence of fear is how you move through it? So, game time is I do this thing every Monday where we give one of the best triggers, there's 37 of them. And it's a principle that instantly go I needed that and then I do what's called the game ready,

which is a mental process. This is how I you know, when I talked about the MVPs and the number one draft picks in the NFL, all that is I do game readies with them.

And so, I do this every Monday so for business, my business clients if they're going to have an important meeting, they got a sales call or whatever it is, we do game readies before you go because it puts you in the state of flow, it puts you into that you're going to come in what I call calm strength. And there's a power in that. It's just, it's even beyond your words. Its power, its strength. So that's what I'm doing. And I made it really affordable. I don't want to really get into a sales pitch on this, but I'm really excited about it, I can't help it. It's perfectly okay. Because you give people an opportunity to really change their life and that's what we're about amplifying goodness in the world and creating smile. So, I'm so blessed to have you here and have you share that. So, by the way, he didn't share it's \$1 to start.

It might Yeah, I'll give you a loan to you. No, no, I just want I don't want you know, so many. Boy this is gonna sound critical. I don't want to sound critical or are judgmental, but there's so many things out there that you know, they make they do so together.



Phyllis Ayman

**Author, Speaker, Advocate, Radio Show Host and Media Personality.
Speech/Language Pathologist**

“Smile: Cheek Exercise. No heavy lifting required. Uplift Your heart...Uplift the Heart of Another.”

SMILE: NO TRANSLATION REQUIRED ... A LANGUAGE WE ALL UNDERSTAND

BY PHYLLIS AYMAN

I never thought I'd be caregiving for my grandmother at the age of 15. I learned about being a caregiver from watching my mother who travelled 2 1/2 hours by bus and train several times a week to help care for her mother when she was declining physically. After a year this took its toll on my mother and the entire family. Grandma moved into a small nursing home a few blocks from where we lived. I then watched my mother care for her from morning until evening each and every day for months. She would go to the nursing home with egg nog drink in toe and return in the evening with clothes to be washed for the next day. Caregivers are true unsung heroes.

When my parents went on a two week vacation my sister and I assumed my mother's care responsibilities.

My first day entering the nursing home was a shock. My pristine, proud grandma was sitting in a rather unkempt condition in the front lobby. I couldn't bear to see her that way. I ran out in tears and circled the block several times until I composed myself sufficiently to go in and care for her. This experience left an indelible impression on my heart and mind. Years later when I became a speech pathologist the nursing home environment continued to call me.

As a speech/language pathologist who has worked with thousands of patients and residents in the over forty skilled nursing facilities for twenty-five years of an illustrious forty plus year career, I became known for my empathy and high standards while creating and advocating for innovative programs in an effort to improve the quality of life and quality of care for all nursing home residents.

However, seeing the substandard quality of care and quality of life many of our elder citizens receive in the nursing home/skilled nursing facility environment became increasingly frustrating and disheartening. It

became apparent that the greatest impact and change would only happen if I stepped out of that space. I felt compelled and took the leap to STEP OUT.

The time is NOW to WAKE UP, STAND UP, SHAKE IT UP and SPEAK UP about our attitudes towards, and treatment of, our elder citizens, no matter where they live.

I now have become known as "The Voice for Eldercare Advocacy" and will continue to speak out often, wherever and whenever possible, to raise awareness and bring attention to this all-important issue.

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Caring for the Gatekeepers of Wisdom. "Our Loved Ones Matter"

Our Elder Citizens have contributed to building our respective society's, have given birth to the next generation, and have fought on our behalf in wars on foreign soils. They are also the repositories of wisdom. We can all access information on any search engine with our finger tips or sound of our voice, but the richness of the experience and

wisdom gained from that experience can only be shared from someone who has lived it.

Our elders are the ones who have lived those experiences and have that wisdom. As such, they deserve respect, dignity, quality of life and quality of care as they continue life's journey into their advancing years. However, our attitudes towards our elder citizens is deeply rooted in our culture and our language which in turn affects the treatment they receive.

While many cultures value their elders, the challenges we face as individuals and societies for those who have increasing care needs as they live longer lives cannot be understated. Thus, ageism is a topic being addressed around the globe.

Ageism is defined as prejudice or discrimination on the basis of a person's age.

Aging is the process of growing old. The word "old" in the definition for many conjures up an image of someone who is decrepit. Thus the definition itself can affect negative attitudes and prejudice towards older people.

Declining years is a misnomer. Age does not decline, it progresses, it advances. We are progressing from the moment we are born; starting an uphill climb from the lowest levels thereby progressing onward and upward.

The very phrase 'declining years' sets up a way of thinking. It would be more appropriate to say we are continuing on the path of life's journey and are in advancing years. A person's health, physical or cognitive ability may decline, but they continue to advance in years. I remember the expression "over the hill" which was often used when someone reached the age of thirty, contributes to the idea of declining years. When do those years begin? Do we reach our peak at some predetermined age and continue a downward descent from that point? Who determines the peak of the hill? Is it some arbitrary number; 60's; 70's; 80's? Who determines that number? Is it the same for everyone?

Consider these paradoxical scenarios. The high school or college student who reaches his/her senior year is considered to have achieved a level of accomplishment. Yet, we do not ascribe reaching an advanced age with that same level of accomplishment. We exalt longevity and

mourn premature passing. However, the contradiction lies in our attitude towards, and treatment of, the older person, once they have achieved that longevity.

My purpose is to inspire a national conversation and create a grass-roots movement insisting the our loved ones receive quality of care and quality of life wherever they reside, but especially in the over 15,000 nursing homes in the United States. I believe only through the chants of many, loud voices, can we impact change. All too often, when someone is no longer a contributor to the work force. our attitude is that they have outlived their purpose or usefulness. This cannot be further from the truth. Moving to an alternative living environment because one needs more care is nothing more than geography. All too often, especially when moving into a nursing home, this is considered a destination, a place where people go waiting to live out there last days. For most these people are out of sight and out of mind. Many have no one to advocate for them, their desires, needs, wants. Many are lonely, and isolated, surrounded by people yet no one to talk to. It doesn't have to and shouldn't be that way. People can continue to contribute; they can continue to live with purpose in a way that may look different than how we think of it, but, nonetheless, it remains a

purpose and gives meaning to life. It requires shifts in and verbiage and expressions, which will affect mindset and attitudes.

We need to think that this is not an "US" and "THEM" issue. For after all, we are talking about our future selves. What do we expect and want for ourselves in our advancing years?

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I provide valuable unique insight and strategic information for individuals and families so they can become more effective advocates when seeking care for loved ones in a short-term rehabilitation, traditional long-term or memory care stay within a skilled nursing facility. The educate them on how the system works and what their loved ones are entitled to receive. All too often people feel because they or their loved one requires care, they are at the mercy of the provider. I transform people's thinking to understand that this is a business and, as with any other business that needs customers, they are actually in the driver's seat. This helps them feel more empowered and resolute in their advocacy for their loved one's care.

There isn't a person with whom I have come in contact, personally or by phone, that is not affected by this all-important issue in some way, either directly or through a relative, friend, coworker or other acquaintance. Each person supports my endeavor and acknowledges the importance of this message. Heartfelt testimonials of how the knowledge, insight and advice I provided helped families feel as they became more effective advocates for their loved ones in light of emotionally charged situations, responses to seminars on caregiving, testimonials from interviewees from radio and TV, responses from radio/podcast hosts about the importance and impact of my message are all testimonials to how I am touching so many.

ABOUT PHYLLIS AYMAN

Phyllis Ayman, author of best-selling book, "OVERDUE Quality Care for Our Elder Citizens", published February 8, 2019 and "Nursing Homes to Rehabilitation Centers...What Every Person Needs to Know" has become known as "The Voice for Eldercare Advocacy".

As an Eldercare Advisor and Speech/Language Pathologist she brings an insider's view into the nursing home industry after working in 40+skilled nursing/short-term rehabilitation facilities for over 25 years by providing valuable unique insight and strategic information for individuals and families so they can become more effective advocates when seeking care for loved ones. She's published in McKnight's Senior Living News and has been interviewed for international publications.

Phyllis has been a regular guest on the "Darby and Friends" show on WGCH AM Greenwich Business Talk Radio since 2018. Additional media includes: Sustainable Success and Amplified Radio Shows on Voice America Influencer Channel, Boomers Today Podcast, Elevated Radio, Self-Discovery Media Network, Leverage Masters Network and

Independent TV shows. She will be launching: "Voices for Eldercare Advocacy" on Voice America Empowerment Channel. September 9, 2019

She is a keynote and break out speaker on Communication, Empathy and Aging in America and also conducts webinars and seminars on Caregiving, for the public and private sector. Phyllis became host and associate producer of "The Golden Years...Understanding Better Living" on HPATV in April 2019. She serves as a board member of the Massachusetts Advocates for Nursing Home Reform.

Books that changed your life:

Black Like Me

Mitch Albom's books: Tuesdays with Morrie, The Five People You Meet In Heaven, For One More Day

Movies that inspire you

Now Voyager, A Majority Of One, 12 Angry Men, Remember The Titans, Beauty and The Beast, Alive Inside

Song that inspires you:

Smile – Nat King Cole

Your Hero:

Dr. Bill Thomas, a visionary who reimagined nursing homes as described in his book "Life Worth Living".

Quote you live by:

"My philosophy is very simple, when you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, say something! Do something! Get in trouble. Good trouble! Necessary trouble." – John Lewis



Victor Azar

“Smile, hummus is among us.”

FROM PAIN & ADVERSITY TO HUMMUS SMILES

BY VICTOR AZAR

Imagine you are 6 years old in first grade in a strange country. You are singled out, ridiculed, mocked and called a “dirty Jew” by the teachers and your classmates. At recess, you are alone and none of your classmates want anything to do with you. That 6 year old was me. My father was a Seventh Day Adventist Minister. This Christian denomination, unlike all other Christians, kept Saturday as the sabbath instead of Sunday. Keeping Saturday as the sabbath identified us as Jews in a country (Iraq), that considered the Jews as the enemy. The reason the teachers and classmates knew about my religion is because my father made a deal with the principal to let me take Saturday off and not attend school on that day. Our religion dictated that it was a sin to work or go to school on that day. In the Muslim world, such as in Basra, Iraq, they had one day off per week which was Friday. This was

not a good situation for me to endure. I always felt alone and ashamed from such an early age, and did not do well at school because of missing one day per week. I could never catch up with my studies. I longed to be loved and accepted. This was the foundation of my personality which affected the rest of my life.

My Father was such a believer in his cause that every time his church bosses asked him to move to a different country or city to start the lord's work, he accepted the calling. No other ministers would take such assignments preferring to stay close to church schools for the sake of their children. When I was having these horrible experiences at school, my parents would tell me to persevere because the Lord had chosen me to test me. Lucky me! I was also told that Jesus would be coming soon and that I would go to heaven and all of the worldly people, including the children in the school, would go to hell. All of this was because we were God's chosen people. We would get visitations from the Church officials who came from headquarters in Lebanon. They would hear about my tribulations and tell me that everyone in Beirut was praying for me. However, nothing would change for me. I was still harassed and persecuted. Can you imagine what that would do to the psyche of a small child? Do you think that would make

me a hateful, angry, and vengeful person? Or a loving and peaceful person?

As it turns out, I felt that this was an injustice against me which made me an idealistic person fighting for peace and justice, and watching out for the little guy and the underdog.

While my early schooling years had a very significant effect on who I became, subsequent tragic events throughout my life served to amplify the experiences of my early childhood years.

Also, while living in Iraq, we witnessed three bloody revolutions, where, as a child I was terrified of all the sounds and smells of war. Street fights broke out everywhere with gun fire, bombings and dead bodies everywhere that we could smell after a few days of decomposing.

We moved back to Jordan just in time for the Six Day War between the Arabs (including Jordan where we lived at the time) and Israel which caused us to live through all that fear again. This war continued for another couple of years as Israel was intermittently bombing the town where we lived. We had a bomb shelter under our house where we

ran to as soon as the attacks started. Also, we lived through the Black September war which was between the Jordanian army and Palestinian groups such as the PLO and others. This was the most violent and scary conflict that we had ever witnessed. So much happened during that period which I will hopefully write about in a future book.

Later on in life, we immigrated to the United States, the land of liberty, freedom and opportunity, and we loved it. On a personal level though, the tragedies continued with a very painful betrayal by my cousins and a very ugly divorce. I will not go into much detail here except for that my divorce was adjudicated in Jordan, Syria, and the US, and it was an extremely difficult time. With the help of the Jordan catholic church, who took bribes from my ex in-laws, I was deprived from seeing my daughters or hearing their voices for the next ten years. This was more traumatic for me than all of the above experiences.

So you might wonder what would become of a broken and PTSD ridden man like myself? How would my outlook on life be? Would I become a hateful angry person? Would I turn to crime?

Actually, I think of myself as a very lucky man for having had all these experiences and I am very grateful for having this life and all of its successes. After arriving in the US, I worked minimum wage jobs to earn money that I would give to my father so that as a family, we were able to survive and thrive in this new environment. I did this for 10 years during which we saved enough to buy a house and a business. After we established ourselves as a family, I went to college.

I excelled in college and I loved learning. My Bachelors degrees include business, political science and mathematics from Eastern Washington University. I also earned my Master of Science degree in management sciences from Carnegie-Mellon University.

After graduating, I joined PNC Financial to head up a project to modernize General Motors' payment system. GM wanted to be able to deal with their suppliers electronically all the way through the procurement cycle and they wanted to do it with a new promising technology called Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). I was so passionate about this project because it would free up people from the painfully repetitive manual data entry. I was so idealistic and naive that I thought that, as a society we would do less busy work and more joyful meaningful work

and also work less. However, what happened was the opposite. GM was able to consolidate its supply chain and thousands of suppliers worldwide were eliminated and thousands of people lost their jobs. I excelled while working on this project. I published an article in a prestigious technical business journal that put me on the map in the banking and corporate worlds. I got on a speaking tour to educate other corporations on the benefits of implementing EDI and made a lot of money for my bank. In the process, I was also involved in standardizing this technology through the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). My colleagues and I standardized all of the EDI transactions, including encryption and authentication, which are still in use internationally to this day. GM was so impressed with my work that they honored me and my boss by having lunch in Roger Smith's (GM's Chairman at the time) private dining room overlooking central park in NY.

Wells Fargo wanted to catch up with this technology and they targeted me through head hunters for a big position with three times the salary. I accepted and we moved to San Francisco. So, I became a vice president of payment systems at a major bank only 3 years after graduating from college. I was able to put them on the EDI map and I also introduced nationwide the first ever online banking system.

But all was not well at home, and, at the urging of my wife, we moved back to Jordan. I shifted careers from banking automation in San Francisco to hospitality management in Amman, Jordan. Using a hotel owned by my wife's family as a base, I morphed into a promoter extraordinaire. While I helped promote the hotel to book tour groups, I also, helped with my in-laws tourism office to also promote tour groups that arrived in Jordan. And, while I was doing all that, I also started a night club in the same hotel with live bands which became a sensation in the capital of Jordan. As if that was not enough, I was tasked by my in-laws to find land and build a 5 star hotel/resort in the rose/red city of Petra which was one of the most enjoyable projects of my life.

In the Spring of 1994, King Hussein of Jordan shook hands with Rabin, the prime minister of Israel, in the White House, agreeing to start a peace process. I knew that soon we would have a peace agreement with Israel. With an American passport in hand, I was able to cross into Israel and announced that I was there to do business. This was a welcome novelty to government officials as well as tourism company directors. This also was a great time in my life. My dream of peace was materializing right before my eyes. While I was going back and forth to Israel, I was able to find a tourism company that matched my company

in Jordan and we became strategic partners. We decided to create a system where third party nationals could come into either country and be taken care of by both companies in both countries. This was the first agreement of its kind to ever be executed between the two countries. We announced this agreement in a press conference that we held in Jerusalem on the day after the signing of the treaty in the presence of Bill Clinton. I was quoted by many world wide publications including the Jerusalem Post.

So I set out to promote my in-laws' businesses as well as the new 5 star resort. I was able to complete a turnkey operation at the Petra Plaza in the fall of 1994 with 95% occupancy for a full year with money in the bank.

Tragically, in the fall of 1995, prime minister Rabin was assassinated because some people in Israel were not happy about the peace. Rabin was also preparing to have peace negotiations with Syria which sealed his fate. I realized that matters were going down hill from there and decided to come back home to Spokane, WA and work on my own family businesses. That's when the divorce started because my ex did not want to come back to the US, despite being unhappy even around

her own family. It took me at least 5 years of pain and darkness before I picked up myself and moved on with my life.

To make a long story short, I started a food business, running cafeteria contracts, and a catering business. This was great fun and I really enjoyed this business. All was well until the recession of 2008 when the catering business dried up. While catering, I always incorporated different hummus flavors out as appetizers. People were crazy about my hummus and they urged me to package it and sell it. I did just that and it became a huge success in the Northwest of the United States. After three years of manufacturing and packaging my products in one of my kitchens, the business grew so fast that we just could not keep up with the demand. Luckily, a nearby produce distributor offered to produce and distribute my products which was a very welcome thing. I was now freed up to promote my products and experiment with new products.

One of the things that I do to promote my hummus is going to the stores and conducting tastings. This is my most favorite thing to do. I just love the surprised happy smiles on people's faces as they taste the flavors. Seeing these smiles is what I live for. I see couples or families come to my table and after they start tasting, their whole being changes

as they smile and start sharing their experience with people passing by. They say, "You have to come taste this, it is amazing."

Through my website and social media, people get that I am very passionate about health. I make sure that the ingredients and the way we process our products result in the healthiest and cleanest label hummus anywhere. This passion was the result of yet another negative life experience. I had an aggressive cancer that I cured naturally through, mostly, nutrition. Since then, I have continually been researching all kinds of topics that have to do with health and then implementing these findings into my products.

All of my experiences, including my horrible childhood experiences, are the catalyst for who I have become. Living through wars and seeing death and destruction will always be a part of me. This is why I am always an advocate of peace. I will do anything to see that everyone around me is happy and safe. I have become a caretaker and a pleaser. This is why I love to see people having a good time and smiling around me. I'm not sure that the hummus business is my calling, but seeing how people react to me and my products, sure feels like it. I am finally loved and accepted, which is what I craved as a child.

ABOUT VICTOR N. AZAR

Victor N. Azar is a Palestinian-Lebanese-American businessman and founder of Victor Foods. Victor Foods was created to manufacture and distribute award winning hummus and other mediterranean foods in the Northwest of the USA.

Victor graduated from Carnegie Mellon's School of Urban & Public Affairs with a Masters of Science degree in Management Sciences. His undergraduate degrees are in business administration, math, and political science from Eastern Washington University. Victor is a successful entrepreneur who started and operated many successful businesses in Spokane, WA, and abroad. After graduating from Carnegie Mellon, he worked in the high tech banking industry at PNC Financial, where he developed and implemented GM's EDI payment system, which produced huge economies of scale for General Motors. As a result he became a published author and lecturer in the high-tech banking industry. Within two years in his banking career, he became the vice president of all payment systems world-wide at Wells Fargo in San Francisco.

During his entrepreneurial career, while he was living in Jordan, he was the driving force behind the creation of the first joint business agreement between Jordan and Israel. He announced this agreement in Jerusalem in a press conference that he held with his Israeli counterpart hours after the signing of the peace treaty between the two countries in 1994. Victor also started and operated a night-club in Amman, Jordan that became the busiest night spot in Jordan and promoted the first ever rock and roll festival in Amman's palace of culture to benefit Queen Noor's indigent women's cottage industries project. In 1995, Victor was the poster child of the peace tourism campaign. He delivered keynote speeches to huge audiences of travel agents in the major cities of the United States.

Back in his home-town, Spokane, he started D'Zaar Catering and Food Service, Inc. and acquired contracts with Triumph Composites and the Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture to provide cafeteria and catering services. In 2010, Victor started Victor Foods to produce mediterranean foods such as hummus for the grocery shelves in the Northwest of the United States.

Books that changed my life:

The Prophet - by Gibran

Think & Grow Rich - by Napoleon Hill



Erin Baer

“Smile, You are a Badass.”

SMILING THROUGH IT ALL

BY ERIN BAER

My name is Erin Baer and I am a Badass! However, I didn't always think of myself that way. My life was anything but a fairytale. It has been filled with peaks and valleys, twists and turns filled with good, bad and ugly parts. As a child, I was well behaved, shy and didn't speak up. I was the kid who stayed to herself, sat in the front of the class; the one with perfect attendance, and the one who focused on just surviving the day. I was taken out of class to only be sent to speech, because I couldn't pronounce my S's and Z's correctly, how embarrassing. I hated school. I loved learning; it was everything else that would bring me to tears at the end of the day. I just wanted to be liked, because everything in my world told me otherwise. My childhood was difficult, it was filled with bullying, abandonment, isolation and challenges that no child should ever endure. Because no one seemed to like me, I mean I didn't have any friends, not one. I did my best to blend in, disappear if possible and just survive the day. It was absolute torture. When you are a kid and your

day is filled with such dislike you begin to question your very existence. Every day, I would start fresh in hopes to make it better than the day before and they all ended the same, me, walking up my long driveway after being dropped off by the school bus and crying as I took each and every step towards my front door. I felt that I was brought into this world by our creator on accident, after all I was a twin, maybe I was the mistake. Yet, something in me, told me that was just a seed that was planted in my mind and it was not true. So, as days turned into nights and nights turned into new days, I kept waking up with a new found hope, that maybe today was the day someone would see me. Yet, it never happened, not until much later in life. I was lucky enough to be introduced to God at an early age, by my second-grade teacher who had a fondness for me. She spotted me the first day I arrived in kindergarten and told me I was going to be in her class (second grade of course) and second grade came and sure enough I was in her class. The outlook I had become a little brighter and clearer when she became my first mentor/friend and cheerleader. My journey had just begun and I had a lot more that I would endure until God revealed his true plan for me. Growing up, I was always told by my parents and their friends that it would get better, eventually. Honestly, I just thought it was a something they told me to give me some encouragement to not be so sad. It

never really did, not as a child anyway. Yet, I held onto that idea that maybe, just maybe it would get better someday. I just didn't know when that someday would be the day. I just began to accept that the other kids were never really going to see me, really see me so it was best to stay to myself and do my own thing. My Dad taught me the game of Golf as a toddler and I fell in love with it immediately. I found solace in golf, being out on the putting green, practice range or golf course; just me and that little white ball, it was beyond peaceful. Sounds silly, but it was everything to me. I could relate my life to the game and it gave me hope that one day life would be just as amazing. That was the beginning of me learning what it means to accept yourself when no one else did. After all, being female, playing golf I was teased even more. Yet, I didn't care, I loved the game and the game never judged me. It became my rock. Over the years, I became an accomplished golfer and learned much of who I was, who I was becoming and how I faced life head on. Golf became my rock, as everything around me seemed to be chaotic. Yet, my rock was shattered as a young woman, when I endured a traumatic tipping point of abuse and rape. I met the monster when I was working in the Golf industry and after a while it polluted my views. After finding the strength to leave the toxic relationship that if I didn't would have resulted in death, I started on a journey to find myself

again. I felt betrayed by Golf and decided to take a break from the thing I loved most. I needed time to mourn myself, my life and start picking up the shattered pieces of who I was. Having and experiencing a life-threatening heart condition for nearly 8 years that wasn't going to go away without some changes, I made the decision to refocus my energy on living a healthy lifestyle, mentally, emotionally and physically for me. That's when I fell in love with competitive bodybuilding and became a successful Figure Competitor. I put everything I had into it because at this point, I had nothing to lose. I had already lost who I was and I was on a journey to find me again. I loved the focus and determination it required while revealing just how strong I truly was. I have always been very competitive and competing in bodybuilding was right up my ally. Plus, it allowed me to focus on anything but the trauma I had endured. I thought if I could look good on the outside, surely, I would be okay in the inside. I was wrong. My first show in 2009 was amazing, it gave me the craving to do more, but after my second show 3 weeks later, I did well and placed, just not as well as I hoped and my world came crumbling down. Instead of being happy with my progress and improvements I gave too much responsibility to external gratification. It was in that moment realized how I was ignoring the trauma I had endured and made the decision to seek help. I began seeing a

therapist and started to unravel the mess that my life was in. Why I felt the way I did about myself, about others and the world around me. I realized that though things happened to me, I was the one who could make the decision to change it. In those moments during therapy, I made the decision to take 100% responsibility regardless of fault because if I did that, my life and the direction it would go in would be up to me and no one else. Since I sought out therapy and I was doing the work on myself, I would be prepared for anything, or so I thought. During my early years in competitive bodybuilding, I had a fluke accident that caused a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and Post Concussive Syndrome (PCS). I had lost some of my memory, the ability to multi-task, and the simple act to keep count. It all sounds so minimal yet it wasn't. The traumatic brain injury tested me in so many ways that it caused me to get frustrated with myself, fear judgement by others and most of all not be enough, whether it was smart enough, quick enough, patient enough, etc... I had to relearn things, especially how my brain used to work to know how it was going to work and what I needed to do to get better. I had to put in a lot of work to rehabilitate my brain and learn new ways of understanding others, understanding myself, storing information, retrieving information and to this day, I still have moments where I realize that my brain still struggles, even though it's been 8

years. I didn't know it at the time, but everything I had experienced up to that point was preparing me to take on the battle of infertility. This is a battle I am still currently in and a battle I know is closer to the end than the beginning. The strength that has not only allowed me to survive everything I have shared has taught me to live my life fully regardless of what is thrown my way. It has taught me that there will always be ups, downs and turnarounds. I had my moments when it turned my smile into a frown, but just a moment because I realized that smiling was a lot easier when you push forward. I am thankful that I have gone through all those trials and tribulations, because it has made me the strong, badass woman I am today with a huge smile on my face. I am proud of that and I am proud of my journey. Without the journey I have been on I would have never learned that I am strong and courageous and by standing tall, rooted to my beliefs, nothing can break me, I bend with the wind finding another success in my beautiful life as my own Hero, a badass and one that is smiling ear to ear.

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As a woman who was silenced herself, I was tired of seeing other women being silenced for wanting to be strong, courageous, and proud of who

they are while moving on from feeling beaten down by life. Enough was enough and I began to share my story, to be the positive voice to show others that they are not defined by their circumstances, they too can be their own heroes. The more I shared my story, the more I realized it was time to write my book, so I did. My book From Beaten to Badass was published in October 2019, National Domestic Violence Awareness Month to encourage others to speak up because their voice matters. I was on a mission to get my book in the hands of those who needed to read it and to give them strength, hope and courage and to know there was light within their darkness.

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I am who I am because of the people that have come into my life as well as those who have left it, because all of them made a profound impact in who I am today. I was given a lesson by each and everyone of them. Some of the lessons I learned were self-acceptance, strength, pride, determination, tenacity, faith and growth. Without those people who were/are in my life I would have never been blessed with the lessons they taught me. I have cherished each and every single one I have been fortunate to learn. The biggest lesson I love to teach others

is Giving Back. I do that every single day as I have made it my mission to do just that with the help of others. I love seeing the smiles on the faces of others as I give back because I want to – not because I have to. Giving back to me is worth more than its weight in gold. I wanted to help others that have found themselves in similar life situations from bullying, abandonment, domestic violence, sexual assault and even infertility – all the “elephants in the room” that no one likes to talk about. I decided I would be the one to confront them. My book does just that, it confronts the elephants and shines a light in the darkness of what life can throw your way. I didn't know how important my story was until I created the Make an Impact Campaign back in 2020, where individuals and businesses sponsor my book and it is then sent to a domestic violence shelter to give the staff, advocates and survivors a guide into the world of being beaten down. From this my organization has become a social enterprise and lives are changing simply because I decided to speak up and share my story. I wouldn't have been able to do it without those in my life who supported, encouraged and stood by me. Sharing my story has been the biggest gift I have been able to share with the world. One I am honored and humbled to acknowledge, one that brings others hope and helps so many others smile again, to be a part of that is a blessing.

ABOUT ERIN BAER

Erin Baer is a thriving entrepreneur and lives her passions as an Author, International Keynote Speaker and Empowerment Coach. Her life's work is to enable beaten down and silenced to once again be strong, courageous, and proud. Erin decided to be the positive voice to show others that their circumstances don't define them, that they don't need to be beaten down in life, and that they too can be their own heroes. Through her coaching and speaking, Erin encourages you to look within yourself where you will find the power to unleash the badass in you. You may feel defeated and feel life is unfair by the cards you were dealt. However, the only way you lose is if you don't learn and you don't get back up. You are a badass! Please welcome Erin Baer as she shares with you her story of moving from Beaten to Badass.

Books that changed your life:

Writing my own book: From Beaten to Badass, Gift of Fear by Gavin DeBecker, Outwitting the Devil and Three Feet From Gold by Sharon Lechter and Greg Reid, plus so many others - just too many to list

Song that inspires you:

Kelly Clarkson - Broken & Beautiful
(Produced by Marshmello & Steve Mac)

Quote you live by:

Myself

Fun Fact:

"Smile, You are a Badass!"



**Jillian Baker, Internet Marketing Specialist & Consultant, Connector;
Lattice Marketing, Founder**

“One ten-second smile can cure
a whole bad day.”

MORE WILL BE REVEALED, SO KEEP SMILING

BY JILLIAN BAKER

It's 1999. I'm twelve years old. My dad is a computer programmer and IT specialist. For the past year, I've been helping my elder family members learn how to fix and work their computers. My dad was tired of being the family IT guy, so he passes the job onto me. You could say I was born with a technological silver spoon. But this is the first time I get to do real work. I'm working for my Dad's partner in an internet service provider. (Remember dial-up?) The ladies in the office had been entering the first half of this data for weeks. I typed the rest in a few hours. I'm paid better than any twelve-year-old I know. Websites are becoming a bigger part of his business, so he's teaching me to design websites too.

It's 2002. I've been helping my dad improve his designs for a while now. I'm sixteen, and for the first time, I'm designing an entire website by

myself. I'm officially designing websites for businesses before a high school diploma is in sight.

It's 2003. I drop out of high school because I'm getting hard into drugs. OTCs mostly, because they are easy to get my hands on. I overdose over the summer and terrify my family. I want to put some space between myself and the drugs, so I homeschool, get my GED and start college a year early at age seventeen. School is easy. I have a 4.0 GPA and things are looking up for me.

I'm still known as a computer whiz so I start my first business, teaching and fixing computers in peoples' homes. I work my way through almost the entire nearby retirement village, teaching charming old ladies to send emails to their family. I get many customers from the poster hanging at the gas station in town where I pump gas.

But college is getting harder. The summer semester is over. No more down to earth older classmates trying to improve their lives. In come the rowdy young people. It's not long before I decide that alcohol isn't a drug... and all I need to do to feel okay again is get drunk and make friends. I quit school with a 4.0 GPA (minus that one public speaking class where I broke

down during the final speech.) I can't handle life anymore.

It's February 5, 2009. My home has been impounded, everything I have in its trunk, riding on bald tires. How did a white Buick LeSabre become 'home'? Over the next fourteen days, I will sweat, cry, shake and ask myself: Why? How? How did I get here? Dear God, can this all please end? I'm detoxing off heroin. I'd been injecting about twenty bags a day. I'm twenty-two years old and my whole, big family knows about this rather public bottom. Even my little cousins. I hated myself.

I remember chills that felt like millions of tiny spears, stabbing me from the inside out. I remember vowing, promising, swearing, that I would never, never use again. I've made this promise to myself before, but this is the first time I've lost my fallback. My father tells me on the phone that he's terrified because he knows that when he lets go of my hand there is a 50/50 chance I'll sink or swim. But he also knows that if he never lets go of my hand, that I'll never learn how to swim. I'm officially sick of this life and want a new one. For my Dad's sake. For all their sake.

Sadly, regret doesn't heal a broken mind. Bars don't heal psychological scars. Every ounce of my being wanted to live a clean, normal life. Not

one ounce of my being knew how. Within 36 hours of my release, I was back to using. I didn't know any other way to live anymore.

Right now, you might wonder, what trauma, what hurt, what damaged childhood must have produced this junkie? I still wonder myself. I have some theories, but none of them would qualify for a lifetime movie special. I was a bright kid. Books were my first obsession and it showed in my academic life. I never met a teacher that didn't fawn over "my potential." I hated hearing about my potential.

I never learned the necessity of hard work. Everything came so easily to me. Grades and academic recognition just happened. I didn't study. I'd only do the homework when they said I had to or fail then I'd finish a semester's worth in an evening without flinching. Am I bragging? Maybe a bit. My smarts were the only thing I had ever liked about me. It was the only thing I had to love about myself.

But what smart person ends up detoxing in jail over a missed court date? I was out of reasons to love myself and, as I said, I continued to use. For the next two weeks, in various drug dens, with various people, I declare that I'm looking forward to going to rehab... tomorrow...

tomorrow... tomorrow... until it was clear that tomorrow isn't promised. I woke up in a shower in a one room apartment in Paterson, NJ, my fellow degenerates dragging me to the chair where I had fallen out, insisting that I had died, turned blue, purple, stopped breathing, no pulse, and oh, by the way – could I get out?

It would take a novel to explain the next few days following that event, but in short, I had just enough will to live to find my way into a rehab. Not because I loved myself. Not because the most recent bottom was worse than any of the other bottoms I'd reached in nine years of cycling through various drugs, trying to find the 'one' that would solve me. I got clean because I wanted my family to be able to sleep at night.

For the first time in my life, I didn't have a grand story or idea for my life for all that 'potential' that I had to do great, amazing and impressive things in the world. I didn't have some theoretically amazing future. I had realized that no matter how dark and deep a hole I could find to crawl into, my family never stopped caring about me. I decided to live for them.

March 2, 2009 is the last time I put a substance in my body. It would be a while yet before I learned how to smile.

A few weeks into my stay at the facility a recovering addict came in to share her story. It could've been my story. Amazing family. Close with her father. Smart, middle class, everything in the world to live for. She went long periods of time appearing like she had it all together. She worked, paid bills. But over time the periods of manageability got shorter, and the dark, dark pits grew deeper and wider.

But she was SMILING. Real smiles. Not a chemical smile. Not the kind of smile you use when you're trying to convince the nice family in the parking lot that you'd run out of gas and just need a few dollars to make it home. This woman had a beautiful life. A career, a family, a husband that knew her whole story. She was free of shame.

I don't even remember her name, but I know she saved my life that day. She told me how she had stayed clean and I dove headfirst into that new way of life.

I learned that the horrible things I'd done in my life didn't have to define my entire life. I had just one goal. I wanted to stay clean, share my story, and let someone else's daughter, sister, cousin, niece, granddaughter, know that they never have to use again. I got clean for my

family. I stayed clean because an addict in recovery gave me hope.

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It's 2011. I'm just over a year clean. I met the love of my life. I have keys to a home, a car, and to a place where I can meet with other recovering addicts to share in my joys, struggles and gratitude. They help me live with integrity, and I just can't stop smiling. I have everything to gain and nothing to lose. Every day alive is a gift.

We're expecting our first daughter and I can't keep up with the heavy lifting at my job. I'm laid off and unsure what to do next. My father calls me. I've been turning down work offers from him for the past year. I didn't want to take on too much early in recovery. But I'm home with nothing to do and a long-time client of ours is struggling with Google AdWords. He can't wrap his head around it and is wondering if I can help. I hit Google and learn everything I can.

When I declared myself ready to take on the task, I logged in, made the necessary changes, and within two weeks I had lowered their costs and doubled their sales. On the other end of the phone was a man I

had admired most of my life, thanking me for the impact I made on his business. I cannot begin to describe the feeling that washed over me. My entire life, I'd been surrounded by business owners. My father, grandparents, aunts, uncles, my Dad's various clients, and here I was, offering something that could help the people I looked up to the most in life. I was hooked. But in a good way this time.

I started freelancing and within a year, Lattice Marketing was born.

This would be an excellent place for a 'happily ever after'. But life is still life. Even when you have spiritual principles in your life. Even when your heart is filled with service. Even when you practice faith and love and integrity, life still happens.

Shortly after I started my small, part-time business, my happily ever after fell apart. I was clean. My husband wasn't. He was spiraling and I was powerless to do anything about it. Sure, he wasn't hitting the pipe or running the streets. But I watched alcohol destroy him. In short order, I was a single mom, living at my parents away from my support network and mourning my relationship. My supplemental income became my only income overnight.

I had a million excuses to fall apart. But not one reason. I went into my business with the same energy that I went into my recovery. I started networking. I joined the local BNI chapter where my father was a member. The same chapter he had been a member of when I was in jail, rehab, a halfway house, a shelter. These people were his dear friends. They knew my whole story before I ever arrived. But they met me with SMILES.

I cannot express enough the importance of connecting with people who lift you up and help you grow. Today I have many networks, some personal, some business, but in all my networks, I'm not in it for money or popularity. I want to connect with others, I want to grow with others, and I want to foster growth in others. I can't think of a higher calling than to participate in another person's journey in a positive way.

Through the amazing relationships I built in BNI, I was able to turn a part-time freelance gig into a future for my daughter and me. Speaking regularly in front of fellow business professionals, I developed a knack for presenting. That shaking teenage college student who flunked her speech final has since delivered impactful and entertaining talks to

groups of hundreds of people, both for business and as a recovering addict, sharing hope with others.

My clarity of purpose and pure tenacity kept me going through difficult times, and eventually to amazing new places.

My daughter grew as my business flourished. And our lives took an unexpectedly beautiful turn when her father got clean in 2013. We remarried in 2015 and had our second daughter together in 2016. Today, his amazing older children are also in our lives. I am a blessed and joyful stepmother to two amazing humans that I did not have the privilege of raising and am also a deliriously happy grandmother to a little baby boy.

Today my husband and I dream together. And yes, sometimes life shows up, and we have to pivot. In internet marketing, the landscape is constantly evolving. My husband has gone through a variety of career pivots, but with willingness to accept the world as it is rather than as we'd like it to be, we don't ever let obstacles stop us. They simply become fascinating landmarks across our path.

I am not an overnight millionaire. I'm not even a millionaire yet. But my personal life is rich with authentic relationships with people of all ages, income brackets and backgrounds. The opportunity to participate in their journeys, and to enjoy their company on mine makes all of it worth every uphill battle, struggle, and interesting turn we face in life.

In addition to the business that I love like a fifth child, my husband and I aspire to provide affordable housing options for women in recovery, start a property management company, and a number of other side dreams along the way. At the time of this writing, Lattice Marketing is preparing to launch Bootstrapped Business Marketing for those ambitious entrepreneurs who may be starting on shoe-string, the way I did, and want to take on the task of marketing their business online.

My dreams are lofty, but together with the amazing tribe of people I have formed, we can do anything.

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It is easy to stay smiling and free knowing that I put my principles and values first. Money and prestige can be powerful tools, but if I put them

before my own peace, they won't serve me, or my purpose. And even with putting my relationships, my values and my purpose above my profession, Lattice Marketing has achieved double digit growth eight years out of ten.

I take time to appreciate and enjoy my family. I make time for my spouse. As a homeschool Mom, I spend time nurturing my children's self-confidence and love of learning.

As a recovering addict, I remain in service of the recovery community, sometimes by teaching public institutions about addiction, sometimes picking up the phone for an addict who is struggling, or simply celebrating with them as they reach a new milestone.

I've learned that it's the quality of relationships I build with others rather than the quantity that builds success. I approach my clients and network with a willingness to serve, and as a giver, I receive. A clenched fist can't receive blessings. An open hand to give receives much in return.

I've mentored people professionally and personally throughout the years and consider it an honor. Without giving of my time to another, I wouldn't be fortunate enough to receive the kind of gratitude from

others that recharges my heart and my purpose again and again:

"When I joined BNI 8 years ago, it was nerve-racking talking in front of a large group of people with really no idea what I was doing. Jillian was assigned as my mentor. I still remember how professional and efficient she was. She welcomed me with open arms into the group and was always there when I had questions. Because of Jillian's professionalism, I knew I had to up my game to a new level. She was the example that I worked to expect from myself. A few years ago, I launched the 24/7 Chapter of BNI. Her role as a mentor inspired me to be the kind of member who can lead with professionalism, accountability, and of course, a welcoming smile. Her success in all aspects of her life is inspiring and extremely motivating. Our chapter is excellent, much thanks to her. I'm grateful for everything she has done for me as a member and a friend."

- Dave Bendel, Washington Flooring; BNI 24/7 Founding Member

In business, I focus on what my clients' goals really mean to them as people rather than what that client means to my bottom line.

"Without Jillian, I wouldn't even be in business. The business was one foot in the grave and one foot on a banana peel. Today, 75% of our

business is through our website. Jillian made it possible for me to provide for my family.” – Andy Hartwick, All Season Overhead Doors & More

Gratitude is one of the most powerful forces on the planet. Received, it energizes and inspires. Given it can change someone's world. But the greatest power of gratitude is in one's attitude. It's not a feeling, it's an action. It's our behavior. That which I'm ungrateful for, I am liable to lose. If I am grateful for my friends, family, network, clients, children, grandchild, husband, then I nurture and care for them. If I'm grateful for my home, I maintain it, clean it and improve it. If I am grateful for a message of hope that was shared with me, I share it with others.

My goals may shift, the path to my goals may shift. Life may knock all of my plans off the drawing board, but when I face the world with a smile, the world smiles back.

I love myself today. I love knowing that no matter what is going on, whatever I face, that more will be revealed. There are no ends, only detours, and I don't have all the answers. But with gratitude, willingness to serve, and a smile, I can find solutions, one day at a time.

ABOUT JILLIAN BAKER

Jillian Baker is the owner of Lattice Marketing in Warren County, NJ. She was raised in IT from a very young age and has been designing websites since the age of sixteen. With her nearly two decades of experience serving small businesses, she provides premium business web presences for small businesses that depend on consistent local leads and a fantastic local reputation. She is a connector and active networker dedicated to building lasting and impactful relationships with her clients and community.

Books that changed your life:

All of Them

Movie that inspire you:

Dead Poets Society

Song that inspires you:

Just Fine, Mary J Blige.

Your Hero:

The Addict Who Stayed Clean Today

Quote you live by:

More Will Be Revealed

Fun Fact:

I was dressed as a Christmas Elf, on my 34th Birthday when asked to write this.



Steve Barber, Supporting Strategies

“We all have adversity. What is important is that we’re here for each other.”

TURNING ADVERSITY INTO A SMILE

BY STEVE BARBER

When I first mentioned to my inner circle that I was co-authoring a book, the question was asked of me, “Why would I want to read it? What is in it for me?” At first, I was a bit taken back by the question, but then I quickly realized I ask the same question to myself before I start reading a book or taking on a task. So, the answer as to why you should read my book and my story is simple. I am just like you. Life has dealt me some blows and has also given me the opportunity to pursue my dreams. I learned to alchemize struggles into valuable learning opportunities and possibilities. My story could be your story and I hope you are inspired by reading my story and realize the bumps incurred along the way do not define you, they make you stronger. I learned to ‘embrace the suck’ and realized adversity is one of many tools that when understood and used correctly can be the driving force behind your success.

My journey started over 50 years ago when I was born to two amazing parents, Susan and Barry. They gave me all the tools I needed to become successful... a strong family, college education, all the support I required, and most importantly, love! My mother raised my brother and me while my father provided for us. To this day, I believe there is nobody who worked harder to provide an incredible childhood. Barry is a CPA who worked for a top accounting firm and rose to run their international accounting practice. His job required long hours, extensive travel, and a lot of time away from home. He is the reason for my strong work ethic. Susan was a stay-at-home Mother who raised me to be the person I am today. She was incredible in every way possible. She was Mother, my confidant growing up, and somebody who lite up the room when she walked in. Unfortunately, we lost her in 2012 from a short battle with Pancreatic Cancer. The adversity of losing the closest person to you is something you never really get over. It took me being vulnerable to those around me and leaning on their support to begin to smile again. Now, I use the pain I felt dealing with my Mother's passing as my primary driver to succeed. I know she is looking down on me and want her to be proud of the man and father I have become.

I had a great childhood. I had all the love in the world and all the toys and games I wanted. I got to experience vacations of a lifetime. Multiple trips to Disney World and Hawaii stand out plus more than a few summers on the Jersey shore! I had all the reasons to be happy. However, this book is about turning adversity into smiles, so I would like to share some of the adversity I experienced growing group and how I use those feelings to fuel me today.

I would first like to talk about my brother. Adam is almost 9 years younger than I am and, other than both being in the accounting profession, have always been about as opposite as brothers can be. I loved playing sports; Adam loved the arts. I am reserved, Adam is more eccentric. I am conservative, Adam is not. I like the mountains and country; Adam likes the beach and city. Being of different personalities and generations, I often felt like an only child struggling to learn the lessons of how to emotionally deal with others. I did not have that brother or sister to lean on, to fight with, and to learn with. I had to learn this emotional intelligence through trial and error. I use these experiences today. I do not dwell on the mistakes. Instead, I accept them as part of everyday life and use them to course correct as appropriate. The adversity of not having that sibling to lean on and learn

from growing up defines me in my adulthood. I choose to accept that I am not perfect, learn from my mistakes and focus on staying positive. As we grew older, our relationship and bond strengthened, and I am very proud to have a brother like Adam. He is somebody who, in many ways, is more successful than I am, and somebody I can now turn to for guidance and who will be by my side whenever needed.

Barry's travels took us from northern New Jersey to the suburbs of Chicago when I was 7 years old and then back to New Jersey at age 15. This was a difficult time for me as I had to leave my childhood friends and start anew while in the middle of my high school years. That first summer, I was alone and distraught. I had no friends and no social activities. I was young and immature and rumbled with the question why me. Why did my life have to be uprooted? I became increasingly frustrated and, unfortunately, I took those frustrations out on the people closest to me and became a difficult person to live with. My temper flared easily, I became a bully to my younger brother, and was not happy. I was also dealing with an ankle injury that changed my life (more on that later).

I emerged from that long summer a different person. I dealt with emotions that I did not know I had and became much more reserved and

worried about entering a brand-new school with no friends. The story I had in my mind was one of isolation and loneliness. The revolution was the exact opposite. I was welcomed by my new community and met my life-long best friend. Having a friend that shared the same values as I did, liked the same things as I did, and was so much fun to be around was the source of emerging me from my funk. I finally had the friend and the person in my life that I could relate to. I started telling myself things like life is good, I am likeable, and school did not have to suck. I learned the magic of friendship and started smiling again. I also learned that the stories we make up in our minds focus on the negative. The reality is we need to release the negative and focus on the positive.

Looking back on my childhood, it taught me the life lessons I needed. Yes, there were challenges, but I was lucky enough to have an incredible family, a Father who provided more than he needed to, a Mother who was there for me no matter what, and a sibling that any man would be blessed to call his Brother. My childhood and adolescent years gave me the solid foundation I would need to rely on later in my life.

I mentioned that during the summer we moved from Chicago to New Jersey I was dealing with an ankle injury. This injury that occurred

while playing high school football in Chicago is something I am dealing with to this day. The original injury was a simple broken ankle. However, the ankle never healed correctly and caused me a great deal of pain throughout my adulthood. 30+ years and 4 surgeries later, I had the ankle fused in 2014. The pain my ankle caused inhibited me from doing many things and affected my quality of life. I feel I have spent more time limping and on crutches than I have walking normal. Although no longer in pain, I am dealing with the repercussions of the surgery. I can no longer walk barefoot with a normal gait and need to wear specific shoes to help with this. My hips, back, and neck are constantly in pain and discomfort because of the ankle fusion. Rather than focus on the negative, I have taken this challenge and turned it into one of the forces that drives me every day to succeed. I have found that pain is just a mindset and if one focuses too much on the pain, their entire demeanor changes. Instead I focus on the positive, use the pain as a driver, and keep an optimistic outlook which, in turn, leads to a much better quality of life. #keepsmling #shifthappens

Fast forwarding to my early 20's, I graduated college with a Bachelor in Science degree with a Major in Accounting and was working at Merrill Lynch as a Financial Analyst. To be honest, the job was just that....a

job. I was bored most of the day and needed a change. Because of this, I realized early in my career that I did not want a job that was routine. So, what did I do, I moved into Corporate Accounting, working for a publishing company in New York City. For those who are not familiar with corporate accounting, it is about as routine as a job can get. The first two weeks of the month are busy, the third week of the month is catch-up, and the fourth week of the month is when we were able to take vacation. Luckily, my personality is not one of a typical accountant (thank you, Mom!) and I quickly migrated out of the Corporate Accounting world into Corporate Finance. Not long after that move, the Publishing company I was working for asked me to relocate to Maryland as they were starting a joint venture with a division General Electric and needed somebody to oversee the accounting and operations side of the launch. To this day I am not sure why they chose a 26 year-old with limited accounting experience and no operations experience to oversee this project but I am forever thankful.

Working for TPN Register was the job that changed my life. Yes, I performed the routine accounting functions, but I learned so much about running a company through hands-on experience. I was not only involved with IT, Human Resources, and facilities management

but I also gained the experience of working with Senior Executives and dealing with the different personalities that came along with each of those areas. The lessons learned while at TPN Register has followed me throughout my career.

After TPN Register, I bounced around at a few other jobs until I landed at PBI Media, soon to be known as Access Intelligence. I spent 17+ incredible years with this company working as Vice President of Financial Planning and Internal Audit. The CEO of the company is somebody I worked very closely with and learned so much from and still value his opinion. He taught me how to be a leader, not a manager. I was able to use my life experience and personality to help navigate the company through both turbulent and prosperous times. I loved all 17+ years I spent there. It transformed and challenged me in many ways and taught me valuable life lessons that I use to this day. Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end and the end was not how I envisioned it. I experienced a very hard reality that I already knew. The business always comes first. Personal relationships are secondary. However, I also learned about ways not to be treated when the difficult decision needs to be made to separate and vowed to treat my employees the way I would like to be treated. To this day, I still

love Access Intelligence and wish nothing but success for them and all those involved. Although devastated from the split, I soon realized it was the best professional thing to ever happen to me.

I used the immediate aftermath of my termination from Access Intelligence to decide the next step in my career. I had a wealth of experience and knowledge and was continuing to learn. Oh yeah, I failed to mention that I was finally fulfilling a bucket list item and went back to school to earn a Masters in Business Administration. I made this decision in 2017 and wanted to challenge myself so I chose the top-ranked Robert H. Smith Business School at the University of Maryland to complete my degree with my goal of obtaining the degree with a 4.0 GPA. The 24-month program tested me in many ways and is one of the most difficult under-takings I have ever completed. I needed to rely on all my prior experience, my time-management experience, my people-management experience, etc. to get through the programs. Not to mention some new life-long friends (#SharkTank) that pushed me when I needed to be pushed. Looking back, I am so happy I went through with getting the degree. I learned more than I thought I would, made new life-long friends, and fulfilled that bucket list item. I did not obtain the 4.0 GPA but came close with a 3.97!

Taking all my life lessons, adversity, knowledge, and experience, I decided to embark on a new venture that has and will continue to test me. My life after Access Intelligence is not one of a corporate employee but one of an entrepreneur. At age 48 I decided to venture off on my own! No safety net, no entrepreneurship experience, nothing but my life lessons and the support of my loving wife and son. The risk was high but so was the opportunity. I very quickly realized I was in over my head. Like when we moved from Chicago to New Jersey at age 15, I had to reinvent myself. I had to start over and make all new business relationships. I left my prior life behind.

Two+ years into my new journey and I have done it! I have the best job in the world. I used every bit of my life lessons, the adversity, the long hours, the challenges, the successes and failures, the anger of losing a job I loved, all of it to build a business from scratch. I am now a successful entrepreneur, a master networker, an influencer, and a leader doing something I never thought I could do. The hours are long, and the stress is high, but the reward is worth it. All of the challenges and obstacles I faced as a child, as an adolescent, and as an adult made me stronger and shaped me to be who I am today. My advice to all is take the adversity and channel it to something positive. Because when you keep smiling, shift happens!

Why: Since I broke the news that I was co-authoring a book, I have been asked why? The answer is simple, because I want to tell my story and how I used adversity to learn and challenge myself and pursue a dream I never knew I had. I learned life is not simple. I understand that every person deals with adversity in their own way and that every person takes that adversity and makes of it what they will. I took my own adversity and shaped it into a force that has driven me to success. That success has come off the back of many people, many influencers, many leaders. People who did not need to give me the time of day when I was starting out but who helped me in a time when I needed all the help I could get. I want to thank these individuals, these influencers, by giving them the recognition they deserve in this book.

I am looking forward to seeing each of these individuals with a big smile on their face and influencing others to Keep Smiling because Shift will happen!

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How do I create abundance, solve problems, and inspire smiles? The answer is simple. I focus on the positive. I take the challenges presented

to me, use the tools I have to solve them and project positivity. To coin an old phrase, I take lemons and make lemonade. In my business of being a growth and profitability advisor, I take a consultative and collaborative approach to every relationship. I focus on what is working and discarding what is not. I end every meeting, every conversation, every phone call with a smile. I say 'please' and 'thank you' and always come to the table with a solution, never with just a problem. I go out of my way to help my community and leave a situation better than when I found it. I believe in the Keep Smiling Movement and I believe in focusing on the positive. All of this combined makes it possible to take any situation, any adversity, and come out stronger on the back end.

Books That Changed My Life:

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Steven Covey
Screw It Lets Do It: Lessons in Life, Richard Branson
The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, Patrick Lencioni
One Word, Jon Gordon, Dan Britton, and Jimmy Page

Movies That Inspired Me:

The Godfather
Apollo 13
Rocky
Shawshank Redemption

Song That Inspire Me:

God Bless The U.S.A by Lee Greenwood

Your Hero:

My Mother

Quote You Live By:

"Whoever is happy will make others happy too"
– Anne Frank

ABOUT STEVE BARBER

Steve Barber is Owner and & Managing Director of Supporting Strategies | Northwest Maryland where he offers a unique perspective on bookkeeping by taking a consultative approach to understand the needs of his clients and providing the financial analysis business needs to grow.

He has over 30 experience in Corporate Accounting and Finance. His strengths include improving financial capabilities and efficiencies, ensuring financial integrity and transparency, and providing financial insights for quality decision making. Additionally, Steve has performed due diligence for over 30 different companies considered for acquisitions.

Steve enjoys developing long-term relationships with small business owners who want to spend more time growing their business and less time managing company finances.



Brian Basilico

“Change Happens...
Normal Is Just A Setting On A Dryer!”

THE BACON & EGGS SMILE

BY BRIAN BASILICO

I was born an entertainer, which makes you both attractive and annoying depending on your mood and tastes. It's also hard to be creative and rich. That has taught me some tough life lessons. I have been successful, and I have been homeless with only a box of clothes and two guitars. It was that later experience, that taught me life is not about what you get, it's what you give. From that, I learned to go from a riches mindset to an abundance mindset. the ultimate lesson learned is... “People Don't Care How Much You Know... Until They Know How Much You Care”!

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I found my superpower is teaching. I have a thirst for knowledge with the ultimate purpose of sharing it to make a difference in peoples lives.

The is nothing more gratifying, than seeing people you teach obtain success beyond their wildest dreams! “When you teach... You learn twice”!

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I have learned to add value to whomever I work with. Whether I am volunteering on a board or committee for a non profit, or getting paid for my time and talents, success is measured in the value you create.

With non-profits, I have helped them to understand the value of relationships. When working a Chamber of Commerce, I have helped it's members understand that they are not paying to become a member, they are investing in the community of other businesses, and how together you can create income and good will at the same time.

With for profit companies, I show them how the current and past relationships are more valuable than anything they can do to create new ones. It's not that new business is not important, but the desire to follow the latest trends often leads to ignoring what got you where you are.

I explain that you have to become a thought leader in your industry, community, or inner circle. There are two defining phrases that quantify that: “When you contact a prospect... You are a salesperson. When a prospect contacts you... You are THE expert” and “I would rather spend 10 minutes with 10 people who know me, than 10 seconds with 10,000 who don't”!

In vest in yourself and continue to grow and learn. Invest in others with your time, knowledge and experience. As Zig Ziglar once said... “You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help other people get what they want”.

Book(s) that changed your life:

The E-Myth Revisited
The Blue Ocean Strategy
Win Bigly
Start With Why

Movies that inspire you:

Star Wars
Field OF Dreams
This Is Spinal Tap
It's A Wonderful Life
The Matrix

Song that inspires you:

The Living Years - Mike & The Mechanics

Your Hero:

My Dad - War Vet, Teacher, Survivor

Quote you live by:

"Change Happens... Normal Is Just A Setting On A Dryer!"

ABOUT BRIAN BASILICO

Brian Basilico is the award-winning author of the best selling book "It's Not About You, It's About Bacon! Relationship Marketing In A Social Media World!" He was honored as one of the Top Marketers to Follow in 2018. Brian is an Online Marketing Strategist with over 40 years of marketing experience and the owner of an award-winning internet marketing company, B2b Interactive Marketing, Inc. He is world renowned for his LinkedIn Training and Innovative Content Marketing Strategies and was one of the first 1000 people to join the Social Network in 2004.

Brian is a syndicated blogger, podcaster, and a sought-after guest expert featured in Entrepreneur and Inc., magazines, With over 500 episodes, his show "The Bacon Podcast", is ranked as one of the Top 100 Marketing Podcasts on iTunes, and was also recognized by Inc. Magazines as one of their top 35 business podcasts.



Tucker Bearden

“When we smile, we conquer doubt, fear, sadness and worry.”

BE THE BLESSING FOR OTHERS AND YOU WILL LIVE WITHIN BLESSINGS

BY TUCKER BEARDEN

I am a Certified Ziglar Legacy Keynote Speaker, Anxiety expert and Aspergers Advocate.

Like many other children, I was born with a neurological abnormality that hinders ones natural ability to understand social cues as well as emotional responses known as Aspergerís.

When I was younger, making friends was a daunting task I wouldnít wish on my worst enemy.

The more people that are around, the harder it is to sustain my composure so imagine a leisurely stroll through Walmart becoming a horrifying experience that leaves you hospitalized with life-threatening panic attacks.

Throughout my life, I was fired from over 20 different jobs because of my lack of communication skills.

After enduring homelessness, addiction, multiple failed suicide attempts, and a long walk through the darkness, I found my purpose in serving others by sharing the knowledge I've been blessed with.

“If you can be the spark that lights the way through the darkness for even one person a day, your entire life will have been worthwhile”
-Tucker Bearden

It was a long road learning how to control my self around others. There are still challenges and I struggle at times but if you believe in something enough to push towards it EVERY SINGLE DAY no matter the trials and tribulations, you will achieve the greatness you are designed for.

So where did all this begin?

I got a job working with thoroughbred racehorses as a Hot Walker which is someone who walks the horse around the barn for 30 minutes at a time until they are all cooled down from training.

After a few years, I became a groom which is twice the pay and ten times the work.

We worked seven days a week, three hundred sixty-five days a year but I loved the connection I had with the animals.

See, I don't connect with people very well but with animals, it is a completely different story.

I can feel what they feel. I am comfortable around them. There is no anxiety or tension.

Since we worked every day and most days were mornings and afternoons, I had to find a way to entertain my self.

So I started looking for videos on Youtube and came across something known as TEDx My world changed forever.

The first one I ever got to see was of Tai Lopez.

Then I watched Simon Sinek's talk "Start With Why" which opened my eyes up even further to this principle of service.

I felt a FIRE light in my soul! I had found my purpose! I knew THAT is what I am supposed to do!

So It was time to formulate a plan to overcome this dangerous level of anxiety I had...In that moment I heard that little voice we all have in the back of our minds...Who are you!?

You can not sustain a normal conversation with one person at a time, more or less 1,000 or more. Who do you think you are!?

While looking for something to cheer me up I came across a quote by Zig Ziglar "You can have anything in this world that you want if you will only help enough other people get what they want"

I had been looking at this all wrong... What was I doing for the world?

Why do I deserve a spot on stage? Then in a flash, it came to me. PIZZA!!!

I began taking \$50 out of every paycheck and going to Little Ceasars to get six Hot & Ready Pizzas each day.

I had a bicycle with a bungee cord so I rode my bike around town and found homeless people.

I would give them a pizza and ask them to tell me their story.

I did this every week for nearly eight month before I began feeling comfortable talking to people. I found that the more I compliment and listen intently, the easier it was because the conversation was about them and not me.

I had to practice listening without being distracted by my own tendency to over analyze the conversation. I really tried to grasp the meaning behind the message.

In this, the truth was uncovered that anxiety is all in the mind...It was never in the diagnosis.

A diagnosis does not define who you are or what you are capable of achieving in this world.

Someone else's observations of you hold no power over your future unless you give them the power to control your life.

Much wisdom was shared, many friends were made and within all of it, the man I am today was born.

Your greatest challenges will become your most POWERFUL strengths!

I became a public speaker because I believe that if a person obtains knowledge capable of improving the lives of others, It is a raw act of selfishness to withhold that information from the world.

So go out, use your wisdom to bless others and be the spark that lights the way through someone else's darkness.



Paul Becker

“The greatest self is a peaceful smile, that always sees the world smiling back.” ~ Bryant H. McGill

KEEP SMILING

**BY REAR ADMIRAL PAUL BECKER,
USN (RET)**

I never aspired to be known as a leadership expert, but after 30 years of building large, successful diverse teams around the world in peace, crisis and combat, it's a descriptor that others have generously applied to me. How did this come to be? Well ...

I've always been fascinated by leaders and the art of inspiring others to succeed. My earliest role models from the 1960's and 70's were my Dad (a NYPD Police Officer), astronauts, and combat heroes I read about in books or saw on the screen. This fascination led me to enter the Naval Academy and try my hand at inspiring teams to achieve a common goal.

By the time I received my commission in 1983 I studied so many attributes of successful leaders that I had a tough time remembering and applying them all in a coherent fashion. Add to that the difficulties of

serving afloat and overseas in crisis situations with little margin for error, and I soon found myself learning more about leadership from my frequent failures than my few successes! This was my impetus for documenting what worked best from the leaders I admired most in the military and civilian sectors, and studying the difference between great and poor leaders. The difference boiled down to three key ingredients: “Teamwork, Tone, Tenacity.”

Why “Teamwork, Tone, Tenacity (T3)?” Because these three attributes form a superior set of mutually reinforcing behaviors aimed at meeting mission, taking care of people and developing subordinates. I would later find they also provide an invaluable framework for overcoming adversity. These three attributes also fit together well in a short, actionable, memorable phrase that is user-ready in the fast-paced, pressure-packed, information-intensive environment in which leaders operate in today. Leaders and followers can recall and execute specific “T3” practices in any situation from a contested combat zone to a boisterous board room. And when a leader’s clear, actionable, memorable guidance is known and understood by those seeking to achieve a common goal, the chance of achieving and perpetuating success is greatly increased. A few comments about each of the three T’s:

Teamwork: Teamwork begins by building trust. A leader has many responsibilities, and one of the most important is building relationships, because the result of relationships is trust and the by-product of trust is loyalty ... and loyalty to the team is the essence of workplace moral. The best military teams I ever encountered were those led by GEN (Ret) Stan McChrystal in southwest Asia and GEN (Ret) Martin Dempsey in Washington because they established a workplace environment where trust and loyalty between every echelon and every member of the team was the norm and where every teammate had an understanding of what needed to be accomplished.

Tone: There are a lot of dimensions to Tone, but when I reflect upon the leaders who demonstrated it best, I recall their positive attitudes which caused a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events and outcomes. VADM (Ret) Dave Nichols and Jim Zortman demonstrated the best tone of the leaders I worked with. I esteemed their genuineness, integrity, taking the time to teach and train, always comfortable with who they were and consistent in their actions. When they asked “How are you doing?” they meant it and were always ready to listen to a real response. And whenever I made a mistake working for them, they made me realize I could fail without feeling like a failure. The

result of good Tone: A positive command climate, one which made people want to come to work and excel every day.

Tenacity: I like Thomas Edison's citation, "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration." There's no substitute for hard work to understand all aspects of an issue, being involved and being visible to your people, communicating standards and applying sustained effort to ensure all members of one's organization understand the objective and how to implement a solution. The most Tenacious leaders I ever served with were Army COL (Ret) Annette Torrisi and Intelligence Specialist Master Chief (Ret) Todd Schroeder who each provided me a healthy dose of subordinate "reverse mentoring" from individuals much younger and junior to me. Arriving on short notice into Afghanistan in 2009 when our Coalition was suffering setbacks and in organizational disarray, they placed the burden taking on and solving our toughest unit problems ahead of their own personal comfort and ambition. Each demonstrated more than just endurance and persistence in a hostile environment, but persistence with a purpose and a relentless focus combined with a certainty of what was going to transpire. For Annette and Todd failure was never a permanent option, just a temporary obstacle.

After three decades of service around the world, I was honored to be selected in 2013 to serve as Director of Intelligence for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon. It was a pinnacle professional position with tremendous leadership responsibilities and a chance to apply all I had learned about "T3" to a large, diverse work force working on vital national security issues. Little did I know I would need to apply the "T3" framework elsewhere in my personal life.

On December 23, 2014 I was diagnosed with Stage IV Bone Marrow Cancer. There is no Stage V. A large tumor was eating up my right femur. The blood results for this disease, known as Multiple Myeloma (MM), were off the charts in the worst direction. After a detailed radioactive scan, I asked the Doctor, "Can you tell me where else the cancer is?" She replied, "It would be easier to tell you where it isn't." I can't remember the last time I was speechless ... I'll never forget that one. My wife Kim and I braced ourselves for what would be a sporty 2015.

I knew Faith, Family and Fitness would be part of what would help me triumph over adversity, they always had. But this time I knew I'd need something more. I needed a framework that I could reflect upon quietly, that I could declare aloud, that I could physically demonstrate

during dire circumstances. I needed something short, memorable, actionable. I needed something which I'd previously developed, applied and succeeded with in crisis. I needed something that would impact, invigorate, inspire. I needed T3 ... I needed Teamwork, Tone, Tenacity.

I spent most of 2015 in the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center undergoing several procedures, surgeries, High Dose Chemo Therapy and Stem Cell Transplant. By the end of the year I achieved a stable remission and remain so today. After this experience I knew I would devote the rest of my professional life to helping others improve their leadership skills, performance, and ability to overcome adversity through the understanding and application of Teamwork, Tone, Tenacity (T3). It was an easy decision when I started my business, to name it "The Becker T3 Group."

I now wake up every morning energized to 1) be alive, and 2) realize I can help others improve their performance or overcome some type of adversity. If I'm associated with someone in anyway I consider ourselves part of the same team, and their success equals our team's success. This credo follows the Navy's maxim of "Ship, Shipmate, Self"

which puts the organization's mission first ("ship"), then others ("shipmate") then the individual ("self").

Today I create abundance, solve problems and inspire smiles on other faces through the application of Teamwork, Tone, Tenacity (T3). As a public speaker and Executive Coach I get the opportunity to share lessons on improving performance and overcoming adversity around the country and internationally with corporate and health care audiences and individual clients. What puts a smile on my face? Seeing the positive impact that T3 practices have when applied by others and being honored upon retirement by the Naval Intelligence Community as the namesake for the "Rear Admiral Paul Becker 'Teamwork, Tone, Tenacity' Award for Leadership given to our most promising young officers. As long as others keep applying T3, our future is bright!

ABOUT REAR ADMIRAL PAUL BECKER, USN (RET)

Rear Admiral Paul Becker (Ret) is an internationally recognized leadership expert and motivational speaker. He served 30 years as a Naval Intelligence Officer where he built large, successful diverse teams in peace, crisis and combat, culminating in assignment as Director of Intelligence for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In 2014, Paul was diagnosed with Stage IV Bone Marrow Cancer. He spent the next year+ undergoing multiple surgeries, High Dose Chemo Therapy and a Stem Cell Transplant. In 2016, Paul founded the The Becker T3 Group, a consultancy and public speaking platform focused on leadership, improving organizational and individual performance and inspiring others to overcome adversity.

Paul's speeches, interviews and articles have been widely published. He's been awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor and was recognized by the Naval Intelligence Community which established the Rear Admiral Paul Becker "Teamwork, Tone, Tenacity" Leadership Award in his honor.



Lyn Benavides Findlay

“A smile is an instant facelift because it lifts your face. It lifts your mood, and it touches other people’s lives when they see you smile, and they smile in return.” ~Lyn Benavides

KEEP SMILING

BY LYN BENAVIDES

Truthfully, I was a very, very shy kid. I even had an uncle that used to call me Gabby to poke fun at me because I did not talk at all. Being a middle child might have had something to do with it. I have an older brother, Bob, older sister Bev, and a younger sister, Marcia. Throughout elementary to high school, I stayed very timid and didn’t talk.

As a result, nobody talked to me because I didn’t speak to them. They thought I didn’t speak to them because they thought I was stuck up; I was just too shy. I also felt like I wasn’t pretty enough, and I worried about my bad skin due to pimples. Additionally, I hated my glasses thinking they were so ugly; I never wore them. Instead, I always wanted to look beautiful, wear makeup, and fix my hair to improve my looks as well as wear trendy clothes.

Fortunately, my mom taught us to sew, so I made really cute trendy clothes straight out of the fashion magazines. I was always into makeup

mostly because I wanted to cover up my skin, but I was into the trends and fashion of makeup as well. My mother wouldn't buy it for me, so I bought my makeup myself, mostly skincare, by saving my lunch money.

I married while still in high school and stayed home to raise my only daughter, Andrea Adams-Miller. Therefore, I didn't start any career to later on in life. However, I did join the YMCA and started actively attending classes. Soon I was teaching Aquanastics, which was a women's exercise class in the water, and I was lifeguarding, too. It was my first job ever in my middle to late 20s.

All during this time, I was a runner. I ran every day long distance and started running 10K races on the weekends. Sometimes I ran several races a weekend winning my age group. Thankfully, running built my confidence level as a woman. Of course, winning medals and trophies where I had to go on stage to receive them helped build my confidence, plus it was fun. Running became my social life.

Since I liked helping women at the Y, that job later led me to a department store where I applied for a cosmetic position. Instead, they hired me for the lingerie department where my focus again was helping

women. A while later, I finally moved to the cosmetic department, and I have stayed in the cosmetic industry for 30 plus years now!

In that industry, I had to overcome my shyness. Working at a department store, you can't just sit back and not talk to people. Finally, I became more confident and outgoing as I wanted to find out what their needs were so that I could find the best products for them.

I love selling cosmetics, helping people, and doing makeovers. Of course, when you first start in cosmetics, you tend to do things just as you would do for yourself because that is what you like. However, you eventually learn to compensate for what other people like for themselves. With all my years of experience, I can help the oiliest of skins to the driest from the no-makeup look to the dramatic look. Additionally, I am skilled in creating the best-looking natural eyebrows for women who don't have them anymore due to chemo treatments or other hair loss reasons.

At my highest peak, I oversaw a ½ million dollar make up counter in a city of approximately 45,000; that accomplishment was a big deal. I was always very successful in my career at the cosmetic company counter and for the department store that housed that company. I won

awards and attended special dinners with overnight stays at prominent fancy places. I worked on hundreds of women over the years and earned the name, "My Makeup Lady."

In the midst of that, I found a lump in my breast, and I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Focused on my career, this was a massive setback as I was set to sell the most and hit marks beyond my imagination. Now, I was afraid I was going to be ill with cancer and recovering from surgery. I didn't know how that would interfere with my life. But even though I was very, very upset about my diagnosis, I went through the chemo and surgical processes smoothly as if it was a breeze. I only missed a couple of days of work. I even remember going back to work with the drainage tubes still hidden under my clothes.

I didn't talk about it and didn't share it with very many people at work. That was the hardest part, telling people that I had cancer. But, I got through it, and everything was the same. The only change was my understanding of what it is like for people to go through such a situation. I also understood how it is to deal with life and death situations. I joined a couple of breast cancer support groups and met several new friends. Using social media, I joined Sisters in Scars, an online support group,

and went away to a retreat twice where I was with women from all over the world who were also survivors. I even attended two breast cancer conferences and learned a lot about breast cancer and survivorship.

A couple of years later, I left the department store to open a Mary Kay business in my home where I have created a lovely little boutique. There I can visit with the women, get to know them and their skincare and makeup needs. Being an independent Mary Kay representative has been a beautiful transition for my life as I set my schedule and have the freedom to work as much as I desire. The biggest plus is that I get to help women feel better and look better, so they have confidence in themselves.

Working on women for everyday makeup is lovely, and, I equally enjoy helping them get ready for their special days. For young teens, I enjoy helping their mothers help them start proper skincare routines as well as their first makeup applications. Skincare basics are so essential. When I babysit my great-granddaughter Mavis Van Horn, age 3, I am already teaching her how to wash her face correctly and how to use sunscreen.

Of course, I enjoy the first dates, graduations, and proms, and I had lots of practice on many girls throughout the years including my

granddaughters, Destiny Van Horn, Devony Miller, and Demiya Miller. Brides and their bridal parties are always special because they want their makeup to last all day and feel the most beautiful they could ever look. Fortunately, women enjoy skincare and makeup throughout their lives, and I have worked on women's skincare and makeup as old as my mother, Frances Poe, age 93.

The most rewarding part is making a difference in the lives of women who have a special need. For example, I met this woman, by chance, at a store. She was going through breast cancer treatments and had lost her hair. Her son was graduating at the end of May in my hometown. I had her come over, and I did her makeup before the graduation ceremony. Coming to my home was a big deal for her as she had amazingly high anxiety. She was terrified to come, afraid she would not like what I would do for her, just scared of everything. For some women, a cancer scare can have that effect, as if they can't make any decision as a result of their cancer diagnosis.

But, once she sat down, with our conversation, she was able to relax. We're friends now, and she loved everything. I just kept it simple and nice. I felt good that we could chat where I could relate to a stranger that came to my house, and I could make a difference in her life.

And I get it. I had breast cancer a second time. Again, although scared, I went through it like a champ. I had a single-sided mastectomy and reconstruction, only to find out a couple of months later that there was a possibility of a reoccurrence on the other side. As a preventative measure, I had a mastectomy on the other side and reconstruction, too. However, my confidence got me through it, and I am empowered to continue my life positively and make a difference in the lives of other women.

What I enjoy most about my career is reaching out to people who want to try it, to try on things. It's not like they have to become an exclusive Mary Kay customer or want to wear makeup all the time. Just come over and try it on. Let me treat you, give you some pampering. Let me put some skincare products that you may have never used on your face to feel it and have your face feel extra special. Or, just come over, and we'll sit and drink coffee or wine and have a couple of friends over for a party. I enjoy the friendships that I can make with ladies who would like to come over so we can laugh, feel good, and smile.



Werner Berger, Corporate Leadership Consultant, Guinness World Record Holder, Author & Speaker

“At every moment during which you are consciously present, the world smiles more brightly!” – Werner Berger

KEEP SMILING AS YOU NAVIGATE THE VALLEYS OF LIFE

BY WERNER BERGER

My earliest memory, two men in suits, ties and hats are sitting on a couch. I go to my bedroom to get my pop gun because I have to shoot them. My mother gently takes the gun from me and says, “No we don't do that.” You see, it is a few months after the start of World War II, and being German, my father is being carted off to an internment camp.

Today I still wonder, “Where in the world would this level of retaliation in the actions of a two-year-old have come from?”

Years go by. I am happily living with my mother and 17 month older brother. It's time for Herbert to start school and I am intent at joining

him. The headmistress says, "Oh let him come, in a few days he will want to stay home." An unfounded prediction. Throughout the school years I am always the youngest in our class, never realizing the longer term impact this would have on my psyche.

Six years after his removal my father is released and I can vividly remember going to the train station with my mother and brother, to meet this stranger. I have no conception of what is to come.

You see, isolation from society changes people. My father returns as a highly autocratic and demanding person. Father knows best. Always! Father knows more and is ready to let everyone know. The government forces us to leave city life and to live on a distant farm; or our family is to face deportation.

A few months go by and I say to my brother, "I hate him like s...!" Within days my brother makes a rude gesture and I threaten to tattle. He replies, "If you do I will tell dad about what you said." Shortly thereafter I tattle, and not surprised by my brother following through on his threat. Why am I taking such a risk? The impact is instantaneous and severe. For three days I am completely ignored by this "strange fiend"

who had recently come to disrupt my life. My mother is urging me to approach him and say I am sorry. I refuse to do so for days and then, finally give in. I am again completely ignored. I do not exist! I run after him and beg forgiveness; hating the fact that I doing so. I'm finally let back into his presence. However, all authentic connection appears to have been lost. Was it ever present?

I'm telling a story or voicing an opinion. Remember, father knows best – I feel shut down and rarely speak in his presence. Of course, kids should be see and not heard. Right? I hear him yelling at my mom, calling her names and I'm wondering, "Will she divorce him?" I'm desperately hoping so. Constant apprehension and fear can change to hatred. That can warp people. . .even kids; maybe long term!?

I'm a spectator at a track and field meet and am mesmerized by the pole vault. I'm saying, "When I get to high school I'll be vaulting." I go home, find two poles to act as uprights, hammer some nails to hold the cross bar, and, using another pole, little more than a stick, my first jump is over a bar that is 6 inches above the ground. After school I spend hours and hours vaulting in my backyard. I have the urge to vault over my mother's clothes line. Big mistake. Without a box, into

which the base of the pole gets planted, the tip slips. I fall and break an arm. Six weeks later, I build a box and start vaulting again.

I can't wait to get to high school since pole vaulting is a part of their curriculum. Much to my disappointment the sport gets banned after another athlete breaks an arm. Not deterred I cut a bamboo pole from the bush, carefully dry it to ensure it remains straight, and spend most of my alone-time vaulting. Gradually the bar goes higher and higher. I'm spending countless hours at MY sport in preparation to become an Olympian. Although that never happens I do keep vaulting into my university years with at least a modicum of success. Unfortunately, pole vaulting is not a sport that can generally be self-taught.

As I'm writing this another happening springs to life. As a part of my preparation I run. We are living against a mountain and there is a point about 500 feet up and a bit over a half mile higher away. The path is an old gravel road. My first run was 15 minutes plus a few seconds. Not very good!, in fact, terrible! I determine to do the run in 10 minutes. Why 10. . .who knows? only because that figure springs to mind! It is 6 weeks before university starts. I run daily; bare footed. Gradually my huffing and puffing diminishes and I can

run the distance without stopping to catch my breath. On the 2nd to last day I go full out and my time is 10 minutes 17seconds. I'm completely exhausted, winded and wonder, "How the heck can I cut my time down below 10?" Next day I have my brother stationed about 200 yards above my finish line and my mother in-between. Their job is to yell and cheer me on down the last stretch. They do so. I get to the end. I'm a ball of sweat and completely out of breath. My time is 9 minutes 58 seconds. In that instant my father drives up, steps out of the car, looks at me and snarls, "That's the best way to get a heart attack!" Ouch!

All through my university years (a B.Sc, and two Masters Degrees) I'm in love with my physical activities; track and field, rugby, tennis, running, pleasure cycling and ball room dancing. One day a thought, no, actually a conviction, ripples through my brain, "Should I hurt myself and can no longer compete, I will kill myself. I'll have nothing to live for!" Years and years and years later I get to realize the implication and limitation of defining myself by my activities. Hmmm! A question could be asked, "Where and who is this person, Werner?. . .a question that, at the time, was beyond my consciousness to even ponder.

After the B.Sc. at 22, I jump continents, never realizing that I am running away from something; or someone, someone who expects me to work in his business! I say, "After two years I'll be back!" At the time I did not know it was a lie.

OK, it's time to fast forward. As an honors student with an M.Sc. I am not yet ready to face the world. I have to know more, learn more. Am I escaping into the safety of being a perpetual student or do I simply love learning? This is also a time to pursue my pole vaulting. I figure out what is holding me back from vaulting even higher and, being in the bush as an exploration geologist, I spend most of my summer training specific movements by swinging on anything that is growing at the desired angle. I know this makes no sense to you, and it's Ok What my story is leading up to is the execution of the one best vault that I have ever made expidited.

Returning to university, and prior to the start of the track season, I don't vault. Instead, I use the gym and ropes to further perfect my deficiencies. The day of the meet, it's now more than 9 months since I have held a pole in my hands, let lone do a vault. I'm primed, ready to touch the sky. A storm threatens and instead of having the normal 5 or

6 warm up vaults we are limited to three. On my first two I do the run up, plant my pole and simply swing through to stretch my muscles. My last, still without a crossbar, is the 'full monte.' I do my run up, plant the pole, fire up my core, hoist my lower body, get into a perfect handstand (or so it felt - I don't have a video) and fall back into the pit. This is what I have worked for so hard, all summer and autumn. The trees, the ropes, the exertion, all fall away. If I die now I'm content! I finally have the feeling of flying through the air, several feet higher that I had ever vaulted before. I'm lying in the pit, on my back, looking up at the uprights and the absent cross bar, and smile.

The cross bar is placed, lesser jumpers are starting at lower heights, the storm is coming closer and closer. I'm impatient, I either want them to succeed or drop out so the bar can be raised to my starting height. My focus is on the movement of the storm. Finally it's my turn. I pick up the pole, my grip height is set, my run-up markers are in place. I go to the starting point of my run-up, lift my polemist before starting my run. . .and at that very moment the first rain drop falls. Immediately the meet is called. I'm shattered. This was to be my day! In actual fact, it WAS my day, I just did not know it, yet!

I graduate from my MBA in the top quartile of my class and never vault again.

I get offered a job with Proctor and Gamble. Instead, I takeover the running of a small company of 17 employees. Seven years later we have grown to a maximum of 94. I'm president of one industry organization and vice president of another, am married, have four children, three natural and one adopted and am deeply unhappy. In the mean time my father dies and the one tear I shed is for him no longer being able to traverse his beloved farms. Years later I sell my business and retire at age 44.

It's early 1981 and I'm sitting with my stock broker and say, "Sell everything!" The bank interest rates are at 19%. He balks and finally agrees. Two hours later my ex returns home from her new business venture and I share my decision. She questions my impulsiveness and after some discussion I relent, phone my broker and say, "Stop selling." Phew, nothing had yet been sold! Within a month the market crashes and now every stock we own is sold for pennies on the dollar.

It's OK, we can survive this! Janice focuses on her fledgeling business and I become the house-husband. The kids are all out of the nest at

university or working. I soon learn the traumatic depths that 'housewife-syndrome' can generate. Doing the same chores over and over, cleaning and re-cleaning, juggling everything, with limited or no daily external stimulation, no sense of accomplishment, always more to do, no one seeing the good stuff that has been done, only what's still missing, no one appreciating (I mean really appreciating) what it's like to look after everything that needs doing and most often sacrificing the self for these mundane activities (and listen, I was not even forced to deal with the myriad of child raising needs - how the heck do single parents have the slightest chance at making it through those years?). The thought, "Who is Werner?" still had not registered; I perform and yet I'm feeling lost!

I remember a few years earlier having a conversation about personal responsibility and me saying, "I'm responsible to my business and I'm responsible to my family. I do what is demanded of me!" With the deepest conviction I believe I have no choice in this. You have heard the words, "Human Doing!" I have no concept of what it means, and especially what it might mean to be a "Human BEING." I always considered myself to be a 'nice guy,' yet am missing the deep connections I see others enjoying. In retrospect, no wonder! I'm asking myself, "Is

this all there is?” still unaware of the meaning of personal choice or even that something is missing in me. I'm thinking, that's just how life is.

Two years pass. Janice's business is doing well while I'm dreading getting up each morning. I attend Werner Erhard's Est training and come back preaching about self responsibility and choice yet only hold these concept as cognitive magi-nations. Finally I can't stand it any longer and attempt to re-enter the workforce as some kind of a manager. Several interviews later I'm still unemployed and finally accept a job as a handy-man building pig pens for a friend, while still administering the chores at home. Emotionally I was in a bad place.

At one of the follow-up Est workshops I get partnered with Eric. We are to connect during the week as accountability partners. We call once, yet don't accomplish anything meaningful. At the next get together we talk about what we are doing and he suggests I check out the corporate consulting firm with which he is associated and under whose 'umbrella' he is running his own business. What follows are the the most exciting and fulfilling twenty years that I could ever have imagined. It took me three years to build a client base, and the knowledge

and the confidence to work with companies large and small. My biggest clients were AstraZeneca and Clorox Canada. I had graduated for consulting in Customer Service, Sales, a multitude of Managerial skill to the exulted domain of Leadership.

What kept puzzling me is, “Why executives would leave highly focused workshops, claiming their learning will have a profound impact in their lives and on their business success, and then, 6 months later, hardly remember the name of the program, leave alone having implemented any of the skills they claim to have learned; skills in which they had demonstrated competencies during our classes?” I introduced follow-up and reinforcement sessions, trained the executives to who they report, and even introduce corporate culture re-orientation session to align with the win/win philosophies that were the foundation to my teachings. I was working extensively with repeat business in Canada, the USA and occasionally in Europe. I am coaching and consulting utilizing thirty four (34) different technologies and am leader-training prospective trainers in thirteen (13) of them. I soon learn that the billions of dollars spent on people skill training rarely produces the desired impact. Why? I know there is more for me to learn, although I do not yet know what.

One day I am having a chat with one of my colleagues and the topic of spirituality is raised. I say to Gordon, "I do not know what spirituality really is." We converse for a while and then part, non the wiser. Within months, one of my sons says, "Dad, you had expressed a desire to trek to Mt. Everest Base Camp. Want to still go?" I am fifty five (55) and jump at the thought. A few months and we are on our way to Nepal. I had trained with a sixty (60) pound back pack, climbing stairs and hiking the slopes of a nearby gravel pit. The normal trekking time from Lukla to Namche Bazaar and on to Mt. Everest Base Camp is ten (10) days. However we decided to add an eight (8) day hike to the start. My son is carrying 44 pounds and I have 38. One of the stretches takes us over the Lamjura La at 3540 meters. We have been trekking between 9 and 11 hours per day, rest a moment and, instantly, bone weary exhaustion sets in. 'Onwards and upwards' we complete the trek to Namche in 6 days. Seven days later we are at Base Camp. One of our new friends contracts altitude sickness and we support her back down to Namche. What now? We decide to trek back up, climb the steep Kongma La back and finally return to Kathmandu exhausted yet elated

The trip with my son can only be described as a life changing odyssey, one not contemplated nor expected. The unimaginable beauty of

the Himalaya, the strenuous days and our amazing physical bodies all converged to have a major impact on me; in fact, not on the old me, but on my being. Hmmm that word again! Now it all makes sense - on all three levels, cognitive, emotional and spiritual. A shroud has been lifted, a 'mystery' solved. I found something that I had been looking for all my life, without consciously knowing what I was searching for. The crazy part, it had always appeared in brief moments of time. Fleeting, yet powerful, and, at those moments I did not possess the capacity to glimpses, grasp or hold onto them. . .which I later learned I couldn't do anyway. However, what I do learn is that I can internalize and own them, even in their absence. I reflect back, did I not experience this at the end on my 10 minute mountain running, and not only on the list day: while I'm playing my sports, dancing; learning; looking at my sleeping children with tears streaming down my face; lying in the pole vault pit gazing into the sky; exulting with my corporate clients after a workshop; at times loving and fleetingly experiencing my life? Ahhh, the question however is, could I own it! If you do not know who you are, other than defining yourself by the perfunctory descriptions of what you do, you can't really own anything. When 'no one is home' there is no vessel into which a deposit can be made.

To my surprise, my later journeys into the mountains, climbing the seven-summits, and taking friends on high altitude, multi-day hikes, repeatedly drew me into the womb of these ethereal experiences of being. Years earlier I did not have the faintest idea of what this could mean, and even today, words still fail adequate description. In this delicate and delicious space everything, yes everything, appears stunningly exquisite; the people, the sky, the clouds, the stars, the trees, the rocks, the cycles of nature, our bodies, everything! What I now am aware of is, what it's like to live in the present, in the moment, to cherish each instant in time, and everyone and everything in it; what it feels like to be connected, to self, to others and to this amazing planet, solar system and beyond. The words awe, appreciation, thankfulness all fade in the glow of the experience. As my early history might suggest, regardless of my accomplishments, I lived with the feelings of not being inadequate. . .not being enough, a shell rather than a human being. I chuckle and am chagrined when I think, "And others had to live with this!"

Every time I reflect and allow myself to sense these experiences my skin automatically prickles - goose bumps. The questions, "Where is Werner? and, Who is Werner? have magically been resolved. He is no longer that shell that might have been called a man. We all allow

ourselves, without much choice, to be conditioned by our early life experiences and tend to judge negatively those we do not like. These are all learning opportunities, whether we know it at the time or not. They shape us into the person we grow to be. The transformation comes when we get to know who we are, at a deep level, and can then accept everything that happened to us simply as realities of the past, and utilize them as springboards to a future we design. It is indeed unfortunate that our early childhood education does not focus on the magnificence of all existence and especially on the preciousness and interconnectedness of all. Maybe this has to be learned through the school of hard knocks? However, I think not!

What I now know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, there is a profound difference between existence and being; that confidence, assertiveness and empathy are the keys to leading a life linked to personal responsibility, choice and contribution; that most people skills training (leadership, sales, customer service) does not produce the anticipated results as long as it resides at the cognitive level and has not been transferred from knowing to automatic doing, by repetition, contemplation and ownership; that people blossoms in collaboration; that we are not separate entities that got alienated from each other and from the earth

we inhabit; and that all life is sacred.

My experience, until I got to know who I am, and in fact, until I was blown away by the me who is me, the being remained hidden. I'm smiling at the irony of my existence and chuckle at any thoughts or wishes that my life could have been different.

Know this, I am me, and **you** are **you** for a reason, and for making our unique contributions to this world!

Smile!

Or, Come on, smile with me at all the silliness we are conditioned to conjure up around who we are, or are not, or should be, even though we are perfect and have hence simply forgotten to remember it!

Books That Changed My Life:

"The Wizard (comic book) and the serial story,
"William Wilson the Wonder Athlete"

Movies That Inspired Me:

Avatar, Carousel, Chariots of Fire

Song That Inspire Me:

The Rose – Bette Midler

Your Hero:

Gandhi, Mandela

Quote You Live By:

"All of life presents peaks and valleys. A Smile
changes the journey into a thrilling adventure"
~ Werner Berger



Drew Berman

“From jail to Yale and from janitor to CEO, one tiny action crosses all borders and languages. Your very special smile instantly makes the world a better place. Smile more.”

WHAT MAKES YOU SMILE? BY DREW BERMAN

My name is Drew Berman and I am born and raised in NYC. Please, don't hold that against me. I'm one of the good guys. People from NY are actually nicer, they are just nicer faster.

One of my first jobs was selling hot dogs at Shea Stadium, which is now Citi Field where the Mets play.

That was an amazing experience to say the least. I found myself during my junior and senior years of high school having a ton of fun, making a lot of money, and making a lot of people smile.

Looking back at that time, the more I made people smile, the more money I made. Interesting formula, right? So I took stage and put on a show. With everyone watching, I would yell, tell jokes, start the wave and other ball park shenanigans.

I remember one time, yelling so loud at each section about hot dogs that I had three or four sections watching me. I got to the 5th section and screamed “doesn't anybody want a hot dog?” And the whole section yelled “NO”

Everybody laughed!

I ran to the 6th section and everyone yelled “HOTDOG” and I sold out in a minute. I knew I was on to something.

I became an entertainer and for years people recognized me, in and out of the stadium. One vendor, thousands of people, dozens of games. It was truly remarkable.

In college I studied marketing and communications. Which in essence taught me how to make people smile. People may forget what you do, they may even forget what you say, but they always remember how you make them feel. Ah, marketing.

After college I got exposed to the cookware industry. Some called me the pan man, others referred to me as the pot guy. That made a lot of people smile for some reason.

Through cookware we got exposed to the bridal industry. Everyone was happy. And stressed at the same time. So what was our job? Make em smile. And when they did, they bought pot from me, um, I mean they bought pots from me.

Cookware led me to Real Estate. Our job there was - yup - you guessed it. Make em smile. When they were smiling, they were renting or buying apartments from us. And we sold a ton.

Then I semi-retired at 28. I took a bicycle trip around the world. It was an epic adventure called Odyssey 2000. We traveled 35 countries, 6 continents, 200 people, 20,000 miles and never-ending stories. In countries that didn't speak English, we only had one way to communicate. Whether we wanted to say hello, or goodbye, I am lost or I need help, where is the bathroom or can I have a beer ... we always spoke the international language. The one that crosses all borders. A smile.

And then I lost my smile. After a life of fun, fitness, fantasy and seeing the globe for a year, I went into a mini depression. Real Estate became a grind. I found myself in my early 30's president of the BBB, busy but broke, running full speed on a treadmill going nowhere. My smile on

the outside stayed, but on the inside, I was trapped on the hamster wheel. I was chasing clients away, so I quit Real Estate. I started in advertising and was too focused on selling not serving, because it was all about me. My bills, my trips, my goals, my sales... I was running out of money, out of time, and out of smiles.

In February 2006, my life changed forever. A man walked into my office down 42 pounds and 8 inches off his waist. He was using super foods, nutritional intermittent fasting, and looked young and healthy. I found out that I had the TDOS syndrome; toxins, deficiencies, overweight and stress. I then learned we all have at least one of those.

So, I flew cross country and found a science-based fulfillment company that addresses TDOS with food, minerals, vitamins, amino acids and digestive enzymes. The company vision was to free people from physical and financial pain, and in the process become the most trusted and most respected health and wellness company in the world. I got my smile back.

I came home and started telling everyone. We were seeing people lose weight, sleep better and have more energy. People from all over the

world were having great results. Profound results, emotional results, and long-lasting results. And people started smiling.

In my book, *You Can Have It All; the Ultimate Guide to Having Fun, Making Money and Living the Good Life*, which is now available on Amazon, I teach people how to have better health, have more fun, and make more money.

When I'm out and about, people ask me what I do. Where do I begin? I help people live better. I assist people in breakthrough strategies. Friends, clients, customers and business partners focused on killing the caterpillar to become the butterfly, we guide them through that journey. I help people lose weight, sleep better, have a better sex life, look and feel younger. I help people break out of the hamster wheel by freeing them from jobs that no longer serve them. I'm a best-selling author, speaker, coach, edutainer. Blah, blah, blah. What do I really do?

I make em smile.

Drew Berman, CSO - Chief Smiling Officer
www.drewberman.com

Book(s) that changed your life:

Keep Smiling

Secrets of the Millionaire Mind

Shantaram

Movie(s) that inspire you:

Every Marvel Movie

Song that inspires you:

Don't Worry Be Happy

Hakuna Matata

Honky Tonk Woman

Your Hero:

Yoda

Quote you live by:

It's a business doing pleasure with you

ABOUT DREW BERMAN

Drew Berman is a best selling author, peak performance strategist and life architect. He has been helping people with the lifestyle triangle -creating better health, better wealth and more free time for over a decade. Berman is an executive recruiter and trainer for one of the fastest growing health and wellness companies in the world. He is also on the board of the worlds only online university focused on the principles of think and grow rich. Drew Berman lives in CT with his wife and his two boys.



Dr. Bonita Best, Information Technology & Cyber Security Professional; Fashion Model; Mentor

“Smiling change moods and behaviors.”

HELPING PEOPLE HELP THEMSELVES WITH A SMILE

BY DR. BONITA BEST

I am who I am...

I am Bonita Best; a daughter, sister, mother, aunt, niece, cousin, god-mother, mentor, scholar, friend, information technology (IT) and cyber security professional, model, and actor. When I was a elementary student, I had a repetitive dream with a message of “Help People Help Themselves”. At the time, I did not understand what this message meant; however, as I graduated from undergraduate school, I began to understand my mission and purpose in life. “Helping People Help Themselves” also became my mantra in everything I did and do in life.

I am a pracademic, an academic who is an active practitioner. My area of expertise is in tacit knowledge transfers, IT and cyber security. As a pracademic, I am able to fulfill my mission and purpose in life by helping people combat cyber criminals and bullies; and helping organizations improve processes and to become less vulnerable to cyber attacks. In my career, I have used my knowledge and skills to help streamline processes and implement solutions into help immigrants get travel and employment documents; protect the US borders post-9/11; and reduce waste, fraud, and abuse. In the academics, I've helped students get to the "finish line" with their academic goals by serving on doctoral committees and being a mentor to graduate students.

My Mom said "God doesn't give you anything you can't handle" and "...makes you strong". Before I turned 28 years of age, I overcame life challenges ranging from childhood rape and bullying, workplace discrimination (gender, race, and age), marital infidelity, same-sex domestic violence, to verbal abuse due to becoming bald by choice. My life challenges has enabled me to help others navigate through their own challenges, feel less alone knowing someone else has dealt with a similar situation and have prevailed, and inspires others to push onward.

When I was raped during a childhood slumber party, I learned that people close to you rather turn a blind eye and bury the truth when the rapist is a family member or friend of the family. This made me feel powerless and voiceless until I was older and stronger to face my rapist to let him know that I did not and will not forget. Decades before the #metoo movement, I faced my rapist and I felt powerful, liberated, and with a voice again. I forgave my rapist and the people who failed me when I needed them most; I needed to in order to heal and overcome.

As a baby, I was tongue tied (ankyloglossia) and had minimal mobility of my tongue. Oddly enough, throughout my life including in my adult years, I've had to have a procedure to snip the tissue (lingual frenulum) underneath my tongue to assist with my tongue mobility. In elementary school, I dealt with in-person bullying. Many of my peers picked with me because I needed to attend special education classes (aka "boom-boom classes") to help with my speech and reading. I spoke with a slur and had/have difficulties pronouncing some words, so my therapists were helping me. In addition, I learned that I was dyslexic which is why I had difficulties reading. I loved school and my teachers yet I disliked some of my classmates because I was picked on because they thought I talked funny and attended "boom-boom classes". My parents

encouraged me to focus on school and not to worry about what people say. My daddy always told me to live up to my name -- I am Bonita Best.

Although Affirmative Action was approved, as an IT Professional in the 1990s and 2000s, I encountered workplace discrimination. Immediately after graduating from Historical Black College and University (HBCU) in the early-1990s, I became a COBOL programmer for a government agency; and within months, I was promoted to the next grade level due to my proven record of accomplishments. When I relocated to the West Coast, I accepted another opportunity as a receptionist knowing that the company will be upgrading its network from mainframe to Windows environment. Within a month, I was promoted to become the company's system administrator for the Western Region and was recognized as the "Employee of the Year" each year while employed. As a young adult, I was proud of my accomplishments and did not encounter workplace discrimination until the mid- to late-1990s.

In the mid-1990s, I accepted a project coordinator role at a not-for-profit organization. I loved being able to apply my technical expertise for a worthy cause -- implemented a county-wide solution for people affected and infected with HIV/AIDS. After proving myself with the firm, I was

offered to take over the IT Director role and was ecstatic to have this opportunity. However, the executive director called me into his office to tell me that I needed to obtain my husband's permission before accepting the position. The next business day, I informed the Board of Directors and executive director that I will be the agency's next IT Director. In this situation, I leveraged the "less is more" tactic because I was not going to have the executive director build a glass ceiling for me because I was a working mother of young child. Upon the announcement of my new role, the existing staff resigned without a 2-week notice and included references of my age, race, and/or gender in their resignation letters. Not only did I have to deal with an executive director with his dated views of a woman's role but colleagues who rather not have a paycheck because this young, African American woman was becoming their manager. One of my HBCU professor discussed how people of color could be viewed and treated in the workplace; however, I still was shocked and was in disbelief. Given this opportunity, I was able to build a rock-star team and was in a position to hire talented people who would potentially be overlooked; a personal goal should I ever become a hiring manager.

When I knew that I was going to file for divorce, I reflected on what I wanted for a change. First, I needed to find out what I like to do because

I felt that I “lost myself”; I needed to discover me again -- my likes, dislikes, hobbies, and interests. Second, I wanted to cut my hair for a number of reasons, for instance, my hair was long but did not hold curls so most of the time, I ended up pulling my hair back into a ponytail or bun; and lastly, I wanted to start anew and get rid of my hair. I cut my hair in early-1996 and never looked back. I embraced being bald by choice. Being bald in the late-1990s was not as popular as it is today.

When I cut my hair, my parents were concerned that my employers would not take me seriously and would not be able to climb the corporate ladder. I told my parents that employers employ me for my brain and abilities not because of my hairstyle. Women-strangers would think that I was ill or had a terminal illness. Men-strangers would quote Bible verses or other holy books quotes then state that a woman's beauty was in her hair. A few friends and family members said some cruel words to me. Lastly, I was also called some derogatory names that some members of the LBGTQ community have been called due to my hairstyle.

Post-divorce, I was open to exploring my likes, interests, and some unknowns about myself. Two male friends that I respect asked me

about my thoughts on my sexuality. They helped me investigate the idea of lesbianism. My first same-sex relationship was intense and was an emotional roller coaster. I also encountered domestic violence by the hands of my same-sex partner. When the police came to my rescue and was examining my bruises, he asked me if I ever been abused before by a man – I said no and looked at him strangely. I said I will not have a man or woman abuse me and said I want to press charges. I wrote a my statement and then served as the State's witness against my ex-partner. Through this process, I learned that the court's pamphlets for help focused on heterosexual not same-sex domestic violence support. When I attended domestic violence group therapy, I kept correcting the facilitator that my girlfriend was abusive not my boyfriend or husband. I became an advocate for same-sex domestic violence and partnered with a local LGBTQ community center to launch a program surrounding this topic. In addition, I openly talked about it on the AOL Ebony Lesbian group and started helping other victims leave their abusers.

Every day, every situation, every life experience, and every job opportunity I strive to Help People Help Themselves and to live up to my name – I am Dr. Bonita Best.



I am driven to Help People Help Themselves because it's my purpose in life. This gift, blessing, and drive was given to me as a youth. Helping others is self-gratifying and I find that I am blessed by give selflessly to others.



By helping others help themselves – sometimes I am a cheerleaders, brainstormer, and inspirer. Most times people just need encouragement to pursue their goals or dreams. Other times, people need a someone who can see beyond the surface, hear things that are not spoken to help them navigate through matters. Some times people just need to know that they aren't alone in their journey called life. I have been blessed to see people get to their “finish line” and accomplish their personal goals in life. Lastly, when I play a role in helping organizations meet their goals, reduce their vulnerabilities, and/or streamline their processes, I feel like I am fulfilling my mission in life.

Book that changed your life:

Beloved by Toni Morrison
The Color Purple by Alice Walker

Movie that inspire you:

Forrest Gump
Do The Right Thing

Song that inspires you:

Eye of the Tiger and
Hungry Like A Wolf are a tie

Your Hero:

My Daddy

Quote you live by:

I am who I am



Colleen Biggs

“Your attitude reflects the smile you wear every minute of the day.”

MY JOURNEY CREATING SMILES

BY COLLEEN BIGGS

I remember standing in front of my elementary school when I was just 6 years old. I stepped up onto a chair to reach the microphone and stand firmly in my confidence ready to share my talents with the entire school at the assembly that day. They pressed play on the cassette tape and I sang along with the music for Debbie Boone’s “You Light Up my Life”. When I finished there was a roaring applause that echoed from the school walls. I bowed and slowly stepped off the chair, not knowing that this was the last time in my childhood I would ever stand in my truth, feel whole, and proud to be Colleen Biggs again.

My world turned upside down when my parents divorced. Like many, it’s a time we look back on our lives and realize that this was a pivotal point in which we started traveling down a path that would be

excruciating and uncomfortable. Traveling daily to find who we truly are meant to be is necessary for reaching our true potential and tapping into our greatest power, which is our purpose! And mine went something like this.....

Enduring weekly abuse was easier to heal than the words he spoke that day. "She's not worth one hundred dollars per month," he stated. Those were the last words I remember hearing my dad say as he packed up his every belonging to head across country to embark on the next chapter in his life. I was the youngest of three children in my family. We were what I would refer to as "a normal family"! We would go to church on Sunday, spend evenings with homework and favorite weekly television shows, and spend the summers in Utah with my aunt and grandparents. Camping was a regular activity, and life seemed the same compared to my friends' upbringings. It wasn't until I was an adult that I realized how different we really were. I guess it was a blessing in disguise that my dad left when I was twelve years old. That very day, I became responsible for the rest of my life. Even though it was too early to grow up and take on the responsibilities of those twice my age, there wasn't a proposal for any other life path to be had. And so it shall be. The path was marked, and it was up to me to start my journey.

At the age of thirty-six, I was yet again, a single mother. Is this what life is all about? Looking for the next true love? Failing to endure another marriage or painful relationship? It was in this moment I realized that if I was in control of my actions and my story, then why did life suck so badly? Why was it so hard for me to have the fairy-tale love that we dream about as girls? Or did I not dream about that as a girl? I couldn't even remember what my dreams were at this point. Who and what was I chasing all of these years? When I hit rock bottom, I knew it was time to flush out the pain the hurt and the yet-to-be uncovered. Hello therapy!

It was me I had been chasing and I didn't even know it. Crazy to think that up to this point in my life, I thought that the daily miles I ran, weekly visits to the gym, yoga classes, and annual marathons were all the therapy I needed. Well, I was wrong! It took the right person, at the right time to help me unlock the cage that I had placed myself in. I needed someone outside my frame to show me that the handle was on the inside the entire time. I needed to turn the handle so I could come out of the shadows. I call this time of my life "the awakening"! I literally woke up, as if I had been living in a life of complete darkness. I was able to see my childhood for exactly what it was. I was able to

face those that I allowed to carve out my path and forgive those that wronged me. It was a pivotal point in my life to clear out the hurt, the pain, the self-doubt, and to transform my thoughts to attract the life that God intended for me.

My new-found vulnerability allowed my heart to open for the first time and welcome my soulmate. I'm happy to share: We have been married for eleven years. This step to understanding what it was like to truly feel support, equality, and love was the catalyst to the next chapter in my journey to lift those around me.

My years in corporate America seemed to be the right fit as I climbed the ladder to executive leadership. Coaching CEOs through the launch of their businesses and beyond fueled my drive for excellence. I mastered servant leadership and shared my knowledge with everyone I came in contact with. I took on any-thing and everything within my work and my personal life that involved giving back through service. My heart was filled with gratitude for this opportunity to fulfill my leadership opportunities. I even achieved a first degree in the practice of Taekwondo. Yet, there was still something missing. Que Self-Discovery 2.0!

I traveled eighty percent of each month during my last twenty-four months with my corporate position. Spending several hours at a time in a car or plane was not uncommon, so I took to listening and learning the audible way. Have you ever felt you were meant for something more? That your intuition was telling you to pioneer your own path? These were the continuous thoughts as I navigated my way through forty-eight states. Each visit with clients, every discussion, brought me closer to my destiny. People. Stories. Community. Showing Up. Validation. Confidence. Bingo! This is why I'm here! My mind erupted like a volcano with visions, thoughts, ideas, and plans that were so vivid—even today, I'm overwhelmed by the thought of the clarity I was offered in that very moment. The seeds were planted!

Fast forward six months to the ah-ha moment. I was attend-ing a retreat for women in the commercial construction industry for business development. I had attended once before in the past, but this time it was different. Without the weight of the cage I had previously been standing within, I was able to clearly see, as if the optometrist had handed me glasses for the first time, how each woman possessed her own unique power in her approach to her position. The power in the room felt like static electricity. The sense of support they each shared for

their fellow sisters and the thread of connection for the understanding of how difficult it can be for women in this industry was astounding. Was it really only for women in the construction industry?

Heck no! It was for all women! Women in IT, healthcare, finance and every other industry of business. "I'm going to change the world", were the words I whispered when the roundtable session ended. The journey to empower women to show up and lean into their purpose began! You see, that day, in that room, every woman showed up! They felt safe in the community, let down their guard for a moment and became vulnerable with others. When women are together in a community, they do not succumb to hierarchy; instead, they simply support and connect. Change begins here!

Over the past twenty years or so, I have nurtured and grown my contact list. Doing this for so many years proved to be the catalyst and foundation for a successful launch. I reach out to individuals and my community regularly and personally invite my contacts to events through phone calls, LinkedIn invites, personal emails, newsletters and text messages. If you don't have a strong contact list, I would recommend creating one. I talk to everyone I meet for two reasons: to

learn their story and to gather their contact information to see how I can assist them in connecting with the thousands of contacts I know. When your mission is to change the world, one person at a time, you look for every opportunity to do so, even on a plane. So, the next time you are on a plane or have the opportunity, see who you can connect with; it just might change your life and theirs, forever!

The journey to lead in my purpose with Lead Up for Women has been more gratifying than I ever imagined. Women all over the world connect with me through our online mediums and podcast. They receive our newsletters, comment on our website, submit and read articles for the bi-monthly magazine, and have become part of a community of women that lift, support, accept, contribute, endorse, and love one another.

There is a plethora of reasons to support why it's impossible to create change in this world, especially from a child that believed she was not worth one hundred dollars per month. An initiative begins with one person, one idea. One person believing in herself. Momentum begins from within. Find the handle. Turn the handle. Step out of the cage and into your light. Believe in you and believe it's possible, and you too can pick up the pen and write your story. Your future is waiting.

I share with you my story today so that you will know in your heart that through others stories we are provided strength. When we are strong, we are confident. When we are confident, we feel happy, we smile, and we excel. When we excel the world is a better place for everyone!

I believe we all have an invisible super power that is uniquely ours. My Mission is to help others discover their super power so they too believe this life is about thriving, and not merely about surviving. My name is Colleen Biggs. I'm a Mother, Sister, Daughter, Friend, Wife, Grandmother, Author, International Speaker, motivator, publisher, podcast host, Entrepreneur, and pioneer for women. I am a world changer. I show up as me unapologetically every day and everywhere. I provide women the space and the platform to be, have, and do what it is that lights them up. We are all called to serve and called to lead in this ever changing world, and now is the time for all of us women to step out of the shadows, be seen and show up as the light leaders we were created to be. We each hold a lamp of genius and hope that is uniquely ours. The brighter we shine the more change we create. Shine bright ladies, the world is waiting for you!



Otto Borsich, Chef, Author, Speaker, Humanitarian

“A home cooked meal is a smile on a plate.”

SMILES FROM THE KITCHEN

BY OTTO BORSICH

I was born to be a chef. But it was not that simple. I nearly died at birth. Withholding the details let's just say the hospital was preparing my birth and death certificate simultaneously. My mother Rose, a fervent Roman Catholic prayed daily clutching her rosary as if it were a lifeline straight to God Himself. It was her desire to name me Otto. Her reasoning, no son named after his father would perish.

I was born a survivor, six decades later I'm telling the tale. At age 5 I knew two things. I was going to join the Navy, and be a chef. Growing up in Ohio in the 60's & 70's and wanting to become a chef was an unusual career choice. Chefs were like ghosts; you knew what they were, but you never saw them. Yet I remained focused to pursue my calling

I overcame Perthes disease, a vascular disorder that put me in traction for an entire year at age 6. Then wearing a full brace on my left leg

for 3 years. Even though one leg was immobilized, it may have kept down but I was far from out. I dreamed of escaping the rural landscape of Ohio. To join the Navy and serve my country. Onto big city life, preparing fancy food at the finest restaurants. I learned the value of persistence during adolescence. My medical condition may have hindered me from playing little league, riding a bike or going swimming. But, the one thing it did accomplish, it steeled my resolve.

As a teen I worked at the best restaurant in town, McGarvey's. It was an institution, in business for over 70 years. Eddie Solomon, the proprietor, an old school restauranter was instrumental in developing me on my road to becoming a chef. His was full of pointers. Things such as, the guest is not always right but the guest is always the guest. Another nugget, the answer is yes, what's the question. I joined the Navy, volunteered for the submarine service. Being inside a metal tube 40 foot in diameter, longer than a football field long powered by a nuclear reactor with 16 nuclear missiles is a special kind of crazy. My biggest take away way from that experience, and there were many. Simply was, if I can do this, I can do anything. Being submerged 350 feet in the Pacific Ocean for months at a time prepared me for the rest of my life.

I had a plan. Complete my 4 year hitch. Use the GI Bill and enroll at the Culinary Institute of America (aka, the CIA). Simple enough right? I traveled to the Big Apple and landed a job at one the world's greatest hotels, the Pierre. I came to a fork in the road, and took it. Rather than attend the CIA, I decided to stay at the Pierre and completed a 3-year apprenticeship program. It was hands on training at one of greatest hotels in the world, plus, I was getting paid. I don't regret the decision.

I stayed in NYC for a few years, became Leona Helmsley's personal chef. Worked in Nantucket and South Beach. It was a very exciting time in my young career. One of those life changing breaks happened in 1998 when I was hired as an Executive Sous Chef in charge of training for the Atlantis Resort and Casino in the Bahamas. After a couple years had passed, I had read in an industry publication the CIA was looking for Chef Instructors. I was so thrilled at the opportunity I placed my resume and cover letter in a US postal overnight package. It worked, the next day I got a call, and an appointment. I had to cook a four-course meal for 8 people in 4 hours. Not an easy task, but this is the CIA. The Harvard of cooking schools. I passed the cooking exam, and the Q & A roundtable with 8 chefs peppering me with questions. I was offered a job as a Chef Instructor at the greatest cooking school in

the world! My dream came true, just in a different form. You'll never know where life will take you. My livelihood has taken me to 30 countries on 5 continents, and still counting. Life truly is about the journey. It's great to have a plan, but important to be flexible. Be open for what the universe has in store. I've made 60 trips around the sun, in the words of Ol' Blue Eyes, the best is yet to come.

.....

Indubitably and divinely appointed by the universe. I was born to cook. It is my gift; I accept it wholeheartedly and perform it with love and gusto. Transforming raw ingredients from nature's bounty to create a memorable meal is the infinite reward. It's a pleasure, not simply for those who can afford it in high dollar gourmet restaurants, but more important, for those who can't afford it. The poorest of the poor. I view my role as a Culinary Missionary spreading the gospel of all things food. Nurturing minds, hearts and souls with delicious food and encouraging words. That truly is the calling, to share my gift. It fuels my passion. To cook for someone in need of a meal. Breaking bread while learning about another's culture is indeed priceless. It brings a deeper understanding of humanity, exposing toward one another.

Food is the great equalizer. It connects 7.5 billion souls together on Mother Earth. It is an honor to be a connector

.....

My how, in a word, persistence. It's my middle name. I've been tenacious all my life. It started on day one when the doctor told my parents I would not survive. But against all medical wisdom, I was born to beat the odds and whip the whites. Through it all, I've kept on whisking. Persistence got me here, and it continues to be my engine. Persistence is key, period. Just as the swift steady stream smooths the edges of the jagged river rock, it takes single mindedness, an unyielding sense of self to get where you want to go. It may take longer than you like, but persistence alone is omnipotent. Through it all, it creates character, discipline and dedication. Will power is the single greatest force in the universe, it is indomitable.

ABOUT OTTO BORSICH

A small-town boy with a big city heart Otto Borsich is a living example of overcoming obstacles. He joined the Navy and cooked on a nuclear submarine. Changing his Navy blues for chef whites he continues to cook. Having worked at such establishments as the Pierre Hotel, the Bellagio, the Atlantis, Charlie Trotters and was a Chef Instructor at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America. He has cooked for presidents, kings, queens, rock stars, movie stars and superstars.

He appeared on Top Chef, Supermarket Stakeout, delivered a TEDx speech and is the author of a bestselling memoir cookbook, A Chef Is Born. His tagline is Taste the Freedom. A self-professed Culinary Missionary, spreading the gospel of all things food while nurturing, mind, body and soul to those who are blessed to receive his gift.

Book(s) that changed your life:

The Power of Positive Thinking, Purpose Driven Life, The Alchemist A Year of Miracles, The Noticer: Sometimes, All a Person Needs Is a Little Perspective

Movie(s) that inspire you:

Braveheart, Frida, Rocky
The Pursuit of Happiness

Song that inspires you:

Born to Run

Your Hero:

JFK

Quote you live by:

“The people who think they are crazy enough to change the world, are the ones who do.”



Fr. Michael Briese

“You Will Change The World with a Smile.”

SMILES OF HOPE FOR THE HOMELESS

BY FR. MICHAEL BRIESE

Nearly thirty years ago, I, Mr. Michael Briese, lived in a simple efficiency apartment. I had a very sparse home. My bookshelves were 2x4 boards placed atop cinder blocks. I had a 40-year-old rusty brown file cabinet. I had a chair and an old short single bed. I stored my few clothes in one closet and my worldly possessions inside a large trunk I had placed behind the head of my short single bed. I was very sick for many years. I was attentive to my own ill health and in touch with my doctors. No matter how well I followed the instructions from my doctors and carefully took my prescribed daily medicines, I still suffered. I was known in more than one of the local Hospital Emergency Rooms. Suffering had become an expected part of my daily life.

In my daily life filled with an abundance of suffering, poverty, isolation, and rejection, I long ago decided to toss my own material success

into the wind. Instead, I dared God to enter ever more fully into my daily life. I pleaded with our beloved Lord to bless me with a greater abundance of faith, hope, love, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, greater knowledge, greater understanding, and most important, greater heart-felt wisdom. I spent years suffering and asking our dear Lord some ultimate questions, “Why me O Lord?”; or “Lord, what have I done to deserve this suffering?” God did not answer.

I lived in that spiritual silence, often alone, and surrounded by an urban setting in which I was merely a stranger passing into and out of countless people's daily lives. They were people whose minds did not care one bit about my suffering. Yet, God did provide countless blessings, graces, gifts, and abilities to my own broken, ill, and insignificant self. There within the very depths of my daily being, my dear Lord as the Divine Creator, Divine Artist, and Divine Father, took me by my hands and slowly over many years, God molded me into the new man our Lord wanted me to become.

I did NOT choose to become the successful businessman I knew I could become. After all, by age 28 I had obtained patents in over 15 countries in Asia, Europe, and of course here in the U.S.A. Some years

later while living in a Benedictine Abbey, I obtained yet another U.S. Patent. I look back at my inventions and today I look to my books, and in them I see God's gifts. My patented products and books all contain creativity, careful research, testing and much retesting. Then, time and again, I took the steps necessary to actually manufacture or publish these products.

Still, the greatest abilities I now possess are NOT to be mistaken as abilities I developed or created. That would be a fool's conclusion. Whatever abilities or skills I now have are all God-given gifts. I came into this world just a little naked baby. I did not know the difference between an A or a B, or a 1 or 2. That's how dumb I was when I entered into this world. Today, in my latter years, I believe the books I write are works composed by my praying; and in prayer, by my listening to the ancient words found in Holy Scripture. Through prayer, and with silence permeating the air I breathed, I have experienced our beloved Lord's prayerful wisdom. There in silence, I seek and find our dear Lord. Prayer is the language of the human heart. Prayer is my road map to follow as I pursue my daily efforts to discover and rediscover Christ as He finds rest and stillness amid prayerful heartfelt silence.

On many occasions, I believe, I have come face to face with God. These holy moments can include occasions when I look into the eyes, and carefully listen to the words spoken to me by strangers in need. I take risks as I freely choose to open my own heart to the reality that God so often speaks through the simple words of the poor, the weak, those suffering, of the simple ones. Very often profound truths can be discovered in the innocent words spoken by a mere child. With the innocence of a child and the spiritual wisdom of our elders, I now more fully understand that to know about God is to pursue the academic field of studies known as Theology. But for me, to actually come to more fully know God, is to love God with all my heart, all my mind and all my spirit Nothing more and nothing less.

My lifelong, heartfelt desire and actual pursuit of our dear Lord has brought about many blessings, greater spiritual understanding and certainly my daily unearned and undeserved spiritual awareness that indeed our Lord is with me now, and shall remain in my company until the hour of my death. God is good! All the time! Prayer has been, is now, and forever shall remain the greatest power God has granted unto me. My heart prays, ***“Dear Lord, I am not certain how or where I am to go in this one unearned lifetime. I give You my whole being,***

my heart, my mind and my spirit. I cannot know for certain where I will be tomorrow, or how I will journey there. I cannot know who I shall meet. I cannot know why our paths shall cross. However, my Lord and my God, I know this day and forever, that You are my God in whose divine company I forever shall strive to walk humbly, to love goodness and to serve others. AMEN.”

I always say, ***“When we come into the presence of a poor person, we meet the image of Christ, and in that human being is a reflection of a sacred, precious, and holy life.”*** My only desire is to live my one life in service to the least among us. This is my personal dream, my hope, my daily reason to awaken and go out into the world. Daily I am humbled by the suffering of the poor. By entering into their daily lives, I again and again, come to discover, and humbly recognize Christ in the struggling lives of my poor, poorer, and poorest brothers and sisters. In their daily lives, I come to see, discover, rediscover, and recognize many impoverished daily lives blessed with ample precious genuine Holy Faces of God. I believe our dear Savior Jesus Christ came to live among the poor, teach the poor, and die for the poor. Thus, to me, our Risen Savior Jesus Christ is our Lord of The Poor.

My ongoing daily service to the least among us involves basic, yet fundamental ways to sustain lives. My daily life as a priest includes my daily efforts to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ not merely by words but also by my daily actions. Daily I enter into lives of the poor. I provide them with 30 to 35-pound bags of healthy foods. I provide them with a week or more rental assistance to get them off the street, out of the nearby wooded areas, and from living under bridges. In addition, in the most recent years, I have worked with the local public and private schools to purchase, collect and deliver adequate and protective winter coats to needy children, and even to adults in some of their families.

I understand from my own poverty that the poor among us have a dignity, the unearned gift of one lifetime and a role to play in the unfolding of God's kingdom here at hand. Like the people who are better educated, more successful in business, or more powerful, our poor brothers and sisters possess a God-given innate dignity. *Even the poor are created by God out of Divine love and in His image and likeness.* As such, if we recognize and acknowledge this innate dignity and our one common and shared human nature, then we, as modern disciples of Christ, may strive to put our Faith into action. Christ

did this. So must I, together with other priests and religious ministers. Right now, we are providing over 7 tons of foods on a monthly basis to the needy and hungry among us. Still, hunger is growing at a very rapid pace!

To successfully grow in my daily efforts to serve the least among us, I need your prayers, generosity, financial support and your provision of food, seasonal clothing and rental assistance. When you help one or more of our more needy sisters or brothers among us, you are being invited by our dear Lord, to enter ever more closely into His company. When you see a poor person, you see the image and likeness of poor Joseph, poor Mary, and the poor Jesus Christ, our Holy Redeemer!

—Fr. Michael Briese



Tom Briscoe, Stand Up Comic, Author

“A mile driven lasts a few minutes. A smile given can last a lifetime.”

LAUGHTER & SMILES IN THE AISLES

BY TOM BRISCOE

There is no denying it. Most of my friends, family and fellow comics will laugh their faces off when they hear that I was invited to contribute to the Keep Smiling, Shift Happens Book Project. I make a living as a comedian, so that won't be the reason. Although a bit cantankerous, I do maintain a positive attitude, so that won't be the reason. (Granted, if I went to Snow White's house for a keg party, I would hang out with Grumpy more than Happy but still...)

I bore them with sharing all the joys in my life, so that won't be the reason. The reason why they will hysterically roll on the floor, followed by looks of disbelief plastered all over their stupid mugs will be because I have Resting Angry Face. There have been plenty of studies on The Cognitive Science of this malady. I personally haven't read them, mostly because I don't know

what Cognitive Science means. All I know is, I got it. Everybody who meets me for the first time thinks I'm angry. This is my Happy Face:

My Happy Face

I have spent a lifetime being asked, "What's wrong? Is everything all right?" I have responded to these queries with jokes, and making the inquisitor, er-uh... I mean, the inquirer smile or laugh since the fifth grade. It may be the reason why I have been tracking a career in comedy since then.

I love comedy. It started by watching comedians on The Ed Sullivan Show. That morphed into wearing out all the comedy albums I could get my hands on. Outside of the Catskill & mainstream comics, I had a few Party Records too. To prevent my mother or father from ever finding them, they had to be stashed under my bed. I also left a pile of failed math tests requiring a parent's signature as my decoy stash.

I went to a mix of Catholic & public schools. I had all kinds of teachers. Nuns, priests, hippies, young-empathetic-energetic-teachers and

apathetic-old-cranky-counting the days until retirement teachers, they all taught me. If you were to round them all up and ask if I was smart or a smart ass, they wouldn't come up with a consensus. Being able to recollect and perform entire sketches heard on TV the next day on the playground reflects my being a smart kid. Manipulating a music teacher to continuously say "pianist", a geography teacher to continuously say Bangkok and an English teacher to continuously say Balzac reflects my being a smart ass.

After a stint in the Air Force, I strung together a bunch of blue & white-collar jobs. Some were better than others but that funny bone remained itchy.

I took various sales jobs but writing in my comedy notebook was more fun than writing contracts. I kept my comedy dreams at bay and kept the day job. Family obligations always came first, still do. My wife understood and never got in the way of my hitting the open mikes at various NY comedy clubs when time allowed.

My sales numbers were never bad but never great either. Reinforcing the old adage about those who can't - should teach, I became a sales

trainer. My heart really wasn't in it. I wanted to be a comedian. The only way to become a full time comedian and still provide for my family was to become a closer.

The difference between a closer and a headliner in comedy is this. Coffee is for closers. Being a headliner means you work big venues. Your name is on the marquis and fans will drive through snow to get to your show.

A closer is a club comic you may not have heard of. They do the most time. Have the most pressure on them. Get paid more than the other two comics. They close the show. Comedy club closers also open for big, national acts and work the cruise ship and resort circuit.

One of the training modules was a class on the Power of Visualization. After one particular grueling day, I decided to practice the visualization techniques that

I was preaching and pulled into a shopping plaza parking lot. Popped in the tape. (Yes. It was a cassette tape. I'm old. Get over it.) I closed my eyes and said out loud "I am a closer" 100 times. Honestly, it felt great. I

never knew how empowering it could be. I opened my eyes and looked for a sign from the universe. It was right in front of me.

McDonalds Hiring Closers

No disrespect to any McDonalds employees. I know I couldn't do their job. But this was far from the sign I was looking for. Screw You, Tony Robbins.

I left sales training and took a job in sales for a growing logistics company. I was also getting paid doing comedy on the weekends. I loved both jobs. In fact, I was profiled in SELLING Magazine in their for Hidden Life profile. I thought I could do both for the rest of my life. But something happened. I had to pick a team. Corporate America or Stand Up Comic.

This is what happened. I was sent to Indianapolis for training. The class was Thursday thru Sunday morning. The VP of Sales was the trainer. My boss in NJ left me a voice mail, "Listen, they're very impressed with you, keep it up, glad you're taking it seriously." I was excited. The day

job seemed secure. The comedy was going well too. An agent friend of mine arranged a Friday Late Show Guest Spot at a premiere comedy club in downtown Indianapolis. I didn't tell anyone. I wasn't part of the 6:00 O'clock drinks at the hotel lounge. That's where the VP of sales invited the class to dinner and show at the same comedy club. It sounds like a plot twist in a bad sitcom but it's true.

I had no idea they were in the audience. They had no idea I was on the show. I only did a 7-minute set but it went really well. The club asked me to follow up for some dates. I couldn't do any dates in Indianapolis because of my day job in New Jersey. I loved my day job.

The VP of sales had a great sense of humor. That night he cornered me and said, "You have a great future." He smiled to himself and walked away. I said, "Thanks,hey wait a minute. A future at what?"

Turns out he was swamped with work and was looking to hire a trainer. He strongly advised me to apply for the job. The job wasn't even posted. When I offered to give up doing comedy his response was, "Hell no. Keep doing it. It will make you a better trainer." It wasn't a job offer, but I could not have flown home any happier about both of my jobs.

My boss in NJ didn't know about my stand up set. He was far from happy. Shortly thereafter, I wasn't fired but was definitely shown the door. I could continue to work there but had to give back the company car, the benefits, and the base salary. All my accounts were now to be considered house accounts with no commission. I quit. Since that day, every dollar I have earned has been through comedy.

I am smiling. I am living proof that dreams can come true. I now have the security and safety of being an unknown comedian with no steady salary, no pension plan, and no health benefits. It's an industry where the gatekeepers think 26 years old is old. I have incomplete to-do lists that are 26 years old. I am smiling and hope that those who helped me along the way are smiling too.

I primarily work as a cruise ship guest entertainer. Sometimes it feels like I'm a starving artist but somehow my wife and I have been able to pay for our daughter's first cars, college tuitions, and weddings. On more than one occasion we have gone to Wal-Mart and didn't even have to look at the price tags. The ships have been particularly rewarding. When the opportunity arises, I am able to take my family on vacations that are way above my pay grade.

I've traveled to over 100 countries. There is an old show biz adage that we perform for free but get paid to travel. How much travel you ask? Well here is a snapshot of my summer schedule a few years ago.

Flew NY to Amsterdam = 3,158 miles.

7 ½ hours + 3 hour layover = 10 ½ hours.

Flew Amsterdam to Cape Town = 6,026 miles.

12-hour final flight.

TOTAL = 9,184 miles / 22 ½ hours.

Sailed 5 days on a ship from Cape Town to Sao Tome.

Flew Sao Tome to Lisbon = 2,840 miles.

6 hours + 3 hour layover = 9 hours.

Flew Lisbon to Amsterdam = 1,152 miles.

2 ½ hours + 1 hour layover = 3 ½ hours.

Flew Amsterdam to Hong Kong = 5,770 miles

11 ½ hours + 10 hour layover = 21 ½ hours.

Flew Hong Kong to Fiji = 5,113 miles

10-hour final flight.

The plane landed late in Fiji. Since I originally departed from West Africa, I had to do secondary screening to prove I didn't have Ebola.

That resulted in missing my next flight. I had to hire a taxi.

Taxi from Nadi, Fiji to Suva Fiji = 127 miles

4 hour drive.

He actually gunned the gas going downhill, down the mountainsides of Fiji. This is why I always travel with a flask and rosary beads.

TOTAL = 15,002 miles / 48 hours.

Sailed 6 days on a ship from Fiji to Sydney

Flew Sydney to Los Angeles = 6,520 miles.

15 hours + 3 hour layover = 18 hours.

Flew Los Angeles to Vancouver = 1081 miles.

2 ½ hours + 1 hour layover = 3 ½ hours.

Flew Vancouver to Anchorage = 1,155 miles

3-hour final flight.

TOTAL = 8,756 miles / 24 ½ hours.

Sailed 2 days on a ship in Alaska.

It was beautiful, sunny day In Ketchikan, AK. I fell asleep on a park bench and the ship sailed. Almost got in big trouble but a good friend had my back.

Flew back to the ship.

Ketchikan to Juneau = 234 miles

1-hour flight.

TOTAL = 234 miles / 1 hour.

Continued to sail 5 more days in Alaska

Flew Anchorage to San Francisco = 1,752 miles.

4 ½ hours + 5 hour layover = 9 ½ hours.

Flew San Francisco to NY = 2,561 miles

5 ½ hour flight.

Layover at home = 20 hours.

Flew NY to Copenhagen = 3,857 miles

8-hour flight.

TOTAL = 8,170 miles / 43 hours.

Sailed 7 days on a ship from Copenhagen to Estonia

Flew Estonia to Copenhagen = 524 miles.

1 ½ hours + 3 hour layover = 4 ½ hours.

Copenhagen to Chicago Delays = 4 hours.

Finally boarded aircraft, sat on runway = 2 hours.

Flight cancelled.

Rerouted Copenhagen to Munich = 503 miles.

1/2 hour + Overnight in Munich = 12 hours

Flew Munich to NY = 4,044 miles

8-hour final flight.

TOTAL = 5,071 miles / 30 ½ hours.

GRAND TOTAL

- 6 week trip
- 42,326 air miles
- 160 ½ hours of travel time
- 25 days at sea
- 10 nights in hotels.

It isn't always as nuts as this itinerary but it's not uncommon either. I can't say I enjoyed every minute, but I can say that I wouldn't trade this job for any of my old ones.

I usually view my comedy as a way to give the audience a commonality through laughter. Forget Folgers in my cup. The best part of waking up on a ship is having a group of passengers retelling my bits to me over a cup of coffee.

It can also be humbling and not only in the "this audience hates me"

sense. My typical day in a port goes like this. First thing, light a candle in a church and say some prayers. Yes, some churches still have candles and yes, sometimes I pray for the Giants to win. Second thing is to buy a book at a used bookstore. Yes, there are still some used bookstores around. Third thing is, I go to a bar and drink beer while reading the book until I bump into a ship buddy.

One day I walked out of church in Wrangell, Alaska. If you're a fact checker, it was St. Rose of Lima. Two older women from the ship were standing on the sidewalk at the bottom of the stairs and we struck up a conversation. They were sweet, smiling and kept telling me how funny I was, how much they enjoyed the show. I let them go on and on. Why not? How funny and wonderful I am is my favorite topic.

They asked me if the church was open. I said yes and offered to help them up the stairs. There was an immediate change in their tone. I was so busy taking in all their compliments, I never asked about them. Turned out that their older sister was in a burn unit, dying. Her house went on fire. She was badly burned and in critical condition. They were going in to pray that she hung on long enough for them to get home and say goodbye. Talk about a humbling. They were carrying such a heavy

load yet could still smile and talk to me without bringing it up. Where did they find the strength? Since then, if I'm ever tempted to burden somebody with my problems, I think of these two strong women. It's a reminder to keep me focused on the person I'm talking to.

My other takeaway from this experience was my comedy show gave them a temporary reprieve from life's pains and anguishes. It made them smile for a while. I love my job.

ABOUT TOM BRISCOE

Comedian Tom Briscoe hates writing about himself in the third person and sincerely hopes you think some high-priced, show biz publicist wrote this bio.

His comedy career didn't start until he was over 30 years old and being groomed for a big corporate sales job. Suffice to say, it didn't work out and he has never looked back. He shares it all in his hilarious & critically acclaimed solo show, "So...I Got Fired From THAT Job". He went from being the funny guy at work to being the comic who is always working because he is so funny. Tom headlines major clubs, resorts, and casinos nationwide. He has been seen on the Comedy Channel in Canada, Dry Bar Comedy and heard regularly on all the satellite comedy channels. Tom has traveled the world. He's traveled to over 100 countries by being a perennial favorite on all the major cruise lines.

Tom tours with the 2 Guys Walk Into A Bar Comedy Tour. The first 2 Guys Comedy album, "If Tom Brady..." was launched on Realize

Records and is in worldwide distribution on iTunes, Amazon, Spotify, Apple Music, and Google Play.

2 Guys Walk Into A Bar have published the world's first Two Way Joke Book with Perfect Publishing. If you read the book in one direction all the jokes are clean. Flip the book over and all the jokes are obscene. They are for sale at their live shows and will soon be available through their website and on all the usual digital platforms.

Tom's book, based on his solo show, "So...I Got Fired From THAT Job" was recently published with Perfect Publishing. His first cd, "Lost At Sea-D is only available on cruise ships. A new double cd will soon be launched on Realize Records.

WEBSITES & SOCIAL HANDLES

Website: www.tombriscoe.com

Email: tom@tombriscoe.com

FB: The Tom Briscoe Comedy Show

VIDEO, PRESS PHOTOS, BOOKING

AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Book that changed your life:

A Confederacy Of Dunces
by John Kennedy Toole

Movie that inspire you:

Kelly's Heroes

Song that inspires you:

See A Chance by Steve Winwood

Your Hero:

Turkey w Mozzarella, lettuce, tomato, balsamic
vinegar.

Quote you live by:

"Don't believe the world owes you a living.
The world owes you nothing. It was here first."
Attributed to Mark Twain



Jim Britt

“Waking up to your true greatness in life requires letting go of who you imagine yourself to be.” –Jim Britt

IF YOU WANT TO BE WEALTHY THINK LIKE SUPERMAN

BY JIM BRITT

If you want to be wealthy (whatever wealth means to you) you have to think and act like wealthy people think and act.

As I was writing this chapter and having to look back on my life, I really had to laugh at myself...

Man, I was so naïve. I'm a high school dropout. My first job was picking cotton for \$.02 a pound. Cotton doesn't weigh very much. At age 17 I took my first job working in a gas station for \$1.00 per hour, sixty hours a week. I got married at 18. Had my first son at 19. My next job and my last one was my dream job working in the factory on the

assembly line wiring telephone switchboards. I was making \$1.67 an hour with no hope for a better future.

I worked the swing shift 4 PM to 12:30 AM. It was about 11:30 PM and I was looking forward to night off the next day. A fellow from another area in the factory stopped by, stood for a moment behind me, then asked, "Hey Britt, you going to work in this factory the rest of your life?" My answer was "I don't know, maybe." He then asked if I would be interested in making some extra money? I said I sure would. He then said, "Come go to this meeting with me tomorrow night. It's an opportunity to make some extra money." I ask, "What is it?" He said "I don't know. They just told me to bring someone with me." I responded back, "Well that person is not me. I'm not going to some meeting that I know nothing about." He said, "Come on man. I'll tell you what...if you go with me, I'll buy the beer after the meeting." I asked, "What time is the meeting." I went for the beer not the business opportunity.

Little did I know that my life was about to change forever! We arrived. There were about 40 people in attendance, all SUPER enthusiastic! The first speaker wasn't so interesting. All I could think about was the free beer. However, when the second speaker took the stage and started

talking about the money you could earn, I sat up and took notice. The more he spoke the more excited I became. I saw hope for a better future for the first time in my life.

Big problem. It cost \$4,000 to start in the business. I had \$9 in the bank and by payday that would be gone. However, I said yes and committed to the business. I thought I could go to my bank where I had my \$9 on deposit and get a loan for the \$4K. Nada. I went to 23 banks and loan companies before #23 loaned me the money. I had big dreams, and I could taste the caviar and hundred-dollar bottles of wine that I'd buy with pocket change.

The man presenting the meeting that night presented a short training after. He said basically your job is talking to people. If you talk a little, you earn a little. If you talk a lot, you earn a lot. I asked him how much is a little and he said one a day, and a lot is 10 a day. Wanting to get rich faster I chose the ten a day.

A year later, after talking to at least 3,650 people that all told me no, I'd lost my home, both vehicles, all my furniture, and pretty much everything I owned except my clothing.

My home foreclosure was final with a notice from the sheriff posted on my front door saying I had to be out in five days. I had no place to go, no money, no food, no vehicle...nothing. I had a wife and a child and 15 cents in my pocket. The good news was it was going to be easy to move because I had no furniture. It was a pretty stressful time in my life to say the least.

Today, I can look back and have a hearty laugh about what happened. Here I was, a poor high school dropout who'd never earned more than \$350 in a month dreaming about pulling in \$10,000 from my new business. The words "when pigs can fly" immediately comes to mind.

I remember someone telling me back then that "practice make perfect." Big problem. I was practicing and perfecting the wrong things.

I eventually made it work. Lucky for me a man, savior really, showed up on my doorstep that showed me what I was doing wrong and what I needed to be doing. He spent two hours with me. That two hours changed my life. My business took off like a rocket! I learned a few secrets, some I had already learned by accident, like tenacity and never giving up.

I'd reached my goal of \$10,000 in one month within three months. Then, just a few months later, I was making as much as \$40,000 and more every single month. I started a second business using some of my profits and within 12 months of total collapse, losing everything, I was a millionaire.

In that business I also met and became friends with the late Jim Rohn. A couple years later we became business partners in the speaking/seminar field. I was initially the promoter, but that quickly grew into me being a speaker as well.

I've learned a lot in the past 44 plus years. I learned that I couldn't go from a nervous rookie speaker with little experience and with minimal self-confidence to hosting TV shows and speaking in front of 5,000 people overnight. I simply wasn't ready.

I've learned from the thousands of people I've coached and mentored that none of us can do something we don't believe is possible. It's not going to happen if you're not ready for it to happen. I've learned that there is no such thing as luck. I also learned that if you put yourself out there where the action is that luck shows up. This has led me to

understand the single most important principle of wealth-building that has meant the difference between poverty and riches for people since humans first traded for pelts.

Are you ready? Come in just a little closer...

Every income level and every life level requires a different you.

If you think that earning \$100,000 a year is a lot of money, then \$1,000,000 will be completely out of reach. If you believe that having \$50,000 in the bank would make you rich, then \$500,000 won't miraculously appear. You will NEVER earn more money than you believe is "a lot" of money. But you will also learn as you read further that ALL beliefs are false. They are all made up stories that can be changed at the drop of a hat. And for most it's going for the gold, but at the first sign of struggle they revert right back to their old story, their old made up beliefs.

See, what you DO is only a small part of becoming rich. In fact, there are thousands, if not tens of thousands of ways to make money - and lots of it. What I've learned over the years is that by focusing on who you want to BECOME instead of what you need to DO you're going to multiply your chances of getting rich a hundred-fold.

But, as easy as it is to talk about it, now that I can buy those hundred bottles of wine (I never did like caviar), I know that it's not so easy to make the mental and emotional shift that's required.

I've been working at it for years, and I still find dozens of ways I limit myself.

All About Luck

FACT: Becoming a millionaire is easier than it has ever been.

Many people have the notion that it's an impossible task to become a millionaire. Some say, "It's pure luck." Others say, "You have to be born into a rich family." For others, "You'll have to win the Lotto." And for many they say, "Your parents have to help you out a lot." That's the language of the poor.

A single mother with five children says, "I want to believe in what you're saying. However, I'm 45 years old and work long hours at two dead-end jobs. I barely earn enough to get by. What should I do?"

Another man said, “Well, if you work for the government, you cannot expect to become a millionaire. After all, you’re on a fixed salary and there’s little time for anything else. By the time you get home, you’ve got to play with the kids, eat dinner, and fall asleep watching TV.”

Everyone has a story as to why they could never become a millionaire. But for every story, excuse really, there are other stories OR PEOPLE with worse circumstances, that have become rich.

The truth is that all of us can become as wealthy as we decide to be, and that’s a mindset. None of us is excluded from wealth. If you have the desire to receive money, whatever the amount, you have all of the rights to do so like everyone else. There’s no limit to how much you can earn for yourself. The only limitations are what you place on yourself.

Money is like the sun. It does not discriminate. It doesn’t say, “I will not give light and warmth to this flower, tree, or person because I don’t like them.” Like the sun, money is abundantly available to all of us who truly believe that it is for us. No one is excluded.

There are, however, some major differences between rich and poor people. Here are some tips for becoming rich.

Change Your Thinking

You have to see the bigger picture. There are opportunities everywhere! The problem is that most people see just trees, when they should be looking at the entire forest. By doing so you will see that there are opportunities everywhere. The possibilities are endless.

You’ll also have to go through plenty of self-discovery before you earn your first million. Knowing the truth about yourself isn’t always the easiest task. Sometimes, you’ll find that you are your biggest enemy—at least some days.

Learn from Millionaires

Most people are surrounded by what I like to call their, “default friends.” These friends are acquaintances that we see at the gym, school, work, local happy hour, and other places. We naturally befriend these people because we are all in the same boat financially. However, in most cases,

these people aren't millionaires and cannot help you become one either. In fact, if you tell them you are going to become a millionaire, some may even tell you that it's impossible and discourage you from even trying. They'll tell you that you're living in a fantasy world and why you'll never be able to make it happen. Instead, learn from millionaires. Let go of these relationships that pull you down when it comes to your money desires. It's okay to have friends that aren't millionaires. However, only take input from those that have accomplished what you want to accomplish. Hang out with those that will encourage and help you get to the next level. Don't give your raw diamonds to a brick layer to be cut.

Indulge in Wealth

To become wealthy, you must learn about wealth and how it feels to be wealthy. This means that you'll have to put yourself in situations that you've never been in before.

ON OCCASION, DO SOME OF THESE:

Fly first class and see how it makes you feel.

Eat out at the finest restaurant and don't look at the price.

Take a limo instead of a cab or Uber. Watch how you feel.

Reserve a suite in a first-class hotel.

If you are used to drinking a \$20 bottle of wine, go for the \$100 and see how it tastes. It does taste different.

All I am saying is, try some of the things that wealthy people do and see how it makes you feel.

Believe it is Possible

If you believe that it is possible to become a millionaire, you can make it happen. However, if you've excluded yourself from this possibility and think and believe that it's for other people, you'll never become a millionaire.

Also, be sure to bless rich people when you can. Haters of money aren't likely to receive any of it either.

Read books that have been written by millionaires. By gaining a well-rounded education about earning large sums of money and staying inspired, you'll be able to learn the wealth secrets of the rich. I just saw

a video on LinkedIn with my friend Kevin Harrington from the TV show Shark Tank. He said that one of his new companies he launched just had a million-dollar day on Amazon.

Enlarge Your Service

Your material wealth is the sum of your total contribution to society. Your daily mantra should be, 'How do I deliver more value to more people in less time?' Then, you'll know that you can always increase your quality and quantity of service. Enlarging your service is also about going the extra mile. When it comes to helping others, you must give it everything you have. You just plant the seeds and nature will take care of the rest.

Seize ALL Opportunities That Make Sense

You cannot say "No" to opportunities and expect to become a millionaire. You must seize every opportunity that has your name on it. It may just be an opportunity to connect with an influential person for no reason. Sometimes the monetary reward will not come immediately, but if you keep planting seeds, eventually you'll grow a fruitful crop. Money is the harvest of the service you provide and sometimes the connections

you have. The more seeds you plant, the greater the harvest.

Think Life Superman

Want to know some of what my first mentor shared with me that took me from a broke factory worker, high school dropout, to millionaire?

First, he said, you have to start thinking like a wealthy, unstoppable person. You have to have a wealth mindset. He said that wealthy people think differently. He said, "I want you to start thinking like Superman!" Sounds crazy, right? Well, it's not. It's powerful and here's why. How you think will change your life.

Wealthy people think differently. They really do. And anyone can learn to think like the wealthy.

I'm not talking about positive thinking, Law of Attraction, or motivation. Let's get real. None of that stuff works anyway. Otherwise, we would all be rich and happy already. I'm talking about thinking based in quantum physics science. Once you understand and apply it, it will change your life. You will become unstoppable!

If there was any person, fictional or real, whose qualities you could instantly possess, who would that person be? Think about it. Personally, I would say that Superman is the perfect person. Now, you are probably thinking I have lost it right? Just stick with me here. I think you will like what you are about to hear.

Superman is a fictional superhero widely considered to be one of the most famous and popular action Hero and an American cultural icon. I remember watching Superman every Saturday morning when I was a kid. I couldn't get enough. He was my hero!

Let's look at Superman's traits:

Superman is indestructible.

He is a man of steel.

He can stop a locomotive in its tracks.

Bullets bounce off him.

He is faster than a speeding bullet.

No one can bring him down.

He can leap tall buildings in a single bound.

Great powers to have in this day-and-age, wouldn't you say? What else would you need?

Now, for all you females, don't worry, we have not left you out. There is also a female version of Superman, named Superwoman. She has the same powers as Superman.

Now, this is where it gets interesting. Let's first look at the qualities that Superman possesses that you want to make your own. And to make it simple, I will refer to Superman for the rest of this message, and you can replace with Superwoman if you are female.

Again:

Superman is powerful and fearless.

Superman is virtually indestructible—except for kryptonite of course.

Superman can stop bullets.

Superman has supernatural powers. He can see through walls.

Superman can stop a speeding locomotive.

Superman can stop a bullet.

Superman jumps into immediate action when troubles arise.

Superman can crash through barriers.

Superman can even change clothes in a phone booth in seconds. Not too many of those around anymore. You'll have to duck behind a building to change.

So, you're thinking right now, 'Ok, I know that Superman has incredible supernatural powers, how can that help me? What good will it do me to think I am Superman, a fictional character?'

Here is where science comes in. This is the part where you will be amazed when you learn about the supernatural powers that you already possess! NO, REALLY!

Your brain makes certain chemicals called neuro peptides. These are literally the molecules of emotion, like love, fear, joy, passion, and so on. These molecules of emotion are not only contained in your brain they actually circulate throughout your cellular structure. They send out a signal, a frequency much like a radio station sending out a signal. For example, you tune to 92.5 and you get jazz. Tune to 99.6 and you get rock. And if you are just one decimal off, you get static. The difference is

that your signal goes both ways. You are a sender and a receiver.

You put out a signal, a mindset, of confidence about your financial success and people, circumstances, and opportunities show up to support your success. When you put out a signal of doubt and uncertainty you receive support for your doubt and uncertainty. You've been around someone that you didn't trust, or you felt less than positive just being in their presence, right? You have also been around people that inspire you. That's what I'm talking about. You are projecting a frequency, looking to resonate with the frequency you are transmitting.

Anyway, the amazing part about these cells of emotion is that they are intelligent. They are thinking cells. These cells are constantly eavesdropping on the conversation that you are having with yourself. That's right. They are listening to you! And others are listening to your cells as well. Others feel what you feel when they are around you.

Your unconscious mind, your cells, are listening in, waiting to adjust your behavior based on what they hear from you, their master. So just imagine what would happen if you started to think like Superman... or like a millionaire.

Here are some of the thoughts you might have during the day:

“The challenges I face day-to-day are easily overcome, after all I am Superman.”

“I am indestructible.”

“I have incredible strength.”

“Nothing can stop me.....NOTHING.”

“I have supernatural powers and can overcome anything.”

“I can accomplish anything I want when I put my mind to it.”

“I can break through any barrier.”

“I can and I will do whatever it takes to accomplish my goal.”

“I fear nothing.”

The trillions of thinking cells in your body and brain listen, and they create exactly what you tell them to create. Their mission is to complete the picture of the you they see and hear when you talk to them. They must obey. It's their job!

Since you are Superman, you cannot fail. Why? Your thinking cells are now sending out the right signal, because you told them to. They are making you stronger, more successful, everyday! You have the ability

to fight off all negativity, doubt, fear, and worry—nothing can stop you!

Superman has total confidence. So, your cells of emotion relating to confidence will now create more neuro peptide chemicals to promote feelings of power and confidence that others will feel in your presence.

Superman is fearless. So, your cells of emotion relating to fear will now create more neuro peptide chemicals to create feelings of courage. You are unstoppable!

And here's the key. Others will respond to you in the same way that you are talking to yourself.

If you are confident, others will have confidence in you.

You have thousands of thoughts every day. Make sure your thoughts are leading you in the direction you want to go. Make sure you are telling your cells a success story, and not a 'woe is me' story.

Most have been conditioned to think that creating wealth is difficult, or that it's only for the lucky few. What do you believe? It doesn't cost

you any more to think like Superman; and it's much more inspiring!

Mediocrity cannot be an option if you decide to be wealthy and think like Superman.

Your decision, and communication with your cells, creates a mindset; that mindset influences how you show up to the world.

None of that old type of thinking matters anymore...after all, you are Superman, and you can accomplish anything.

If you want wealth, you have to stretch yourself. You have to do the things that unsuccessful people are not willing to do. You have to say "yes" to opportunity, then figure out how to get the job done. You have to let go of your fears and uncertainty.

Maybe you are uncomfortable selling and asking for money. If that's the case, then learn sales and learn to ask for money every day until you feel comfortable asking for it. You will never have money if you don't learn to ask for it.

I've learned a lot in the past 40+ years as an entrepreneur. I've learned that in order to have more, you have to become more. I've also learned that if you are comfortable, you are not growing. I learned that I couldn't go from a nervous rookie speaker with minimal self-confidence to hosting TV shows and speaking in front of 5,000 people overnight. I simply wasn't ready. I grew into that, one speaking engagement at a time. Every time I finished a speaking engagement, I would ask myself, "How did I do, and how could I do it better?" I still do that today.

And I've learned from the hundreds of thousands of people I've trained, coached, and mentored that none of us can do something we don't believe is possible. It's not going to happen if you're not ready to step out of your comfort zone and stretch yourself.

This has led me to understand the single most important principle of wealth-building, that has meant the difference between poverty and riches for people since humans first traded for pelts.

Are you ready?

Come in just a little closer. Listen up!

Every income level requires a different you, a different mindset! If you think that \$10,000 a month is a lot of money, then \$100,000 a month will be completely out of reach. If you believe that having \$5,000 in the bank would make you rich, then \$50,000 won't miraculously appear. You will never earn more money than you believe is “a lot” of money.

What you do as a business is only a small part of becoming rich. In fact, there are thousands, if not tens of thousands, of ways to make money—and lots of it. What I've learned over the years is that, by focusing on who you want to become instead of what you need to do, you're going to multiply your chances of getting rich a hundred-fold.

Ask anyone who's found a way to make a large sum of money legally, and he or she will tell you that it's not hard once you crack the code. And cracking the code starts with you and your mindset. The “code” to which I refer isn't a secret rite or ancient scroll. It's not even a secret. It's a certain way of thinking and believing in which you've trained your mind to see money-making ideas.

That's where you see a need in the marketplace, and you jump on the idea quickly. It might involve creating a new product; or, it may just be teaching

others a special technique you've learned. It may even require raising capital to start a company or to market a product or idea on social media.

Don't Hold Back. You Have to Take Action to Change.

Start right now to imagine yourself as already having wealth. How would your life be? How would your day unfold? Start to own your wealth mindset now! The subconscious mind is unable to differentiate between actual fact and mere visualization. So, by imagining that you already have it, you're encouraging your subconscious mind to seek the ways and means to transform your imaginary feelings into the real thing.

Find yourself some mentors. Nobody has all the answers. Surround yourself with people that will support, inspire, and provide you with answers that keep you moving in the right direction. If you truly want to attain wealth, have a thriving business, or reach the top of your game in any endeavor, having a qualified mentor is essential.

Okay, lets come in for a landing ...

It is absolutely essential to have a crystal-clear picture of what you

want to accomplish before you begin. If you want to attain wealth, you must learn to operate without fear and with a sharply defined mental image of the outcome you want to attain. This comes from thinking like a wealthy person, (like Superman) making decisions like a wealthy person and being fearless (like Superman) when it comes to stepping out of your comfort zone. Look at the end result as something you're already prepared to do, you just haven't done it yet.

Think about this. Your success is something that you have been preventing; it's not something you have to struggle to make happen. The key is to not let fear, doubt, other people, or mind chatter push your success away. You'll find that the solutions taking you toward your goals will come to you in the most unexpected and sudden ways. You don't need the perfect plan first. What you need is a perfectly clear decision about your success, the right mindset, the right mentoring, and the ideal way to get you there will materialize.

The greatest transfer of wealth in the history of the human race is happening right now. Are you positioned to get your share?

Remember, in order to get a different result, you must do something

different. In order to do something different you must know something different to do. And in order to know something different, you have to first suspect that your present methods need improving.

THEN, YOU HAVE TO BE WILLING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

For more information on Jim's work:

www.JimBritt.com

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www.facebook.com/jimbrittonline

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To find out how to crack the rich code and change your subconscious programming regarding money: www.CrackingTheRichCode.com



Pastor Timothy Brooks

“I hope you always find a reason to smile.”

KEEP SMILING

BY PASTOR TIMOTHY BROOKS

As a child born into an enlisted military man’s family, we moved a lot. We didn’t have much money and lived a marginal life of poverty. Additionally, my parents wanted my mom to be a stay-at-home mom, which meant we lived on a tight budget. That reality was very frustrating to me as a kid, profoundly disappointing.

There’s a moment in my life that I’ll never forget where I wanted to put my name on the back of my baseball jersey. At fifty cents a letter, it was really trivial. My last name is Brooks. At six letters, three bucks shouldn’t have been an issue. My parent’s initial response was that we could not afford it. What family doesn’t have three dollars, I wondered, but that was the stark reality of our situation.

Living off the government through the military can be interesting. For example, when my parents were transferred to Louisiana, our housing

and paychecks were goofed up. We had no house, and my dad's car was repossessed because he didn't receive his government check. Deep in my heart, I knew it was not my parents' fault, but I remember thinking, I am done with this type of life. I'm going to use my intellect; I'm going to use my athletic capacity. I am not going to live this life when I'm an adult.

Additionally, my father believed he was held back in potential because his parent's divorced when he was in middle school. Therefore, he thought that it led him to struggle in early adulthood with getting and keeping a job, as well as the lack of direction and meaning in his life. However, that all came together when he enlisted in the military.

He worked hard; he was an electrician. Additionally, he boarded boats for the Coast Guard, keeping drugs and other things out of the country. I was proud to learn he put his life on the line at times. Plus, he would spend hot days in Louisiana in boiler rooms of the Coast Guard boats only to come home exhausted. He worked really, really hard. I was always impressed and thankful. Unfortunately, he didn't see himself with the esteem that I saw him with, he saw himself as having not reached his full potential.

I respected him, I loved him. However, my father blocked off the possibility that my life would follow his life. He refused to let me help on house projects, and he forbade me to look under the hood of cars. He would not allow me to do any blue-collar work whatsoever, because he didn't want me to work physical labor that was hard on my body.

He and I saw him from a different point of view, and this difference created difficulty between us. Nothing major as we got along really well, but this push to white-collar work was frustrating. He wanted to make sure that I was clueless with any kind of blue-collar work so that I would reach my full potential. Meanwhile, while all that is happening, I am scoring the 95th percentile and higher in standardized tests. I'm getting straight A's; I'm getting asked to begin gifted and talented classes. This is profoundly affirming the way my parents were trying to shape my life.

The irony of all this was living in Boston, Massachusetts, as a child where my favorite thing in the whole world was my dad taking me to work where we would take the train into the city. I remember emerging from the subway seeing people in dark suits and ties. Here I was in 2nd grade, and I knew that that was what I wanted to do someday. I wanted to walk around the city in a suit looking important.

At a profoundly young age, I mean, a super young, first-second grade age, I decided I wanted to be an attorney. My mom wasn't excited about this plan. She would argue with me about it, but I made my decision that I wanted to be an attorney and go to an Ivy League school. Later, when I witnessed the financial challenges of my parents, my dreams of being a lawyer just got more and more vivid. I knew that I could get into law school. I knew I could thrive when I got there, and I knew I could make six figures. I planned to conquer the world.

Religion was a staple for us and a significant influence in my life. I grew up going to church, and we even went to church on vacation. We were actively involved. With all the moving, the church was the foundation for us as our relationship with God. Thank goodness as we moved so much that I attended four schools in five years. The church was the only solid I had growing up.

Church and Christian life were central to our growing up. My mom kept a prayer journal and knowing that she prayed in the morning shaped me to see how functional that was to her. My dad carried his Bible; I can still see the case that he carried it in, and these memories became the central practices.

Looking back on where all I have lived, I lived in Connecticut, Virginia, Massachusetts, Louisiana, and Wisconsin. I went to school in Illinois and Kansas for undergrad and graduate school. As a pastor, I've lived in Ohio, Florida, Maine, and Maryland. The solidity of my life has been my relationship with God, combined with my relationship with the church. Then, also my connection to family. I'm thankful for all of those things because I'm not sure what would keep me grounded. Otherwise, I don't know what would be central to me without my connection to the church, God, and family.

I was always trying to sort how God was going to fit into my life. Early on, I was negotiating if I'm making good money, 10% of tithes going back to the church will be helpful. Plus, with the skills of the lawyer I could really serve a church board really well. Here I was at 12 thinking through these issues, pretty bizarre stuff for a 12-year-old. It's just how I was wired.

In first grade, I was telling all my fellow students how many years left till we went to college. I was just a weird kid. Always goal-driven, always going somewhere. No day was wasted. Everything was about getting out of the poverty that I perceived myself to be in all the time.

Despite that reality, I was the happiest as I loved my family, and I loved my life. I just hated that all my friends had a Nintendo and that other kids could afford to play on a travel baseball team that I couldn't afford to get my six-letter name on the shirt. These little things just weighed on me in ways that shouldn't have, but it frustrated me.

For myself, my awkward moments or challenges consisted of getting lazy in high school, I was always a high-functioning A student. When I got to high school, I just got bored with school, and was in all the advanced classes or whatever, and started getting B's and occasional C's, because I wouldn't do my homework. When I, when I went to college, I was a terrible student as I started off really, really bad. And by the time I was done with my sophomore year, I was me I was passing, but it was clear to me that I was not becoming the person that I wanted to be or was meant to be.

The laziness and the not leveraging the gifts that I was sure God had given me. Maybe even utilizing the gifts that God had given me and the absolute worst kind of ways to just float through on intellect, rather than really engage academic life, the reading, the spiritual formation, all that kind of stuff. It's really creating me to be the kind of person I didn't

respect and didn't particularly love. Sucking at school for two years is really painful for me. I didn't know how to become good at school.

I didn't know how to move back to the top of the class because I had no strategies. I hadn't studied in like six years at this point. I really should have opened a book and challenged for valedictorian. Instead, I like just floated for 16 years to the point where I didn't recognize myself anymore, and I didn't really respect myself. As a junior in college, I had to learn to become a student. That change was pretty humiliating and embarrassing.

Finally, things shifted, I paid attention to people I respected, and I faked it till I made it. Trying the things that they did, it started coming back to me. By the time I graduated from grad school, I had reached magna cum laude. Finally, I sensed that God had given me the capacity to do more than float. That realization was a pretty, pretty impactful moment for me, I've got to start investing myself in the parts of me that I like better, that I respect better, that seemed more authentic.

My whole life was pointing the direction of high aptitude and religion at an early age. Even through I was lazy in school, I still knew that religion was my future. When I was 15 years old, I went to church camp like I did

every summer. On the last day of camp, I had an out of body experience. I don't know how to describe it other than when the room emptied; God spoke to me in clear terms, telling me that he wanted me to be a pastor. I don't know how I didn't fight that because everything I obsessed with my childhood about was about who I was going to be was not in line with being a pastor. At that moment where I thought God called me to be a pastor, I said yes. I had peace about it for some reason.

I remember boldly telling the story about my call to ministry at public school. One day, we were in one of those classes talking about what are you gonna do when you grow up. I was a senior in high school, and I thought, "Oh, I've got to tell the truth. I can't be a liar." I said I'm going to be a pastor. A very, very pretty Catholic girl sitting in front of me, turned around in front of this whole class of 60, and said, "Does that mean you can never have sex?" I was like, "Oh my gosh, sure," completely red-faced.

I was willing to start addressing these challenges of being public about my faith and my journey in high school. It all worked out; people really respected it, which was formative to me. I was afraid becoming Christian was going to become marginalized in society. My public-school friends who were reasonably secular people were very, very respectful.

I learned religion, which was a big deal considering that I came from a non-educated family. My parents hadn't gone to college. My mom's entire family hadn't gone to college. I finished my bachelor's degree, and my wife completed her bachelor's degree in early childhood education.

Just before we were about to head off to seminary, my dad was diagnosed with esophageal cancer, a pretty severe case, but the doctors had a really reasonable plan to address it. They were going to remove his esophagus, stretch his stomach, and reattach. They felt like he had an excellent survival chance. The surgery was deemed as a success, so I saw him to say, "Dad, you've got like three months to recover to drive me out to seminary. He nodded as if to say, "Yep, I'll be there." I got in my car and drove back to college.

The next day, a phone call from my mom revealed that his incision developed a leak and that there was an infection in his abdominal area. Within a couple days, his health spiraled entirely out of control, and he entered into what turned out to be a half year, medically induced coma to keep his functions alive while they addressed this very threatening infection in the core of his body.

Moving day came, my wife's parents were there, my parents were not. My dad was in serious condition. We were all confident that this was God's plan called upon my life to go to seminary. With my dad in an extreme medical condition, I moved 10 hours away from his hospital bed because we were all confident. All the way through, the family felt this is what we were supposed to do having the belief that somehow miraculous healing would take place.

Things fell into place really well there. I started my pastoral life as a youth pastor. This time I began immersing myself in a new community. By the fall, my dad started turning back to health. We spent Thanksgiving with him. It was amazing to witness this miracle and to spend time with my dad again. It seemed like it was all going to turn out to be the perfect story.

A week later, the first Saturday in December, I got a call from my mom saying that I'd better get on the next flight out of the city that they didn't think my dad was going to make it through the weekend. On Monday, he died. This is now the week before finals, all my papers were due; instead, we're planning the funeral. It's funny how you spend a lot of time wondering if you've made the right choices, if you've gone to the right places, and if you've done the right things.

I don't really know how to explain how strange it is to be fatherless in your 20s. You don't need him on a day to day basis anymore. Yet you still have grand plans for what adulthood together is going to look like. In my teenage years, my dad and I had a bizarre relationship because he didn't have a dad during those years. And so, there was some real contentiousness between us about things that were now easy.

He reunited with his dad when he was 21. When I turned 20, our relationship changed. There were struggles with him figuring out how to be a dad during the years that his dad was gone. He was the best of dads during my life when his dad was around him at that same age. We were working it out in some fascinating ways, what our relationship was going to look like. Our closeness from my childhood was congealing in some really, really fun ways. I was I was pretty confident he was gonna be a great grandfather.

I was looking forward to those days. The hardest thing for me in that week was imagining my children I hadn't had yet. I wondered how I was going to explain to them this man who was my father. We buried my dad, I was 23, my sister was 21. She was unmarried. There's no way for her to have a wedding where my dad walks her down the aisle. These are the griefs that you process in your 20s.

I was not angry. I was actually enrolled in a class called pastoral grief and counseling as my dad died, which was a gift because I spent the whole semester talking about how to help people through grief like mine. I didn't feel like I deserved anything better or different than what I knew I was going to walk people through in my pastoral life.

I don't know that my sister or my mom had it so easy like me, but I really liked the work of seminary, and theology was super helpful. I had faced a pain that was as intense as what people I was going to pastor would be facing. I felt I have made a good pastor at funerals because I have a sense of what loss feels like, and also what the really profound hope in the resurrection of Jesus can be.

I returned to seminary with my dad now buried. I was received with such open arms by professors and the president of the school students, they knew the tragedy and how going back to a strange place seems so empty. I immediately felt the care was an affirmation of all of the trajectory and decisions of everything that I have gone through. And it was, it was just another affirmation of how great the church can be in the midst of tragedy and difficulty.

The professors helped me finish and catch up on things that I missed. I took off, academically, I took off with purpose and direction in life. I really started solidifying stuff in my mind about what I wanted to be and do as a pastor that I, I just didn't have the space to work through when my dad was struggling. In seminary, we talked about as pastor's language, means of grace in which God's grace makes it to our lives in surprising ways.

Getting to be 10 years ago now, I was heading towards becoming a pastor, confident in the way God had shaped me and molded me. My story had come together, leaving me with the ability to have something to say to the church. Also, to be a presence for people in their lives, through all sorts of things. I have been there for them in seasons of poverty, grief, doubt, and struggle. I really felt like God was helping me to be the kind of person and pastor that can be really helpful for people in the most challenging moments of their life.

Finding a church, building a community will help you in moments of confusion and struggle. I think for me, being grounded in the Christian community, with peers and adults who've been there before, always helped prevent me from straying too far from who I was meant to be. I'm grounded in eternal God, which is solid, but even the history of the

church is foundational. The church in your neighborhood may have popped up in the last five years, but it's rooted in a faith that's thousands of years old. That kind of solidity can't be manufactured.

As far as fulfillment in my life, I try to invest in people regularly. The way this looks is that I have days where every hour on the hour, there's a new person in my office facing tragedy to victory. At times walking them through the shocking forces and revelations from people they love. Being present for people is really meaningful to me, like being able to be a non-anxious presence moment like that. Then, I'll leave the office to take my daughters to the soccer or softball field or on the basketball court. I involve myself in coaching because I want to extend my positive reach into the community beyond the pastoral office.

I think a really, really good way for me, and the way I'm wound to leverage myself as a person is to be a member of the community by investing in people's kids who aren't just church kids. On a Saturday, you can see me hollering and screaming at girls playing soccer, telling them to stay in their position. A couple hours later, I'm showing a girls where to put their arms when they're going to swing a softball bat. I love the community engagement that that brings.

I don't close out a game saying, "Y'all need to know Jesus!" Instead, I hope to carry my title into the field as a dad and community member that genuinely cares about the girls. I hope I can come off as a productive member of the community who cares for more than just growing a church. Instead, I'd rather come off as a person who is investing in people who are the next generation.

I want to see our church understand its mindset as being outwardly focused. I want to help people's mindset shift from "what do I get out of this" to "what impact are we making on the neighborhood and the people around us?" I think that the Christianity that I grew up in, in the 80s, and 90s, led to the mindset of how does the church feed me? It's time to change from thinking about self to thinking about others.

I'm hoping that in the next 10 years of my life, that I really help people see their Christian walk to grow in your quiet time, your disciplines, your character, and that it's been worked out as the church. The church is a tool of evangelism, helping people find Jesus. We are a tool of community engagement, being a positive force for people's lives in the neighborhood who don't see themselves Christian.

We're doing good work of bringing God's justice to the world where people who've had deeply unfair things happen to them. Whether systemic or personal, maybe they're abused by their father, or perhaps they were sexually assaulted by a neighbor, or, they were born into cycles of poverty. They can't see their way up. Being in the form of helping people change their trajectory in life and finding out that it was God's calling to the church that brought us to them by grace helps improve their experience and their relationship with God.

Book that changed your life:

Celebration of Discipline – Richard J Foster

Torture and Eucharist – William Cavanaugh

Pastor in a Secular Age – Andrew Root

Desiring the Kingdom - James K. A. Smith,
desiring the kingdom.

Dare to Lead – Brene' Brown

Strengths Finder 2.0 – Tom Rath

Five Dysfunctions of the Team - Patrick Lindsey
Elena.

The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to
Self Discovery – Ian Morgan Cron & Richard Rohr

Simply Christian – N. T. Wright

Prophetic Imagination, Walter Brougham

Movie that inspire you:

Pixar movie inside out. Martin Scorsese movie
called silence.



Kimberly Brown

“You don’t appreciate a smile until its gone.”

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT A SMILE CAN DO UNTIL YOU LOSE IT

BY KIMBERLY BROWN

In life God gives us freedom, freedom to choose, freedom to make our own decisions. Life is about choosing the right path for the betterment of you. Some choices I regret and some choices I love but I do know everything has worked out for my good. I truly believe my life has been a lot of lessons, teachings, overcoming obstacles, but God has never given me anything I could not handle and because of this journey called life, I am who I am.

I was born February 27, 1982, to my mother Kimberly Jones and my father Jim Brown, to my God_parents Kimberly English and David English aka Melvin Franklin from the Temptations. My Godfather

David would always tell me he was the one who saw me first when I was born. My dad disagrees and says he's the one who saw me first. My mother was knocked out so she can't make this argument. I was loved by two great men. I say loved in the past tense because a week before my 13th birthday, my world shattered and I lost him, my Godfather David. He was the glue that held everything together.

I had the best 13 years of my life. My life was like a movie but I didn't even know it. From swimming at the Playboy mansion as a kid, parties almost every weekend at my dad's. People would just stop by and my dad would just let them in. You never knew who was showing up. The Nation of Islam was always there, my Uncle George Hughley, my dad's best friend. In actuality, I had three great men who loved and adored me. Gang members from the Bloods and Crips frequented our home. My father created the Amer-I-Can program which is in the inner-cities, prisons, juvenile centers, etc. My dad would always have graduation ceremonies for the students and their families who completed the program to be held at our home.

See I can't remember my parents ever together, I've seen a picture of all three of us but I have no fond memories of having my parents under

one roof. I can remember my father driving to Mulholland Drive to meet my mom and would give me a wad of cash and say: "Take this and give this to your mother." That was the drop-off. My father was crazy over my mother. So crazy he would yell at me about my mother. That's when I mastered the tune-out. The first time I remember my parents being under one roof was when I was like 5 years old. They were at my mom's place and they were talking. The next thing I know I hadn't seen my mom in a very long time. She sent me packages with stuffed animals and stickers.

One day I'm sitting on my dad's bed, watching cartoons and my father comes in and says "do you want to go see your mother?" I said "yeah." So I got dressed and jumped in my dad's 1969 brown Mercedes drop-top Benz. I ended up walking into a police station and seeing my mother in a room sitting on a bench. She gave me lots of kisses and hugs. The next thing I know they were in court fighting and I had to testify. I was in kindergarten at the time. The attorneys asked me questions pertaining to financial support. They said my father wasn't taking care of me. I told them my father gives me a lot of money to give to my mother every time he dropped me off to her. I told them my father would always take me shopping on Sunset Blvd, right below where we

lived. I also remember telling the judge "I want to spend more time with my dad. After I was done testifying, my parents both came back into the courtroom. And boy oh boy both of my parents are beasts. They went at it standing up and yelling at one another. Most assume I get my attitude from my dad but if people know my mom then they would say I get it from her. So I get my attitude from both my father and mother. My father is a lot older now and he's calmed down a lot, my mom, slightly.

The court order stated my father had to pay my mother \$1000 a month and he could see me every Tuesday and every other weekend. So really nothing changed except for now it's mandated by a court of law. We eventually went back to me choosing when I wanted to see my dad. I had a key to his house and would go anytime. It was great having three homes to go to when I was young. I had my mother and when she was getting on my nerves I would go to my father's and if I needed a break from them both I would go to my Godparents.

Now the life I lived with my Godparents was another movie. I would always go on stage with Temptations and sing "My Girl. One trip David took me to a water park and we were in a tube floating in a lazy

river and after, I was on stage. That night Tommie Davidson was doing stand-up comedy and I got to meet him. I knew who he was because "In Livin Color was all the rage in that day. It was the same night my Godmother busted her heart tattoo open on her shoulder.

Like I said, the first 13 years of my life were my best years. Traveling to Vegas with my dad to sign autographs at convention centers to going to the mall and shop while he did his Sunday night radio show. It was in my 13th year is when everything started crumbling down. It started with my Godfather passing. I never got to visit him or say goodbye. My dad told me the news. Even though my father and Godfather never spoke and had a falling out at some point, my dad was with him in the hospital until his end. At the same time, my dad decided this was an opportune time to try to get back with my mother. My mother had come to my dad's house one night, he had hugged her from behind over the top and said "Kimberly, wouldn't you like for your mother and father to get back together? I said "yes, for the simple fact I would have a better life, even if it was semi-toxic of yelling I could handle that.

I remember my dad having two girlfriends in my lifetime besides my step-mother, Leila who I liked but i was spoiled brat with her and

Angela who I thought was mean. I didn't like her. At least Leila was nice and always took me shopping and to fun places. I really thought there was a chance for my mother and father to be together, it never happened. At David's funeral, I was hysterical. I was crying not stop. My Godmother turned around and looked at me and asked my mother "is she going to be alright. No, I wasn't going to be alright, I just lost one of the biggest loves and joys of my life. It was only for a split second I was distracted when Michael Jackson went to the alter to pay his respects. After his death, I was in a very sad mood, like a piece of my heart was missing. I couldn't believe it, he was gone. My father didn't attend the funeral, he was out of town on business, I think filming a movie. But he did let my Godmother throw the re-pass at his house. He also helped to get her paperwork in order to make sure she was good financially.

A little time went by after David's death and that's when the chaos began. My father first brought home a new girlfriend. I was nice to her at first but then I didn't like her, she was taking up a lot of my dad's time leaving no room for me. I would never acknowledge her by saying "hi, or "bye. She told my dad and my dad told me to leave. So that made me hate her even more. I had my father all to myself for the first

13 years of my life, I just lost my Godfather so you would think I would spend more time with him. He was the only man I had left. I felt like I was losing my father too.

At the same time, my mother and Godmother had a falling out and my mom told me to cut all communication off with her. I lost everyone I cared about. David was truly the glue that kept us all together. I know if I still had him in my life. and he never died, my life would have been totally different. I would always ask God why He took David from me. Later in life I realized it was God's plan and to be thankful I had almost 13 years rather than no time at all.

You never know what a smile can do until you lose it. This was my beginning, not my middle, or my end but this time impacted and shaped the person I am today and the choices I made.

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Life's journey contributes to making us who we are but our parents set the foundation. All my life's experiences led me to an exact moment in time, in Vancouver, Canada May 27th, 2015. That exact location and

time I will never forget that day, it was the day I heard the voice of God. He said, "Kimberly I am choosing you to spread a message. Part of the message was "get my people together. I worked for God by hosting single events across the nation putting men and women together for the purpose of husband and wife. After my LA event a couple met, was married in less than 10 months after the event, and now has twins, a boy and a girl.

I believe "Blulign," the name of my company was a test from God to see if I would be faithful. Being an evangelist and starting my own business taught me and prepared me for today. My God given purpose is to unite God's people for victory over evil. I am currently building what God has blessed me with, "Daughters of Legends." A superhero women's group to join global forces to take on the world. To showcase, empower, and uplift in a positive movement of action and real change.

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How am I? I can say I'm very determined in what I want. I go after it and not let anyone or anything stand in my way. If there's a problem to be solved, I go through every door to solve it. That's my execution.

Before I execute I plan. I think of the best option of how to solve the problem. Sometimes problems arise and I am unable to plan so I go with my instincts and execute. I can't remember any times I went after what I wanted and failed, I only remember the wins.

I create abundance by planting seeds in others. Seeds of information and/or ideas planted in the minds to help individuals see their vision but bigger. To help them see the path of where their dream can go. I create abundance for myself by dreaming, believing, and achieving it. To consistently work for the outcome I want to achieve. Doing what I love to do and who I love to do it with creates an abundance of love and love is the best feeling in the world.

I don't think I ever intentionally try to make someone smile unless I know they really need a smile. I believe I inspire smiles by being my authentic me, funny, joking, and loving. I spoke at a women's home called "Lighthouse Ministries. I know I was able to put smiles on their faces by the time I left. I shared my intimate life with them and we prayed. They soon wrote me a letter telling me how they loved my visit and it helped and inspired them. Those are the types of smiles I want to be intentional with, putting smiles on people that need it the most.

ABOUT KIMBERLY BROWN

Kimberly Brown is the daughter of former activist, actor, and Pro Football's Hall of Fame superstar, Jim Brown, who was a running back for the Cleveland Browns of the National Football League from 1957 through 1965.

Kimberly is a graduate of Baylor University with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration: Marketing & Mngmt.

In 2021, Kimberly made her acting debut as Geraldine Liston in the movie "One Night in Miami," directed by Regina King. On the television side, Kimberly executive produced and is starring in her docu-series with Robyn Charles; the daughter of Ray Charles to make up the social activist group "Daughters of Legends".

In football, Kimberly served as a defensive end in the 2019 season on the world-famous Legends Football League's team; the Atlanta Steam. For the 2020 & 2021 seasons, she played for the flag football team, Code Red, in Atlanta as a running back.

Kimberly has appeared on sports radio, talk shows, & podcasts. She has been featured in music videos, three of which were directed by actress Meagan Good for artists Ricky Bell from New Edition.

Books that changed your life:

Rich Dad Poor Dad by Robert T. Kiyosaki

Off My Chest by Jimmy Brown

Movie(s) that inspire you:

The Avengers

The Color Purple

Documentaries

Song that inspires you:

What Love Feels Like by Robyn L. Charles

Your Hero:

My father Jim Brown

Quote you live by:

Dream, Believe, and Achieve



**LuAnn Buechler, Author, Coach, Trainer, Transformational Speaker
and Founder of the ihug Movement**

“Hugs are a powerful human connection. It’s the physical version of a smile. Both uplift people. Share them often.”

HUGS BRING SMILES OR HUGS LEAD TO SMILES

BY LUANN BUECHLER

My story looks a lot like others. I was raised as a good catholic girl with 7 siblings in an average midwestern community. I did what I was told. I did what I was supposed to do to live up to others rules and expectations. Get good grades in school, go to college, get married, have kids, get a good job and climb the corporate ladder. While all these things are good in and of themselves, and appear to be a perfectly good life by societies standards. I failed to find my true passions, myself in all of that. What did I really want my life to be?

I did find my way into a business I enjoyed, meeting and event management. However, I got side tracked after a divorce and ended up in a management position in corporation where I was unable to do the things I really loved. My life became miserable. I hated going to work

and I had to find a way out. I left that job without knowing my next step or another job. This was the summer my father took ill and passed away. I now look at it as a blessing that I was unemployed at the time and able to support my father’s journey to the after-life. After that, I took the first job that came my way because I needed money (a common human condition), which was in sales – and I hated that too.

The good news is, while doing that I found a little organization called BNI. Business Network International, the world’s largest networking organization. I fell in love with their philosophy of Givers Gain. I met a lot of wonderful people and decided if “they could do it” I could too. So, I started my own business... with no fear, no direction and no business plan. Somehow regardless, I have managed to have my successes. The business has transformed over the years from Event Management to being a Coach for both personal and professional development.

It’s because of BNI, that I found Janet Bray Attwood and the Passion Test. In the true spirit of Givers Gain, Janet agreed to speak at an event I created where she met my daughter. She fell in love with her and asked her to be a Passion Test Facilitator for Teens, this led to both my daughter and I going to facilitator training.

I thought, “no matter what happens, it will be a great bonding experience for my daughter and I.” And it was so much more than that. The Passion Test is a system to teach people to live in joy, loving your life and it has helped me to step fully into the authentic me and do just that. BNI is also a system and I teach people the BNI System. I knew I could also teach people the BNI System. Doing so allows me to more fully live it in my own life every day.

“What you love to do and what is God’s will for you are one in the same thing.” Janet Bray Attwood. This statement has freed me to love myself, love what I love to do, and allow myself to do it. I want to help others experience this freedom and peace of mind, by discovering their passions. Living in joy, which makes me SMILE!

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Introduction

A hug is a powerful tool connecting us to other human beings. I’ve always been an affectionate person, but I doubt that I have always used

this tool in my life. I lived the majority of my life on autopilot in terms of personal touch and hugs. I never used hugs in a business setting; I saved hugs for family and friends and those who were open to hugging.

Several years ago, I discovered the book, the Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts, by Gary D. Chapman. My husband and I took the quiz included with this book to learn how to communicate better with each other. The five love languages are words of affirmation, gift giving, acts of service (devotion), quality time, and physical touch. The test uncovers which of these languages gives you pleasure. My love language is personal touch. This is something I need in my life from others, so it was serendipitous that my first assignment at my first Transformational Leadership Council meeting was to bestow a hug upon each attendee as they arrived and departed over the course of the weekend.

The Transformational Leadership Council is an organization created by Jack Canfield, author of Chicken Soup for the Soul series and President of Canfield Success Principles. The organization is designed to bring transformational leaders together from around the world to support each other's visions and learn from one another. The first TLC

meeting I attended was in Vail, Colorado, in 2008, and this is where my hug journey began.

Serving at the TLC events is an extraordinary blessing in my life, for which I am forever grateful to my friend, Dr. Ivan Misner, Founder & Chief Visionary Officer for Business Network International (BNI). He referred me to Guy Stickney, the TLC Meeting Director.

At that first meeting, Guy gave me the assignment to greet every one of the attendees with a hug upon their arrival and again when they departed. That's right; it was my "job" to hug everyone, to make each person feel welcomed and loved.

From the minute I arrived, before I knew the members, I was connected to them through the power of a hug. Hugs bring people together and create a connection of love and service. There is no judgment, no question, no doubt. Just love.

Then in 2011, Robert MacPhee, one of our speakers at the Passionate Life Summit, in San Diego, California gifted all of us with an "ihug" button. It was there I decided to wear the button as a way to warn

people that I HUG. Soon it became a human experiment to see how people would react.

I remember my first experience while wearing the button. I was standing in the lobby waiting to direct people arriving for the conference. An older gentleman coming in for a Veterans Reunion was standing in line at the front desk, and I caught him staring at me. He was reading the button. I could see the wheels turning in his head trying to figure out what it said. Then he blurted out “you hug?” I said “I do,” and I proceeded to give him a big HUG.

Now, I give the buttons out to other people and ask them to report back to me with their stories. This is a basis for this book, to share my experiences and others while wearing the “ihug” button.

I set the intention to ihug Across America in 2020 during the Presidential campaigns to reconnect people in the face of polarization with the human hug. While the COVID 19 crisis as put an end to that for now. We will hug again, and the movement will be even more impactful because of it. For now, we are sending virtual hugs, so follow us on Facebook at ihug Movement and ihugmovement.com.



I have now had my own business PMC Events & Coaching, for 15 years. Where I live the philosophies I have learned along the way from all of my teachers, in BNI, The Passion Test Family, and the Transformational Leadership Council. I can now look back and see that many of the messages I have learned my father tried to teach me, when I was too young to grasp it. I know he smiles down on my today with joy, that I get it.

I practice meditation and prayer daily. I teach the power of a positive mindset and help others find their passions to live a life in joy. We teach what we want to learn and practice in our own life. Janet Bray Attwood says “I am the teacher, living the teachings.” I am that too.

One of my teachers Dr. Sue Morter, of the Energy Codes, said to me once. “You are just a little bubble of joy, and you’re the last one to know.” I think that was true. Now I look for proof when and where I bring others joy. People tell me often, I light up a room when I walk into it. I step into the world each day to share my light and bless others in what ever way I can in that day. From a simple smile to a warm hug or sound advise.

I trust in the universe, God, that all things are happening in their right and perfect timing for my good. I look for the positive outcome from any situation, trusting it is what I was meant to learn from in the moment. I walk in faith that God is guiding my path. I give a lot of hugs and always have a SMILE on my face and in my voice.

ABOUT LUANN BUECHLER

LuAnn Buechler, known as the Little Spark, is a Certified Facilitator of the Passion Test and the Passion Test for Business, which she uses in her coaching practice to ignite the SPARK in you and your business. LuAnn is the co-author of Exceptional Care for Your Valued Clients, and self published author of ihug:My Journey as a Hugger. She is an avid networker, BNI Director Consultant and member of the Transformational Leadership Council.

LuAnn is also the Founder of the ihug Movement a grass roots effort to spread love and human connection simply by sharing hugs Across America. To learn more follow her in Facebook at ihug Movement or ihugmovement.com

Book that changed your life:

The Passion Test,
by Janet Bray Attwood & Chris Attwood

Movie that inspire you

Heaven is for Real

Song that inspires you:

Grateful by Jen Hannah

Your Hero:

My Father

Quote you live by:

“Do what you love, in service to people who love what you do.” –Steve Farber, Author of Love is Just Damn Good Business



Sherry D. Burden

“You never get a chance to make a first impression... Just smile!”

KEEP SMILING

SHERRY D. BURDEN

I was born into this world out of love. In my earliest memories, I remember feeling safe, secure, and warm. A special shoe-wearing, bowlegged, little chocolate girl, I was always singing. I sang my love to my friends and family and in return was showered with love and happiness. The week of my fifth birthday, the love that showered down on me turned into chaos. That week, my father passed away due to a complication during surgery. My mother was also in a tragic car accident that caused a severe brain injury. My songs of joy became songs of sorrow.

For weeks after my fifth birthday, my grandparents who took on the task of raising me, did not feel there was any need to explain where my mother and father had disappeared to. It was at this time that I began to form limiting beliefs to protect myself. My limiting beliefs surrounded issues of abandonment and the need to figure everything out by myself. I reminded myself that at any time the ones I loved most

could disappear and leave me alone. I promised to never get too close to others and to never depend on others. I convinced myself I could navigate life on my own. I would be strong, push my hurt feelings deep down, and march forward by myself.

As a child, I remember the makeshift closet, my mother's and my clothing hanging on wired hangers and some at the base of that section of the attic. My mom and I slept in that attic in the same bed that had no box frame, foot board or headboard. I recall feeling the springs in the mattress. This is where I witness abuse and mental illness from my Mom who had been suffering from depression due to the loss of my father and not receiving any professional help until she had a psychotic episode that everyone else finally witness. I had experienced many of those nights for years before anyone else knew about it. My grandparents had to care for both my Mom and myself.

I grew into an adult with the same limiting beliefs and mindset I had as a child. I worked full time and put myself through college, but I did it mostly on my own. Receiving little help, what would have taken four years, took me six years - but I graduated with honors. I had succeeded on my own. It was a very long road. I got married. Yet, 12 years later

it was time for me to be on my own again; to ease back into my old routine of only depending on myself. I transitioned through divorce alone. I pushed the hurt and pain deep down as I had done since the age of five. Yet this time, I had two sons joining me on my journey.

Giving birth to my two sons from my marriage changed everything. I was not alone but the arrangements and choice to let my sons stay with their father caused me to feel out of control and hurt. Painful memories I locked away as a little five-year-old clouded my mind bubbled up in my stomach. I would physically get ill. It was getting more challenging for me to push through presenting myself as a happy, strong, put together, and always smiling woman. So, I tried to mask the pain through other means. I would rush to catch the train to any happy hour after a long day at work just to feel a sense of belonging and a couple hours of happy feelings. I would abuse alcohol to block out what I considered failures in life and to experience a sense of freedom. I just wanted the nights to quickly end. I wanted the day to come where I would feel truly happy, and my sons are grown. Those evenings sometimes turned into behaviors that I later regretted such as one-night stands. I used alcohol as an excuse for any wild or promiscuous behavior. Any act I performed, or over flirtatious conversations I initiated

that didn't sit well with soul, I blamed it all on the alcohol. One way or another, I was going to fake it until I made it - whatever that meant, I did not know.

Years after my divorce, I found myself in a dark basement with just a small sliding glass door and no windows. I felt shame, disappointment, helplessness, and depression. I slept on a mattress on the floor, which reminded me of my childhood sleeping arrangements in an attic packed with all my belongings.

I began to have thoughts of suicide. Thoughts I had not last had since my teenage years. I wondered how this was my life, in my late forties. I had a good job. I didn't deserve this. I had been the one to make others feel good. I volunteered with my community. I treated everyone with kindness and empathy. I loved to love. My life had to be more than this. I reached my rock bottom and I knew my only options were to give up or transform.

Amid all my belongings in this basement apartment of someone else's home, I admitted to myself that I felt lost and lonely. I cried and knew that I needed help. I heard a voice tell me to go online. Desperate for

any answers, I began to search for a way out of my loneliness. I came across a video of a woman being interviewed about her own struggles. She had experienced divorce and loneliness and made it through to better days. She explained how she went through the Hoffman Process. It is a week-long residential and personal growth retreat that helps participants identify negative behaviors, moods, and ways of thinking that developed unconsciously and were conditioned in childhood. Everything she said resonated with me. In what can only be described as a series of miracles, I found myself attending the Hoffman Process less than 2 months later.

This Hoffman Process program provided me the much-needed opportunity to work on myself but this time I had support. I was propelled to address my limiting beliefs, to forgive those that had hurt me in the past, and to ask for help. I learned that my deep hurts and trapped emotions were blocking me from my true destiny and purpose. I realized challenging situations in my life were happening for me and not to me. I realized that I was the designer of my destiny.

My entire perspective on my future changed. I started to truly believe that I was the creator of my reality. I was excited about living and ready

for the world. I learned how to respond to negative situations in life from a place of compassion and growth. I learned how to pause and respond to things that didn't feel good.

I created a life vision for myself and with my newfound outlook and I was surprised when many of my goals manifested in less than six months. I started to invest in myself, take risks, learn new skills, and believe in a better tomorrow. I turned obstacles and challenges in my life into learning experiences. I learned how to forgive myself and others. How to remove limiting beliefs. How to love myself. How to invest in myself. How to ask for help. How to look for the lesson in all things. How to never give up. How to keep hope. How to enjoy things that make me happy. How to keep learning. How to embrace the silence and the unknown. And how to live life to the fullest.

My faith got stronger in all areas of my life. Within one year after the Hoffman Process, I became a certified health coach, started a talk show, became a recording artist, and self-published my first book. I became a full fledged entrepreneur and my finances became more abundant. My relationships with my sons and mom began to thrive. And my relationship with myself flourished.



I do my best to take care of my mental, physical, and spiritual self with the goal to live to be 103-years-old in my right mind and with maximized mobility. I believe that will allow me enough time to be an example for many generations and to live life to the fullest and with purpose. I want my children and future generations to know that learning and trying new things is not age bound. I want to personally teach my great-great grandkids how to live a life with no regrets and with less stress.

Everything that happened to me in life prepared me to serve and help other women find their purpose and live the life they want without unnecessary hurt and pain. I want to help women recognize their power, give them hope, and teach them to love themselves. I want to help women identify limiting beliefs and replace them with empowering beliefs. I want everyone to know, you can live life to the fullest no matter what you have gone through. You can attract what you want in life.



I create abundance and solve problems by starting my day off with either a prayer, meditation, tapping, or doing a gratitude exercise. I raise my energy so that whatever may come during the day, I can deal with it quickly and continue to function from the soul of who I am. Staying in a place of feeling good most of the time attracts abundance and causes me and others to smile.

I find inspiration from the big and small moments. From the smiles I receive after singing a song at the end of my talk show or workshop. From the exceptional testimonials by clients who have received my health coaching services. From the five-star reviews on my published book "Time to Declutter My Life."

Abundance has shown up in my life through a career that allows me to work from home, which enables me to save money on travel and other expenses. My health and wellbeing are abundant as I seek opportunities of learning and creating new streams of income that allow me to have the freedom I want in my vision for my life before retirement age. I am part of incredible communities with like-minded and supportive people. All of these things cause me to have a reason to smile throughout my day.

ABOUT SHERRY BURDEN

Sherry Burden, born Sherry Crocker from Newport News, Va., has lived in SC, NC, PA, and MD. Known as 'Queen She' on the stage and in business, she attended Old Dominion University and graduated from Norfolk State University in Va. with a BS in Management Computer Information Systems. She is a proud mother of two sons and is an only child. She loves to travel and is a foodie.

She believes in:

- living a creative life and fulfilled life
- establishing and nurturing productive relationships, but romantic and non-romantic
- sustaining good health, physically, mentally, behaviorally, and spiritually
- and loving the skin you're in!

Sherry has been an advocate for our youth and those with mental illness for over 23 years. She was a leader for the NAACP Youth, Youth

Ministry Leader, Youth Mentor, and Customer Service Trainer for youth. Additionally, she is an active participant with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI of Wake County).

Two seminal dynamics profoundly impacted her development into today's person: being raised by her maternal grandparents and getting divorced after 12 years of marriage.

She is an IT Business Analyst, Certified Health and Life Coach and Talk Show Host, Recording Artist, Photographer, Published Author, Inspirational Speaker, Talk Show Host 'Creative Living,' and online Self Educator.

She is the founder of the 'I Vote 4 Me' women's movement and owner of QueenShe Visions, LLC.

Her motto

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Her song

I Surrender All

Book that changed your life:

Man's Eternal Quest by Paramahansa Yogananda;
Solitude: A Return to the Self by Anthony Storr; The
Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz; The Holy Bible
by King James; The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran; Ask and
It Is Given by Esther and Jerry Hicks; 7 Habits of Highly
Effective People by Stephen R. Covey

Movie that inspire you

Overcomer; Why Did We Get Married; This Christmas;
Soul; Prince and the Frog; Lion King The Wiz; Hidden
Figures; Lean On Me

Your Hero:

My Shero is my Aunt Charlene Robinson (RIP)

Quote you live by:

“Do unto others as you would
have them do unto you.”



Gayela Bynum

“‘Keep Smiling,’ it makes life easier and much more beautiful!”

WE WILL SURVIVE CANCER WITH A SMILE

BY GAYELA BYNUM

We Will Survive Cancer (<http://www.wewillsurvivecancer.org>) came together as an organization in 2009, inspired by my daughter-in-law, Michelle Tull Bynum. Meeting Michelle, hearing her story, observing her grace and warrior spirit as she fought cancer; as she maintained her unique sense of humor and smile, made an enormous impression on our founding members, Greg Davis, Ginger and David Vuich, BJ Douglass, Lisa Spoden, Kimberly Wilde Warfield and Robert Ragland. So here we are almost ten years later; in 2019, We Will Survive Cancer will celebrate its 10th anniversary. In these past years, Michelle’s story has been told far and wide and was the focus of the 2015 book release, “Don’t Waste My Cancer.” WWSC’s second book [Keep Smiling?] focuses on the progress and good works the organization has spread throughout the metro DC community, Virginia, North

Carolina and Texas and, the survivors, sponsors and supporters of the organization.

We Will Survive Cancer's mission began in 2009 by providing gifts for two families at Christmas who otherwise would have not experienced the holiday season. The prohibitive cost of treatment for cancer patients leaves little money to celebrate events. In 2017, WWSC gifted 64 families totaling 244 people. Over the ten years WWSC has contributed to over 4000 people through Life With Cancer, Howard University Cancer Center, the USO, Virginia Oncology, Children's Hospital in the metro DC area, Virginia Oncology, and Wonders & Worries in Austin, Texas and a cancer center in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. WWSC gives gas and grocery cards, pays bills for patients in need; WWSC provides an annual Mother's Day event, honoring mothers living with cancer and their family, WWSC provides parties and activities for boys and girls. 2018 WWSC provided an Easter Egg Hunt in collaboration with the USO at Walter Reed Hospital. WWSC serves dinner quarterly to the Children's INN at NIH.

In 2015, WWSC launched, the "Sisterhood of the Traveling Wig," which was started by Michelle who shared her wigs with Jane, a young woman

in cancer treatment. When Jane no longer needed, the wig, Jane sent it to Maine for a young bride to wear, who had recently been diagnosed with cancer and had lost her hair – each time the wigs were returned to Jane who cleaned and passed them to other women in need who had lost their hair from chemo. The wig has been passed from Texas to Massachusetts, to New York to Colorado, and back to Texas and is still on the move. In 2015, WWSC's Vice Chair, Greg Davis, met Tom MacCormack, Founder of the MacCormack Foundation (<http://www.panamamccormackfoundation.com>), in the hills of Panama. Tom fashions and gives prosthetics to the natives who could otherwise not afford limbs. In their exchange of information Tom mentioned his collection of wigs that he could not use. Greg mentioned WWSC's Sisterhood of the Traveling wig program, as a result, the MacCormack Foundation (<http://www.panamamccormackfoundation.com>) graciously donated the wigs for WWSC to distribute to women going through treatment. The Sisterhood of the Traveling Wig program is overseen by Celebrity Stylist, Josie Valdez, a member of WWSC's Board.

We Will Survive Cancer established the "Celebration of Life," honoring cancer patients who embody the spirit of Michelle and her positive words, "Don't Waste My Cancer!" Each has gone beyond battling cancer

and made a positive change for others. WWSCs Honoree for 2018, is Steven Gaffney. Steven is an author of five books, and, is an expert on Honest Communication in the workplace and in life. Steven conducts seminars for major corporations in the US and around the world. Sher Mathew was honored in 2017. Sher, a cancer survivor, volunteers to assist and mission to orphans in third world countries. Sher was a candidate for LLS Woman of the Year in 2017. Ginger Vuich, honored in 2016, is a cancer survivor and Founding member of WWSC's Board. Ginger wrote the application for WWSC's 501(c)3 status and is active in national politics. Touraine Lynch honored in 2015 is an active volunteer with the growth and socialization of young women. Greg Babcock, is a cancer survivor and WWSC's first Honoree in 2014. Their stories can be read in WWSC's "Don't Waste My Cancer," published in 2015.

The common thread of We Will Survive Cancer and its second book, "Keep Smiling," is found in Michelle's words "Don't Waste My Cancer," and "Eat Life with a Big Spoon!" Yes, being diagnosed with cancer is traumatic and often a death sentence, but in the time, we walk this earth, we must "SMILE," and make the most of the life we are blessed to live! We Will Survive Cancer's mission is to bridge the gap and make life easier for those facing their battle with cancer!

A Big, Big thank you to my good friend and co-author and producer of Keep Smiling, Ken Rochon for your constant encouragement as We Will Survive Cancer progresses. Thank you to the Board of We Will Survive Cancer for your continued commitment to WWSC's mission to assist families affected and living with cancer. Thank you to all of WWSC's sponsors, you are an essential component of our effort. Thank you, Scott Kaplan for making it all possible!

Please visit www.wewillsurvivecancer.org and

Like us on:



ABOUT GAYELA BYNUM

Gayela Bynum, Founder and Chair of We Will Survive Cancer is a longtime resident of the DC Metro area, and has had a longstanding career in the federal government – she left the government for a couple of years to arrange fundraising events on Capitol Hill. Around 1990, she founded a boutique handbag and accessories business that focused on sales in the early years of the Internet. Ms Bynum's newest venture, "Gabi and Gabe," <https://gabigabe.myshopify.com>.

an Internet based retail site that sells accessories to men and women. A portion of all proceeds goes to We Will Survive Cancer. Additionally, she has served on the boards of the National Press Club, Summer Opera Theater and, currently serves on the Board of Opera Camerata of Washington.

In 2009, Gayela and a group of friends founded "We Will Survive Cancer," www.wewillsurvivecancer.org a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization who were inspired by the warrior spirit of Michelle Bynum.

The organization supports patients and their families affected by cancer, who lack financial resources and are in need of everyday services.

Gayela was born in Oklahoma City and was classically trained in piano, violin and voice, and dance and majored in art and art history and graduated with a degree in art from the University of Arkansas. Gayela reads, sews, designs and paints in her spare time. She is a member of Alpha Phi Fraternity and Daughters of the American Revolution. Today, Gayela lives in Alexandria, Virginia – her son, William Blaine resides in San Diego; her son, Bradley Word Bynum, daughter-in-law Christie, and her precocious grandson, Reid Tull Bynum reside in the Austin, Texas Metro area.



Michelle Calloway, Tech Founder, Media Expert, Host of Tech With Heart TV

“Smile with your eyes, and your soul will shine too.”

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY WITH A SMILE

BY MICHELLE CALLOWAY

My name is Michelle Calloway, and I am the middle child of five children. I was a shy, quiet girl growing up, but overall had a positive attitude toward life. My mom really appreciated my help in caring for my younger brother and sister. I did have a pretty significant inferiority complex though. I never really knew how to properly accept a compliment when given.

When I was eleven years old I was encouraged to go work on a friend's ranch for the summer. It turned out to be an incredible personal growth opportunity for them that extended into the next five summers. I learned all kinds of useful skills that most city kids don't ever

get to experience. I believe working on the ranch is what helped me develop a strong work ethic, grit, and determination.

I fell in love at the age of fifteen with an older boy named Chuck, who was also my best friend. He helped me grow my confidence so that I could hold myself in higher esteem. I worked on properly accepting compliments from people even though it still felt incredibly awkward. During this phase of my life, I also discovered that I had a quick sense of humor. Since I wasn't physically very attractive looking, I leaned on my sense of humor to attract new friends.

Chuck and I ended up getting married when I was only nineteen years old. He opened my eyes to international travel, and together we loved exploring new foods and cultures. We became parents to two beautiful girls and I got to become a stay at home mom. It was an amazing life. As the girls advanced passed diapers, I got hit with a creative bug and began night school pursuing a degree in graphic design and visual communication. Chuck was an engineer for the City of Reno, NV, and upon receiving my associates degree he helped me get a job with the City as a graphic designer.

Then the unimaginable happened. Chuck started getting sick, and he could no longer work. Doctors didn't know how to help him, or slow down his body's deterioration. He suffered for six years before finally ending it all. It was horrific and sad beyond imagine. I was widowed at the age of thirty-four, with two young girls to raise on my own now. My faith in God was completely challenged and I didn't know what to do next.

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About three months after losing my husband, I found myself in the ocean at night in the midst of a storm. Waves were crashing over me threatening to devour me! I gasped for air as I struggled to keep my head above the water. Then I heard a man's voice in the near distance, and I could barely make out the shape of a small ship. He yelled, "Grab Hold," as he threw out a life preserver that landed 12 inches in front of me. "Hallelujah!," I thought to myself. "I'm going to be saved!" But, when I went to lift my arm up out of the water to grab hold of the life preserver, it felt like it was weighted with lead. I couldn't muster the strength to grab hold of the life line that was thrown out to me. I knew then and there that I was going to drown, and there was nothing anyone could do to save me.

As I woke up from that dream, I audibly heard God's voice say, "Do NOT trust in your own strength, but trust in my strength alone." Woah! In that moment I realized that I need to graft myself into God's living vine, so that no matter how weary I get in the future, I am connected to my source of strength and power. Essentially I dedicated my life to whatever God chooses to have me do.

God has since sent me another amazing man to share my life with. He too is my best friend, and now business partner. In 2012, while running my small graphic design agency, I was introduced to a technology called augmented reality, that literally made physical printed materials like a business card COME ALIVE with a video story. Well, after seeing that, I couldn't sleep for TWO WHOLE WEEKS! It appears as though I was being called to do something with this technology, but I didn't fully understand why yet.

Then a young lady came into my office and said she'd like my help in creating an interactive greeting card for her boyfriend who was now deployed overseas in the military. She wanted him to be able to hear her and see her anytime he wanted so he didn't feel so alone. I loved the idea and we went to work.

When he received the physical card and she began talking to him from the card, he was rocked to his core! He said the oceans disappeared between them, and she seemed to be right there with him in person. He then carried the card in his wallet every day while serving overseas because he couldn't imagine being separated from her ever again! Isn't that powerful?! It was in that moment I realized that I was called to bring this technology to the world in a way that everyone, no matter their age, intellect, or budget, can experience enhanced relationships through this magical portal of augmented reality technology.

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Beyond offering interactive branded experiences that help people and business connect with each other in robust ways, I also lead an initiative called "Tech With Heart." This initiative exists to enlighten and empower business owners about technologies that will help them maintain competitive advantage, while also keeping human connection at the core of how we do business.

We have created the Tech With Heart Network to provide a safe, heart-centered approach to technology community that offers business

education and networking opportunities. I interview business owners live on Facebook in the Tech With Heart Network, to position them as the authority in their space, while educating the community about certain business building topics. We also offer workshops, bootcamps, and educational webinars to promote business growth.

We now have Tech With Heart TV, (streaming on Roku, Amazon Fire, and Apple TV), where I interview bigger influencers about their successes and what our business community can do to follow in their footsteps. The Tech With Heart TV Show also gets broadcast out over all the major podcast platforms in audio form as well. These evergreen broadcast mediums have expanded our ability to reach and empower business audiences all over the world.

The Tech With Heart Foundation in our newest addition to the initiative. It provides educational and vocational training for minority and undeserved film and media students in the San Francisco Bay Area. The foundation also partners with other successful non-profits that serve to place children in permanent housing through fostering, adoption, or rescuing them from sex trafficking circles.

ABOUT MICHELLE CALLOWAY

Michelle Calloway is an International Speaker, Bestselling Author and CEO of an innovative software solutions company called REVEALiO.

REVEALiO serves the emerging world of augmented reality or (AR) which reveals virtual content when real-world objects or images are viewed through a mobile or wearable smart device. This interactive experience has shown to increase engagement and conversions exponentially.

Michelle has been featured in Inc. Magazine, and praised by Kevin Harrington, of ABC's Hit TV Show, Shark Tank, for providing small business owners with a unique differentiator that creates powerful organic conversions.

Michelle is also Founder of the Tech With Heart Network, an online business community and TV show. Her TWH Network further

empowers small business owners to achieve rapid success leveraging the power of media exposure and celebrity status. The power of this network can take a new business owner with no pre-existing track record and create instant credibility in any market.

Books That Changed My Life:

The Bible

Movies That Inspired Me:

The Blind Side

Song That Inspire Me:

Fearless - Jasmine Murray

Your Hero:

Jesus (no, really!)

Quote You Live By:

"I've learned that people will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did, but people will
never forget how you made them feel."

– Maya Angelou



**Jenny "Meatballs" Carrington (aka Baby J) -
Entertainer / Social Entrepreneur; Founder of Freedom2Fit, Inc.;
Co-Founder, We Are Mother Earth; CEO Live! GTI**

"All the smiles made it worth those miles!"

A JOURNEY OF 3,000 S(MILES)

BY
JENNY "MEATBALLS" CARRINGTON

Born to a blended family of thirteen siblings and six co-parents, I have always wanted to be uniquely me. I was raised in a loving home but still experienced a fair amount of childhood and young adult trauma. In the face of any signs of hopelessness, dancing, singing, and art became my healthy coping mechanisms. As a prima ballerina in my early and late teens, and graduating top of my class through graduate school, I have never been afraid to put in the work and have always stayed focused on my goals. I originally wanted to be a professional dancer or Broadway star, but my family really stressed the importance of education and financial security so I found myself constantly at odds and in inner conflict. I hold an MA from Fordham University in Human Development and Social Intervention as well as a BA from

Binghamton University in Philosophy, Politics and Law. It wasn't until after I completed my thesis dissertation entitled "Self-Development & Moral Reciprocity in a Global Age" that I finally felt free to do whatever I pleased. In that work, I dove head first into spirituality; the science of love; love's impact on health and mental health; and how to change our social service system in the US and abroad. Studying humanity and our relationships with each other and with Mother Nature has always been fascinating to me. I am using my academic background in hand with the wisdom gained from those around me to inform my vision for the future.

I became a full-fledged entrepreneur at age 26 when I founded the nonprofit organization Freedom2Fit, Inc, and shortly thereafter began forming the mindful media conglomerate GTI Enterprises. In 2020, I finished walking across the entire United States of America to bring attention to our need as a people to unite around honoring Mother Earth and participating in the celebration of the reJENeration (a twist on regeneration) of our beautiful ecosystem. One thing that I have learned along the way is that divinity is inside each and every one of us. I have spent a lot of time practicing self-compassion, self-forgiveness, forgiveness of others for their wrongs against me, conflict

resolution, reconciliation, emotional nutrition, healthy and empowered non-violent communication, and other tools that foster dynamic learning relationships and unconditional love. In Greco-Roman and Christian traditions, this is known as "agape" love. In African traditions, it is called "ubuntu". Studying unconditional love for self and for others has helped to make me a fearless leader that aspires to "Christ Consciousness" insofar as we are all sinners and we all have a place in creating heaven in our own hearts and together on Earth.

Some challenges I have faced include not being taken seriously by the powerful men in my life. Being a fearless woman with empowered sexual agency is seen as a threat to many men and even many other women who are socialized in a male dominated culture. Unconditional love and masculine / feminine harmony can be scary and a seemingly impossible goal in a society that teaches us to repress our sexuality, devalue our creativity, and overall condition us to dislike ourselves so that businesses can sell us more products. Trying to understand how our young boys and girls are socialized to be insecure and to compete with one another has been very interesting for me on my path to discovering who I am. It has also been fascinating to study how we teach boys and girls differently to be leaders. Learning how to overcome

embarrassment, shame, rejection, and disdain has been a huge part of becoming the fearless, smiling leader I am today.

If a woman is in fact most beautiful when she smiles, why do so many boys and men hurt women in so many different ways? This is a question that has sat with me throughout my whole journey of self-discovery. I believe that Nature carries a predominately feminine energy and that healing the wounds we have inflicted on our planet starts with healing the wounds between men and women, which begins with changing the stories we share and teach to young boys and girls. A closer look at the way human beings invite each other into intimacy through consent and trust-building has exposed many parallels with the way humans interact with other parts of our eco-system either through force and exploitation or through mindful engagement. I even believe that there is a direct correlation between understanding the human fertilization process and the fertilization of the land in a “regenerative culture.”

Unconditional motherly love can be embodied by any human regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, etc. It is vital that we have more women leading the global impact strategy. I believe a necessary step in this goal is empowering young girls to help them realize their potential.

That is only possible when we first believe in our own potential. I am an alpha female, a lady warrior queen, and the CEO of FLOW- rap, yoga, water, and women's issues.

In my own journey, I have perhaps learned the most about myself by listening to others. I am very excited by stories of people who were once struggling with mental health challenges finding a sense of peace and inner healing. I am passionate about self-love, integrity, creativity, all of the arts and social sciences, and people who consciously engage in #radicalcollaboration to solve problems. As an entrepreneur, I am bringing together individuals and businesses across sectors who would otherwise never interact, because I believe that we all have so much more to offer together than apart.

An essential part of healing our planet is changing the way we eat. I am a major foodie and believe that everyone should be able to experience affordable, high-quality, gourmet, and nutritious meals from diverse culinary traditions. This will only be possible when our society has moved to regenerative agriculture as our main source of food. My team at We Are Mother Earth is in the process of developing and deploying SpARK Pods: sustainable, climate-controlled greenhouses

that produce fresh food year-round without the use of fossil fuels. I also know that it is critical that we restore clean water for all citizens of Mother Earth. Hydration has been such an important part of the journey to love myself. We humans are made up almost entirely of water and I have found that being fully hydrated not only helps my skin, hair, nails, and smile, but also my attitude for gratitude, my spirit of love, and my whole-hearted soulfulness. I do everything I do because I want others to experience the immense sense of self-love and togetherness I feel about humanity and the Earth. I have hope for this planet and I want to help bring that hope to as many people as I can. While my vision for the future of our beautiful Earth is large, it is entirely within our power to make it happen. We can have all the things we need: peace, sustenance, health, love, gratitude. It is all possible, and it's already happening.

Purpose Driven S(miles)

Seeing people starving on the streets and subways of New York City and Los Angeles has been one of the biggest drivers for my "why" on this planet. We have more than enough abundance for everyone to be

well-fed, clothed, housed, and receive proper emotional support and human connection. Technology has led us to a place where even the most vulnerable could be taken care of without impacting the luxury lifestyles of the wealthy. I also believe that those in our prison and social service systems are mostly victims of childhood trauma and that the system actively conditions people to stay stuck rather than provide HOPE. My research focuses on how to provide literal doses of HOPE (health outcomes of positive experience) to those in recovery from substance abuse or mental health challenges. What we know is that HOPE often comes in the form of simple things like smiles, hugs, relationships, music, art, great food, fitness, and sunshine. Knowing this, my job now is to design and build a whole world around these medicines for the people!

Abundance Delivered in Smiles

Did you know that you can practice your smile? I did! I actually love to exercise the muscles in my face particularly my cheeks and lips. Smiling at strangers has even landed me conversations with people who later became business partners, clients, and friends! While

walking across America, I met thousands of people of all different demographics. What I learned is that everyone has a story that shapes the way they “show up” in the world. By using yoga as a primary tool for healing humanity and fostering self-love, we can all “show up” for ourselves, our families, our communities, and the larger universe. We heal our “stories” of trauma by seeing where they show up for us in our “body of evidence.” Yoga can be done anywhere, and I am grateful to have brought so many smiles to people all over the world so far just by sharing some yoga and healthy meals with them!

Moving forward, my team and myself at We Are Mother Earth are creating a “Brand New Beginning” for America and the world. We have been designing an interactive theme park called “Togetherland” that is based in regenerative and sustainable eco-technologies. At local Togetherland sites, we host events that help create “Permanent Magical Culture.” What’s the recipe for the magic? Delicious, nutritious, regeneratively sourced food; fitness activities built into the landscape (yoga, acrobatics, sports, ziplines, etc); music for healing (solar-powered stages and prop houses, WAME conscious artists who write songs for hope and for the future); youth leading the way in designing projects to address climate change; divine masculine & divine feminine energy

coming together to heal relationships and form consent culture; divine ivory & divine ebony coming together to heal the history of slavery; reconciliation between the heartland and the coasts of the United States to form a more perfect union; and Return to Honor programs for incarcerated individuals to help build the landscape of “Togetherland.” With movements like “Keep Smiling” at the forefront of the charge, we will continue reminding everyone what’s truly important!

We Are Mother Earth! Are you? Let’s Return Home, to Honorville, Togetherland!

ABOUT JENNY CARRINGTON

Jenny Carrington holds an MA from Fordham University in Human Development and Social

Intervention and a BA from Binghamton University in Philosophy, Politics and Law. She began studying systems theory in 2011 at the Center for the Study of Social Policy. She is an individual with an unprecedented sense of optimism and joy. She is a dancer at heart but enjoys all the creative and performing arts. Jenny has appeared in yoga instructional videos as well as on MTV and is a certified yoga instructor. She has co-produced four multi-day music and arts festivals as well as been on staff for several others. In 2014 she founded the non-profit organization Freedom2Fit, Inc. that brings yoga and holistic health to the community at large and to “at-risk youth”. In 2015, she began bridging this work with the social innovation portal and mindful media conglomerate that has become GTI Enterprises (DBA We Are Mother Earth). Her vision is to connect entrepreneurs

leading the global impact strategy as well as work with socially impactful individuals and organizations to represent their causes using high quality presentation and video materials while also regenerating funds through mindful media back into these causes to create a closed loop. She now has original music on Spotify and iTunes spanning multiple genres. In 2019, she walked 3,000 miles across the USA to bring attention to We Are Mother Earth projects while continuing to pursue her artistic passions.

Books That Changed My Life:

The Art of Loving - Erich Fromm, The Way of the Superior Man,
Think & Grow Rich

Movies That Inspired Me:

A League of Their Own, Simon Burch

Songs That Inspire Me:

Birds Set Free - Sia, Pompeii - Bastille

Your Hero:

Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez

Quote You Live By:

"If you want to know God, you must know yourself." -
Nahko & Medicine for the People

"A "matriarchal world" does not mean matrilineal or that one queen shall rule the world. It simply means "a world in which a Mother's Heart leads all social institutions, corporations, and governments." All humans-men, women, or transgender-can embody a mother's heart if they so choose. We are destined for extinction as a human race unless a mother's heart assumes leadership of the world."
– Ananda Karunesh



Brandy Champeau, Speaker, Author, Curriculum Developer, co-founder Exploring Expression

“If you can find the learning in life, you can turn your struggles into stories and your stories into smiles.”

SMILES COME FROM A LEARNING LIFESTYLE

BY BRANDY CHAMPEAU

I'm not supposed to be here.

My life has been a series of near misses and semi-disasters. But sometimes it's the struggle that creates your story.

My story began in 1978 one snowy November night with two people who in the seventies should not have been together. My mother was a white woman, barely out of her teens, of German descent raised in a middle-class household in Illinois. My father was a young black man fresh from a poor household in the Ozark foothills in Missouri. They met on a military base in Arizona. Their love and Uncle Sam carried them across the ocean to Germany where they had me. The Army hospital where I was born was atop of a mountain, about a 40-minute

drive from the base they were living. The fact that I was born on the night of the first snowstorm of the year, that made the journey to the hospital a grueling trek. This was an apt introduction to my life.

I was a sickly child, allergic to nature and prone to fevers and bouts of pneumonia. At one point I was given a possible diagnosis of Cystic Fibrosis, but the military hospitals did not have the equipment to conduct the tests. Luckily, that diagnosis was eventually ruled out. Most of my time as a young child was spent indoors being watched over by my parents and a devoted older brother. My earliest memories are of adventures that my brother and I would take in our minds and through our books.

My parents were, and still are, self-proclaimed nomads. Throughout much of my childhood, the US Air Force provided them (and me) the perfect opportunity to see as much of the world as they could fit into their lifestyle. For me, this turned out to be both a blessing and a curse. When you are always seeing new things and meeting new people, life becomes a continuous learning adventure. Bouncing from Germany to Oklahoma, back to Germany, to Maine, Nebraska, Illinois and back to Oklahoma, afforded me the opportunity to view life from a variety

of different lenses. While I was often too sick to go out, my parents were very gregarious by nature, and we had a steady stream of different yet fascinating people in and out of our lives.

The flip side to a nomadic lifestyle is that all of these interactions were fleeting. With all the many people we knew or met along the way, we never knew when or if we would ever be in the same space with that person again. Thus, I learned to value and soak up those moments like a sponge. These memories were the souvenirs of my early childhood. Let me learn everything I can about this person because I may never see them again. I learned to listen. I discovered, if you spend your time with someone doing only talking, but not listening, you don't leave with anything. I learned to listen to people with a desire to understand them and their ideas. Even as a small child I wanted to understand, not just to know.

The nomadic lifestyle also kept me somewhat sheltered from much of the race and class issues that were, and still are, prevalent in our society. My parents raised me with the understanding that everyone is – well, just everyone. Skin color was just a genetic trait like the color of hair and eyes. And, in a military community, class distinction revolved around the military rank of the adults and was nonexistent among the

children. At least, that was my lens through which I lived. Everyone is strange, everyone is different, everyone is unusual, and everyone is fascinating. I later learned that I had a rose-colored view of the world when it came to race and class. However, I was also raised with the belief that this is just the way life is. Sometimes it's not fun and sometimes it's not fair. But there is always something to learn that makes every moment valuable. If we can learn to understand life as it is, we can become a force for change with a foundation based in reality.

One thing that I'll always remember is how much my parent's valued, not just academic learning, but learning of all types. After leaving the Air Force my father became a cross country truck driver. Occasionally I would go out on the road with him for a couple of weeks at a time. The people I was able to meet through my father as we moved from truck stop to truck stop were some of the most interesting in my memories. I loved to sit and listen to the ramblings of other drivers who had been alone in the cab of their truck all day and were thrilled to have someone to listen to them. I would talk to waitresses during truck stop dinners. At one point, my father even went so far as to hire a prostitute to sit and talk to me about her life. These were people from all different lifestyles, and I heard stories about aspects of life that I had never experienced

and could never have imagined on my own. I began to understand a world that was not always kind but was beautiful and interesting.

My transition into adulthood was sudden. It was like being thrown into the deep end of a swimming pool and left to sink or swim. By high school I had grown weary of the nomadic life. At that time, we were living in Oklahoma. My older brother, who had been my constant companion since birth, moved away to college. My parents were ready to move onto their next great adventure. I was a belligerent teen and protested adamantly because I no longer wanted to move and change schools, and I wanted to graduate with the few friends I was finally making. I believed my parents would change their mind, or I thought that they would force me to go and I would complain for a while and go on. Imagine my surprise when I returned home from going to see David Copperfield on stage, a 16th birthday gift from my parents, to find that they had moved and left me behind. I stayed with family friends briefly but in short order I was homeless. The support system that I had relied on my entire life suddenly wasn't there. However, the lessons I had learned from my family remained. And now I had a new lesson to add to my list. It was the one that propelled me through the rest of my life: You have a choice. You can either get up or not.

I did graduate from high school with my friends, with honors, and received a full ride to any college in the state of Oklahoma. I followed my brother to the college of his choice but found myself floundering. Thus, when my mother, who was then living back in Nebraska had a medical crisis, I was ready to go to her aid. With only a year of school under my belt I was now a college dropout. I was still a headstrong teenager, and with my younger brother having mental health and behavioral issues, my mother and I were unable to live compatibly. Once she had fully recovered, she handed me some money, and sent me back to Oklahoma City. A teen and her money were soon parted and shortly thereafter began my second bout of homelessness.

•••••

Ultimately, I am a statistic who made my own statistic. With the help of a very dear friend I left the streets. Yet my adult life was just as tumultuous as my youth. In the years since I became a black single mother of three children by three different men. I have been married and divorced twice: once to Peter Pan and once to the Big Bad Wolf. I have worshiped many gods and worshiped just one god. I have raised

special needs children and raised other people's children. Twice I have been robbed having everything I owned stolen.

Throughout my life I have lived through tornados, ice storms, hurricanes, blizzards, and even a couple of minor earthquakes. I was a high school junior in Oklahoma City in 1995 when Timothy McVeigh committed the first major act of domestic terrorism and bombed the Federal Building. I was a single mother of 3, newly recovered from peripartum cardiomyopathy (pregnancy-induced heart failure) when a history making tornado struck my daughter's school. I have hit bottom so many times that I have my own chair down there. It's a recliner because my bones hurt, and I liked to put my feet up. I've suffered medical heart failure and emotional heart break. Yet each moment and each mountain has had value – because throughout I have learned that I am a survivor just like everyone else. Everybody comes from somewhere and everyone's story is both interesting and important.

I never intended to create Exploring Expression; I never intended to become a small business owner. When I finally returned to college, I had already lost one marriage and gained two children. I was a single mother living on welfare, with the understanding that I needed to

do something to elevate myself. So, I walked into the college advisor's office and said, "I need to graduate fast and make a bunch of money." At that time, I didn't care what major they assigned to me. I was open to the universe and the task before me. I just knew that I didn't want to live my life relying on free turkeys for Thanksgiving. (Little did I know that it would be well over a decade before I stopped needing free turkeys.)

The advisor said Management Information Systems was the degree path for me, and I said okay. And then I made time. I worked one or two jobs, went to school, and raised my children. When I discovered that my second child has special needs, I became an advocate for him. When it became apparent that he was unable to flourish in public school settings, I pulled him out and began home schooling. I was determined to raise my children with the same expectations of greatness that I had.

Nowhere did I see Exploring Expression. But, sometimes it's not about what you see. Through it all it's similar to being in the chair at the optometrist office. You are looking through those goggles and the doctor is adjusting the lenses, making small changes, and she says, "Is this better or this better? Which is better? Number 1 or number 2, number

3 or 4?" This is how I approached my life. I moved forward through it always on the lookout for a better lens to view through. And when I saw an image that suggested something new, I acted. So, when in my last semester of college, I received a job offering to develop government training materials, I never hesitated even though it had little to do with my degree. It was another adventure, another opportunity to learn and understand.

Fast forward. As my career and life progressed, I remained open to opportunities. While still working as a curriculum developer I began taking additional opportunities. I taught Sunday school classes and then began adjunct teaching at a local community college. I went back to college and got my master's degree in Project Management. I joined Toast Masters to improve my public speaking skills. I obtained a certificate in Conflict and Dispute Resolution. I trained and became a Stephen's Minister to provide compassionate, Christian caregiving. I was committed to a process of continual self-development and improvements regardless of my many situations.

Homelessness, abusive marriages, illnesses, natural disasters have all helped me to grow to where I could connect to people when they were

not where they wanted to be. The solitary life as a sickly child in a nomadic family developed my sense of imagination and wonderment. The special learning needs of my children, together with a career in developing instructional tools, brought me an understanding of how to share the amazing things I've learned through my experiences. And through it all, Exploring Expression evolved.

My company, Exploring Expression is my outlet for sharing my love of learning with others. I write children's books, but more, I create activity books and learning guides to help parents help their young children think through the stories they read. Our company builds curriculum, lesson plans and worksheets to help parents and educators to experiment with a variety of sources for teaching material. I coach parents trying to develop skills and plans for helping their children cultivate a love of learning. And for those people who have a story or lessons that will help others in their learning journey, I coach and support independent publishing of their own stories.

Ultimately, I hope the world sees me as a person who is an example to others of how to embrace the events in their lives, both good and bad, as opportunities to learn, teach, grow and share.

ABOUT BRANDY CHAMPEAU

Brandy Champeau is a speaker, author, curriculum developer and learning lifestyle coach. She is also the co-founder of Exploring Expression, a company that provides products, services and publishing for a Learning Lifestyle. Having survived homelessness, domestic abuse, pregnancy induced heart failure and devastating natural disasters, Brandy knows how to rise from the ashes. She has not only survived but is now living her best expression. Brandy, a single mother of three children, including one with special needs, is dedicated to help parents and educators become the best expression of themselves so that they can make learning fun, easy and natural not just for their children but for themselves.

Books That Changed My Life:

The ONE Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind
Extraordinary Results by Gary Keller
Hatrack River by Orson Scott Card
On a Pale Horse by Piers Anthony

Movies That Inspired Me:

The Shawshank Redemption
Pete's Dragon
Secondhand Lions
Six Degrees of Separation

Songs That Inspire Me:

Standing outside the Fire by Garth Brooks
Flowers are Red by Harry Chapin
The Mississippi Squirrel Revival by Ray Stevens

Your Hero:

My Grandfather

Quote You Live By:

"Remember Who you Are and Who you Represent"



Dr. Antoine Chevalier

“A smile is a strategic way of causing a positive moment and movement.”

IF I SMILE, YOU CAN DO IT TOO!

BY DR. ANTOINE CHEVALIER

I am Dr Antoine Chevalier, PhD and have been working for the Executive Office of the President of the United States of America for the last 18 years, since July 2001, at the White House Athletic Center. I practice Functional Medicine and offer my services, mostly, to secret service, political appointees, senior executives service.

Some secret service personal were facing issues such as extreme Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or aka Concussion. I researched that condition and came up with a solution using Micro-current Electrical Therapy stimulating acupuncture points, trigger points, tender points, motor points, combined with a unique form of cognitive therapy, with a unique advanced form of Chi Gong healing modality. The combination of those three elements successfully reversed post concussion

symptoms completely including the physical tremors, depression, short term Memory loss, and suicidal ideation, usually associated with Concussion. The research got published in a peer reviewed scientific journal and endorsed by the National Institute for Health (NIH).

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5002218/>

Based on that success, I proceeded to further my research into mental health, more specifically suicidal ideation. It intrigued me, after discovering the direct link between traumatic brain injury and suicidal ideation. I thought maybe, by healing the brain, I might be able to eliminate suicidal ideation all together, no matter what the source is.... TBI, trauma etc... and I did.

I, now, in my non profit, successfully treat homeless veterans suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Chronic Pain, PTSD, Major Depression Disorder, Drug Addiction, and Suicidal Ideation.

The drive to succeed comes from my up bringing. I was born in a funeral home in a very small town in the middle of France. My parents were undertakers. After school, I was not allowed to play with my

friends. I had to come back to the family business and help my dad cleaning up dead bodies and prepare coffins.

One day, my dad woke me up around 2am and drove me to a farm house in the middle of no where. Inside the living room, a 15 year old boy just hanged himself. My dad climbs the chair, cuts the rope and instructs me to grab the legs and dump the body on the coach. Looking at my friend's corpse lying in front of me, at that moment, I made a commitment to myself : one day, I will find a solution to suicide. 33 years after, I have the honor and the privilege to announce you that NOW I do have a solution to suicide.

Intuitively I knew that the solution does not reside into western medicine. I put myself through a PhD program at the Sorbonne University in Paris in international development and sustainability, with a minor in Anthropology which allowed me to travel all around the world, studying world cultures and their way of healing the body, mind, and spirit.

Since I have been sexually abused at age 5, by my grandfather, at age 12 by my mother, almost killed by my father, verbally emotionally and

physically abused by my ex wife, I became severally suicidal my self in my 20s and my 30s. I became my own lab / testing ground for what works and does not. This journey took me to Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Senegal, Thailand, Bresil, French Guyana, Costa Rica, Hawaii, USA, Canada, Japan, Australia. The results of the trials and errors of this journey took me to the completion of a new healing modality I call Neurological Integrative Therapy (NIT) or also called Brain Therapy.

Since Japan has the highest suicidal rate in the world, I teamed up with Dr Nakano from the Nakano Clinic of Neurosurgery of Osaka, Japan. Dr Nakano has performed more than 5,000 brain surgeries at 100% success rate. He is considered one of the best neuro-surgeon in the world. He had patients he could not operate on as the cause of the medical condition is too deep in the brain and any form of surgery would have terminated their lives. He was curious to know if I could help them.

We started with a 72 year old Japanese man suffering from a severe TBI and stroke which left the left side of his body paralyzed. He was taking medications for pain, depression and suicidal ideation.

We used the Functional MRI at the clinic to assess his cerebral plasticity and connectivity before the session. After almost 4 hours of treatment, he was able to walk. We scan his brain right after and it was showing an improvement of cerebral plasticity and connectivity by more than 70%. Three months after the session, he was still able to walk and the Functional MRI was still showing more than 70% improvement in neural plasticity and connectivity.

We replicated this trial with more than 20 successful cases which triggered the Japanese government to endorse and sponsor us for a real clinical trial.

My new modality modality will be submitted for Nobel Peace price for medicine next year or in two years.

We are launching a war on suicide and save our HEROES.

For every session you get, we will donate a session to homeless veteran in need and successfully end his her suicidal tendencies and homelessness.



Shirley Whing Chow, Social+Emotional Intelligence Coach, Vocal/ Elocution Coach, Amazon Bestselling Author, Speaker, Children's Happiness & Success Genie

"A smile is the shortest distance between people, and the more we smile, the less we fight."
Legendary Comedian-pianist, Victor Borge

THE VOICE OF SOCIALLY & EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT CHILDREN IS THE MUSIC OF OUR FUTURE.

BY SHIRLEY WHING CHOW

Have you seen the movie *Hector and the Search of Happiness*? In this gem, Christopher Plummer, a professor who studies the effects of Happiness on the brain, discussed in a lecture how children naturally experience happiness as a STATE of BEING. Adults, however, experience it as a by product as if they are on a quest to get it back. He added that the more we focus on our own happiness, the more we lose it. On Google, 'How to be happy' scored a whopping 7.56 billion clicks

while 'How to be successful, rich or famous' only accumulated 1.51 to 2 billion.

What do 7.56 billion searches tell us? How many more clicks will we see as meals are made by Moley the robot chef while dinners are enjoyed over WhatsApp or You Tube rather than person-to-person interactions?

I have never googled 'How to be happy'. Having intimate knowledge of illness, depression, ADHD, PTSD, bullying, self harm and even suicide, I should have (one would presume). Twice in my life, I have 'lost and found' my desire to smile and laugh. In the last decade as I realized that more and more children are losing their smiles and laughter to stress and depression, I decided that something must be done. This is how an opera coach-pianist, soprano, conductor and concert producer shifted her focus from helping musicians shine on stages around the world to becoming a Social-emotional Intelligence (SEI) Coach and the founder of Shirley Whing & Fine Voices. It is my turn to pass what I have learned as a survivor and a woman onto the leaders of tomorrow, our children.

My story actually began when my stork's GPS broke. It rerouted me to a Chinese couple in Hong Kong (instead of France). Thanks for the anti-aging skin! A swing jumping, tree climbing and adventure-seeking tomboy was not popular in a conservative culture. I was colic and malnourished. Thin as a twig, mum and dad kept feeding me cow's milk, butter and cheese. Even though I was chronically sick, my curiosity never wavered. I questioned every illogical thought, challenged every questionable rule, examined every adult interaction, and played every radio jingle on my toy piano.

At age 10, my diabetic mother passed away due to some sudden complications. I hardly cried as if the shock hijacked all my tears. Visions followed as I slipped into an emotional void. PTSD symptoms like hyper vigilance, sleeping problems and destructive thoughts began to manifest. An inferno of hives erupted soon after. For my entire adolescence, hives randomly engulfed my face and body with painful and embarrassing patches of torture. I wrote in *Ignite Your Life for Women* that I used to pray to the heavens, 'Please wait till after the swimming lesson is over, please give me a two-hour break.' Unfortunately, anxiety only bred more anxiety.

I lost any desire to smile and laugh. At home, I hardly spoke. Instead, hours of playing Beethoven's Pathétique Sonata and Chopin preludes channeled my voice of pain and anger. It also shielded me from bullies. How I wish that back then I had read world expert Dr. Gabor Maté's *When the Body Says No!* I would have understood the relationships of childhood trauma and autoimmune disease, cancer, ADHD, addictions, and a myriad of physical and mental illnesses. I would not have thought that I was cursed.

One day, two school music teachers found out about my story. They began calling me after school. It was as if my mum sent them to show me that my feelings mattered. **Feelings always matter. The inability to recognize, regulate, and resolve negative feelings is precisely what gets the world depressed and sick.**

At age 13, my teachers taught me how to conduct. I formed a cello-piano duo with a senior student, began to sing, debate, and lead at school. As my voice got heard and valued, I began to achieve. By age 17, the social aspect and emotional attunement in music-making finally put seven years of autoimmune attack and depression to an end. Just in time to start college and to spread my musical, intellectual and social

wings, I regained my super power to smile and laugh at will. By the time I graduated with a B.A. in piano performance, I had performed in different parts of Southeast Asia as a collaborative pianist, studied Italian in Italy and traveled all over Europe. Leaving Hong Kong became a natural outcome.

After finishing my master's degree in piano accompanying on a full scholarship and teaching assistantship at the College-Conservatory of Cincinnati, I found my 24-year-old self starving for love. I moved to Austin, Texas to play wife. Sadly, codependency and a long list of other dysfunctions stalled my growth as an adult and as a woman. From age 28-33, I slowly hit rock bottom. A very long story short, during my divorce, I lost any desire to smile and laugh for the second time in my life. Clinically depressed and suicidal, I lost my appetite. At my lowest point, I weighed 89 pounds. I was very sick.

My parents watched over me from their dimensions. Mum led me to the amazing therapist Margo Booth who lowered her fees significantly. Thanks to her generosity I could afford her help. Dad, who had died from a sudden illness when I was 25, directed me to an article about Laugh Therapy in Indian hospitals. A big light bulb came on. The Daily

Show at bedtime resuscitated my laughter. Slowly, 'the giggles in my life brought back the sun in my life,' as I told the audience at The Magic of Dedication, the first emotional awareness and fundraising concert I produced in Hong Kong in 2017.

The giggles in my life also rerouted me to Hong Kong where tens of thousands of little masters of happiness reset my life's Happiness GPS. I took on a position to supervise the choral and musical theater programs at one of Hong's Kong's largest and most esteemed performing arts center for children. I used to tell my dates that I was the mother of 1200 kids and I could calm down three hundred rowdy children in any rehearsals in just a few seconds. Some men found it intriguing while most ran for their lives.

To give tens of thousands of auditions, scholarships and vocal coaching, produce and manage large-scale musicals, concerts and international choral tours, train staff and resolve tricky complaints, my brain and heart went into superdrive and ultimate sync. Great times! In my eleven-year tenure, I discovered how respecting and serving everyone (even when emotions are high) is the ultimate skill.

Every weekend, I thanked the kids for sending me to 7th heaven with their silly giggles, wide eyes, and wisdom of authentic happiness. In oceans of lucky kids, however, I noticed many physical and emotional signs of distress. Hong Kong ranks 76th in the WHO World Happiness Index, 6 places behind Libya. As one of the world's wealthiest cities with children ranking 2nd in a global school performance study, it is also where 1 in 10 primary students suffers from severe depression. 50% of its secondary students and teachers feel hopeless. Evidence and cases of anxiety and stress kept showing up on my radar. They include chronic fatigue and lethargy, severe eczema, rigidity, ADHD, aggression, bullying, meltdowns, severe detachment anxiety, Social Anxiety and Autism Spectrum Disorders, chronic forgetfulness, low self-esteem and even self harm.

With all that I have experienced and learned about negative emotions, stress, and childhood trauma, I began to look at my position very differently. I became obsessed with solutions.

Over the years, no matter how exhausted, withdrawn, uncooperative and insecure children might feel, I found that they all loved stories and

surrendered to hilarious jokes. Watching how hundreds of kindergartners cheered when Ugly arose from bullying in Honk Jr. rehearsals and finding how some little girls applauded Ariel for becoming bigger than her father's dream in The Little Mermaid, I began using every musical rehearsal and personal interaction to reinforce self awareness, motivation, optimism, resilience, and teamwork(4 social-emotional intelligence competencies).

Being a lifelong vocal coach and an empath, I am given a unique ability to read people and hear beyond their tones. I maxed out the comedian, storyteller, and healer in me. Humor, role play, story telling, NLP, clear boundaries, the Growth Mindset and relationship building all became my magic tricks. Be it standing on tables(and jumping off) in high heels to demonstrate, turning difficult lyrics into nutty parodies, getting kids to cheer and clap for shy friends when they took initiative or redirecting aggressive behavior towards compassion and responsible decision making, the kids kept teaching me how to guide them. They showed me how much they need an influencer who connects and empathizes with them like Mr. Rogers, leads and guides like Ron Clark, and entertains and enlivens like Ellen Degeneres.

In children's programming years (ages 3-7) when their Alpha and Theta brainwaves make them super learners, when their core beliefs will tug into their subconscious and program their adult lives like broken records, we have a precious window of opportunity to embed in them the habits and experience of joy, optimism, empathy, compassion, self-awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship management (all SEI competencies).

It is truly magical when a young person finds his or her voice. It's not just about seeing a talent flourish and shine on stage — although that is an incredibly gratifying experience. In helping young girls and women realize how their difficult past lay the foundation of a glorious and autonomous future, Shirley's Search or Research of Happiness finds the holy grail! In giving others the wings of self-confidence, self-awareness, and resilience, I fly free and high.

In 2016, I founded Shirley Whing @ Fine Voices, a performing arts society to avert depression in Hong Kong. With Fine Voices friends and junior performers, I created two concerts called The Magic of Dedication in 2017 and The Wonder in Every Woman in 2018. They boosted awareness of emotional wellness and gender advancement, and raised

funds for Plan International and HER Fund in Hong Kong. In November 2018, I presented the speech 'Your Voice Matters' at the Women Economic Forum held in Los Angeles where my advocacy of emotional wellness was honored by an Iconic Woman Award for Creating a Better World For All.

Becoming clear with my life purpose and mission, I started making quantum leaps in 2019. I became a co-author of Amazon bestseller, *Ignite Your Life for Women*. I created Shirley Whing & Fine Voices Co., Ltd., spoke about subconscious programming in the 13th Symposium at the World Academy for the Future of Women in China, directed the first HK regional competition of an NMCC International Music Competition and helped organize and judge for the 1st PhilanthroKids HK Giving Tuesday Ambassador Award Ceremony. As a certified Social+Emotional Intelligence Coach, I presented 4 Daily Mantras for the topic of Cultivating and Developing Emotional Intelligence through the Arts at Annual Women Economic Forum 2020 Egypt and was honored to receive an Exception Women of Excellence Award.

I have never been younger at heart and more passionate about life as I am now. With the Universe guiding me in my service to humanity.

I awake and shut eyes everyday with smiles on my face and gratitude in my heart. At the end of *Hector and the Search of Happiness*, Hector realized that happiness is an obligation. In focusing on the happiness of children and young women, happiness is my faith and truth.

Social+Emotional Intelligence Coach Vocal/Elocution Coach

Amazon Bestselling Author, Speaker Children's Happiness & Success Genie

Shirley Whing & Fine Voices Company Limited www.shirleywhing.com <https://www.facebook.com/finevoices/>

ABOUT SHIRLEY WHING CHOW

Shirley Whing Chow is a double agent on a mission to inspire and support 3 generations of change makers to Laugh, Learn, Love and Lead. A seasoned collaborative pianist, opera coach, musical producer and choral conductor, Shirley has dedicated her first three colorful decades to creating success for aspiring musicians across the USA, Canada, Austria, Italy, Norway, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan, the Philippines, China and Hong Kong. She has served at institutions such as the University of Texas at Austin, the Austrian-American Mozart Academy, Virginia Opera and Utah Opera. Iconic British pianist Sir Graham Johnson described her as 'a colleague, and a most accomplished one.'

From 2007 to 2018, Shirley managed tens of thousands of angelic and talented performers aged 5-18 in a premier performing arts center in Hong Kong. Her love for them has opened her eyes to the ill effects of stress and anxiety have both on children's developing brains and emotional well-being. Applying a unique blend of Social-Emotional Learning techniques, humor, and critical thinking habits to theatrical

singing, elocution, role preparation and musical performance coaching, Shirley finds thrilling results.

As founder and artistic director of performing arts society Shirley Whing @ Fine Voices, Shirley produced advocacy concerts *The Magic of Dedication* (2017) and *The Wonder in Every Woman* (2018) and fundraised for Plan International and HER Fund. In 2019, she founded Shirley Whing & Fine Voices and spoke to college students at the 13th Symposium of the World Academy for the Future of Women in China. At the Women Economic Forum (WEF) in LA and Annual WEF 2020 Egypt, her speeches on emotional wellness and Social+Emotional intelligence (SEI) development has granted her the awards of Iconic Woman for Creating a Better World for All (2018) and Exception Women of Excellence (2020).

Shirley became a Certified Social-Emotional Intelligence Coach, an Amazon Bestselling Author for *Ignite Your Life for Women*, a Director of the 1st NMCC Inter-national Music Competition - HK Regional, an Ellamo Foundation Advisory Board member, and event partner and adjudicating member of the 1st HK PhilanthroKids Giving Tuesday Ambassador Awards.

Shirley has performed and arranged music for the movie *The War at Home*, and coached singers in the 2020 blockbuster *The Rescue*.

Books that changed my life:

The Art of Loving

– Erich Fromm The Way of the Superior Man

Movies that inspire me:

A League of Their Own Simon Burch

Songs that inspire me:

Birds Set Free - Sia Pompeii - Bastille

My heroine:

Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez

Quote to live by:

“If you want to know God, you must
know your-self.”

– Nahko & Medicine for the People



Robert Clancy, Author, Influencer, Speaker

“Making someone smile can change the world. Maybe not the whole world, but their own world.”

LOVE HAPPENS

BY ROBERT CLANCY

“Love has no end, because it’s always writing the next beautiful chapter of your life.”

Who:

I would best categorize myself as an expert in logic with an equally developed spiritual side—that gives me a unique view of life in a way that most others cannot see. I see the world and life’s mysteries as a puzzle, an algorithm, or a long line of code that needs cracking—a cypher if you will. More importantly, I know how to share what it is I see in a way that others can benefit.

At age nineteen, I was at the lowest point of my life and on a destructive path, one that most likely would have ended my life in a matter of months. My life fell apart when several of my friends tragically

committed suicide while others died in horrific car accidents. I gave up; I was lost. A friend reached out and taught me how to meditate. What transpired the first time I meditated was almost beyond belief. I was a few hours into this meditative state when a divine angelic messenger appeared. She greeted me with a kiss, and later touched my forehead with her index finger during the encounter. This touch opened the universe to my soul—I was plugged into all the knowledge and love in the universe. This angel not only healed me, she revealed what heaven and love were all about, and the purpose of my life's path. I was given a tremendous gift and responsibility. As I stated initially, I am a highly technical and analytical person, yet I cannot deny what happened to me.

I held this divine encounter as a secret for nearly thirty years, telling only a handful of people for fear of being judged. There are some people who will still judge me, some who may be reading this chapter. In 2012 I began to share this experience with the world because I was steadfast in my resolve not to take this experience to my grave.

I spent those thirty years doing the best I could, volunteering to help others understand the love and light within themselves.

Why:

I found that my world was shifting at a dizzying pace, and I lacked the tools to not only thrive, but even survive with my heart and soul intact. Technology was whizzing by me, the increasingly complex global geopolitical landscape became almost incomprehensible to me, and displacement of all the “rules of life” that I'd been clinging to were no longer moving me into a place where I could flourish.

Then it hit me!!! I decided to think of ,and write, one inspirational thought every day for an entire year. I challenged myself to come up with the inspirational words before my feet hit the floor each morning, then I would post them on my Facebook page before heading off into the day.

My page grew astronomically. I was on to something, something much greater than me. At first I received messages of gratitude from people all over the world, then the messages became deeper. One woman from the Philippines messaged me and said, “I am a mother of two small children, but I feel like I am a failure. Today I decided to end my life...but I read the words hope you wrote today and I changed

my mind. You saved me.” I broke down crying. I thought, “What if I was lazy and decided not to post that day, there would be two children growing up without their mother.”

It was in that moment that I realized that each person has the power to turn themselves around and live a happier, more fulfilling life. A person may need a little guidance, inspiration, and be open to the amazing possibilities each day can bring. The key is to move forward with love, faith and hope. Those three amazing words have no synonyms and they are not meant to, the words themselves convey a meaning that all understand. They only exist when you believe in them. Love is the reason for your being. Hope gives you the courage to rise. Faith is how you will return to that love.

How:

When you wake tomorrow morning, take a moment to visualize the precious treasures you have in your life. Just lie there in your bed and give thanks for all the gifts you have to share with others—they are boundless.

You never know exactly how much time you have on Earth, so why you should you worry about when you will die? You should only concern yourself with how much you share your love between this day and your last. Every act of kindness you do unto others truly matters. Kindness is a huge piece of your soul's essence, and it's truly meant to be shared with everyone you encounter. Giving is the greatest gift of love you can create. I've discovered that all hearts all come in one size...large...and when you fill your heart to the brim with love, it may accidentally spill onto others. The best part of love is that it never runs out; why not spend your time giving it away?

Just as there are infinite points within any line, there are also infinite chances for you to share your beauty each day. Being kind to those you meet on your chosen path instantly connects you with their thread of love, and thus, all of the love in the universe.

It only takes one seed to grow a mighty oak tree in the world, and in much the same way, it only takes one kind heart to grow immense love. Think about all of the seeds of love you've already planted just by sharing a smile. Have you taken a moment to enjoy this incredible garden you've created with your heart?

Love is the voice in your heart that speaks volumes without ever using words. Let it be loud and heard by all. A kind heart is guided by the love that flows through you. A loving heart is guided by the hope that glistens from the feathers on an angel's wings within your precious soul. A hopeful heart is guided by faith given to you by divine grace. A graceful heart is simply fulfilled by love, hope and faith.

Every moment of your life is an opportunity to share the wonders of love.

Compassion is the gift of empathy—the ability to form a kindred bond with another's experience. As you journey through life, marvel at all the souls that come and go from your life. You become a precious expression of each of the bonds.

I'm not saying love is perfect, but you can still love perfectly even during those difficult times. Have you ever had one of those days where everything just goes wrong; and no matter what you do it just seems to get worse? I see you nodding your head. You know exactly what I'm talking about. You are probably thinking, "Yes! That's sums up the last year of my life!" It may be time to adjust your perspective. When you

keep pushing on something only to experience more setbacks, that's just God's way of telling you to change your direction or just let it be for now. Your attention is desired elsewhere. A door closed in your face is not a loss, it just means there's an open window for you somewhere else. Spread your wings and fly in that new direction. Trusting in God's great picture is the essence of all that is love.

I am absolutely driven to leave some kind of legacy. Just to keep it in perspective, legacy is not so much about what you leave behind, but rather, what you leave helps ensure others are never left behind. Although you've got but one life that will eventually come to pass, the love you share with all your heart is what is meant to last. Love is what makes you immortal. Every single ounce of love you create in the universe lives on in the hearts of all those whom you've touched. What could be more beautiful than starting something that creates endless ripples of good?

Finally, just know one thing that is for sure in this life...love will find you.

Love is a warm ray of light beaming from the sun;
It may be found in the laughs you've created by simply having fun.

Love may be written within the kindness of your face;
It's surely in everything created with all of God's grace.

Love is an endless ocean flowing from each of our souls;
It's the greatest part of life that completes and makes you whole.

Love can save you from your deepest depths of despair;
It can never be taken, only given and shared.

Love is forever growing within a community that cares.
It can start in modest ways, often with just one basic prayer.

Love is much more than a smile or a just simple kiss;
It's the legacy of kindness given that creates God-given bliss.

Share your love!

ABOUT ROBERT CLANCY

Robert Clancy is a creative visionary, #1 international bestselling author, spiritual teacher and co-founder of Spiral Design—an award-winning creative design and marketing firm. At age nineteen, Robert experienced a divine spiritual encounter that altered his life in profound ways. In 2012, he created the Robert Clancy – *Guide to the Soul* Facebook fan page, where he shares his divinely inspired thoughts, now followed by nearly one million people worldwide.

He is a sought after speaker, presenter and guest. Robert is a regular contributor and weekly guest on Los Angeles KABC Radio's syndicated *Late Night Health* Radio Show. He's also co-host and producer of the *Mindset Reset* television show (MindsetResetTV.com), which has hosted notable guests such as star of the hit film, *The Secret*, Dr. Joe Vitale, actor Kevin Sorbo, actress Dee Wallace, Arielle Ford and Marci Shimoff among others.

His latest book *Soul Cyphers: Decoding a Life of Hope and Happiness* quickly became a #1 international bestseller. Robert is also a featured spiritual expert appearing with Dr. Joe Vitale, don Miguel Ruiz, Brian Tracy and Dannion Brinkley in the movie *Becoming the Keys*, release in January 2019.



Denise Conde

“The world always looks brighter from behind a smile.”

THE VALOR IN SMILING

BY DENISE CONDE

My name is Denise Francine Conde and I was born on April 17, 1972 in a coal dusted covered city outside of Buffalo, NY. When I was 18 months old my parents moved my two older sisters and I to a small riverside, picturesque village in Youngstown, NY where I grew up. In my mind at the time, I had a pretty ‘normal’ childhood. My father was a Vietnam Veteran and I honor his story and his Valor, even though, alongside millions of children of Vietnam Veterans I experienced physical and mental abuse as a bi-product of his PTSD from his time in the war. My father also suffered from alcoholism which he overcame by the time I was 10 years old, however his fits of rage carried on in a cyclic pattern reigning fear and terror until the time God brought him back home.

In spite of everything I endured as a child, I was gifted with the absolute will and strength over my unresolved trauma to become a special education teacher. It was a difficult journey as alcohol and drugs

became my coping mechanisms to drown out the unhealed pain from my childhood that I had repressed. I failed out of college and was constantly on the run, seeking safety and shelter. But even then, I didn't give up. It took me eight years to get my bachelors degree, and to then become a special education teacher, and then my masters degree; fighting against being told that I would never become a teacher and that my masters degree was only a piece of paper from people who were supposed to be my support.

I was honored with the blessing of my beautiful daughters, Grace and Maggie and swore that my trauma would not become theirs, although while I was still in my first marriage, I noticed similar traits to the marriage of my parents. My husband would often fall into the uncomfortable familiarity of yelling, screaming, my infidelity and disrespecting ourselves and one another. I blamed my ex husband for all our problems and divorced him. Refusing to look hard enough at myself and my own unresolved trauma, conditioning and patterns. Now I know that what you don't heal, you repeat.

I thought that I had forgiven my father long ago, however it wasn't until I started recognizing the conditioning and patterns of my parents in

my second marriage to Michael that I realized that I had pushed down my true feelings of what he put me through, and brushed them aside. After my father's passing, my mother became someone I no longer recognized. Narcissistic, unleashing my oldest sister's rage onto me any time she felt necessary doing what she believed was best for her adult children. As I started to implement boundaries with my mother and sister, my mother called Child Protective Services on me for claims of me abusing alcohol and my daughters. This call forced me onto an unrelenting path of healing, throwing me into situations where I had to sink or swim. To accept and truly move forward from what had happened to me, heal every traumatic event of my life, or face repeating the lessons. Michael also not recognizing his unresolved trauma as well, we separated. During this separation we agreed to work on ourselves, and this is when we were awakened. Truly, divinely and spiritually. The Universe and God brought us back together to share our unconditional love story. Through reading many books, counseling, meditation, yoga, journaling, and hiring the best life coach out there, Heather Rine, we have come to meet our authentic selves again and we are now living our purpose.

Within nine months of returning home to our authentic selves, I have become a real estate agent, left teaching to write and share my story,

hired a writing manager and to work with Michael at our Custom Cabinetry business, Conde Design Group. I aspire to finish my book as soon as possible and open my coaching business so that I can help guide people who have experienced trauma like me, and show them that it truly is possible to come out the other side and become the best, most authentic version of yourself.

The deepest part of me that urged me to step into my power and pursue this journey was my family. My husband, Michael, and my girls. I knew if I didn't heal, my family couldn't either. In adulthood, after the loss of my father, the most terrifying and traumatic event that I endured was my mother's call to Child Protective Services. The fear I felt about knowing that I couldn't control the outcome of this situation forced me to look at my life and the decisions that I had made and how I was currently living, compared to the person that my daughters and Michael deserved, opened up a craving within me that desperately desired healing and to put an end to my mother's, father's and oldest sister's endless abuse. I knew that not only did my family deserve better, but so did I. I knew that I was a good mother, I knew I was a good person to the core and this event opened me up to the passion burning in my soul to let it all out, to stop playing a role and

pretending I was "okay" to appease others. Instead of bringing me to my knees, I decided to rise with sheer will and determination. I took up the flag of healing and ran with it, becoming utterly vulnerable and undergoing counseling. Under the advice of Ron, my counselor, I wrote every traumatic event from my childhood into a journal. This was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do; remember the past, dig up every traumatic event that I had pushed deep down within me. As I wrote, I mourned and cried for the child I once was. I'd write a traumatic event and three more would follow. I wrote until I was physically and mentally exhausted and then dropped the journal into Ron's mailbox for his review before our next appointment. I also discussed at length the abuse I was enduring from my mother after the passing of my father. I was able to finally speak my truth and let go of the shame surrounding what happened to me. The beatings, the emotional and psychological abuse, allowing myself to let go of the shame for what became unhealthy coping mechanisms. In amazement, Ron held the trauma journal in his hand, told me it wasn't my fault, that I was a good person and that I should write a book. I knew it wasn't my fault but I also knew that now it was my own responsibility to heal. I read and researched the impact of trauma and healing trauma tirelessly to understand my parents and myself. I began putting these techniques

into action in efforts to heal myself and my family and to once and for all, end our generational trauma.

The catalyst for continued and deeper healing came after the separation between my second husband, Michael and I. Many old patterns within our marriage still existed and there was much built up resentment and anger towards one another. The focus for healing was placed solely on me and me alone. There was an underlying denial that anyone else like Michael or the girls needed further support as a family unit. The cards were stacked against our healing as a family.

The techniques I was implementing for myself such as mindfulness, future self journaling, listening to my body, staying present, understanding that my reactions of anxiety and anger came from a place of feeling physically and mentally attacked and unsafe in my own body. I was also practicing yoga to help regulate my nervous system. There was steady growth, however self-sabotage and the feelings of not being enough, not healing fast enough, not being capable of being loved, deserving of love or giving compassion, empathy to myself and others would come into play almost every three months.

A vital piece to my healing was missing. Meditation. I rejected this idea with arrogance and ego protecting me, telling myself over and over that I didn't need to become some Buddhist monk in order to heal. A friend had said one key word during a conversation. It was manifesting. I dug deeper into this word. I had been watching Bob Proctor videos as well, understanding that I was living in the past. How could I get out of the past and build and create the new future I wanted. I needed more. It stuck with me even after Michael left. We made a promise to each other to work on ourselves and finally, I soothed my ego into acknowledging what I needed, as much as it bucked and rejected it. I went deeper into my own healing. Meditation allowed me to understand that I didn't have to live in trauma any longer. It allowed me to let go of the conditioning and patterns of my parents that were not mine to begin with and no longer served me, and return home to my authentic, beautiful true self. I bought an online coaching course called "Unsinkable: The Secret to Bouncing Back" by Sonia Ricotti. Bob Proctor endorsed the course along with Jack Canfield, Joe Dispenza who really stood out to me. The course included meditations and helped me discover my life's purpose. I knew I had to share my story, Your Valor, with others. Michael and I were simultaneously, yet physically apart, coming through a spiritual awakening to have our worlds collide once again in unconditional love and forgiveness.

Still working with my counselor Ron, who I knew I had outgrown is when Heather Rine and I vibrated into each other's life. Heather and I grew up in the same town together and went to high school together. Heather posted something on Facebook that resonated with me. I wanted to learn what she was doing. I had been watching Bob Proctor videos as well, understanding that I was living in the past. How could I get out of the past and build and create the new future I wanted. I needed more. Upon the first phone call with Heather, I discovered she was a consultant coaching others in a course created by none other than Bob Proctor, "Thinking Into Results". You can't make this stuff up!

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My spirit and light shines every where I go. I spend time meditating every day creating and calling in my abundance. I share that love and energy with every soul that I'm honored to cross my path. The belief in self is the belief and love in others. I have forgiven others and myself knowing my lessons have been learned and dropping little seeds every where I go inspiring others to do the same.

As a leader in our company, we inspire those who work for us and

lead by example instilling our belief in our employees as we believe in ourselves. We listen, look at our actions and habits, create, change and grow. And also repeat the great words of Elf, "I like smiling, smiling is my favorite".

ABOUT DENISE CONDE

Denise Conde has lived a hero's journey. From childhood abuse, alcohol and drug abuse and up out of the ashes to share her healing journey is an inspiration to all. She taught for 20 years as a special education teacher, and is now a co-owner of a custom kitchen cabinet business, real estate agent, writer, soon to be published author. She's one to take notice of, as her story is one of divine and spiritual intervention.

Books that changed my life:

Creating the Champion Within – Molly Kennedy
Out of the Fog – Dana Morningstar
The Body Keeps the Score
– Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D.
How To Do The Work – Dr. Nicole LePera

Movies that inspire me:

The Secret
Think and Grow Rich
The Notebook

My hero:

Jack Canfield

Quote to live by:

“Never Give Up”



Wayne Connell – Founder Invisible Disabilities Association, Caregiver, Author, Speaker, Technologist

The eyes are the windows to the soul, a smile is a reflection of the heart! – Wayne Connell

A SMILE SHOWS YOU CARE

BY WAYNE CONNELL

The question has been posed to me on many occasions. Why did I decide to found the Invisible Disabilities® Association (IDA)? The obvious answer is because of my wife, Sherri. As many of you know, Sherri lives daily with Progressive Multiple Sclerosis, Chronic Lyme Disease, Chemical Injury and Traumatic Brain Injury and lives constantly with severe pain and bone crushing fatigue. I met Sherri in 1992 at the age of 28 after her diagnosis of MS in 1991. Also in 1992, Sherri was diagnosed with Lyme disease which can be traced back 14 years earlier from a tick bite. I not only fell in love with her, I later fell in love with helping all the people living daily with invisible disabilities and pain. I wanted to be her champion and theirs too.

But why care at all? Caring means being a part of someone else's mess. Caring means moving from "it's all about me" to "it is about you too". According to Google, the word care can both be a noun "The provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something" and a verb "Feel concern or interest; attach importance to something." I think "how" someone shows they care is via kindness or being kind.

I believe what moved me to launch IDA was both care as a noun and a verb. People who live with invisible illness many times become part of the shadows. They need as the above definition states, "health, welfare, maintenance and protection." Sometimes caring can be hard to come by. I hear stories quite often of a person lying injured in the street and people crossing the street to the other side to avoid getting involved. I remember getting a call from my wife at a department store one day when she had collapsed on the floor. She was sitting in the aisle for over an hour and people were just walking by her without stopping. No one seemed concerned. Sound crazy? I hear these stories quite often.

How can caring impact a person's health? A 2013 article in Wired Magazine by author Nathanael Johnson talks about the "Care Effect."

Research led by Ted Kaptchuk at Harvard Medical School: Patients with irritable bowel syndrome were told they'd be participating in a study of the benefits of acupuncture — and one group, which received the treatment from a warm, friendly researcher who asked detailed questions about their lives, did report a marked reduction in symptoms, equivalent to what might result from any drug on the market. Unbeknownst to them, the researchers used trick needles that didn't pierce the skin. Now here's the interesting part: The same sham treatment was given to another group of subjects — but performed brusquely, without conversation. The benefits largely disappeared. It was the empathetic exchange between practitioner and patient, Kaptchuk, concluded that made the difference.

It was the empathetic exchange between practitioner and patient that made the difference.

What Kaptchuk demonstrated is what some medical thinkers have begun to call the "care effect" — the idea that the opportunity for patients to feel heard and cared for can improve their health. Scientific or no, alternative practitioners tend to

express empathy, to allow for unhurried silences, and to ask what meaning patients make of their pain. Kaptchuk's study was a breakthrough: It showed that randomized, controlled trials could measure the effect of caring. But there was already abundant evidence from nursing science to suggest a healing power in the interaction between practitioner and patient. A study in Turkey found that empathetic nurses improved the symptoms of patients with hypertension. Midwestern cancer patients who received massages slept better and had less pain.

I have had many discussions with nurses, and I asked why they decided to pursue nursing as a profession and their answer usually is because they care, especially for people who are sick and in pain. Caring for the invisible is one of the main reasons Hall of Fame Speaker and Neurohumorist, Karyn Buxman, RN, MSN, Author of the *What So Funny About...* book series joined the IDA Advisory board. By showing kindness and care, I believe IDA helps contribute to the health of those we touch through encouragement, education and connection.

An article by IDA's 2013 Healthcare Honor's Award recipient, Marlo Thomas, actress, author and National Spokesperson for St Jude

Children's Research Hospital, also shed's perspective on the healthy benefit of being kind and caring.

At first blush, stories of decency and goodness may seem trivial when compared to the constant stream of bad news that pours forth every day. But it's just a matter of keeping perspective. For instance, would a story about a group of villagers in India banding together to save a baby elephant stop the poverty and injustices suffered by so many around the world? Of course, it wouldn't. But it might keep us from throwing in the towel.

Or what about the fast-food employee from North Carolina who turned a young girl's disastrous prom night into a dream date? That might not turn around the epidemic of bullying facing our youth today, but it goes a long way toward remembering that people are basically kind, and that we look out for each other.

And then there's the New Hampshire college athlete who gave up his beloved sport — the shot put — in order to save the life of a complete stranger. That might not be the miracle cure for cancer that we've all been looking for, but it certainly sends a

message that sometimes love and kindness are the most powerful medicines.

While we all should continue to take a deep breath and bear the harder and sadder stories that populate the front pages of our newspapers — and then try to do something about them — let's all remember to feed our spirits by seeking out stories about random acts of kindness, as well. Those stories are out there — sometimes you just have to dig a little to find them.

I hope the stories of kindness Marlo mentions are not so random. I think of Dave Dias, 2011 *IDA Caregiver Honor's Award* recipient who takes the time out of his busy schedule as an insurance executive to regularly blog about his wife, Irene's struggles with illness and injury from a car accident. Dave even took the time to write a book, Irene's *Journey of Faith*. Dave is not alone in caring, yet we still have strides to go. I hope we can move from "stories" to "caring" becoming a way of life.

There are many great organizations focused on research and the medical treatment of illness. The Invisible Disabilities® Association's

mission revolves around care. We care by listening, believing, validating, encouraging, educating and connecting people touched by illness, pain and disability. We show we care by telling the world that people matter even in all of their illness and pain: even when they can barely get out of bed; even when they can't speak for themselves and even when they can't even take care of themselves.

I love the following quote from leadership guru, John Maxwell, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." I care, I believe is the reason I founded IDA. At IDA, We Care, We Believe. We look forward to a world where people living with illness, pain and disability will be Invisible No More®! A world where we all care and believe! So, smile and show you care!

ABOUT WAYNE CONNELL

Wayne Connell, IDA's President and CEO founded the Invisible Disabilities Association (IDA) in 1996 out of the desire to educate friends and family about his wife, Sherri's debilitating illness. Soon afterwards, people around the globe began sending emails sharing how IDA had changed their relationships with their loved ones. He is co-author of the book, "But You LOOK Good, How to Encourage and Understand People Living with Illness and Pain." Wayne's background fueled his passion for helping people living with illness, pain and disability. His experience includes that of a professional, multitasking husband caregiver with an extensive background in management, media and technology. This man on a mission quickly launched IDA into a world-wide outreach for millions of people living daily with invisible disabilities, illness and pain.

Books that changed my life:

Os Guinness - The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life

John O'Leary - On Fire: The 7 Choices to Ignite a Radically Inspired Life

Tommy Spaulding - It's Not Just Who You Know: Transform Your Life (and Your Organization) by Turning Colleagues and Contacts into Lasting, Genuine Relationships

George Müller - The Autobiography of George Müller

Movies that Inspire Me:

Chariots of Fire

Amazing Grace

Rudy

Extraordinary Measures

Song that Inspires Me:

Louis Armstrong - What a Wonderful World

My Hero:

My wife, Sherri is my hero!

Quote I Live By:

It is more blessed to give than to receive

~ Jesus



Sarah Coolidge

"If you smile at me I will understand, 'cause that is something everybody, everywhere does in the same language." ~ *Wooden Ships*:
D. Crosby, P. Kantner and S. Stills

THE GIFT OF THE CROOKED SMILE BY SARAH COOLIDGE

Dinner time was pretty scary for me growing up. I sat at the head of the table and watched the same scene unfold every night: the conversation would escalate into more and more anger and misunderstanding and then, BAM! my father's hand would come down hard on the dining room table and the whole house seemed to shake on its foundation. One after the other, my older sisters would get up and run from the table, crying. The clean up from the meal would proceed in silence, and then the evening would wind down. Next night? Same thing.

I sat at the head of the table because that was where the baby in the high chair went. When the high chair went away no baby came after me, so, there I stayed. Sitting in that spot was like having a front-row seat at a theatre that played the same scary show, night after night. As

the conversation heated up, I watched the predictable scene unfold, and wondered why no one did anything to stop the freight train of anger that was coming towards us. Our dinner table was made from a hollow-core door, and my father was a big, strong man, so you can imagine the clap of thunder his hand made as it hit the table. That noise was the signal that he had reached his limit of frustration and we had all better stop talking. That was all more than 50 years ago now, yet loud, sudden, angry sounds can still set my heart pounding and fill me with panic.

My father had a crooked smile, and many in my family say that I inherited the same smile. I don't know if that can be completely true, because he suffered a brain aneurism that paralyzed the right side of his body when he was in his 20's which certainly contributed to his lopsided smile. He recovered substantially from his paralysis, but continued to have difficulty in his speech (speech aphasia). All of this happened before my sisters and I were born, and his symptoms deteriorated throughout the rest of his life. He struggled mightily to communicate with anyone, and this struggle would often deteriorate into frustration and rage.

My mother was, among other things, the English-major daughter of an English professor. One of her biggest values was correct usage of

the English language, and she was adept at pouncing on any inaccuracy that we uttered. This was quite a contrast with my tongue-tied father, and her perfectionism contributed a lot to their unhappiness. It appeared to me as though she was egging him on when she questioned him about what he was trying to say. Didn't she know that she was asking for trouble? Did she want to have an argument with him?

Here's the thing: my father was a kind, loving, gentle man. I know he did not want this to be the scene in our home every night, nor did anyone else in my family. In those days there were no resources to support a family like ours, no training for the mother on how to communicate with her husband, no classes for the kids on the differences in the family. We simply did not have the tools to derail the nightly train of anger before it got up to speed. That anger train left me terrified, and it also gave me my most precious gift.

It is well-documented that children who grow up hearing more than one language develop greater creativity and problem-solving skills, as well as more flexibility in communication, and that these benefits stay with them as permanent wiring in their brains. This is why I wanted both of my sons to enroll in bilingual education, and why I used sign

language with them when they were still too young to speak. What I only recently learned is that I, too, was exposed to a second language growing up: Aphasia.

Because my sisters and I were living daily with someone who struggled to find the correct word, or any word, for what he wanted to express, we all developed a high ability to piece together possible meanings from very little input. It is a skill our mother never had, because she did not grow up with it the way we did, and so her patience with my father's speech was much more limited than ours. Although it was frightening to witness the arguments and unhappiness that grew out of our parents' inability to communicate, our brains were also busy growing new connections around alternative meanings and ways to convey information. My sisters and I are remarkable in our ability to decode meanings this way. That was the gift I received, a gift I did not understand or appreciate for many years.

The anger and misunderstanding in my family continued throughout my childhood, and eventually led to my parents divorcing. All of this happened long ago, yet the desire to prevent the wreckage of communication gone wrong has stayed with me. Over the years I studied English, Journalism and Strategic Planning, and taught English as a second

language. I have free-lanced as a proofreader and editor for business books, which led me into assisting my clients beyond their writing. Today, I am a strategic business coach, supporting people to develop the self-leadership skills they need to grow businesses which serve themselves and the planet. Improving my client's messaging and communication is inevitably one of the skills we work on together.

I grew up feeling unseen and unheard, and wanting desperately to help my father, who I believed felt the same way. The passion this sparked in me to work to help others out of any invisibility they wrestle with inspires all of my activities as a coach, a community leader and a mom. When I encounter someone who seems to struggle to be understood and feel heard, I come alive with the desire to support them.

Our unique ability as human beings to form sounds in order to share meaning and connect with one another is remarkable in its complexity and diversity. Each one of us has countless different ways that our experiences impact the wiring in our brains, which we then translate into the words that we can only hope our listener will interpret the way we want. When we consider this complexity, we can see that it is really miraculous when communication goes well and when people feel truly

heard and understood. We can also appreciate and honor the importance of taking a serious interest in improving our own abilities to use all of our communication abilities well.

The fact is words, especially written ones, are our least effective way of communicating with one another. Much more of our communication is happening through body language and vocal tone, but most of us are not taught this fact. The average person learns to speak our complex language pretty well by the age of 4 (an incredible feat in and of itself) and then we spend the remainder of our lives yakking away, thinking that everyone around us uses words the same way we do. We rely on our most unreliable communication technique, and when it doesn't work for us we are surprised and dismayed. I want to help change that, whenever I can.

There may be nothing better than the feeling of joy and satisfaction when you sense that someone has truly listened to you and understood you. Isn't it wonderful? Wouldn't you like more of that in our world? If all of us felt heard and understood, what do you think would happen to the amount of violence among people on the planet? I think it would stop altogether.

That is why the underlying thread in all of my activities is the effort to clearly understand the people around me, and to support them to achieve understanding with others around them. My work and relationships have always revolved around that. Simply put, I believe that I make a difference for every person alive when I help anyone learn how to communicate more clearly, and support them to feel seen and heard.

As a coach, writer, speaker and parent there is nothing that pleases me more than to help someone to create a clear message that accurately contains the meaning they wish to convey. When I translate their meaning, just like I used to do for my father, and ask "Is this what you are wanting to say?" I get the thrill of watching their faces light up. In moments like these I feel the joy of fully receiving my parents' gift to me and, in my mind's eye, I once again see my father's crooked smile.

ABOUT SARAH COOLIDGE

Sarah Coolidge is an Author and Strategic Business Coach who supports people to develop the self-leadership skills they need to create their best businesses and lives. She does this by accessing her deep understanding of the power and impact of our everyday language, and then teaching her clients a step-by-step process to craft the internal self talk and external messaging to achieve their goals. An expert in enhancing integrity and accountability to build effective and productive personal and business relationships, she is an intuitive listener who loves to assist people in “drilling down” to their critical next steps and then planning processes for achieving them. Her books are: “Your Amazing Itty Bitty Message Mastery Book,” and “Make a Book, Move a Book, Book a Sale.” She earned her BA and MA from the University of Wisconsin – Madison, followed by post-graduate work in Training and Development at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities. When she isn't facilitating transformational workshops she spends her time hanging out with her children, working in the garden, hiking in the Sierras and skiing as fast as she dares. She can be contacted at sarah@sarahcoolidge.com.

Books that changed my life:

“The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe” C.S. Lewis

“The Four Agreements” don Miguel Ruiz

Movies that inspire me:

“The Shawshank Redemption”

“Hair”

Song that inspires me:

“Spirit in the Sky” Norman Greenbaum,

“Southern Cross” Crosby, Stills & Nash,

“Solsbury Hill” Peter Gabriel

My heroes:

My parents.

Quote to live by:

“If it is not a ‘hell, yes!’ it’s a ‘hell, no!’”

~Abraham-Hicks



David Corbin

“We can’t solve **everything** we face but we can’t solve **anything** unless we face it. And facing it with a SMILE is the greatest accelerator to growth, happiness and prosperity.”

HACK IT OR LOSE IT : FEEDING OUR MINDS AND LIVING OUR BIG LIVES

BY DAVID CORBIN

If you’re like me, you want to live a big, happy, fulfilling life; one filled with love, joy, service and purpose. In my opinion, that life vision is under massive attack and being hijacked by outside forces who want you to think, do, vote and buy what is best for THEM and not necessarily for YOU and what’s in YOUR best interest.

‘Yeah, but we have free will and make our own decisions,’ you may say.

That’s true but let’s break it down:

It's been said that what separates our species from pigs, goats, sheep and cattle is Free Will. Free Will: the ability to independently think and make decisions. Thank goodness for Free Will so that we can direct our lives and, within limitations, control our destiny. True, right?

Well I invite you to consider that today more than ever there are forces who are interfering with our free will and who endeavor to deeply influence that way we think and how we feel. How are they doing this? Mostly with advertising, marketing and propaganda.

My research reveals that, with the expanding use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), there is little doubt or disagreement that there are entities exploiting this information and therefore actually know US better than we know OURSELVES. Sound far fetched? I thought so at first but after deeply researching this topic, it's not so far fetched. Im convinced it's real. I've seen it and been influence by it and you have too. Check out this scenario:

“Mom, I'm really, really angry at everything and everyone.”
Mom replies, “no sweetheart, you're not angry. You're hungry!”

And, after preparing and serving you a sandwich, you ate it and realized that *Mom knew you better than you knew yourself!*

Mom knew what she knew intuitively and using her 'natural intelligence'; she didn't have the AI available and didn't need it! It's a 'Mom thing!' (Imagine if she had AI? Uh oh!)

What we know today is this: Corporations such as food manufacturers, pharmaceutical companies, television and internet broadcasters and even governments, armed with data driven by brilliant algorithms going into deep collected data, often know us, in many areas, much better than we know ourselves. The net result is that they use artificial intelligence algorithms and deep data to not only PREDICT our thoughts and behavior but also to LEAD and DRIVE our thoughts and behavior. They, in a sense, HACK our minds and psyches with advertising, programs and propaganda. Heck, we're so busy doing our 'everyday' that we are sitting ducks.

So what can we do? Roll over and play dead? Throw up our hands and surrender to their relatively unlimited marketing budgets, give in and agree to be their puppets? Sadly, that IS what we see going down... but

it doesn't have to be that way.

HACK IT OR LOSE IT!

Whaaaaat??? Hack what? Lose what?

The answer: Hack your OWN mind or lose your OWN free will.

How?

Here's your 3 Step Process.

WAKE UP! , stay alert, be proactive.

1. With pen and paper in hand, make a list of what is truly and deeply important to you. What do you care about, who do you care about, what are your values, how do you choose to live your life, you know, the important stuff. List these things out. An example: My health is important to me because with it, I can be free to enjoy quality time with my family and friends.

2. Next, HACK YOURSELF! Make sure that THESE messages are prevalent in your life so that when advertisers and marketers are telling you what is important, you have YOUR values and thoughts clearly ingrained so that you can ward off these attempts to hijack you.

- MEDITATE
- CREATE AFFIRMATIONS
- PLACE NOTES, SIGNS, PHONE AND COMPUTER ALERTS
- WRITE OUT GOALS, VALUES, BELIEFS

3. Laugh your butt off as you consciously observe their unsuccessful attempts to influence you to do what THEY want rather than what you KNOW you want.

In my opinion, many of the 'hijackers' are not bad people with bad intentions. They have a product to sell or they have a philosophy or candidate

or program to sell. I get that and, in an of itself, it's not a bad thing. HOWEVER, there ARE a TON of people and companies who are hell bent on making sure that you buy their goods, services, policies, candidates... whatever... at ANY cost... even if it is BAD for you. It's of no importance to them- just as long as they win, they don't give a hoot what the negative effect may on you. And if this sounds a bit crazy or conspiratorial.... it totally IS. There is, and has been for a long time, a conspiracy to 'own a part of your thoughts and beliefs. This is a part of selling and branding. This is a part of campaigning. And it's not necessarily bad. However, when using AI data to sell you a drug that you many not need, that may have negative side effects, that may actually cause harm to you then it's dangerous as hell and, in context of the example above where you declared that you want to live a long life to share with your loved ones, it will sure as heck interfere with YOUR goals as they move you toward THEIRS.

Yes, Hack yourself or lose your free will.

It starts with awareness,
continues with clarity,
fueled by disciple
and fostered by the support of friends and family.

Hack it or Lose it.

As one of my values is LOVE, I end by wishing you lots of it as you take control of your BIG, AWESOME LIFE.

ABOUT DAVID CORBIN

David M. Corbin, two time WSJ Best Selling Author, has been referred to as “Robin Williams with an MBA” because of his very practical, high-content speeches, coupled with real life, entertaining and sometimes side-splitting stories and applications. He’s know as the “Mentor to Mentors” and Entrepreneur Guru as he’s trained and advised, mentored and guided many luminaries in the fields of speaking, consulting, entrepreneurship and big business. A former crisis intervention counselor with a background in healthcare, he has served as a management and leadership consultant to businesses and organizations of all sizes—from Fortune 20 companies to businesses with less than 1 million—and enjoys the challenges of all. He has worked directly with the president and office of the president of companies such as AT&T, Hallmark, Dominos, Kaiser Permanente, Mountain States Mortgage as well as the Hon. Secretary of Veterans Administration and others. He has been a featured speaker for Inc Magazine and rated top 5% of speakers, Secret Knock, Income Store, City Summit, Digital Footprint, CEO Space and many more. David was awarded the Innovation of the Year by Bank of America and presented in association with Former Prime Minister

Margaret Thatcher, Tom Peters, Sec. James Baker, Maya Angelou and others. Featured in Forbes Magazine, Inc.Magazine, NBC, FOX, and was star and host of the movie, Pass It On as he hosted such gifted contributors as Brian Tracy, Gavin Keilly, Greg Reid, Les Brown, Mark Victor Hanson, Bob Proctor, Evander Holyfield, Mario Lopez and others. An author of numerous books including, ILLUMINATE THE NEGATIVE: Converting Challenges into Opportunities, Preventing BrandSlaughter: How to Preserve, Support and Grow Your Brand Asset Value, Psyched On Service: Building a Total Service Mentality, From Image To Influence, From ChangeVictim to ChangeMaster, From Internment to Fulfillment, PointCount, ReSanity: Truths About Food, Pharma and Healthy Living in an Insane World, From WTF to OMG with some LOL.



**Angelina Maria Cortez, Entrepreneur, Inventor, Industry Creator –
Founder of The Hospitality Pet Amenity Gift Packs**

“Smiles can cause you to climb mountains.”

SMILING THROUGH THE PROCESS

BY ANGELINA MARIA CORTEZ

To my most wonderful Lord and Savior, Jesus The Christ, you have brought me a long way and blessed me with friends, and loved ones that have walked with me and often times carried me when I wasn't able to stand. Your love in life is a bright beacon that always gives me the strength to move forward, no matter what it looks like. Thank You for all that you have created me to do and those that will be blessed by your plan for my life. My Children, Ernest, Liliana and Jackie, you are all 100% amazing, keep up the good work, at making me real adult, the sacrifices I have made for you 3 were exactly what I needed to understand unconditional love, The Lord has given me great blessings in the form of a family. Thank you Mom, Dad and Laron, MY FULLTIME PRAYER WARRIORS!

A smile is a quiet weapon that will put to flight a legion of doubts and calm the enormous swells of fear that arise with every new step in faith.

I had a great childhood with the most beautiful and graceful mother a little girl could dream for. My mother was always so kind and loving and gave me more love and kindness than one daughter could hope to receive. On the other side, my biological father cared nothing at all for my well being and lived his life coming and going as he saw fit, he never bothered to send my mother .15 cents during my entire childhood. I didn't understand how much pain and how many mistakes I would make due to the lack of a real father in my life, to show me what to do and how to be. As a young girl I never thought that these things were important, I thought to myself that I was alive and that I was going to be great no matter who came or went. I believed this from my earliest childhood.

Growing up in the Bronx and in Queens in New York was a wonderful life for me as a young girl, I thank God that I didn't have to deal with the issues that some girls went through like being molested or being physically harmed, but I could certainly feel the effects of a fatherless childhood in my early years. My father's mother was a huge force

in my life, good and bad. I saw how nice she could be and also how evil she could be all in the twinkling of an eye. In the house she was bossy and demanding and outside in front of others she was kind and endearing. However, as a child I knew that there was something wrong with this duplicitous behavior.

When I was about 9 my mother went through a divorce from my brother's father. My mom remarried and she and Joseph relocated the family to Columbia South Carolina, they said New York was too fast and filled with drugs and bad influences. As a young girl 11 years old I had no idea what this world was about but I knew I had two parents that were going to make sure that I made it through. I remember when we first moved down south and they had very little money, my mom worked cleaning houses and washing cars while preparing for joining the army to give the family a better life. I had no idea that we weren't rich in a lot of ways because we had the best family times and we spent time together and did things as a family. We had nice holidays complete with gifts and new clothes and we never went without food and necessities, so as far as I knew, we were doing very well, especially when looking at the condition of some other families I had seen in our neighborhood. My dad was in school to get his South Carolina license

in HVAC so he could work in his field. There was a time that we walked all the way from our apartment complex to downtown Columbia, my parents told my older sister, Dawn and younger brother, LC and I to wait at the park across from this large building and that they would be right back. I could remember seeing the RED CROSS sign on the building and just knowing they had gone to sell blood that day so we could have food on the table. I will never forget those sacrifices that my parents have made for the family. However, somewhere in the back of my mind I knew that we were going to be just fine. We eventually moved to Germany, but not before living with my biological Father for 2 years in New York .

I grew up fast there, I came to see a different type of lifestyle where my uncles had women coming and going and they partied a lot and smoked and worked full time jobs but there was also hard drug use, and a plethora of cousins from random women that I may have seen only once or twice. My grandmother was just a tyrant to me and she ruled the house with an iron fist and through her money could make someone obedient to her. I really hated living with her, she would smack me in my face and say mean things to me and I vowed to myself that when I got out of New York, I would never return.

During this time I had been living with my grandmother, my father was on crack and stealing everything from everyone that wasn't bolted down to the floor and guarded by armed forces. I had my mind made up that, I need to keep all valuables on my person if I wanted to keep them out of the pawn shop. A pivotal moment happened when my favorite uncle on that side of the family, Uncle Tony came to me one day and said, your grandmother gave this to me to read. It was my diary! I couldn't believe it, He told me she had read it, gave it to her friend Verna to read it and then had given it to my uncle Michael and Uncle Steven to read it and that after him, it was going to my father. I really hated living with these people. However, I never told my mother any of these things. I My grandmother threw me out of the house and then I was living full time with my father, and his wife Jenny and my brother Christopher two houses over. I was so happy to be out of her house. My grandmother had no daughters although she wanted one and since I was the eldest, she wanted to control everything I did and I couldn't stand it. She told me one day that when I grow up she would pay for me to go to nursing school and buy me a car. I was thinking I am NOT going to be a nurse and I wont be around you, as soon as I can get out of here. Truth is 35 years later we still have no true connection due to the abuse I suffered at her hands. If it had not been for

the blessing of my first love, who made sure I had some school clothes and money for lunch because my father never bothered to be concerned about those things even though I lived in a house with him. My stepmother paid all of the bills and was always burdened with this. I really didn't like the circumstances that I was having to deal with in my daily living. I felt like my uncle Steven and Michael were bullies and they were unnecessarily mean to my brother Chris and I. I hurt for my brother because he had to stay in that environment.

I was made to move to Germany to live with my mother who was now 3 years Active Duty in The Army. I fought having to move to Germany, inwardly, but when I got there I started to enjoy the fact that I was living away from the torment of the last 2 years.

What I learned from my time in New York for those two years helped me to overcome the issues of peer pressure. I never allowed peer pressure to be a thing in my life. I always marched a different beat and I flourished in Germany. I made lifelong friends and I also go to become a star JROTC Cadet which gave me the direction to aim for joining the Army so that I could travel for myself. I thank my mother for being an amazing role model. My mother taught me how to organize things in

my life, how to be an effective manager and how to walk in excellence. I learned so much just by watching her in action. This little 5 foot lady with a heart of gold and the funniest laugh. I learned how to not get stuck in the past, but to move forward and push for my goal, accomplish it, demolish it and build higher goals.

I am the way that I am because I had an amazing mother that didn't allow her lack of a true loving mother figure and a father that passed away early from sickness due to Korean war drug addictions and PTSD.

I love pets and I do what I do because as a little girl, my father's grandmother, Beryl Batson King from Cuba had given me rich experiences with taking care of stray cats and dogs as well as the family pets, which were plenteous. I create solutions for the hospitality industry and educate these organizations on how to create comfortable atmospheres for traveling pets because I know how loved a family pet can make a person feel. I am one of those people, a lady who travels with her cats! Thanks to my Great Grandma, Beryl.

Creating solutions for people that make them happy makes me happy and spreads joy and hope in the lives of others that life isn't all bad

and that we can make life what we truly desire by forgiving others and ourselves and pushing forward in the love of God with kindness in our hearts and a countenance of joy on our faces.

My purpose in life is one that involves creating industry for others who may be dreaming of their inventions fitting into the landscape of the world and creating a good life for themselves and their team members. I am excited every single day to get the feedback that my creations are making people smile and making their lives better.

I know that my life has worth and meaning and I couldn't ask for more, coming from a place that could have destroyed my inner joy, but my heart was sealed by God that no matter what I went through I didn't take it to heart, I just learned from it and used those lessons to my advantage and to share that wisdom with others. Walking in that truth is very satisfying. My Hospitality Pet Amenity Gift Packs make people smile because they are thoughtful and fun!

ABOUT ANGELINA MARIA CORTEZ

Angelina Maria Cortez is the creator of The Revolutionary Hospitality Pet Amenity Gift Pack, Professional Speaker and Actress with Credits in National TV Shows such As CBS' Under The Dome and more, Angelina Has worked with amazing lead actors and comedians such as Charles S. Dutton, Katt Williams, Tommy Ford and Isaiah Washington. Angelina served in the US Army and is also a Service Disabled Veteran.

Book(s) that changed your life:

The Bible.

Movies that Inspired me:

JOY with Joy Mangano of HSN

Your Hero:

My Hero is My Mother, a strong woman with
astounding courage.

Quote you live by:

“Things are getting better by the minute,
Good things are happening!”



Alicia Couri

“Passionately Pursue Audacious Confidence to live life without limits or restrictions.”

A CONFIDENT SMILE WILL TAKE YOU PLACES YOU NEVER IMAGINED

BY ALICIA COURI

It's funny the things that stick with you as a child and shape the way you come to think of yourself. We all have these memories. Memories of things that others would think of as unimportant or insignificant. For me it was the idea that being different was the kiss of death, that different was defective so if I was different, I was defective, not beautiful, and not acceptable.

At around four years old, my mother struggled with my hair, at least that's how I remembered it. She would put it in ponytail and five minutes later it was just an enormous unruly mess. Come to think of it, that's probably why I keep it straight today - "I'm going to tame you,

hair, whether you want it or not.” Anyway, my mom was just baffled by what to do with it, so she cut it all off! I was easily confused for a boy, even my favorite uncle called me “Bald Head” which he stuck with even as an adult with a full head of hair. That shift in how people reacted to me taught me that I was not pretty anymore – I looked like a boy - and taught me the importance of looking the part in order to gain the acceptance and approval of others.

What really solidified my belief that I was not beautiful, and that everything about me was all wrong happened in Kindergarten when our family lived in Brisbane, Australia. I was one of only three black children in our entire school, and my sister was one of the others - there was one other but she was a native aborigine and wasn't as dark as I was. My hair was different, my skin tone was different. I would walk into a room and everyone would stare at me. Feeling the weight of people's eyes always made me wonder what they were staring at and made me feel incredibly uncomfortable. So I would always try to hide or to not be noticed because, in my mind, I was always noticed for the wrong things. I didn't feel like a typical girl, so I spent my developing years trying to disappear. It got to the point where I was so good at it that I truly did think of myself that way. I developed this “Invisible Woman

Complex” where I was so convinced that people were ignoring me that I was almost incapable of seeing the attention they paid me even if it was blatant and in my face! I still struggle with that sometimes, my mental default is still sometimes that I was and am invisible.

As I got older I drew closer to my brother than I was with my sister and became more of a tomboy. I was very much into playing outside and running wild with my brother. As a young teenager I was a late bloomer who got teased all the time about “not being a woman” yet. I remember being 12 and all of the other girls in school were already wearing bras and I just didn't have to, I hadn't developed at that point. I absolutely remember being so jealous that the other girls got to wear bras, thinking back on it now I have to laugh because when I started to develop, boy did I develop.

In hindsight, my years in Australia taught me so many valuable lessons about myself, my mission and my passion. This idea that first of all I wasn't beautiful later allowed me to not just see and believe in my beauty but to help others see it in themselves. Two, my desire to be invisible now allows me to help others understand why they need to “Be Seen & Be Heard”, and three, silencing myself meant that my voice is powerful and must be raised.



So how did I go from wanting to be invisible to helping myself and other women own and optimize their feminine strength through confidence, beauty and style? Another question I have to go back to my childhood to start answering. I’m going to start by reminding you all that life is full of contradictions, and so are people themselves. While I was busy trying my best to be invisible, I was also soaking up every bit of beauty, style and makeup knowledge I could. I remember as a kid I wanted a Barbie doll so I could comb and style her hair. I never got that Barbie, but I ended up getting something a little bit better by 9 I was my mother’s hair dresser. In my teens I learned how to sew my own clothes. A career in fashion was my mission, after studying it in college, I also became a makeup artist and hair stylist. Through the years not only did I realize the lack of confidence and self-esteem in the majority of my clients but saw my own limiting beliefs and lack of confidence mirrored in them. I became driven to pull myself out of the state I was in so I could help others discover their own gaps in confidence and limiting beliefs to build a strong solid brand and walk with Audacious Confidence.



Finding my true self and developing my Audacious Confidence was one of the most important undertakings of my life. Yes I gave birth to 3 amazing children, which was incredible, but being able to stand and really embrace who I was and be excited about where my life was headed was a moment I desired for everyone who wasn’t experiencing that to have. To step out and do, be and experience life in a whole new way was what drove me. Helping individuals to create and develop their own Personal Brand was the opportunity for me to impact others on a very deep level. Beyond developing a personal brand, but giving them the tools and opportunity to step out of their comfort zone in media, to begin the process of celebritizing themselves helped take individuals from a place of obscurity to a place of “Hell yes, I can do that!” That brought so much joy when they can stand on stage in confidence, or in front of a camera, whether it was for a photoshoot, video or live TV, their transformation was very evident and not just to me but to them and others around them took notice.

ABOUT ALICIA COURI

Alicia Couri has a mission to help individuals' step into their "Audacious Confidence" so they can be more, do more, have more and live their lives without limits. As a Personal Brander she seeks to create an elevated platform for her clients to stand out and "Be Seen and Be Heard" as industry leaders. She helps her clients show up powerfully and gain visibility so they can attract more clients and increase profitability. Alicia uses her brand to Influence, Educate, Inspire, and Entertain any audience. She is a dynamic Empowerment Speaker, Kolbe Certified™ Consultant, Author, Actor, beauty & Style expert, Personal Branding expert, Executive Producer of Dreamaniac TV and hosts Women Unleashed & The Audacious Confidence Show both live online TV shows.





Dr. Pauline Crawford-Omps

“Your attitude reflects the smile you wear every minute of the day.”

KEEP SMILING

BY DR. PAULINE CRAWFORD-OMPS

WHO ARE YOU ... as in your journey from birth to now. Include challenges and obstacles you overcame and what they taught you.

From the very beginning my family and friends labelled me a *Reluctant Rebel*. Born a tomboy in post-WW II London on the 23rd of May 1949, I found myself dreaming of being a sailor on a tall ship sailing the high seas to the Americas! It was not a dream of escape, just one of adventure fashioned in the imagination of a young girl. My upbringing was a happy normality. Part of a very happy and large extended family that was part of a stable catholic community in North London, I am the third of four children, having two brothers and an older sister. I remember feeling different from the others ... almost invisible when conflict arose. I found myself hiding away from the fear of being judged and not liked.

Smiling was always, and is still, my way to face the world and feed my relationships with love. I wrote in my teenager diary that I could not understand why adults didn't always smile, as it made *me* feel and look so much more beautiful! At 17, I remember sitting in my bedroom and observing myself in the mirror. I was happy with my crowning glory (my hair) and the colour of my eyes, yet, at the same time, critical of the size of my eyes ... too small ... and my eyelashes ... not long enough.

I think it was during this time that I grew my hair long in order to hide behind it. Again, however, I did love my smile. It felt good to be smiling and I noted in my diary ... an exercise book I had ... that my smile not only felt good but improved my looks and asking myself, "Why did adults not always smile as a natural way to express and ripple happiness." I vowed at that moment to carry a genuine and natural smile all my life. It has served me well in good times and bad, making it easier to rise above my own doubts and conflicts.

My challenge, as I grew up, was learning how to deal with negativity and conflict in relationships; how to stand up for my truth without losing my desire for happiness. As I matured, my passion for harmony

seeded my purpose to help others find their smile and keep it even when *bad stuff* turned up in their life.

My loving family upbringing gave me the roots to grow my tree of values ... love, respect, empathy, trust, abundance and collaboration. Being reasonably intelligent, I was accepted by Exeter University where, as a *freshier*, I kindled my first intimate relationship. After six years I married him, and we spent 30 years together. During our marriage I gave birth to two amazing children, a son and a daughter. They are both adults now, and my daughter has honoured me two grandchildren.

In my mid-forties, I became disheartened by my husband's increasing need to drink, creating a conspicuous VOID within me. As a result, I eventually made the decision to end our marriage. I was challenged by the divorce – *remember, we have Catholic leanings* - as family life was and remains so important to me. The deep love we once knew had faded away over time and was no longer present. I felt drained of my smile.

On my own once more, I learned to live the life of a single entrepreneur for 16 years ... until I met my soulmate. It happened late in my life; I was 62 and had developed a *workaholic* lifestyle. Even so, I was

absolutely certain that I would meet him. Seeking that deep love connection was my biggest challenge ... and my greatest dream.

The Reluctant Rebel inside me gave me an inner sense of purpose and the determination to keep on smiling and moving forward. Those relatively solitary years instilled in me the spirit of adventure. Some of the decisions I made during that part of my journey were not always approved by those closest to me, which is not unusual from what I have heard from some who have been in a similar position.

My decision to go to a conference in Budapest, however, was what brought me to meet my soulmate Jim. In meeting him - an educator, an American professor of Entreprenology, someone with a passion for music and the heart and soul of a musician - I made the decision to go with my heart. I captured his love with my smiles and serendipitous meeting made me smile again ... a lot! I moved with him far away from my British homeland to the Asia Pacific, and now to America. Maybe my early desire to sail away had become a reality?

My smile has been enhanced and challenged by my adventures and experiences. I have met new people, new cultures, new ways of being.

I feel destined to be an adventurer on the high seas of life, no regrets, no backwards tracks, only forward on my mission to help people find and help themselves through smiling at whatever life brings one's way.

Over my life I have created numerous business enterprises. I became an Image consultant in the 90s, developing corporate business programs that combined image, style, professional etiquette and success mindset. I founded Corporate Heart in 1999 to offer culture change programs, gender dynamics experiences, communication, engagements and healthy, high-performance workshops.

WHY ARE YOU ... as in why do you do what you do? Why does it excite you? Why is it calling or purpose in life?

A Sociology and Statistics college graduate, I used my passion for geometric study to design tools based on *Mapping the MIND-field of Behavior*, to make relationships easier to understand. My goal is to enable people to live, love and work together in harmony.

In 2003, 2004 and 2005 I conducted corporate wellness research in UK business and worked with a number of major PLCs in the UK

during the period. Corporate Heart spoke to the need to unlock people's potential to succeed in business and in life. The two, from my perspective, are inexorably interlocked if anyone truly desires success in a meaningful, fulfilled manner.

I am, at core, a connector, a chatterbox, a lover of life with an abundant love of people. I have always loved the magic of conversation and been a designer of things that are versatile, practical, helpful and fun. I am excited when meeting people and I meet various situations head-on with a smile and an inquisitive, loving embrace with all of the tools and techniques to help!

I love to help people determine what makes them tick ... and to help them solve the conflicts in their life when it comes to relationships breaking down. I love to help them value what makes them come alive and how to tune into the best collaboration style. Helping them rediscover their natural gifts, their dreams and desires, has always made me smile. I am known as *Miss Magical Conversations* because of my ability to put people at ease, and to encourage them to share their passions and dreams. My calling is to connect people. I start with connecting them to their true nature and then help them engage with

others, finally moving them toward the enjoyment of experiencing a blissful and meaningful life. At work or at home, boardroom or bedroom these are the things that matter.

My Big Dream ... Foster #worldharmony in a Realm Drowning in Conflict. I have professionally studied people for 30 years. I have helped individuals feel more confident about who they are and why their lives have taken some of the turns that they might have regretted. I always educate using the information and the tools that I have discovered, learned and authenticated. I have experienced first-hand a wide variety of programs I have participated in just to know myself better. As I interacted with and observed an increasing number of different business environments, seeing how women repositioned themselves in the workplace, I wondered how men and women could truly engage without ego or malice. I pondered the hard-hitting questions as I wondered if men and women could learn to truly understand one another ... if they really had what it would take to develop a cheerful, inclusive, collaborative relational environment given some of the situations they faced?

Entire economies are currently being dramatically influenced by the impact and sheer presence of numbers of women in the workplace, not

to mention other diversity factors. Still, top management appears to be trying to decelerate the movement to achieving balance with regard to the number of women in top C-suite roles. Is it really that difficult to find qualified women for positions that are continually opening-up in boardrooms of the world?

HOW YOU ARE ... as in how you create abundance, solve problems, and inspire smiles. Your proof that *you* are effective.

My continuing research eventually led me to the realization that there were a range of very subtle visual differences between men and women. They were slight, almost imperceptible differences in physicality – one's bones and basic body structure – but they were there. I began to see natural gender dynamics behaviour patterns emerging that I could link to physicality. Based upon what I was observing and substantiating, I designed and developed a *Gender Dynamics*® map that explained to me why I was a little unorthodox when it comes to females, while it helped me add a few new nuances to the male-female equality debate.

The Reluctant Rebel in me wanted to know why I was different to my sisters. How could I have so much masculine energy and yet retain my

female essence? Through my work I learned that this map worked to show me not only who I was, but how I was affected relative to others. The learning process helped me develop the skill – and over time, the expertise - of understanding and directing different conversation styles taking place in the same room. It also worked to help me gain a practical understanding of various relationships and how that understanding could help my clients behave with greater confidence in both professional and personal matters.

One of my greatest *ah-ha* moments occurred in 2008 as I initiated the use of my map between other women and men. Eventually, I was able to illustrate to my clients how differences worked to create the magic of collaboration ... a process that can only be successful through an environment of open, honest and authentic relational cooperation! I now use this map to guide my clients through what I have labelled the *MIND-field* of relationships.

As I continued to develop and refine my map, I learned that my intrinsic tomboy nature was not only normal for me, but that it could be adapted to deal with all situations ... familial, social, professional and intimate. It explained why I am who I am.

My calling in life is to share this map with everyone from the boardroom to the classroom to the bedroom and beyond. We can all connect, communicate and collaborate with far greater ease. Magical Conversations emerge when we know who's around the table. The primary goal is to eliminate inappropriate behaviour - e.g. sexual harassment - and maximize creative cohesion and productivity, the success that men and women working side by side can deliver.

My clients say that I make their lives easier and better because they learn not only who they are but how to connect effectively and appropriately with others. Differences can create difficulties and foster resistance to building a loving relationship. I work to solve my client's difficulties by helping them understand and value a new perspective on behaviour and communication and how they might be perceived by other. It is quite simple and magical when we see the differences mapped out. It works for men and women alike. It enables people to do what is most important - happy, productive and loving relationships. A client recently said, "Pauline is a thought-leader who gives us simple, powerful concepts to greatly expand our communication skills." On another occasion I worked with a senior male client who voiced concerns about his relationship with his grown-up daughter.

He was unsure as to why or how to fix it. Exploring his gender dynamics, he realized he was invading her territory. By adapting his language from "tell" to "ask and share", their relationship improved 100%. When people resolve conflict in relationships, whether professional, social or intimate, their happiness soars and creative energy returns.

Principles of abundance are key to my work and I know that it is possible to resolve the challenges generated in today's fast paced world where inappropriate behaviour, fears and doubts are hindering men and women growing together for the benefit of all. My objective is to eliminate these fears from our lives and free men and women to live in a healthy loving environment be it familial, social, professional or intimate.

I offer consulting and coaching online and/or one-on-one for individuals, teams, groups, associations, schools, parents, children and companies. I work at C-Suite, Middle Management, Staff and Supervisory levels. I am currently training a global oriented team of Certified Ambassadors of Magical Conversations, experts on the use of the Gender Dynamics® Map and associated behavioural tools. These Ambassadors will be hosts to lead Magical Conversation Round Tables

and Circles to discuss key issues. The formula for these is based on the principles of engagement ... no judgment, no anger and no urgency to act before everyone is ready to commit to their part in the outcome.

My vision is for #worldharmony through #magicalconversations transforming conflict into collaboration. This will happen as we each embed the Gender Dynamics® Map as the hard drive navigation tool for our awareness about each other. As men and women become conscious of the routes, locations and connections in every relationship and conversation, then we will cease to need the map, or the GPS that guides us when the route is unknown.

ABOUT DR. PAULINE CRAWFORD-OMPS

Dr Pauline Crawford-Omps is passionate about people and their potential to collaborate and create magical outcomes when working together. Moving beyond the confusion of the current era of #metoo, she solves the many difficult and sensitive issues that damage performance levels and the ability to lead a healthy life. She is an International Speaker, Changemaker, Gender Dynamics Expert, Certified Image Consultant, Author and Educator.

Having worked across three continents - UK and Europe, Asia Pacific and USA - Pauline is a well-known inspiring facilitator who engages her audiences in a mindset shift regarding communication between men and women. With a focus on personal and professional transformation for individuals, teams, leaders and communities, her vision is to bring harmony and balance to the boardrooms of the world so that leaders - male and female alike - have access to the best talent available in a collaborative fusion of natural masculine and feminine attributes.

Pauline earned her undergraduate degree in Sociology and Statistics, as well as a Master's and PhD in Entreprenology. Her doctoral research was in Wellness Cultures of the UK. She is Past President of the Federation of Image Consultants UK 1992-94 (now known as FIPI), CEO and Founder of Corporate Heart Ltd. She is also President of World Association of Visioneers & Entreprenologists (WAVE) and a Directors of the International University of Entreprenology (IUE).

Books that changed your life:

The Art of Happiness by Dalai Lama, The Sacred Gifts by Dr Anita Sanchez, The Game of Life by Florence Scovel Shinn, The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse by Charlie Mackery

Movies that inspire you

West Side Story, The Notebook, Mama Mia, Dirty Dancing, All the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers Dance Movies!!

Musicians and Songs that inspires you

Musicians Beatles Elton John and Eagles ...and Jimmie James!!, Imagine by John Lennon, Your Song by Elton John, Just the Way you are Billy Joel, Smiles by Jimmie James

Your Heros

The Dalai Lama, Leonardo da Vinci,
Sir Richard Branson, Dame Judy Dench, Nelson
Mandela, Eleanor Roosevelt , My Mum - Muriel
Agius, My Dad - Edward Agius

Quotes you live by

"The Future belongs to those who believe in the
beauty of their Dreams" Eleanor Roosevelt

"Happiness is not something ready made, it
comes from your own actions" Dalai Lama

"I t's not about how much you do, but about how
much love you put into what you do that counts"
Mother Teresa

"Creativity is logic in hindsight" Edward de Bono



Karen Creecy

“If you see someone without a smile give them one of yours.”

RESTORING SMILES

BY KAREN CREECY

I I worked for a company that offered free hotel stays for life after 25 years of employment. I planned to do that & retire, but ended up losing my job after 24 years. That changed everything from what I thought life was going to be and turned it upside down. But it allowed me to make different choices, because of some of the things that happened, having good credit, working in network marketing supplementing my income, planning to retire early and not having any debt. I had become debt free after being over \$16,000 in credit card debt and was able to pay that off before I had lost my job. That allowed me to proceed a little bit differently. My parents passed away and had paid off the house. I had moved to Florida from New York, and was not weighed down with a mortgage and all those things over my head with a lot of the debt that most people could possibly have, in a situation when they lose their job and things are in a panic. It allowed me to just slow down and at the time not go back to corporate America. So I just did more with

entrepreneurship. I had a lot of entrepreneurs in my family; my uncles, aunts, some of my cousins had their own businesses. I'm from Jamaica, West Indies. We learned about hard work & discipline to have different choices in life. When my father passed away, I felt he had been trying for so many years to do something with entrepreneurship but may not have had the support and wasn't able to achieve some things he really wanted that were dear to his heart. I wanted to pick up the baton and decided that I would always follow my passion and fulfill my dreams.

I got into business & was passionate about healthcare for several reasons. First, my mom was a nurse and for many years, I said I wanted to be one also. I was a Candy Striper as a teenager but when I saw blood, I went the other way! I couldn't even take out my son's tooth... it made my stomach turn. Although in my mind I thought I wanted to be a nurse, I found that being in that environment wasn't for me. I tend to take a lot of notes; many say I'm detail oriented. I pay attention to some things others may overlook as they prefer to look at the big picture, while people like me dot the i's, cross the t's and make sure that the big picture happens. I was found to be more of a behind the scenes person to make sure that things are working. I have the ability to see the entire picture and strategize the path it needs to take to move from idea to reality.

I became involved with a network marketing company that was also in healthcare. So although I didn't go into the nursing field, it allowed me to do something in the area of health. Healthcare is the number one reason for bankruptcy, and even when people have insurance, they may still get caught up & need to file for bankruptcy or ask for help on GoFundMe.

Both of my parents died from cancer and my sister is a breast cancer survivor. When she found out, she did a family medical history tree and found about 8 of my father's siblings who we located had a form of cancer. On my mother's side there was diabetes, heart problems, she had lupus and I have been diagnosed with that as well. So taking care of our health is something very important, although many times we neglect it until a doctor tells us we need to. When starting to get serious about my health, I worked with a Holistic Health Coach and she requested that I create a wheel of life -- a circle of life looking at where you are in each area of your health, your spirituality, your finances, your business and career, your relationships, your recreation. All of these things made me look at where I was spending my energy. Since I didn't have a job at the time, all of my energy was going into building a business and trying to take care of finances. I grew up across the

street from a church, was in church on a regular basis and am part of a nightly prayer line we have every night at 9:30 pm EST, 365 days a year. So although the spiritual part is very important, I really wasn't taking care of my relationships, my health, and not much recreation. I just worked...totally out of balance.

It had me look at how important it is to have fun. When you are having fun, I think of smiling. Smiling is important, but not everybody wants people to see them smile. Some may hide their smile because they are embarrassed about their teeth. Having a dental exam can uncover health conditions such as cancer, diabetes and more but also restoring someone's smile can be life changing. When you're able help people to get the work that they need done, it not only changes their state of health, it restores their self-confidence & self-esteem. It does something for them inside & out and gives you personal satisfaction that you have done something to uplift them & improve their life.

I love the concept of the Keep Smiling Movement. I joined it with the opportunity to smile brighter, restoring smiles, assist others to save money on their dental & health benefits & address needed dental work to improve their smile for those that may be one of 74 million

uninsured & underinsured without dental benefits. It also offers an opportunity to supplement your income. Sharing info with others will allow you additional reasons to smile when you are making more money! Without our health, there is no wealth!

I didn't have bad teeth but I did have a tooth out of place with whose appearance I was not pleased & it altered the way I smiled. I decided to get braces as an adult so when my son got braces, I got braces as well. I was shocked that after I got my braces off, I needed \$4,000 more work done on my teeth and my dental insurance had a limit of \$1,000 per year. After three years in braces I didn't want to wait four more years to finish my dental work & have the beautiful smile I was dreaming of. Because of the plan that I offer, I was able to have all my work in one month at a reduced rate rather than four years with insurance. I realized there are things we can help people with or without insurance through the program I offer for uninsured or underinsured individuals, groups or companies.

It helps to consider additional sources of income as you never know when issues of life may hinder your ability to earn, plus the tax deductions are great as well. My son had a near fatal car accident and at the time I was a person that never took vacation, never took time off, I

would always try to extend an extra day onto holiday, again, because I didn't know how to have fun & was busy concerned about finances. I was always busy trying to work as much as possible. He had blood on his brain, had lacerated his liver & spleen, glass under his eye and more injuries. He couldn't go back to school for several months and I was able to be home with him to focus on his care and attention, thankful for starting a business to earn more income. I worked with someone in the business whose husband was dying and rather than having to go to work every day, she was able to stay by his side every day and to be with him until his last breath, rather than having to focus on the money & be concerned that she'd get fired if she didn't go to work. If & when these types of things happen and being able to make that choice, you realize life is not all about trying to make money and get paid. It's more about having those heartfelt connections and being there with the people that you love and see them smile one more time.

A while ago, I had a business partner who was paralyzed from the neck down. Although others had to assist him to eat, bathe & more, he was able to work the business from his room, which gave him confidence & pride that he earned some money & did something for himself. Restored smiles!

One person that I wish I would have been able to find sooner was a gentleman from Africa with 4th stage cancer who was not a citizen here, which is not required with the benefit plan I offer. He had been coming back and forth from the US for several years and by the time someone introduced me to him, he had not been able to get help with the medical assistance he needed. I was able to get him assistance through the hospital advocacy program to have the chemotherapy that he needed. And on the very day that he was to have his first treatment I received a phone call, expecting a praise report that he was happy to finally be able to get help after so many years, but the call was to tell me that he passed away that morning. It probably made me even more determined to find others who may not be able to get the necessary help in a timely manner. It could be something as simple as not having a teeth cleaning to eliminate the bacteria in your mouth that can poison your bloodstream and kill you. In the end I knew I was able to do something to make him happy for a little while. It warmed my heart to provide the assistance he needed for so long and to know I was able to provide hope to him when he thought there was none.

There are people who have the opportunity to help someone but they are shy or embarrassed to talk to people, they may have been rejected

in the past or they're not passionate about their business to talk to prospects. But there truly are people who need our help. Restoring smiles. If you give a smile, you'll usually get a smile. Just touch someone's life with a smile or with benefits that they didn't know they had access to. You could save somebody's life, even yours. We all can truly make a difference to someone, anyone every day. It's giving people more opportunities to smile (& be happy with the one they have) and the chance to live and have a healthier life, to feel loved, accepted and to feel good about themselves.

Ten years ago, I was working with a gentleman, and even after he died, his family still receives a check he earned while living. I look back at that. The Bible says a good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children. These days some people have to take a collection to bury them. Others may be unable to pay their bills, may have lost their jobs and with more automation, people need to have more options to survive.

I look forward to helping others to do this, engaging people who are on that path, because so many people hate their jobs, are doing something that they don't like, but they have bills to pay and want to keep a

roof over their head. But they're not fulfilled or happy. I want to more engage people with what makes them happy & what's in their heart, to not chase the money but find others going the same way. When they have those conversations that makes their heart sing instead of just passing the time making small talk, our brain shoots off those endorphins, we are happier and smiling more. I'm still building the dream in my heart & know it will be fulfilled. In the meantime I'll look to restore smiles for the ones who need dental work or have access to benefits, connect with the ones who want to build & leave a legacy for generations to come and the ones looking for others to be a blessing to & for.

Karen Creecy

www.KCconnectsWellness.com

<https://www.facebook.com/kcconnectswellness/>



Alyscia Cunningham

"During a touch period, my husband and I wouldn't go to bed at night without watching comedy. It was then that I realized the significance of a smile and laughter. It was pivotal in transcending life's difficulties."

LIFE'S A JOURNEY: NEVER ALLOW ANYONE TO ROB YOU OF YOUR SMILE

BY ALYSCIA CUNNINGHAM

I was born in Seattle Washington on March 17, 1979, but my earliest and fondest memories were of my home in Corona, Queens NY. It's where my family and I resided until 1992. We lived in a multi-family household, with my grandparents, uncles, aunt and her daughter residing in the upstairs unit. Myself, my two brothers and my parents residing in the downstairs unit and my uncle, his wife and their daughter in the back house. There were fourteen of us in total and I loved having my family close by. My grandmother and aunts would take turns washing and braiding my hair since my mom was unable to do it for me. She suffered a stroke at the age of 25 and it left her with paralysis on her left side. Without much assistance, my mom cleaned,

drove, worked full-time and cooked delicious Trinidadian dishes but there was no way she could do my hair with only one hand. Although it never bothered me, she always reminded me how much it hurt her. Especially given that I couldn't stand my grandmother doing my hair. She was insensitive to my pain. Abruptly combing out the kinks and knots, and it didn't help that I was tender headed.

In the 80's, it was rare to see someone who suffered a stroke and survived. Even more so, being left with paralysis on either side of their body. The stares from everyone as I walked with my mother confirmed it was an unusual site. She worked as a Court Clerk in Manhattan Family Court. The first time I visited her job was for "Take Your Child to Work Day". Not only did people stare, to the point that they would break their neck as they walked past by, but they would also cause her to trip or fall when rushing by with a harsh brush of the shoulders (New Yorkers are fast walkers especially in Manhattan). I would often catch her fall or help her stand after falling on the ground.

It didn't take long for me to become very agitated with the rude stares and gestures from strangers as they passed by. I was about 7-years old, and obviously at my boiling point, when I gave a death stare to

another pedestrian and yelled out "What you lookin at?". I caught him by surprise and my mother as well. Appearing to feel embarrassed, he immediately kept his head straight, but my mom wasn't happy about my response. That day I believe I quickly realized I could possibly stop the stares if I gave everyone a mean look and would blurt out my "What you lookin at?" response when needed.

I can't recall exactly when we had the conversation, but my mom told me to stop acting like a "bad John" (Trinidadian phrase to refer to someone who is unruly or a troublemaker). She said I couldn't fight everyone, and my response won't prevent anyone from looking. In my child mind, I was protecting her. I knew she looked a little different, but I couldn't understand how grown adults would not only eye her down but also go to the extent of pointing and laughing. As much as it troubled me, it never seemed to bother my mom. She always smiled and helped others along her path no matter how challenging life may have been. And she told me I **shouldn't allow people to rob me of my happiness** and that I should smile instead of looking so mean. That stays with me to this day.

Because I knew how it felt to be on the other end, even if I wasn't the person everyone was looking at, I never wanted to make someone else

feel the way I felt. Instead I would look away as if I didn't notice their difference (especially if everyone else was staring) or I would look directly into their eyes and say a simple, hi how are you.

Your Calling or Purpose Driven Life.

I wouldn't be honest if I said the stares still don't get under my skin to this day. Especially after the experience of giving birth to a baby girl who developed severe eczema just a few weeks after being born. Most of her skin was like an open scab, dry and bleeding to the touch. It was throughout her scalp as well which caused her hair to grow in patches. The circumstance actually brought me back to feeling as I did when I was a little girl walking with my mother. As much as I tried not to let people steal my happiness, I couldn't help but to return the stare with a straight face, as if I were saying "What you lookin at?"

On top of trying every natural remedy possible to heal my daughter's skin, while facing a great deal of discomfort recovering from a c-section and post-partum depression, I discovered a small bald spot on the left side of my scalp. In fact, one of my dread locks fell out. I was

beyond stressed and soon learned that my hair loss was considered to be alopecia (the partial or complete absence of hair from areas of the body where it normally grows). I didn't think much of it (neither did I pronounce it correctly) and kept on with my life, not realizing that I would come face-to-face with alopecia a year later.

After finally finding a remedy that seemed to work for my daughter, I decided to cut my hair. I just wanted to release myself from the weight. The negative responses from those who heard about my decision to cut my hair was appalling. They seemed to be more attached to my hair and the way I may look without it, than I was. It was my hair! Why was everyone else concerned but me?

In response to a rude comment about **why I SHOULDN'T cut it**, I replied, "Would you tell your daughter she is no longer beautiful if she lost her hair involuntarily?" My comeback was completely unexpected, and it left the person speechless. In that moment, I thought how cool it would be if I created a photography project that proved that bald women are also beautiful. And in an instant, I Am More Than My Hair was born.

I interviewed women and girls from many walks of life who've experienced hair loss and captured their stories and portraits. It grew from a thought to a photography book and now a documentary film. Aside from breaking the mold of a beauty standard, one of the themes is how the participants want to be treated when seen. According to everyone I interviewed, it was evident that they all face being stared at while out in public and the preference would be quite the opposite.

Side note: Just don't stare. Better yet, ask if you really want to know.

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Through my journey, working on *I Am More Than My Hair*, I realized that my passion for it stemmed from my experience as a child, which resurfaced after giving birth to my second baby girl. My goal was to show that although hair is beautiful, it doesn't take away from the beauty of a woman or girl without it. The participants trusted me to share their stories and it is my hope to inspire society to think differently instead of scrutinizing others as if they are different. The positive shift my work and the females involved has created, is proof of the effectiveness. Bringing the smiles on the faces of those who participated is

confirmation that I've produced not only a valuable product, but also created abundance for those involved. For me, that's more important than anything I could have ever envisioned.

ABOUT ALYSCIA CUNNINGHAM

Alyscia Cunningham is an entrepreneur, author, filmmaker and photographer. After the success of her first book, *Feminine Transitions*, a photography book encompassed with portraits of raw feminine beauty, Cunningham published her second photography book and upcoming documentary film, *I Am More Than My Hair*. The book features 138 portraits of 46 females and the stories of their experience with hair loss as well as females who cut their hair in solidarity of a loved one. The film includes interviews and dives into the connection of their emotions in relation to the media's portrayal of beauty standards. Alyscia creates these, and future projects, with the consideration of art for social-change. Alyscia leads the Washington DC Metro Chapter of Moms-In-Film, the VP of the MD Chapter of American Mothers Inc., and also one of the FrontLine Voices for Stop the Beauty Madness, a campaign focused on changing the dynamics of beauty globally. Her work has been featured on Fox5 News, The Huffington Post, Cosmopolitan and The Washington Post. To learn more about Alyscia and her work, visit Alyscia.com.



Heide Dangelo founder, publisher, author, professional speaker,
TV host, actress, serial entrepreneur.

“Smile you are awesome!”

SMILE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

BY HEIDE DANGELO

I was born deaf as the result of rubella in 1964. I was an unwanted child in the eyes of my parents and sister growing up. They claimed I was mentally ill and deserved to be beaten. I was not allowed to make friends or to have one, I was often purposely starved of food, and left outdoors without food or water for days. I knew the way my family treated me was wrong, and that no child or person should be treated that way.

I've been hit, mocked, spat on, stoned, hair pulled, kicked, punched, pushed, slapped, coerced, manipulated, beaten, stabbed, sneered at, picked on, stolen from, blamed, berated, accused, cheated on, lied to and about, criticized, belittled, called a liar, called insane, oppressed, devalued, discredited, gossiped about, conned, misrepresented,

disrespected, abused, starved, doubted, disbelieved, and more. All these behaviors that happened to me are the same ones that happened to Jesus.

Growing up for me was like being “Cinderella” and “The Ugly Duckling” combined. I was not everyone’s dream girl, but despite it all, I prevailed. My abusers from school and home claimed I was from another world because I couldn’t function in the hearing world. I was from “EYErth” (pronounced as earth. - “Our eyes are our ears”), despite my hearing loss, I was able to read lips and body language’ I was able to interpret facial expressions. I relied mainly on my intuition and was able to absorb anything visual. I didn’t know how to behave properly, how to make friends, or even use the right words in casual conversation. I missed out on a lot of learning and socializing that most children get.

At home and school, I was the victim of abuse, bullied by classmates, sister, acquaintances, and family members just because they perceived me as “different. While children my age were learning to how to talk, read, write, and play, I was not allowed to. I wanted to learn, I taught myself how to read and write till until one day my speech teacher Mrs. Jean Vemich asked me to read a book while waiting and I told her I

couldn’t, then she taught me during my speech lessons when I was in the third grade. I became a better reader, speaker, and writer over time with practice and perseverance. I never attended a school for the deaf, sometimes I wished that I had. I wanted acceptance by the hearing world.

When someone have a disability doesn’t mean a person is “dis-abled” or “not abled.” It just means that person has to face more challenges than “normal” person might. I have faced every one of those challenges myself, and each challenge made me a stronger woman. I am not unworthy or substandard, I am not broken, I am worthy. The hearing world can be hostile toward people who don’t hear or speak well. The concept of normalcy was created by the able-bodied masses, who all seem to agree how we should act. Many people don’t understand what it’s like living with a disability, but if they did, I think they would be humbler. I believed they would be more compassionate.

Throughout my youth, being physically mentally, verbally, emotionally abused, I clung tenaciously to my desire to live a normal life and longed for a hero to come to rescue me to be free me from abusive people in my life. I became my own hero with God by my side. My

hero in human form was my teacher, Mrs. Jean Vemich. She taught me how to hear, speak, read, do my homework, and the realities of life. She provided me much of my education growing up. When so many other people around me either abused me or gave up on me, she stood out. I would not have been able to live a successful life if wasn't for her. I grew thirsty for more, and I came to love learning. My confidence grew, and I learned about life and healthy relationships.

Regardless of the abuse I endured, a rough beginning, I pressed on. Despite a rough beginning, I still emerged as a finely faceted diamond, a determined woman of genuine confidence, capable of taking on any test life throws my way. When hit by challenges, I've depended on God to give me courage, strength to win over adversity. That is where the gift of adversity comes in.

Deep within, I hungered to be treated as an equal. I looked for opportunities where people would appreciate what I could accomplish. I decided to become an entrepreneur after many years my mom, sister, and step mom had sabotaged me by preventing me from getting jobs or maintaining one. (I had them as reference, and they had stalked me as well). And many coworkers and employers took advantage of my

worth and value. Till I started cleaning houses, the referral grew, then started the business and it grew into a million-dollar business.

Having God as my business owner has taught me all the ropes to become a successful business owner. Through God, I have learned to associate with positive, open-minded people and discovered that I could fit in. I realized that I was free and there were plenty of kind, loving people in the world.

It fueled my fire to teach people about our life-purpose and how to navigate through tough times. As a girl who faced so much abuse and neglect, now when I am faced with obstacles, I believe I can come through almost anything. That's the gift of adversity.

There is a story about a gardener observing a caterpillar. The gardener saw the caterpillar transitioning into a butterfly, it was struggling to break free of its cocoon. The gardener did not like to see the butterfly struggling a long time just to emerge its way out of the chrysalis. He wanted to help it by cutting open the cocoon to allow the butterfly to be free, however, the butterfly fell to the ground and died. The gardener did not know the struggle in the cocoon is the process of

transformation to help the butterfly to grow strong and fly away. We too, go through the same process, learning more as we go through our struggles for our growth, development, and experience. That is where our gifts come in to transform us into a beautiful butterfly.

Similarly, in our lives, we go through the same profound changes as the caterpillar, all the pain and suffering to liberation, going through struggle to allow us to grow into our best self is not an easy process, it is a matter of choice. Do you want to soar above your adversity to receive your gifts to appreciate who you are and what you want to become? When the caterpillar was inside the cocoon struggling for an extended amount of time, it does not change into something that it is not meant to be. It experiences the changes as it goes through the process of life; it knew that it was not meant to be designed to stay in the current situation.

Like the famous saying “out with the old, in with the new”, through the secret gift of adversity your life can become whatever you want. We can choose to stay in the old version or learn through our process of adversity to emerge into the better self by tapping into the positive gifts and shared values that our struggle provided.

When you hear a story about someone who has gone through adversity that are similar to your own, you can relate to their growth and their discovery of their self-worth through the pain they endured. We are created with the endless power of transformations; we can help everyone see their own potential, as God sees a beautiful butterfly in us all. Be creative and get out of your box.

See only solutions. Do whatever it takes to get past adversity. It can be painful at first, but you'll experience an amazing outcome. You'll never realize how far you can get unless you try. You can take your adversity as an opportunity to learn from the situation. God never gives us more than we can handle. Everybody is unique and can handle certain trials and tribulations.

Never compare your life with others, there may be people who have it “easier” but no one but God truly knows what is going on in their lives. This is the time to be kind and loving to each other. Everybody will transform into a butterfly in their own time, do not push people to transform in your time.

Despite being legally deaf, it does not doesn't stop me from sharing the same stages with America's top new thought leaders, millionaires, and business titans. I share my experience, wisdom, and success formulas

with entrepreneur from all walks of life, in order to help them transform their businesses I believe no one should be left out from living a successful life. No one should feel as alone as I felt.

I was told I wasn't good enough to compete in sports and beauty pageants, yet I went on winning Miss Deaf Arizona 1984, Miss Talent 1984, and Best Dancer three years in a row. I also won medals in gymnastics, weight training, aerobics, bodybuilding, track and field, cross country, and was a 1984 Olympian, and have been an aerobics instructor for many years.

Today I have become a founder, magazine publisher, serial entrepreneur, author, professional speaker, actress, TV Host, influential educator, consultant, and business thought leaders to know. Been named #1 Human Communicator Guru in the world. I have learned that life is full of learning experiences. When some people experience obstacles or catastrophes, they give up, believing all is lost. Call on your unique gift of winning in the face of adversity and begin your own personal transformation, growing to your full potential. Do NOT listen to anyone tell you "No, you can't", just turn around, smile, and say "I can, watch me!"



Why am I a magazine publisher? Deep within, I hungered to be treated as an equal. I looked for opportunities where people would appreciate what I could accomplish. After many people took advantage of my worth and value, I longed to help others in what they need. During my journey, I had worked for several magazine companies where many loved my work and encouraged me to start my own.

I saw an opportunity where I can be the light in the world, where the media market was lacking in; a place where I can help, serve, create, spread and share stories and positivity around the world through my three different magazine companies: Influential People Magazine, International Fitness Fashion Magazine, and Influential Doctors Magazine. Since there are so much negativity going around and many different types of heroes are being unheard. It fueled my fire that I wanted to give more exposure to those who are making an impact on people lives around the world while spreading positivity and the unheard. There are many invisible heroes waiting to be discovered.



I look at life as full of the learning experience. I will not listen to anyone who says, “you can’t”, I would look at their face and smile and say, “I can and watch me!”. There is a light waiting for you to be discovered. We cannot depend on others to make you happy, only YOU can make yourself happy by doing the things you enjoy doing. 1. Decide on what you like/love and enjoy doing, look within, are you happy? 2. Go For it. Do what makes you happy, and do NOT let anyone discourage you. 3.. Get Clarity. Find why you are happy and enjoy doing. 4. Clear any blocks. Your past does not define who you are, do NOT listen to “can’t” Clear anything that will block you from achieving what you like/enjoy doing. 5. Be Resistant to negativity. 6. Focus on what you can do. Focus only on solutions, not on the problem. 7. Manifest – Make it real and enjoy how good it feels within you. 8. Stay in the Positivity Realm. There will be stumbling blocks along the way, do not lose faith in what you enjoy doing.

Stay consistent, stand firm in genuine confidence, capable of taking on any test life throws in the way. 9. Depend. When challenges happen depend on God/divine one/within to give you the courage, strength to win. This is proof of my success. Smile, be the light.

ABOUT HEIDE DANGELO

Heide Dangelo is a bestselling, author, actress, serial entrepreneur, professional speaker, and most influential educator, consultant, and business thought leaders to know. Has been named #1 Human Communicator Guru in the world.

An authentic can-do person, Heide unselfishly helps small business owners to build their brand and achieve success in diverse industries with her experiences. This has made her a highly influential, sought-after mentor. She is the Founder and Publisher of Influential People Magazine (named one of the top international magazines), International Fitness Fashion Magazines, Influential Doctors Magazine, and the Human Communication Institute.

Heide helps people out of an abundance of kindness. Even though she is legally deaf, she can speak and hear well with her Cochlear Implant while hosting Influential People, Undercover Investors, and Health Nutrition TV shows. She also founded her own nonprofit organization Angels Helping Seniors to help seniors live in a healthy, clean home at no cost to them.

Books that changed your life:

Zero Limit,
Celestine Prophecy,
Four Agreement,
Statements of Power,
Rich Dad Poor Dad

Movie that inspire you

Heaven Can Wait

Song that inspires you

Faithfully – The Journey, Everything-Toby Mac

Your Hero

Mrs. Jean Vemich

Quote you live by

“Life is full of learning experience.”



Carmen Davailus, Speaker, Author, Founder of Doggies for Dementia Foundation, Advanced Practice Nurse and Photographer

Smiles from the heart show on our lips. Smiles from our souls shine in our eyes and have the power to change the world.

KEEP AUSTIN SMILING

BY CARMEN DAVAILUS

It's easy to think about my life story and the linear birth to now timeline. This then that, then this and then that. However the important events are so much more than a bullet point on a timeline. Labels such as mother, grandmother, daughter, and so on don't say much. Let's talk about the interesting stuff.

It Took Me Six Decades to Learn

"The story I tell myself is..." I could've avoided so much angst if I heard this earlier in my life. Every story I heard or told would've weighed so much less. There's no right or wrong, it is simply a story. I wasted energy defending my story, when it was simply the story I told myself.

The Story I Tell Myself About Family

I am the middle child and only daughter in a family of five. My father was from Tennessee, and my mother is from Puerto Rico. She was just 18 when they married, with a new marriage in snowy Michigan, a 2 year old, and pregnant with me while being away from family in the tropics must've been rough.

My father was ten years older than my mother, and always had yearnings of doing his creative work even while he was in the Air Force. I lovingly give him credit for my overachiever genes. My parents came from small families, and we lived states and oceans away. There were no grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins nearby, and I rarely saw the few we had. My parents kept busy, and I often felt a little lost. It never felt right to say anything, and the story I tell myself is I learned to be self sufficient while we were all finding our way.

You're Making That Up

We lived in Puerto Rico for about a year when I was thirteen. My father was newly retired from the Air Force and my parents packed up their

businesses for our exciting journey. Once there I could feel the tension, but had little idea of what was happening. I made a conscious effort to be small.

I rarely spent a day or night away from my family. My only friend, the daughter of missionaries invited me to the beach with her family. My parents reluctantly let me go so long as I promised to stay in shallow water, and my brother let me borrow his snorkel and mask. A beach day with friends was a huge deal. They chose a beach I knew well, but they did not. I loved it because the bay was very shallow, and I could easily stay in waist deep water. There was a very strong current further out in the bay though, and it was easy to get pulled out to the rough waves of the open ocean.

As I ventured out with my friend and her father, I saw we were getting too far out. I tried to pull them to safety, but it didn't take long for all of us to get too far out. He was able to save his daughter. I got sucked under and strong waves smacked me when I came up for a breath. My brother's mask and snorkel were slapped off and I was coughing and gasping. I searched for the bright sun in order to know up from down. My lungs were on fire as I struggled. As I drifted deep under the surface,

I felt a sense of calm and stopped struggling. Suddenly, I was pulled up to the surface and onto a surfboard. I coughed and begged him to not tell anyone because I did not keep my promise to stay in shallow water. I didn't want to be the cause of more stress at home. I don't remember details other than crying by myself on the beach where my friends found me. I explained what happened, and pleaded with them to not tell my parents. I was 13 and didn't know the words to describe my worries. As I expected, my parents' fear and disappointment resulted in days of shunned silence. I was swallowed by shame, and don't remember thinking about how I almost drowned other than it would've been better for all of us if I had drowned. I needed to be held while I cried. This memory was made worse when I heard "You're just making that up."

The story I tell myself is that I wouldn't recognize it for years but almost dying, keeping secrets and doubting myself, left with me with a special and unique insight that serves me well.

Listen and Learn

Both my parents were entrepreneurs, and I helped as soon as I was old enough. I liked being a part of anything with my parents. I never heard

the word 'entrepreneur' but it was all I knew. I suppose this explains why a typical job stifles my creative spirit, even though I tried to fit into the 9 to 5 routine. My father was a self taught upholsterer who created beautiful furniture by draping and cutting fabrics. I'm certain my love of design came from him. My mother was a hairdresser and equally creative. She can see beyond the person standing in front of her, and I believe we share this trait. My parents ran their businesses in a large building on our property. They were ingenious, and I could easily help them both which filled my life with color and variety as I quietly learned about teamwork, business and love.

My father worked alongside his twangy country music and cigarettes while my mother's side of the building was filled with laughter, gossip and women. I couldn't appreciate this at 15, but they were exceptional artists successfully avoiding the land minds of business until one night when our lives changed dramatically. We never recovered. Fear, scarcity, blame, and hope and resiliency thundered overhead. The story I tell myself is life can change in a nanosecond and how we respond becomes the real story.

Words Can Break Hearts

The night before my father's heart attack, I begged my father to go on a school field trip to a museum a few hours away in Chicago. My parents were reluctant since it had only been a few years since my near drowning. I wanted to show I was trustworthy, and I naively gathered the courage to stand up for myself, which I had never done before. After a very long day on his feet, my father finally retired to his recliner. I took a deep breath, wiped my sweaty palms on my jeans and quietly pleaded. I saved the money and arranged for a ride and was ready. I wasn't very far into my rehearsed speech before he held up his hand and said, "I'm too tired to argue with you. Just go if it's that important to you." I felt a pang of guilt but mostly I was simply thrilled to go on the trip. I was a kid who never talked back or argued for myself or anyone. I finally drifted off to sleep but not for long.

My mother woke me before leaving for the hospital. Just a few hours earlier I courageously spoke up, and then felt so selfish for doing so because my father almost died from a heart attack. I blamed myself and wasn't the only one. It took decades to speak up again. Later in nursing school, I learned how stress may have been a trigger for his

heart attack, but the damage began a long time before that night. Sadly, the shame was already self-branded on my heart.

By the time my father came home from the hospital, I had a job in a local pizza place after school, and on the weekends I worked at our local nursing home. I would do anything to make up for what I had done. I got good grades, played in the band and tried to be perfectly quiet. My father was tired and fighting his own demons over not being able to take care of his family like he once had. We all quietly struggled.

My family rarely talk about past events, but I needed to hear how my father's heart attack wasn't my fault. One day about 20 years later I sat with father the night before he would have open heart surgery. I told him I didn't realize the stress he was under and how guilty I still felt. He laughed and said he never even thought to blame me. The story I tell myself is while words have the power to break and mend hearts, I get to choose my truth.

Art, Art and More Art

I was incredibly shy until later in my high school days. I journaled before journaling was cool, wrote poetry and song lyrics and day-dreamed about beautiful places. I learned to write about my feelings without ever daring to explain them. My English teacher strongly encouraged me to study writing and I thought she was crazy, but still tucked away her encouragement. The idealistic teenager in me envisioned a life filled with art and beauty like the pages I saw on the pages of Vogue magazine. I landed a music scholarship at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas which was perfect because we moved from Illinois to Las Vegas right before my high school graduation.

A few years later, my parents divorced, my mother moved to Puerto Rico and my father changed the locks on the house shortly after I moved out. It was a sad and lonely time, and yet I was super excited to be on my own. I needed a plan, though and I needed it quick in order to support myself and stay in school. I changed majors from music to nursing and managed to graduate as a registered nurse before I turned 21 while holding down a full time job. I promised myself if I could get

through school and support myself with one job, I would return to my art classes. I kept my pact but it took a while.

In order to be a registered nurse, I had to pass the dreaded state board exam. As responsible as I was, I somehow overslept, and showed up a few minutes late with wet hair. I was exhausted, missed my family, and very disheartened by the reality of healthcare. I eventually found my way and grew to love my work. Forty years and a few more university degrees later, I worked my last day as a nurse practitioner. I found my voice by helping other to tell their stories with photography and enjoy it more than I could've imagined. The story I tell myself is those forty years spent hand in hand with people in crisis, prepared me to dive in with compassion and find the beauty in painful stories.

Wave the White Flag

Imagine this scene, I'm in Hawaii with my pre-teen son who is happy and healthy. I buy a home just a few blocks from the beach, and I love my job as a new nurse practitioner. This was the happiest time of my life until September 11, 2001.

I have one son, Nick who is and will always be the light of my life. It was just the two of us for most of his childhood, and there has been nothing I love more than being his mom. I didn't know a lot about raising a little boy, teenager or young man, but I learned. Nick was 14 on September 11, 2001 and we watched the terror attacks on TV. Hawaii is a very patriotic state, and the thought of defending his country in war was applauded and became an obsession. I believed he craved a brotherhood and to be a part of a bigger family than just the two of us. I prayed he would lose interest in the military but he enlisted in the army after finishing high school. I protested, because as selfish as it sounds, I couldn't imagine anything more frightening than sending my son to war.

I could write a book about how it felt to say goodbye, send my son to basic training, and then to 18 months of war. This was during the peak of soldier's deaths. I watched the news some days and others couldn't bare it. In order to be ready for the dreaded call, I monitored military websites to see the numbers of wounded and killed in action and at other times couldn't look at all. After work, I drove around the block because I was afraid to see a military car at my home. I was sad and lonely to my core. A friend suggested I consider surrendering, but I

thought it would be impossible. Instead of beating myself up over feeling sad or obsessed with worry, I allow myself to feel it 100%. I needed to imagine my worst nightmare so I could also visualize surviving it. This simple but very scary and difficult exercise probably saved my life. During the holidays I cried for three weeks straight. I couldn't talk without crying, and as terrible as it felt, it was better than bottling it up. I made and kept strands of prayer beads and felt for them every time dread suffocated me. Prayer and surrender prepared me for worst day and also for the day Nick returned home injured but alive. Nothing would ever be the same, including me. Much like my reverence for memories inspired me to write and photograph, my son's experiences inspired him to be a full time singer/songwriter. His music heals. The story I tell myself is that horrific things will happen and they need to be experienced fully. Deeper scars are left when I beat myself up for the negative feelings or when I tuck them away for another time.

Unanswered Questions

In the summer of 2017, I went to my childhood home town in Illinois. I left 42 years before and returned for three days for my high school reunion. On the second day, I rented a car and drove 3 hours each way

to visit my godparents. I wanted to see them, and hoped they could fill in some gaps about my childhood. I felt like a puzzle missing key pieces, and they were the last ones holding the pieces.

My Godparents were waiting on their front porch and excited to see me-especially my Godmother. She jumped up and down and hugged me tight enough to stifle my breath. They were energetic and as youthful as always. I couldn't help but notice my Godmother repeated the same comments about every 5 minutes. "Did I love you enough?" she asked. "How is your mother? Where do you live?"

I spent the previous 10 years caring for people impacted by Alzheimer's Disease, wrote a book of families' stories and I didn't even know someone I loved and was counting on was dealing with it. The irony was not lost on me. I watched my Godfather with admiration as he navigated around difficult issues with the kind of love and compassion few of us get to live. I cried the whole 3 hour drive back with grief and disappointment. I had a wonderful group of friends waiting for me though, and I will never forget how they wrapped their arms around me. I cried even more on the flight home because I dreaded the solitude of a troubled marriage heavy from years of anger, depression and the sting

of abuse. The one I loved most was fading away. This was the biggest and most painful secret amongst secrets.

The story I tell myself is unanswered questions and secrets hurt much more than truth told with love, kindness and compassion.

Making it Work

As I write this, we are in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic and a unique part of our history. There is pain, confusion, fear, loss and anxiety about the present and the future. There is also a reawakening of our family and spiritual values. We can speculate, but frankly nobody knows what to expect because nobody has ever had this experience.

I love my time alone, but I also love to be with people. I miss the fun conversations and the deep dives too. I've had my share of loneliness but Doggies for Dementia keeps me smiling. It's as fun and serious as the name implies.

At first, I thought how this is perhaps the worst time to launch a nonprofit. Unemployment is at a historical high. On the other hand,

Covid-19 has resulted in profound isolation and loneliness much like families who care for a loved one with dementia experience all the time and often for years. We all have a different insight. So, what do we do?

I consider myself a leader, and leaders are resilient and think of extraordinary ways to contribute. I think of the families Doggies for Dementia supports, and it makes it easy to work tirelessly. Plus there are fewer distractions when being quarantined. My walls are covered with plans and timelines. It's an exciting time even though we can't photograph families because of the social isolation and safety concerns. It is also a time to grieve and surrender. There are days I feel overwhelmed with emotion. Our elderly and vulnerable citizens are being hit hard by this virus. I've already had people write to me saying they regret not photographing their family before Covid-19 because for some it is too late.

A Mission from God

I often refer to my work as a mission from God, just like the Blues Brothers. I believe the surfer on the beach in Puerto Rico saved me so I could be exactly what I am. When I was working in the clinic feeling like there had to be more, I had an epiphany about sharing and documenting

family's stories with photographs. Even that day I drove home knowing I was on a path which would change my life in many ways. I had no idea of how much it would impact the lives around me. This made it easy to again surrender and follow my intuition. I leaned into the fear but frankly I felt incredibly certain, which was new to me. Therefore even while facing the challenges of Covid-19, Doggies for Dementia continues to grow. Instead of photographing, we are building our VLOG to share stories. We continue to support families, and doing the tedious, technical behind the scenes things just like other businesses. The story I tell myself is every problem has a solution and it doesn't have to be complicated.

What could possibly go wrong? Cancer can happen. In the early days of social isolation and in about three weeks, I was diagnosed with cancer, had surgery and was sent home to recover all without seeing one unmasked face. There were no hugs or shoulders to cry on. I was lonely, and in my wildest dreams could never imagine hearing "you have cancer" and then not seeing another person for weeks. It all felt like a blur, but I couldn't help but again note the irony in this situation. I was feeling scared, alone and isolated like the families Doggies for Dementia serves. I could see the light at the end of my tunnel though because the cancer is gone.

I shared these life experiences because each one left me with more compassion, courage and clarity for myself, those I love and those I serve. The story I tell myself is I'm exactly where I need to be, when I need to be and have the courage to know even the challenges are gifts.

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WHY

This is a common question I hear when people learn I was a nurse practitioner. "Why would you leave a good medical career to be a photographer?" What the inquirer usually means is they can't imagine anyone wasting their education, leaving a good paying and respected career to take pictures. Years ago I may have thought the same way, but I don't now.

I recently did a podcast interview and the host mentioned I seemed apologetic when I described myself as a photographer. At first I was stunned to hear his observation, but I realized he was right. Describing myself as a photographer doesn't tell the whole story though. Photography is my tool as an advocate, teacher, storyteller and preserver of memories. Every

life is important and every time of our lives deserve to be revered. What is the value of a photograph when it becomes the last one ever taken? I think of this every photo session.

Forty years in healthcare being the first to touch a new life and being the last one seen prepared me for the sacred work of Doggies for Dementia. I knew when to stay and when to move on. Why would I leave my medical career to be a photographer? Because I had to.

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How I Inspire Smiles

I don't have any special tricks, but people can see through to the truth though. I love what I do, and when I'm ease, anyone in front of my camera is most likely at ease too. I always remember a real smile is a gift. The more real ones I give away, the more real ones I receive. The more joy I feel, the more joy I see. The more love I feel, the more love I receive.

ABOUT CARMEN DAVAILUS

Carmen Davailus is founder and president of Doggies for Dementia Foundation. After 40 years as a nurse practitioner, she left her career to document the lives of families impacted by dementia with compassionate stories and photography. Her award winning book, Just See Me-Sacred Stories from the Other Side of Dementia was published in 2018. She is an international speaker, photo journalist and Alzheimer's Advocate leading with kindness, courage and inspiration.

Book(s) that changed your life:

A Woman's Worth by Marianne Williamson

Song that inspires you:

Let It Be by the Beatles. It's about surrender, and learning to surrender is key to a joy filled life.

Quote you live by:

"Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty."

–Mother Teresa



Kameron Dawson

“Smile despite the circumstances and laugh throughout the pain. Life is full of hardships but it is how you deal with them that will define you.”

KEEP SMILING

BY KAMEREN DAWSON

I grew up in a mixture between East and West Baltimore. My mother was a single mom at first, and she had great help from my uncle. My uncle was involved in martial arts with my father, which at a time, I didn't know that he was going to be my father. This backstory a lot of people do not know; I was an inner-city kid. My mom did her best to put me through private school, but I was suspended repeatedly. My uncle was able martial arts at an early age in a community center when I was four. I was in a community running around and didn't have any structure. Then, at the age of six, he took me to the first commercial martial arts school. That's when I met my instructor, Gerald Dawson, which, later on, he became my father.

I had had some rough years, you know, going through elementary school, middle school, getting suspended, did not know how to keep my hands to myself, not necessarily a bad kid, just an active kid. Before I understood

martial arts, I was doing it only out of habit. But once I realized what I was supposed to be learning, that's when structure and discipline came.

My dad adopted me when I was about ten years old. So, he quickly went to work to give me that she came into my life fulltime. Before, lively full-time instructor. So, he always played a father figure to me when I didn't have anybody.

My dad, Gerald, was initially born in Queens, New York. He lived there until about his teenage years; he came here to study martial arts. He became very, very successful as far as tournaments and businesses concern. To me, he was someone that was a superhero without a cape, without a costume or, for lack of a better term, his costume was his uniform because he took in inner-city kids. He changed their life on an everyday basis. He's someone that saved my life and gave me structure. An example on the map but off the map taught me a bit out discipline manner, rs, and how to be courteous. That's something that stuck with me all week today to be a business owner.

I think he saw a bit of me in him, as being someone who didn't have his father in his life either. I believe that he was stepping into my life to

kind of right a wrong his dad did to him. I think that he took a liking to me and took me under his wing. Additionally, I have an older brother named Jerome Dawson. My dad's only biological child is a 3rd-degree black belt.

Presently, I am a 4th-degree black belt; I won the World Champion as the number one heavyweight fighter in the world. Nazca North American Sport Karate Association is the biggest that could be found in the world. And I'm, you know, I'm number one since the age of 18. I was the youngest champion ever. I won a significant tournament overall as a 16-year-old teenager, and I beat 18 to 29-year-old men.

My dad, Gerald, said something funny to our friends. He said that he was a World Champion and that he could win in any class except my son because I don't want to beat him. It always made everyone laugh. He teased me that he would change his weight, redo the clock, come to my division, and hit me. I had the opportunity to fight alongside my dad within what they call a team fight. We were the first father and son ever to be able to compete, so we made history together over and over again.

At age 52, before he passed, he won the world title for the 30 and 39 dimensions, so we did a lot of things and made history over and over again, things that have never been done before.

I think one thing that made us different is being disciplined and not having the momentary discipline, but long term. We understood that it was a marathon and not a sprint to be great. On the days that we didn't feel like doing it, we still got out of bed at 5 am. We always did the running; we even did the drill; we still did the gym. Having that accountability partner was awesome because there were days that I didn't feel like doing it, and he will push me. There were days where he didn't feel like doing it, and I would make him. Having a father and son team is so important.

I was surprised when he passed. We had a previous scare in 2010 when he had a widowmaker heart attack in the karate school. We were training, and he fell over. Because he was such a jokester, everybody thought that he was joking. We turned him over; his tongue began to swell. Luckily, somebody started CPR. But the CPR did not work. By the time the paramedics got there. He was already clinically dead. While they rushed him to John Hopkins while they attempted to revive him,

it was the first time I had to cope with the fact that my dad was gone. When they got in the ambulance, I didn't know they would be able to save him within seven minutes or that they were going to be able to get him rushed into open-heart surgery and save his life.

Accepting that he was gone this second time became more comfortable as I understand the first time, I would have to pick up the pieces and continue without him. Having him that extra time was a blessing that made it a bit smoother to immediately pick up the details.

My dad opened up the school in 89, originally named it "Maryland's Best School of Karate." That was a bold statement because, in an era when people loved martial arts coming out of the Bruce Lee era where Saturday, Kung Fu movies were big. He did that to make a statement. He always told me it was a standard that he held inside and outside the school. Once he realized that certain people were not happy, his humbleness, he referred to it as "Awesome Martial Arts Training Center." The reasoning was that he was called Gerald "Awesome" Dawson in competition, so he ran with the "Awesome" trademark.

Within the last year, my dad passed, and I went back to the school name's roots, back to Maryland School of Karate, because that's the standard that I'm going to hold the school. Humbly there is no instructor; there is no school; there is no competition within our area.

I am not rushing, but I am excited. I feel like there are certain things about being a father that you learn from being a son. You may have felt certain feelings when certain things happened, and I feel as though I want to outdo what he did so that my son can outdo what I accomplished.

I guess that's always been our structure, always to outdo our teachers. As an instructor, we all know that our job is to make our pupils who come up behind us better than we ever thought about being.

As far as growing up, my mother did a fantastic job. But, a woman can't teach a man how to be a man. I think certain things because of my environment that I wouldn't easily slip into and did for a certain period. Not anything outrageous, but I think that I would have been distracted. I think I would have got caught up in my surroundings and my environment. I was not in a gun-blazing part of Baltimore, but

you can end up in an area when things could get worse if you turn the corner. He gave me that structure, and without him, I might have been sitting a little bit.

You don't know that my life had a tragedy at a young age that could have made me turn the wrong corner. My mother was shot in the back of her head four times due to a robbery. That morning before she went to work, she knocked on my door and asked if I wanted to go with her. She usually asked twice. Again, she came back, "Kam, you want to go?" "No, Ma'am." Then as if the world stopped, she asked me a third time, and I chose to stay home and play video games with my brother.

During school that day, random people rumored that my mom had been shot. This was pre-social media, so I thought people were just bullying or picking. However, I got home and found out that they entered her hair salon in East Baltimore, robbed her, locked her in a bathroom, and shot her 4x's in the back of her head, leaving her for dead. Again, I was reeling from losing my mom, no knowing that John Hopkins was doing another miracle by saving her and doing skull reconstruction. She was told she would likely be paralyzed, never cut hair again, but she persevered and got her strength back to go back to work again.

Then right after that, the year later, my dad had that heart attack. I had that feeling like I'm done. I'm done. I didn't want to martial arts much. I didn't want to be around a lot of people. It was a stage where I felt like the people closest to me could be taken away, and I almost felt like the point.

But when we stay in front of our school and talk about perseverance, we always strive hard to achieve our goals. So being able to push through that, you know, but push through, almost having both my parents taking push through how to redirect that anger and frustration into martial arts is something that I want to do for the kids also, because even though we all have a story, even though we all go through, you know, tragedies in life, the martial arts is always there.

I've had nothing but a demonstration of perseverance around me. So, when adults and professionals say that your kids are watching so, you must lead by example at all times. Listen because everything that you do affects the children and the people around you.

When I was 16 years old and won that Championship over the adults, it was a surreal experience. Standing in position with my dad, being on the mat pacing back and forth for the fight, even though all these

people were around, I felt like I was in a black room and like it was only my dad and me in the Karate school as we have always been. I could hear his voice so vividly. When I won the Championship, I think he won the title because of his coaching, which was so good. That was my first world title in Pittsburgh. I was it was a tie score. We went into overtime. And we love Dickerson is because I was tied up for four, and we had one time out; we took the time out. And my dad told me you have a critical decision to make. You can either be a beast or bit. He said you could pick one. And you know, I went out there, and I gave him my all. I scored the last point, and I was 16 years old, and I was a world champion. And that was like a great moment. My most credible and most memorable one is after my dad passed in December, I fought in the biggest tournament on the east coast.

It was the aka grand nationals in Chicago, an undefeated weekend, which never goes like that. Here within a group of 55 male adult black belts, I was the last person standing. I won the heavyweight division, and then I went on stage, and the final show, which is on TV, which is in front of you know, hundreds of people, I went on that stage. Before I left home, I took our team uniform, and I packed it. Also, I knew that not having him there was going to be something significant. And

I knew that I had a job to get done. I was locked in all weekend. And when it got to the main stage, I had an oversized coat; I had all sweat-pants. And then when I got on stage, and I took my jacket and my sweatpants off, I had my dad's uniform on. And I was able to close the show, and I won the biggest tournament on the east coast as a salute to him. As the fight was ending, and the lights were going down, I put on his uniform; I had all his equipment on everything was his. And you know, I left it all there covering what his uniform top. And that was, that was the end of you know our story. That was the end of our chapter. And I knew when I walked off that stage, you know, it was the beginning of my legacy. And everything I was going to leave for that one was for him.

At his funeral, there were so many people there. We had to ask people to leave due to overcrowding's safety hazards with mourners for my dad.

That many that showed up showed me that within one lifetime, you could affect so many people. Be aware of your encounters with people and pay attention to how you treat everyone daily. Case in point, there were grown men, saying that they owed him for being the men

that they were today. Being able to stand out the way he did, have that discipline and always stick to his principles while always putting other people first. We took on kids every day that we didn't have the money to cover. He just allowed it to all workout. Even when the school wasn't earning enough funding, the kids without money received uniforms. If they needed a ride, they got a ride. When we traveled, we filled the van so tight to make sure everyone who wanted to go could go. His being able to affect people's lives was significant as it made a substantial impact on me.

Now, I teach martial arts because I see that there is a need for structure in children. I love giving children those principles and design that I was blessed to be successful; every student will not get to black belt. But if there is a student I taught for two months, three months, and they leave the karate school better than what they came, I feel I've done a job. I don't do it for financials, and I don't do it for good jobs, I don't do it for high fives and don't go for the record; it should I go because I love in our love impacting children's lives. And we do get children that are blessed with both parents. And we get children who are blessed with just one. And we do our best as instructors, and I am the head instructor there to set that leadership and set that foundation to put

DR. KEN 'DR. SMILEY' ROCHON, JR.

them on a path to be successful. I know many people think that martial arts are about the kick and the punch, but we are giving them the life skills to cope with the world on the other side of the door once they leave the karate school. So that is that that is my purpose.



Dolf de Roos

“Swing that frown pendulum to a Smile.”

KEEP SMILING

BY DOLF DE ROOS

(Edited from an interview) I had a very mixed eclectic upbringing as I was born in New Zealand, but I ended up going to school in six different countries. Additionally, I now speak six languages. That's rare, and it's kind of cool. People always say that it must be so sad that you never grew up with people that you've known since kindergarten. But very few people have grown up with kids they've known since kindergarten. So, I didn't see that as a big disadvantage.

But in amongst all this moving around from country to country, starting a new school and meeting new friends, there were lots of ups and downs. There were lots of frustrating moments. I couldn't understand how the new rules in this country I lived in were different from the old rules in the old country I had lived in previously. I pondered, why couldn't they make it all the same across the globe? So, there were definite frustrations that were experienced as a kid.

However, I had even bigger frustrations living in Australia, I say with tongue in cheek. School in that country had no requirement to wear shoes. I guess it was too hot, and I lived about 30 yards from the beach. I rode my bike along the shore about two kilometers to get to school, which was great fun. What an experience it was to ride along the beach with the waves coming in to greet you. But, of course, your bicycle didn't last very long because your tire rims rusted out, so you could say another early frustration was my bicycle always rusting out. 😊

On the other hand, it makes you realize, holy smoke, "Are you kidding me? You're living on the beach that many people around the world have heard of -- surfers paradise. That's a pretty cool place to be living. For those of you who don't know anything about surfer's paradise, it was back in the day when the Gold Coast had a total population of 32,000. Now, of course, its population is more than 400,000. So, looking at those numbers, a concurrent frustration is, "Oh, my gosh, if I had just bought one piece of real estate, just a little, maybe two or three properties...or ten back then, when there were only 32,000 people, the real estate would have gone up astronomically. Real estate tends to go up anyway.

Another frustration I have had along the way that seems to continue is the views of real estate investing, reflecting on an article in Time Magazine from 1948 that said buying a house is no longer a good investment. Certainly, when you compare housing prices, real estate is no longer the investment it used to be, as this was an era when houses averaged \$8,000. However, ever since then, there have been articles that expound on the virtues of not investing in real estate, when U.S. history shows investing results are quite the opposite.

After earning my Ph.D. in electrical engineering, not the easiest courses, real estate became my life. Then the irony is, I never really worked a day as an engineer because when I was at university, I started getting into real estate. There's a whole backstory behind why I got into real estate, but anyway, I did, so by the time I finished a Ph.D., I applied for two jobs. At the end of the second job interview, I was offered a job at \$32,000 a year, which was a huge salary. But, unfortunately for my prospective employer, the week prior, I had just completed a real estate deal that netted me 35,000. I remember thinking why anyone would work for 40 hours a week, 50 weeks a year for 32 lousy thousand dollars in his or her right mind. When in one week, you can make 35k and take the rest of the year off and do it again, read books on the beach, or whatever,

so I never took that job. To this day, I've never had a job. People often ask what's it like never having had a job. I stare at them with a bit of a blank face because I don't know what it's like to have a job. It's a bit like right asking you what's it like having canoed to Pluto. You have no idea because you've never done that, so it's one of those weird things.

People often come to me saying, you'll never guess what my boss tried to get me to do today. Dutifully I say, well, what did they get you to do. Well, they asked me to do this, and this, and this, and it's not in my employment contract, and it's not right. They tried the same thing three weeks ago. In response, I say, I've got a solution for you. Eagerly they beg for me to please tell it to them. I say, "Quit." In response, they shake their head, stating they can't quit. I've got bills to pay. I've got the mortgage. I've got to get the food. They're stuck in this place with the job, so I don't want that life and never wanted that life. Instead, I went out and did things like real estate. Along the way, I got cajoled into sharing how I do it.

The fantastic thing is that I bought all of these without using any of my own money, and I share how you can do that for yourself. To keep the story short, I've ended up writing 23 books on real estate. They've done

okay; one of them spent seven months on the New York Times best-seller list. Many authors are happy to get that status for a day or two, so spending that much time and being translated into six languages and sold in 18 countries is done remarkably well. Therefore, I enjoy sharing how people can get out of the rat race bandwagon and get financial independence by investing in real estate.

And it works, not because I'm a brilliant teacher. It works because real estate is something that if 1000 people try it, 998 will have great success with it. Real estate is very forgiving of mistakes, whereas I find, in my humble personal experience, people to get into the stock market. About half of them do well, and they make money, and the other half don't do well; they lose money. All because it depends on which stock you buy, and that sometimes can be, in my opinion, a bit of a gamble. Anyway, I have great fun teaching people how to do that, and I've taught real estate in an astounding number of 27 countries.

I didn't set out to see which country I could get invitations asking will you come and address us speaking at this conference on real estate. However, I've also had great joy in a completely unrelated field, and that is helping people go global. Especially here in America, we have a

very low proportion of the population that has a passport. A few years ago, it was as low as 20% in Australia and New Zealand, where I spend a lot of my upbringing. Now, about 96% of the population has a passport. You could argue all those places are so tiny that to go anywhere and see something other than your local scenery, and you would have to have a passport. That may well be true, but the truth is, they all travel overseas. In the U.S., we don't, and even though those with a passport, only 5% travel.

Along those lines, the U.S. is the lowest in learning a foreign language, so Americans, in general, are not so brilliant at exporting. There are about 100 million companies in this country: fewer than 1% export. That's fewer than a million companies that export, and of those who do 80% export only to Canada or Mexico where it's a road trip: it's not even overseas. That leaves about 200,000 that export globally. When you export, it benefits everyone because if you and I export something overseas for 10 million, we have 10 million coming into the country. That raises the value of the U.S. dollar; it makes our imports cheaper.

Think about it, only 200,000 companies export, and an astounding 115 million people watched the last Super Bowl. None of them benefited

more than a little from the Super Bowl outcome, whether their team won or not. Can you imagine that 115 million people took part in an activity where no one gets any real benefit? Only 200,000 export which benefits everyone. That's why my catchphrase in this industry is if Americans can put as much effort and energy as they currently put into the sport into export, then we'll all be better off. Anyway, that's the premise behind it, so we've had great success.

So to make a positive impact in the world, I am taking companies by the hand where we take them to France, Italy, Japan, or Thailand. We've done this with 23 countries. In one week, we achieve with them and for them in business what they probably wouldn't do in a year on their own. That's a lot of fun.

Invariably some of the projects that I've come across are interesting. We've been involved in some avant-garde projects and energy generation technologies. We even lifted things from the seabed. That's led me to some of the most remarkable meetings where I feel I love this blessed life. But again, you've got to ask yourself, am I just experiencing good things that are happening to me, or does my energy attract the things I choose to get involved.

For example, I had this device for lifting heavy objects off the seabed, so I made a phone call to the largest salvaging company in the world. They didn't understand the scope of all that I could do with my equipment, so they end up connecting me to the highest man in charge, who suggested I drive down and plead my case. So I said Okay and started on my 24-hour journey from Europe to the Netherlands. Upon arrival, they say the guy I am meeting is on a research vessel during our appointment time. Confirming I arrived when scheduled. Instead, the main guy invited me to come along with him on the research exploration.

Now, understand as a Ph.D. student, I did my electrical engineering Ph.D. in sonar systems, and while most people model the dolphin, which is a pulsing, instead I modeled the bat which sends out sonar. Sonar is an entirely different system than in the frequency domain, rather than the time domain. This situation was fascinating because he was looking for a 17th-century vessel that sank in the Mediterranean. Here I am on this research vessel and with the President of the largest salvaging company globally, working on a personal project of his finding the 17th-century ship. We had a submarine onboard to go down under the ocean. I mean, what a blast; what a lot of fun to do that sort of thing.

You see, it's as if we create our reality. If you say to yourself, repeatedly, well, that sort of thing will never happen to me. It probably won't because you'll sit at home watching soaps on T.V. For the record, I don't have a T.V. I often say to people, if you want to improve your life, take your T.V. and toss it out the window. If you want to save some money, open the window first before you throw it out, but get rid of the T.V. Truth is, I have a T.V., but I don't have servers I don't have satellite links or cable or anything like that I just can't be bothered with it. Apart from the fact that the ads are so frequent these days, and there are about 10 decibels louder than the programming, you're just getting back into the movie or whatever you're watching them boom there's some ad for some insane product that you don't need and don't want, and you've seen them ten times before. I just can't be bothered with it. I'd rather be out in the real world doing something real.

We've got to decide what is the course of our life when we wake up every morning. Here's the challenge, I think most people think, I wonder what will happen today. I wonder if it will be a good day or a bad day if they do not influence it. At the same time, I know there are some things you just can't help. For example, I've been in so many earthquakes it's uncanny. I don't subscribe to any supernatural reason to

that; I think I just happened to be where they happen to be an earthquake. So, you can't control when there is an earthquake, at least, I believe I can't. There was one in Christchurch. I wasn't there for the main when I was there beforehand; it was September 4, 2010. The main one, the big one that caused 15,000 homes and 1600 commercial buildings to come down, wasn't there. But I lost every square inch of real estate I had in their city. So don't get me wrong, you can't control everything.

As you well know, we can't decide that the sun will come up an hour later this morning. However, there are certain things that we do have power over and influence over. One is how we interpret things, and by interpreting things differently, I mean we don't live in a world devoid of reality, but by analyzing the world around us, we can create change. When I say you can change your world through simple things like a conversation, you can change your future.

We've got to be very meticulous about making sure that we don't always end up having, without even realizing it, a negative attitude to things. You know, give people the benefit of the doubt and be the first one to make a positive move. Be the first one to be considered free of

judgment and open-minded, and you'll be surprised how often they say, wow, I was wondering why we were in this fun can! I'm so pleased to be in your presence, read through your papers, or consider your proposal, or whatever, the situation.

We often have a theory, and even if the theory is slightly off, you will always find evidence to support your theory, and I will show you why. By the way, I don't want to get into anything political or religious or anything but, if you have a theory on politics or religion, you will find evidence to support it. You'll end up hanging with people who feel similarly about it, which gives you more evidence that your theories correct, which makes the others wrong. Whereas if you'd grown up on a slightly different side of the tracks, or you'd have one conversation with a different person, or you'd been born into another family, you'd have a completely different point of view.

I think the thing to realize from that is our points of view; no matter how firmly we believe them, no matter how ardently and passionately we believe, they are accurate. If you'd had slightly different circumstances, you'd be just as adamant and passionate about another point of view. When you not only accept that as a reality but believe it in your

heart, then you start to see things as the only point of view because that's where they happen to land when circumstances arose. Either accept it or move on. I try and avoid arguments. There are no winners from an argument; you just can't win.

If they ask my opinion, I'll express it. If others say, well, that's ridiculous, I'll try and explain why, but I'm not there to sway them. I see people getting mad at the end up fighting, even gunfights over a point of view. It's just not worth it. There's so much fun to be had in the world. Why would you fight?

I have this theory, if you can't put your head down on your pillow at night and say to yourself, wow, what a blast it was today, then you've got to do something differently. Because, as I said, the days are gone, you'll never get a repeat. You can never fix what was wrong with it or change it to improve it. Just commit to making the next day a little bit better; make it more fun. Make it zanier. Be more inspiring to other people. Be more inspired by other people.

Life is not a competition of who can inspire the most. It's just being aware of what we can do to make this world a better place because, in

100 years, all of us are going to be gone. Maybe we will probably be forgotten about the only question that will remain, but how did the world change by our presence. Hopefully, a little bit for the better because we were grateful for that infinitesimally small period on this planet. That's why, if we can contribute, we can do things that can change people's lives for the better. We can open their eyes to something they didn't realize was possible, and then it's all worthwhile.

My life started with an intermingling of different conflicting views, and through it all, I learned that you need to trust yourself. Trust your gut. There's an old saying that you get seven people, you ask them an opinion, and you will receive eight opinions. Why, because no one's ever quite sure.

I think the thing that comes through for me is that we are far more in control of our destiny than we realize. Life is not something that happens to you. Life is something you create. One way of looking at it, our eyeballs are like lenses, and most people think that we see what's out in that environment. Those visual images, the light rays, the photons, whatever they go through to our eyeballs, are reflected onto the retinas of our eyes. Our brain interprets what's there, but there's always

another way of looking at it. Regardless of what we think we see, inside our brain, we create our reality. Then we project out into the real world what our reality is to us.

You might say, well, that's a bit crazy. Surely, it's the other way around. You're an engineer. You must know the difference. But here's the reason why it's so different, you can have two people who experienced the same thing today. Maybe they're even together. They go on the same rides; they meet the same people on the same phone calls, and one of them will wonder how to mean the people they interacted with behaved and how the ride sucked. They complain about everything, and the other person who is with them the entire time has an entirely different interpretation. The question becomes, is either one of them right, which makes the other one wrong. The answer is not really; they both experience the same things. But the only meaning, and this comes from tuning in, of course, the only meaning is the meaning, we give something, and the only meaning in life is the meaning we give to things.

It's not what happens to you in life that counts, but how you react to it. You could say that if you respond in a good way, if you're reacting in

an appropriate way to make the most of any situation, then you'll end up smiling. That's partially true, but there's another way of putting it, and that is, the more you smile, the more you'll turn things into a good situation.

It's the difference between like this example. I was caught speeding; I had many clients with me, and we were doing 114 and got pulled over. I thought, well, it's fair, I was speeding. But what was different was that I was smiling. The traffic officer was a female; she was very pleasant. I admitted it, and I said thank you for being so kind and gracious about this ticket. If you're going to get caught speeding, which no one particularly enjoys, this is the way it should happen. Then, she went back to her car, and eventually, she came back and said, my battery died. I can complete the ticket. You're free to go. I thought a second that it was just pure luck. It could be I don't know the answer, or was it my attitude that manifested those results of no ticket. By the way, 114 sounds like a lot, but I'm talking kilometers per hour, so it was 140 in a 100 zone, so it was like doing 68 in a 60 miles per hour zone on a freeway. I didn't think it was a mess of moral transgression in the scheme of things, so I got lit up. It was a good day.

The only meaning of life is the meaning we give things, and I chose to make it a great day anyway. I traveled with clients; they were paying me big bucks to take them places for specific reasons. Of course, what could go wrong with the day. One thing I do know is we're going to be dead for a mighty long time, so we may as well enjoy the time we've got here, and we don't know precisely what happens afterward. Do we get to do this all again? Until I know for sure what the answer is, I will try and make every day count. Because one thing I do know when a day is gone, it's over when you put your head down on your pillow at night.

You will never get a repeat of that day. If you've chosen to be grumpy, mean, and disparaging, and all those things. It becomes part of who you are. We are the sum of all the thoughts we've had running through our minds, so make sure that you have great thoughts and make sure you smile a lot. I love some of those sayings, I haven't originated them, but I remember reading a section on smiles in some magazine. It said a smile takes but a moment, and yet the memory of it can last forever. A smile enriches the receiver without making the donor poorer.

When you think about it, they're all pretty compelling reasons to smile a lot; you will get some people that if you walk around town with a

smile on your face, they think, whoa, he's a bit spastic. So what? I'd rather be smiling, thought of as spastic, than act frumpy and grimacing to be deemed normal. Here is a generic rhetorical question. Would you rather have sane people think you are crazy or crazy people think you're sane? It's a very interesting question. It takes so little effort to smile, and yet it changes the world. People hesitate at strangers at first sight as they don't know what your intentions are if you approach them unless you start with a smile. Then, suddenly, the world opens to you. Smile, and the world laugh with you, snore, and you sleep alone.

Happy Memorial Day! Help us help a Veteran to smile. Donate \$1 or more to the Keep Smiling Movement, a 501(3)c, saving lives through S.M.I.L.E.S. by creating a D.O.S.E. of H.O.P.E.



Darryl D'Souza, Author, Speaker, Educator, Founder Earth Keepers Connect

“Smile and light up someone's life!”

SMILE AND LIGHT UP LIVES

BY DARRYL D'SOUZA

Born to middle class catholic parents in Mumbai, India, I had a fun filled childhood in this densely populated and lively city of the world, and yet it was too close to comfort for me, so I left Mumbai to pursue an Engineering Degree in Pune, the home of one of the world's most revered mystics, Osho. I won't hide that it was also my plan to go up to him one fine day and say "Dude! I think you've got a couple of things wrong here. Wanna hear about it?" But alas! He passed away just before I could meet him. There was no saying how my life would have panned out, had I met him.

But life had something else in store for me - Pneumonia! It came on so hard and fast that one fine evening I was not able to breathe because my lungs were filled with phlegm and I started coughing blood continuously.

As there was no time for slow acting home remedies, the allopathic doctor was called in. He helped me survive the night with some oral meds and injections on my butt. That was my 1st Near Death Experience. A month long course of medicines made me feel all right. But that was my immunity breaking down and it paved the way for an amoebic infection in 2 years after drinking mountain water on a trek. Thus began a decade long journey of repeated stomach and intestine infections, IBS, colitis, diarrhea, blood in my stools, anal fissures and finally 3rd degree piles which had to undergo surgery. All of this was managed by allopathic antibiotics, ayurvedic medicines, homeopathy, prayers, healing from gifted healers, but never cured. My suffering reached its zenith when I developed skin allergies all over my body that made me scratch off my skin. I was eventually unable to wear clothes or foot ware and had to give up work and sit at home in shorts on my soft bed mattress, since chairs also would irritate my skin. Eating food also became an ordeal since my mouth would severely itch by the end of every meal. Finally came the day when I decided to give up my life because I was clear that this is not what I came here to experience. I began to choose which way would be best.

But it seems The Good Lord would not have it that way. So before I went ahead with my master plan of meeting him up there, he sent an

acupressure therapist & herbal medicine man in my life, who taught me how to use these ancient sciences to cure my skin allergies first of all, and within 6 months flat, because they were my most intense trauma. Later came more work on diet and nutrition and natural organ detoxes that I learned and did for myself. I learned that only natural systems of medicine really cure. All the rest only helps you manage an illness and gives you the life experience of continuous struggles and suffering.

Amazingly, I healed completely within just year using what I practiced as integrated natural medicine. Born of my success was a new desire to help people with similar sicknesses or who were suffering from high bp, cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, hormonal imbalance, arthritis, liver disease, kidney failure, lung disorders and most of the common chronic illnesses. So in 2005 I began treating friends and neighbors on the weekends because I went back to my corporate full time job as an Engineering Consultant. I remember my first patient - our household help, a lady who was wrongly diagnosed for kidney stones and set up for an operation that was avoided when I detected through acupressure that the intense pain she had was from a severe appendix infection. I taught her how to cure that in a few days with acupressure and a change in diet. There were a couple of small kidney stones too

that got dissolved by a herbal concoction I gave her over 10 days. Thus began my journey as a healer of maladies and a caretaker of people.



It's been 15 years now that I've graduated through the real world of practice and the experience of giving talks and seminars and workshops on reversing chronic illnesses and my decade long interactions and experiences with doctors, healers, therapists, alternative medicines practitioners, life coaches and spiritual teachers enabled me to curate and convene India's 3 Continued Medico-Spiritual Educations Conferences that still remain the benchmark in the country.

On the way in 2012 I published my first book 'Become Healthy or Extinct' on reversing chronic illnesses with integrated natural therapies that finds readership in close to 200 countries. It is a free download on my website <https://becomehealthyorextinct.com> because I believe sickness is only the result of a lack of awareness that should be free in life, just like air. The book has helped thousands of people across the globe solve their health issues and in turn they have been freely sharing its teachings with others to help make this world a healthier

and happier place. I get excited when people mention how amazing my TEDx talk on what is food for human beings is. The fact that its crossing 2 million views comforts me. It tells me that people across the world are beginning to understand how we have made food our poison instead of our medicine and how this has caused so much sickness in the world.

I know all of this would not have been possible without God's guidance and help in my life through his many unseen forms and chosen people that were sent to help me accomplish things. I knew it was his blessings when I received an invite to speak and the 1st World Parliament on Spirituality in India in 2012 and then again as the keynote speaker at the 2nd World Parliament on Spirituality in USA in 2016. I shared some very important teachings for Humanity at these events. They are on You Tube. We all choose sufferings in our lives to help us remember some important things and when we overcome them, they become world lessons to be shared. The bigger the suffering, the bigger the lesson and the service it will provide in the world should we choose to share it with others.



Our present times have become very tumultuous with people fighting each other and cultures and countries waring against each other and people willing to kill each other in the name of God. It has given me the 2nd book of my life and that one is on Universal Love, Brotherhood & Spirituality. I hope it will serve people across the globe in leading more peaceful lives. I know its going to be a tough task, but I've had good experience in this sphere as well, after doing spiritual workshops and retreats since 2012 and also from discussing problems of this world and their solutions with evolved people in this world.

Once you are really in it, I guess you are gone hook, line and sinker! That's how I became and organic farmer in 2015, just pursuing the way of creating healthy food for people since I talked so much about it over the years and finally there wasn't enough of it to feed my own students in the country. Working on the land made me work for the soil and the air and the water and the plants and that's how I became an environmental activist. The world is such a beautiful place. If you can really place your mind and heart on something, it will amaze you and call out to you. This is how God works on you through all his means and ways.

The way I create abundance in the world is when problems present themselves, I work on my own or with people to find the solutions and when that is in place, I find some way to share it with the world, because I know many in the world need the same. That is what made me create the Healers & Therapists groups and also the Earth Keeper groups in India that work through Whatsapp and Facebook and on the ground as well. Thousands of people up to some good work for the benefit of society every single day of their lives based on their individual talents and life's callings. It makes me happy, yet I know I got so much more to offer before I'm done with this life. That's why I wake up every day with a smile on my face. You gotta live for something. That's the fuel that fires you. The bigger the your dream, the bigger your light, the bigger your life!

If you're filled with light and the love of God, the beauty and the goodness of things that emerge never stop. Earlier this year I co-founded Manipadma Foundation (a global human development and human service organization), and a few months later I signed The Global Compassion Charter and now I'm looking forward to making Goa (the city where I live in India) a compassion city that will give me and my tribe here new opportunities and resources to serve people in a

better way. What's even more exciting right now is that I'm working on another dream I began having a year back.

It's curating and hosting The New Earth Summit - a 3 day summit on health, food & environment that is providing solutions to our current problems in these domains and more importantly showcasing the integrated living ecosystems of our immediate future that will save the Earth. Just by reading all of this, you can already gauge how happy I am :) I believe we should never stop dreaming and making our dreams come true and that's why I love this quote from Lawrence of Arabia "All men dream, but not equally. Those who dream in the dark recesses of the night, awake in the day to find all was vanity. But the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act on their dreams with open eyes, and make them possible."

ABOUT DARRYL D'SOUZA

Darryl D'Souza went through 14 years of sickness & suffering that almost ended his life in 2004. His radical reversal from that state to a state of complete well-being within just 1 year of using Integrated Natural Therapies is a story that has inspired thousands across the globe lead healthier lives. His book 'Become Healthy or Extinct' on curing chronic illnesses with integrated natural therapies finds readership in close to 200 countries. Darryl has devised several disease reversal programs that he does through workshops all across India. He has also launched platforms for doctors, healers & therapists to work together and has curated & convened 4 mind, body & spirit healing conferences. Darryl is also an organic farmer, an environmentalist, a TEDx speaker, an ambassador of VeganNation, founder of Earth Keepers Connect, co-founder of Manipadma Foundation and a speaker at The World Parliaments on Spirituality.

Books That Changed My Life:

Born to Win

Movies That Inspired Me:

Ben Hur

Song That Inspire Me:

Earth Song ~ Michael Jackson

Your Hero:

Lord Sanat Kumar

Quote You Live By:

"Never Say Die"



Jen Du Plessis, Speaker, Author, Mentor, Podcaster

"I love smiles; people's eyes wake up and say "Hello, I care!"

THE POWER OF PENNIES BECOME SMILES SUCCESS TO SIGNIFICANCE → A SMILE TO LAST A LIFETIME BY JEN DU PLESSIS

Finally. Home. It only took me 50 minutes. Thank goodness there was no traffic at 11:00 p.m.

But was I home? Or was I as my hotel? My business has grown so much that I'm working 14-hour days, and for what? My body is aching, my mind is fried, I don't have time to have the smallest chat with my kids, the man I'm married to is just a secondary thought, and, hey, did I eat anything today? How much longer can I run like this? This isn't what life was supposed to be like. Oh well, I need to go to bed so I can start the rat race again tomorrow.

Fifteen years ago, the person described above was me. Day in and day out chasing the dream and certainly not living it! I was focused on my business and clients, and it was never enough to be the top producer in my company or have clients and referral partners who loved me. My family loved me (thank God!), but I always put them last. I knew it had to change so I started thinking about where this drive to succeed truly originated.

*We flatter those we scarcely know, we please the fleeting guests,
but we deal many a thoughtless blow to those we love the best.
~ Virginia Krabbenhoft, Jen's Mother*

I come from a large Catholic family and am one of 37 first cousins. Until I was almost 13, I was the only one who was without a sibling. I had 18 aunts and uncles. Two of my uncles were like fathers to me. They took me everywhere with them—cleaning carpets, cleaning offices, cleaning their rental properties, working the family garden center, and even to the oriental trading store. Here is where I learned my work ethic and apparently how to clean!

My parents were hard working, but we were poor, and I mean dirt poor. Dad was a carpenter and functional alcoholic. Mom worked for the

family business and was a verbal abuser. My background story is for another time, but the reason I mention it here is to show why I didn't mind spending time with my uncles. It was better than being home with all the yelling, hitting, and throwing.

Most of my childhood memories, aside from the alcohol and abuse, were made with my uncles. They were funny, charming, caring, strict, and always concerned for me. Don't get me wrong, they loved their other nieces and nephews, but they had all moved away and were stretched across the country. These uncles were full of life. A game they played among themselves was to give all the cousins nicknames, such as Dan the Man or Jean the Machine. For me, they chose Jenny who ain't got a Penny. Seriously!?

One of them told me, "You know Jenny, you're going to be just like your father. You're going to be an alcoholic. You're going to smoke. You're going to have a horrible marriage and most likely you'll be poor too."

Can you imagine? Of course, I thought it was funny then so I kept a penny in my shoe. Every time they called me Jenny who ain't got a Penny, I would grab the penny out of my shoe and say, "No Uncle, I

DO have a penny.” At first, I didn’t understand what he truly meant, but when I did, it made me feel worthless and alone. This is when I started my quest for a life of proving, which led to proving and perfection.

Proving to my uncles, and the rest of the family, I would be better and different than my parents. Proving would show everyone I would make something of myself and would make everyone feel proud of my accomplishments. If I were perfect maybe Dad wouldn’t drink, and Mom wouldn’t cut me down or yell because I didn’t clean something right.

*One penny may seem to you a very insignificant thing,
but it is the small seed from which fortunes spring.
~Orison Swett Marden*

Demonstrating the hunger for perfection and acceptance revealed itself in many ways throughout my life. From having stellar grades, becoming a pre-med student, being the best in sports, playing flute and piccolo in the local symphony while I was in high school, becoming an avid speed reader, becoming the only student on the advisory board for the National Lung Association (to learn more about the effects of smoking since mom and dad both smoked, and I was experiencing second-hand

smoke), being named Miss Colorado Springs, and then runner-up in the Miss Colorado Teen Pageant, being on a competitive rifle drill team, square dance team, soccer player in college, active member of a sorority, becoming a top producer, a national sales manager, and on and on. I was living a life of proving, until the breaking point 15 years ago.

I thought if I was the best in anything or everything I did, people wouldn’t judge me, look down on me, second-guess me, or think I was like my parents and amount to nothing. If I could show all of them I could be much more, life would be great, and I’d finally receive an apology from my uncle. There was only one (albeit big!) problem to achieving this: All this hard work for years and years, it turns out, was merely an attempt for me to please everyone else, and not myself.

*Better to wear out than rust out.
~John Krabbenhoft, Jen’s Father*

Coming to the realization it was time for me to step into my own power was a difficult yet exhilarating time for me. I had to find what was truly important to me, what fulfilled me, and what I wanted. No one else, just me.

The path was tough. I graduated with a degree in Architectural Design and Construction Engineering, so linear, logical, and technical thinking was a part of who I was. After all, being a woman in a male-dominated financial world wasn't easy. Sticking to facts and again proving my worth and value could only come from my results—results as an underwriter, manager, originator, executive, and business owner. Why had I chosen mortgages anyway? Good Lord!

Somehow, somehow I needed to dig deeper than I'd ever done before to learn why I acted and performed like I did. That's when I found the true power in my life. You see I was, by nature, a giving and nurturing person. The job, success, and life of proving had made me this way, but it was completely against my core. I was tired of struggling and made the large life decision to change it all. I had to; there was no way I could continue in the same manner.

My family, my husband, and my friends needed me.

I needed me.

Success would have to take a back seat. My production was around \$50 million at the time and I would just have to let it go...or so I thought.

*If you are casual about your business,
your business will become a casualty.*

~Les Brown

I decided to create an assessment of what I wanted my personal life to look like, then, determine what my real core values were. This approach was the logical side of me tackling the problem regardless of how emotional it might become. Next, I examined how I lived. Was I living these core values or simply talking about living them? For example, if family was a core value, was I placing them first? Had I set up boundaries to ensure they came first? Was I letting external factors (clients, office staff, referral partners, engaging in a life of proving) occupy all my attention?

This wasn't easy. I couldn't turn off the proving and perfection switch. Completing these two simplistic appearing steps took discipline, fervor, and the will to change my life.

I decided to ensure everything I wanted in my life came first. I had concerns and wondered what would happen with the business I worked so hard to build. Nonetheless, I forged ahead. I booked vacations to places I'd never gone, took classes and courses in areas I'd only dreamed of doing one day, planned date nights and being present with my husband, blocked time to read, pray, and be with my children (hoping it wasn't too late). It was imperative these priorities came first.

But how was I going to continue to work if I pursued what was fun and exciting for me? Wouldn't my business fail? And then I'd have to face the music with my uncles. I thought, "O God, please help me push through this!"

Here is what I realized was coming to fruition—because I was so focused on creating a better life for myself, I naturally began to go to work with more intention and clarity than ever before. In the past, I was a prisoner to my business and everyone in it. Running ragged to complete everything and help everyone. Now, I was clear with who I wanted to help—from referral partners to client types. I narrowed my niches and said goodbye to many complicated relationships. I worked with people who would complement my life.

I was seeing clearly now. Moving from having a mortgage business to a mortgage practice (leveling up my expertise, focus, and intention every day) was going to be key for my success. And it was!

There is no such thing as balance, it's a total lie!

~Jen Du Plessis

To my delight my business didn't decline: instead, my practice grew. It grew in volume (ultimately funding over \$1 billion in my career) and team members. Love and patience and being present in all things rather than half-witting everything, proved to be the ultimate proving! I was on top of the world; financially (having more pennies), ranking, health, emotion, family, love, fulfillment, joy, time, adventure, culture, and relationships. You name it, I was acquiring it all! I wasn't proving, I was living! Living my legacy while building it.

People talk about work-life balance all the time. For me, it's like eating soup with a fork. You are tired, rundown, worn out, living in chaos, lack focus, and more importantly, never truly fulfilled. For instance, let's say you were standing on two boats in the water.

Let's try to maintain balance. You can't because there's too much movement. Neither boat has your full attention. You can't relax and be completely present either. When you finally become too tired, you make a decision to jump to one of the boats (keeping in mind this decision isn't thought through—you're tired and just want it to end—you choose and jump). But are you present on the boat? No. You're exhausted and just want a minute to breathe. Sound familiar? Like the beginning paragraph of this chapter? A balanced scale is 50/50 and never all in.

Work on Purpose to Play with Passion.
~Jen Du Plessis

What if you could be so clear about your life's desires you go to work with full focus, complete everything in a shorter period of time, work with only the right people, and then leave early to do what you love best? What if you could do this every day? How would your life change?

During the years after making the decision to change how I lived my life, I learned, practiced, and mastered my priorities so I could master my life. It took lots of trial and error but in the end, I was able to narrow

everything down to five key strategies allowing me to work on purpose to then go play with passion every day of my life, and attract clients rather than chase them so I wouldn't have to work so many hours. Do these strategies work? You be the judge. In the last eight years of my mortgage career, I worked four days per week, rarely on a weekend, and started three more businesses; all of which I still have today.

These five strategies became prevalent when I was asked by one of my coaches to define what I did to become so successful and still have a commanding personal life. I didn't have any real answers. I first answered, "Well, I wrote thank you notes."

She challenged me saying it couldn't be that simple.

So, I said, "Okay, well, I personally met with each of my clients."

Her challenges continued. NOW, when I think back on her question, I smile because I did have the answers, I'd just never thought about them deeply enough. I had developed and created a turn-key business that didn't need me to be at the office all day, yet never took a moment to dive into how I was doing everything so well. It became clear there

were a few areas where I had become the absolute master: Clarity, Credibility, Community, Communication, and Continuity. Mastering these five strategies made it easy to be successful in business and life.

Focusing in these areas, keeping in alignment with my core values, my life desires, what fulfilled me, who I wanted to work with, and the life I dreamed of having had taken me from \$50 million to over \$100 million per year in production, and I was working less to live more.

The Power of Pennies

When I look back to the day so long ago and rewind the comments my uncle said to me; I can't help but think about what my life would have become if my uncle had not said those harsh words to me.

Three years ago, I visited the small town where I grew up. The memories were, and frankly are still, difficult to process. Seeing the house where I grew up, every street I passed, parks where I played, schools I attended, all of this took me back to unbearable times. The truth is, I now know with certainty, I would have a different life had I not been pushed by my uncle.

A quote I found several years ago from Charles Marshbum continues to provide me with solace, *So, don't pass by that penny when you're feeling blue, it may be a penny from heaven, that an Angel's tossed to you.* While the naked truth is my uncle's comment cut me to the core, it was also such a blessing to jolt me out of what may have been.

Jenny who ain't got a penny has a lot of pennies today. I'm truly blessed to have gone through this learning journey.

One penny has become a powerful symbol. What started as motivation and moved to determination spanned years of desperation leading to inspiration, and finally jubilation.

ABOUT JEN DU PLESSIS

Jen is America's Lifestyle Business Master who helps sales professionals who feel overwhelmed and stressed out because of business trying to multiply results in record time, to have the courage to say yes to their personal lives.

During fifteen of her 37-year career in the mortgage industry, Jen has been listed in the top 1% of loan officers nationwide, spending 3 years in the top 200 of nationally ranked originators and has funded over \$1 Billion in mortgage loans. She is recognized as an Influencer in her industry as a best-selling author, top podcast host and charismatic speaker; sharing stages with such icons as Darren Hardy, Tony Robbins and Barbara Corcoran.

Jen believes that when you work on purpose you can play with passion.

Books that challenge your life:

The Compound Effect by Darren Hardy

Movie that inspires you:

The Notebook, Act of Valor, Sommersby

Songs that inspire you:

Time and Tide by Basia

Take a Bow by Maddona

Bossa Lady by Kerensa Gray

Holding Back the Years by Simply Red

Your Hero:

The Divine Trinity

Quote you live by:

We flatter those we scarcely know, we please the fleeting guests, but we deal many a blow to those we love the best. By Ella Wheeler Wilcox



Peg Duchesne

“Wellness happens when we think and grow smiles.”

MILES OF SMILES – GIVERS GAIN & BNI

BY PEG DUCHESNE

I was born early in life (weren't we all?! My Mom was a young bride whose new husband departed a month after their wedding to serve as a Marine Lieutenant in Korea. It was after his departure overseas that my mother realized she was expecting their first child. Dad was in Korea when I was born at Bethesda Naval Hospital and I didn't meet him under I was 4-months old, when he returned. I am the oldest of eight children; one of six girls and two boys, all born within less than ten years! We were raised in an idyllic neighborhood in the Washington, D.C. suburbs of Silver Spring. After kindergarten at a Montgomery County school, I started first grade at St. Bernadette's Catholic School. Being a baby-boomer, the classes were extremely large. In fact, there were 72 kids in my first grade class. I often marvel at the fact that I even learned to read, with the large classroom and the slew of siblings at home. In the middle

of first grade, my 5th sibling was born! I switched to public school for 5th through 8th grades, and then attended an all-girls Catholic High School not far from the University of Maryland.

Historical events, societal changes, and a cultural revolution were all part of my childhood. I was in 4th grade when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, just a week before my 9th birthday, and at the age of 9, watched with delight as the Beatles performed for the first time on the Ed Sullivan show. I was 13 years old when both Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were shot. I remember vividly the riots that ensued in DC. I was 14 when Woodstock occurred! I had high school friends whose brothers were killed in Viet Nam. Title IX was enacted and the Roe vs. Wade decision came down during my junior and senior years of high school, respectively.

Following high school, I attended St. Mary's College of Maryland, a public State College which just five years previously had evolved from a junior college to become a 4-year institution. I flourished there, exploring all kinds of things, as one does during their college years. I was a student athlete, majored in psychology with a minor in education, and relished the best of a liberal arts education. I worked during the winter

holiday breaks and during summers to pay my tuition. I worked on Capitol Hill for awhile, various jobs in the Postal Service, from sorting mail to executive assistant to two different Post Masters, one I Rockville and one at a Sectional Center in the DC suburbs, and as an assistant to the General Counsel at Group Health Association of America. When I graduated, I returned to work for that attorney at GHAA, assisting with the Amendments to the Health Maintenance Organization Act, which included working with some of Senator Ted Kennedy's staff. The legal work intrigued me, so when the Amendments were completed, my project ended at GHAA, so I went to work at a prestigious law firm in Washington, DC. For more than three decades, I worked in law firms, preparing pleadings for court filings, assisting with trial preparation and exhibits, and all sorts of litigation work. Two memorable cases that I worked on were the Tylenol case, from which came increased labeling requirements for medications and the Food Lion vs. ABC 20/20 case, where I sat in on the deposition of Diane Sawyer, attended the 6-week trial and helped achieve victory for our client, Food Lion. In 2007, I left the corporate world and ventured out on my own, to start a communications consulting company. I supplemented my income at first with part-time work at a web-design company owned by friends of mine. It was through them that I was introduced to the organization known

as Business Network International, or “BNI.” I am happy to say that, after more than a decade in business, my communications consulting company, Duchess Enterprise, LLC is doing well and I am known as the “Message Therapist,” making marketing and communications count! In fact, 85% of my clients can be directly attributed to referrals generated through networking in BNI.

The motto of BNI is “Givers Gain,” meaning those who give will receive abundantly. The business relationships I have created through my involvement in BNI are formidable as well as productive. I began as a member in a chapter, took some leadership roles within the chapter, and then was tapped to be an Ambassador, assisting with several chapters. After a couple of years, was then promoted to a Director position and love the opportunities to meet, network with, recruit and train individuals on how to achieve success and expansion in their business. The founder of BNI, Dr. Ivan Misner, is a most influential individual who has impacted many business professionals around the world. I am proud to have a leadership role in his incredible organization. When people generate business for themselves by first passing business to others, the positive energy that is created definitely leads to many smiles!

ABOUT PEG DUCHESNE

Peg Duchesne is a real “people person,” a seasoned networker who loves to help businesses and individuals craft their unique message and deliver it to their market. Peg is a marketing strategist and communications consultant and is owner and founder of her company, Duchess Enterprise, LLC. Some refer to Peg as a “message therapist,” who makes communications count!

Peg listens to her clients’ challenges, points them in the direction of the perfect solution, and helps business owners get the word out about their mission, products and services, and crafts that message and strategizes so it reaches the perfect audience, their ideal client!

Peg comes from a background in the legal field and has a strong sense of service, having served over sixteen years in the Army Reserves. She currently is on the Board of Trustees of her alma mater, St. Mary’s College of Maryland. Peg is a Director of Business Network International, with BNI 4 Shore and is a valuable resource for those ready to learn and grow their business.



Michael Duguet

“A genuine smile worth a thousand words can instantly open the gates to people’s hearts; forming new connections and giving positive motivation and energy.”

SMILING ACROSS CONTINENTS

BY MICHAEL DUGUET

My name is Michael Duguet, I was born in the Loire Valley in France which is world renowned for its wine and royal castles. I often say I was raised in a restaurant kitchen as I remember spending countless evenings in my childhood observing or helping my dad, grandfather and later step-dad cooking the greatest French delicacies you could imagine.

Like many children of restaurant owners, you quickly get involved in the family business. My first official job was at the age of 12 where I would clean the dishes at my mother’s restaurant most weekends. While most kids this age were playing, I was working and making money. From the age of 15 to 20 I worked every summer vacation as a cook at my father’s restaurant. It was a very touristic location in

the castle of King Francois the 1st and a few blocks away from the Leonardo Di Vinci manor where you can tour and discover all of his inventions. During that time I became a master of French Crepes, serving a very diverse clientele of domestic and international people. That was my first real experience dealing with multiple foreign cultures. I discovered English and Germans typically have their dinner at 5-6pm, while Italian and Spanish would come eat at 9-10pm with the French in between resulting in extremely long hours of operation for a small family business with limited staff.

Working underpaid 70+ hours a week in a very small kitchen on hot summer days is quite eye-opening when you are a teenager and most of your friends are having fun outside. It didn't take me long to realize that this wasn't the life I wanted for myself. To this day I believe this was actually a blessing and a pivotal moment of my life as it became crystal clear that I better start working harder at school.

I have a high respect for the passion my parents have for "l'Art de la Table" and the dedication it takes to run a restaurant, but at the time as a young teenager, it was difficult to only see them at work. I had only rare occasions to share personal moments with them. I don't recall my

dad showing up at any of my sports games for instance. Looking back and being older you understand they had to work hard to provide a living for the family and I hold no hard feelings towards this, but it became evident I had to do better for my own children later on in life. While this may sound sad in some respect, I was actually a quite happy kid overall, my friends often called me Colgate as I always had a big smile on my face. I truly believe a genuine smile is worth a thousand words and can instantly open the gates to people's hearts.

From this point onward, with renewed interest for classes and more defined goals for myself, I caught up with academic programs allowing me to ultimately graduate from Ecole Central of Nantes which is one of the top Mechanical engineer schools in the country. At the age of 23 with my new degree secured and already some experience designing automotive parts for a Tier 1 car manufacturer supplier, I had changed my original destiny of carrying the family business.

After a few years working as a system designer in the railway industry my life would reach a second turning point on Christmas Eve. As my professional career advanced with more and more projects dealing with international partners it became clear that I needed to perfect my

English if I was looking to get promoted to the next level. My annual performance review was scheduled that morning and I used the occasion to express my intention to seek for a new position abroad in the near future. As I left my manager's office to say hello to his boss, who did not know the discussion I just had, announced me that the service was creating a new position in the US to develop the business in North America. What a rare moment in life where you formulate a new long-term goal and by unexpected circumstances received an almost immediate life changing opportunity. I was the youngest candidate for the job, but received it nonetheless.

Several months later, on July 5th 2010, I landed in Philadelphia and my American dream began.

The first years in the US were intense professionally and personally. My corporate job as a project manager in a foreign country was obviously a great accomplishment especially for someone who didn't grow up in a white-collar environment. While my new situation was fulfilling at many levels, I was missing the one thing I had been immersed in since the very early age: owning and running my own business.

One chance you have when you come to the US as an expatriate is that you can easily identify differences or voids between home and your new environment. I believe many of those voids are often actual business opportunities. As I enjoyed my new life in the suburbs of Philly I was struck by how many people would approach me in the street, at the grocery store or at the club to ask me where I bought my fancy-looking clothing. One noticeable difference between the two cultures is that French people will always dress up if they go out of the house, even if it is to go buy a bottle of milk in the middle of the night.

As I enjoyed receiving compliments by random strangers, I quickly realized that the US men's fashion industry was lagging 10 years behind what was happening in Europe. In most places, even in large cities, men had a very limited choice in clothing beside what I consider the at that time classic and conservative options you could find in most US department stores.

From this observation I decided to reach out to one of my favorite clothing brands at the time, Franck Michel, a 40+ year old father-son designer house located in Le Marais in the heart of Paris. One phone call and a sleek corporate style presentation later, I had become the

exclusive distributor for the brand in North America. This was the inception of my first business UrUnique.com (You Are Unique) which was offering exclusive designer shirts for the fashion forward man. While Fashion styles come and go quickly, I was one of the first people to introduce reversed and double collar shirts in America. Quickly after onboarding other distinctive European inspired clothing brands and expanding the offering to all major pieces of menswear, the company's website became Menfashion.com.

My goal was to offer distinguishable items that not only gave confidence to the men who wear them, but also allows them to convey a story, express or reveal their charisma and certainly appeal the curiosity of the crowd. Like a genuine smile, Fashion is a form of personal expression which is often the starting point of a great discussion or at least a great chance to receive a compliment from a random stranger.

At this point I was a corporate employee during the day and a businessman at night and weekends. But soon came the time where I had to make a big decision for myself. At the end of 2013 my international assignment was about to end. This was a particularly stressful time as I had to secure a new position in order to stay in the US, keep my

business alive and continue my love relationship with Lindsey, my now wife, emergency medicine physician, and business partner that I had recently met. While I had many reasons to stay in the US, it was a new milestone in my life as it meant the US would be the place I now call home. When I left France as an expatriate, my colleagues had told me "You know when you leave but you don't know when you will come back." It had come the time to make a decision as to which life I wanted to continue.

The next chapter of my life has been the transition to a more family-oriented path. After the birth of my 1st child, I promised myself to be a more dedicated father than I had growing up, so I quit my engineering career to free up time for my family while continuing developing my business from home. This is a lifestyle change that takes time. When you have been wired from an early age to work hard all the time, it wasn't always natural for me to relax or plan for activities and leisure. Thankfully I owe my wife a great tribute for helping me to reach a more balanced lifestyle one step at a time.

Two years ago, Lindsey and I started our own real estate investment firm which is our ultimate plan to reach financial freedom and provide

the best life and education for our 3 children. We aspire to leave them a Legacy that will allow them accomplish even bigger dreams and hopefully help them put many smiles on people's faces. In the two years since we have started this new business, we have acquired over 20 properties, most of which have been complete renovations of distressed houses into beautiful places for others to live. We strive to help everyone from those who we buy the properties from, to the community in reviving run-down houses and buildings, to the new tenants who can now call a place home. While we hit roadblocks and face struggles every day, we have learned an immense amount of knowledge in this time and keep going forward with a positive attitude. Because it is very true that whether you think you can or you can't you're right.

ABOUT MICHAEL DUGUET

Michael Duguet is a French ecommerce and real estate entrepreneur. He is the founder and owner of Menfashion.com, a store offering luxury designer clothing for the modern and stylish man. He started his career working as a Mechanical Engineer in the Automotive and Railroad industries which led him to move from France to the US in 2010. He currently resides in Pennsylvania with his wife, who is an Emergency Medicine physician, and their three children where he also manages the family real estate rental portfolio as they acquire and fix distressed multi-family properties in their local community.

Books that challenge your life:

Rich Dad, Poor Dad

Movies that inspire you

The Matrix

Saving Private Ryan

Songs that inspire you:

Get Lucky – Daft Punk

Love Generation – Bob Sinclar

Don't Stop Til You Get Enough – Michael Jackson

Heal the World – Michael Jackson

Your Hero:

My maternal grandfather Roger Rabiller.

Quote you live by:

“Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right.”



Tony DURso, Talk Show Host, Speaker, Author

"Today is the Best Day of My Life!"

SMILING BIG ON THE TONY DURSO SHOW

BY TONY DURSO

I am an Italian immigrant, coming to the U.S. at the age of three, where I promptly took a two-year vacation.

At age five, I began a 7-day a week paper route in Chicago, getting up every morning at about 4:30 a.m. (That's probably labeled as child slavery these days. — I learned the value of one dollar and consider it very precious to this day.)

I got back every morning by 6-something a.m., and got ready for school that started at 8:30 a.m. if I remember correctly.

I walked to school about 1-2 miles away. I walked back home to lunch every day, and then back to school. All in all, that's 4 trips a day, 5 days

a week to school. That was nothing for me after delivering papers in all sorts of weather.

I became immune to any kind of inclement weather — any kind — 100 degrees below zero with the wind chill factor, five-foot high snow drifts, frozen ice streets and sidewalks and freezing ice-rain were not an issue.

The paper carts were huge with two giant wheels almost as tall as I. The weekday papers were OK, but on Sundays, each Chicago Tribune newspaper was several inches thick, and with 100 or so newspapers, my cart was too heavy for me to move by myself. My older brother had to help me on Sundays to deliver papers until I could manage for myself.

After some 5 years or so, of doing this, one of the papers disappeared (The Chicago Sun Times) and I only had to do the Chicago Tribune. That was an afternoon route, and I was delighted.

I then got a bicycle and was able to ride my way through the neighborhoods, instead of pushing the giant monstrous cart. On Sundays, I made several trips to refill my bag with newspapers.

I did that for ten years and faithfully did my duty every day despite snow, blizzards, freezing rain, near-typhoon winds*, 100 degrees below zero and everything else. — Except I missed one day when I was attacked by a band of snowball-throwing bigger kids that forced me to flee from my papers, only to return the next day to finish the task.

(*Winds so strong that I could lean forward and almost let go without falling down; winds so strong that sometimes I was forced backwards while trying to walk forward; winds so strong that it was hard to breathe — all while trying to hold onto and deliver newspapers.)

All my money went to my parents to help support me, pay for my clothes, school books and so forth.

We moved after my 4th grade. I checked into the newspaper center in my new neighborhood and they did not have carts. They only had newspaper bags.

Thus, I carried all the newspapers on my back and walked the miles of my routes. The only consolation was this was an afternoon gig, and I didn't have to get up at 4:30 a.m. Lovely!

The bags were so heavy, nearly a hundred pounds for the weekend paper, that my shoulders and back hurt horribly. (Maybe I weighed a hundred pounds or so back then.)

I would pick which shoulder hurt the least to hold the bag for the longest, until the pain was unbearable, at which point I switched shoulders again. It was all I could do to walk, like a hunchback, looking down at the ground, because the weight was so great.* I did that for years, until I could afford a bicycle at the very end of my newspaper career.

(*Little did I know, that this wrecked my posture. — Later in life, I found that I always walked around looking down, and never realized it was from this time period.)

At ten years into delivering newspapers, I was finally old enough to work with a permit. I got one soon after I turned fourteen. (Note: I did all of this myself, including finding a doctor, getting a physical, getting papers signed, etc.)

At fourteen I did a few years stint as a short order cook at a fast food drive-in. From here on I supported myself and purchased my own

clothes, school books and material.

At nineteen I went into corporate America and learned so many skills: marketing, public relations, typing, lead generation, sales, and so forth. I learned on my own and was self-taught on most topics, getting books from the library on subjects of interest.

In my 30's, I started going to chiropractors for my aching back. Co-workers were unsympathetic that picking up a few boxes here and there would cause any issue, when girls 1/2 my size had no issue. — What did they know?

One chiropractor wanted to know about my neck injury and when it happened. I said, "What injury? I never had one."

Her answer, "Never look up for the rest of my life. Just don't look up, ever."

It was then that I noticed my neck and slightly hunched look was not very pleasing. My neck was at a 45 degree angle when I walked. I usually looked down.

For years I had my neck treated. After maybe a decade of chiropractic treatments, I finally decided to do what I was told to never do ever in my life: I decided one day to look straight up and if that created any injury, then so be it, but I felt I could.

So I did and I was able to look straight up with impunity. Though, it hurt after a short while. The fact is I did it. I beat it. I straightened out my posture finally.

When I go on stage these days, I don't think anyone is the wiser.

In 2007 I was given the opportunity to have my own lead generation company, and grabbed the shot.

I did well, but the industry was beset with regulation changes that impacted the way we could market, or the way others could accept leads. — There were four major changes, over 7 years that brought my business down to the ground. Each time it was upsetting to rebuild my business based on new protocols.

Something inside kept telling me to find something I could completely

control myself; something that was mine that no one could heavily impact; something I could completely own and fully be in charge.

I looked and looked for what could I do that I could control one hundred percent. I kept hearing this word here and there, "podcast." When I decided to find out what it was, I yelled out, "Hey! I'm Italian, I can talk! — I can do this." I studied everything I could find on the Internet in a two-month period.

I found a connection to radio legend Michael Benner, and got him to mentor me on how to radio. (He is well known throughout Southern California for his popular human potential talk radio programs on KABC-AM, KLOS-FM, KLSX-FM, KCBS-FM, KRLA-AM, and most recently on KPFK-FM.)

Then I did the Italian thing: I jumped in with both feet and started.

My first shows were one-hour live on Blog Talk Radio. I learned through the school of hard knocks, and from Benner, how to put on a good show.

I started growing my social media network in advance for what I knew was to come. I created Revenue Chat Radio (Sep 2015) and used my marketing skills to let people know that my shows were available. I pushed hard.

I knew the basics of marketing and lead generation — while Facebook Google et al change their algorithms, logorithms and so forth, I knew hard core marketing basiscs, which work — my savings grace.

I started with zero audience. I did not know anyone in the industry as my prior work was always online and I never met any clients.

I looked through social media and picked out entrepreneurs who resonated with me. I invited them for an interview and found everyone agreed.

Many of them promoted the shows to their own audience and to their social media network, which in turn brought me more and more fans. This started becoming a lot of fun.

And then the hacking started. I did not document when it started exactly. This was a bad time of my life, and who wants to remember that?

My website images kept being deleted. My shows disappeared. My web pages disappeared. My blogs went missing. I was in horror, and for some 2-3 months played this cat and mouse game with someone (s) hacking my site while I kept trying to plug the security holes.

I tried to give up a few times. Literally. I really did. I threw in the towel. I couldn't deal with it anymore. The stress level was making me crack.

I told my wife I was quitting and she said that since I had done so well, so fast, that this is my calling, and to continue. She said that I knew how to rebuild everything and get it going again. I did it once, so I could do it again.

She said she would give me all the support I needed, even though no income was coming from this endeavor. She put in for and started doing extra shifts and worked overtime as often as possible to help out.

She often worked 6, sometimes 7 days a week, getting up at like 3:30 a.m. and returning home in the evening every day. — That was horrible to watch.

I tried to talk her out of it a few times . . . but I never stopped. — I kept going with determination, even while I was crying inside. You have no idea how much of a horror this was. I think of this as one of the worst times of my life.

After a few months, I seemed to have plugged the right holes and the hacking stopped. — I rebuilt as fast as I could and kept my shows going.

I wanted to quit. None of this was making income. I felt everything was destroyed. However, I kept that on the inside.

On the outside I kept at it, I kept at it, I kept at it.

To my delight, I got about 500,000 downloads in my first year (Sept 2016).

Well into my 2nd year (June 2017) I had an opportunity to join VoiceAmerica Influencers Channel with a 2nd weekly talk show. While Revenue Chat Radio was about a half-hour long, this was a full one-hour weekly talk show. I took the chance.

I called that show, The Spotlight with Tony DUrso.

Now I was running two weekly talk shows, with multiple guests. It kept me busy.

That show did great and quickly ramped up near the volume of Revenue Chat Radio.

During this (in my 2nd year), I got hacked again. This time all of my website traffic was going somewhere else. My domain was hijacked. I would get it fixed, and then it would get hijacked again. This went on for seemingly several months.

That again took a long time to fully take control of. I finally got that hole plugged, and I kept doing my shows regardless.

I continued my pattern hard, promoting my shows as if my life depended on it. — In my 2nd year, I hit 1,000,000 downloads (Sept 2017).

I also put out a book earlier in the year, Elite Entrepreneurs, which became a quick Amazon bestseller.

And, by the end of my 2nd year, I was the #1 show on VoiceAmerica Influencer Channel.

Then, at the beginning of my 3rd year I did what you would expect. I took a gamble and combined both of my powerful shows into one giant: The Tony DUrso Show (Sept 2018).

My fingers were crossed. I wasn't sure what to expect.

And then the numbers came: I nearly doubled my audience and began hitting 50,000 downloads per episode.

The momentum grew, I was running on inertia. Just a little bit past my 3rd year, I hit 3,000,000 downloads (Dec 2018).

I learned a hard lesson: you only fail if you stop. If you do not stop, then you are only learning. You have to keep going until you succeed.

Along with that lesson, I get mentored by the world's elite for a few hours a week. I interview several prominent entrepreneurs and celebrities each week who shared their insights and guidance with my

audience, as well as with me.

I also started going to local networking events, meeting people, and inviting them on my show.

The list of guests waiting to get on my show expanded to about 1 1/2 years. Evrerybody it seemed, wanted to get on my show.

I began asking for an appearance fee, or some sort of barter or trade and that became successful as well.

The number of sponsors grew and grew as well. Some well-known brands advertise with me (listen to some shows and find out).

My show grew and grew. — It took a lot of work. It was not easy.

I started taking on podcasting clients and became the “secret weapon” for them. Some have gone on to achieve great success, such as being in the top 100 on iTunes, or getting 100's of 1000s of downloads per quarter .

I believe the success of my shows, aside from my marketing and lead generation knowledge, is that I focus strictly on my guests. The show is all about them. My job is to highlight and spotlight them for my audience. My guests are important, not me.

You'll notice I don't usually digress with stories about myself, aside from a comment or two.

I look at it this way: You cannot possibly read every book, watch every video, do every class and attend every lecture/webinar by everyone in the world. It is not possible.

You cannot possibly do everything all by yourself. You need help to grow. You need a team.

I consider it my task to connect you to successful entrepreneurs and VIPs who can give you some of the wherewithal you need to help you succeed, to help you overcome obstacles and to help you grow fast.

My growing audience tells me that I am on the right track.

I now Smile Big Every Day.

When people call me on the phone and give the usual, "how are you doing today" without expecting much of an answer, I surprise them with, "It's the Best Day of my Life!"

I usually shock people with that, and I am always asked, "Why?"

I say that my refrigerator is full, my wife is happy (together 26 years at the time of writing this) and that my vehicles are full of gas.

Yes, you can say that I am, "Living the Dream."

I guess that's true.

- I write my own ticket.
- I do my shows when I want (to a degree as I have sponsors to answer to).
- I travel when I want.
- I take lots of little family trips.
- Every day is really, "The Best Day of My Life!"

- I ask my wife routinely to make sure I am grounded to earth. I never want to think I am too big for anyone or anything.
- I am greatly appreciative of my success.

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Why I do what I do is not easy to say. You will think you heard it from many people, and yet, I can tell you clearly, that this changed me completely.

It is why I am here that started me on the path to success.

Sometime before I started Revenue Chat Radio, I was given an insight that I should adjust my life to be fully in charge of it (as already discussed). That was a tough move to make.

I knew there was a bigger reason for all this. I went forward with faith.

It took time and I can honestly say that I became more and more on

the path of my bigger purpose on earth.

The realization was gradual, and took years. Nonetheless, it is profound and while you may have heard these words before, they are extremely important to me.

I do this for you. Yes, that is right.

I do this to help you become a bigger, better, brighter being and rise above the confusion we live in.

There is so much information out there, that it becomes an overload. It is a confusion.

There are so many different answers to the same question.

For example, there are so many great people who all seem to have a different take on how to define “goal.”

I talk about this in my book “The Vision Map™” (working title). This is why I use the term, “Long-Term Objective” instead of “goal” (which

can mean something done in one day, one week, one month, multiple months, a year, or even a ball through a net — it does get confusing).

That gets confusing. We need to cut through the confusion and advance.

We need to cut through the confusion and move forward.

We need to rise above.

My job is to help do that. My job is to help those who want to get helped.

My job is to help you rise above the confusion.

I love my job. This is my purpose.

I thank God for giving me this purpose and helping me see the light of day.

I thank God every day for my air, for my food, for my water and for

my abundance of survival. It is with His grace that I have been helped. I am so grateful for everything He does for me. I cannot thank Him enough.

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- I create abundance by simply doing my job as above.
- I do my job and the abundance of survival comes.
- The abundance is already there. I merely have to walk to it by following my purpose.
- The abundance comes virtually automatically.
- I focus on helping.
- I focus on returning a good value to anyone and everyone.
- I try my best and usually everyone is super pleased with me (99.9%). That makes me happy.
- The proof is in over 4,000,000 downloads to date, a bestseller, the #1 show on VoiceAmerica Influencers, and with very successful entrepreneurs and celebrities getting interviewed on my show.
- That makes me happy. I love making people smile.

ABOUT TONY DURSO

In the past 3 1/2 years Tony DUrso:

- Launched Revenue Chat Radio and then, The Spotlight with Tony DUrso — now merged into One Giant: The Tony DUrso Show.
- The Tony DUrso Show gets 60,000 downloads per weekly episode.
- Tony's shows have 4 million downloads to date.
- He's the number one show on VoiceAmerica Influencers.
- Tony is an Amazon bestseller, *Elite Entrepreneurs*.
- He helps millions of entrepreneurs learn from the success of others.
- Tony teaches *The Vision Map*™, the testament to his success.
- (Proper spelling is D'Urso but as search engines get confused, the ['] is dropped to make it simpler.)

Tony can be found at tonydurso.com



Stephen Dynako, Speaker; Author; Founder of Social Chrysalis

“A smile is the way of authentic, heartfelt connection.”

THE INSPIRATION, JOY, AND SMILES OF FOLLOWING THE EVOLUTIONARY IMPULSE

BY STEPHEN DYNAKO

I was born in Chicago in the fall of 1966, a few months prior to the “Big Snow” of January 1967. Even though I was too young to remember the blizzard, it must have had an impact on two of my early interests: 1) a fascination with the weather and 2) my love of media and communication.

After I got a little older, I would clip the weather map from the back page of newspaper, tack it to my bulletin board, and deliver weather reports to an imaginary TV audience. Therefore, I integrated my two early interests into something that brought me joy and frankly confidence, since I was a shy and usually tentative child.

My inherent presentation ability coupled with the power of my imagination to create something tangible instilled me with a sense of personal agency and joy in doing work that called to me. Of course as a child, I wouldn't have called it work back then. Even today, when I'm immersed in media, speaking or other communication projects, it certainly doesn't feel like work.



Another one of my early interests was the actual the world of work. I somehow found it fascinating that my Dad would leave the house each day to go to work. It was always mysterious to me: What was this work and what did it entail? Eventually I discovered my Dad's identification badge, emblazoned with the company logo and his photo. I also found out more about the actual work he did. My Dad was an engineer in the picture tube division of Zenith Television. This was at the point in my young childhood when I wanted to do what my Dad did. I created a crude version of an employee ID badge for myself and I setup a small office for myself, with a card table as my desk, a makeshift name plate, a couple of pens and pencils, and a pad of paper.

As I got older, my interest in communications continued to grow and I took up writing short stories. My second grade teacher encouraged me by telling me I had the talent to become an author someday. My Dad was still working for Zenith at the time, and the company had decided to replace all of its manual typewriters with electric ones. Employees were given the option to purchase the old manual typewriters at what I suspect was a deep discount. My dad bought one of the old Royal manual typewriters and brought it home. I instantly fell in love with the machine and taught myself an evolved method of hunt-and-peck typing that got faster and more accurate over time.

By the time I got to high school, I had written and typed up dozens of short stories that I stored away in a briefcase. My interest in communication evolved to newspaper reporting. I pitched myself to my hometown newspaper as a stringer reporter, specializing in human interest features. I also became editor-in-chief of my high school newspaper, The Willowbrook Skyline. I typed up all of my stories on that old Royal typewriter, which solidified the foundation for my communications career.

In college, my focus shifted a bit as I took an interest in radio. True to being a writer, though, I wrote scripts for the weekly top 40 music

countdown program produced at my college radio station -- Loyola University's Top-40 outlet WLWU, affectionately known as Hitline 88.7 FM. Eventually, I was presented with the opportunity to assume one of the daily four-hour air shifts as a dee-jay. Even though I had gained a great deal of confidence as a writer, I was hesitant at this point in my life to become on-air personality. During my childhood I had developed a rather bad lisp, particularly in mispronouncing "sh" and "ch" sounds. Even though I had received speech therapy in grammar school, I wasn't able to overcome the problem and the lisp remained.

It is said that personal growth happens when one is willing to step outside of his comfort zone. My comfort zone in the communications realm back then was firmly rooted in being a writer. However, thinking back to my very early childhood days of delivering the weather report to an imaginary TV audience, there must have been something in the cards that was nudging me to get in front of the microphone. I can't recall exactly how it happened, but I got connected with one of Loyola's speech teachers, who was generous enough to coach me to overcome my lisp. After that I took on the Monday through Friday midday shift at the Hitline.

In addition to being a dee-jay at Loyola, I worked for a couple of professional commercial radio stations in the Chicago market, plus a publishing company as editor of its annual media directory. After graduation I worked in corporate communications for IBM, and even though my career trajectory took me into different industries beyond the media, communications was an aspect of every professional role I held. I continue to leverage and develop those skills to this day.



That early experience of being coached by my college speech teacher on his own time must have left a generative impression on me and served as an example for selflessly helping others. In the professional domain, I had the opportunity to be meaningfully helpful to people when I was a manager of a client service group in the banking industry. Somehow it was encoded in me to manage from a center of compassion and understanding. I was interested in helping employees grow, to fulfill their potential, as well as to bask in the glow of all the positive feelings generated by prioritizing others.

I made myself fully available to the people who reported to me. I took the time to hear out their frustrations, their suggestions, their hopes

and their dreams, and in most cases simply to be present to them, to ensure that they were heard. The greatest compliment I received from one of my employees – one that I will always hold in my heart – was her admission to me that she felt safe telling me anything, because she knew I would always listen and never judge. There is no perk nor fringe benefit I could ever receive from a company that is worth more to me than that complement. The practice of that presence continues to be one of my most deep-seeded values in business and in my personal life.

As the years passed in my corporate career, the practice of authentic human values in each of my roles, though fulfilling in its own way, left me yearning for something more. I wanted to accelerate my own evolution as a generative person. I got involved in the ministry in my church as a lay chaplain. This led me to a very profound experience with an elderly congregant named Raymond, which put me firmly on a spiritual path and invited me to open my heart more widely to being of service. After Raymond died, here is what I wrote about him for his memorial service:

Having been a fellow member of Raymond's church then later his chaplain, he and I often spoke of spiritual things. Like us all, he had regrets in life, but as a student of Truth and practitioner of

consciousness, he strived to be enlightened and make the most of the present moment. As such, we did not speak extensively of days past. However, I do know that Raymond was born in Puerto Rico, he served his country in the military, he deeply loved his pets, and he took pleasure in the finer things in life – the theater, classical music, good food and drink, and sharing festive times with friends and family.

I came to know Raymond much later in his life, long after his physical ability to enjoy most of the things mentioned above betrayed his desire to partake in them. As many of the photos on display at this celebration service suggest, Raymond was great company – someone who, I'm sure, was on or near the top of everybody's invite list for special occasions and casual get-togethers alike.

Separated by age, I missed the opportunity to hobnob with Raymond at a party, a concert, or a show. However, I can lay claim, albeit selfishly, to knowing Raymond during perhaps the most spiritual time in his life – a time when the treasure of his heart was his consciousness. Raymond spoke powerful affirmations in the shadow of discouraging conditions. His mind was firmly

connected to the Divine, so much so that I pray I can hold the high watch with the same fortitude as he.

Raymond was more than a friend to me. He is my spiritual mentor. I should have told him that when I had the opportunity; it just took his transition for me to realize it. Somehow, I think he knows.

My experience with Raymond had me asking myself the next question of “What do I do with this experience? What comes next?” I thought professional chaplaincy was perhaps the next stepping stone in my career, and I embarked on a six-month chaplain internship with Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. Here, too, I had not just one but a number of profound ministerial and helping experiences, and again at end of my tenure it had me asking the same questions.

After taking over a year to discern my next move, all the while continuing to work in the corporate world, I eventually applied to my alma mater Loyola University and its master's degree program in pastoral counseling. Because I was not ordained, professional chaplaincy seemed too far out of reach, but becoming a pastoral counselor definitely seemed within reach.

I went through the program in three years, attending halftime while still working full-time in the corporate world. I did my clinical internship at a psychotherapy practice then after graduation I attempted to build my own practice as a pastoral counselor. Building this new life and career did not go as I expected. I struggled to get traction in the field and underneath it all, I ultimately never felt the alignment that this was the appropriate calling for my life and my life's purpose.

You might imagine my frustration and my shame at concluding that I had wasted so much time pursuing all of this education, only to have it bear no fruit nor leave me with any sense of hope for my future work. I became depressed and angry with myself. How is it that I could have been so focused, so accomplished, and so confident earlier in my career only to feel that all of those attributes were now suddenly no longer part of my personality and way of being? I felt like an imposter and a foreigner to myself.

However, one positive thing all of that education in psychology and counseling did for me was give me the tools to practice self-awareness. I later came to terms that my graduate education was more about evolving myself than it was about directly being of service, even

though I certainly did serve and help others in the course of it. Instead, my graduate education and everything that happened in the wake of it was to support my growth. It opened up the space, albeit painfully, to integrate the total of all my personal and professional experiences, skills, and genius so that I might show up more powerfully as a contributor to a better world.

The eureka moment for me was when I realized that I could only evolve as a generative human being when I integrated my professional and my personal experiences with my desire to serve and to help people. Before that there was a part of me that was wanting to leave behind or deny my previous experience in order to move to the next level. Instead, I came to realize that I can take my best and most generative attributes from the past, embrace and practice them in the present, in order to build the best and most generative future.

With this realization in my consciousness, I eventually came upon the conscious business movement. This certainly appeared to be the field in which I could integrate my previous professional experience with my desire to help. Again, using those deeply embedded communication skills, I was presented with the opportunity to teach and develop

educational content for a conscious business training and certification program.

Subsequently, I was introduced to the author and futurist Barbara Marx Hubbard. Barbara was considered the mother of the field of conscious evolution and she wrote a book of the same name. I was invited help Barbara co-create the last two online programs of her life, and even though I did not know her for very long, we became fast friends. We made a positive impact on two cohorts of students who took the principles of conscious evolution and applied them in a practical way in their own callings.

My co-creative work with Barbara also inspired me to found Social Chrysalis, an online learning platform that teaches the skills of conscious evolution. Not surprisingly, Social Chrysalis is the platform that allows me to further integrate my communications experience, my business experience, my desire to help others, and fulfillment of my evolutionary impulse to contribute to a better world. Despite the storms that are sure to occur, I forecast many more bright and hope-filled days ahead.

ABOUT STEPHEN DYNAKO

Stephen Dynako partnered with the late legendary futurist Barbara Marx Hubbard in 2019 to conduct the final program of her life, the Evolutionary Ambassador Academy. The program was “an immersion experience to actualize one’s creative potential in the world and accelerate personal evolutionary power.” Since then, Stephen has focused his efforts on taking conscious evolution to the mainstream by founding the educational platform Social Chrysalis: <https://www.socialchrysalis.com/>.

Stephen has worked in both corporate and entrepreneurial environments for over 30 years. This includes leadership positions in the corporate communications, technology, and banking industries. He passionately and courageously brings to business his gifts of communication, leadership and presence. In service, Stephen has applied his gifts in the realms of counseling and the ministry. Informed by his varied experiences, Stephen believes that now is the time for humanity to get radical about making Love our priority. His website is <https://www.dynako.com>

Books that changed your life:

Autobiography of a Yogi by
Paramahansa Yogananda

Song that inspires you:

Lovely Day by Bill Withers

Your Hero:

My Mom

Quote you live by:

“Judge not by appearances but judge with right
judgment.”

–Christ Jesus

“I came here a clown and I will leave a trapeze
artist.”

--Raymond J. Quinton



Karen Eastman

“The game of life is won the second you choose to make your smile your go to expression.”

CONSCIOUS POSITIVITY

BY KAREN EASTMAN

Everything in our lives elicits hope. From the time we are little, we start hoping. From idealistic thoughts of ‘I hope I get a puppy for my birthday’, or ‘I hope we get to go to Disneyland this summer’, to worrisome thoughts like, ‘I hope I don’t fall off my bike’, or ‘I hope I pass this test’, or even ‘I hope he likes me.’ Then there are concerned thoughts like ‘I hope I find my dog’, or ‘I hope grandma gets better’.

Somewhere along the way, as we get older, we often get cynical. ‘That NEVER happens to ME’, or ‘I NEVER win’. We don’t even realize that we’ve made this cynical switch in our lives.

What if we switch it back? We are all capable of doing just that. What if we looked at every adverse situation in our lives with HOPE, instead of despair? What if we searched for the positive in a negative situation? If one searches for the negative in ANY situation, one will find it.

However, the same goes for POSITIVITY.

Let's be *consciously* positive for a few moments as I share a couple of stories with you.

When I was just a baby, 18 months old, I swallowed plumbers' lye - commonly known as Liquid Plumber.

You see back in the 'olden days,' they did not have a skull and crossbones on the label (assuming I could *read* a label of course) or have childproof caps. (I think I'm one of the reasons they HAVE childproof caps now). I was rushed to Children's Hospital of Los Angeles where I spent much of my young life. Before I was even 10 years old, I had endured over 200 surgeries on my esophagus, primarily to keep it clear of scar tissue.

I remember much of all of that. I remember going to the hospital every few months. I remember the nauseating smell of ether, the anesthesia they used when I was a child. I remember waking up after every surgery with a sore throat, and THEN the nurse would ask me to cough...IMAGINE THAT!

But here's the funny thing.

I knew ALL the nurses by name on the pediatric floor. I was even a little bit of a celebrity. I could pretty much get away with anything while I was there...we even had a wheelchair race in the hall one time! I got plenty of jello, ice cream and popsicles and Emmett Kelly Jr (the clown) even came to visit me. Looking back, honestly, I have no bad memories of my many visits there.

At the age of 9, we were living in a small rural town in central Nevada, and mom found out there was a doctor in Las Vegas that could do my surgery. You see, every three months, she had been driving 450 miles each way to take me to Children's Hospital, and Las Vegas was only 150 miles from where we lived.

After surgery, mom knew something wasn't right. I wasn't waking up like I usually did. I had already been delivered from recovery into a room, but I just wasn't waking up. Mom contacted the nurse and stated her concern. She had been through this surgery with me so many times, she knew what to expect. She told the nurse I was very hot and could they please take my temperature. They did and it was 106.2! They immediately packed me in ice and what they discovered was ... the doctor had punctured my esophagus. Peritonitis had set in.

They performed repertory surgery to repair my esophagus and I was in intensive care for 31 days.

Here's what I remember. My grandma & grandpa came into the ICU and told me that when I got all better, I could have anything I wanted, and what would that be? I said I wanted a blue bicycle with a white basket and pink flowers. (I got it!) I don't remember any pain, or anxiety, or fear.

When I came out of ICU, I was not allowed to have anything to eat or drink by mouth and had a tube in my stomach to feed me. After my 31 days in ICU, I spent another 30 days on the regular pediatric floor. I was in a room with another little girl. About two weeks after being there, I saw that my little roommate had a 7-Up sitting on her table with a little bendy straw hanging out of it. I daydreamed about having a sip of that 7-up and how good it would taste. When that little girl was sleeping...I looked at that 7-Up, then I looked at the door, then back at the 7-Up. I finally got up the courage to get out of my bed and I tiptoed over to her bedside table. I quickly looked around and took a long swig of that 7-Up...long since flat by now. Oh, how delicious it was! How wonderful that sweet liquid tasted after 6 weeks of NOTHING. Fortunately for

me, my esophagus was pretty healed up by then and no harm was done. I'll never forget that moment (and glad I didn't get busted!).

I still have to have surgeries to dilate my esophagus, and now they do biopsies because I've had so much damage to my throat over the years that I'm more susceptible to esophageal cancer. I've been very fortunate so far, rather, blessed and I'm incredibly grateful for every day. Looking at unfortunate or even bad things that happen to us and finding the blessings...that's *Conscious Positivity*.

Back in 1986, at the age of 25, I was in between jobs as a travel agent and was burned out. As I was driving my Volkswagen bug during a very hot day in August in Las Vegas, I looked down for just a brief moment, and the car in front of me stopped for the car in front of them to turn into a driveway. I plowed right into them. I wasn't wearing a seat belt that day and I broke the windshield with my face, fractured my wrist and my leg. I was very, very lucky. I got stitches in my face, and fractured my wrist and leg. I decided that it was God's way of shaking me up..telling me to stop feeling sorry for myself and figure out what I could do to serve others. Very shortly after that, I was offered a job that I loved for years.

My dad, Marty, was the manager of a river rafting company on the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon. In May of 1989, my dad was 'captaining' a raft through Crystal Rapid. It's a treacherous rapid, rated a 10, which is a classification based on difficulty, with 10 being the highest. When the guides are getting ready to traverse a rapid, they get out on the shore and 'scout' how the water is running, so they know which way to go. When they finally went through, the water took my dad's raft in a different path and the raft flipped. Everyone was thrown out. Marty immediately went after the passengers to get them safely back to the raft, or to shore. He shouted 'get a head count' to account for all passengers, which they did. Unfortunately, my dad didn't fare so well. Tragically, he died after saving 5 people's lives. He was only 54 years young. We discovered after he passed away that he was an undiagnosed diabetic and was told by the doctor that they would need to amputate one (or both) of his legs after the rafting season was over. I called my dad an 'earth guy'. I believe he died doing what he loved and wouldn't have wanted to live in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Knowing that comforted me. I chose to find the positive.

Do you see the pattern here? In every situation I can think of, I have chosen to be consciously positive. Find the blessing. Trust me, it's not easy.

Another thought. Have you noticed that every single Disney movie has something bad or horrifying in it? Why IS that? It really is a parable. There's always a message there. It's because we always appreciate the end result SO much more when we've gone through the valley. If you value those difficult and trying times, you will be conscious that there is always an ebb and flow. After the darkness comes the light.

If you look for the negative, you will ALWAYS find it. The same goes for positivity! When your mind is centered on positivity, you are more equipped for those stumbling blocks that others find to be obstacles. Push them out of the way and find the blessing!

My wish for you is that you will take a deep breath whenever you are facing one of those stumbling blocks. Gear up and know that once you overcome it, you have more tools for the future, you can bless others with your wisdom, and you are better equipped for the next one. Face them with the mindset of *conscious* positivity, and you will experience more positive, more joy and have a more fulfilled life!

God bless you in your journey...and stay **CONSCIOUSLY** POSITIVE!



Jerry Edwards

“There are only so many meals in a lifetime.
They should all count!”

GREAT FOOD BRINGS A SMILE TO EVERY FACE

BY JERRY EDWARDS

As a young child I loved sports, cooking and helping people. My Mother and Grandmother's influenced me in the kitchen as I always wanted to help. They stood by my side and taught me techniques and flavor development. But my Father's influence in sports and business was in the forefront of my mind. While in high school, I really felt that getting into a culinary program somewhere would be a great idea. But, I was destined for college and a professional career.

I went to college to study psychology, which seemed like a great field because I would be able to help others through compassionate counseling. As it works out, college students need to support themselves, so side jobs are important. All of my side jobs involved cooking ... and I loved it. Getting to work the line in a fine French restaurant, becoming an ice

cream maker in a small ice cream shop and working the grill at the Student Union were all very exciting to me. I was able to be creative and create something that brought joy and pleasure to guests of these establishments.



I stepped back my Junior year having completed my core classes for a Pshych degree and decided to make a plan for my future. It involved getting into business as a chef somewhere somehow. I added a second major in business and started working toward that goal. I worked 8 hours a day 7 days a week running a small ice cream shop, which grew to 3 stores, a bakery, a deli and a catering company in my Junior and Senior year of college.

After graduation, I was able to secure a small sandwich shop and started my own business at age 22. It was the best decision of my life. Since then, I have never looked back, only forward. Failure has never been an option and believe me, I should have failed many times.

Over the years, my passion for food has really been the driving force behind my cooking. I had a small amount of culinary training, but

mostly I learned through trial and error, intensive study and other chefs that were happy to collaborate with me. I studied the butchering of meats and fish, sauce making, plate designing and all around kitchen management.

I learned the greatest lesson: Learn from others. I joined the American Culinary Federation (ACF) as well as The National Association of Catering Executives (NACE). These two organizations gave me the courage and the tools to grow my business. It was the relationships that made this possible.

NACE especially taught me not only about cutting edge culinary concepts, but also how to run a business, how to treat your team and how to motivate others. I dedicated much of my time back to NACE and have been rewarded greatly. I was named to the Hall of Fame for NACE in 2006 and an Industry ICON in 2014.

Over the years, I have learned that giving is the most important thing I can do. Therefore, I have spent much of my energy on charitable educational organizations like NACE, ACF, Tastewise Kids, National Academy Foundation and The Visit Baltimore Education and Training Foundation.

Today I am proud to have run my business for 38 years and the main mission has been to serve others during the most important moments of their life. I am truly blessed to have had such a life.



There is a desire inside of me to create a wonderful experience for others, whether it is during a conversation over a glass of wine or it is an event that I have designed and executed. We talk about the 4 pillars of our success:

1. Creativity in all things, which includes problem solving
2. Passion – You must have a passion for serving and pleasing others
3. Teamwork – Catering and Culinary is a team sport. The weakest link can bring the whole thing down, so inspiring everyone to be on their game is very important.
4. Philanthropy – We believe in giving until it hurts. Anyone

can give an insignificant amount toward a charity. But getting involved and truly helping is a different story and needs to be nurtured

I believe that by constantly recognizing and acting upon these four elements, I am able to make a difference in other lives. This creates abundance in many ways. Business grows, relationships grow and I grow.

ABOUT JERRY EDWARDS

Chef Jerry Edwards is President and Owner of Chef's Expressions Catering and Consulting.

His company has won two separate National Catering Company of the Year Awards and won over 80 industry awards.

Jerry holds an honorary doctorate in hospitality

In 2008 he was inducted into The NACE Hall of Fame.

In 2015, Jerry was honored as the first ever NACE Industry Icon Award.

Jerry has traveled the world, training and assisting Caterers and Event Planners to animate their guest's culinary experience.

Jerry is an expert at designing and creating perfect culinary menus that can work in any setting.



Captain Lou Edwards

“Smile and be kind, for we are here in this world just for a while.”

THE BEST SHIPS ARE FRIENDSHIPS

BY CAPTAIN LOU EDWARDS

Imagine: Living your dream lifestyle; Getting paid to explore distant shores; Cruising the world for FREE, with your own highly profitable group events at sea, while earning thousands of dollars for yourself, your company or your charity; Meeting the most interesting people, and helping to change lives! Life wasn't always like this for me.

As an only child born to poor struggling parents from Brooklyn, aged 62 and 42, I was orphaned as a teenager when both my folks passed away within a few years of each other.

Needing to fend for myself and find a way to survive, I dropped out of junior high school to join the circus. Well, it was kind of like a circus when I went on the road with people like “Andre the Giant,” Classy

Freddie Blassie, 601 pounds Haystacks Calhoun, “Polish Power” Ivan Putski and “Manager of Champions,” Captain Lou Albano. May he rest in peace, HE was the original Captain Lou.



It was 1978, before pro wrestling became the billion dollar sports entertainment empire that Vince McMahon and Hulk Hogan would soon transform it into. By somehow forming a few key friendships, I was “taken in” by this colorful crowd and quickly became the “voice” of a New York based wrestling talk radio show, as well as ring announcer, interviewer and color commentator.

The wrestling community was a lifeline for me at a terrifyingly lonely time. They kept me off the streets, and got me to overcome my shyness. These became the most fun four years of my life. (Until now, of course)

At the time, I didn't realize how I managed to create this first in a series of “accidental joint ventures.”

In 1982, well-meaning friends and my few remaining relatives strongly suggested that wrestling will never be big, and that I should focus on getting a “real” job.

So, I quit. Big mistake. *Never take advice from people whose lives you wouldn't want!* No regrets, though. This first joint venture taught me showmanship. The next one would teach me salesmanship and SURVIVAL!

One day at the racetrack, I befriended a lovely man (actually a degenerate gambler I'll call “Norman”) by simply asking him “So What Do You Do?” That one question led me to my next crazy career selling plastic furniture covers to poor people living in the “projects” of the worst burnt-out neighborhoods of the 5 boroughs.

My days of dealing with “Norman” and his partners “No-Neck” and “Melon-Head” led me to a clientele of drug dealers, crack-heads, mobsters, corrupt politicians and welfare cheats (and many hard working Joes trying to survive and make ends meet). Just business as usual for the inner city in the eighties and nineties.

And they all wanted sweaty plastic slipcovers to protect (and destroy the look) of their nice new furniture! So, suffice it to say, I went from one kind of circus to another, and getting a very “different” education along the way. For me, I was just happy to stay alive, and make an “honest” living.



Remember “plastic slipcovers?”

After paying my dues for several years, I graduated to “Blind Man,” selling custom window treatments and upholstery in better neighborhoods, to a more upscale clientele. Joke on the street was that I became New York’s only straight (as in hetero-sexual) Interior Decorator! ;-)

Of course I delighted at the hundreds of women who invited me into their bedrooms...to measure their windows, of course! What were you thinking?!!

The money was good, but after a while I started feeling a like a glorified taxi driver, spending more time fighting traffic in the 5 boroughs of NYC than actually making sales. Furthermore, quibbling over color swatches and our “fifty shades of beige and mauve” became less and less fulfilling. (Grey wasn’t big yet).

After twenty years of making a living, I decided to start making a LIFE! I dreamed of world travel, helping to fulfill dreams and fantasies and making a bigger difference in people’s lives, including my own.

Like many others who have never been on a modern-day cruise-ship before, I used to think cruises were just for the newly-wed or the nearly

dead, and that the average age of the guests was DECEASED!

Then, a friend (actually an evil woman I'll call "Carole," who would later nearly ruin my life) talked me into going with her on something called "The Big Red Boat." Fortunately I was instantly hooked on cruising, but unfortunately on her as well.

I'll save the story of my romance gone awry for another book, but I knew that I had to persevere if I were ever to realize my dream lifestyle of exotic sun-drenched beaches and distant shores.

Woody Allen said 80% of success is just showing up. It was in January of 2003 that I took his advice and attended my very first internet marketing conference called "The BIG Seminar" in Dallas, Texas.

I had been bitten by the cruise bug by then, and hoped to learn how to put my new "Little Shop of Cruises" travel agency online and reach out to a greater audience via the web. At this point, it was part hobby, part dream...as I was still a BLIND MAN (in the window treatment industry).

Never did I imagine that the people I would meet and the friendships I would make in Dallas that weekend would profoundly change my business model, and the course, my LIFE!

It was another attendee that asked if I could arrange a similar event on a cruise ship, sort of a "seminar-at-sea" combined with a fun vacation vibe.

She asked if we could do mastermind meetings and JV's in a giant Jacuzzi, sipping a Pina Colada, while sailing away from some sun-drenched islands in the Bahamas or Caribbean.

Not even realizing that JV stood for "Joint Venture," I instantly said SURE, we can do this. In fact, that's my specialty! It actually wasn't YET, but I figured "fake it 'til you make it," right?

They say the "third time is the charm" and this 3rd big Joint Venture was about to radically change my life. Until this point, I had made all the wrong investments. My special stock market strategy was to buy at the high and sell when my stock hit zero! I should have known not to trust a financial advisor named Marcus Finagle! I bought my first property, a waterfront condo overlooking the NYC skyline, at the very

top, right before the real estate tumble. This time, I knew I needed to invest in my one best shot at a bigger ROI....ME!

At that event, I bought all the info products and software packages and discovered how to automate the booking process online, and how to finally stop selling one-on-one in person or by phone, and start selling one-on-many through websites, webinars, live stage presentations, etc.

On Halloween weekend of 2003, my first “special-event-at-sea” debuted with about 50 students and a handful of speakers. We did just about everything wrong and yet it was a HUGE success.

It was that “Affiliate Marketers Cruise” that led to me transforming my new business model away from one of a million travel agencies, to being a one IN a million producer / planner of special themed niche group vacations.

Branding myself as “Captain Lou” the cruise-guru worked very well, and I quickly became THE go-to guy for people with audiences they wanted to WOW with an unforgettable, profitable and life-changing experience.

I started producing “Special-Events-At-Sea” for casino chip collectors, hobby groups, multi-generational family reunions, real estate trainers, marketing coaches, consultants and gurus.

In January of 2007, I showed up again, at legendary online entrepreneur Mike Filsaime’s \$5,000 live seminar event called the 7- figure Code. Mike had been a guest on some of my previous cruises and was starting to become more of a friend than a client.

His idea was to continue these cruises, but in a bigger way, with a much bigger vision.

The Marketers Cruise would have no speakers, no selling, NOT a seminar-at-sea that is guru-student, but rather a true peer-to-peer networking and mastermind vacation that would draw the world’s TOP marketers for an adventure of a lifetime that happens every January.

Instead of adding a \$1,000 to \$3,000 event fee for attendees, which I now do with many of my niche cruise events, our give back to the internet marketing community that has done so much for our businesses would be to keep the Marketers Cruise at our costs!

We decided to make it affordable, profitable and FUN for everyone to attend and bring their family and friends. The rest is history. Over the past decade we've gone from 61 to 118 to 263 to well over 400 attendees each January. Top marketers from 17 countries around the world put everything on hold to come join our cruise family each year, with the guest list reading like a who's who of the brightest marketing minds on the planet. These hundreds of other online entrepreneurs have contributed more opportunities for successful joint ventures than I had ever imagined.

The Marketers Cruise is my "flagship" product. It is what's turned "Captain WHO?" into "Captain Lou."



This event, where profitable deals are done while on vacation and having fun, has been the springboard for my other life changing "group events at sea" such as an annual Murder Mystery Cruise, an eBay cruise, a United States Marine Corps Veterans Cruise, a Martial Arts Cruise and a "Legacy Cruise" about what we leave behind by learning to pay it forward.

I now help develop niche group events for entrepreneurs who either want to bring their own audience on the Marketers Cruise or their own customized cruise ship adventure to the Caribbean, Alaska, Hawaii, or Europe...instead of some stuffy hotel conference room.

I bet you belong to at least one or two groups, either offline or online, and can think of several great ideas for an exotic adventure for your organization, community, church, or hobby group.

Did you know that group leaders CRUISE FOR FREE?

You can even earn thousands of dollars for yourself, your company or charity by providing your own onboard curriculum of lectures, enrichment seminars, swap-meets, team building, networking events

and dinners, as well as private parties and island excursions just for your group. I'm the one who coordinates all of the loving details with the cruise lines (and resorts) to make these events profitable, fun and turn-key!

By continuing to go overboard for my guests, I now have thousands of cherished clients from all over the globe who keep coming back and referring their friends.

Hard to imagine that as an 8th grade dropout who has never seen the inside of a high school, I've gone on to lecture at colleges and now speak on stages around the world.

It's taken me 35 years to become an overnight success, but that's alright. We didn't have the internet back then. Or access to visionaries like my friend Mike Filsaime and other inspiring entrepreneurs that are featured in this book. Now YOUR dreams and fantasies can be fulfilled much faster!

I'm finally living MY dream, getting paid to travel the world, living the laptop lifestyle and encouraging YOU to do the same. Perhaps you'll

consider joining me on one of my upcoming group cruise events like the Marketers Cruise, so you can discover...the "rest of the story" and start planning a profitable and FUN group event of your own.

Remember, it doesn't matter what SHIP you're sailing on, or what great journey gets you to your destination...as long as you are with friends who share your passions and goals. Even the "unusual" ones that led me to this life I finally love. After all...



See YOU on the Lido deck!



Jose J. Elizondo, Marketing & Systems Expert, 2X International Best-Selling Author, Speaker & Business Mentor

“Your true purpose is to discover what you are capable of.”

HOPE MEANS SEEING EVERY FAILURE AS A STEP CLOSER TO YOUR NEXT BIG SMILE & WIN

BY JOSE J. ELIZONDO

When I came to the United States, I had nothing to my name but a backpack. I was hopeful and willing to do whatever it took to create a great life for myself. I was starting from zero. I knew that I would have to work hard to survive. And I did – I worked where I could and was open to any opportunity that came my way.

Some of the positions I took were for business owners who needed odd job help. Time after time, my role would grow into something more. I had a knack for seeing where their business could improve with easy changes

to systems, processes, and automations. My suggestions helped my bosses to reduce costs and increase revenues. Because of these suggestions, I was offered a bigger role in their business. But I didn't want to grow someone else's business at an hourly rate that left me too broke to afford a decent meal. I knew that working smart and discovering true freedom meant I had to find a way to create my own income. I started earning only \$40 a day; trading my time for money was getting me nowhere. I was ready to take a new leap of faith and see if I could be capable of something more.

In five short years, I went from being broke with a backpack to growing my own \$2M+ construction company. It was a company that was efficient, ran smoothly and seemed to grow on autopilot. I was finally able to implement the things I had taught to other business owners over the years. I systematized, automated, and created smart processes throughout my business. While doing so, I created a comfortable life for myself. I married my beautiful wife, bought a house, and we started a new family. Life was good, and I believed that through my hard work I had finally earned my success.

Then, in what felt like a blink of an eye, I lost everything. The housing crisis affected my entire company. Work slowed and money stopped

flowing. I struggled to make payroll for my workforce of over 100 people. Almost overnight, it seemed like the life I had worked so hard for was over. One moment, I was living the American Dream. Then, I was suddenly filing bankruptcy, losing my home, and facing the hardest decisions of my life. I had to tell my wife that we had no other option but to move back to Mexico. With one baby girl, plus another one on the way, I knew I had to fight to create stability for my family. At the same time, I felt like I was back to where I started – no job, nowhere to live, and no clear path forward. It took all my strength to stay active, stay positive, and stay hopeful. I had figured this out once, and I knew I would figure it out again. There was no other option.

So I went back to working wherever I could, diving into long hours and tedious projects. I found myself working 70 hours a week trying to make ends meet. It was a far cry from being CEO of a multi-million-dollar construction business so recently ago.

I was working nonstop, pulling in 12-hour days and working 6 days a week. I was hardly there for my wife, who needed more help with caring for our newborn and 2-year-old. She moved in with her parents to get the day-to-day support that I wasn't able to give. I worked so much

that I rarely got to eat dinner with my family or get home in time to put my daughters to bed.

One day, a new moment of clarity hit me like a ton of bricks. I had been working even more than usual, picking up extra hours wherever I could. When I came home, my own daughters didn't seem to recognize who I was. Their own father was a stranger to them. Right then, I knew something had to change; I couldn't go on like this any longer.

I thought that launching another company was the answer. I set my sights on growing again in construction. I also decided to launch a new trucking business for a new income stream. While planning my path to rebuilding everything (again), I realized that I needed something different this time. I needed to create a future that was more fulfilling. Life had to be about more than just building my own wealth.

It forced me to think about what I was truly capable of achieving, and what kind of an impact I could make in this world. I thought back over my successes. I considered how I changed the lives of other business owners I had helped along the way. I always had a knack for seeing the big picture, for understanding the challenges that could be fixed simply

with processes and systems. I have always been passionate about helping others, and realized I had to make that a core part of my future.

I decided my next business would have a different purpose. I wanted to share my growth strategies with other entrepreneurs so they could realize freedom and success for themselves. I knew that I had the right mindset to grow my own thriving business again, and this time, I would do it in a way that would help others grow theirs, too.

This led me to launch Fastlane Marketing. My company is dedicated to helping business owners find growth on autopilot, achieve financial wealth, and discover true freedom by getting their time back. I understand what it means to pour your hard work, sweat and time into launching a business. That effort should pay off, and you should be able to live the life you really want to live as an entrepreneur. I help uncover what is needed to take the fast lane to business growth. The goal for each of my clients is to be truly successful, abundant, and happy as an entrepreneur.

Launching this business has filled a void I didn't realize I had. I now feel like I've found a new way to expand my impact and honor my purpose fully, and I'm so grateful for the journey that led me to this new chapter.

My “why” is something that became clear through ups, downs, and working hard to keep my own hope alive. I believe our purpose is to discover what we are truly capable of in life. This applies to personal success and in how much positive impact we can make for others. I get excited to think that I am still capable of much more than I’ve achieved so far. By growing my company, I am helping other entrepreneurs to grow theirs too, and discover that they are capable of more than they imagine.

I try to create smiles every day by creating a positive impact in everything I do. Whether that is paying for the next few people in line at Starbucks or gifting a trip or giving away a winning lottery ticket, I know that the most powerful way to create abundance is by giving abundantly to others. I see my business in the same light – as another way to increase abundance for myself and others. I know that the more I push the boundaries of what I think I’m capable of, the more compounding my impact is in the world.

ABOUT JOSE J. ELIZONDO

Jose is a marketing & systems expert who teaches entrepreneurs unique new ways to increase sales predictably and profitably.

He has helped countless entrepreneurs across a variety of industries to expand and scale quickly with custom strategies. Business owners hire Jose when they are ready to implement highly effective marketing campaigns that lead to more customers, bigger sales, and growing profitability.

Jose is a believer in supporting every business with integrity. He stays on top of the latest trends in digital marketing, is a master of what works in traditional advertising, and uses a mix of psychology and data to drive every marketing decision.

Books that changed your life:

The Millionaire Fastlane by MJ DeMarco

Mind hacking by Sir John Hargrave

Movies that inspire you:

Sherlock Holmes, Iron Man

(& all Avengers movies)

Song that inspires you:

Good Feeling by Flo Rida

Your Hero:

Iron Man

Quote you live by:

How do we change the world? One random act of kindness at a time. – Morgan Freeman



Annie Evans

“Make the world a better place,
one smile at a time.”

LIVE LIFE WITH A SMILE ON YOUR FACE BY ANNIE EVANS

I was born to a mentally ill mother who said I came out of her as a monster and bit her? Not possible, I know – but she repeated this to me throughout my life. She went undiagnosed until I was in my teens and she subjected me to a lot of abuse. She went on long walkabouts leaving me at a very young age to take care of my siblings (thank you to my surrogate mothers). I ran away at 12 (across the country) when she threatened me with a butcher knife, screaming that I was trying to kill her (I had a butter knife in my hand). That trip across the country was an adventure and full of amazing history in the making. I went down several destructive rabbit holes during my teens and early adult life. I had a huge chip on my shoulder and was angry at the world.

I knew I wanted to be a productive person and I knew I was smart and capable, but my attitude was horrid, and I finally saw how I was repelling those who might have helped me. I knew I had to change! I did not know how...I searched and searched and finally came upon a small book about 'Constructive Living' by David K. Reynolds. It made sense to me and I put it to work. The simple rules became part of me and re-engineered my attitude. I was able to retrain my brain and re-write my limiting beliefs while putting new positive beliefs into my sub-conscious.

World travel and many valuable mentors subsequently allowed me to be a jack of all trades. Despite only having a high school degree, my adventures and global travel along with some strategic employment built out all the education I needed to succeed. I have hired and fired a full range of all the best resumes. I spent most of my career in senior management, as an entrepreneur and a realtor. I have suffered many losses but have stepped up into new lives each time. A ladder I continue to climb.

I am a start over expert...



My major why is that I want to help people become the best that they can be...to live the life that they really want to live. I have survived and thrived after several really challenging life events. I learned how to start over and want to share my process with others. We all are subject to sudden and radical changes– just today I got news that a close loved one was in a bad car accident and remains in a coma in intensive care at this very moment – you never know (praying hard).

I also believe that we can take charge of our brains and I advocate all of us fully participate in dealing with depression and other mental disturbances so many of us experience in varying degrees. I can help with that.

I lost both my mother and my precious brother to mental illness. I have had a front row seat on the evolution of the treatment of mental illness since the 1950's until now. I have a lot to say about the ways we currently treat mental illness and other ills of our society: 22 Veteran suicides per day? over 500,000 homeless people in the US? our troubled environment? climate challenges! broken and cruel immigration?

cultural discord and racism? There's so much more...I want to see change and hope that the lies we have been subjected to these past few years do not become the norm. Truth is truth.

As someone who prides herself on being self-educated, I would like to collaborate on improving our current educational curriculum. In my experience of hiring others, I found that many recent college graduates were unprepared to step into their positions. I mentored several, especially those who exhibited a good work ethic and the desire to learn and be productive. I also had to let several go and hope they found their place and purpose.

Generally, we teach subjects such as math, English, science, history, and electives such as foreign language, physical education, computers, health, art and music. We do not teach other very important things that we need to know and use as we grow into adults.

Financial literacy, problem solving, and inter-personal relationships are not on our agenda. We do not fully develop our young people enabling them to be the best they can be.

For me, these times are the most troubling I have experienced in my entire life. After fighting for civil rights in the 60's and 70's, there has been an alarming rise in hate and racism in the past few years – we fought so hard to make progress and it is being reversed now. I know some of it always here, but it was not publicly. Currently, we have seen a rise in hate groups and violence targeting those who differ from ourselves. This is global, but it is especially alarming to see it run so rampant here in United States.

I have come to believe that our education curriculums are a source of blame for our current situation. We do not spend enough time teaching our students the responsibility for being good neighbors and to take their duty seriously as United States citizens. We, the people, are accountable for maintaining our freedoms and protecting our constitution. We cannot take our freedoms for granted!

We are leaning towards accepting things that, to me, are totally unacceptable. If we are not careful, we will no longer be the only complete democracy controlled by the people. We are currently leaning towards letting autocracy seep in...something we should have learned from history to watch for.

When I was in school, we had to learn about history and how the foundational papers of our republic were written. Our republic, and its freedoms are still totally unique in the world. We cannot let our freedoms fade away and it is our responsibility to protect them. Until now, the United States of America has been the only country founded for and by the people.

I had to memorize many parts of our founding papers and was tested on the substance of our Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, Constitution, and Gettysburg Address. Each of these documents, except for the Gettysburg Address, were signed in unison by many founding fathers with unanimous agreement. The meaning and the reasons for each line has significance.

The bottom line, we the citizenry are responsible for maintaining this republic as a free country with our freedoms including choice of religion, free speech and other unalienable. The founding fathers set up three distinct branches of government: the executive, the legislative and the judicial. They clearly wanted there to be checks and balances. Those checks and balances are being severely tested today.

Since the mid-60's the emphasis on how this country was founded has largely been set aside in our curriculums. Do enough of our students really get the truth and beliefs which this is fought for and built on? Recently it seems that new immigrating citizens, who declare an oath to the constitution, are more knowledgeable than many born into these freedoms.

I do not intend to write a history lesson here, but I think that in these times there is a need for renewed attention to what we have and what we could lose. The President, Congress and the Supreme Court are meant to work for us as three separate, but equal, pillars to act collectively to run this country. The founding fathers had the foresight to build protections against corruption and abuse of power. Our right to vote is the key to preserving our freedoms.

Regardless of your political bent, I am pretty sure that you do not want to lose any of your personal freedoms. It is the collective vote that must maintain and preserve this democracy.

This country was formed out of the need to 'escape' the tyranny of King George III. In his England and Ireland where there was no freedom of religion.

This new country was previously occupied by the Native Americans and Europeans had been coming over since around 1492 to North America. There were no United States or Colonies.

The colony of Jamesburg (proud to say that both sides of my family can be directly traced to Jamesburg and the development of the Delaware Valley) was founded in 1607. The Pilgrims fleeing religious persecution landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620. Both Virginia and Massachusetts were supported by the Native Americans (remember Thanksgiving?). By 1650 England had established a dominant presence on the Atlantic coast. The first slaves started arriving in 1770. By 1770 there was a population of about two million in the original thirteen colonies.

What led up to the American revolution? King George (who periodically suffered mental illness and eventually left because of it) and his parliamentarians enacted the Stamp Act in 1769, excessively taxing the colonies to raise capital. That led to the Tea Tax in 1773 which led to the beginning of the revolt and the Boston Tea Party. Excessive taxation without representation ultimately created the American Revolution which began on April 19, 1775.

The Declaration of Independence was written the next year and ratified on July 4, 1776, calling for freedom and independence against the tyranny of the king and ministers who were responsible for colonial policies.

The Battle of Yorktown in 1781 where the British Army was defeated was the beginning of the end of England's rule over the colonies. The Treaty of Paris in 1783 recognized the thirteen colonies as United States, a sovereign country (and expanded its territory west to the Mississippi River).

The Bill of Rights, which formed the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution were ratified on December 15, 1791.

Who are the founding fathers? This is arguable, but generally those who initiated the revolution and were instrumental in crafting our constitution are recognized. George Washington (first president 1789), Alexander Hamilton (Federalist Papers), Benjamin Franklin (negotiated Treaty of Paris with John Adams), John Adams (president 1797-1801), Samuel Adams (probable originator of the Boston Tea Party), Thomas Jefferson (president 1801-1808) are among the top

contenders – but there are many others at the top of the list. There are amazing stories about all of them and all of them were real people like you and I, imperfect as we all are.

Please explore and educate yourself on our history. One great thing in this modern day is that all of this and more is available at the tip of our fingers on a phone or with an internet connection. Educate yourself and you may have life-changing results from this exploration. We should all take precautions to inform ourselves and seek out truth amid the growing expansion of misinformation. I have lived through many important moments in our history.

Currently, I really am concerned that we don't look at our own histories, but more importantly, we need to remember the lessons from previous history which should never be forgotten or repeated. We need to study and know these lessons (and there are many – in our country and in the world). I find that many deny facts from history and therefore neglect the lessons we should have learned, even to deny some events ever happened (moon walk is just one example, sadly the holocaust is another). It is shocking to me, as I have lived through so many, they happened and are undeniable.

Let's take The Killing Fields, for instance. Many may not even know what that is, others will think this is from the distant past and many will have seen the movie. The Khmer Rouge was active from 1951 to 1999. The ideology was autocratic, xenophobic, paranoid, and repressive. The army that would eventually take over the rule of Cambodia after five years of war (1970-1975 with approximately 700,000 people killed) was built up in the eastern jungle of Cambodia with the help of the Viet Cong and even Mao Tse-tung. They ravaged the country and ultimately killed about two million Cambodians from 1975-1979.

This situation is complicated, yes there are still remnants of the Khmer Rouge and ongoing trials as I write. There is no question of the genocide, but the trials of the participant are ongoing. Some Khmer Rouge participated in running and even getting elected in the new Cambodia. The International Justice Monitor, January 9, 2020, reported on December 19, 2019, that in a 266-page ruling, failed to resolve charges of genocide and crimes against humanity against Ao An and whether it will proceed to trial. It remains unclear if or how this case, or two similar ones against former Khmer Rouge leaders will proceed.

I am bringing this specific piece of history up because I worked in Cambodia for a few years up to 2014 and experienced the country coming back to life. Cambodia has been courting foreign investment and has been successful getting it (sadly often confiscating Cambodians private land for the 'public' good). Opening factories with experienced owners from all the major manufacturing countries and companies.

I shared a flight from Japan to Phnom Penh with a Cambodian Foreign Minister to the President, and had a very in-depth heart to heart conversation with him. He had escaped the terrors to France and only returned to Cambodia after it started to rebuild, and he wanted to help his country. I asked him "do you think that anything like this could happen again?" and I really didn't expect an answer as there was a long pause and then "yes, I could see it happening again, but I hope to help that not happen."

I know that many, probably most, cannot conceive of anything like this happening in United States, but we cannot be complacent. We are currently going through a period where we are blinded to lies which are accepted as truth by many. Just in the past few weeks and months, major damage has been done to our Constitution and the Rule of Law.

If this continues, we will find ourselves in a whole new world – one that I am not sure any of us wants to see.

It is our responsibility to step up and protect this amazing country. We need to fully participate in the freedom to vote for this country to be at its best. I don't care what party, what your beliefs, your race, religion or any other factors are. Please continue to be informed to the best of your ability and check the veracity of your sources.

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I will continue to 'do the work' to make a positive difference in this world by collaborating with others in many different areas of where we need to cure the ills of the world, as well as through my 501 (3c) non-profit; my books, training and coaching. My passion is helping improve the treatment of mental illness, working with as many as I can to improve their lives and helping them create the lives they really want to live.

At the core, I want to share my extensive experience and the process that I have used to start over many times (from scratch), teaching

that we can retrain our brains and eliminate our limiting beliefs, and how we can reinvent ourselves and find our true unique purposes and passions.

We all have a purpose in life with a story to tell. What is yours? Let me help you find it, if you don't know.

ABOUT ANNIE EVANS

Annie Evans is an author, coach and trainer focusing on helping people to become their best selves. Her life experience has empowered her to share and help people dealing with difficult circumstances and events. She has started over 'from scratch' too many times to accurately count. She learned and developed a process that changed her life from a troubled, damaged, depressed and angry young adult to a positive, productive person. She was able retrain her brain, control her feelings and input new positive self-images into her subconscious to transcend her difficult childhood, and subsequent challenges, to live a fabulous adventurous life. She now shares this process to help others.

A successful 'Jack of All Trades,' she has been a horse trainer, a celestial navigator (44,000 sea miles), worked in fashion and architecture, project manager and business advisor, product developer, home/interior designer and international supply chain director (she took a start-up from \$7million to \$25million).

She is also currently a California Realtor®, DRE# 00702725 at Realty One

DR. KEN 'DR. SMILEY' ROCHON, JR.

Group Summit in Ventura. She loves to make peoples' real estate dreams come true.

Annie currently loves her home and her dog in Ventura, California. She is a lover of nature and is grateful she has lived in many of the most beautiful places, including Yosemite National Park, Big Sur and Malibu as well as many other places of beauty. She often says that nature has helped her through the hardships she has had to endure. Her life has been an adventure, despite its traumas and setbacks. She loves photography (don't be surprised to see her publish some in the future), travel, sailing, horses and all animals. She also hopes to help indigenous people who are marginalized in this and other countries.

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Jennifer Evans

“Don’t waste a day without smiling.”

TRAVEL LIGHT BY JENNIFER EVANS

As a young girl I dreamed of traveling to Africa and helping people in need. But as I grew up, that dream became distant. I was influenced by society and did what I was “supposed to” – go to college, get a good job, and get married. Sound familiar?

From the outside, my life looked solid, but when I turned 26, the walls of my life collapsed. It found myself divorced, out of a job, and living back at my mom’s house in Arizona.

I was embarrassed and felt like a failure, yet I still had hope for the future. I sought help, and after working closely with two life coaches, I landed back on my feet in the corporate world. I felt fortunate, but unfulfilled, and my childhood dream to serve and travel began to reoccupy my mind. I believed deep down that my life was meant for something more.

I decided to put my dream to paper, writing in my journal “I have a calling from my soul and I am planning the risk, the leap, the jump of a lifetime! And that is to leave it all for a service mission and personal journey of discovery and fun around the world, or at least to Europe!”

Against the sound judgment of close friends and family, I took that leap. I gave notice to my boss with no extra cash in the bank and no clue how this dream would become a reality.

On my last day on the job, I worked at one of the nation’s most elite charity events, Celebrity Fight Night. Around midnight when the evening was winding down, I took a break alone on a bench. As I was scrolling through social media on my phone, I heard footsteps walking past me. I looked up, and to my surprise, it was the event honorees, renowned billionaire philanthropists.

I was speechless. This husband and wife duo were living my dream! They had committed their life to service and spent the majority of their time in developing countries fitting people in need with hearing aids.

I said to myself, “Could this be my opportunity?”

Then thoughts of doubt crossed my mind, “No....I don’t know what to say, and even if I did, they probably don’t care what I have to say,” but the deep desire inside of me outweighed the fear, and I jumped off the bench and ran up behind them politely calling their attention. They stopped and turned around. As it turned out, they did care what I had to say, and my courage and genuine desire to serve made a favorable impression.

My dream was manifested. In April 2012, I landed in Ethiopia, my first of 18 trips serving on the beautiful continent of Africa! Our mission was to spread peace and understanding around the world, and helping people hear was our vehicle.

Imagine how you would feel witnessing someone hear for the first time or helping restore a grandmother’s hearing after years of silence. My heart has softened to the sight of tough men crying, women dancing, and children giggling at the sound of their own voices.

I began to help build and eventually scale community-based hearing health care programs in 45 countries throughout Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific.

I also had personal journeys of discovery and fun such as: boating the Amazon in Peru, witnessing the Dalai Lama speak to 10,000 monks, dancing with tribal members in Papua New Guinea, floating in the Dead Sea in Israel, wildlife safaris in Tanzania, exploring ancient Petra in Jordan, snorkeling the coral reef in Malaysia, trekking with Silverback Gorillas in Rwanda, and walking the streets of Bethlehem. The list goes on and on with a grateful heart.

Best of all, I belonged to a mission team, a global family, and our efforts were changing hundreds of thousands of lives annually. We were road warriors serving abroad over 200 days per year: Countless flights, hotel rooms, and rotary club dinners. My life was strenuous, but I loved it. I owned my dream.

Or did I?

Over time my mental and physical health diminished. Chronic stress and jet lag took a toll. I was emotionally depressed and physically exhausted. Life on the road and the demands of my job played a factor, but there was a bigger issue that needed to surface...

The Secret Came Out

The first time I got drunk I was 13 years old. I loved the feeling and wanted more. Throughout my teens and 20's, I was a "weekend warrior", partying on the weekends and yet somehow managing to be successful in school and work. My partying included excessive binge drinking accompanied by bad decisions and blackouts, and eventually marijuana, opioids, ecstasy, cocaine, a little meth, and psychedelics. I was a highly functioning addict.

However, when I was blessed to be part of that great mission, I knew it was time to cut back on the partying. My solution? Marijuana.

Smoking marijuana had been my favorite pastime for many years, but when the depression and exhaustion crept in, my use significantly increased to multiple times per day. Getting high made me feel better and escape the stress of my overactive mind.

Weed became "my medicine" that I needed daily and I put myself and our team at risk by smuggling it across borders around the world. My

existence became solely about work and getting high, and not necessarily in that order.

For a few years, this lifestyle worked for me (with diet and pain pills here and there), but in the summer of 2016, I completely burned out. Instead of going to my employer for help, I made a hasty decision and resigned from my job. I didn't know what was next, but I knew it was time for change.

"I am a strong woman", I thought. "I can do this."

It was the longest month of my life, but I managed to stay marijuana-free for 30 days. I was so proud of myself for having it "under control", I decided it would be okay if I let myself get high once per week. I chose Sundays. I was able to manage this schedule for a month, and then I planned a trip home for the holidays.

Within days of returning to my old stomping grounds, I was back to getting high every few hours and enjoying countless cocktails on Saturday night with friends.

One such morning after partying the night before, I woke up with a pounding headache and regret for not sticking to my self-imposed two-drink limit. I would have loved to lie in bed all day nursing my horrible cocaine hangover, but I had committed to taking my Grandma to church.

I reluctantly pulled myself out of bed, got high, and picked up my Grandma. As we walked into the church, I was handed the program for the service. I looked down at the paper and the headline popped out at me like lightning illuminating the sky: "Addiction Must Fall."

I was stunned and did a double take. I mean, I believed in God, but this was different. He was talking to me.

I wish I could say I quit drinking and drugging that day, but I was not able to. I felt like a hamster running in a wheel. I would wake up every morning and tell myself that today I wouldn't get high that day, but my mind was consumed with desire, and by the time the evening came, I gave in. I didn't want to live this way anymore, but I couldn't stop.

I researched rehab facilities but could not afford one. I was able to get a coach. After a month of trying and failing at moderating myself, my mentor asked me if I had tried asking God for help.

“No,” I said. “Why would I?”

I always had successfully relied on myself, but at this point, nothing I was doing was working, and I was desperate, so I gave it a try. I remember that night like it was yesterday. I knelt down on my knees and prayed to God for the first time in many years. I told God that I was struggling and asked Him to help me change my story before something bad happened.

Soon after, I felt an inner nudge to look for support in my area, and then I made my way to my first 12-step meeting. Let me assure you; I did not want to be there. I thought, “I am not an alcoholic or addict like these people!” I was very tempted to walk away and never go back, but then I met a 60-year-old woman named Wendy. Her story reminded me of my own, and she had what I wanted - freedom from the bondage of addiction.

Wendy told that if I wanted something that I never had, then I needed to do something that I had never done before. I reluctantly took her suggestion and began working the program. To my astonishment, my mental obsession and physical compulsion to use drugs and alcohol were removed. I experienced my miracle breakthrough!

My journey of recovery began. I floated on a pink cloud for a minute, and then reality set in. For the first time as an adult, I was feeling every emotion.

It was painful, but I knew there was nothing for me in my old lifestyle, so I persevered. Yoga, 12-step meetings, and fellowship with other like-minded people helped me pull through.

Newly sober but still depressed, I attended a women's leadership meeting in Texas. I was the youngest of 12 women, who, with the exception of myself, were filled with joy and peace. I wondered what their formula was, because I knew they weren't high on drugs. What I soon discovered was they were women of faith and were high on the Holy Spirit.

Sound crazy? Well, it did to me! I grew up Catholic, and always thought the Bible was a great reference book, though I never read it myself. I was a “spiritual person” and thought that people that believed in Jesus were naïve. After spending time with these spirit-filled women, I began to wonder if Jesus was real, and was encouraged to ask questions.

The Bible says in Matthew 7:7, “Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened.” So that is exactly what I did. I opened my heart to the possibility and talked to this so-called Jesus guy, “If you are real, please reveal yourself to me.”

To my amazement, Jesus revealed himself to me. He began speaking through what I call “uncoincidental” situations, communicating through people and scriptures to give me personal revelation of His truth and nearness.

The first time was in April 2017. I was on a flight to Dublin. It was like God spoke directly to me though the woman sitting across the aisle from me. I continued to pursue Him, many more supernatural experiences happened and convicted me.

So much so that I could no longer deny Him. I repented for my sins and accepted the free gift of eternal salvation by accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I was born again.

My journey of healing began. I committed myself to reach optimal wellness in spirit, soul and body.

I developed a personal relationship with God. I studied the word of God daily, made prayer an ongoing conversation, and asked Him to purify my heart and mind.

I worked out, began eating healthier foods and cut down on my sugar intake.

I saw a therapist and identified the reasons I turned to substances in the first place.

At a very young age, I was molested, and at the age of 12, my parents got divorced, which left a big wound in my heart.

When I discovered that turning to substances was my solution for

copied with my childhood trauma, I was able to forgive others and myself and give it over to God. Slowly but surely, He healed the pain in my heart and gave me a peace that is irrespective of circumstances.

I learned that there is no drink, drug, man, food, job, possession, or achievement that will ever be able to satisfy that craving inside of me. I found that God alone that satisfies and helps us overcome.

I understand that you may not be an addict or follower of Jesus, but maybe you lack self-control or could use help overcoming an unhealthy habit.

Transformation is a process, not an event. Do not be discouraged, transformation happened for me, and it can for you too! Take that leap and create Your Miracle Breakthrough!

If you are ready to give the world the best of you and not what is left of you, there is no better time than to start ASAP!

The ASAP Method to Create Your Miracle Breakthrough

A = Acknowledge Acknowledge your Unhealthy Habit

Acknowledge your biggest unhealthy habit that you are ready to overcome. The first step to breaking through this habit is acknowledging the problem and having a real desire to change.

Some of the most common unhealthy habits are substance abuse, overeating, consuming too much sugar, constant worrying, procrastination, being a workaholic, sexual promiscuity, excessive use of social media, video games, pornography, lying, complaining, outbursts of anger, etc.

S = Surrender Surrender your problem to God

To gain freedom from your unhealthy habit, surrender it to God, whoever that may be for you. Tell him your struggles and ask for His help. We are not meant to do life alone, but God gave us free will and will not intervene unless we ask for His help. You don't have to hit rock bottom to fall to your knees. Humble yourself to God, and he will lift you up.

A = Act Act Your Best and Let God Do the Rest!

Take action and watch God help you overcome! God can't help or correct you if you are standing still. He'll work with you, but He won't do it for you. Before you act, make sure you pray and ask God to give you direction on how to move forward. Then listen and obey. Often God puts people and situations in our lives to help us, so be aware of opportunities that arise. You may feel inspired to join a program, hire a life coach, or see a therapist. You might already know what you need to do but working with a coach or like-minded group will hold you accountable and dramatically increase your chances for success.

P = Persevere Persevere through the Challenges

At times you may be tempted to fall back into your old unhealthy habit...but you don't have to! When you feel tempted, remove yourself from the situation, pray, and then call an accountability partner. Don't let your feelings control you. Stay on course even when you don't feel like it. If you do make a mistake, admit it, ask for forgiveness, and start over. When you've been operating a certain way for so long, it takes time and perseverance to let old habits die. Keep going!

The ASAP Method will lead you to your miracle breakthrough if you are willing to acknowledge your weaknesses, surrender and ask God for guidance, take action, and persevere!

Whatever path you take, I encourage you to invest in yourself. Give people the best of you, not what's left of you. Travel light.

ABOUT JENNIFER EVANS

Global Humanitarian, Best-Selling Author, Inspirational Speaker

Jennifer Evans captivates people with her heartfelt humor and inspirational testimony of overcoming addiction, burnout, and mental health challenges. She is a Global Humanitarian, Best-Selling Author, and Inspirational Speaker. “Give people the Best of You, not what’s left of you,” is the mantra behind her devotion to helping others discover the best of themselves.

Jennifer is co-author of *Own Your Dreams*, a collaborative book project with world-renowned motivational speaker, Les Brown, that gives valuable action steps to help people conquer insurmountable difficulties and live the life of their dreams.

Jennifer works as Ministry Relations Manager for Joni and Friends in Arizona, a Christian ministry dedicated to glorifying God while supporting the global church to evangelize, disciple, and serve people living with disability.

In addition, Jennifer is the Founder of Jenerosity Foundation, a non-profit organization with a mission to decrease the relapse rate of addiction and help people in recovery reach optimal wellness.

Prior to, Jennifer worked as a director of a public health charity, where she developed programs in 45 countries on six continents. She has served on a multitude of humanitarian missions with many high-profile people including Elton John, Johnny Depp, and Richard Branson.

Jennifer is a native Arizonan and graduated from the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University.

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Books That Changed Your Life

The Bible

Movie That Inspires You

The Case for Christ

Your Hero

Kathryn Kuhlman

Quote You Live By:

Give people the best of you,
not what's left of you!



**Steve Farber, Founder and CEO, The Extreme Leadership Institute;
Author, *The Radical Leap*, *The Radical Edge*, *Greater Than Yourself*,
*Love Is Just Damn Good Business***

“Your smile is a powerful way to cultivate love in the people around you—at work and beyond.”

EXTREME LEADERS ... EXTREME SMILES 😊

BY STEVE FARBER

There was a time in my adulthood when I wasn't doing what I loved. Like all too many people on this planet, I spent years floundering through life with no particular sense of direction or purpose—or at least not one that would enable me to support a family.

When I was a younger man, I knew exactly what I wanted to do. I had been playing guitar since I was 13, and if you had asked me in my late teens and early twenties what I was going to do with my life, my answer would have been obvious: play music, write songs, and perform.

I got married at 23, and that marriage came with a huge bonus—my first child, Angelica. By the time I was 24, my son, Saul, had joined the

clan, and at that point I discovered that being a musician and—how do I put this?—feeding people were mutually exclusive ideas. Like a gunslinger hanging up his revolver, I hung up my guitar, and I started trying to provide for and raise a family.

That's when I got into business and eventually came to discover that I was an entrepreneur. Giving up music, however, was extraordinarily painful. I felt like I was grieving the death of a dream. Music had been such a huge part of my personality. It was part of the way I had connected with people and shared who I was. It was what I loved to do. Giving it up as a professional pursuit was so painful that I just stopped playing altogether.

At the same time, however, I began to pursue a new deeply fulfilling dream: fatherhood. I loved my family. I loved my kids. And I got deep gratification in bringing home the paycheck on the all-too-occasional times when that happened.

My first “real” job was in the commodities futures business. It was a straight commission gig, so it was feast or famine. That taught me a lot about entrepreneurship because it was really up to me to keep my boat

afloat—a lesson that has served me well ever since. Discovering and growing into my natural entrepreneurial inclinations, I soon opened my own brokerage shop, which meant I paid myself a salary but only if the company created the income to allow it.

That was my baptism of fire into the world of business. It's where I learned about hiring people and motivating them to be productive, about marketing, about the stress and pressure of having to make payroll when other people are depending on you for the money to feed their families, and all of the various and sundry things every entrepreneur has to learn. I learned very quickly. And painfully.

Ironically, the main thing I learned was that even though I loved the game of business, I hated that business. From the outside, it looked pretty cool—the classic American Dream. I had my own company and great employees. I was my own boss. I had kids, a house, a car, a dog, and all the middle-class trappings anyone could hope for. The problem was that commodity futures is a very speculative investment, so our clients lost their money left and right. This led me to have a moral dilemma with my own business, and I just flat out hated it.

It's one thing to have your own business; it's quite another to despise it.

So to recap, in a very short span of time, I got married and had kids (which raised the stakes in terms of responsibility as a provider), I gave up music (which caused me grief), and I got into a business that I hated. There was no music. There was no joy in going to work. And this was all before I was 30 years old.

Then came a series of pivotal moments in late 1988, early 1989. My growing family and I were still living in the Midwest (by then my younger son, Jeremy, had arrived, so I had three kids). My business partner had welched on a \$25,000 funding commitment, and, consequently, my business went down in flames. I was offered and accepted a job across the country in exciting San Francisco, but it was in the same industry, which, of course, I still hated. This was someone else's company, however, so the task of making payroll fell on his shoulders, not mine. For me, it was a new chapter in a new setting and a chance to start over. Sort of.

On my lunch break one day, I found myself walking around the Financial District of beautiful downtown San Francisco. And even

though I felt the excitement and promise of the place and the opportunities it represented, I was still totally, utterly, unequivocally miserable in the grueling, soulless work that I was continuing to grind out every week.

I knew two things with equal, crystal clarity: one, I had no doubt that there was something I was supposed to be doing on this planet, and, two, I had absolutely no blasted idea what it was.

Although I have a strong affinity for the spiritual, I'm not a particularly religious person. But while walking down the street on that blustery San Francisco day in 1989, feeling the woeful churn of a sailor lost at sea, I literally looked up to the sky and whispered through clenched teeth, "C'mon! Just tell me what I'm supposed to be doing, and I will gladly do it."

That was, in retrospect, a pivotal moment. I had acknowledged that longing voice in my heart that says, "I have purpose."

It might have been days, at most a few weeks later, but I soon found myself having a conversation with an old friend whom I hadn't talked to in a while. He mentioned that a mutual friend of ours was "teaching

some kind of workshops for corporations.” That was all he said. No more detail, no explanation.

And right then, in that moment, after hearing those few ambiguous words, all of my lights went on.

“That’s it,” I said. “That’s what I’m supposed to be doing.”

I had no idea what that was, but I knew it was for me.

I started talking to people about this “corporate training stuff,” and I soon discovered that there was a whole industry out there. I had no idea there was such a thing as “training and development.” I dove headlong into the research to learn who did what. That line of work, I realized, would give me the opportunity to combine my business experience with my love for working with people, and it would also allow me to make use of the performance skills I’d learned onstage.

I asked everyone I knew for leads into the industry. I created a résumé that made the case for why, inexperienced as I was, I would make a great “trainer.”

I was hired by a small consulting company to do contract work teaching business writing workshops, and after I conducted my first session, I slapped “professional trainer” on my résumé. I was soon brought on board by an international training and consulting company, which gave me broad experience working with a wide variety of businesses and industries in various parts of the world. A few years later, in 1994, at the ripe old age of 36, I was hired by the famous management guru Tom Peters, and I met my mentors Jim Kouzes and Terry Pearce. As a vice president in Tom’s company, I learned about leadership at a very deep level and worked with senior executive teams across the business spectrum.

And guess what?

I loved this work; I had found my purpose.

Over the years in my time at the Tom Peters Company, my experiences in the trenches with clients, as well as my immersion into the collective bodies of work of Tom, Jim, and Terry, helped me develop my own point of view, my own leadership voice.

And there was one strong, unwavering, unrelenting conclusion that I

came back to again and again: my personal quest to find meaningful work that I love to do was not unique. Nor was it arbitrary. It was, in fact, a crucial, universal principle: love is the core of great leadership, and it's at the foundation of any thriving, competitive business.

I left the Tom Peters Company in 2000, and published my first book, *The Radical Leap*, in 2004. *Leap* was followed by *The Radical Edge* and then *Greater Than Yourself*. My latest book, *Love Is Just Damn Good Business*, was published by McGraw-Hill at the end of 2019.

Now, in my early sixties, having traveled the globe to work with and speak to tens of thousands of people over the years, I can whole-heartedly say that I'm doing what I love in the service of people who love what I do.

The insidious idea that we have to sacrifice one part of ourselves to nurture another is false. Our ideal state is to be successful in our business ventures, to amplify personal joy and meaning in our lives, and change the world for the better—all at the same time. These are not mutually exclusive ideas.

You don't have to be a jerk to make money. You don't have to sacrifice money for joy. And you don't have to be a martyr to change the world.

Love it all—that's where your success as a human being will come from.

My advice to you is this: Be totally unapologetic for the money you're earning. Be totally unapologetic for the joy you're experiencing. Be totally unapologetic for the impact you're making on the world for the better. But aspire to do all of them.

That's what we're built to do in, my opinion. And that's at the very heart of why I believe *Love Is Just Damn Good Business*. Because love is the secret sauce that makes it all possible.

Here's where I suggest you start as you join me and our remarkable Extreme Leadership community on this journey: Ask the questions that matter to you. Listen for the answers. And then do what you love in the service of people who love what you do.

I hope the smiles in this book will inspire you in that endeavor.
—Steve Farber

(Adapted from the preface to *Love Is Just Damn Good Business: Do What You Love in the Service of People Who Love What You Do*, by Steve Farber. Copyright 2019, Extreme Leadership, Inc. | New York | McGraw-Hill Education, 2019)

ABOUT STEVE FARBER

Listed on Inc.’s listing of the Top 50 Leadership and Management Experts in the world, and #1 on Huffington Post’s 12 Business Speakers to See, Steve Farber is a bestselling author, popular keynote speaker, and a seasoned leadership coach and consultant who has worked with a vast array of public and private organizations in virtually every arena.

Farber is the former Vice President of legendary management guru Tom Peters’ company and is the founder and CEO of The Extreme Leadership Institute—an organization devoted to helping its clients develop award-winning cultures and achieve radical results. The Institute’s team has helped over 25 companies earn a ranking on the Best Places to Work list.

Farber’s third book, *Greater Than Yourself*, debuted as a Wall Street Journal and USA Today bestseller. His second book, *The Radical Edge*, was hailed as “a playbook for harnessing the power of the human spirit.” And his first book, *The Radical Leap: A Personal Lesson in Extreme Leadership*, was named one of the 100 Best Business Books of All Time.

His much-anticipated new book, *Love is Just Damn Good Business*, published by McGraw-Hill, is available now.

Farber is a member of the exclusive Transformational Leadership Council, and his column, *The Extreme Leadership Chronicles*, runs frequently on Inc.com.

Books that changed your life:

The Lord of the Rings,
The Leadership Challenge, Leading Out Loud

Movies that inspire you:

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood,
Horsefeathers

Song that inspires you:

Have a Little Faith in Me,
anything by John Prine

Your Hero:

John Prine

Quote you live by:

Do what you love in the service of
people who love what you do.



Dave Farrow, Author

The saddest words ever said or penned are these, What Might have been.

REMEMBER THIS SMILE

BY DAVE FARROW

I have rarely talked about this even to close friends. But here goes.

I died at birth.

It was Jan 10th 1975 and I was born yellow with lungs full of fluid and not breathing. The beautiful cry you hear from a healthy baby did not fill the room. Instead it was a panicked rush to get me breathing.

Due to these complications at birth, I had to be hospitalized for the first 11 weeks of life and then in and out of the hospital for the next several years. If you are interested in the medical diagnosis, I was born yellow with a type of Pneumonia that filled my lungs with fluid. I had health problems that plagued me for the rest of my life. I used to pass out when standing or exerting myself, I have some hearing loss that makes me read lips to compensate and a host of auto immune issues

from vitiligo, psoriasis, and acute arthritis that affected me even when young. It confused people because one day I would be energetic and pain free, running and playing sports. Then other days the pain would be so bad I could barely go on. Because I was so young, adults found it hard to believe when I complained about chronic pain. Most adults told me I was faking it and it just made my condition worse. This was especially difficult with the teachers at school. Anyone who has experienced chronic pain understood though. When the pain comes and goes you make the most of your good days to make up for lost time, and distract yourself from the pain to come.

Pain is the world's toughest and most effective coach in my opinion.

My earliest memories were painful and lonely, to be honest. But they were also defiance. I clearly have a feeling of what it feels like to have death close by and I decided I would fight with everything to avoid it and if given the opportunity I would defy every label put on me with all I have.

That attitude is what saved me. In the face of pain and death the only answer is defiance.

I remember as a child when I had to be taken off painkillers because they were afraid, I would get addicted to codeine (a form of opioid). I remember walking with a cane in my teens when my back was bad. Some thought it was a fashion statement because they could not understand how this active athletic guy could have times when he acted like a 70 year old. The good part was that if any kids made fun of me, they at least kept their distance for fear of being hit with the cane.

Being a teenager however, when I complained of pain or fatigue it fell on deaf ears and I was often told I was faking or really was not in pain at all. Even by close family members.

This story may be a little darker than you expected when reading about the memory guy, but it is my life and I hope it helps others. I believe that those who have a rough start in life have a shared comradeship. There is a hardness inside that if channeled in a healthy way can make you take charge of your life. If you go negative it can make you bitter.

In my heart though I never blamed anyone else for my problems and never once thought people need to treat me differently for my ailments. It is my burden to bear, and it was my problem to solve.

I decided to get healthy and became obsessed with diet and exercise. I made good progress and overcame much of what ailed me except for the auto immune issues and the back pain. I ate better, becoming vegetarian at 14 because I read a book and stayed that way for 22 years, (that's only half the story I also avoided pasta and most fried foods, plus ate plenty of protein so I was more healthy than the average vegetarian).

At the time I didn't know anyone else who was vegetarian in my city and there were no pre-packaged foods like today, so I learned how to cook. That ability to cook from scratch is the best suggestion I have for anyone. Know what goes into your food and it will change your life.

I can also say as a guy that women really like a guy who can cook. I will just leave that line right there.

Doctors told my mother I would not live six months, then a year. On and on, they moved the line thinking death was always around the corner. She did not for one minute believe them and being a devout Christian prayed nightly for my health. It is from her that I got my defiance for adversity. Thank you, mom.

Being sick and in pain affected my schoolwork. My grades fell. Looking back, I didn't understand the problem because pain and fatigue was just life to me. Some days you can't function and other days you try to make up for it that just seemed normal to me. But others saw it as everything from bipolar to acting out. I felt better when I was diagnosed with ADHD and dyslexia because it felt like progress. Now people would understand me better.

Nope.

The experts slowed things down more and I could not stand it. I was reading and learning more in the library every night than I did in the classroom, where I was so bored.

Today I know I have a very high IQ and should have been challenged with more work and more advanced subjects. I remember being fascinated by the work people did in the advanced classes and found it much easier than the basic stuff they tried to teach me.

This was the second time I lost faith in experts and decided I needed to figure out how to learn.

Looking back, it feels like I am being so arrogant to say this, but it proved to be true. All the experts, teachers, adults all told me what I was capable of. They were all in agreement that my abilities were below average. One teacher told me not to expect much out of life and that I would never make more than minimum wage (this was not a very popular teacher as you can imagine). I was told all of these things - put into a box and told to stay there. Looking back this was a huge effort labeling and categorizing me. Dozens of people were in on it from family to professionals.

And they were all wrong. Every single one.

If I had believed them for just one minute, something in me would have died. It reminds me of my mother who was being told by every professional that I would die and all she said was NO. Not my boy. He will grow up big and strong and smart and it does not matter if everyone in the world says so, he is not going to die. He will live.

I don't have exactly the same faith my mother has, but I do admire it. If she did not have undying faith in God I may not be here today. It's something that logic plays no part in.

I faced my defining moment, my moment that all the experts were in agreement upon.

At that point there were two choices. To accept or fight this. I imagined in my mind's eye exactly what my life would look like on each path and I had no respect for the person I would become if I took the easy path.

It reminds me of an episode from Star Trek T.N.G., where Picard recalls a time when he was stabbed in the heart as a 20 something fresh out of the academy. He was stabbed by Nausicaan because he was reckless and daring and provoked them. This injury threatened his life later when he was older, and his heart was failing.

He is given the opportunity by the all-powerful entity the "Q" to live his life as if that mistake had never happened. (Side note: Isn't it weird that the atheistic show Star Trek basically had God as a main character? Debate me on Facebook about this some time.)

Then Picard relived the moment he was stabbed and avoided the fight instead. This changed the timeline. He never became captain of the Enterprise. He never even rose above ensign because he was always

the one who played it safe. He discovered that the type of person who avoids a fight with Nausicaans does not grow up to be a good leader.

Faced with the possibility of dying later in life from heart complications or living a longer life as the one who plays it safe, he asked "Q" to reset things the way they were.

Because death is preferable to a live unlived.

So, I saw these two timelines before me. One where I accept that I had ADHD and I lower my goals and accept what the experts are saying.

Or I fight.

You know what I did?

I became obsessed about learning everything with how the brain works. I wanted to read every book on the brain to figure out how to overcome my challenges. The first skill I mastered was speed reading.

Then I discovered memory techniques and learned everything I could

on that. Then I learned mentalism, hypnosis, visualization and more. Everything about the brain, I wanted to master it. Eventually I started to invent new techniques. Today I am recognized for inventing five original accelerated learning techniques including a strategy called Memory Modes that was later proven to work in a double-blind neuroscience study.

Soon my performance improved but I discovered another fact about humans.

They don't want you to change.

I started to use memory techniques on tests and often got perfect on any memory related test.

Instead of being happy for me, the teachers all assumed I cheated and lowered the score.

There were a few exceptions. Some teachers were inspired by what I was doing and started to ask me about memory techniques. They told others and started helping other students with my secrets. It was

amazing to find out some of the techniques I invented were being used by people who never met me.

Near my last year of high school, I started a memory club and we did memory competitions and challenges. Little did I realize this was one of the first of its kind, predating the international founding of memory competitions by the W.M.C. in England a few years later. Some part of me regrets not continuing memory competitions and of course filing for a trademark.

But it was a personal challenge I wanted to overcome. Many still thought I was that dumb kid who was acting out or faking being hurt. I wanted to break free from that label.

That's when I decided to break a Guinness Record for Memory.

The rest is history. I worked hard for six months to develop a code and system all my own to break this record. I followed the rules and broke the record by memorizing the exact order of 52 Decks of playing cards all shuffled together after seeing them only once.

I later broke this record nearly ten years later with 59 Decks (3,068 Cards in total). I can honestly say it changed everything. No one thinks of me the same way. Many people who said the worst things about me now wanted to praise me and be close friends.

I went on to make a career selling my memory program. I've been on over 2000 media interviews and sold approximately 10 million world-wide when you add it all up. Not stopping there, I founded a marketing company Farrow Communications that does publicity and marketing for other entrepreneurs and experts just like I did for myself. I have real estate holdings and other business investments. I run memory programs and competitions around the world including a very cool summer school program in America. I am often hired to speak and train executives and salespeople in memory and accelerated learning. I even worked as a nanotech scientist and robotics engineer for the sheer enjoyment of being on the cutting edge of tech. Currently, I am working on a new robotics startup company called Farrowbot because, why not.

I love my life.

Later at a class reunion one teacher went up to me. It was a woman who had made things very difficult when I was a kid. All those feelings came up to the surface, but something was different. She was clearly distraught. She could not stop apologizing for how she treated me, telling me over and over that she was just following her training.

Clearly this had bothered her for years. While I was busy defying labels she was living with horrible regret. I was the mistake she made. I was her big regret.

Any anger I felt was erased in that moment. The journey we take in life is only partially our own. Every step we take is a step with others.

I told her she did the best she could and for what it's worth I was a difficult kid to teach.

We hugged and remain friends to this day.

For what it's worth, I intend to continue being a difficult kid for as long as I live, and I hope you do too.



Dom Faussette

“Smiling doesn’t always mean you’re happy with everything. Sometimes it just means you’re strong enough to accept it and make the best of it.”

BE BALD AND SHARE A BOLD SMILE

BY DOM FAUSSETTE

Growing up in San Bernardino, California. It wasn’t the most pleasant environment, but one thing my mother used to do was take us to an even more impoverished environment to just look around and feel the environment. Twenty minutes later she’d take us to a new-build where a Realtor would tour the spec. homes and hand out candy. I remember a time we were sitting on the steps inside of this brand-new house and my mother said, “You know what? Just because I live here now, doesn’t mean I have to stay here.” I always felt this outlook was relevant in many situations.

Life is about experiences. My mom and dad, very tough, both prior military, eventually became entrepreneurs. Some of the things that stand out are, I remember I getting stabbed my sophomore year in high school because I said something to offend a young lady.

Although that was a negative experience, at that moment, in hindsight, I realized how strong words are. There was a time that I got in trouble, and my mom took me to our DARE officer. It was a lesson in integrity and character. I learned character and integrity at a very early age. It's those two words and those two concepts that, even in my darkest times, kept me right, if you will.

We couldn't afford it, but she said, "You can decide to live here, or you can decide to stay where you're at. The choice is yours, but you're not going to get anywhere without hard work and dedication and without being focused on things outside of yourself, from a positive standpoint." I remember that.

Like many of you, I grew up wanting to help people out. I didn't know that it would be in this capacity. I joined the military fresh out of high school. I then ended up becoming a police officer once I got out of the service, and I thought that was my purpose in life, my path. Just to be a cop, help the old lady across the street, if you will. That never happened. I never "helped people across the street." I realized that I was hurting more people than helping. Becoming a product of my environment. If you could imagine, as a police officer, more often than not when

responding, nobody wants you around. You're just there because something's not going right in the world of someone else. When you do that, and you see a lot of the negativity that takes place in this world day in and day out, it changes who you are as a person. I got to a point where I went from sad to depressed, to just numb, having no compassion for anybody in the world. It got to the point where I was suicidal. "Suicide by suspect." Let me explain what that is. Going to that depression, that anger stage, I really could no longer handle the job, but I wasn't going to kill myself because my family would end up losing the death benefits, so I opted never again to wear my bulletproof vest. Chasing drug dealers and kicking in doors. Putting myself in the line of fire with the hopes of being taken out. It never happened.

There was one day I'll never forget. It was two in the morning, a weekday, so naturally it was quiet. I was in my patrol car, and some lady jumps out in front of my car. She yells, telling me that her husband was trying to kill her. I get out, and I see her husband standing there. He's got a knife in his hand. He's in the middle of the yard, and like I said, it's two in the morning, so it's dark out. I say to myself, "This is my time to go. I'm good." But then I saw three kids standing behind him. I had my weapon drawn, and I said to myself, "I'm not going to let their dad kill

me, and then he goes to prison. but in turn, I'm not going to kill him because nothing good's going to come into these children's lives."

I holstered my weapon, and we struggled, but I made the arrest. I didn't get hurt, and I don't know if I saved his life that day, or if he saved MINE! That next morning, I put my two weeks' notice in because I realized that there's more to life!

A couple of mentors and coaches later, I ended up getting into corporate leadership. Four Fortune 500 companies later, I noticed so many successful people wasting their talents, losing their spark, gaining weight, getting divorced, becoming depressed. And these guys, they were younger than forty. Thought to myself, "I was that person. I was depressed, angry, sad, never wanting to move forward in life, wasting my talents."

It's really about a balance in life. I'm not a big fan of the phrase "life-balance," because for me it's "moment-balance." The balance that I have in my company is not the balance that I'm going to need while I'm out to dinner with my wife or delivering a leadership facilitation at the corporate office. For me, it's about bridging the gap between my mind and my heart.

I talked about your whys, and understanding what it is I was put on this earth to do. I firmly believe that I'm not here for myself.

If I were here for myself, one of the bullets would've hit me when I was a cop, and I would be dead and gone. We all have a greater purpose. The fact that I found mine is what allows me to be here now when I'm coaching, and it is listening to my clients. Do I have a perfect life? No, but I strive towards perfection every day.

When you've been in so many dark places, it's very easy to wake up and be in a happy place. It's a choice. I wake up. My eyelids open. My feet touch the floor. I'm on this side of the dirt! I control everything else that happens that day. I don't have a three-to-five-year plan; I have a three-to-five HOUR plan!

I'm an Executive Coach who just happens to Speak Professionally. I eat, breathe, dream about overall quality and improvement of SELF. This was no overnight decision. As I look back on my life experiences, I know that I've been trained for the moment I locked in on my purpose in life. Whether it was the lessons I learned as a Military Working Dog Handler (K-9 Handler) in the United States Air Force, getting tested on the streets

as a Police Officer in Jackson, Mississippi or Leading teams in the various companies I worked for... Coaching excites me! With each move made in my multiple careers, I had to always push myself. The question I most frequently asked myself was, "HOW BAD DO YOU WANT IT?"

By asking the question, "How bad do you want it?" Understanding that, "It took you thirty years to get here. You're not going to get there, wherever there is, in thirty minutes, or thirty days.

Now we can begin the process, but that's a decision that you would have to make." Understand, there are certain changes that must take place in your life. For the past decade, you may have come home from work and set your butt in front of the television and done nothing. You cannot do that any longer. You must completely change everything you're doing in your life to get the results you don't have. It's about getting the results that you want, but why haven't we gotten them?

Probably because most of us are lazy and we end up feeling sad because we're a product of our observations, but we don't realize it! For example, when you get into your car, the AM/FM frequencies are flowing back and forth. You have the option to listen to talk radio, sports radio,

country, classical, hip hop, jazz, but you tune in by deciding on the station that you're going to listen to. Compare this example to our lives. We all tune into what it is we want out of life. If you don't want anything out of life, then that's the station you're going to tune into, but if you want something, then you're going to tune into things that are greater than your current situation. It takes a habit to replace a habit.

Having the ability as an Executive Coach to assist someone in finding their smile and becoming happy is not an easy problem to solve, but it's the most rewarding. During our first session, I use the rifle analogy. All we're doing is "taking the rifle out of the case." We're not loading the magazine. We're just taking the rifle out of the case and inspecting it, and understanding how valuable knowing your life is, and knowing where you want to go. When you see something on paper, a lot of times I don't really have to say much. They'll know what they need to work on. That assessment has amplified and shined a light on the gap between where they are, compared to where they feel they should be.

So many of us go through life, and we don't put any thought into ourselves. Naturally, we put thought into everything and everyone else, and we're so consumed by our calendar, our phone, our text messages, and what our

wife's doing, what our kids are doing, and what our employees are doing. Decades go by, and we don't think about ourselves. It's like the airplane example of the flight attendants who talk about putting your oxygen mask on first before helping your kid. Your knee-jerk reaction is, "I want to help my kid first." But the takeaway there is, you've got to help yourself, so you will be there to be able to help them. Otherwise, you might be passed out and then they don't have the support they need. The good thing about the style of coaching that I do with my clients is it ends up being fun. It ends up allowing them not to have to think in the same way they would in the office. It allows them to be free. They trust me because I'm not in their circle. It's that refreshing feeling of them knowing somebody that doesn't want anything fundamental, because so many people pull from successful people. Successful people are very cognitive about who's talking to them. They're typically closed off, and they have to put on this front of, "I've got it all together because if I don't put up this front, this person's going to call me out." Or, "This person probably wants something from me," and more often than not, that person does. With this coaching relationship, everything I want from them, they want from themselves as well.

I have learned that abundance is created from fruitful relationships. When clients come to me, they should expect the building of a

relationship. I coach because it brings joy and excitement to my life. I mean, who wouldn't want to spend their life helping others operate at their fullest potential?

It's my purpose. It's just fun, but I live it at home. My clients come to me, and it's refreshing. I don't say this lightly. Because I choose my clients, they should expect a new friend. I had one guy call me his younger bigger brother. I hear a lot, "Man, you get me." They should expect to be listened to, they should expect to be respected, they should expect a relationship to be built, to be held accountable.

They should expect that I, as their coach, am going to be committed to their life during this coaching process. They should expect teaching, training, sharing, and expect to be freed of the life that they're currently leading. Because they're not "living" life, they're "leading" their life. You're able to enjoy life and as simple as it sounds you're able to laugh.

You want to open a relationship, and when you do that, it opens an opportunity. It opens a mindset. It opens things that someone may never have thought of on their own.

ABOUT DOM FAUSSETTE

With over a decade of corporate leadership, small business/Executive coaching, and most importantly, real-world, in-the-trenches business experience, his view is radically different. We cannot do anything we put our mind to, without first unlearning what the mind has retained. Author, Dom Faussette extracts the unidentified natural leadership ability you currently possess to build upon your platform. Dom appreciates, and shares with listeners, that success is a moment-to-moment choice and not about title, capital gain or possessions. Success is a feeling of opportunity that requires engaged thought, performance driven action and influential leadership.

In a leadership capacity, Dom served in the United States Air Force with the 305th SFS as a K9 handler, then as a Police Officer with the City of Jackson, Mississippi. Dom Faussette is the founder of Think React Lead LLC. He continues to work with the best and brightest in the leadership development field.



Paul Finck

“A gentleman smiles at the opportunity to make the world better.”

MAVERICKS SMILE DIFFERENTLY

BY PAUL FINCK

YES! Mavericks smile differently, because they act vs react... and, in doing so, they **MAKE LIFE HAPPEN!** They smile the knowing smile of pride over the life they have created.

I have been a maverick for most of my adult life. I have always marched to the beat of a different drum. While most people turn left, I turn right. As a Maverick, I am someone who refuses to play by the rules and isn't scared to cross the line of conformity. As a matter of fact, Mavericks tend to create their own line that is ever-changing. **Yes, I am a Maverick.. and I smile a lot!**

“Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect” – Mark Twain

I am seen as an optimist - always looking through rose colored glasses, determined to find the silver lining in every situation. The alternative seems pointless to me. However, this does not mean I have been sheltered from the pains of life. I grow up in a “challenged” family life. Addiction, psychosis, and infidelity was the back story to lies, miscommunication, and disruptive life decisions. After 35 years of mental abuse on both sides, my parents finally divorced. Strength of character, personal responsibility, values, and trust were not concepts discussed in my household let alone demonstrated. I had no role models of what a successful relationship looked like. No concept of what a successful friendship should be, or how a successful business person behaved. I had no parent who was capable of guiding me to make effective life or business decisions ~ they weren't even able to make them for themselves. I had no “Rich Dad” to show me the path to business or financial success. **So HOW the heck did I end up becoming Paul Finck, The Maverick Millionaire ®?**

I graduated from college in 1986 with a psychology degree and went straight into medical sales. The company I choose to work for offered me a decent salary with a slight commission override. Most people would have been satisfied with that—but not the Maverick in me. After

seven weeks—just long enough for me to move into an apartment and paint it—I quit! Imagine: College graduate quits his first paying job after seven weeks. I quit to go to work for the competition who offered straight commission only. What was I thinking? I was thinking “I want to be motivated, inspired, and challenged with my position—or BUST!” **YES - It was a Maverick move.** It was unconventional... and yet I never even hesitated. So what happened? I more than doubled my original projected income that year, and I enrolled one of my best friends to join me in the journey. Now I was moving and shaking! Bold counter-intuitive action lead to improved results. This was a lesson I learned well.

Unfortunately, this position did not last long. Fast-forward one year later. It is now 1987. I am an “experienced” twenty-two-year-old medical sales person in New York City. The firm I am working for is being closed down for “billing infractions” with Medicare and Medicaid. Suddenly I am without a job. The normal reaction would be to go find another position. **The Maverick reaction: Take note of the opportunities around you and get into action.**

I observed not only was I out of a job, so were dozens of other quality salespeople in my local region. I got busy creating a new company, a

sales organization for home care products... one of a kind in the day. I negotiated large commissions for my team with several small local companies that had no sales force. They would act as our fulfillment house. With that done, I convinced seven of the top reps from the now defunct company to represent us. Within two weeks, with the help of a partner, we were up and running with a new company, new marketing material, new structure, and new responsibilities. **What a Maverick move - again!** For me, it was an obvious action to take, and yet to dozens of others in the same situation it wasn't even an option. Again bold moves that paid off.

I realized, at that moment, a principle I teach to my coaching students and upper level mastermind students to this day: **There is a solution to every challenge. Keep your eyes open to the possibilities!** I also acknowledged I had two choices: lead or follow. Most of us are faced with that choice regularly in our lives. Where your life takes you will often be determined by which path you take—lead or follow. As with everything, it is your choice, and it was mine at the time. I chose to lead.

**“Play as if the world is watching ~
Even when they are not.”**

I continued to be a serial entrepreneur over the next decade plus, dabbling in distribution companies, supply chains, billing systems, high tech capital equipment, Dental industry, network marketing companies... the list goes on. All sustaining me, however none of them exploding me to anything above decent. From my perspective at the time, I was on top of my game doing great.

As the years went on, the love of my life, Deborah, and I got married and started our family. Although we have lived an eventful life, for the sake of keeping this story confined to the room given, I will fast forward a bit. Let's pick up the story a few years later in the year 2001 when one of the pivotal moments in my life took place. This is when my miracle happened, or should I say miracles. My fifth child was born... and my sixth... my last set of twins. That's right - you read right; “my last set” which implies I have another... which I do. Matter of fact, **I have three sets of twins; Six children in total.** This key event in my life gave me the motivation and dedication to create a powerful new journey for myself and my family which has carried us to this day.

Amanda and Alexandra are my oldest girls. They are adopted from birth and are my nieces biologically. My wife and I have cherished and

cared for them every second from the moment they were born. Then came Stephen and Katerina. They were born via In-Vitro Fertilization. Four months later... SURPRISE! - pregnant again (the old fashion way)... David and Daniel, my identical boys. Three boys/Three Girls... The Brady Bunch comes to life. All 6 children born within five and a half years of one another. So now what?

TIME TO GET BUSY! I knew our current income was not going to sustain our current standard of living with a family of eight. I had to DO things Differently, AND not just by a little! I looked up the income range for participating in financial aid in my part of the country (The amount of money you could be earning or less to still QUALIFY for “food stamps”). For a family of eight, I could be earning as much as \$73,000 per year and still qualify. I did not realize how close to poverty level I was at the time. I just knew I had to create more and quickly! So I got educated on the key ways to build wealth and prosperity.

I had heard on the radio of this program by ... wait ... hold your breath all you experience real estate investors... Carleton Sheets, the famous real estate investor no money down guru from the seventies. He heard of a CD set that was for sale and as I was driving one day from account

to account, I heard the advertisement, and wrote down the number. Well, this program cost an incredible amount of money. They wanted the outrageous price of \$800. To me at the time --- wow ~ holy smokes – that was a lot of money. I had six kids and a wife to answer to. I couldn't buy this... at least not without asking first! So, I dug deep for my best sales material and went to work on convincing my wife this was our answer!

Now, I don't know about the rest of the guys out there, but I know myself. If my wife was not 100 percent on board with the program - this new step in our incredible journey – there was no way it was going to work. Effective communication would be a must. Working as a team was absolutely necessary. It would involve complete understanding of what all this was going to mean to our future and what we were going to have to give up to make it work.

I can hear some of you already – “give up”; what do you mean I have to “give up” something? I was told I could have all I want. Life was abundant. This is an “AND” world, not an “Either/or” world. As true as all these beliefs are, often sacrifice is necessary. I have found this especially true in transition periods in your journey. **The biggest sacrifices must**

be made to create the biggest changes... and the biggest rewards. As my wife and I talked, we came to an agreement. Yes, my wife and I came to an agreement BEFORE we started down this new path together. She agreed to take on the majority of the care for the children. Before this time, I was 50/50 partners with her on everything. She did the laundry. I did ALL the food shopping. She cooked. I cleaned the dishes. We both feed, feed, feed the babies. We both changed, changed, changed all the diapers. Now things had to change for us to simply survive let alone thrive. I told her “give me 12 months”. In twelve months, I will work the system, take action, and create a new vision for our life! I would continue my current position and on nights, weekends, and anytime in between, I would work on creating abundance via real estate investing. OK – great pitch... now I really had to go out and do it! As the “What if” mambo was going off in my head, I realized I was really scared and yet.. I didn't let the fear stop me!

I did get busy. Hard work. Continuous persistent behavior. Additional reading and listening to authors, trainers, guru's. I read every book. I listened to every CD. I went to all the seminars. I analyzed property after property, calling on realtors and brokers, looking up in the newspapers (yes, this was before everything was listed on the internet)

for anything that looked like it might fit my criteria. In my first thirty days, I analyzed over one hundred properties to find THE ONE—and I found it!

Within 30 days I did have my first property under contract! This one property was no ordinary property. Most are told to walk before they run. This advice can be applied to most ventures and most industries... real estate is no exception. Purchase a single family home, do a minor repair and sell it. Maybe be really daring and buy a duplex and test your skills at being a landlord. As I look back, I realize the Maverick within me was ready to take another bold leap. **My first property was a commercial strip mall.**

Facing my fears, I did do it anyway. And that one property lead to another and another which then lead to other opportunities. Over the next couple years, I earned my real estate license and became a mortgage broker completely transitioning to real estate full time. I was also doing side deals with joint ventures partners and strategic partners. Altogether, I have done over \$20 million in personal transactions, and I am still active in real estate investing to this day.

Everything was going great... then the recession of 2008 hit. Yes, I lost during that time. It was not easy. I never count my loses though. I don't see the point. **Instead, I take action the Maverick Way™. I look for the opportunity!** I have gone through my share of ups and downs of the market and yet I always find a way to bounce back. I learned "I must fail to succeed".

During this time, I had already started looking for the what the "next level" for me would be. In my journey to find financial freedom and lifestyle abundance, I stumbled onto more personal development training. Considering I was a psychology major, and had spent a couple decades studying sales and the human psyche, I really didn't think I needed to learn anything more... however, my wife was interested in doing it with this time. I was excited. We could do this together. This was the beginning of yet another chapter in our lives.

Even with the ups and downs, I had managed to secure a lifestyle shift for us, and was able to provide comfortably for my large family. It was about this time, I met a speaker who inspired me to strive for a real purpose in life; A meaning of what my life was about far beyond paying the day to day bills. A reason for getting up in the morning so great,

it would continue to stretch me to my fullest potential. **I got inspired to be the best ME!** However, this would take another leap of faith.

You might have heard this before - To succeed, you must take a leap of faith. I am here to assure you that this is FALSE! **You must take MULTIPLE LEAPS of faith ~ over and over and over again.** So, here we go again! This is when things start to jump to another level for us.

I started business/personal development coaching and strategic business consulting. I wanted to help others find the the answers to unlock their potential! In addition, I created a speaker-support business representing some of the top real estate "gurus" in North America. I was privileged to coordinated the sales process and train the sales teams for dozens in the industry and became one of the experts in the field on Live Events and 3-day bootcamps. To round out my skill sets, I became certified in hypnosis and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and now have spent over 10000 hours coaching people around the world on how to live a great life, personally and professionally.

I started to be known as **The Maverick** because of my nonconformist, unorthodox approach to life and business. I believe people can create

their own destiny and empower individuals to be strong in their convictions even in the face of opposition. I love to confronting the tough issues. I teach the **Maverick Way™** behavior and mindset which will guide you to what you really want out of your time on this earth which I have since laid out in the Maverick Manifesto. (Download your FREE summation of my maverick mindset today called **The Maverick Manifesto**. Simply goto www.TheMaverickManifesto.com)

Since then I have gone on to do millions of dollars in real estate, run over 250 “bootcamps”, coach and train thousands around the world, become a publisher and an author in over 10 international best selling books, and established multiple successful businesses. At my flagship event, “**Maverick Success Live**”, which is offered several times a year around the country, I lay out the step-by-step plan to applying these components into your day to day life along with unconventional Maverick techniques for business, finance, sales, marketing, communication, and interpersonal relationships.

IF I can create abundance with a profession, a wife, and six kids under six, *anyone can do it!* Time to get busy with your journey and Smile just a little bit Different.

Be a Maverick ~ Do it Different™

ANYONE CAN DO IT!
Time to get busy with your journey and
have more to SMILE about!

To experience more
www.TheMaverickDifference.com
“**This is only the beginning!**”™

ABOUT PAUL FINCK

Paul Finck, The Maverick Millionaire® is one of the foremost authorities in business and personal development today. In his over 3 decades of sales, marketing, and entrepreneurial experience, Paul has moved over \$20 million in Real Estate transactions, sold over \$30 million in informational products, and ran over 250 live events. He has worked with some of the best-known speakers in the world to take their events to the next level, and coached entrepreneurs and small business owners from around the world to build their business and create an abundant future for them all. When you desire a real difference in your personal or financial world, crave a strategic game plan, looking to build a great team, and maximize your income dramatically in the next 12 months, Paul Finck is the Maverick for you.



Rodney Flowers

“Don’t let the world change your smile, use your smile to change the world.”

KEEP SMILING

BY RODNEY FLOWERS

I had a fairly normal childhood. I was, on the most part, raised by my grandmother, surrounded by many female cousins. But that did not get me any special treatment. In fact, being the “man of the house”, I was trained from an early age to take charge and work extra hard. Looking back, unknowingly, my upbringing set me up with the strength and resilience I would need to face and overcome what would turn out to be a very dark period in my life.

Fast forward to 1993. I was a high school athlete, determined to impress top college recruiters and secure a spot in the NFL. Football was my ticket to success. And then, on the third day of my sophomore year, during the very first game of the season, that dream became a nightmare. One moment I was running across the field, ready to make the tackle of a lifetime. Little did I know it would be my last. I made the hit, and I remember it was a fierce one. Boom!

But something didn't feel right this time. It felt like all the energy had left my body. I wanted to get up but my body just would not cooperate. And as I lay there, I could hear my teammates shouting, "Good one, Rodney. That's what I'm talking about. Now get up, Rodney! Get Up!" I kept trying, but I just couldn't seem to summon the energy to do so.

Some of my teammates even ran to me to help me get up, but a coach shouted, "Don't touch him! Don't move him! He could be hurt bad." And that was when I knew something was very wrong, and I felt the first slice of fear. The realization hit me that at that point my head was the only part of my body that I could move. I had lost control of the rest of my body. That was a game changing moment for me.

I was put on a stretcher, in an ambulance, and transported to the local hospital's Emergency Room. Doctors and nurses tried everything to detect feeling in my lower body, to the point of cutting my feet, but I felt nothing. There was no response. That's when they realized the situation was serious, and I was airlifted to Duke University Hospital for further evaluation. A battery of tests later, the doctors came to my bedside and gave me my diagnosis. I was quadriplegic. Doctors told me it was highly unlikely that I'd ever walk again. But they did their

best to convince me that it was possible to live a happy, productive life from the confines of a wheelchair.

At that moment, it felt like in an instant, so many open doors had slammed in my face. I could not imagine living the rest of my life in the confines of a wheelchair. How was I to reconcile my active 15-year-old boy lifestyle with huge dreams with this nightmare? My life as I knew it was over, right?

But wait! That was then. Today, several years later, thanks to a steady dose of discipline, commitment, faith, and persistent effort, I no longer need a wheelchair. I can walk on my own two feet. I can drive. I live a normal life. Not only that, I am a college graduate with a Bachelor's of Arts and a Masters Degree in Business Administration. And for the past 20 years or so, I have been working as a Contracting Officer with the Department of Defense (DoD) United States NAVY (USN) supporting NAVAIR at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station.

In addition, I'm the author of the life-affirming and highly-inspiring Amazon bestselling book, *Get Up! I Can't. I Will. I Did...Here's How!* which teaches empowering life principles to transform your spirit

and motivate you to awaken the amazing power within you to overcome any challenge. I also authored the international bestselling book, *Essential Assertions*, packed with guiding life principles & inspiring stories that energize and motivate you to recognize your maximum potential, uncover and leverage your hidden strengths, & use your unbreakable spirit to capitalize on life's opportunities.

Looking back, this is a life I would never have envisioned for myself when I was a star athlete in high school. But if you ask me, I'm living my best life now. Why? Because my life story has served to inspire millions of people who may have been at the point of giving up. If I could do it, so can you, so can anyone. All it takes is a dream, resilience, a persistent spirit, and a VISION.

Vision makes it possible. Vision makes greatness possible. You see, change doesn't begin with resolve; it begins with vision. Vision is the genesis of all creation. Human beings are creative beings, God-like, when we exercise our gift of vision to produce a result. If you can believe it, you can achieve it, truly. If you can hold your vision long enough, understand it, feel it, you're able to bring it forward. Holding vision is FAITH, and when you strive towards making your vision a reality,

that's faith in action. That's truly honoring yourself and the universe/your creator. Execution of your vision is a form of worship. We must be grateful for this gift, and we must show our gratitude by using it.

Game Changers know that vision is the difference between existing and living.



My purpose in life revolves around finding answers to this question: How can we live better, more fulfilled lives regardless of the scars of our past and the setbacks of our present? I have a sincere, heartfelt passion for motivating, transforming and encouraging others to embrace and live their life purpose to the fullest.

We all have challenges, but our choices when it comes to how we respond to these challenges makes all the difference. I did not let my past define me. I woke up every day and I fought to improve my situation. I still do to date. And this lesson in resilience is what I seek to impress on others. I have this passion within me to help people become the engineers of their futures instead of victims of their circumstances.

I want everyone to realize that an extraordinary life is waiting for them just over the horizon of their self-defeating beliefs, doubts, and excuses.

As an internationally respected writer, superior communicator, influencer, and thought leader, I am dedicated, tenacious, and fully committed to being a change agent for overcoming life's adversities and maximizing individual achievement and success.



I have been featured on several radio shows, podcasts, social media broadcasts, and stages. I am also the founder and host of the Game Changer Mentality Podcast, the place for motivational insights, powerful strategies, interviews, stories, tools, and actionable advice from people who have successfully 'Changed the Game' in some area of their personal and business life.

In addition to my writing, I am also a keynote speaker and resilience trainer. I have spoken in different stages including corporate settings, business conferences, school auditoriums, church pulpits, boardrooms and seminars. To people living with disabilities, my speaking topics

offer a beacon of hope, and they range from Diversity & Inclusion to Resilience in the face of adversity. I speak to school boards on New Education Strategies that cater for a smooth transition into adult life for all, regardless of their disabilities.

My core topics include: Overcoming Adversity through Resilience, Vision Makes it Possible, The Power of Transformation, Channeling Passion into Productivity, Resilience Intelligence in the Workplace, Making "It" Happen, Corporate Identity & Culture, Process, Growth, & Goals, and Daily Structures for Improvement.

ABOUT RODNEY FLOWERS

Rodney Flowers, founder and president of Inspirational Endeavors, LLC, inspires, motivates and encourages individuals to reach for their hopes and dreams with earnest expectations regardless of their limitations or challenges.

After a traumatic high school football injury, Flowers was paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair. Despite an unfavorable prognosis for recovery, he spent the next 18 years regaining his ability to walk and making a positive impact on the world. Today, Flowers is an internationally respected writer, communicator, influencer, thought leader and change agent for overcoming life's adversities and maximizing individual achievement and success.

Flowers is a three-time international Amazon bestselling author, keynote speaker, CEO, entrepreneur, transformational leader and resilience trainer. Rodney is dedicated, tenacious, and fully committed to overcoming life's adversities and maximizing individual achievement and success.

Visit www.RodneyFlowers.com for more information and resources.



Kellan Fluckiger, Coach, Speaker, Author, Creator The Ultimate Life Formula

“You are a divine being with a purpose. You have gifts the rest of us need. You are created to have joy, Your SMILE is the heartfelt invitation to be part of your world, to connect and create together.”

YOUR SMILE IS YOUR TRUE SOURCE OF POWER

BY KELLAN FLUCKIGER

I came into this life from the eternities as did we all. My mortal experience started in an average middle class world. You wouldn't expect high drama from the situation. There was nothing of starvation, war or other outside upheaval. But it is not what is outside that defines who you are.

As it turned out, my childhood experience was emotionally and physically abusive. Well meaning parents who “knew what was right,” enforced their ideals and preferences with a vengeance. I learned to lie for self-preservation and lying became an all- coping behavior. I lied about homework, I didn't do my work and lied until my parents were called to school and then I got more punishment. I wanted anyone to accept and like me at any cost.

I lied to impress other kids so they would like me. I began stealing things to give away in an attempt to buy friendship. The amounts of theft got larger and larger. Eventually I got caught and got in more trouble. I turned to drugs in the 6th grade as an escape. I tried anything I could to numb the pain of being nobody and worthless.

Then I did well in school to get approval. It wasn't enough. I turned to chemistry and learned to make explosives to impress people. I was gifted in music and so I tried using that to get recognition and admiration, but it wasn't enough. It didn't matter what I did, I was still lacking. The only lesson I remember taking from childhood was the sure knowledge that "I was not good enough."

I left home at 17, alienated and floundering, I was an outcast from the family and treated as lost. Kind of like the "prodigal son" in the bible, except I was kicked out instead of leaving voluntarily.

I had severe depression for decades and still did everything for one of two reasons. I wanted someone to tell me I was OK, or I wanted approval from my mom. Nothing created that sense of being ok. I assumed everything was my fault and so my frustration and anger turned inward.

I spent the next 35 years trying to prove I was OK. I thought I was trying to win approval from my parents, but I was really trying to prove something to myself.

Outward career success came easily, and I pretended away the internal misery. The short version is decades of hollow life full of success, money, empty relationships, broken dreams, divorces, drugs, alcohol and everything else to excess. I did not know how to get help and just kept "trying."

Predictably, I marked the milestones of depression, addictions, rehab, attempted suicide and all the rest. Finally, in my 50's I had a literal divine intervention from a merciful God. This provided an awakening that finally allowed me freedom from the chains of depression, self-loathing and incessant failure.

I started a long but exciting road to recovery from addictions, depression and trying to "prove something." Part of the divine intervention was the blessing of an Angel in the form of my wife Joy. Aptly named, she became my best friend, my soulmate and the bright beacon of sanity in the madness that had been my life. She taught me the meaning of friendship and loyalty.

I got both professional and spiritual help. I tried different approaches to healing. I worked hard with meditation and both eastern and western medical approaches. Finally, I created a path forward that healed me and gave me the opportunity to serve those around me who had false narratives about life that resembled mine.

In working to understand my experience, I began to write. The first work was a five part series on meditation. This was important to me because meditation played a pivotal role in both physical and spiritual healing. Then I wrote about my own history in “Tightrope of Depression - My Journey from Darkness, Despair and Death to Light, Love and Light.”

In this process I learned that I was not alone. There are many who struggle with self-worth at different levels. It doesn't matter so much how it happened to each person, and every story is both unique and powerful. What matters is there is a way forward. There is a path to healing and it starts with taking responsibility for your own life. In connection with the book, I composed an album of original music. The lyric and melodies express the feelings of those who struggle like I had.

When that book was finished, I realized that the story was not complete, and volume 2 of the “Tightrope” series was finished in 2019. It is titled “Down From the Gallows” and chronicles continuing recovery and the daily struggles and triumphs of life. Like the first volume, it has an accompanying album or original music. This album is about hope and recovery.

The divine process of growth and development never ends. in the summer of 2018, I contracted a superbug. I had necrotizing MRSA that caused pneumonia in both lungs. I spent a month in the hospital, with 2 weeks in a coma in ICU and biological isolation.

I had a near-death experience. Since I didn't die, I knew even more certainly that I had a mission to perform. I wrote two more books about this experience. “Meeting God at the Door,” and “The Book of Context.” Both are focused on the four simple truths I learned in my conversations with God

1. You and I are divine creations. We are the literal offspring of God.
2. We each have a divine purpose and mission we eagerly accepted before we came.
3. We were given all the gifts and talents we needed to

accomplish this mission. 4. All the help we need from both earthly and heavenly sources is available to us if we seek it.

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After this experience, everything in my life coalesced into a single purpose. I help people understand those four truths and then discover, develop and manifest their divine nature and gifts. Everything else I do is in service to that goal.

My purpose, the thing I came here to do is to help people DO the things they don't BELIEVE they can do. Why is this such a challenge? Why is it that we all feel this yearning and the truth of a purpose, yet we settle for far less than our capability?

We live in a noisy and angry world. Everything is about competition and having more than someone else. Judgement and inadequacy are everywhere. From our first breath we are compared to others and often get the short end of the stick.

The truth is that you are divine. As a divine person, you have a purpose

and gifts that the rest of us need. Our highest purpose and greatest joy come when we are in service to our fellow beings, the world around us and the growth and advancement of every other person.

My purpose in life, each day I draw breath can be summed up in three guiding words. Love, Create. Serve. Love each person as they are in this moment. Here. Now. Create space for imagination to blossom and creativity to explode. This brings words and works of meaning, truth and value. Serve each person with Joy and in their highest and best interest.

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A catalyst is something that facilitates or speeds up a chemical reaction. Without the catalyst, two chemicals are mixed and nothing happens or the reaction happens slowly. With the catalyst, the reaction happens quickly and powerfully. The catalyst is not chemically involved in the reaction, but the presence somehow makes it happen.

Today, I am focused on a single purpose. I am the Ultimate Catalyst to help people discover and do what they are called to do. As a coach, that

Is the role I play. Of myself, I am nothing. I did not rescue myself from death and destruction. God did that for His own reasons.

Since I am still here, I have one purpose and that is to be the catalyst to help as many as possible find their own divinity and then maximize their potential and service to others. It is very simple.

All the talks I give, all the books I write and all the music I record is aimed at this purpose. Every person feels that yearning to be something more. It is divine. We often choose to settle for crumbs because we lack the vision or energy to make the “reaction” take place.

I do private and small group coaching. I conduct workshops on how to create your own Ultimate Life using the principles organized for that purpose. I help people become the next best version of themselves. I have written 11 books and I have 3 more in the works with many more planned.

I am active in church and community to help everywhere I can. All these activities are my vehicle to “Add Good to the World.” I will not rest or be finished until every person who is willing understands and

connects with their own divine potential and uses their unique gifts, talents and refining experiences to serve those around them.

Each of us has a story, big or small, about our own unworthiness. That story prevents us from being our best selves. The story is not true and it can be changed. It takes Time, Energy and Resources to make changes. For those ready to change, I am that Catalyst.

I have clients in Europe, Canada, USA, Australia, India and other places around the world. I use social media, the written word and music to spread this message and lift and help every person I can.

Book(s) that changed your life:

As A Man Thinketh	The War of Art
Primal Branding	The Art of War
The Way of Mastery	Stealing Fire
The Book of Mormon	The Results Equation
The Music Lesson	The Biology of Belief
How God Changes Your Brain	Crazy Good

Movie(s) that inspire you:

Only the Brave	Bridge on the River Kwai
The Electric Horseman	

Song(s) that inspire you:

Anthem	You
Everything I Do, I Do For	

Your hero:

Jesus Christ	Abe Lincoln
Mr. Spock	

Quote you live by:

"The Way You Do One Thing Is the Way You Do Everything."



Diane Forster

“Your attitude reflects the smile you wear every minute of the day.”

WHEN YOU GET INTENTIONAL ABOUT YOUR LIFE, YOU CAN'T HELP BUT SMILE! BY DIANE FORSTER

I was conceived the night that John F. Kennedy was shot and born on August 4, 1964, in Brooklyn, NY. I grew up on Long Island and moved to Encino, California in 1981, which was the summer before my senior year of high school because my dad had a job opportunity in Hollywood. I remember it being a traumatic time because I was leaving behind the only life I had ever known. However, the blessings I received from that experience changed me...I learned how to adapt to new environments, I made wonderful new friends, I fell in love, and I matured and became very independent.

I attended San Diego State University, and got a job at an advertising agency in L.A., which turned into a 32-year career in advertising followed by television ad sales. My last 20 years working in corporate were spent at Disney/ABC in Chicago.

I had moved to Chicago to get married. I met my former husband while he was on a business trip in Los Angeles. We dated long distance for a few years, and when we decided we wanted a future together, I moved to Chicago. Our relationship started out strong and promising, but it fell apart very early into the marriage. We were in and out of therapy quite a bit. There were good times, but there were many, many dark and lonely times.

When we decided to have children, I had medical challenges and was told that I would never be able to have a child. I refused to take that as my fate and told my doctor, "there has to be another way." That started my journey of surgeries, drugs, testing, ultrasounds, frequent doctor appointments, you name it...I was doing it. I was motivated by determination and desire...there was no room for doubt. At the same time this was happening, my mom had discovered that she had Stage 4 colon cancer. I went through one of the darkest times of my life, trying

to keep my fertility efforts moving forward while flying back and forth to L.A. to help take care of her. My mom passed away on October 1, 1996 at the age of 53. She was so young and so beautiful, and she was the brightest light that ever shined. I miss her so.

I got pregnant with my twins the month after she passed away. It was so bittersweet. The excitement and anticipation helped ease the pain of my mourning. My miracle babies, Robert and Melanie, graced the world on August 16, 1997. Thank you, God, and my angel Mom.

My life became all about raising my twins and working at ABC. The marriage suffered even more. There was no passion, no connection, and my heart and soul were feeling lonely, neglected and empty. To the outside world, it looked like I had it all...the dream life. Yet, inside of me, I was imploding. I felt my soul, spirit and zest for life slipping away more and more with each passing day, week, month, year. I was numb. I would wake up each day exhausted. I was tired and so lonely. I reached a point where I just couldn't take it anymore.

On June 25, 2011, I attempted to take my life. I went up to the bathroom, and I locked the door. I grabbed two bottles of pills, and emptied them

out into my hand. I looked down at them and said through my tears, "I just can't take this pain and loneliness any longer." Then, a force much greater than me karate chopped my arm and knocked those pills out of my hand and all over the floor. A voice so clearly shouted into my ear, "Oh no, Diane, you are not ending your life this way! This is not the end of your story. You need to go get help so that you can tell your story so that you can go help others!" I took a breath, I looked up and said, "Okay. Show me the way! Because I don't know how, and I don't know what to do!"

The next day, I reached out for help and began to work on ME. That's when it happened. My re-invention. I delved so deeply into me and asked myself so many questions. That is when the journey of self-discovery began.

What I learned is that I did not love myself, not truly. I didn't value myself. I didn't think I was worthy of the things I wanted in my heart, and so I stopped asking for them or expecting them. I began to discover just how valuable I am and how worthy I am of everything my heart desires.

I learned that my journey up until that point was FILLED with lessons of clarity and desires. I could not be where I am now had I not experienced the darkness. I learned the power of forgiveness, and that forgiveness starts with SELF first! But, the biggest lesson I learned is that I am the one responsible for me, for loving me, accepting me, nurturing me, forgiving me, completing me. I decide how I feel. I decide how I live. I decide what I want. I am the one who is in control of my life.

My intuitive gifts got dialed way up! I was writing and creating like crazy! On August 23, 2013, I woke up with a poem in my head called, "I HAVE TODAY." It flowed right out of me, and when I finished writing it, I looked down at it and said, "This is way more than a poem. This is a movement. I HAVE TODAY will be a global brand to help women who don't know their self-worth discover their true divinity, power and purpose." I realized if I was living in that quiet hell, how many other millions of women are living this way, too!

That led to the bold decision I made. When my twins graduated high school in May 2015, I quit my job at ABC, I sold my house and everything in it, I got my twins off to college, and I moved from Chicago to

San Diego with my clothes, a dream, and my mantra was, "I just want to see where this goes."

Since that leap of faith, my life has been extraordinary. I'm a best-selling author of "I HAVE TODAY...Find Your Passion, Purpose, and Smile...Finally!" I host my own TV Show and my podcast, both titled, "I HAVE TODAY with Diane Forster." I am a speaker, a coach, an inventor and I am creating a "Have It All" Life for myself and my clients.

I discovered my power. I discovered my purpose. I live each day with Intention. I teach others how to do the same.

I am happy. My soul and spirit are full of love, gratitude, forgiveness, happiness and joy. There's so much fulfillment in my life because I am living it on my terms, and I'm helping others to take back their power, make their dreams come true, and live an intentional life doing what they came here to do...be intentional, feel worthy, be happy and keep smiling.



Over 67% of Americans say they are unhappy. Suicides are up 30% since the year 2000, and they are up a whopping 50% for women! What I've discovered over my years of research and working with clients directly is that people are mired down in their subconscious minds with limiting beliefs. The programming that is living in their "hard drive" is filled with every imprint they've ever experienced, and 70% of them are negative. They are not conscious of them, but these negative thoughts are running their lives. Thoughts like...I can't, I'm too old, I'm not ready, I'm too fat, I'm not smart enough, rich enough, good enough, fill in the blank enough...! They operate their lives from fear instead of faith, from trepidation instead of trust, from doubt instead of determination, from stress instead of surrender.

Suicidal thoughts don't show up on a test. If someone isn't speaking up, you don't know they may be suffering with them. Take Robin Williams, Kate Spade, and Anthony Bourdain for example. Here were three very successful people who would appear to have dream lives, and yet, they took their own lives. It's getting worse. The reason, I believe, the states of depression, anxiety and suicide have increased so much is because of a few factors. #1 Social Media and being a voyeur into other people's

lives makes others feel bad about themselves. #2 The political arena and all the polarity is filled with anger and hatred. #3 Most people have forgotten how to just “be.” We are so busy “doing” that we don’t allow ourselves the time and space to daydream, to play, to connect with our higher states of consciousness and what it is we truly want and what makes us happy.

Everything we do at “I HAVE TODAY” is focused on intentional living, living in the present moment, releasing pain from the past and limiting beliefs, and empowering our audience and clients with the tools and resources they need to live to their highest, greatest, fullest potential, without the fear of failure. There are no mistakes...everything is a “lesson along the way!” My clients experience massive transformation very quickly! They feel GOOD! They feel excited! They feel inspired! They feel their power and value! They feel self-love and self-worth!

As an award-winning inventor (my product is The SPIFTER, featured on QVC), I am a visionary AND an implementer, and I have a unique skill as a visionary to see “the big picture.” So, when I’m working with people, I’m out speaking, I’m hosting my TV Show and Podcast, I can tune in and feel what needs to be communicated, and I can see the

gaps, solutions and opportunities. It doesn’t matter who it is and what they want, I can see their fastest path to getting it.

I also believe that there isn’t anything you can’t be, do, or have. All goals and dreams start in the mind, and it’s our mindset that determines our level of success at achieving it. So, my work focuses on mindset first. It’s the key to everything. As Wayne Dyer used to say, “When you believe it, you’ll see it.” I teach my clients that all you need to know is the “What” and the “Why.” The “How” is not your work. The universe will bring to you all the components of what you need to accomplish the “How.” That said, it’s surprising how many people don’t actually know what they want! I help them get clarity around that.

My purpose in this life is to make other people feel good. Plain and simple. And, the way I do that is helping them make their dreams come true, to get everything they want, to have a “Have It All” life... because it’s their birthright, and it’s what they came here to do.



Of the many processes, modalities and products I use, my “Personalized Mantra Meditations” are, by far, the most effective tool in my tool box. Each one is customized to the individual. We look at their past, their limiting beliefs, the pain and struggle they’re experiencing, trapped negative emotions they carry with them, and anything else that may be holding them back in their lives...particularly around not feeling worthy or deserving of love. Then, we look at their goals, dreams, desires and what they truly want their lives to look and feel like. I take all of that information and create a 5-10 minute audio Mantra Meditation that they listen to daily. They feel the shift from the very first time they listen! They call me and write to me about how good they feel! They sleep better, dream more, feel wonderful when they wake up, they are excited about the day ahead of them, and things begin to shift fast! It’s the most rewarding feeling for me when I hear their stories! They find love, they heal chronic illnesses, they make more money, they feel empowered! It’s awesome!!!

When your mindset is healthy, everything in your life gets better. Your health, your relationships, your financial situation, your productivity, your confidence. You feel love for yourself, acceptance of others just as they are, you’re calm, clear, and confident! It’s fantastic, and it’s the way life is supposed to be!

Once you have your Mantra Meditation, then we move into inspired action towards your goals. You have the confidence, desire and motivation to make the necessary changes to create your “Dream Life.” Everything else then begins to fall into place, and like I said, it happens fast. Once they cross over that line, they love themselves, they love their lives, and they can’t stop smiling!!!

My book, “I HAVE TODAY...Find Your Passion, Purpose and Smile... Finally” is filled with useful tips and keys to living the “I HAVE TODAY” way. I also have many free resources in addition to my coaching programs.

My mission statement is to see that “1 Billion women who don’t know their self-worth discover their true divinity, power and purpose” because I know what it feels like to be living in the dark and what helped me find my light, and I know how good that feels. I want that for everyone, because it is my belief that the ONLY way to ever achieve world peace is through self-love. When we love ourselves completely, unconditionally, without any judgement, we open ourselves up to love the rest of the world the same way. That is how it’s meant to be. When you live like that, you can’t help but smile all day, every day.

ABOUT DIANE FORSTER

Diane Forster is a TV Show Host, Podcaster, Speaker, Award Winning Inventor, Intentional Living Expert and Re-Invention Specialist. She helps clients achieve their professional and personal goals, using her unique processes and methodology. She clears away mindset blocks, limiting beliefs, and creates rapid results to reach your full potential. Her clients call her “*The Dream Come True Maker*” using her Intuition and her Mindset and Manifestation skills.

Diane is a Best-Selling Author of “*I HAVE TODAY: Find Your Passion, Purpose and Smile...Finally!*” and “*Reach Your Greatness...100 Top Thought Leaders Share Their Secrets for Living an Extraordinary Life.*” She is the Founder of “I HAVE TODAY” focused on helping you live enriched, empowered, fulfilling lives through her speaking engagements, workshops, books, digital programs, private coaching, and her TV Show and Podcast, both titled, “*I HAVE TODAY with Diane Forster.*” Diane has been featured on ABC, QVC, Chicago Tribune, San Diego Start Up TV and Business News Daily, and on many TV, Radio and Podcasts.

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Kent Georgi

“Keep smiling, you never know who’s world you’re going to change!”

KEEP SMILING

BY KENT GEORGI

I grew up in a small town called Howard, Colorado, a population of 1200 people. We lived 30 minutes away from the most prominent town called Salida, where I went to school. Everybody knew everybody. There’s only one stoplight in the city.

There I lived a normal life, growing up with my sister. My mom was a nurse; my dad was a carpenter. As I was brought up, I always worked the weekends with my dad. I learned about hard work and the value of work ethics through him. I didn’t know what I wanted to do when I got out of high school, so instead of wasting money paying for college, I joined the military.

Like my dad and my grandfather, I joined the US Navy. I served from 1992 to 1996 as an active-duty officer. Having served during the Kuwait war, I’m considered a war vet. And, I stayed on reserve duty

after that time. Then, I went into the IT world and worked for companies like Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC) and AT&T for a long time. However, during that time, 9/11 happened, and we were the first reserve unit to be called up to active duty.

From there, I was sent off for a year to patrol the ocean hot spots for all the military equipment needed for the war. A month and a half later, I was reactivated to active duty and sent to Iraq, where I served for nine and a half months.

Having served in Iraqi Freedom war, I am now considered a two-time war vet. In my time there, I saw lots of things that happened good, bad, and awful. But, it was also a time where I learned even more about responsibility. And, I learned something very valuable, being in the military, if you don't know what you want to do, you'll find it, or it will find you.

After the military, a friend offered tickets to go to the Millionaire Mind by T Harv Eckert. I took those tickets and went. I ended up doing their Quantum Leap program, which led to my journey in personal development and motivation. Ultimately, it led me to get to know lots of

speakers, trainers, and coaches. From that, it's given me ideas to work for myself and create my own business best.

Back in 2009, right after the crash, AT&T had laid me off from my IT job. From that time forward, I've never looked back. I've been a solo entrepreneur, creating my businesses, creating different projects for myself, and I have enjoyed it because of the freedom and flexibility ever since. I've worked with people like Tony Robbins, John Assaraf, Les Brown, Brian Tracy, Greg Reid, Sharon Lecter, and many more. All because of my personal development, opportunities have come my way. Because of the connection, I've worked with them hand in hand and even conducted business with several of them.

Along the way, I became a best-selling author. That launch started my journey, letting people know who I am, what I'm about as well as telling them my why. More or less, I created a legacy for my family. I am proud that I can reflect my knowledge to the people I know and who desire to know me. It has been interesting to learn that you could be the wealthiest person in the world, but so many of them choose never to leave a legacy. So, for me, I wanted to create a legacy regarding helping other people be better leaders.

Additionally, I created a group called Warrior Leadr. It's all about choosing leadership. My point of view is that if you are a leader, you can become a better leader because nobody's perfect. Along those lines, we can always learn, grow, and become better and better; I wouldn't say a better person but rather a better form of our true self. That true self is then magnified to allow us to help other people. It's like a Pay It Forward where I bring some of the best speakers, and some of the best leaders in the world to help train and work with people to become leaders or be better leaders for their family, teams, and businesses. That's why I'm excited about this Warrior Leadr program. I'm working on a big project right now with Greg Reid and Sharon Lecter. The bottom line is that it's all about leadership.

Regarding how I put smiles in the world, I enjoy helping other speakers get on stages. So, I am referred to as an appearance manager for celebrities as well as motivational speakers, trainers, and coaches. I help them get on stages so that they can share their message and help change other people's lives. Whether it's becoming a better leader, becoming a coach, helping them earn extra money or create a new business, the celebrity aspect, I do it because I enjoy watching the celebrities show up for an appearance at a show such as Comic-Con. I love watching

people smile because they get to meet their hero or somebody that they have seen on TV or a movie, and it's now their opportunity to meet them. Anytime they are in line, they always smile and act giddy because they get that chance.

I love seeing that smile with people that go to motivational, personal development events. They get to meet the speaker or trainer that they followed due to a podcast, a webinar, or a book. Seeing people smile brings joy to me. I know it brings joy to the people that I'm working with, as well.

Of course, I also love to shoot photos. I'm part of the critical Keep Smiling Movement team as an Official Ambassador. I capture pictures of the celebrities I manage with the Keep Smiling cards or with the speakers and trainers with the Keep Smiling cards because those people have brought tons of tears and joy to their followers. Those are happy tears, by the way, as they bring smiles to people's faces as they change their lives. These leaders shift the outlook on their follower's and fan's businesses, their families, or their futures. It's incredible to acknowledge those people on what they've done. And of course, they're leaving a tremendous legacy behind.

DR. KEN 'DR. SMILEY' ROCHON, JR.

In closing, I always end my calls with Keep Smiling because you never know whose world you're going to change. If you smile at somebody, you can change their day from a bad day to a good day. You could change how they are thinking. Maybe they've just had a crappy day, and all they needed was just person to smile at them. Smiling at them might engage a conversation or interrupt a story in their head, and you never know who you're going to meet along that journey.



Al Granger

“I am an Advocate of Smiling.”

HOW MANY SMILES DOES IT TAKE?

BY AL GRANGER

I'm inspired by many things. However the two women in my life are responsible for the majority of my inspiration. My wife Susan and my daughter Amy. I am so fortunate to have them in my life. Now that is really something to SMILE about.

My journey started in the first half of the last century. As you can imagine trying to convey a journey of your life could take considerable thought depending on what you believe is important. We all have life experiences that made us who we are today. Some good and some not so much. If I say the word “ball” most people see an image in their minds of a round object and not the word “ball”. Depending on your experiences you could see a golf ball or a man standing next to a huge ball of rubber bands he has collected over the years. I hope as I share

some of my challenges and obstacles you will think back and realize that your journey is equally as important to who you are and it will bring a "Smile" to your face.

I was born in Trinidad, British West Indies, because my father was in the Air Force. We were stationed there for 3 years and then reassigned to Frankfurt Germany. Additional moves included Florida, Georgia and Alabama. By the time I was 5 my parents were divorced and I was living with my mom several miles from my grandparents in Ohio. I remember being happy and adjusted to life without my dad. My father made a career out of the air force and I didn't see him much. My first real memory of any type of challenge came when I was 8 years old. My mother was married once before and I had a older sister that I barely had seen because she lived with her father in Baltimore. My sister was now married and expecting her first child and my mother instantly said we are moving so she could be near my sister. First major life lesson was there are things you don't have control over. How you react to changes in your life can make a big difference.

My mother never did marry again and I guess it was because she was very independent. She always told me I should learn how to take care

of myself because she wouldn't always be around. She taught me how to cook basic food (at the age of 7) and safety in the kitchen. Take responsibility for my own actions and don't let people take advantage of me. She said once people know they can take advantage of you it will never end. However she did say you should be compassionate and treat people with respect and you will have many friends. My mother never owned a home, car and never even had a driver's license. However she had a wealthy soul and prepared us to experience life the best she could. Mother passed away when I was 19 and my dad a year later. The first 20 years taught me a lot of lessons and as I said before "How you react to changes in your life can make a big difference."

I went to school to be an electrician and worked for several small companies for about 2 years. Got laid off and the job market was really tight in that industry. My girlfriend at the time landed a job using a agency. So I applied and got a job at a printing company. Back then you paid the agency for finding the job for you. Yes, I paid for my first job in printing. Little did I know I would be in that industry for 50 years. Years ago in the printing industry moving around from company to company wasn't looked at as a career obstacle. The more you moved

around the more experience could be gained. I was fortunate to work for companies that had mechanics that could repair and maintain the equipment. At the ripe old age of 23 was running the press on the night shift for Stromberg Publications. Publishers of 25 weekly and bi weekly newspapers. The challenge I faced here was being in charge (noticed I didn't say supervising) of 8 employees that were anywhere from 10 to 20 years older than me. I soon realized I had to learn how to negotiate for more authority and compensation. My first life lesson on negotiating didn't go so well. I left there knowing I had a lot to learn.

After submitting my resume every 6 months for 8 years I was hired by Rockwell International for the position of press installer and repair technician. Working in various parts of the country I learned that people are the same no matter where they lived. Sure they had different points of view but the basic human interaction and respect for each other's opinion was always present. I look at today's social climate and just wonder how we got here.

Being away from home so much was starting to cause some stress. I received a phone call from my supervisor and he proceeded to tell me about a company that needed someone to manage their printing

department and was able to repair and maintain the equipment. I interviewed for the position and used the negotiating skills that I had learned over the years (and didn't have at the age of 23) to achieve a very good outcome. The company was Gannett / USA Today. That is where I gained all of the skills needed to venture into the next phase of my career. In 1992 I started Tech Image Printing.

If not for spending 8 years at USA Today I don't believe I would have gained the knowledge or the confidence to start a business. I always enjoyed meeting people from different parts of the country and backgrounds. Learning about the challenges and struggles of others has made me realize that we all have a lot in common. Most of the printing industry is business to business in nature. I enjoy discovering the journey business owners have made. Because of this interest in their journey many of my clients have become personal friends over the years. They all have one thing that they do after sharing each personal story and that is SMILE!

In the early days of starting a business our main focus was producing printed materials for individuals and businesses. On the individual side it was mainly wedding invitations which almost every bride

needed and was a problem that needed to be taken care of. We decided to be different than any other wedding stationary business and offered the clients the option of being shown a catalog (s) of samples in their home or letting them keep the samples for 5 days to review. They could see designs, paper and various ink colors / combinations. This service proved to be very profitable and helped us grow the business alongside the business to business clients. However there was one issue we couldn't overcome when it came to the wedding invitation orders. The clients said they loved the fact there we came to them saving them time and money but they never referred us to other brides. After 5 years of offering this great service we decided to devote the time spent on wedding invitation on our business to business clients that gave us referrals. Little did we know that was a great time to shift our resources because a new way to reach people in the masses was just being born. Yes.....The Internet. Now every wedding stationary company could deliver samples to the homes of brides everywhere.

Another problem to be solved? Well we did just that by becoming an independent sales rep for several of the wedding stationary companies and gained back the lost revenue. The beauty of it all is they let us use their website to connect with the potential brides. Talk about a SMILE!

13 years ago we had another problem. We wanted to send a weekly newsletter via email out to our clients and potential clients. We wanted to be informative without being intrusive. No matter how we looked at it we couldn't come up with subject matter that we thought people could use. We knew that people relied on us for their graphic design and printing but most people were not interested in the "how it gets done" and just wanted it done. At that time I was doing a lot of networking which I devoted considerable amounts of time finding networking events. Most were run by groups that required you to join before they would tell you where and when. Then I realized that informing business owners and entrepreneurs might be the information I could offer in our newsletter. The Networking Advocate was born as a website and the newsletter is sent out to thousands of networkers in the Baltimore, Washington and Northern Virginia metro areas. In the past 13 years I have met and introduced countless people using this weekly newsletter and website. I have the SMILES to prove it.

ABOUT AL GRANGER

Al Granger is owner of Tech Image Marketing, printing and marketing company. Al has held positions with USA Today, Rockwell International Graphic Systems and currently is a Technical Advisor for Perfect Publishing.

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He is a contributing author in *“The Perfect Office”* published by Perfect Publishing 2011, *“Umbrella Marketing, Amplify Your Message”* published by Perfect Publishing 2012 and *“Make a Book, Move a Book, Book a Sale”* published by Perfect Publishing 2015

He launched The Networking Advocate in 2007. A website that serves as a resource for information regarding networking events, workshops, technology events, seminars, trade shows, expos and professional development and training opportunities, in the Baltimore – Washington Metro Area. They are dedicated to being a great source

for connecting business professionals, entrepreneurs, networking groups and networking venues resulting in economic growth in the Baltimore – Washington Metro Area.

There are plans in the near future to expand The Networking Advocate to other metropolitan areas.

To learn more or to post an event contact Al Granger
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Kristine Grant, MFT Author, Singer/Songwriter, Motivational Speaker, Relationship Expert

“Smiles are beautiful and they cost nothing ... what is priceless and an evidence of joy, love, relief, and gratitude is when we smile only because we are touched by another from what we have either received or given that comes straight from the heart.”

SMILES ARE A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE. THERE ARE NO WORDS WHEN A SMILE TOUCHES THE HEART

BY KRISTINE GRANT, MFT

Who: I am the middle of five children, a California Blonde Beach Bunny — Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, my family and I moved to San Clemente, a beach town in Southern California when I was twelve... I was considered to be both a spunky tomboy, a sensitive girly-girl, and definitely adventurous. I graduated from high school a year early and by the following year, or when I was eighteen, I left college, sold my car, and flew to Maui, an Island in Hawaii. The beaches were amazing, and surfing the reefs was quite a challenge. (I have the scars to prove it). While living in Hawaii, I had various jobs such as

driving a Boston Whaler speed boat and giving para-sailing rides; and bartending at Luaus before sailing off to Honolulu on a 75 foot catamaran. More adventures were in store as I ended up acting on three Hawaii 5-0 TV shows, and regrettably did not join the Screen Actor's Guild as a prerequisite for continuing on more episodes. I was gone nearly a year before my father flew to Hawaii desperately combing the beaches looking for me... Oops! I never bothered to contact my family. He eventually found me and convinced me to return home and go to college so I could build a "real life". However, once I returned, I found the environment to be too stifling. And, while I was naturally creative and artistic, my parents did not support any creative aspirations or notions apart from becoming a nurse or find some sort of "reliable" profession. My big brother, Bobby, suggested I join the military ... that way, I could "see the world" and return with the GI Bill to pay for my education .. and I would be completely independent of "Mom and Dad". So, I did. Although... the military "adventure" was not quite what I expected ...

Joining the US Army was more of a shocking experience to say the least. You will learn more about this particular chapter in my life with the 2021 release of my new book or memoir, "Deliver Us From Evil",

(my stories of triumph over trauma). Yes, during this time in my life or between the ages of 19-25, I was terribly mistreated and nearly lost my life ... I was able to draw a new perspective with regards to power, control, race relations, and discover my own endurance or emotional strength. When there was no one to catch me... I managed to move on any way. Yes, I was that Blonde Beach Bunny that landed in Germany wondering "Where are the condos?" ... I did have some unforgettably wonderful experience though, such as traveling around Europe; skiing at the finest resorts; cruising on a Red Star Russian communist ship between Yugoslavia and North Africa; driving through the Amalfi Coast; going to the Grande Pris in Monte Carlos... When I returned home, I took a script writing course. The professor not only gave me an A+++++ grade, but asked me to remain after class. (He worked as a script doctor for MGM Grand films). He sat with me for over two hours interviewing me, taking notes ... then, within the year, the movie, "Private Benjamin" was aired. I met the lead actress, Goldie Hawn, some years later. I mentioned that while the movie was not my exact same story, so many elements resonated. Goldie hugged me.

I graduated from college with a degree in fine art after winning juried art contests and receiving a cash scholarship from the nearby

Laguna Festival of Fine Arts. Then I moved to Los Angeles for a job in advertising. It was not exactly what I thought it would be ... climbing corporate ladders was not very inspiring ... Nevertheless, as they say, one thing leads to another. I ended up training and working in various jobs. I managed a film location agency in Hollywood whereby I met several celebrity actors and musicians, (even performed as a dancer on an "M-TV" show) then, worked as a travel agent including creating professional group travel experiences. While I always enjoyed traveling... creating amazing travel experiences for others, though, while I sat in an office looking through travel brochures, was not all that interesting. Needless to say, some might wonder whether I could ever stick to one thing, However, I realize that all of my various professional opportunities did allow me to learn more about the world, the psychology of people, and what did and did not resonate for my own satisfaction. Eventually I obtained a real estate sales license and went to work for my brother selling older, "Turn-of-the-Century" style homes for his real estate agency which was located in South Central Los Angeles.

As fate would have it, I did meet Brad, the most adventurous man I have ever encountered. Three weeks after we met, I found myself, with

toes wiggling, on the edge of a 60 foot cliff in Jamaica ... while Brad dove off of it... I jumped! And I jumped into his arms as his wife soon after we returned from a photo safari in Africa. He proposed in the most romantic way after our hot air balloon ride over the Serengeti. Brad was a medical doctor with his own urgent care practice about 75 miles south-east of Los Angeles. We enjoyed so many adventures including riding across the desert in Pakistan; traveling with the "Flying Doctors" in Mexico; cross-country skiing through western Europe; cruising through the Panama Canal; spending months traveling across India; the near and far east; and so much more... Brad nick-named me "ATC"... all terrain chic. I adored his spontaneity. It was as though I was blessed with my own personal guide . The Universe had answered my call. It has been said, "Some things are just too good to be true"... and I suppose it was. Thirteen years after we met, I discovered the trust in our marital bond had been broken. I was heart-broken. Our daughter was not even two years old when she and I left.

During our marriage, I was never expected to work. I was able to delve into other areas of interest mainly studying religions and spiritual concepts. Yet, the way I was raised, to be so independent, I decided to go back to college. Since I was married to a doctor, it made perfect sense

that I become a licensed marriage & family therapist. I could build a private practice and not be “stuck” to a time clock should I need time off to travel or enjoy free time as well. During my time as an intern, I was drawn to look into the practice of various energetic or alternative healing modalities. At one point, (as an aside), I found myself “tuning in” to my clients’ energetic resonance while counseling them. I discovered my own “healing” talent with a “laying on of hands” energetic practice that I performed outside of the realm of conventional therapy. I received my MFT license about a month prior to leaving Brad.

Moving back to the coast with our little daughter, Alana, seemed like the next “best step”. I was quite busy being a single mother. Brad did not want to divorce and our divorce proceedings were quite protracted over several years. Despite the pain of ending my marriage, I created a small, part-time private family therapy practice. Still, in order to build a steady practice, I was required to work longer hours. This was a difficult concept as I wanted to spend more time with my daughter. One of my sisters, suggested I work for a school district as the hours were decent; I could enjoy holidays and summers off; and still maintain a solid income. I took her advise and returned to college for a post graduate credential in school psychology. Then, for nearly 20 years,

I worked with children of various ages primarily within the realm of psycho-educational evaluations. Working for public schools in reference to the social/political vantage point, was yet another education in and of itself.

Still, the most wonderfully rewarding aspect was my work with children. And yet, my daughter suffered. By the time Alana, was eleven, she became the target of “mean girl” bullying. It was so horrific, and my heart ached for her.. that I flew to the east coast to attend the “National Mean Girls” anti-bullying conference. I wanted to take a deeper dive into this growing issue.

Not only did this social dilemma include physical and emotional “in-person” abuse, but cyber-bullying. Serendipitously, I met the producers of this conference who afterwards, happened to give me a ride to the airport. During this 45 minute jaunt, I shared my concerns regarding my daughter’s deep suffering surrounding her issues with “mean girls”. The producers then invited me to speak on the subject at their national conference the following year, in Las Vegas. As a result of this encounter, I was inspired to create the **BFF: Be Friendship Focused** 10-week guide for mentors to lead a Self Empowerment /

Anti-Bullying support group for children ages 8-12. Alana and I also created an inspirational card deck, the **A-Z Power Cards**. This was a sort of oracle that not only opened up meaningful conversations for children or groups of kids regarding character building and positive concepts... but it included our Artwork. Alana and I spent a whole weekend drawing and painting these cards. It was a sort of cathartic experience for the two of us. After self-publishing the book and cards ... not only did I present at the conference in Las Vegas, but I continued to speak around the United States at various venues pertaining to children and the growing epidemic regarding relational aggression and other social concerns.

I have so many untold stories surrounding the successful if not dramatic shifts I witnessed within the realm of children's self-empowerment. The overriding or common life lesson arose from learning of so many random acts of kindness and care that arose from a sense of real satisfaction for helping another. It was certainly my joy to influence the positive transformations as a result of practicing the guidance offered throughout the BFF program, but the children continued to move beyond what I would ever have imagined! The sweetness, the care, the ultimate selfless acts of kindness were the highlight of my career in

education. The bottom line, as I mentioned when I was interviewed as an expert on a Fox TV News program surrounding the "March for Our Lives" student movement ... I shared that the universal need for our children is to ultimately feel loved, accepted, and connected no matter what.

While working as a school psychologist, I continued to maintain a small private psychotherapy practice. When you are a family therapist, commonly friends and their associates call upon you for casual advice. Once a neighbor who was divorced with nearly grown children knocked on my door asking for dating advice. It seems she had met a lovely man, an attorney, whom she had started dating over the last several weeks. While she enjoyed his company, found him to be generous, respectable, and an all-around good guy, she was not the least bit attracted to him in a romantic sense. And, she could not bring herself to openly reject him or let him know she preferred to be only platonic friends. Long-story short, since she was obviously tongue-tied and unable to have a face to face conversation, I suggested she write an honest note that conveyed her true feelings and simply give it to him. Her attempt to do so was an obvious lame if not dishonest excuse for not wishing to date him. When she shared what she had written, (prior to sharing it with

him), I tore it up and re-wrote an honest message... one that she would have ultimately appreciated had the shoe been on the other foot. Well, the letter was indeed a success. Not only did they remain friends, but he helped her with a legal case at no charge.

My **Inspired Heart** Letter-Writing service was born from an entourage of letter requests just as the result of this one neighbor's dilemma. To date, I have been composing these intuitive, compelling letters that have positively shifted so many client's life circumstances within the realm of relationships both inter-personal and for business connections alike. Yes, as a sideline passion, I have ghostwritten well over four hundred letters. The stories behind these Inspired Heart Letters continue to amaze me. My client requests fall within the realms of "singles looking for love"; circumstantial or romantic letters for partnership & marriage; moving on after a separation or divorce as well as successfully co-parenting; dealing with blended family issues; friendship fallouts; grief and loss/eulogies; commemorations; and issues within business and/or client associations. How I happened to land up on this uncharted territory for ghostwriting compelling messages or as my book title; **RELATIONSHIFT How to Write the Words You Really Want to Say ...** describes, I am bringing back the long-lost art of the

Love Letter. By the grace of God, I have developed a keen intuition for helping others quickly resolve any sort of relational conflict or concern. My book has also been endorsed by various luminaries or authors within the realm of relationship recovery: John Gray, Katherine Woodward Thomas; Dr. Cristiane Northrup; and Ariel Ford.

It is truly my honor to have experienced a wide variety of landscapes both emotionally and across this planet through my life experiences both professionally and on a personal level. As I write this entry to the **Keep Smiling** anthologies, we are experiencing a uniquely odd time amidst social and political unrest and the threat of a disturbing pandemic virus. Although I retired a couple years ago, at times, I will work for a season, helping students with emotional challenges. At the start of this social "lock down" due to the Corona -19 virus, I have worked by remotely counseling high school teens battling with their sense of loneliness, isolation, and despair. My primary homework assignment during this challenging time was to encourage each student to perform a random act of kindness at least once a week. Well, in essence, this did prove to be a powerful elixir that lightened and brightened their outlook and experience. After working with our youth over so many years, I was not too surprised, yet so delighted to hear the amazing stories of

care and concern demonstrated once they moved outside of their own pain, chose a lighter, brighter outlook and with charity, compassion, and real consideration ... gave what they could to someone else. Their smiles were spontaneous and without reserve. They just could not contain the joy that giving from their heart, (and with their own unique creative thoughts for helping another), indeed contributed to a much better outlook. You see helping someone else to smile is contagious ... there is a ripple effect when we help or encourage someone else, who in turn helps another and so on, and so on ... and that is how the world should turn. So, keep smiling, and enjoy your life on purpose!

WHY: Through this life's journey, I have traversed over so many life experiences both professionally and personally. When I look back, I was certainly influenced by my family of origin ... and thankfully, I was compelled to find a more universal family connection by spending time in a variety of life circumstances circumscribed across geographical; professional; and interpersonal domains. Although there was an inordinate amount of trauma, when I was younger, somehow I managed to move through it by finding a deeper purpose and developing real compassion for those trying to find their way. As I mentioned earlier in my "story", I have always been drawn to adventure and creative pursuits. My

ghostwriting is truly creative, intuitive, and a gratifying way to make a difference. As a word-smith" and one who loves music, I wrote the lyrics and melodies for several songs. My songs will soon be released, under my album, "Soul Glow" by Tina Rose, (my performer's name). I have such a sense of delight and satisfaction since giving myself permission and actually completing my songs. Therefore, with a song in my heart, or to honor my path, I continue to explore or find new, creative, adventures. I do hope my contributions will, indeed, cause others to smile.

HOW: As an intuitive ghostwriter for Inspired Heart Letters, through my own personal growth, life experiences, training within the field of psychotherapy, and an innate sense of intuition, I help others to find the right words they really want to say in order to resolve any sort of challenge within the realm of relational concerns. When we are confronted with any difficulty in connection with another, naturally, our ego or defensiveness gets triggered. Then we tend to have a more myopic or limited perspective. I am able to leap over a client's ego, land into their higher heart, move passed their emotional reactivity, and see the bigger picture. I am easily able to formulate the write message ... and words are a frequency that causes a radical shift toward resolving any situation towards the best outcome.

ABOUT KRISTINE GRANT, MFT

Kristine Grant, MFT is a motivational speaker, author, and singer/songwriter. Her unique method for helping others suffering from relationship fatigue is discovered through her ghostwriting service, Inspired Heart Letters. To contact Kristine: www.kristinegrant.com or call her business cell: (Inspired Heart, Inc.) 858-500-2277 PST



**Jenn Gruber, Family Relationship, Transition & Life Coach;
Speaker; Author**

A smile is the simplest way to connect with someone – to let them know you see them, and they matter.

TOP TIP FOR FIGURING OUT YOUR PURPOSE: ASK YOURSELF WHAT MAKES YOU SMILE!

BY JENN GRUBER

When I was a teenager, I heard Oprah Winfrey say that she'd always known she was destined to do something big with her life – something that would impact many people. I remember thinking, “Me too!” I could relate to Oprah's words. I knew I was meant to fulfill a specific purpose – I just had to figure out what that purpose was.

I graduated from college still not knowing. I knew I'd someday make my mark on the world, but I wasn't sure how. I didn't have a clear vision of what that looked like.

I bounced around through a few jobs and eventually began working as a meeting planner. The work suited me in many ways, but didn't feel like "my calling". But that was fine, because I was soon ready to start having babies. I'd known for as long as I could remember that I wanted to be a mom and, although that wasn't THE THING I was meant to do, it was still a big part of what I considered to be my purpose in life. It was important to both my husband and me that I stay home with our children when they were young, so I was conveniently able to set aside my quest for finding "my true calling".

I embraced my role as a mother completely. I adored having babies, meeting and hanging out with other new moms, planning play dates and birthday parties, reading to my children, and watching them grow and learn. It wasn't all a piece of cake – I realize in retrospect that I was overwhelmed and didn't always handle the stress in ways that were healthy for me or my family, but I was fortunate to have a husband who was not only a very involved, hands-on parent, but also a patient and supportive partner.

Despite the fact that I got stressed out and yelled at my kids more than I'd care to remember, our life was, in those early days of parenthood,

was pretty idyllic. Our kids felt safe and loved. We enjoyed time together as a family, and with our extended family, and with an amazing circle of close friends.

Gradually, as the kids started preschool and then elementary and middle school, I found myself with more time on my hands. My purpose was still being a mom, first and foremost, but I was able to supplement that with volunteer work. I became involved in the PTA, our community pool, our church, and our youth sports organization. Because I "didn't work," I had endless hours to give to these groups. I ran fundraising auctions, served multiple terms as PTA president, testified before the county council and the school board, started a student book club, planned sports banquets and teacher appreciation activities, took students to visit with elderly community members, and led more activities and committees than I can remember. I was able to utilize my talents for organizing, leading, writing and speaking, as well as my interpersonal skills, in ways that I never had been before, and it was deeply fulfilling.

Through my volunteer work with the sports organization, I was offered a paid position. I became the director and was thrilled that, although

the pay was minimal, I was finally being compensated financially for the work that I was doing. I was working from home, the hours were flexible, and my responsibilities were varied and extensive. I loved being able to ensure that the volunteer coaches, parents, community sponsors, and players all had the best experience possible. The job felt like the perfect first step back into the professional world.

By that point, the volunteer work that I was still doing had become more overwhelming and less enjoyable. The biggest problem, I now realize, was that I was terrible at setting boundaries. I wasn't able to say no. I felt like, since I didn't work full time like other parents, it was my responsibility to do more. I felt guilty into doing things when I was told there was "no one else" who could possibly do it. I was burned out, and I was becoming resentful of the time I was giving. And, though my husband was always supportive, his patience was wearing thin.

Eventually, I began a second part time job which, in my mind, gave me a "legitimate excuse" to take a step back from all except the volunteer responsibilities I truly enjoyed. My new job was a deviation from anything I felt "called" to do, but was an opportunity to work on a very flexible schedule, five minutes from home, with people I loved. I knew

that I'd want to pursue something different after my youngest child graduated from high school but, for the short term, it was a good fit.

Fast forward about five years – I found myself turning 50 and about a year away from being an empty nester (or so I thought – but that's another story!). It was time to consider what the "next chapter" of my life would look like. Rather than feeling excited about pursuing something new, I felt intimidated and unnerved. My husband would be eligible to retire within the year, and we'd always planned to relocate when he did that. I found myself thinking, "I'll wait and see where we end up living, then I'll figure out what fits in with our new life there." When I stopped and reminded myself, "wait a minute, you've been doing things that have allowed you to put your family first for the past 22 years – now it's time to do what YOU really want to do!", I realized that I no longer had any idea what that was. And that was terrifying!

I still had a nagging feeling that there was some purpose to my life that I hadn't yet discovered – something I was meant to do. But I was almost 50 and hadn't made any progress towards figuring it out – let alone pursuing it. I had a bachelor's degree and a resume filled with a haphazard mix of volunteer and part time positions. I felt like I'd

missed my chance to make my mark on the world – like it was too late. The ridiculousness of that thought is clear to me now but, at the time, it almost paralyzed me. Almost.

Several years earlier, my oldest son had read Ben Carson's autobiography, *Gifted Hands*, in school, and I read it along with him. I loved reading about Dr. Carson's belief that we're each born with a God-given talent. It's our responsibility to figure out what our unique gift is, and to then use it to give back to the world. I realized that, although I'd never heard it articulated that way, that was exactly what I'd always believed.

My greatest fear was that I'd reach the end of my life without ever having figured out my purpose – without ever having done whatever it was I was meant to do. That fear, it turned out, was greater than my fear of being too old and too unaccomplished to pursue something new. So I set to work on a pretty intensive self-discovery journey. I read books and articles, listened to podcasts, worked with a coach, watched TED talks, practiced yoga, meditated, journaled, attended workshops, and eventually began playing with the idea of becoming a life coach.

I reflected on what I enjoyed most in past jobs – about what made me smile – and realized that, in every position and role I'd ever held, I'd helped forge stronger connections among people. I knew that people felt comfortable talking with me, and that acknowledging what they shared with me in a way that made them feel seen, heard, and understood came naturally to me. I remembered instances where I'd had superiors come to me for insight about the office climate, or I'd helped to quell the apprehension of a school community going through transition to a new principal, or I'd helped a friend figure out how to deal with difficult in-laws, or I'd given a family member guidance around how to navigate an uncomfortable conversation. Once I began thinking about it, I came up with countless examples.

I knew that I enjoyed talking with people and hearing their stories. I loved connecting with people and smiling with them. But it was REALLY hard for me to embrace that as a skill, a talent, or as anything exceptional about myself. I thought, “a talent is something tangible, like being a good musician or an amazing gardener, or being fluent in multiple languages, or being really good with numbers. Being a good listener isn't a talent – anyone can do that, and it's just part of who I am!” I've come to realize that both are true – it's part of who I am, AND it's a gift that's unique to me.

In the first hour of my first day of coach training, I realized, “THIS is what I’ve always been meant to do.” The training was rigorous and intensive, and it definitely pushed me outside of my comfort zone. I would never describe it as “easy,” but it all made sense. And the more I learned, the more I wanted to learn. I’d finally found something that I felt passionate about. It was the career that I’d not only spent my whole life searching for, but also preparing for.

As I went through the certification process, my coaching niche became clear. I’d started out thinking I’d coach people like me – women who reached midlife and questioned what their next chapter would look like. But I knew there was more to it than that.

Over the prior year, I’d struggled with a wide array of conflicted emotions as I spent time with my dad who suffered from Alzheimer’s, helped my mom with a move that involved major downsizing, helped my children work through college and career choices, and adjusted to a new routine with my husband where day-to-day parenting was no longer our primary responsibility. I realized the challenges I’d experienced weren’t unique to me, and I wanted to use what I’d learned to help others.

My specialty area is family transitions. What I love most about coaching is that there’s no advice giving, because what works for one person isn’t necessarily the right solution for anyone else. My role as a coach is to create a judgement free space where I partner with clients to explore how they’d like their relationships to look, figure out what’s getting in the way of that, define specific goals for moving forward, and then come up with plans for achieving those goals. I’m not there to tell my clients what to do – I’m there to help them find solutions that THEY feel good about.

It sucks to learn that a parent has Alzheimer’s. It’s a devastating illness that’s excruciatingly difficult for the patient and the family. Coaching doesn’t change that. But we can choose how we deal with the anger, frustration and sadness we may feel. We can choose how we show up for our parent and how we spend our remaining time with them, and we can choose how we interact with other family members.

It’s hard when our kids move away, and even harder when they don’t want to come home to visit us. It can be heartbreaking when they make choices we don’t agree with -- whether it’s dropping out of school,

marrying someone we don't think is right for them, leaving a great job, or a million other possibilities. Their decisions may be outside of our control, but the way we choose to respond isn't.

I absolutely love helping clients realize that they have the answers within themselves – they just need someone to help them uncover those answers. I provide a safe, non-judgmental space where people can slow down and take a breath. I help them gain clarity by asking the right questions and offering thoughtful observations and insight. It's always exciting to help someone who feels like a victim of their circumstances realize that they do have choices, and to support them as they shift their mindset and their energy.

One of the reasons family transitions (or any transitions, for that matter!) are so challenging – even if it's a positive change like marriage or retirement – is that they represent an ending of the life we've known. It's natural for us, when faced with an ending, to take stock of where we are and where we want to be. In times of transition, we often find ourselves questioning our purpose -- or how closely aligned our lives are with that purpose.

There's a lot of pressure in our society to "find your purpose". The verbiage seems to imply that everyone has only one, that it's easily identifiable, and that it needs to be acknowledged in order to be lived. In reality, we may not yet have identified a purpose (we can have many!), but that doesn't mean we're not living it. Being in a position where I'm able to help clients identify and connect with their purpose is a tremendous honor and privilege.

I still believe that I was put on this earth for a reason and was meant to do something important with my life. I realize now that I've been doing that all along. Will I impact as many people as Oprah? Probably not, but that's impossible to measure. The truth is, we never know whose life we're touching, and in what way. If we're doing something that we feel good about -- that makes people smile -- then we're using our gifts and we're making a difference. We usually have no idea what happens after that. We don't know where someone may have been if not for our smile and encounter with them, and there's no way of measuring how many further lives may be touched. I DO know that when I'm helping someone to find more joy in their own life, I'm doing my part to help make the world a more loving place.

ABOUT JENN GRUBER

Jenn Gruber is a speaker, writer and certified professional coach, specializing in family transitions. Through her business, Jenn Gruber Coaching, she helps clients who feel overwhelmed, unappreciated and misunderstood to get clarity on what they want and need so they can feel more connected to the people around them. She enjoys both one-on-one and group coaching, facilitating workshops, and mediating conversations between family members.

Jenn's experiences in raising three children, transitioning with her husband to life as an empty nester, losing her father to Alzheimer's, helping her mother downsize from her home of 50 years to a much smaller condo, and making a midlife career change give her a unique ability to relate to many of the issues her clients struggle with. The happiest people, according to a 2002 Harvard study, are those who have close ties to friends and family and are committed to spending time with them. Jenn believes this wholeheartedly and loves supporting clients as they find more fulfillment and joy in their relationships and their lives.

Books that Changed My Life:

The Gifts of Imperfection by Brené Brown;
The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz;
Playing Big by Tara Mohr

Movies that Inspire You:

A League of Their Own; October Sky;
i Origins; Coco

Song that Inspires You:

I am Light, India Arie

Your Hero:

My Great Aunt Clara

Quote You Live By:

"What do we live for, if not to make life less difficult for each other?" George Eliot



Sergio Gutierrez

“If you’re not using your smile, you’re like a man with a million dollars in the bank and no checkbook.” – Les Goblin

KEEP SMILING

BY SERGIO GUTIERREZ

—Who you Are, your journey from birth until now. Include challenges and obstacles you overcame and what they taught you.

My name is Sergio and I know one thing: I was born for greatness and to make others smile! Smile with their faces, smile with their eyes, smile with their whole bodies, and with their ears. I am a professional musician, entertainer, artist, and a full-time lover of life and the people in it! Albuquerque, NM is my home. San Diego CA is my new home of 12 spectacular years.

Being a people person started deep in the womb while forming alongside another amazing human being- My twin brother Samuel. Now, I popped out first with so much excitement, I’m sure, in the middle of the night on October 8th, 1986 only to be held by the people I love and admire most. At the time, my mother Rosella was only 18 years of age

and my father Carmelo, 25 years old. And the story of the Gutierrez family began.

Ever since I can remember, I never really had enemies. I knew 'bad people' existed, but I always had this knowing that the kids who were mean to me on the playground were the ones who needed love the most. A knowing that these kids needed kind attention. This puts one in a very constant vulnerable position. I didn't care. The challenge of this as you get older is that some will take advantage of you, yes. The good thing? ...those people have then shown you some of their true colors right off the bat allowing you to make the choice of not putting yourself near those very individuals.

I was an athlete. My twin brother and I started with gymnastics and then branched out into karate, soccer, basketball, and track. As track MVP, basketball MVP, and captain of the Los Lunas Tigers mens soccer, there was always this knack for being a leader, a people person, a creator. But an artist? Fancy titles and simple clip art drawings on school projects were a thing. A thing that I never knew would lead me to paint a painting live in front of an audience in La Jolla California in 2019 only to auction it off for nearly \$40,000, giving every penny of the proceeds

to a family in need of dire help. Sports taught me how to give and make other human beings smile. To give your heart. Give your effort. Give words of encouragement. Give what is needed at the moment to make whatever needs to happen- happen. Like mama always said, "Son, don't worry. Just give your very best... because your best is all you have to offer. If its not good enough, then you have the opportunity to make yourself better!" That always made me smile. Thanks mom.

The career in the arts started after receiving my very first guitar on Christmas day in 2001. I was fifteen. I had been learning a few months before all because of a girl that I was still 'in love' with after 'dating' for nearly 2 years. which is actually quite some time when you're only 13 and 14 years old. I think thats why her excitement had so much impact on me when I jokingly mentioned that I could play guitar while we were hanging out one day. the excitement flooded into my bones and I ran home to my cousin who had been learning as well, but was much further down the road in learning chords and knowing what the heck to do with the chunk of wood with strings attached. He taught me a few chords that instantly became easy to me. I didn't realize at the time, but what takes the average person a few weeks to learn, I naturally and quickly learned within minutes. I visited the girl the next day, Rachel

was her name, and played the chords for her as she melted in her seat with the biggest brightest smile imaginable. I knew at that moment, I need to learn more chords!

From then on I played in garage bands all over town and started a rock band called Axson in 2005 that took the town by storm. Picture the cover of your favorite 80s hair metal band. Got one? Yeah, that was us 20 years too late. Leather pants, long hair, and a passion for being under stage lights! But I think our real passion was making people happy with the music that we created. To take them to a different place emotionally and spiritually. And it helps to start a career where every 4 to 5 minutes people are clapping and giving you praise. Its a win-win in the smiling game...until you move to Hollywood, CA and try to 'make it' with the big dogs in the scene. You get bit. Quick...and often.

I have 6 books of journals that I wrote a couple of years leading up to the big move to California and a couple of years after. They contain prayers. Lots of prayers. They also contain song lyrics and every single book oozes with inner dialogue of a young man searching for himself. There was one constant: "Sergio, you are smart. Pain is never forever. Believe. Trust. Just. Keep. Going."

There are many things about being a musician. For starters, every human on this earth has some sort of connection and love with music. Its the first thing we experienced in our mothers womb. did you ever stop to think that the first thing your little ears heard was your mothers heart 'beat'. Mind blown! This connection leads to meeting people. Lots of people. All the time.

Being a musician has taught me that nothing lasts forever. its a wheel of "hey wanna join my band?" eventually revolving to the next spoke of "I quit" or "this isn't working for me." And look- Im still alive and happy in what I have created today. Realizing that nothing or no one has ever, or will ever, break your heart. Its your expectation of forever that will break it.

From 2008-2010 I was performing by night and working a day job as a diamond grader at the Gemological Institute of America. It was a radical difference to say the least. By day, it was quiet. Rows and rows of over 300 of us worked hovering over our microscopes documenting imperfections in these diamonds. After grading thousands of these things, they start to become as valuable in your mind as a rock you find in your shoe on a random stale Sunday afternoon. This taught me that too much of anything is just too much...except smiling. There is no cap to smiling.

I wanted out and my opportunity came. by 2010 I was playing about 15 shows a month which would provide enough income for me to get by. I also developed tendonitis from the minute movements of the diamond tools and fiddling with the microscope knobs. After many doctor visits, it was noted that I was 2% disabled because of the job and they paid me to leave the company. So I bought paint brushes and a canvas and at the end of 2010 I started to teach myself the art of painting.

I learned a huge lesson about getting that payout from the company. I was a bit worried to leave. The lesson here: "You do not know enough to worry." That quote is brightly lit on the marquee of my brain.

the art career started at 24 years old, again, because of a girl. I wanted to give a unique gift to a woman I was dating at the time so I thought that a painting would be perfect. It showed intent, time spent, creativity, and was a gift I was sure she never received before. It was of her tattoo on her wrist: A treble clef music symbol with a rose poking through. She melted and smiled the biggest smile that reminded me of the smile Rachel gave nearly 10 years prior. I ran with it.

Im in a great position. Im 24 years old creating a life that I want. Being

a meaningful specific instead of a wandering generality. Im making people happy. I play a guitar while singing and people dance. I paint a painting with a smile, and people talk about the colors, textures, style, and where they would place the painting in their home. Its magical! Pure magic. Pure.

I did initially run into some challenges that would stop many in their tracks of pursuing an art career. Posting my very first public painting on social media would have crushed me had I not been aware of the vulnerability of doing so. Or, on the same token, had I cared of peoples opinions. Most comments were the "I didn't know you painted" comments. But there were a couple that were flat out rude. Mockery. That my art would never amount to anything. All I could think about is "I KNOW! ISN'T THAT AWESOME!?! ILL ONLY GET BETTER FROM THIS POINT ON!" And thats that. Look at things as they could be, and not as they are.

Im a proud artist the now runs his own gallery in Escondido, CA. "Wait. A small-town New Mexico boy moves to California and plays music opening for major acts, and eventually opens up an art gallery full of 50+ original paintings?" That is correct. Did I mention that I do

both live music and live painting in one unique show all while raising nearly \$40,000 for one painting for a family in need?

Live music and live art in one show. I woke up one morning at 30 years old after being a musician for 15 years and an artist for 8. I was set on needing to choose one and pursue that. To put all my eggs in one basket. There is something to be said for that but I asked myself one question: why? Why not incorporate both? Clearly, most people dig listening to live music and when I have people over at my house while I'm painting, they seem to be massively intrigued with the painting process. July 2017 I booked my first live art/live music show at Osullivans Irish pub, which happens to be the very first stage I stood on in California after moving for New Mexico 10 years prior. I set up my instrument and microphone next to a blank canvas and an easel. It was a 3 hour show so I figured I'd lure the crowd with music for the first 45 minutes, then I'll paint the outline and the eyes, lips, and nose of Sir Paul McCartney so that the people recognize and connect, Leave them hanging with an unfinished painting so that they stay longer to keep buying booze and food, pick back up the guitar to play some more, and then complete the painting at the end of the show. It was magical! Pure Magic. Pure.

Doing this show accomplished many things. It made people smile after witnessing such a unique show. It made more money for the pub because people actually stuck around longer than usual. I not only got paid to entertain, but I also sold the painting for a few hundred bucks! This was unheard of. How is a musician walking out of this small pub with \$1,000? All by asking the question- "why not?"

Today I am currently in studio recording my own music. I'm running the gallery alongside my business partner Jamie Looney, and doing events all over the world to entertain and raise money for great causes.

Everyone needs connection and love. We need to be seen and heard. It can all start with a smile and that willingness to be vulnerable.

—Why do you do what you do? What excites you? What is your purpose driven life?

I do what I do because I am leaving a legacy. Helping people is very important, absolutely. But I think we all long to never be forgotten in some way or another. Recording music and making the world more colorful with paintings excites me. Both are virtually timeless.

—How you create your abundance, solve problems, and inspire smiles.

I create my abundance by always started the morning with a choice to just be happy. To be a light in this world and to realize that all people are pretty much like myself having similar wants and needs. Sometimes others are a little lost and damaged from the aftermath of some horrible circumstances and those are the ones that need the warmth of a smile. Whom shall I not love and for what reason?!

ABOUT SERGIO GUTIERREZ

Sergio Gutierrez is a professional musician/artist and has used his performing arts career to heavily influence his practice of painting and creating a wide range of pieces in the styles of abstraction, conceptual art, new realism, and photo realism. Being a self-taught artist picking up a paintbrush at the end of 2010, Sergio's paintings, with their striking contrasts, colorful patterns, and exuberantly painted imagery, give the expression of his high positivity and passion for the arts in many different forms. In both music and art, he always finds way to convey a sense of joy and generosity of spirit!



Anil Gupta

“Smile and be kind, for we are here in this world just for a while.”

GIVE X GROW X GRATITUDE = HAPPINESS BY ANIL GUPTA

It was 2008 - my worst year ever. I had lost everything in the crash.

I was beating myself up emotionally.

I started to drink too much.

I even beat myself up physically!

I wanted to end it all. I was suicidal.

It was a tough time indeed. I did not know what to do.

I started to help people and the pain and suffering started to diminish.

I realized in the moment you give authentically all the pain and suffering will disappear.

I started doing events with a handful of people and gradually increasing to bigger and bigger events. I was invited to speak on larger stages

finally speaking in front of over 10,000 people in a bull ring in Medellin, Columbia to a Spanish audience! I thought it was me that was going to be slaughtered!

I wrote a best seller book called *Immediate Happiness*.

I spoke on Fox news live on a couple of occasions as well as guest speaker at Harvard twice.

I met celebrities, athletes, tycoons and influencers.

This is not to impress you but to let you know what is possible when you get out of your own way and start to focus on serving others.

One reflective day I asked myself what did I do to turn things round?

I worked out there were three major components. I reflected even more and worked out they were somehow linked. The link was a formula for happiness.

I had found a formula for happiness

$$H = G \times G \times G.$$

Happiness = Give x Grow x Gratitude

The First G -

The first thing you have to do is Give.

You have to Give your gift, time, love, energy, joy, commitment, money, presence etc WITHOUT wanting anything back. It has to be a pure gift with a pure intention.

In the moment you give authentically the pain and suffering will disappear.

The Second G

You have to Grow - emotionally, physically, spiritually and mentally.

Have a look at your life and see which one of these you need to work on and be brutally honest. What do you spend your time thinking about most of the time? Is it your emotions, your health, your mental aptitude or your spiritual side.

The Third G

You have to be Grateful. Be grateful for what you have and do not focus on what you do not have. In 2008 I was focusing on what I had lost and not what I had left. I had a beautiful family, amazing friends and great health. If you look at your hands right now and ask yourself - when was the last time you thanked them. I bet it has been a long time or never! They have done everything for you. What would you do to get them back if ever you lost the use of your hands? Anything!

Now the beautiful thing about this formula is that IT ALWAYS WORKS.

Whenever you feel that you are not as happy as perhaps you should be then you can look at this formula.

You should score your self on each G.

What is your Give score? If 10 is the highest level of Giving and 1 is the lowest, what score would you give your self?

What is your Grow score? If 10 is the highest level and 1 is the lowest level, what score would you give your self?

What is your Gratitude score? If 10 is the highest level and 1 is the lowest level, what score would you give yourself.

What you will find is that one of these has a much lower score than the rest and that is the area of your life that you need to work on. As you work on that area of your life then your Happiness score will significantly rise. Let us take an example

Give score is 8

Grow score is 7

Gratitude score is 2

Happiness (H) score is 112

If you increase your gratitude score to 3 - your H is 168

If you increase your gratitude score to 4 - your H is 224

If you increase your gratitude score to 6 - your H is 336

If you increase your gratitude score to 8 - your H is 448

These represent 50/100/300 and 400 percent increases in your Happiness Score.

You can see what a dramatic effect this can make in your life. This will compound itself even more if you improve your other two scores by even a small amount.

This is a powerful formula that can have an immediate impact on your happiness and which saved my life many years ago. This formula gives you the clarity that you need when things are not working as well as you want, and when you may not be thinking as clearly as you should.

Awareness >

Clarity >

Focus >

Action >

Results >

Momentum >

Fulfillment

You can do this assessment anytime of the day and one of the three G's will always be below the rest. You will find this can vary from hour to hour, as someone or something may have triggered a negative response in you, thus affecting your score. It is quite interesting to monitor this.

You will get the power back in your life rather than life running you.

With practice the self assessment can take a matter of a few seconds to determine which G needs to be worked on. It takes me less than 10 seconds to determine which G to work on. It removes the subjectivity and allows an objective assessment as to what is actually happening in the now and what action to take in the now!

The results are immediate.

Always use this formula whenever your life is not as great as you want it and you will develop a muscle that will deliver much happiness to you and your family.

You can teach this to your family and even do an assessment for them to help them overcome any unhappiness they may be going through. They will thank you and they will think you have a special gift!

And you do!



Nik Halik

“Be the reason someone smiles today.”

SMILE AND ESCAPE THE ORDINARY

BY NIK HALIK

I was born with a poor biological template. I developed chronic allergies, debilitating asthma, and I was nearsighted. I was medically confined to my bedroom for the first decade of my life. When I was eight years old, a traveling salesman knocked on our front door in Port Melbourne, Australia, and sold my non-English speaking parents a set of the Encyclopedia Britannica. That set turned out to be one of the greatest influences on my life. It was the spark and secret kindling that set my imagination on fire. My imagination had stretched my mind, and it would never retract to its original dimensions. I read the encyclopedia constantly and, without my parents knowing, I'd take it to bed with me. I'd shine a flashlight under the sheets, flick the pages of a volume through to a subject that fascinated me, and read until I nodded off to sleep. Sometimes I'd stay awake past midnight, dreaming about the

things I was going to pursue in life, and imagining the world that was out there waiting for me.

As a child, you used to dream. Your mind wasn't shackled by logic, false beliefs, or societal limitations. Everything was possible, and the world was wondrous and magical. Then, as you aged, you started developing false and limiting beliefs about yourself and the world around you. You started buying into societal programming. When people told you something wasn't possible, you believed them. When your peers chose jobs and careers based on their own internal limitations, you followed suit. You started thinking more "responsibly" and "sensibly." And in this process, the flame of your dreams died down to mere embers, and in some cases may have been entirely extinguished.

Breathe life into your dreams again. Cast off the shackles of your false beliefs and societal programming. Realize that the vast majority of your limitations are only in your mind. What grand adventures would you live? What noble causes would you champion? What great feats would you accomplish?

Writing the Script of My Life:

The encyclopedia and the lure of space travel opened up all the things I wanted to accomplish. I sat down and wrote my highest aspirations in life. I drafted my own screenplay of goals. I was the actor, the producer, and the director. Here I am as an eight-year-old, with my list of 10 life goals. Pretty ambitious. Dreaming and thinking big. It has fueled my life ever since. Since writing down that list at age eight, I've accomplished almost everything on the list. I have two major goals remaining: rocketing to a space station orbiting 250 miles above the Earth and walking on the moon. Even those goals are within my reach.

I became the first flight-qualified, certified civilian astronaut from Australia, and was a backup astronaut for the TMA 13 NASA/Russian space mission. I remain in mission allocation status for a future space flight to the International Space Station. For a few years I lived in Moscow and graduated from the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Star City. During the Communist era, Soviet cosmonauts were quietly chosen, groomed, and trained behind a veil of secrecy. My life has been filled with extreme adventures. I have visited over 158 countries. I have trekked with the Tuareg Bedouins across the Sahara Desert. I broke the

sound barrier in a modified Russian MIG 25 supersonic interceptor jet traveling at almost Mach 3.2 (2,170 mph, 3,470 kmh) and viewed the curvature of the earth. My rock band performed and toured with big names like Bon Jovi and Deep Purple. I dived down five miles deep in a pressurized biosphere to have lunch on the bow of the shipwreck RMS Titanic in the North Atlantic Ocean.

I have climbed the highest peaks of five continents, including the mighty Mt. Aconcagua in the Andes. I have two more peaks to summit on my attempt to become one of a handful of climbers in history who have climbed the Seven Summits — the highest mountains of all seven of the world's continents. I did a Navy Seals HALO skydive jump with oxygen, above the summit of Mt. Everest in Nepal at over 30,000 feet, on my most recent birthday. I have rappelled into the heart of the most active volcanoes in the world. I have storm-chased tornadoes in the Midwest and hurricanes across the Atlantic Ocean. I even negotiated with the former deposed dictator of Egypt to spend a night in the nearly 5,000-year-old Cheops Pyramid in Giza, Egypt. I spent the night alone in the King's Chamber of the pyramid and slept in the sarcophagus in total darkness. The very same sarcophagus that Napoleon Bonaparte, Alexander the Great, Herodotus, Sir Isaac Newton, and

other giants of history had slept in. Media outlets dubbed me the “Thrillionaire.”

Over the last two decades, my companies have impacted over one million people in more than fifty-seven countries. I deliver keynote speeches and facilitate entrepreneurial training courses around the world. I even get the opportunity to speak in remote locations most foreigners would simply never visit. Just recently, I spoke in the communist “hermit kingdom” of North Korea and taught geography to a classroom of teenagers about to graduate. I have conducted an entrepreneurial mastermind seminar to more than 750 investors and business owners in Tehran, Iran.

My adventurous life has not happened because I was born into wealth.

I wasn't born rich — but I was born rich in human potential. My life by design was never coincidental or lucky. I have merely acted out the script I created for my life — a screenplay I wrote as a young child. My manifested reality was the result of every decision made in my life. I did have medical issues earlier in my childhood, but I refused to be held captive by them. I was forced to clear any obstacles that threatened to obstruct my path of self-discovery. I'm no more special than anyone

else. I've simply set my sights on big goals and have never stopped working to achieve them. There's nothing stopping anyone from doing the same. I share my life experiences to inspire individuals to live their own version of the ideal life. There is no shortage of adventures to live and thrills to be experienced.

Whatever it is for you, go after it. Don't let anyone tell you it's impossible; don't let anything stop you. Life is the greatest show on earth. Ensure you have front-row seats. You have an abundance of opportunities that people in the past could not even have dreamed of. Eliminate all excuses from your mind and vocabulary. Cut off the pessimists and haters in your life. Surround yourself with inspirational people, and immerse yourself in inspirational material. Do whatever it takes to escape the trap of the ordinary.

Because I can promise you this: It is so worth it.

My Obsessive Focus on Economic Freedom:

As a 5-Day Weekender, my life is dedicated to living a 5 Days passive

life and 2 Days active life. I am not your typical 9-to-5 type. I don't plan on working for someone else for forty years so I can collect a pension check. I don't sell out my dreams for the illusory "security" of a "safe" and comfortable job. As a warrior-entrepreneur we must be obsessively and relentlessly focused on freedom at all costs. Do whatever it takes, and for as long as it takes, to break free. Never be satisfied until you are financially free. Learn from your failures and get smarter, wiser, and closer to success each time you fail. Never give up.

Liberate your mind and finances. You don't invest in retirement. You eliminate retirement and choose to love life. You never fully retire. Instead, you retire from things you hate and embrace living a life you love. The ultimate quantification of success is not how much time you spend doing what you love. It's how little time you spend doing what you hate.

What do you want less of in your life? What do you want more of? Whatever each of those answers is for you, that's what a 5 Day Weekend lifestyle can give you. Imagine the possibilities. Create a vision and then use this vision to fuel your drive to achieve the lifestyle you want. As you create more choices and more free time, you can spend your life

in ways that provide your greatest joy, achieve your grandest goals, and share your abundance with your community. You are free to fully live your highest purpose. You crush the word “someday” and do the things you’ve always dreamed of doing today. You stop wishing and start truly living. Shake the tree and alter the trajectory of your life forever. As someone said, “It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.” It’s the individual who raises their level of awareness and capacity to harness new energies. Color outside the lines. Rattle the cages of societal norms. Never do things because “that’s the way it’s always been done.” Live life on your own terms. Become a maverick, a renegade, pioneer, explorer, creator and innovator.

ABOUT NIK HALIK

Nik Halik enjoys his 5 Day Weekend lifestyle. He has traveled to 158 countries and participated in all kinds of extreme adventures. He has dived to the wreck of the RMS Titanic, climbed some of the world’s highest peaks, done a HALO skydive above Mt. Everest, climbed into an erupting volcano crater, and recently visited North Korea. He was trained by the Russian Cosmonaut Training Academy and was a backup astronaut for the TMA 13 NASA/Russian mission to the International Space Station. Nik earned his financial and personal freedom by investing in real estate, the financial markets, and founding several enterprises. He is an angel investor and strategic adviser for tech startups and a stakeholder in a number of businesses around the world. He is a frequent keynote speaker at conferences and masterminds. Nik resides in the Hollywood Hills, Los Angeles, and has private residences in Morocco, Australia and the Greek Islands.

Books that changed my life:

My childhood TinTin books

Movies that inspired me:

Gattaca, Shawshank Redemption

My Hero:

Theodore Roosevelt
26th U.S. President

Quote I live by:

"Success is stumbling from failure
to failure with no loss of enthusiasm."

—Winston Churchill



Umar Hameed

“The best way to start your day is with a smile.
That is also the best way to end it. :)”

LIVING LIFE FULLY MAKES YOUR HEART SMILE

BY UMAR HAMEED

My name is Umar Hameed, I am a keynote speaker, an author, and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) performance coach. My purpose in life is to let the world know that people have the ability to create much better lives for themselves and their families. Live with more happiness, passion, and fulfillment. I live my purpose by teaching people how to take charge of their most valuable asset, their mindset.

Your beliefs drive your behaviors

My big insight is that everyone knows what they need to do differently to get better results. The reason most people can't make the change is that underneath every behavior that counts is a belief in our

subconscious that controls it. Think of the belief as a Blackhole, the strongest force in the universe that locks the behavior in place. This is why it is so hard to change behavior because it won't change without the underlying belief changing first.

You can change your life today

This is a client story that will illustrate how quickly change can happen.

More than 30 years ago – when she was just 9 years old – Sonia experienced one of the most significant days of her life. Her mother was going out on her first date since being divorced six months earlier. “Just keep the doors and windows locked and you’ll be fine,” her mother said.

Sonia wanted to be brave, but she became increasingly anxious after her mother left. She had never been left alone before. A short time later, she heard someone walking up the front steps toward the front door. She raced to the kitchen where she pulled out a large knife from the butcher-block cutlery set on the counter. Knife in hand, she ran to the bathroom and slammed the door shut. She waited in the dark

holding the knife waiting for what was going to happen next.

I met Sonia recently. She is the CEO of a successful company and she's especially proud of her management team. It took Sonia two years to find the right people – people who had the drive, passion, and expertise – to help her build the company.

Yet, here's the problem: Sonia is a world-class micromanager. She must involve herself with every decision her team makes. Her actions have alienated members of her team and slowed the overall operation of the company. Sonia, at least, recognized this problem. She participated in a workshop that focused on delegation skills, and she even hired a personal coach. Still, nothing changed.

When Sonia came to see me, she spoke about her compulsion to micro-manage. I asked her to think of an instance when she felt the need to satisfy this compulsion. “Just the other day,” she said, “I was talking with a client and something was going wrong. And, I felt the urge to take charge.”

“Sonia, in your mind, go back to that event and visualize what you saw,” I said. “Listen to what you heard – your client's voice, any sounds

that were present, and your inner thoughts. When you do that, you begin to feel what you were feeling then.

“Oh my God,” Sonia said. “I’m feeling it now. There’s a weird feeling in my belly.”

By utilizing a tool I learned from neuroscience, I helped Sonia to link that feeling in her mid-section with her unconscious mind. I said to her unconscious mind: “This is a distinctive feeling that you are experiencing – when have you felt it before?”

If I had addressed Sonia’s conscious mind, the response would have been: “I don’t know.” The unconscious mind, however, records everything. As soon as I asked her about the feeling, her mind took her back to that event 30 years before.

That night, as she hid in the bathroom holding the large kitchen knife, Sonia had a thought: “To my mother, men are more important than me.” With that thought, she created a powerful belief: “The only person in the entire world whom I can truly trust is me.” It was that belief that drove her behavior for three decades.

Using that NLP tool, I showed Sonia how to change that belief. After a 90-minute session, it became visibly apparent that something profound had happened to Sonia. As she left the session, I asked her to take notice of anything that felt different.

Sonia called me a few days later and said: “I’m not sure what you did, but it’s like 100 pounds have been lifted off my shoulders.” She also said her urge to micromanage was gone, and for the first time in her life, she was truly enjoying her accomplishments.

Change happens in an instant. In our culture, we think that change is difficult, takes a long time, and may never occur despite our best efforts. The latest advances in neuroscience, however, prove that change can happen quickly and that change is permanent.

This is my story.

My father was sent to England by the Pakistani Air Force to get advanced electronics training with the Royal Air Force. As soon as he arrived he fell in love with the West. He realized that anyone with

a bright idea and the resolve to get ahead could build an amazing life. This was not possible in Pakistan.

In 1963 when I was three, my family immigrated to England to begin our new life. We were not welcomed. The racism was not covert it was harsh and the anger was palpable. The locals saw us and other immigrants as a threat. "You are stealing our jobs," they said. It turned out they were right, my dad got a job at Hewlett-Packard as an engineer and we had a good standard of living.

Racism

I felt considerable racism and bigotry at school. "You Dirty Paki!" was the British way of saying welcome to England. My experience led me to become a more compassionate person. Looking back, I managed to walk through hell and then emerged in a better person.

Oh, Canada

Eleven years later, my dad decided that to build an even better life we

should move to Canada, the home of maple syrup, back bacon, and ice hockey. Eh!

The contrast between the UK and Canada was huge. In the UK, it took six months of savings to buy a color TV. In Canada, my dad could buy it with his first paycheck while still supporting his family.

I went to high school in Canada and received average grades in all subjects. My parents were so proud. And yet, I did not read a single book during my entire high-school experience. By paying attention to conversations around me, I would get the gist of my required reading and could then get Cs on my exams.

As soon as I graduated from high school, I became a voracious reader and discovered that I love to learn new things. I tried college but dropped out after a few months because the courses seemed boring.

Getting my first tech job

The computer field appealed to me, so I thought that it might be a good

way to go. I applied for a tech-support job with Chevco Computing, though I knew next to nothing. Still, I made it to a second interview. Lou Retta, the tech manager, wanted to assess my technical skills. He and two women (both vice presidents at Chevco) took me to lunch. The women and I discussed love and relationships for 90 minutes. Lou never got a chance to talk tech. And somehow, I landed the job.

I learned an important lesson that day, ones ability to build relationships is more important than your technical ability.

Deep learning

Chevco was a distributor of computer products and my job was to solve tech issues for value-added resellers (VARs) throughout Canada. I had to acquire expertise for hundreds of tech products. During the first six months, I read constantly about technology – morning, noon and night. And, as my level of technical proficiency expanded, I also realized I could never really get ahead working for someone else. I decided to start my own business.

Sovereign Enterprise begins

I became a value-added reseller, installing and supporting computer systems for small companies in Toronto. Fortunately, I loved what I did and my customers loved me. My next step, five years later, was to go to the Mecca of computing – Silicon Valley in California. It was a natural progression, I felt if I really wanted to be serious about developing my computer career.

Silicon Valley

I moved to the San Francisco Bay Area and started working for a value-added reseller in Berkeley, Calif. A year later I opened a consulting firm called Gecko Sales & Marketing.

Gecko's role was to be a virtual V.P. of Sales & Marketing for companies that wanted to launch their tech products in the U.S. market. We would do all the sales, marketing and P.R. road-trips for our clients. We worked with companies in the Valley, even companies based in Asia and Europe.

The White House

In 1996, I received an invitation to present a technology briefing at the White House. I helped them to imagine a future where the Internet could be used to unify their messages to their constituents. So when an issue came up they could instantly send out a response the killed the issue dead in it's tracks.

The unsolvable problem

While working with companies around the world, I noticed two problems that seemed unsolvable. Problem one: No matter where a company was located, it often had employees who were good. Yet, those employees never became great. The companies consistently invested in coaching, training, and incentives to no avail.

Problem two: Too many companies had weak management teams. The sum of the parts was greater than the whole because team members would function in self-imposed silos, displaying selfish ego-driven behavior.

Both issues were human problems, not business ones.

No Limits is born

I realized the “good, not great” problem for people and teams was not being addressed by anyone in a satisfactory manner. Business advisors would provide consulting, training and coaching. However, there is at least a 70- percent rate of failure in such “change” programs, according to the (University of Pennsylvania’s) Wharton School of Business. Our friends in the psychiatric community are crazy and take far too long to create change.

I started No Limits to bring the latest insights from the world of Neuroscience into the business world. My concept was to take these insights and turn them into tools and techniques that business people could embrace.

It has taken 15 years to get the language and the processes right so people from every walk of life would find these tools incredibly useful. Over the past 10 years, I have spoken to business audiences in

14 countries. I have helped thousands of individuals to break through their mental blocks by using the tools and techniques I teach.

If you're not an author, you're a bum!

The essence of what I have researched and taught over the years is captured in my third book, "Unleash Your Crazy Sexy Brain!" This book caters to the business/practical part of your brain. For the spiritual side, I created "Transcending Stress," a guide for tapping into inner wisdom and peace.

Why I do, what I do

No matter what I was doing in my professional life at any given time, my purpose has always been the same: Be the joyful educator who helps people become "awesomer!"

I am always learning new things in order to help people develop the insights they need for building the life they want. Some of my learning validates my way of thinking. At other times, what I glean will destroy

an existing perception of mine and lead me to something significantly better.

My constant goals are to enrich my understanding of the best ways to modify human behavior and how to improve and re-energize team dynamics. This website is where I share my latest insights and ideas.

Many years from now – when I'm 98 – don't be surprised to see me on stage somewhere at a business conference sharing my newest ideas to make the world a better place. And if not the world, at a minimum, my goal will be to make your world a better place so you can become "awesomer." (That's not an actual word, but it should be.)

I am a sales consultant and the world's best expert in changing salesperson behavior. I can change any behavior that holds you back from reaching your sales potential. I use Applied Neuroscience to change human behavior quickly, consistently and permanently. This is what sets me apart from any other sales trainer or sales consultant. My proven methodology ensures that salespeople break through their barriers and become exceptional.

ABOUT UMAR HAMEED

I use Applied Neuroscience to change human behavior quickly, consistently and make the change permanent. I work with leaders, salespeople and teams that want to perform better.

Every behavior and team dynamic has a belief that drives it. You can't create change unless you address the underlying belief. Applied Neuroscience is the fastest way to do that.

Here is what sets me apart from other consultants:

- 25 years as a successful business & sales consultant
- 15 years in changing human behavior using Neuroscience and NLP
- Keynote speaker at conferences in 14 countries
- Author of *Unleash Your Crazy Sexy Brain*

Website: NoLimitsSelling.com Phone: 410 949 7067

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/umarhameed>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/umarhameed>



Amy Hamilton

“Smile through the Discomfort –
that is when you grow!”

SMILE THROUGH THE DISCOMFORT – THAT IS WHEN YOU GROW!

BY AMY S. HAMILTON

Smile, though your heart is aching
Smile, even though it's breaking
When there are clouds in the sky
you'll get by

If you smile through your fear and sorrow
Smile and maybe tomorrow
You'll see the sun come shining through
for you

– Charlie Chaplin, John Turner, and Geoffrey Parsons

After living on this amazing planet for nearly half a century, I wake up almost every day with a smile. I live a life of abundance and know that each day brings with it new challenges, but more importantly new opportunities. Recently I realized that I have achieved most of my dreams and have started to identify new dreams and new goals – that is a great problem to have! The most current of which is writing this book chapter in only a week. When my wonderful and vibrant friend posted that Dr. Smiley had a wonderful opportunity to share my story, I knew that I could rise to the challenge. I hope that my thoughts resonate with at least one person and brings them a smile.

At this point you may be asking yourself who is this woman and why should I continue reading – that is a very good question. Your time is valuable and I do not wish to waste it. I am going to share a bit about my life journey with you, who I am and the experiences that have shaped my world view. Next, I will share why I am passionate about life and want to share my smile with you. Finally, how I wake up each morning to a life filled with abundance and gratitude. While reading this chapter I hope you can recognize similar challenges in your own life. I believe that each of us are connected as humans and we each have an amazing story worth sharing.

You never know where you will learn wisdom that you will recall throughout your life, I learned one of life's many lessons during cross country and track in high school, during our practice sessions I often found myself sweaty and exhausted. Our coach would lecture us on how to prevent injury and how to push through the point where you wanted to quit. He explained that growth happens when you are uncomfortable and that there is a fine line between pushing to improve and pushing too hard. These words that were meant to train high school athletes to improve their running resonated with me on a much deeper level. I realized that living a life of discomfort can sometimes be the best life of all. It is only when we are outside of our comfort zone that we grow.

Specialty, vocation, profession, career, employment, job – when you work in a field you love, it sometimes doesn't seem like work at all. Being a woman in a predominantly male career field has had its' own challenges and discomfort over the past three decades. I began my career in communications as a soldier in the National Guard and later was commissioned as a Signal Officer in the US Army. In 1993 the Internet was barely a concept to many people and future career in cyber would have sounded more like a Sci-Fi novel than a career option. Early in my

career I constantly felt that I had to prove that I was equal to my male counterparts and often found that I had to prove that I was competent. During my time on active duty I always felt like I was less than my male counterparts and that no matter how hard I tried I would never be viewed as a true equal. Even now after three decades in my career field, I still see men predominantly at the highest levels in technology positions, like Chief Information Officer, Chief Security Information Officer, and Chief Technology Officer. I am hopeful as I see more young people in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) each year, when I see young girls in coding classes, I smile.

Moving to a foreign country where you don't speak the language and, in some cases, can't even read the alphabet can be intimidating. I have lived abroad for almost a third of my life at times living in foreign cultures could be overwhelming. Trying new foods can be both exhilarating and intimidating. Making a local purchase and getting the exchange rate wrong can be costly. It can also be daunting to make new friends when you move, even when moving within your own culture. Despite any misadventures in my travels, I found that each time I lived in a new culture I learned and grew exponentially more than if I remained in native country where the world was comfortable and

familiar. I found that my life became enriched from each experience, even the ones that might not seem positive at the time. After all, a good story never begins with "My flight arrived on time and my bags were waiting on the carousel." Bad days make the best stories, which you can share with a smile.

Improving oneself through formal education, training, or self-education is critical to a growth mindset. When I was in high school, I knew that if I wanted to move beyond the blue-collar world that I lived that I would need an education. I selected my college with a minimal understanding of what it would take to achieve a four year degree and no concept of school rankings and leagues. After being exposed to the wonders of academia and opportunity to gain knowledge, I have pursued life-long learning. Pursuing an education can be difficult when balancing all of the other demands in life. When I started my PhD program almost five years ago I was overwhelmed in our first residency and almost gave up before I even started. Sometimes our fear of failing can be so overwhelming that we don't even attempt to reach our goals and this can be the greatest failure of all. Now I am working on my dissertation and there are still days when I feel like giving up, but I know all of this effort and discomfort will be worth it when I graduate.

Exercising our minds into adulthood has been shown to keep the neuroplasticity in our brains resilient!

Love is the most powerful and misunderstood emotion in the world. Today's world focuses so much on romantic love and the importance of finding your one true soulmate; those that are partnered up are made to feel as if their life is incomplete. What if the paradigm was flipped around and you realized that every other person on this planet was your soulmate? In 2016 I had the fabulous opportunity to give a speech at TEDx Stuttgart – The Key to Life from a PMP. In this presentation and my book, *The Project Manager: Life is a Project*, I share how you can use simple project management techniques to become more organized to reach your goals. What nobody knows when they watch the video on YouTube today, is that my heart was breaking that day. I was in the process of going through a divorce with a man that I had been with for fifteen years. He had promised to attend the event as my support person prior to our filing for the divorce and said he still wanted to be there for my big event – he never showed up. While all the other speakers had a seat reserved for their special guest in the front row beside them, mine remained empty. When I went on the stage, I realized that one person's love doesn't define you, the love that I felt from

each person in that audience is what mattered. When we realize that we can share our love with the universe, it will be returned in ways that we cannot imagine. Love always brings a smile to my face.

Exercise doesn't have to be all pain no gain, but neither should it be completely avoided. I hope my old high school track and cross-country coach reads this next sentence and smiles. I have to admit that he was right about running too! Several times I have plateaued in my running and it is only when I switch up my training and recognize that I need to make new goals that I improve. Running is not the right exercise for everyone, but physical fitness is vital to our overall health. We often believe that as we get older we have to lose our fitness, but studies consistently show that the more we move, the less we lose. I recently realized that all of my COVID my running has plateaued again with no goals and simply sticking with the same familiar training routes, so I just signed up for the Army ten miler and started a new training plan with tempo runs and hill repeats. When I run races I am grateful for the many volunteers that make the events possible and I don't think I have ever met a volunteer at an aid station where I didn't smile.

I start each day with a mantra I would like to share with you: “My quirkiness makes me unique. I will not dim my light for someone else’s sensitive eyes. I will blaze my own path and help others along the way.” This mantra reminds me each morning that it is okay to be different and that sometimes it means I don’t fit in – that is okay. I am reminded to live with joy, passion, and abundance. As Michelle Mras says “Live an unapologetic life.” As fun and amazing as my life is on a daily basis, there are times when it can be a challenge. It seems that there are always more things to do than I can ever get done. When you plan a project you have a goal and you focus on the end-state. In life it is essential to know what legacy you want to leave behind and to adjust your life journey toward that goal. Your journey may be linear or it may meander, the essential element is to live your life with intent and purpose. Keep in mind the journey is more important than the destination.

Finally, that the most important thing we can do as a human being is to help those around us. We never know what someone else is going through and how sharing a simple smile can impact them. If you don’t have a daily mantra, I encourage you to make one. Developing your mantra my take crafting over time, it may also be an endeavor that

forces you outside of your comfort zone Remember to smile and enjoy the creative process. While working on this book chapter a quote came across one of my regular feeds from theLawOfAttraction.com “Take time to smile at someone today. You never know who may need it.”

In the book Grateful Leadership by Judith Umlas, I learned that you are unable to be grateful and stressed at the same time – it is physiologically impossible! It may seem paradoxical, but I have learned to be grateful for the discomfort in my life, it is when we are uncomfortable that we grow.

Light up your face with gladness
Hide every trace of sadness
Although a tear may be ever so near
That’s the time you must keep on trying
Smile what’s the use of crying
You’ll find that life is still worthwhile
If you’ll just
Smile

– Charlie Chaplin, John Turner, and Geoffrey Parsons



Denise Haney

“Why not smile what is the alternative doom and gloom! Smiling creates positive energy that relieves stress and leads hope and a richer life—richer emotionally, physically spiritually and financially and it all starts with a smile.

SMILE: THEY'RE ONLY DAILY CHALLENGES

BY DENISE HANEY

I am Denise Haney a 23 year-old strong Black woman. I am a single parent, a mother to an incredible 3 and a half year old son, I am a Morgan State undergraduate with a 4.0 average,--I want to be a social worker because I want to help those that need to know the importance of facing challenges, growing and putting a smile on for every challenge. I am also an entrepreneur with two businesses, Snatched & Shaped, a fitness apparel business, and En'Leigh Xtensions a hair extension business. As you can imagine I had and currently have many daily challenges that require me to lead by example--to smile and show others what can be accomplished if you view challenges as opportunities to grow and succeed. E all need goals that make us proud and happy of our accomplishments--there is plenty of reason to smile.

I've learned over the years that daily challenges will stress you out if you let them. Finding an outlet can refocus you and keep you going. My outlet is to keep smiling. Smile to keep from crying. Smile to laugh a little and ease up the tension. There are so many things that smiling can do for your soul. My daily challenges are rigorous, end-to-end dawn to dusk. My days are so long I sometimes just want to call it a day. I wake up at 6:30 AM every morning, Monday through Friday first making my 3-year old son breakfast. While breakfast on the stove is cooking I wake my son and give him a bath, brush his teeth, and dress him in his school uniform. I have to make sure he has his school book bag and lunch box and be out the door by 7:30am. I drop him off at school by 8-8:15am.

Once he's at daycare I rush back home to check all my emails including business, personal, and college emails just to check to see if there were any changes that needed to be made in my day. After that I rush to get dressed, pack my bags and double check to make sure I have everything I need for class at Morgan State University. I have to be at school by 10am. I don't get back home from dropping my son off until 8:45 AM which leaves me 1 hour and 15 minutes to get myself together and at Morgan on time. I don't ever eat breakfast because I never have

time. I attend 3 classes on campus and I am at school till 4pm. Once school is let out I have to catch up on meetings and communicate with my business associates and my team to go over projects for the day and make assignments for the next day.

If I need to run errands my best time would be between the time I get out of school and the time I have to pick up my son from school at 6pm. After I get my son I rush into the house, cook dinner, pack his lunch, wash, clean, get him ready for bed. I then go over homework while I wait for my Asian manufacturers to wake up for their morning which is our night about 10 PM. All of my manufactures are 12-13 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. I prepare anything that I want to ask them or need from them. In the mist of that I stretch, eat dinner, and try my best to do my facials at night; I rarely get time to pamper myself. By 10pm my manufacturers are up and ready to work with me. Most weekdays I don't go to bed until 3am. On my good days I make it to bed by 1am. Being a single mother, student and entrepreneur leaves me sleep deprived. This is just the basics because nine times out of ten there are always extra tasks thrown unexpectedly into my daily routines. For example as caregiver to family members, or an unexpected family emergency the same time I have class; or my son is sick so I

have to stop everything and immediately attend to my child. Instead of crying (which to be honest I've done on more than one occasion) crying is my emotional release. More often than not I don't cry or lament the paths I have chosen, instead I just smile, because I know I can get through whatever challenges that are thrown at me--I know I can come through it because I've had to multitask my whole life. Regardless of the outcome I know it will get done and I will be better for it--challenges are opportunities and I take advantage of each one--that's how you grow.. I had to learn that I am only one person. We all need that one thing, the one thing that keeps us going when everything else is falling apart. Smile, it will be okay. Smile, It will give you hope. Smile it will keep you living longer while you embrace the faith you should always have in front of you. Faith is belief in positive outcomes. Knowing this you should be smiling all the time. Smiling also is contagious,

Work and Adolescence

Forced to work full time at age 14, after building my Aunts daycare business my childhood abruptly ended. I was thrown into the world of work so I didn't have the time for friendships parties, all the things that

defines childhood and adolescences. I had to surrender peer group activities. And again I was faced with turning challenges into positives and take important lessons about how businesses run and how to be successful.

At a early age of 14 I started working a full time job. My first job was Chuck E. Cheese's in East Point. Chuck E Cheese was right in the middle of the ghetto. I had to watch customers engage in violent behavior they were often mean and disrespectful to employees and to each other. I had to be very careful t was dangerous. Chuck E Cheese was the only place of business open to the public in the Diamond point shopping center. At 14 I wasn't supposed t close at the end of the day because I would be alone and it was dangerous. I wasn't even supposed to be working full time hours because I was still a high school student. I learned to cope with uncomfortable situations and to work with difficult customers. A typical low paying job Chuck E. Cheese would take any employees they could get. Most adults don't work jobs such as Chuck E. Cheese because they cant afford to pay their bills. It was mostly us teenage high schoolers. There were no more than 4 adults working my nighttime closing shift. Most times you need 5 closers, with too few adult employees there would always be a high school full

time closer. I was one of them. I live with my aunt who had custody and guardianship. We didn't get along well most times. She always resented but exploited how smart and different I was from the rest of the family. She didn't support anything I did and didn't protect me from a dangerous job. In addition to full time work and full time high school I was a varsity cheerleader and an AP student too. I learned to manage my time but it was at the expense of growing up with other adolescents and enjoy peer group activities..

My aunt didn't buy me anything. I had to provide for myself. She said it was because I had a job and need to learn responsibility. I wasn't upset but it wasn't certainly robbed me of childhood and adolescence. It did teach me. However that I could succeed on my own and overcome challenges few of my age had to endure.

One of my only social activities was being a cheerleader. Cheerleader expenses were high. Bus money added up, rides to work from home after work meant that I often got home 1:30 AM after closing taking the last bus at night. I had little time to prepare clothes, shoes, even personal hygiene for the next school day, all for \$7.25 an hour. At Chuck E. Cheese I was often a party host so if I was cordial and efficient I got

tips. My checks were no more than \$240 after taxes every two weeks. I learned how to manage money and stretch the little I made to pay my bills. All the time I worked at Chuck E. Cheese I was a damn good worker and was in the highest rated team I was training other employees doing fundraisers and groups. I was their best hostess but they never gave me a raise. They gave me a manager position but not manager salary. After working for a year and a half, my aunt got me fired by reporting me as a high school student exceeding the allowable work hours.

So I moved on, I now had a new job at Chipotle. The pay was so much better and I was the youngest crew member for a while. Customer service was my specialty and I love working with food. They paid me 13.50 from the start nearly double what I had been making; back then that was very good pay for a high school student. There were many more adults than teenagers. I loved it. I still was working full time and they saw my dedication and my strong work ethic so they put me on the full time night shift. I moved up to be a take out specialist. Doing catering, fundraisers, online orders, I had my own section and my own team. I truly loved that job till managers changed and our store went downhill. I moved on after 2 years, my senior year of high school. I was only taking two classes a day. I was determined to go straight to college. I

now worked at Five Guys so that I could have more time for college. By then I had moved out of my aunt's house and I had my driving license and had to still pay increasing bills. I had held three different full time jobs by age 16. I was gaining business experience that other kids my age never dreamed of. I now moved on to Five Guys because they offered me 14.00 which I needed to pay my expenses. I was living the life of an adult in the workplace but only 16 years old.. The job wasn't hard at all until i graduated and had to go to my college summer SASA program at Coppin State and stay on campus for 3 weeks. I let my manager know and he looked me in my face and said "who do you think you are? You think your smart enough for college? No you can not only work week-ends we need you here and the summer is our busiest season". I was stunned. He had just told my co-worker, Sarah who was Caucasian and who asked for the same consideration and he said yes to only working one day-a week; confronting blatant racism I didn't argue i simply quit. I was becoming familiar with racism in the workplace.

After my summer program and school officially started I was ready to work at better job and away from the food and hospitality industry. I applied to Amazon, the first and only Amazon warehouse in Baltimore. The pay was great \$14.25 10 hour with night shifts and over

night 40 hours a week with the option of over time. I was able to pay my bills and help myself with school supplies. I ended up getting a second part time job right after school at Rue 21 next to my school. I worked at Amazon on and off for several years different locations and different task sights. In between that i worked at other company warehouse jobs including Kohls, Dap, Under Armour, Macy's, FedEx, Giant, DTLR shoes, the Container Store, Sephora, white box, and several more. It was the easiest quickest way to make a livable pay check. Since most warehouses operate the same my experience was exceptional. I always moved up and got job offers, won contests and become an employee trainer. Even today warehouse employment is my go to. It has its downside like mandatory over time or constant voluntary time off due to low work supply; this made the job stressful. It want easy work on your feet during your shift for up to 12 hours. The jobs were tedious and exhausting. But the money was good and pay was weekly, but yu became a slave with little control over your hours. I was learning all the time and this was essential training for me to become an entrepreneur and start my own businesses successfully.

Since I was 10 years old I have always done hair on the side. That's how I made my extra money. That's how i got into the hair business which

encouraged me to create En'Leigh Xtensions a business that I am about to launch in 2022. I've always had decent paying jobs and i always try to make my next job better than my last but at heart I always wanted my own business.

Now I had a son and I had to find a job so I can be a single mom and make my son my number one priority but jobs that were more flexible paid considerably less. I had to take jobs not because i wanted too but because I needed some kind of income to support my son and I didn't want my aunt to help me so I had to pay her rent and pay her for watching my son and for BGE electric. I also had to pay her for my uncle take me to work in the morning. I would catch the bus home. It wasn't a job I wanted with much lower pay But my son needed food, Pampers, wipes. clothes everything. The funny thing is I told my aunt I was going t move out and have my own place and car and i did just very that. With a lower paying job saving constantly making \$765 every two weeks with bills worth \$925 a month. But i did it i finally moved in my own 2 bed room apartment and I bought a nice 2015 Kia Forte with 50,000 miles and one owner from Carmax with no co-signer and my own auto insurance all on my own. So here I am in a beautiful apartment with my loving son, a student at Morgan State, and abut to launch

two businesses thanks to adversity and the need to work at a very early age. It taught me perseverance, time management and business skills I never wold have had. As a child cast adrift by my own family t has taught me how to be a god mother and watch my handsome son grow and be safe, loving and happy. I have a lot to smile about.

My story: An Abused Child Unprotected by Social Services

I've never in a million years thought I would experience dealing with such a profession at a young age. When I was 10 years of age my mom and I got into a physical altercation, not that we haven't before. This time it was worse than it had ever been. Nothing I could do or say would change my mother's choices. As I grew in childhood, my mother was very abusive towards me. It became worse. She met a man from work who just came home back fro serving time in prison. My mother now increased the neglect of my sister and I (mostly towards me). I was the oldest and knew that the man she brought home wasn't my father. I was the darker child compared to my mother, sister and my soon to be step father. I was always treated differently as if I was an outcast or something. Now, whatever my step father says was law. It didn't matter if it didn't make sense and it didn't matter if it was harmful to my sister or me.

My mother was child-like and did everything she was told. It became obvious that my mother was very easy to manipulate and in retrospect it is easy to identify that she has some sort of cognitive/learning disability. My step dad apparently saw this and took advantage of the family with my mother incapable of making better decisions. One particular night was terrifying especially to a ten year old. My mother beat the living hell out of me and to this day I still can't remember why. And to top it off my mother is very heavy. I was a petite child and I definitely was no fair match against her. I ran out of the house because I knew I couldn't take this abuse any longer. I ran into the cold snow with no shoes, no coat, nothing but my night clothes I had on. I knocked fiercely on my school friend's door and her mother answered. She begged me to call the police but we all knew they were not coming in the middle of a snowstorm and they really weren't going to come to the projects, they never do on a regular basis in spite of the level of domestic violence.

I decided to call my aunt, my mother's younger and only sister. She was my favorite and only aunt on my mom's side and we were just 12 years apart. My aunt and uncle (Cousin/uncle two sisters got with two first cousins which made me related on both sides my moms and dads).

They both came and had no choice but to take me to the hospital. That was the first night I had ever met a social worker..

I was placed in temporary guardianship with my aunt and I was happy. The adjustments were hard::a new school in the county, new environment, new peers. I didn't have the luxuries of clothing and shoes like the other county kids. Finally, I had some caring, my aunt and the social workers helped out a lot so that I was able to dress more appropriately. Being in the social services system is a lot of work. The social workers came out monthly to check my room, food, grades, activities, and made sure I went to the doctors and dentist. I had to attend therapy at Kennedy Kruger which I hated, And we had to go downtown to family court and battle my mother to figure out long term placement. Was I going to stay with my aunt permanently or end up going back to my mom which I refused to do.

Two and a half years went by and I was almost 13 years of age. Finally they granted my aunt full guardianship under kinship care. Again, It started out great until I started getting older and my aunt's behavior started to change. I felt like she was trying to compete with me. She didn't have a good education. However she was successful by building

a childcare business. Although only 13 I helped considerably to make the childcare business a success. I did her coursework required for certification. It comprised 30 hour, 90 hour classes, creating escape plans for the fire department's approval, working on the master menu for the food program so she could claim the children she had to feed to get another check. I was the only one on my mother's side of the family who was smart enough to take on this burdensome responsibility and succeed.

I've done so much for my aunt I now realize just how much I've helped her. We started bumping heads because it was things she started to do that were unfair. She would treat my little cousin, her son, (who was the same age as my little sister and five years younger than me) so much better. My aunt let me work at age 14 with a school work permit. After that first job she completely stopped doing anything for me. I was basically living off a \$7.25 minimum wage. She never gave me rides to and from work or any support. She even sent me away at least 3 times to group homes and foster homes as a punishment without provocation. This meant I had to travel from Baltimore city, because that's where my case was, all the way to my county school. Eventually at 16 I moved out on my own and have been on my own since.

My aunt did petty things like getting me fired from work or taking my permit so I have no identification to cash my checks. She even unregistered me my junior high school year for an entire quarter so I would fail. I showed up to school just to be sent home so all I did was work for those months. Since I was on my own I completely stopped talking to my family until I found out I was pregnant at 19 while I was attending Coppin State. My insurance had lapsed and something told me to call my social worker. So I did, which I never did because I always left it up to my aunt whom I wrongly trusted so much despite the abuse and lack of love-- what choice did I have.. Soon as I told my social worker I was pregnant she began asking me questions like are you still with your aunt? Didn't you just sign some papers? Did your aunt give you some of your money? I told her my aunt didn't get money for me, she never did. The social worker was acting very strange and very unaware of my whereabouts or the things that I had been going through. Now it came to light that my "loving" aunt had been getting \$900 a month for me since I was 13 years old. And I never saw any of it. Not for clothes, shoes, school, medical, housing or cheer leading, simply no financial support whatsoever.

She bought a house, cars, a big wedding etc most of which was due to the work I performed for her business success and the \$900 per month

she never shared with me. She played me, she saw an opportunity and took it. This entire time she was telling people in the family how grateful I should be that she is doing this from the kindness of her heart and she doesn't get any money for me. She used to beg other family members who were barely hanging on themselves for money to help with me. Even while I was homeless struggling in this world by myself. Done things I'll take to the grave just to survive. Forging my signature and telling them I still live there and she supports me. When the realty was that I lived a life of neglect and abuse. She presented herself as a licensed family home child care provider getting all this money based mostly on my non-compensated work. Everything she did/does is for money with no recognition of my contribution. Lying to the government to get food stamps for me so I couldn't get them for myself and I always wondered why? Now there was a meeting with the Department of Social Services my aunt, uncle and my social worker just looked dumb founded. My social worker knew what was going on and she didn't care. She let my aunt slide and basically since I'm not with her anymore they cut the checks to her. I remained homeless and pregnant with no assistance. And when I tried to enforce it and get help my social worker told me to just let it go. I thought it was to protect my aunt but really it was to protect herself as well.

The social worker knew it was wrong. She knew that my aunt was not taking care of me and she knew what she was doing with that money. She also knew that she forged my signatures. Every benefit that was supposed to go to me went directly to my aunt and her son. What makes me so mad is that I was not experienced enough; I was simply trusting because she was my family. What still makes me angry is she never needed the \$900/month or the food stamps with all the money her businesses built on my ingenuity and long hours of work. Her day-care business had 18 children income plus my uncle's income. It was an opportunity and she took it. I'm just glad that I found out before she started getting income for my son as well.

This is why I want to become a social worker I want to make a difference in my community, especially Baltimore city. There are a lot of social workers who look at their job as a paycheck not recognizing or caring enough to make a positive difference in people's lives. They actually make it worse for the children as exemplified by my case. There are people who take in children because they love children, then, there are also people who take in children for the money. They don't care, they look at it as an opportunity and again the children are the ones who suffer. The social worker should have provided protection

from the childhood and adolescent abuse. I want to be a social worker so that no other child I come into contact with should suffer needlessly as I did. My experiences were painful but an opportunity to build strength, face and overcome adversity and grow as a person. I always love helping people. I always have children's best interest at heart. There are so many things juveniles needlessly through and it's hard for people to understand this level of abuse is institutionalized too. My experiences have created empathy and a strong sense of protecting the young as a professional social worker. I can understand them and feel for them. This is why I want to become a social worker in the field of child and family services.

Conclusion

Adversity can be crushing or make you stronger. It can be seen as impassable or an opportunity to learn and grow. It isn't just genetics because you can't understand my successes from my family genealogy (although a loving rich family clearly presents advantages). It comes from having to confront the reality of your current situation and looking at the cup half full not half empty. You learn that you can be overwhelmed and depressed or see each challenge as an opportunity

and smile right back. In business, school and family life I choose to smile and that affects those around you. I want to make each of my customer part of a community sharing experiences and supporting each other. When I become a social worker I want to see kids grow up happy, safe and healthy. If I can make one person around me smile every day I will be more successful than anything I have accomplished. I'm smiling at you right now are you smiling back?

Books that changed your life

Harry Potter Collection

Movies that inspire you

The Color Purple

Songs that inspire you:

Any Beyoncé, Whitney Houston,
Michael Jackson, Bishop Briggs

Your hero:

This a tough one. I would say my hero changes frequently. My hero never hit close to home like family or my mom so I tend to find my hero through others each hero inspires me differently and at a particular time in my life.

Quote you live by

God gives his toughest battles to his strongest soldiers.



Pastor Kenny Harper

"A smile a piece of art that your face gets to create every day. Let it create and be joyous!"

SIMPLICITY, SMILES, SEX

BY PASTOR KENNY HARPER

My journey started off in small town in the suburbs of Louisville, Kentucky. I grew up as a shy, creative boy with low self esteem often was in my own world. In my teen years, I was graced to find my first passion of music. I followed the advice of many others, "Do what you love and the money will follow". I've come to learn that's a partial truth. There is a reason there are so many starving artists, doing what you love is not enough, you need the knowledge of how to turn your passion into profits and then have the courage, focus and commitment to make it happen.

Life happened and I bought a house, got married, had kids and shifted my focus into learning business and profit growth strategies. Through my years I've had the opportunity of helping many others amplify their business and found my true passion of inspiring and empowering others to turn their passions into profits.



Ever since I was young, I've always enjoyed variety, energy and experiences. Four decades later, and that is still what makes me tick. Whether it's attending a high-energy concert, networking with authentic, driven people or performing a presentation on a stage. I LOVE to connect with the energy others share. There's like an unspoken harmony that occurs between people when the right intentions are set. It can ignite into unstoppable force that lights up faith and fuels passion.

My focus now is to inspire and empower others to amplify their business using their unique gifts, following their true passions and serving a higher purpose. I have felt true pain and disappointment and have lost good friends who have fallen to doubt, darkness and despair. Helping others rise, amplify and shine is WHY I do what I do. And by being my best self, I aim to lead my kids to follow their passions wherever they may lead.



As a marketing advisor and growth coach, I've learned what works is a combination of critical skills.

It's getting to know someone's authentic desires, strengths and weaknesses and helping them gain the focus and clarity to turn their vision into reality.

It's knowing what is needed to get the job done and in the right order. From the systems and strategies to the tools and tactics, without a guide it can be overwhelming.

It's the challenge, accountability and support provided to help keep the consistent persistence that is needed to build momentum and achieve higher levels of success.

I get results by genuinely connecting with others, helping them see their blindspots and realize their greatness.

ABOUT KENNY HARPER

Kenny Harper is a certified marketing advisor on a mission to double the size of ten-thousand businesses nationwide by implementing effective strategies and proven systems. Kenny facilitates workshops and masterminds to empower businesses to achieve new levels of success by applying The Profit Growth Formula and optimizing Value Journeys. He is the host of The Growth Amplifiers and partners with small business advisors to establish win-win-win relationships.

Books that changed your life

MindPower by John Kehoe,
Who Are You Becoming by Jonathan Fanning,
Unstoppable by Dave Anderson

Movies that inspire you

Band of Brothers, Braveheart
Song that inspires you
Unstoppable, Battery

Your Hero

Siddhartha Gautama

Quote you live by

Be, Do, Have.



Loren Michaels Harris

“Smile everyday and live longer.”

SMILING FROM WITHIN

BY LOREN MICHAELS HARRIS

As a child, I never once even considered the possibility that I might one day lose the joy of smiling. That all changed for me when at the age 9 years old in the span of only 10 days I lost my adopted mother and family, the name I had known since birth, all of my friends, most of my childhood worldly belongings, and most importantly...my love for smiling.

The sudden death of my adopted mother instantly sent my young world into an out of control tailspin that would last for nearly four decades. Shortly after my mother's burial, that authorities stepped in, informing me that I was never truly adopted, my existence within the home I had always known was the result of a “backdoor deal” between to single African American women in 1962. I was quickly made aware that I would be leaving my home that very day, destined to live out my remaining childhood within an institutional setting otherwise known as “The State Foster Care System”.

As I struggled to navigate my way throughout the 22 homes I was shuffled between over the next few years, I lost much of what matters most to a child. I lost much of my self-worth, I lost my identity as someone who belonged somewhere, I lost my innocence to the hands of several sexual abusers...but the thing that hurt the most I think, was the loss of my desire to smile.

You see, I had always been the type of child who loved to laugh, that kid who adored playing good natured pranks, lived to experience the many worlds available to a child within adventurous stories found within books; that boy who awoke and went to sleep daily with a smile on his face.

As the years ticked by for me within the system, my desire to smile on the outside was acutely diminished due to my inability to smile on the inside. I stood helplessly by as I witnessed the light of joy slowly but surely fade within my childhood eyes.

The breaker box which controlled my emotions was thrown on then off many times over the years following my exit from Foster Care. I endured severe low self-esteem well into my late twenties, developed a

drug addiction in my thirties...an attempt to self-medicate in order to numb the pain. I dealt my dreams of a better life a severe blow when in my forties the legal ramifications of an addiction came to claim their place within my existence, and it was not until my fiftieth year of life that the change began that has today provided me the life I for so long misguidedly believed could never be mine.

It was shortly after my fiftieth birthday that the realization that I now most likely was dealing with more life behind me than before me...that I decided to bring the art of smiling back within my spirit. I quickly discovered that each time I was tempted to tune in to that broadcaster that had for thirty years broadcasted one tragedy after another on my internal radio station, if only I looked for a way to do something of service for someone else...that broadcast was instantly discontinued.

Once I began to develop and understand the universal healing that comes from being of service to others, my world began to improve, to change, to evolve in more ways than time or space here provide me to expound upon. I began to not only see the beauty from the healing I gained within but began to witness the healing my service was providing for others.

Suddenly I began to smile again, first from the inside...and then eventually once again on the outside!

Today, as I move through the current season of my life, I find myself constantly seeking opportunities in which to serve others through all that my journey thus far has taught me. My “go to”, my “why” if-you-will, is nestled within the arms of the youth of today. I adore more than anything else, the awesome opportunity of sharing my story with young people, and most importantly...encouraging them to keep moving “through” the challenges and not simply seeking ways in which to get around them, get over them, or come from underneath them.

My most recent opportunity to be of service to young people came in the form of an event I staged this year; “The Power Of WE Symposium”. The Power Of WE is a celebration of our youth teen leaders, young people of all mindsets who hail from areas that are riddled with challenges and hurdles. The Power Of WE is created and designed to remind these young people that no matter what the world around them looks like, no matter what chaos they must deal with on a day-to-day, moment-to-moment basis...there ARE those of us you see them, love them, and above all support them! The Power Of WE Symposium experience is

provided purposefully to provide a full day of “Smile giving and Smile receiving”!

I believe that the most important form of being of service to others is to never forget that everything we do should mean something, that everything we do should bring joy to the world and to others. Nothing in this universe says LOVE as loudly and clearly...as a SMILE!

ABOUT LOREN MICHAELS HARRIS

Loren Michaels Harris is a motivator.

A former foster child, Michaels Harris strives to inspire and uplift every person who crosses his path. His message shows those who want to know, that while life is full of challenges, “it is our challenges that provide us our greatest opportunities for growth and learning,” he says.

As a mentor, “Break Through Coach,” author and friend, Loren believes that we are all a part of “The Ripple Effect,” and that it is his duty to use his story to create a ripple that will reach around the globe.

To achieve this, Michaels Harris is embarking on a tour in 2018, speaking from the heart to give hope to those who are desperate to break through the various “glass ceilings” of their lives. “My goal in life is to expose as many people as possible to this systematic approach that has worked 100 percent in providing a template for me to follow, a

template that has provided me with a life that before I only dreamed about.”

Loren loves his Creator, loves being creative, and he loves books, music and all things of beauty. His favorite saying is: “I love me.”

In addition to his upcoming album, “Turn It Around”... Loren has been featured on Larry King Live; NPR; PEOPLE Magazine; ABC; NBC; CBS; CNN; and FOX.

For more information, or to schedule an interview or speaking engagement with Michaels Harris, contact Jim Perez at 708.341.3953, or by email at Jim@PhoenixMobileDPR.com.



Whitney Gonzalez-Hartford aka “Mommin It Like A Boss”

“If you smile from within you might just start to grin.”

FROM CLUCKING WITH CHICKENS TO SOARING WITH EXCEPTIONAL EAGLES

BY WHITNEY HARTFORD

My name is Whitney Gonzalez-Hartford a/k/a Mommin It Like a Boss. I’m a Motivational Boss Mom of 3 beautiful girls inspiring my girls and other mothers to see that there is so much more to life when you’re not living in the now. I have my parents to thank for doing their best to guide my brother & and I down the right path. I was born and raised in the Tampa, FL area. During that time there was only a few stores and plenty of cow pasture to look at. Our town was quite small, everyone knew everyone and you guessed it our business. We started out with a normal childhood; we were raised Jehovah Witness which meant the rules for me were a little stricter than others. We typically hung out with the same small click/ friends during whatever down

time we had. I say click, because I was one of the youngest of the group & least popular. I tried too hard to fit in, but to be honest I never really felt accepted. Around the age of 12 things started to change in my life, as I got older and wiser, I started to notice certain things. There was a change in dynamic at home between my parents. I remember seeing my mom go to a discrete part of the house tired, exhausted & upset. My dad who was a very smart, handy and goal-oriented man who I had looked up was changing. I started to lose the man who, let me play tackle football, be a tomboy, always pushed me, taught us how to renovate a house and told me can't isn't a word. I didn't know what was actually going on, I just knew this wasn't the same man I knew. My parents would argue for hours, as I got older things started to get worse. My mom would plan Friday movies nights and take us to the movies to try and avoid the arguments. I started to see things for what they really were at a young age. Unfortunately, my father suffered from an addiction problem that sent our family to the ER multiple times. We went to counseling as family to help him through the addiction. My father asked us to help him, so I would hide any of the stashes I would find hoping it would help and that I would have my father back. Things just got worse and this was really starting to affect me as a teenager. Thank goodness, I played sports in high school. I don't know

what I would have done without the positive support and outlet. That was the one place I didn't have to worry about my parents. I tended to kind of follow the crowd and hoping to fit in and be popular. Is it everyone's dream to be a part of the popular crew or well known in high school? I lettered in 3 sports for all 4 years of high school and I don't know what I would have done without sports or my amazing coaches who pushed me. I applied what I learned from them in my life to this day. Due to the love mother has for my father she allowed the opinions of others to sway her to hold on to stay in a toxic situation. I even asked my mother why they weren't divorced yet, because I was living it with her. My parents got divorced my sophomore year in school. I was happy for my mom, I felt like she/ we deserved to have some peace in our lives. That was the last thing that happened, I didn't have a normal dad. Things were far from peaceful after, I now became my father's new verbal punching bag because he couldn't attack mother. My mother's name was dragged through the coals. Anyone he spoke to didn't hear the end of how my mom destroyed our family. At the time I thought there was something wrong with me, I was trying to have a relationship with my father who kept verbally hurting and playing manipulative mind games. I actually ended up running away to my mom's house and choosing to reside with her for the last two years of

school because it just wasn't healthy situation for me. People definitely had their opinion of me too. That's ok because my dad gave me some good qualities, I just chose not to follow in his footsteps even though the odds were already against me. My life and religion were somewhat sheltering, so i decided to move out of my mom's house at 19. I thought I knew everything. I didn't know a dang on thing. I didn't even know how to date and got wrapped up with the wrong people. I did receive an amazing blessing how literally saved my life when I was going down the wrong path. You know how I said I wasn't going to follow in the footsteps of my father? Well, I did and got a DUI, two weeks later I found out I was pregnant. I thought sure enough my life was over. Here I was 22, pregnant with a DUI having to go to probation and work full time. If the lord was ever trying to teach me with a blessing and lesson at the same time that was a sure sign. Going through that journey and having my daughter gave me a whole new purpose for life bigger than me. When Nalah was born she brought a woman out of me I never knew existed. I knew there wasn't anything I wouldn't do for her and that I wanted to give her the world. I had always dreamed of having a happily ever after, that wasn't the case for me. I became a single mother when Nalah was 4months. I never thought, I would be that woman, you know a baby Momma. I had dated and been step mom material,

but I never thought I would be on the other side. I didn't try to ruin my child's father life, I actually tried to be fair and do things the right way. I wanted him to be a consistently involved parent in her life and at the time he was to focused on other things on like ruining me so I would crumble. You can say the struggle was real!! My love for Nalah was so much stronger than anyone who wished hate & negativity on me. Trust me there was A lot of hate thrown on my name. I felt like I was in sinking sand and it was only matter of time before I would be fully consumed. I was a full-time single mom for the first two years of her life. I knew no matter how hard people were trying to make my life that I had to keep fighting. There were times where the stress consumed me and I actually ended in the hospital for chest pains but they couldn't figure out what was wrong. Looking back, I was probably having an anxiety attack. I suffered from them due to the level of stressed I endured to survive and make a living for us. I had enough, I decided to stop getting the short end of the stick and had to get the legal system involved to help give me some relief. Once I went that route Nalah now has an involved parent. I was happy for her. What I didn't realize is that I still had my work cut out for me. Things were starting to fall in place with work, Nalah & my life in general. I was able to commit to a consistent fitness lifestyle. When you're a single mother you don't have a

life, you must make the life you want. I was definitely Judged and criticized for taking my GYM days. I had to find a way to work through my stress and struggle. I learned through my 5-year journey maintaining an active lifestyle has tremendously helped me with my anxiety and stress. Working fulltime and being a fulltime parent was exhausting to say the least. Through the process I realized I had to do something for myself that would benefit me mentally and physically. If I didn't would have considered myself to be in a miserable cycle. I only loved my child at the time and the only reason I felt my purpose on this earth was to care for her. I didn't feel valued at all. The dating scene for single mothers is twice as hard because we already have baggage and not alot of down time to do much. I chose to get a gym membership and started running consistently. As I stated to do this I started to feel so much more at peace with my life and who I was. The negative things I wasn't able to control that enter my life were ran or worked out of my mind. It's hard to admit, it can be challenging to get back into the dating scene. I didn't have the best judge of character and went through a few frogs. At that time, myself esteem was low because I already felt like I was at a disadvantage by having a child. Isn't that something I lowered my standard because I felt unworthy. In reality any frogs who wasted my time was unworthy of me. It took me some time to learn that and

believe it. 5 years later I was still owning the single mom thing wiser, stronger and I was starting to get myself more established. I had worked in the legal field since Nalah was born and was offered a pretty decent job I got through a friend. It's was a great opportunity so I took it. I was really starting to get in my groove. A special guy reached out to me who had a soft spot in my heart about 7months after I started my new job. I promised myself if I ever had a chance to try and rekindle something with this man I would. I knew that I had to let know I shouldn't have let him go. The funny thing is we felt like that about each other. There was a problem, he resided In South Carolina and I lived in Tampa. How would this work? My now husband would make 6 hour drives to come see me. I knew that he was the one! We knew we wanted to make things exclusive but didn't realize what odds were against us. My I mentioned the idea of relocating everyone was against it even my mother. We weren't married so I don't blame her for encouraging us that we get married first. Three months after talking we decided to plan a wedding to get married. I wanted to show my daughter how she should be treated by a man who loves her. During this time, relocating with Nalah was an issue. Everyone thought I was going to be stuck in the Tampa Bay Area. When you have a child in the state of FL you can't move without the consent of the other parent. Which I didn't have

even though I tried to be nice and do things the right way. My journey of life has always been a fight. So many people doubted us and said the odds were against us. How was I supposed to plan a wedding in a month? Well, I did it. I worked really hard, hand made a lot of our wedding décor, planned the wedding and fought in court for a better life Nalah and myself. If I didn't go through the pain & pressure, I wouldn't have gained so much knowledge out of my life experiences. I was able to marry the love of my life. As we all know marriage is work and my husband and I make sure to implement the gym in our weekly schedule for the sake of having a healthy marriage! Through our journey as a married couple, we were informed the only way we would be able to conceive would be through IVF. What a bomb to drop on us.... We were definitely not expecting that. This brought a whole another set of stress, weight and pain. If you aren't familiar with the IVF process you are pumped with hormones to make eggs, get pregnant and maintain the pregnancy. I am so glad I maintained an active lifestyle during the process and prior because we were blessed with twin girls. Anytime you have multiples you are considered high risk. I made sure to consult with my doctor about working out and she gave the green light. I could tell the difference between my pregnancy and recovery journey after the delivery with my 9-year-old vs this pregnancy and

post partum with my twins. Believe it or not I was smaller with my twin pregnancy. I didn't really show until I was 6 months and I eat healthy, maintained active my whole pregnancy and people no couldn't believe I was carrying twins. I had more energy during this pregnancy and was happier because I had a stress outlet that was keeping me in shape. Once I delivered the girls, I had a cesarean and was not able to do physical activity for 8 weeks. During this time, I noticed my emotions starting to head in a more negative direction. I wasn't confident with how I looked and my body was stretched out. I knew I had to do something about it and in that moment, I knew my purpose was to uplift and show other mothers how to take their pain, stress, struggle, childbirth and turn it into the fuel to burn those calories. I have learned that you have to work/ fight for anything you want. You may not physically get it a fight, but you will have to always put in work for the things you desire. No one is just going to hand you everything on a silver platter.

Through my experiences as an athlete, single mother, step mother, infertility warrior and mother of 3 I have grown into an unstoppable motivational coach known as Mommin It Like A Boss. Through my painful experiences I hope to shed light in other people's life to help

them get through challenges times. I have learned to find comfort in my chaos and it so fulfilling to help other people do the same. My purpose and passion are to help mothers achieve their best potential physically & mentally. It's so easy to get lost in the crazy sauce of life. I want to give them back their life by making the transition into motherhood easier and sexier. I want people to be shocked to hear they are a mom because of how well they are taking care of themselves. Giving them a new body to love in their postpartum skin is what I desired for myself and others where we don't and workout like crazy. Mommin It Like a Boss with 3 kids, cat, dog is exhausting on its own and no one has time for extreme workouts.

I am the bridge the gap between the millennials and baby boomers. I have clients, friendship & networks of all generation. Going through my infertility journey humbled me, I am open book to those going through their own journey and offer free support workshops. As a motivational coach I motivate / teach people of all ages how to maintain a healthy life style. Winning at this Mommin thing takes a village, requires some strategy & patience. I love helping mothers boss it up so they can be one wearing their kids out not the other way around. I fell down at least 5 times and I felt defeated. It looked like I was a hot

mess and there a lot of days with tears. Going to IVF. That was a whole new beast to concur and I knew if I could get through that, then he had given me a bigger purpose to help others through my life experiences. God, dedication & persistence were my game changer in life and now I put faith over any fear in any situation. I let the chickens cluck, while I continue to rise above and soar with eagles.

Book that changed my life:

Shine On – 60 Day Devotional

Dave Ramsey

Movie that inspired me:

King Richard

My Hero:

Sabrina Protic

Quote I live by:

“Quitters never win and
winners never quit!”



Leo Hefner, Author, Speaker and Owner at Blue Fin Hosting

“The best smile is the best value to your face.”

THERE IS ALWAYS A SMILE AROUND THE BEND

BY LEO HEFNER

Hi, I am Leo, born during my parent's surf safari, I ended up growing up in a tree house on the north shore of Kauai, Hawaii. This beginning only spurred a future surrounded by real estate and property management. As my parents became more affluent in real estate, this business model of success stayed in my subconscious.

After meeting my wife Tiffany on the big island over twenty years ago, loved caused me to move to San Diego to chase her where she went to college. Here my focus shifted to Automotive Technology. Here I dabbled in everything from the shop owner to foreman to the service writer. Eventually working for Mitchell International, my time was consumed writing the shop manuals used for auto repairs. However, when the computer technology surged, I found myself interested in building

my own computer. Later that aspiration let me to own a school that offered computer certifications. However, throughout all of this, I never forgot my deep roots in real estate.

Later, it seemed best to join a group that pooled funds to invest in houses. Then, I merged into business with private partners pursuing real estate investments. To increase my first-hand real estate knowledge, I became a Realtor and a licensed MLO (mortgage loan originator). After a couple years working for someone else, it was time to branch out as the idea of residual income, income that doesn't require an active job, became a focal point.

That's when things all fell in place from meeting Geoff Southworth, a smart guy I met at a private lending conference in San Jose to flying, to Chicago, only to be placed strategically between a small bank's loss mitigation manager and their facilities manager. "Hmm," I thought, "So, one guy forecloses on houses, and the other guy takes care of them once they are bank owned." I smelled opportunity, and by the time we landed, my napkin was full of names, addresses, and phone numbers regarding the last houses in their bank portfolio.

After a drive to Indiana to meet the property manager and tenants while inspecting the house inside out with a contractor, I set up a meeting to wheel and deal. The sellers said, "We have 1.2 million dollars wrapped up in these houses, so our offer is \$475,000." With my gut churning, feeling almost sick to my stomach, I rebutted, "I will give you \$100,000." Mind you, a few months prior, Clyde, an older real estate investor suggested, "When your offer doesn't make you feel uncomfortable, then your offer is too high." So, I took his advice and gave it a chance.

Interestingly, the sellers laughed, broke for lunch, then reconvened settling the deal for seven houses for \$155,000 that produced \$60K in gross rents. Wow, putting that deal together was liberating, invigorating, and mind-opening! That success was the start of South Bend 7, our name for the seven houses in South Bend Indiana.

After returning to home, Geoff and I sought legal help to start Reg D 504 fund. Turns out the portfolio purchase wasn't a one-off deal as many incredible opportunities came shortly after. It turns out, you must open your mind, look around, and entertain creative ways to make things work that is a win-win for everyone.

For example, after meeting the seller of a cockroach infested house listed on Craigslist for 30K, I entered the two bedrooms, one-bathroom house littered six feet deep with trash by myself. The seller refused to go into the building! I boldly came out, stating, "You'll have to pay me \$1000.00 just to take it!" Remarkably, the seller replied, "How about you look at another house first and think about taking two instead."

I, then, viewed the second property, a 40K price with a 10-year, Section 8 tenant, paying \$600 a month. In perfect shape, I decided to offer \$20K for both. Yes, I felt uncomfortable which was good, because that meant I had given him a reasonable offer. Although, the seller initially said, "No," we haggled settling on \$22,500 for both houses! Between both houses, I earned over \$110,000 in equity and over \$15,000 in gross rents per year.

It was imperative to make investing a zero-debt fund that could withstand another market crash after witnessing friends and family lose much of their retirement during and after the 2006 crash. Therefore, with my experience originating mortgages, doing private lending and being part of the Mpack Wealth group, the only way to move forward was to be debt free.

Fortunately, this possibility has occurred over and over again due to the relationships, and the networks developed to find these deals. To date, Geoff & I have bought over 30 houses at a deep discount and passed on hundreds to others. We decided we were going to run this fund in a way that reduced volatility, reduced correlation to the stock market, maintained interest rates and provided cash flow in any economic climate. They did this by carrying no leverage, no loans, and no liabilities. Basically, we buy everything with cash and have 0 debt.

We focused on the expanding 48.9-billion-dollar renter market of those people who receive housing assistance from HUD, the Department of Housing and Urban Development. We buy houses to provide quality housing for a vulnerable population in areas of stable job growth, unremarkable appreciation, and location within 5 miles of 4-year universities with more than 5000 students. Our renters are on Social Security, Veterans Housing Assistance or Section 8. This group is a community foundation that isn't likely going anywhere when times get tough. This way of buying houses is the safest way possible as an economic downturn will not affect the company or investors as much.

At this point, the average purchase price is just under 18,000.00 dollars, an average value is just under \$70,000, and the average rent is over \$650.00 per month. Over the last two years, South Bend 7 maxed out the Reg D 504 offering raising \$1,000,000. During this time, we have grown and thrived. At the same time, they've been able to pay their investors over 7.25 percent in annual returns.

South Bend 7's success is the product of Leo's tenacity with deal-making, the creativity to find deals, and the faith many investors have in me to continue the success. I thrive on finding deals, and working creative angles, as well as I, love developing relationships and working with others. As a real social butterfly, this allows me to socialize while doing what I love for a worthwhile cause. For the first time, I feel like I have found my true professional calling. Now, I have joined Karma international, a group dedicated to connecting individuals both socially and professionally. We put on fundraisers to raise money for various philanthropic causes, and this act has become extremely rewarding. Lastly, I recently joined City Summit, an incubator for non-profits, that teaches organizations how to be a successful non-profit and raise money for them to be successful.

ABOUT LEO HEFNER

You wouldn't be able to tell by looking at Leo, but he was born and raised on the North Shore of Kauai in Hawaii. Coming from two very successful parents in the real estate market you can say he is cut from the same cloth, his father was the top dog in real estate for years and his mother owned a property management company. Following his parent's footsteps, he has built a well-rounded skill set in real estate. He has spent about 3 years as a buyer of distressed real estate, 5 years building homes for his father's company, 7 years as a licensed MLO in conventional and reverse mortgages, lastly for about 5 years he was mentored by George Anton in private lending. Leo on a mission to save people's money, assets and retirements from the next economic downturn.



Lorenzo Hickey, Author & Speaker, Founder of SHAPESHIFT World

“The power of we elevates me,
but a smile will elevate the whole room!”

LIVING YOUR LIFE'S PURPOSE WILL KEEP YOU SMILING AND ENGAGED FOR LIFE!

BY LORENZO HICKEY

Wow.... Where to start when it comes to being grateful for all of your life challenges, obstacles and lessons. From the day I first can remember I was confronted with a life full of opportunities to learn from. My oldest brother was taken from our family was taken away from us from his bout with cancer. He was 5 and I was 2 and in my first memory and instance of change became the oldest son. A burden I would love to hate as I would never be able to live up to the memory of the first-born son and lifelong memory of Kenny. His picture still is the centerpiece on the wall of family photos, forever immortalized as the chosen first

born. What I will remember most is that I grew up wishing that I indeed had an older brother. Reaching for something that was out of my grip without even knowing that challenge would be the first or many lessons that framed my ability to deal with adversity over and over again.

With passion and love in my heart, I can say that my life was and is about constant change and therefore change is my constant and now my comfort zone. For those of you who this resonates with, you might agree that the only way to handle this is become resolute in your ability to adapt, think differently and embrace the all mighty power of change.

So, when I met Ken Rochon about two years ago, I found my long-lost brother from a different mother. We both want to love on people and support others sometimes at the expense of our loved ones. Our passion to make a difference runs to our core and it's with great appreciation, respect and gratitude that I am honored to be part of this Legacy addition of the Keep Smiling book series. Additionally, there are some very special individuals to me that are included in this edition and I am thankful for their energy, commitment and desire to go good in this world. Please accept my virtual hug and thanks for allowing your image, message and thoughts be part of our collective community.

The turning point... we all have one or two that we will never forget and the lesson were so hard and deep that they would make an uncut diamond shine ever so bright. I have had the pleasure of so many that as of today, I feel compelled to lead and provide the light that may make a difference in others lives. The current chapter in my journey is the creation of SHAPESHIFT World where we are helping business owners escalate or kickstart their companies to new levels of servant leadership.

The back story is one of surprise, pain, anger, loss and commitment to living the best life possible. July 17, 1987 my daughter (only child at the time) was diagnosed with cancer... Yes, the frightening "C" word. What transpired over the next 9 months of being in the hospital 24x7 was scary as hell and yet life transformational. I never gave up on the fact that she was going to live and we would get out of that place. All of that happened and she is now an oncology nurse at that exact same children's hospital and giving back daily to those kids in need. I love her for that and am so very proud of her and her husband for giving back to children of cancer and their families through week long and overnight camps focused on healing and dealing with these constant struggles a cancer diagnosis will bring.

Looking back, I have to acknowledge the Make a Wish Foundation and Frank Shankwitz who is in the book. The second dream we latched on to was a trip and opportunity to take our daughter to Disneyland once she was healthy enough to make trip. We did take the trip with my brother and his family and are forever grateful for the financial support to make that dream come true. Coming full circle, we had the pleasure of meeting and thanking Frank and his wife Kitty in person at the Phoenix showing of Wishman the movie.

From July 1987 till now, my life is filled with obstacles or opportunities to grow as I like to call them. But most of all, my life is filled with amazing people that have challenged me, support my family or just inspired me. Ken Rochon is one of those people, but the list is long and full of powerful human beings that want to make a difference for others. My career is in what I call the Legacy phase and the heart-based business we created was designed from the beginning to make a shit ton of money so we can give it back to charitable organizations that do necessary and thankless hard work for those in need. My family, daughters and friends have benefited from some of great philanthropic groups that deserve our help and support.

People are the backbone of our lives... it's not how much stuff you have, nor all the cool places you been, or even all of our accomplishments. It's the people in your life that bring smiles to our faces or that we have the pleasure of smiling at. I for one am so thankful for the random smiles I get every day. If you have this book in your hands and you are reading some of my thoughts, I want to thank you and ask you a favor. Would you please turn to someone around you, or the next person you see and SMILE at them. No expectations, no conversation and no commitment... do it just because you can. Keep Smiling and Transformation Will Happen!



By Reginald Hicks

Smile often, you never know who's in need of one." – Reginald J. Hicks

SMILE, IT'S CONTAGIOUS

BY REGINALD HICKS

At Birth

Even at the beginning of birth, I had issues and struggles of making it alive. See, I wasn't born like every other child. I was a premature child weighing 4lbs 6ounces. Due to my early delivery and not being fully developed, I was in a fight of my life. Spending almost a couple weeks in the NICU (Neonate Intensive Care Unit) until I was about 4lbs 11 ounces (corrected weigh given by the one who carried me; thanks Mom). The doctors gave my mom (April) a report that I wasn't going to survive due to me being so underweight and not being fully developed. Born at 35 weeks, I was about the size of a pineapple. I weighed in the size of a 32-33-week gestational baby. Typically, babies born at that size and age are called late preterm infants. Around that time, an infant lacks the ability to breath well on their own due to unestablished lungs and they don't have the strength to breast feed. Through prayer and capable hands of the NICU team, I was able to go home finally, and my mom was able to hold me.

Childhood

Growing up as a premature child, I had speech issues and had to go to speech therapy to learn how to talk. Even till this day I have issues pronouncing “S” and “R” words. I was made fun of and had to arrive to school extra early or stay late to have my speech lessons. I recall my speech teacher being so proud of how fast I caught on to putting me in a Spelling B competition. However, I didn't win or go far but I counted it as a small win. “That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind” sort of speak.

I grew up in a large family with a chaotic household. I was one out of five that lived in our 3 bedroom/2 bathroom house. I shared a room with my brother and my 3 sisters all shared a room. Although we were knitted closely, we learned how to care for each other's space over time. The sibling rivalry was real going up in our household. Fights daily about food, toys, games, the tv remote, etc. But nonetheless, we loved and care for one another. My mom (April) made sure to drill in our heads that you should, “treat people the way you wanna be treated.” That has never left me even after 20 years of not hearing it. She made the boys hold the door open for her and our sisters, teaching us how to be men at an early age.

We would have family outings, movie nights, and game nights (which were my favorite). Playing Trouble, Candy Land, Uno, and all sorts of card games were the best time growing up as a child, that I do those same things with my children. I look back and I'm amazed at how true the saying is “train a child in a way they should grow, and they will not depart from it.” From opening doors for women, children, and elder people to spending quality time with my children are all great habits that were instilled in me at an early age.

Middle Adulthood

Those foundational concepts that my mom and grandmother taught me spilled over into my youth. I say that because I carried a personality that everyone wanted to be around. I was very shy growing up (still am today but not as evident) until I got to know you as a person. I always had a care and passion to see people in a good light. During elementary, middle, and high school I always spoke to everyone. Even the kids that no one wanted to talk to or be around and thought they were weird, I still would interact with them. Just because of the simple fact that what my mom drilled in my head from my youth; “treat others the way you want to be treated.” I am an observer of people. I like to see why people act, think, and do what they do. Over the years I've gotten

good at it. But just like any teenager, I wanted to fit in and wanted to be liked by my peers & superiors.

There was this time in middle school, where I was chosen to be a character from a love novel; I believe it was Romeo and Juliet. And I was the main man character from the book. So, after a while of reading the words out of the book, word for word, I decided to remix it a little bit by creating my own words I would say to Juliet (character played by a young lady named Crystal). At first, the students and teacher were looking around trying to figure out what I was doing but like a wildfire, IT CAUGHT ON! Everyone in the classroom started making up their own lines, it was hilarious! Our teacher took no time after the first few pages to put out that fire (Booooo). School was a time to interact with peers, find your true self by trying to fit in with the right crowd, and experiencing friendships on a different level. I look back now and wonder how amazing our little minds were back then when we didn't have all this technology. We could remember everyone's first & last name, telephone numbers, and addresses of all those we came across but now have a hard time remembering our own telephone numbers.

I took what I learned throughout my school years and applied all that I learned to make it to college. Immediately after high school, I decided I wanted to go to college, I was just very unsure on what I wanted to go for. Before starting college in 2004 (same year I graduated high school) I had already been working at a fast-food restaurant called Captain D's for two years. So, I was a sophomore (at age 16) working 20-30 hours a week at night. I learned valuable skills being a cook, cashier, and hostess. I enjoyed working and felt accomplished, especially with it being my first job in all. I had extremely strong work ethics and I've always wanted to do my best at everything I set my mind to, rather it was doing the dishes, cooking up a meal, taking out the trash or even stocking up for the next shift. My supervisor took a notice of how passionate I was about my positions and how I interacted with the customers. I always got great feedback from everyone and most of our regular customers knew me by name. I had this one young lady that was pushing my buttons. On this day, I was the only cashier available (I believe someone called out and my boss walked over to my home to ask me to come in; they were desperate). But I ran the store during lunch hours taking over 30 orders from 10am-2pm. That's orders from the drive-thru, call-in orders, and customers that were walking in. From preparing orders, drinks, bagging them up, and adding extra sauces to their last-minute

requests; I kicked butt! However, this lady noticed me running around like a chicken with my head cut off, but in between every other customer, she would ask for some thing different or complain about something. After about five requests and complaints each, she turned to me and said, "I can't get to you, can I?" I said with a smile, "No, ma'am you can't." Then she just smiled back and said, "I like that about you!"

So, I said that to say this, no matter what life throws at you, continue to smile because when life realizes that it can't bring you down anymore; it'll surrender! Be the Captain of your own ship and set your sail for greatness because nothing has control over that besides yourself.

Adulthood

Fast forward to my adult years. After being at Captain D's for about three years, I also started working at my local hospital as a Transporter. My occupation was to pick up patients from their room and take them to different procedures throughout the hospital, then back to their rooms. I loved jobs where I could move around and not sit still in one place because I had an issue with sitting still; I like being active. So, I worked both jobs and went to school in 2004. Still unsure of what degree I would work towards, but I figured I'd do something rather

than nothing, then eventually I would figure it out. All I knew is that I wanted to help people. Now that's a very board choice for a career, wouldn't you think?

Being in healthcare for a while, after hearing about and seeing different occupations, I was able to decide that I wanted to become a Registered Nurse. Even though being a doctor would've been cool, I couldn't see myself going back to school for that long period of time. I knew my strengths and weaknesses. I concluded that, as a nurse, I could still help people, it's more flexible, and no matter where I travel to; I'll always have a job. Sounds cool and fun, but nursing school was "no walk in the park." There were days that I slept in my car, barely ate, was up for 28-38 hours two or more days out of the week just to make it by. It was seriously a struggle to maintain a full-time job, a family, and go to school full-time. Taking 2-3 classes at a time, having to study anywhere from 12-15 chapters per exam in each one of those classes, and maintaining my sanity was extremely difficult but no one could ever say they didn't hear my laugh up & down the halls of our school.

I maintained my sense of humor, purpose, and desire to complete this journey I was on. Not realizing that I was about to make a mark

on my family's tree that was never done before. After the struggles of failing exams, coming from a zero average to passing one of the toughest courses in nursing school (Critical Care), and having to write an appeal to get back in school after being kicked out due to failure; I was the first person in my family to earn a bachelor's degree. To put the icing on the cake; seeing my grandmother, one of the strongest and toughest women I've ever known to cry because of her happiness to see me graduate... I knew I had done something remarkable! And the crazy thing about it, I hadn't even taken my exiting exam yet. The exiting exam is the exam you MUST pass to officially say, "YOU'RE A GRADUATE!" So, I LITERALLY walked across that stage by faith. I just never gave up the fight! I had put so much sweat, tears, sleepless nights, missed times with friends & family to let it all slip away. I was on a mission!

Even during your toughest times, find that thing you can always turn to that gives you hope and joy. If it makes you laugh, smile, or just takes you away on a short journey just to clear your head, do so. Even though the first year of nursing school felt like five years of my life was gone, I remember my dad telling me, "You're a lot further along than when you started."

Life isn't meant to break us or destroy us; life is meant to take us through extreme heat & pressure to turn us into the diamonds we are meant to become. Fine gold and precious gems. So, when that small little voice starts nagging you and telling you negative things, like "you can't do it," "you're not smart enough," "no one in your family has done it," and/or "you're fail at it." Respond with, "that maybe true but I came to do something that has never been done before and I'm here to break the mold!" "I may not have what it takes compared to societies standards or what people expect me to look like, but I WON'T QUIT!"

To Be Continued

I am now 35 years old, 5 children, and still working on being the best that I can be. How I do that is by making a major impact in the people's lives that I meet. Rather it's a gesture, smile, handshake, a warm greeting, or an honest compliment. I knew that I was placed on this earth for great things, and I have yet to finish my journey. I have a business where I teach families how to become financially independent through education and help them reach their financial goals by creating plans that fit in their budgets. In the end, I want to be able to help break the generational curses of poverty and proudly say I am the reason there are first generational millionaires in the 21st century.

Why Smiling Works Best

It's been said that it takes more muscles to frown than it does to smile. But if that's the case, do people who frown the most have less wrinkles (Lol)? Why smiling works best? Because it looks good on YOU! Smiling or giving a smile can dramatically change the atmosphere of a room without saying anything. Someone could be having the worst day ever, but what happens when you see a baby or a child smile; you INSTANTLY smile back and say "aww!" It's such a beautiful and miraculously thing to behold; especially on a newborn or child, it never gets old. However, most of us aren't children anymore. That doesn't negate that someone needs a smile from you. So even if they don't ask for it or request it, give it to them anyway; it doesn't hurt to smile.

D.O.S.E

An acronym that can remind us of why we set out on this journey in the first place. DOSE: D is for Determination. Meaning, I made up in my mind that I would be different by completing what I started. What I decide to do will not only change my life but those around me and those that will come after me. O is for Opposition. Nothing will stop me from reaching my goals and dreams. If anything gets in my way, I will charge at it and through it like a raging bull! S is for Significance.

I am fearfully and wonderfully made. I have been placed on this earth for a reason, that's what makes me significant because I'm alive today. And because I'm alive, I WILL live with purpose. E is for Energy. I will only allow positive energy to flow in my direction and flow out of my direction. People will be impacted in a positive way because I AM ENERGY!

ABOUT REGINALD HICKS

Reginald Hicks is a Financial Coach, Inspiring Speaker and Author where he enjoys encouraging his audience on the importance of financial education. After applying the traditional money concepts from his parents on paying bills, saving money in a savings account, and budgeting did not equip him for the real world. He struggled to get ahead in life living paycheck to paycheck even after obtaining his Bachelor's in Nursing degree. Three years of studying personal finances, Reginald immediately saw the missing pieces that kept him from succeeding financially. His goal is to teach and empower Americans on financial literacy so that they can create generational wealth. The mission is to create a country of well diverse families on how to pass on generational wealth and defeating a cycle of generational poverty through education.

His passion and motivation are to provide for his 5 wonderful children by giving them the life that they deserve. Things he enjoys are outdoor activities, traveling, trying new foods, meeting new people, and making a major impact in the lives of the people he meets. His goal is to educate over one million individuals on financial literacy before his time is up on earth.

Books that changed my life:

Bible, Riches Man in Babylon, How to Win Friends & Influence People, Sell or Be Sold, and Skills with People

Songs that inspired me:

Champion by Carrie Underwood, Believer by Imagine Dragons, It's My Life by Bon Jovi, Moment 4 Life by Nicki Minaj, and Lose Yourself by Eminem

My Hero:

My children are my heroes

Quote I live by:

"For Things to Change, You Have to Change"
& "Success is nothing more than a few simple disciplines practiced every day." –Jim Rohn



Brigitta Hoeflerle

“Smiles Influence the world and create a positive frequency.”

A CHILD'S SMILE IS NATURAL... ENCOURAGE AND PRESERVE IT FOR THE SAKE OF HUMANITY

BY BRIGITTA HOEFERLE

Grew up in a 600 people village near Stuttgart, Germany. Beautiful vineyards all around the village. I couldn't get the hell outta there quick enough. I was horribly overweight, wore thick glasses, friends were not really existent. My mother - to this day - has never told me she loved me, my oldest sister asked my mother: “What's wrong with her?” Yeah, I've always been “different”.

At 17 I started exercising, got cool glasses, develop my own style.

Moved to Stuttgart when I was 20, spent 2 semesters in the states as an exchange student.

I became a Travel Agent for Corporate Travel and quickly became team leader.

5 years later, I went back to school for my second degree.

Moved to Munich, Germany where I met the love of my life: Christian.

Had our first daughter in 2002, built a Montessori School in Midtown Munich.

Decided in Dec 2003 to move our business to the states. In April 2004 we moved the entire family to a small town in Tennessee. To built a Montessori School. And I did. And our second daughter was born in 2005. So I built a business with a toddler and a new born, while my husband was a journalist and started building his intercultural consulting business at the same time.

In 2012 I started focusing on tools for coaching and consulting to

make a difference in children's lives through their parents. I created a coaching program for parents. That took off quickly.

Became a NLP Trainer, was scouted by the largest self-development company in the world and became their fast tracked female trainer.

In 2016 I sold shares of my school and exited the daily operations of that business to move to Atlanta and focus more on the coaching and training side of my business.

Today, I am more passionate about life than ever before. The work I do in teaching how to listen and to decode what one truly hears is a very rewarding and wonderful work.

Our daughters turned out to be wonderful, independent, fun and loving teenagers with a TON of common sense (which I cant say about many teenagers...).

I was the kid that wasn't "heard". I felt like no-one understood me. I hated school, my teachers, my fellow students. I hated myself.

I was able to turn my life around and I swore to myself, that I will make life better for kids. And a big part of making a kids life better: help the adults to be able to relate to the child/teenager/adolescent, by seeking to understand and not as soooo many adults command from children: seek to be understood.

Kids are fine by nature, the adults are the ones screwing them up. So let's assist the adults for the sake of the children!

I am tenacious. I didn't have a plan B when I immigrated to the US. I created a structured, precise, logical, exciting business plan that would make a big difference in the community that I moved to. I built a school. There was no "back door" to "slip out". I do whatever it takes. And it shows in my results in my personal life and business life AND in the life of my clients.

ABOUT BRIGITTA HOEFERLE

PRECISION MEETS CHARISMA

Disruptive & positive by design • Tenacious & strategic by default •
Thought provoking & fun by nature

Brigitta, the owner and founder of The Hoeflerle Group and creator of the 4-Dimensional Communication Diamond™ is known as the fast-ed-tracked female trainer and retired lead coach of the world's largest self-development company. She was born and raised in Germany and resides in the U.S. with her two wonderfully independent daughters, and her husband, the renowned Culture Guy.

Brigitta is an award-winning founder of a German Language School and the Montessori School of Cleveland. Brigitta has always given credit for her success to her unique communication and listening skills, her tenacity and her never-ending desire to take something from good to

outrageously great. Today she is the co-owner of the NLP Center of Atlanta, a certified and licensed trainer with BANKCODE™, and she has built coaching programs for large international organizations.

Brigitta holds two degrees in marketing and social pedagogy and implements her knowledge with creativity and passion into her workshops, trainings, and teachings. Because she is aware that all business problems are personal problems, she has very structured solutions as she teaches in an interactive and inclusive way (providing deeper and accelerated learning).

Let her take your sale-ability to buy-ability, because everyone wants to buy or buy-in, and no-one wants to be sold — no matter if it's a product, a service, an idea, or an opinion. Be prepared to be blown away!

German Immigrant living the American dream.



Paul Hoffman

“When we smile, we conquer doubt, fear, sadness and worry.”

BE THE SMILE YOU WANT TO SEE

BY PAUL HOFFMAN

Have you ever thought to yourself, what does a smile mean and why a smile has such healing and beautiful energy. How many times have you looked at a smiling face and immediately you return the smile... how many times have you looked in the mirror and smiled back at who you see. So I invite why I you to “Be THE SMILE YOU Want To See.”

A smile can turn a cloudy day into a ray of sunshine, a challenging moment into one that inspires you, a heartbreak into a revelation, a tender moment into a burst of love and so much more.

Yes, a smile has the power to open your heart to a plethora of awe and wonder and magical defining moments that endure forever. Sharing a smile, seeing a smile and smiling within is a recipe for more joy,

laughter, love and light in your life. If we all had more of these moments the world would be a better place for all.

Let me share a little about my journey, who I was and who I have become. I have lived a pretty extraordinary life so far. And there's so much more to come.

I have been through the dark shadows and gripping hold of drug addiction, been restrained and put into a straitjacket, spent time in a psych ward, been to 3 rehabs, and as I write this I am smiling, because I conquered those demons. And I know that without them I would not be who I am today.

I went to college on a basketball scholarship. I was Pink Floyds and Emerson Lake And Palmers tour manager at the ripe old age of 22 and 24. I was one of the top writers and producers in the world of advertising music (jingles), at the top of my game culminating in writing "Have You Driven A Ford...Lately."

I have made millions lost millions made millions. I have knocked on deaths door and for some reason I am still here. All these enlightening

experiences have put me on a path of personal discovery in everything that I do. I take nothing for granted and am eternally grateful for all the life lessons I have learned. I believe my best is still to come.

I teach the power of Rituals, Habits and Mindsets. Every day I wake up focused, determined and committed to Sculpt The Masterpiece Known As Me by staying open to learning the wisdom, insights and knowledge I get to experience on my life path, so I turn all my moments in life into defining moments that inspire and empower me to be the best version of who I am.

Here's a little secret about me...

I get to teach what I most desire to learn. No one has to live and be controlled by the fears of doubt, worry, uncertainty and limitations.

Time for another personal smile right now...I'M SMILING because I love what I do. I get to inspire and empower people to live their Ideal Life.

You are destined to live a life illuminated by the spectacular light of possibility within you. Once you believe in you, a world of opportunities

begins to show up as you ride the flow of your brilliance, genius and greatness.

Once you let go of the paralyzing energy of self-doubt, self-sabotage and negative self-worth, your frequency of extraordinariness takes over and then, a cascade of smiling energy will guide you, to always make love the language of your day.

And then you get to Sculpt The Masterpiece Known As YOU.

Something I share with everyone I meet is, "If what you dream wasn't already inside of you, how could you even dream it." For me I believe that with every thought I have a corresponding action will mirror it.

Therefore, I get to choose what my responses are to the thoughts I think and I will tell you, I always choose in my favor. I know that my internal dialogue always creates my outer reality.

We ALL have a choice...

We can either empower ourselves or get in our own way and hold

ourselves back. My passion is to set up zones of imagination in people's minds, so they are simply inspired to realize that going from impossible to possible takes just as much effort as believing you are never enough and giving up on yourself.

I see life as a kaleidoscope of awe and wonder and I desire to experience this awe and wonder in all I do and with everyone I meet. Smiles All Around!

The greatest joys I get in life are seeing someone I work with breakthrough and achieve their greatest challenges. That is a defining smiling shared moment! This excites me because I know from experience that it is very easy to fall into the trap of mediocrity, even though the grasp of being exceptional is seeking your attention. You just have to want exceptional more...

So as I reflect back on my life, a life that has been blessed with ups and downs, twists and turns, heartbreaks and highlights, desperate moments of uncertainty and challenging moments that tested my resolve,

The one thing I can share with you that is perhaps my greatest lesson...I get to determine and choose the path I want to travel so my outcomes are aligned with my highest potential. I live in the power of me and not someone else's version of me!

I have a steadfast belief in my abilities to Sculpt The Ideal Life I choose to live. So, can YOU! I choose to have more smiles than frowns, greater happiness and more love, a student and a teacher, and most of all to get out of my own way by never giving up but by always showing up!

I have learned it's never about me but rather how I show up in the world so I am a beneficial presence for all.

It's time to see challenges as opportunities, problems as invitations to reach higher ground, see your life as one of abundance rather than scarcity, believe in the gift of who you are, a gift that keeps on giving, so each day you get to say...I'm living life in my own way, because I'm getting stronger everyday no matter what.

For me, smiling brings more joy, laughter, love and light into my life.

Sometimes a smile is all it takes to Open Up A Heart. A smile says a thousand things that words could never say.

I will leave you with this simple exercise I do every day. I call it "***The Smiling Reflection.***" Take the time every day for ***5 Smiling Reflection*** moments, in the Morning, Midday, Midafternoon, before Dinner, and at Bedtime.

Stand in front of the mirror and see what reflects back at you. If it makes you SMILE, feel that energy and keep doing all the things that caused you to smile back at you.

I guarantee when you do this for the next 30 days, your inner belief system will shift and a plethora of inspired filled happiness will smile its way into your heart.

It's your time, to "Be The Smile You Want To See" and Sculpt The Masterpiece Known As YOU!

ABOUT PAUL HOFFMAN

Paul Hoffman is the Chief Inspiration and Happiness Officer of **The Success Creation INstitute** and The Personal Discovery Architect of **Sculpting Your Life**.

Paul is a leading expert developing “**Mindsets Of Success**,”™ powerful “**Success Habits**” and “**Daily Rituals**” that help anchor a new way to set up your day for success. He teaches you how to direct your mind, so you **SCULPT THE MASTERPIECE KNOWN AS YOU**.

His work has empowered and transformed hundreds of thousands of people worldwide to create more wealth, optimal health, more clarity and focus meaningful and powerful personal and business relationships. And the keys to discovering your life's purpose and passion.

Paul has shared the stage with T. Harv Eker, Jack Canfield, John Assaraf, The Dalai Lama, Brendon Burchard, JJ Virgin, Stephen R. Covey, Joe Polish, Ray Kurzweil Loral Langemeier, Cynthia Kersey, Peter Diamandis and many other thought leaders and business icons.

A few interesting sidelights about Paul: He wrote a famous advertising song...**Have You Driven A Ford ...Lately?** which is in the advertising music hall of fame...he was Pink Floyds Tour Manager...and his mother lived to the ripe young age of 104.

His passion and commitment is to help people go from the impossible to the possible and live the Ideal Life they desire and deserve!



Paul Hoyt

“A smile unites the world much like a song with a contagious beat causes the world to dance.”

MIND SEQUENCING SMILE SYSTEM

BY PAUL HOYT

No one escapes his or her childhood without a fair amount of challenges, and I am grateful that my challenges were not as great as those experienced by many of the people I have met. I was never physically abused, my parents stayed together their entire lives, and we always had a roof over our heads and food on the table. I was lucky enough to graduate college never having had a broken bone and with most of my fingers and toes. We were a classic, white-bread, middle-class, mid-American family, complete with required church attendance three times a week and corporal punishment. Mom was stressed out a lot - taking care of five kids when your husband is working all the time will do that to you.

Even so, I woke up one day when I was 19 and realized that I was stressed, angry, and anxious 98% of the time. It took me years to admit

it, and decades to understand why. I kept asking myself: “If I’m so smart, how come I’m not happy?”

The reasons I was so stressed out were confusion, cognitive dissonance, and a deep visceral fear of a vengeful, angry God. I just HAD TO figure out the meaning of life, because I felt threatened with eternal damnation if I messed up (i.e., sinned), and I was scared out of my mind that I was going to do just that.

Being angry and frightened most of the time, I had a temper, a sharp tongue, and a huge ego. I was sarcastic, cynical, and intense and not easy to be around. Subconsciously, I was certain that my stress and lack of self-control were going to cause me to be tortured for all eternity if I didn’t figure it all out.

When I realized how stressed out and anxious I was, I took up meditation, just to get some relief. In a few short years, I made great progress in relieving my stress and continued to reduce my anxiety over the next few decades. I finally got to where I had flipped those statistics completely and was only angry and stressed 2% of the time. I was a much nicer and happier person. What a great accomplishment!

But it wasn’t enough for me, and I was still incredibly frustrated on my journey. I wanted that final 2%! I didn’t want to EVER be a jerk, even just occasionally, for the rest of my life. I didn’t want to be mean to my wife and kids EVER. Fortunately, after years of slow progress and frustration, I was blessed to discover and create the components of the Mind Sequencing System, which have enabled me to now enjoy life with a Profound Sense of Wellbeing.

Now, I only get angry or upset for a few minutes a year. Really. The rest of the time, life is quite glorious!

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What I discovered was that we all have incredible Greatness within us, and that we can all learn to tap into our Higher Selves and live a very healthy and happy life. We can be peaceful, joyful, powerful, wise, and loving people. It just takes practice, and that’s why I titled my books “The Practice of Awakening”. The “why” of my journey was obvious to me: having higher consciousness, becoming enlightened, and being consumed by love is its own reward.

Now that I have made great progress on my journey and can talk about

love and kindness without reservation, I am eager to help others experience life in the way that I do.

And this is now my purpose: to do all that I can to guide and serve others and to make this world a better place.



I tried a lot of programs and systems, and they all helped a little bit. What finally made a huge difference was learning to control my thoughts in a powerful way DURING THE DAY, when I needed stress relief and elevation the most. I couldn't leave my family and job and go to a monastery for months or even years at a time, so I found a way to bring the monastery to my work environment. I developed a way to meditate while I was working.

Now I am packaging the Complete Mind Sequencing System and making it available to others who, just like me, find that twice-a-day meditations and an occasional weekend retreat just aren't enough. There are five components to the system, as follows:

- Mind Sequencing Tactical Meditations
- Daily Self-reflections
- Daily Progress Tracking
- Life Analysis
- Gathering and Sharing Wisdom

ABOUT PAUL HOYT

Paul Hoyt, the creator of the Mind Sequencing System, has been on a journey of personal development for over 50 years. After years of slow progress and frustration, he was blessed to discover and create the components of the Mind Sequencing System, which have enabled him to enjoy life with a Profound Sense of Wellbeing.

Paul is the author of three inspirational works, with more to come: Remember- A Simple and Gentle Pathway to Spirit (2005), The Practice of Awakening – 150 Ways to Raise Your Consciousness Whenever You Choose (2010), and The Practice of Awakening II – The First Light of Joy, an Amazon best-seller (2013).

Now, he is focusing his attention on the most important work of his life, helping others discover, remember, embrace, and become their own best selves, through use of the Mind Sequencing System.

For free training, go to [www. MindSequencing.com](http://www.MindSequencing.com).



Dr. Freeman A. Hrabowski, III, President of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)

My mother, encouraging me to smile more, often said, "Son, smile, and most people will smile back at you." The older I get, the more I have realized the wisdom in her words.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING HOPE ALIVE

BY DR. FREEMAN A. HRABOWSKI, III

Note: The following is adapted from "The Role of Youth in the Civil Rights Movement: Reflections on Birmingham," an article Dr. Hrabowski wrote for *African Americans and Civil Rights: A Reappraisal* (The Association for the Study of Afro-American Life & History, Inc., Associated Publishers, Inc., Washington, D.C., 1996.)

My background is that of a middle-class child growing up in the 1950s and '60s in Birmingham, Alabama, at the time of the Civil Rights Movement. My childhood perceptions of the Movement have lived with me through the years, and I continue to think about the role played by the children of Birmingham, who, like children in other localities, were trained to lead marches and to know how to respond

to the police. Certain childhood memories remain vivid — from the uplifting spirituals we continue to hear in our heads over and over to the terror of the police dogs and fire hoses.

It is important to think about the communities in which the struggles of the Civil Rights Movement occurred, including especially the values that guided those communities. In the large African American community in Birmingham, as in other cities and towns, adults served as parents to both their own and other children, and children felt accountable to all adults. Also, churches were central in our lives. While churches, schools, and neighborhoods made us feel special, the larger, outside world, which was White, told us in many ways that we were second-class citizens.

I first perceived this message as a five-year-old child in 1955, when Rosa Parks stoically refused to yield her seat to a White person on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. On a personal level, the message was reinforced during that same period. I remember once opening a textbook and realizing that the book had already been used by students in a White school. I asked my teacher why this was the case, and she replied that although the book may be secondhand, the knowledge it contained

was first-rate. Other messages reinforcing the second-class status of Blacks were inescapable — from water fountains, restaurants, and hotels labeled “Colored Only” and having to enter movie theaters through side entrances, to being forbidden to attend the “White Only” amusement park (and wondering what it would be like to ride the big ferris wheel), to seeing on television only White people portrayed as successful.

Our internal world told us that we would have to be twice as good as others in order to overcome life’s unfair obstacles. All of these messages had an immeasurable impact on the psyches of young African American children; yet, the Black community constantly worked to balance those negative messages — from constructive guidance in the home and neighborhood and moral lessons taught in the church, and constant encouragement by teachers who told us we were very special. It was in this community, during tense and often terror-filled times that gripped the nation, that I lived as a child.

As I talk about these experiences, I vividly remember that for many of the children involved in the Movement, academic work took on an added dimension. From our exposure to local leaders, like Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, and national leaders, like Dr. King and Reverend Young,

we learned that very often these leaders were knowledgeable people, and that knowledge was power! They had the ability to think clearly, speak eloquently, and act confidently. In so doing, they reinforced what our families and teachers had been telling us all our lives — that education makes the difference between success and failure. In the process, many of us became more committed than ever to becoming the best, so that one day we would be successful competing against all kinds of children, proudly representing ourselves, our families, and our race.

The Movement, its leaders, and our parents also taught us a great deal about values — what's right and wrong. We learned about the importance of teamwork from the many, many hours we spent in meetings with adults and other young people, talking about the challenges we faced and trying to understand the strategies and legal issues involved. I remember that my childhood friends and I talked with our parents about whether we would be allowed to participate in marches and the likely implications of doing so. I also recall hearing the rumors that teachers and other workers (like my mother and father) would lose their jobs if they marched. We witnessed the courage of fellow students and our families, and we took part in the Alabama Christian Movement's evening meetings where we learned how spiritual music — from I Ain't

Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around to Woke Up This Morning with My Mind Set on Freedom — can fortify a people and give them a vehicle for expressing their aspirations and strong belief in lofty goals.

My memories of Birmingham in 1963 are vivid, indeed. As a ninth-grade student, I listened to adults seriously questioning the idea of asking children to march as a tactic in the struggle for civil rights. What became increasingly clear to the Black community in Birmingham, as events began to unfold and media coverage increased, was the significant role that the Movement would play in our lives. From my perspective, it was exhilarating to march for such a worthy cause, but frightening to encounter menacing police dogs and to spend time in jail with other children that spring. We believed, however, that we were very much a part of the Movement, and it was cathartic to learn that we could be agents of change. This realization was especially meaningful for me, because I was allowed not only to participate in the Birmingham marches, but to lead a group of kids to City Hall. Such an experience told me that our voices — the voices of the young — were significant, and that young people could think and act responsibly, and that our actions could change the course of history and the world. Our experiences broadened our hopes and aspirations, and they helped us

understand fully that not only did we have the right to sit at lunch counters or enter buildings through the front door, but that we had the responsibility to claim those rights as Americans. We learned, first-hand, the value of citizen participation.

Today, the critical question — besides asking what have we learned from our experiences in the Civil Rights Movement — is what are the similarities and differences between the 1960s and today? Several thoughts come to mind. Most important, this nation has made enormous progress in expanding opportunities for all of its citizens. One clear outcome of the Movement is that large numbers of African Americans have been able to gain a college education, and more, at all types of colleges and universities throughout this nation. In addition, we have increased substantially the number of Black elected officials at all levels, and the numbers of Black professionals, in general, from doctors and lawyers to accountants and business people. Certainly, people with the financial means can now eat in any restaurant or attend any university (if they have the necessary academic credentials).

As I talk to young people about my experiences in the 1960s, I am often struck by how hard it is for them to understand the meaning of

not being able to drink from a public water fountain or use a public restroom, having to enter the side door of a restaurant, or being forbidden from attending a school, simply because of the color of one's skin. A significant lesson from studying this period is how important it is for young people both to evaluate their life circumstances and to know that they are not simply victims of those circumstances. They can change their own lives, and, equally important, can have a positive impact on the lives of others. Most important, they must believe that they can determine their own destinies and that education is as critical to their success today as it was in the 1960s.

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I've always loved math, and I've always bringing excitement to the subject and showing students connections between math and life. That same enjoyment has led me to enjoy teaching and learning, and seeing students and colleagues grow. Perhaps it is in the educational environment that we as human beings talk most frequently about human growth and development. I do what I do so that others can enjoy the excitement that comes from learning.



People of all ages can sense authenticity. When people sense that a teacher or leader is acting or speaking from the heart, they can tell and will listen more closely to what that teacher or leader says. Most important, we teach through our actions far more than we do through our words. For me, learning new things, from French to the use of technology, will never stop. My students can tell that I love learning, and they get the point that we should never stop asking questions and daring to know.

ABOUT DR. FREEMAN A. HRABOWSKI, III

Dr. Freeman A. Hrabowski, President of UMBC since 1992, is a consultant on science and math education to national agencies, universities, and school systems. He leads a university that has been recognized as a model for inclusive excellence by such publications as U.S. News, which for more than a decade has recognized UMBC as a national leader in academic innovation and undergraduate teaching. In 2012, he was named one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World by TIME, and more recently he received the American Council on Education's Lifetime Achievement Award (2018) and the University of California, Berkeley's Clark Kerr Award (2019). His most recent book, *The Empowered University*, examines how university communities support academic success by cultivating an empowering institutional culture.

Books that Changed My Life:

Up from Slavery by Booker T. Washington; The Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison; Native Son by Richard Wright, Vanity Fair by William Makepeace Thackeray; and Bleak House by Charles Dickens

Movies that Inspire You:

While I'm not a big movie goer, I'm always inspired by performances of *Hamlet*.

Song that Inspires You:

"Smile" by Natalie Cole and Nat King Cole

Your Hero:

My maternal grandmother, and also my parents

Quote You Live By:

"Of those to whom much is given,
much is expected."



Merrie Hudson, Christmas Baby, Author, Speaker, Founder of “The Women, Fully Engaged with Life Community” and “The Gathering”

“Next to raising a family, owning my own business has been the most exhilarating and creative challenge of my life, and, as with many other challenges we conquer the rewards can be alarmingly beneficial to people we may never know!” – Merrie Hudson

SUCCESSFUL MOTHERS – INSPIRING, LOVING, & ENJOYING SMILES!!!

BY MERRIE HUDSON

Today I share my story, those things that I thought I'd never tell anyone. I was a 14-year old, eighth grade student in 1964. I still remember wearing the red dickie and matching skirt my mom had made me because the only clothes she could find to fit me were in the Jumbo, women's size clothing departments and not too stylish for an 8th grader. I slinked down the halls, eyes down and shoulders slumped for fear that someone would talk to me and what could I possibly reply back to them when I just couldn't look at them in the eyes?

I had a bad case of “pizza face” or acne and spent most every day swinging between surges of depression and anxiety along with feelings

of hopelessness. I was sure that I would never be free from these dark, horrifying feelings and didn't have anyone to share these feelings with.

I share my story with you not because I want your pity but to share my journey in hopes that I might share something that will spark new possibilities for your future success. Perhaps one of you might still be STUCK in your story, unable to move forward! My prayer is that you may, one day, realize the opportunities you may have to speak words of affirmation to those in your world and change their "lives of resistance" to "lives of resilience and rewards"!

So, back to my story...what else could have happened to me as an 8th grade girl, trying to discover who she was? Birth control pills! Yes! I was prescribed birth control pills and treated with radiation for my severe acne. Within the next 18 months I continued to gain more and more weight until I reached my top weight of 206, and yes, I remember it to the exact pounds! I also developed most of the negative side effects that most women experience when they are prescribed these drugs.

I had no idea what was happening to my body and to make matters worse, I was also given shots of straight horse estrogen which

maximized my hormonal symptoms. I felt horrible and spent a good deal of my time alone because of my low self esteem and lack of friends. In fact, looking back, my best friends were the stars of the old black and white TV shows, This routine went on for many years, not knowing how to get relief or how to improve my choices in life.

After years of living in self-imposed isolation, I made a few positive choices that allowed me to engage with the big, exciting world outside of my home and small, conservative town I grew up in. I spent the next two summers working as a nanny in NYC and San Francisco. These life changing opportunities opened my eyes to the possibilities of creating a new avatar for myself, as a person who would be both self-confident and possibly grateful for the difficult 21 years I had lived.

I decided to become both a student and a teacher. I finished my college degree in elementary education and jumped right into teaching to support my husband through law school. I loved teaching but the class sizes were unbelievable! I still struggled with what I came to call my "Hormone Hell" and found myself too exhausted to be available for either my husband or our two sons. I think I was one of the first

members of the “Mommie Guilt Club” and wondered if anything would come into my world to give me relief!

Two events changed everything for me:

Experience #1-Parent Teacher Conferences-I saw moms and dads who had the same exhausted energy as I had. This exhaustion, added to my own mommie-guilt I felt every day, knowing my two boys were being raised by day care. Most of the parents I met with were working at least one job and left their children at daycare everyday for others to raise. I was doing the same thing and felt sick about it! When I saw their pain I made a promise to myself that if I EVER found a way that would allow moms to work from home and REALLY BE THERE FOR THEIR CHILDREN, I would TELL THE WORLD!!!

Experience #2-A little 2nd grade boy came up to me one day and asked, “Teacher. Do we have to do this? (the assignment I had just given the class).” I automatically told him “Yes” but in my heart of hearts I reminded myself that my answer was “No”, I don’t have to do this anymore!!” From that day on I started looking for my REAL PURPOSE in life and it wasn’t long before it arrived!

Schaumburg, Illinois Raddison Hotel: Mentor for Women

Attended a Personal Development Seminar... Beautiful, stately woman was the presenter. Her backstory: fell in love with her “knight in shining armor” a med student-married him-put him through school-he opened his practice-fell in “LUST” with his receptionist, divorced his wife, who was pregnant with his child and had just been diagnosed with cancer! DEEP BREATH...

The day I heard this woman share her story, it was many years after she was left on her own. She was on the other side of disaster. She was on her own, completely! Luckily her baby was born and had become a cancer survivor. However, she kept waking up single, overwhelmed and with no way to support herself. What next??? She had some big choices to make.

One morning mom and baby headed for the library and plopped down on the floor in the personal development section. She started from scratch to rebuild her life and read everything she could find about how to become a great mother and then a teacher of the personal development principles she was learning about. She found her purpose in life and became a “*Mentor for Women*”. I had never heard that term before. She wanted to help women avoid the debilitating choices she had made in her life.

As soon as she shared her last insight with the class it was as though the heavens opened and MY PURPOSE was delivered from ON HIGH! I, too, was called to be something I had never heard of before, "A MENTOR FOR WOMEN"! Finally I saw a purpose for my suffering. I now had a reason to show up in the world, to share my voice of experience and possibility for women, especially moms, exhausted, hopeless moms! My vision then expanded to wanting to bring parents home, where they could make impressive incomes, teach their children how to do the same and create wonderful memories together!

Desire: What did I want to accomplish?

Now for the opportunity/vehicle that would support my message, a pre-packaged business and the technology that would allow parents to work from home or wherever they are in the world so that they can really "BE THERE" for their children!

This opportunity/vehicle would need to have the following benefits:

1. An Innovative Business Model which would work similar to

- the way a Real Estate Broker makes money-earning a percentage of the money brought into the brokerage firm
2. The highest quality Health and Wellness products available-free from petro-chemicals, etc.
 3. Proven, On-line Business Systems-including Digital delivery of training and support
 4. Several income-producing options including car allowance, unlimited income potential, recognition trips, Bonuses, etc.
 5. Equal money-making potential for all, regardless of when they open their business
 6. Work as an Independent Contractor-qualifying for generous tax reducing benefits

EXTERNAL: What external struggle were you dealing with?

In 1993, I found a business model with all of the benefits I described above. I was "over the Moon" with joy and success. Because this model is based on working with independent contractors, it felt like I was pushing a "Volunteer Army" of sorts, which caused a few problems along my business ownership journey (as in the Real Estate Broker

example). When the Independent Contractor does well, financially, so does the Business Owner. Well, the opposite is also true!

I moved very quickly to the first level of leadership (even earning a Hawaiian Dream Trip of a Lifetime for 10 people. Soon I had jumped quickly from the second level to the third level of leadership, Regional Vice President-which comes with a car allowance for a white Mercedes Benz. I was on a roll and loved helping the many mothers who had eagerly joined my team.

I had just promoted to Regional Vice President which qualified me to receive a car allowance for a white Mercedes Benz. The company president attended my car celebration and helped me recognize my team leaders. It was exciting to experience the financial benefits of working for a company I loved with products that had changed my life, was loving my income and my celebrity status in the company when everything evaporated, at least in that part of my business.

Life and business are sometimes unpredictable! Soon, one of the super-hero business-builders in my sales organization decided to quit and move to another country to help open another company.

Because she had a team of non-English speaking business partners, the results of her leaving my team were devastating because they left too! That meant that their monthly qualifying volume would disappear and so would my car allowance! My car allowance would now be my responsibility.

My husband was in law school and unable to help with this new financial burden. It was up to me to make the payment. I had to go back to work, full-time to pay our bills! This time I still had huge classes but now I was assigned to teach in the revamped storage room in the basement of the school. With no windows and no clock I never knew what time it was or which season was happening outside! Everyday I would wonder if I could beat the odds, just one more day of 50 students -to one teacher-ME! No wonder I was exhausted and a bit rebellious! I wanted to be home, with my little boys!

The GOOD NEWS in this story is that even though I had to go back to work to make our bills...I DIDN'T have to keep teaching this wiggly little kids, I COULD GO BACK TO WORK, THE WORK I LOVED, HELPING MOMS COME HOME! I could REBUILD MY PERSONAL BUSINESS! I COULD RECLAIM MY INCOME! I COULD MAKE

OUR FAMILIES DREAMS COME TRUE! I COULD HELP OTHER FAMILIES TO REALIZE THEIR DREAMS! AND GUESS WHAT? THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I DID!

Within a little less than a year I regained my title of Regional Vice President. I was asked to represent my company in Venezuela and earned the trip of a lifetime to Paris. My life has never been the same.

INTERNAL: What INTERNAL struggle were you struggling with?

Bitter about my discouraging childhood and health issues, many of which have stayed with me most of my life, I became a full-blown victim and stayed stuck for years. At one point I completely quit working, helping my business consultants to succeed or trying to do anything except getting myself up in the morning and washing my face! Living with depression and the feeling that no matter what I tried, I would eventually fail at it, kept me isolated in my home for years, more years than I would dare share with you!

Can you relate? Are you stuck in your story? What are YOU doing to dull the pain of living your same life over and over in your own "Groundhog Day" sequel?

Lucky for me, and perhaps you as well, my story has evolved and thousands of other lives have too! I'm excited to be able to share the Bright Light of my journey and will do so shortly.

MY Wall: What wall or problem did you hit within your current opportunity to start you on this new journey?

Before we get there let me share with you what I call "MY WALL"! Many years ago, after I had decided to put my "KEY" into the ignition of "Merrie's Mercedes" (the business of my dreams), I had what was a spirit-crushing series of events that put me into a tailspin of emotional pain that would keep me showing up small and scared.

I had the opportunity early in my business development days to bring in a dynamo consultant who quickly moved to the top of the company. As her sponsor I was able to benefit financially from her successes. A

couple of caddy consultants who stood to sweeten their bottom line if I were out of the picture, started spreading rumors that I didn't deserve my fantastic income and that I shouldn't have been the one to bring her into my organization.

Both of these claims are false but somehow my heart was shattered and I took their claims in as those they were true.. My confidence completely cracked but my competence was intact so I went to work like a crazy girl to prove that their allegations were wrong and I was perfect, not a loser!

I traveled near and far, lugging display booths on planes searching everywhere for my next super-star. What did I get? Adrenal fatigue! It started in my head then quickly went to my heart. I guess I believed that all I had worked for would blow up, a return to the same thoughts I had earlier in my life. I came home, broken and despondent and chose to believe that my only way to feel better was to continue to take the prescription drugs the doctor ordered, so long ago.

My spirit and body were both broken and after years of being wracked with guilt and shame, I again, had decisions to make. With God's help and many mini-miracles, I gradually started looking for classes,

resources, positive belief-developing training, I thought maybe I could start supporting local women business owners and 'Phoenix' began rising in me and the REAL me slowly came back to life!

I joined Toastmasters, an International speaking club, and met a wonderful soulmate, Susan Glenn. We have been soulmates for years now. We were both born with dreams that defy destiny. We have a passion for helping women to GATHER, to REACH THEIR PASSION, and to MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE! Together we dreamed up a wonderful experience for the women of our community. We called it "The Gathering" and it was wonderful! We met every week for 2 hours and studied personal and business development. We hosted "Getting to Know You" celebrations in our member's businesses and best of all we LOVED ON OUR WOMEN AND THEY LOVED ON US! It doesn't get better than this!!! I love you Susan. I know we were meant to be sisters!

I joined CEO SPACE, an International Entrepreneurial Club and started living into my *REAL* reality. The business professionals, who served and taught the hundreds of members the joys of COOPERATIVE CAPITALISM, AND EVERYTHING BUSINESS, were a true gift. In fact, giving of ourselves was one of the tenants of the exceptional

experiences that the founder of CEO SPACE, Bernie Dohrman, taught us. Wonderful friends, like Ken Rochan, still show up in my life to support me in unexpected ways. Thank you!

3 KEY ELEMENTS-Founded by Kirk Duncan, a man without a plan, shared and taught, often with great emotion, how he had completely transformed his life, his family's life and thousands, and thousands of other families, with the simple skills involved in learning how to use our bodies to positively change our lives. I attended many, many hours of his powerful training, got certified in his methods and went on to teach Body Language skills to others. Kirk loves people so much, and has seen such powerful changes in his students that he offers many of his training for free. He also is very generous in his coaching of his students as they become life-givers to their own students. Thank you Kirk.

As I started to see that I had a VOICE and that my passion and mission was to use that VOICE to help others, I got the courage to re-engage, again in my business, actively and I went on to promote to the highest level of Leadership in my company, National Vice President. In fact, I achieved a double-promotion, Executive National Vice President, because of the fact that the woman with the eczema skin problems, who joined many

years before, I was promoted to National Vice President, before I was promoted. She has gone on to be one of the very top producers in the company, making a wonderful impact, a wonderful income and being able to have 3 great kids and raising them from home. What an impact she has made around the world, for well over 20 years. I am so grateful to have helped to give her a step up in the world! Congratulations Dana!!!

Epiphany: What was the epiphany you experienced and the new opportunity you discovered?

What in the world could I learn from these experiences? What was the purpose for these painful interactions with myself and others? The answer to these questions came from a simple and striking grasp of reality, an illuminating realization that I would be sharing these experiences, one day, with people who might still be drowning in their "puddle of pain".

As a part of my Purpose I would be using my voice of experience and courage as a sure and steady "chain" hooked to these "sinking souls" to pull them to safety. If I hadn't gone through and survived my own challenges I would never be strong enough to pull anyone to safety. Because

my story was transformed, many other stories have been transformed too. Looking back at my journey I am grateful for the pain, the examples, the resources, and the opportunities that came because of my “painful puddles”!

Please take a minute and look at your car, your clothes, your body, your job. What are you choosing today? When you're asleep at the wheel it doesn't matter what you choose, you're “driving blind” and you could drive off a cliff at any moment. Are you open to suddenly feeling like you finally understand your “Wailing Wall”? Are you suddenly becoming conscious of something you never knew before?

Epiphany

Another epiphany I experienced along my journey was when I realized that I am the ‘Boss of Me’. Not only am I an independent contractor but I am responsible to create my life, using my God-given gifts. Once I chose to take charge of my business, after things fell apart for a short time, I knew I would and could rebuild my belief and my business again but THIS time I would use the BEST in technology to turbo-charge my re-entry into winning, not whining! I would release my resistance to standing up for myself and I would rebuild my business

empire once again! This time I would bring a team of dynamic women along with me. I would create a new opportunity that would make a huge difference for families around the world! I developed a new mantra, one that inspires me still, “My name is Merrie Hudson and I am committed to BRINGING PARENTS HOME!

Plan: What plan did you create to achieve your desire?

My plan is to create a new home based business model called “Positive Parent Power Network”. Membership in these collaborative parenting resources, parents will collaborate with other parents locally and worldwide. One of the main focuses for these will be on learning and implementing proven and innovative ways to make significant incomes while positively influencing their children's lives at home. As members of the “Positive Parent Power Network”, parents will work together in PowerPODS that will allow them to discover and connect with their God-given gifts and to make their DREAM LIVES a reality for themselves and their families!

This unique PowerPOD collaborative approach to business is created for my BIGVISION TRIBE of TRANSFORMERS.

Conflict: What conflict did you experience along the way?

My BIG Vision for using technology to automate my selling System wasn't available when I began creating my new BIGVision Community. Many of the critical pieces were just coming online, for example: email providers, CMS (Contact Management Software) and Websites, etc. The financial investment to pay for each separate piece was not within reach of most small business owners.

I spent thousands of dollars on coaches, classes and software to try to build these systems on my own, without success. I discovered that working as a "Lone Ranger" kept me small, inefficient and unproductive but at least I was learning the essential pieces my System would require and I recognized them as they became available later.

Achievement: What was the end result you achieved?

One morning as I was searching online I discovered a new and powerful delivery, business platform that changed everything for me! As things turned out, it is becoming what just about *every* business owner has been

looking for, a one-stop-shop that automates the entire selling Process! Slowly, but surely, other service providers that only offer one piece of the "business automation pie" are seeing a new and innovative "Perfect Storm" brewing worldwide. I predict that this storm will change the face of both BIG and SMALL businesses in powerful ways! As the owner and as the owner of my business is one that is thrilled to death with the potential for

Transformation: What transformation did you experience?

In the middle of the COVID 19 Pandemic...My dream is coming true! My dear husband, Randy and I have just started a new business with SAS Glorious Affiliate Program (which works beautifully with the dynamic New Marketing Super-Power SEO Marketing tool-GROOVE FUNNELS)

Come and build with us!

Wish us Luck!

Merrie Hudson

ABOUT MERRIE HUDSON

How Did I Change From Being a Very Chubby, Depressed Teenager to Promoting to an Exec. National Vice President?

Merrie is an Independent Consultant and the CEO of her Arbonne International Team for 28 years. She is currently an Executive Area Manager and has been honored as an Arbonne Visionary, Member of the Arbonne Million Dollar Club, Top Sales and Sponsoring Superstar, One of the Top 100 National Vice Presidents and is consistently one of the Top Income Earners in the International Network Marketing Industry with Arbonne.

Books That Changed My Life:

Start with Why"-Simon Sinek
"Think and Grow Rich" -Napoleon Hill
The Book of Mormon"

Movies That Inspired Me:

"Gone With the Wind"
"Yentl"

Song That Inspire Me:

"Just a Piece of Sky "(Yentl)
"Don't Rain on My Parade" Barbara Streisand

Your Hero:

My Heavenly Father

Quote You Live By:

"The time for planning and calculating is over, dear friend. The time for taking aggressive action is now. If you don't have your armor ready, too bad! You will be thrust onto the battlefield with the rest of the troops, even if you're in your underwear. The more you try to delay that which you know is inevitable, the more difficult a time you will have. Bite the bullet and charge full speed ahead with whatever armor you've got!" – Unknown



Belinda Fraley Huesman

“Do something special for someone today: just give them a smile and you will be amazed at how much of a difference it makes.”

RISE AND SMILE!

BY BELINDA FRALEY HUESMAN

A smile always mattered to me. My dad woke each morning with a perpetual smile and a song eager to start his day. My mom had a beautiful smile and was very strict when it came to dental hygiene. I still remember the blue tablets our teachers gave out to detect cavities in elementary school. When it was time to get braces, my mom and dad divorced, we relocated, and money was tight. Add to it that I had a slightly bigger nose that did not fit my face, I sometimes felt like the ugly duckling compared to my twin sister. It would be forty-five years until I finally was fitted for Invisalign and now confident in my smile. In the past ten years, I knew I would be preparing myself to launch my brand, “The Menopause Outlaws®.” An emerging entrepreneurial enterprise to transform the perception of Menopause, one wise woman at a time. Elevating the ART of living well through Wisdom, Words, Music, and Style. Believing, “Passion illuminates the path experience has yet to walk.” This original path is a step out in faith but not a new

one. This path was always there, and so were my talents; I did not fully own them until now. Still, I wanted to look and feel my best when I did!

We were raised in a quaint place called Brooklyn, Maryland, an annexed city of Baltimore and lived in a modest row home on the corner. Within walking distance, our school, the library, a corner store, a firehouse, and a large park with a big hill, you could sleigh ride down overlooking the city lights of Baltimore. `My mom raised us, while Dad worked very hard in his own business to support his two children from a previous marriage, a son from my mom's, their two twins and his baby boy who was the apple of his eye. Mom stayed at home, did the books for the business, and raised us. She was a beautiful woman who I miss dearly but one who put her dreams away with the clothes she folded each day. Only upon her death bed did I learn of her true aspirations as a writer with many poems, a half-written book to which no one even knew. The wisdom she passed on in her last days were words that have spurred me to embark on my next chapter. She said, "Don't get my age and have a wish list of things you wish you didn't do, just try, even if you fail it won't be because you didn't try." She died at the tender age of 54 with her song unsung. I took those words to heart. However, it would take me 25 years to put them into action.

From a young child, I did great in school, but somewhere in high school, I started thinking that beauty was far better than brains. I graduated, National Honor Society, but college was not a path I stayed on. I idolized my father, who was seldom around and remembered like it was yesterday, craving his attention. Thirty- five years ago, the order of business for women in my family was to get married, have children, and, if possible, stay at home and raise them. I married someone very much like my father, and that is what I did. My Prince Charming worked at UPS of all places, which was my very first job, and he was nine years my senior. I married at the tender age of twenty-one, had two sons, and relocated to Dallas for ten years. It was then I put every dream on the shelf like my mom. However, the little girl I left behind was relentless, knocking so hard, and I could no longer ignore her. I sprouted my wings, became a Mary Kay consultant so I could be flexible with a work schedule, and traveled back and forth to Nashville to learn the craft of songwriting. I even got up the nerve to sing at a publisher showcase in Dallas and later at the Mesquite Opry. At this point, it was apparent that my spouse and I were moving in opposite directions, and we separated; I left with my boys, credit cards, \$300.00, and a tank of gas. I moved to Baltimore for a year and then returned because my boys were unhappy. Then after moving back, it was clear

that it would not work, I walked out within six months for good.

A custody battle ensued for almost five years, with only 15k to my name eaten up by legal fees to prove I was a fit mother, I felt more like a damsel in distress. Our children suffered through our mistakes. Nothing is fair in love and war, and the saying that children are resilient is a crock. Divorce, separation, and relocation are like a tornado that rips up a child's life, and all the stability they ever had is gone. Expecting children not to miss a beat after that is short of a miracle. I can say for both sons and myself; it took years to find the stable ground again. The inspiration to become the Hero of My Own Story (a coming out song I wrote) was from years of writing inspirational lyrics, first to myself. I also eventually met a man who instilled my faith in men and the love of my life. However, there was still a little girl knocking.

When I first heard the term Menopause Outlaws, I knew it was about me. It was me. I was in my 50's embarking on a new path, and with the support of my husband, we got a place in Nashville. I commuted from Baltimore so that I could learn from the best. The term Menopause Outlaws was eventually trademarked, then guess what? I set it on the shelf. I went back to work full time running a non-profit arts center

in Baltimore and gave up my apartment. Still, the words, Menopause Outlaws, hovered like an ominous cloud of possibility. Calling me, the little girl I left behind, the one who knew what she wanted to be at the age of eleven after purchasing her first Carol King album with her allowance. She was a singer-songwriter. I finally connected with her and realized that every song I had written were words of inspiration and tidbits of wisdom to rescue me. I loved to sing and listened to lyrics intently and mined for gold. The inspiration I needed was always within. Those two words were my becoming. An outlaw in her golden years knowing full well that wisdom's dew is a gift and is what youth is to the 20-year-old. In becoming and owning my talents, the responsibility to sing and tell my story is the way to honor this calling truly, to bring forth my other gift; Encouragement. To permit women to shine as well, and smile because hope is a beautiful place to dwell. And passion is something that is not mysterious; Passion gives us energy; what excites us. When I finally took to the stage to sing my songs and honor my talents, I had so much feedback from women and men. I knew the storytelling through my songs connected with others. It is also my life and my testimony as well to say; I'm still standing, still smiling. This Menopause Outlaw wants every woman to believe we all have a hero inside; we can rise. It is never too late to start something new

DR. KEN 'DR. SMILEY' ROCHON, JR.

and, perhaps, in doing so, find the girl we left behind. "Just Because," my anew song soon to be launched. Transforming the perception of Menopause one WISE woman at a time is not a feat for the weak. Empowering women to find their voice, own their talent, and live their purpose is my calling now. I hear wisdom knocking. I rise and smile at the days to come!

Visit www.menopauseoutlaws.com or www.lambelinda.com to listen to her music.



Matilda Jarmy

“When you smile, the whole world stops and stares for a while.”

THRIVING AND SMILING

BY MATILDA JARMY

There've been lots of challenges at various stages of my life, starting when I was really young. I was bullied a lot in kindergarten and first grade because I didn't speak English fluently.

We lived in Wisconsin, in a town where the social climate was not welcoming to outsiders. My parents had fled Hungary in 1956 to escape communism and eventually settled in Wisconsin. They did a great job of keeping their culture alive, including raising me to be bi-lingual. I was always taught to be proud of my heritage and my family. To be taunted for honoring those foundational elements of my life was jarring, to say the least.

The kids were relentless in their teasing and taunting. Being ostracized like that at a very young age has a very deep and profound impact on a child. You can act out or go inward – I chose the latter because somehow it felt safer.

Those early experiences were extremely painful and isolating, but it basically taught me to rely on myself. It taught me that holding onto my values, my truth, regardless of peer pressure, was powerful. I didn't have the words at the time, but what I felt in those moments was an inkling of the attitude and strength that would become my lifeline during life's ups and downs as I grew into adulthood.

What I felt was a refusal to give in, a refusal to be broken and a refusal to give up. Ironically, I also felt optimistic that circumstances would get better.

Never give up is one of the themes that's been woven into the tapestry of my life. It shows up time and again, in one form or another. Don't get me wrong, there have been plenty of times when a life circumstance has deeply shaken my confidence and brought me to my knees. In those times, I've been very fortunate to have amazing friends who rallied around me, supported me, nurtured me and encouraged me to keep going.

Never giving up, aka persistence, is incredibly powerful. It's also a double-edged sword. Used wisely, it's a great tool to have when you must

push through obstacles, solve a complex problem or laser focus until a project is finished. Persistence without wisdom is not always a positive thing. In fact it can be downright painful. It can keep you in situations, both social and professional, that no longer deserve your attention or presence. Those were hard-won lessons and stories for another time.

However, one of the gems from all these experiences is the strength I developed from continually being challenged in one way or another. The beautiful thing about strength is, the more you use it and rely on it, the stronger it grows.

While my early childhood experiences planted the seeds of persistence and personal strength, it took several decades to realize that my natural gifts are expressed through process-based work. Processes are simply a sequence of steps or actions that you execute to achieve a goal. I spent many years in project management roles in a variety of industries. That career taught me how to organize large initiatives, break them down into manageable chunks and juggle multiple pieces of a project. It was great to work, but somehow I knew that it wasn't the best fit for me. Looking back, I appreciate everything I learned and see that it was a deeply valuable training ground.

My true passion, though, is in-process work. The combination of persistence, strength and process-focused thinking makes consulting and mentoring entrepreneurs a natural fit for me. I coach my clients through the challenges and obstacles they come across and show them that becoming more productive, effective and successful is within their reach.

I really love using skills that come easily to me, to make significant impacts in someone else's life. My consulting clients are thriving and smiling as we work together to expand their skills and support their growth.

A recent example of how I impact people involves a current client. This person was getting down on themselves for not being able to communicate their vision to their staff as well as sluggish sales over the past few months. As we discussed his concerns, it became obvious that he needed more structure around his proposal process.

We created the plan and discussed it one more time. I texted him a few days later, to get an update. He had surpassed his prior month's revenue in 3 days!! He went from not knowing how to move forward,

to absolutely crushing his short-term goals. He proudly told me that the proposal process was here to stay. After all, he had booked over \$20,000 in new business in a few short days, simply by making a few small tweaks.

It is always such a rush to make an impact on someone's life and watch a happy smile light up their beautiful face!

ABOUT MATILDA JARMY

Her passion is to teach you how to effectively use your time, build systems to streamline your operations and help you nurture your leads and clients using marketing automation.

She built a successful career as an IT Project Manager in Higher Education, Consulting, Pharmaceuticals and High Tech. Matilda has a broad range of experience, from managing software projects, streamlining operations, organizing international training sessions, to managing live events, she has a diverse range of experience and skills.

She launched her own consulting company, Optimize Your Time, to leverage her skills, engage with more fulfilling work and nurture deeper relationships with her clients.

Now she works with heart-centered, passionate entrepreneurs who want to get their message out to the world. Her clients enjoy the benefit of her technical and business expertise and her wide range of experience. They get more organized in their business and enrich their

bottom line. They fall in love with their businesses and have time for the things that matter most.



Michelle Jewsbury, Global Breakthrough Specialist and CEO/Founder of Unsilenced Voices

You have to Feel in order to Heal,
with a Smile on your face of course”

HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR LEMONS INTO LEMONADE

BY MICHELLE JEWSBURY

On a warm summer morning in August 1983, my mother, a blonde-haired blue-eyed stunner, started to feel contractions and she knew her bouncing baby girl was clamoring to break out of her womb. She walked into the kitchen and said to my dad, “she’s coming!” My dad, a witty youthful charmer with a crooked smile yelled back, “give me a minute, I need a cigarette.” A short 10+ hours later, I was brought into this world. Two years later, my brother joined our little family.

The first 7 years of my life I grew up in Northern Idaho in a small town with a population less than one city block in Los Angeles. Sandpoint, Idaho was beautiful, with evergreen trees and the fifth deepest lake in

the US with a depth of 350m and 148 sq miles wide, Lake Pend Oreille. In the summer, my family and I used to go to the lake and tie a long white rope to the back of my uncle's boat to attach tubes for us kids. The temperatures would reach a cool 101 degrees in the summer and a brisk -28 in the winter.

When I turned 7 years old, my mom ran into some trouble with the law. She had a so-called friend who had been arrested for possession of cocaine and the police gave her a choice, "tell us who your dealer is, or you won't see your children again." Tracy was an obese woman who always smelled of cigarettes and cat urine. She decided to plant a large amount of cocaine in my parents' home for the police to discover. My dad had just joined the US Army and was in bootcamp down south, so my mom was the only person home when the police found the stash.

As soon as my mom was allowed to use the phone, she called my dad, "what do we do, the cops say they will take our kids?" My dad scrambled and called all our living relatives outside of Idaho state. Before you knew it, my brother and I were whisked off to Salt Lake City, UT to live with my grandparents.

I don't really remember much during this time. I know I was extremely confused and had no idea why my brother and I couldn't see our mom or dad. I subconsciously internalized this grief, thinking it was my fault they "abandoned" us. The few times my dad called from bootcamp or my mom phoned from jail, my brother and I would cry and scream, "come get us, we miss you." We only lived with my grandparents for roughly 5 months, but it had long-term implications on both my brother and me.

After being reunited with my parents, we moved to Burlington, VT where my dad was stationed. For months, I had frequent nightmares. My mom had to cover the windows in my bedroom with dark sleeping bags in order for me to fall asleep, I couldn't have any light radiating through the glass. I eventually outgrew the bad dreams, but the constant fear of being left again was always on the forefront of my mind.

During my childhood, we moved approximately 8 times. Growing up in a military family was hard, primarily because we didn't have a "home" base. I learned quite quickly to make friends, to un-make friends, and then to make new ones. My mom taught me the most important people in my life were my family. Although my dad worked

14+ hours a day and my mom waited tables to make extra money, they were extremely supportive of whatever I wanted to do.

I remember daydreaming about becoming a princess. I'd imagine a black haired, blue-eyed boy would come rescue me from my life and take me to some far-off land filled with lilies and waterfalls. I was in love with the idea of love. I wanted a fairy tale romance.

Growing up I dated here and there, but no one really captured my heart. I stayed immersed in schoolwork, cheerleading, theatre and parties. My friends used to yell across a room filled with loud music and lights, "Michelle, do you want a shot?" I always said yes. For me, school came easy and making friends was tough. I experimented with drugs and alcohol throughout high school.

When I was 20 years old, I decided I wanted to become a movie star. I sold all of my belongings, well except for my shoes and clothes, and drove my white Ford Mustang from Post Falls, Idaho to Los Angeles, CA. I fell in love with the glitz and glam of Hollywood. I loved driving down the 101 freeway with my windows down singing Shameless by Garth Brooks, breathing the smog-filled air. I thought I was on my way to success! I

got myself an agent, started starring in plays and independent films, and even landed a few commercials. Things were going my way.

After being in Los Angeles for 2 ½ years, my dad called me, "your mom is real sick and I think you should come home for a while." My parents were stationed in Portland, OR. I heard great things about the city, so I decided to give it a try. A while turned into 5 years. In 2011 I had a choice to make. My mom was doing better, and my dad just retired from the military, so they were going to move back to Idaho. I could either go with them or go back to California. I decided to give my dream of stardom one last shot!

I gathered what personal property I wanted and packed it in my then 2008 4-door tan Saturn. I drove to the city of Angels yet again. This time, I had a different story...

Just four months after moving to Los Angeles, I met a blond-haired blue-eyed entrepreneur who swept me off my feet. Paul was very successful, handsome and captivating. He courted me by sending flowers and gifts and taking me to sporting events and concerts. He was charming with a magnetic charisma and contagious laugh. I fell in love with Paul within a few

short months. I believed he was my prince, and I was going to live my imaginary fairy tale romance. That fairy tale quickly turned into a nightmare.

The first time my head went through the drywall was 4 months into our relationship. He had become angry with me for saying something inappropriate to one of his colleagues earlier at lunch. We went back to his house where he began screaming at me, “why the f*** would you say something so stupid, Michelle?” He scolded me like a child. Paul said, “You deserve to be pushed around,” and he shoved me so hard against the wall, my head made a very large indentation.

People have asked me, “Why didn’t you leave then?” The truth is, I didn’t think I could leave. I honestly thought things were going to get better if I stuck it out. I was waiting for him to realize what he was doing and fix himself.

The aggression escalated throughout the years. I made excuses for his behavior. I actually thought I was at fault for his constant slander and abuse. The theory of the Cycle of Violence was developed by Dr. Lenore Walker. She suggests that many women who have lived through domestic violence, and professionals who study it, agree there is a sort

of “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” aspect to the man’s personality. Abusers seem to have a split personality. Many are successful on the job, handsome, well-liked, charming and kind in public. Typically, both sides are seen in the home but only the pleasant side is seen by the public.

I stayed with Paul for approximately 4 years where I endured physical violence, emotional manipulation, sexual abuse, and financial abuse. I never told anyone what I was going through while I was in it. When I finally escaped the relationship, I sat in front of my computer and started to write. I wrote about what Paul said and I wrote about all the horrible things Paul did to me. When I read it back to myself, I had an “Ah-ha” moment. I began to realize what I went through was not normal by any means and I should share my story.

My initial writing morphed into a one-person play called, But I Love Him. The play was sixty-five minutes in length, where I played approximately thirteen different characters including Paul. I debuted the play to a nearly sold-out audience at the White Fire SoloFest in Los Angeles in February 2016 and performed it later that year in the Hollywood Fringe Festival. People started to take notice and began confronting me, “thank you for sharing your story, now I know what I am involved

in,” “I went through the same thing,” and “I now have the courage to leave.” I knew I had to do even more.

In July 2017, I founded Unsilenced Voices, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization focused on inspiring change in communities around the globe by encouraging victims to break free and survivors to speak up about domestic violence and sexual assault. The mission of Unsilenced Voices is to provide shelter and relief to survivors of domestic abuse and sexual gender-based violence worldwide.

We have been operating in Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda where we are working to implement shelters, sensitization programs, legal assistance, vocational training, medical and counseling to survivors. Unsilenced Voices is actively seeking funds and partnerships to expand to the USA as well. You can find even more information about Unsilenced Voices at www.unsilencedvoices.org

In 2019 I completed and published my memoir with the same title as my play. *But I Love Him* is a painful yet inspirational true story of a strong, independent woman caught in the horrifying cycle of domestic violence and how she got out. In this book, I share the details of my

struggle with genuine honesty, taking the reader on a twisted journey of love, pain and unyielding brutality that eventually leads...to peace. Mixing statistics, research and resource with my own account (and even some humor), I show just how far someone in my situation can sink, why it happens and how they can always pick themselves back up. You can find the book on my website and at Amazon.com

Also in 2019, I began speaking publicly about my life experiences and coaching people to have tremendous breakthroughs. I openly talk about my alcohol and drug use when I was younger, instability in my youth, domestic violence, being an adult-orphan, women's empowerment, and dealing with a drug addicted family member. You can find more information about speaking appearances and personal coaching at www.michellejewsbury.com

My story is too big not to share with the world. I know how impactful speaking up can be and how many lives you can change by opening your mouth. If I can overcome, then others can as well. I am excited for the future and excited to see where God is going to take me. This is my Passion, this is my Purpose, and this is my Calling. This is how I inspire smiles and solve problems.

ABOUT MICHELLE JEWSBURY

Michelle Jewsbury is an international philanthropist, speaker, author, and coach who has traveled the world as an advocate for the less fortunate. In August 2016, Michelle focused her efforts on ending domestic violence. Her desire to help victims of domestic abuse came from personal experience in such a relationship. In July 2017, Michelle founded Unsilenced Voices, a 501(c)3 nonprofit focused on inspiring change in communities around the globe by encouraging victims to break free and survivors to speak up about domestic violence and sexual assault. She has since completed and published her personal memoir. *But I Love Him* is a painful yet inspirational true story of a strong, independent woman caught in the horrifying cycle of domestic violence and how she got out. You can receive a complimentary digital download of the introduction of the book by texting OBSTACLES to 267-86.

Recognized as a valuable resource in the speaking industry, Michelle Jewsbury is the go to professional speaker who uses her story of

survival as encouragement and motivation for others. By using reflective techniques in her presentation, Michelle creates “A-HA” moments that lead to transformation. With a confident yet calming approach, Michelle’s story makes a lasting impression on the audience and gives them the Power to Take Their Lives Back!

Book that changed my life:

I met George Chanos in 2019 at a speaking event with Powerteam International. He is the former Attorney General of Nevada, an incredible author, and one of the most intelligent men I know. In his book, *Seize Your Destiny*, he quoted Horace Mann, "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity." This book has changed how I look at the planet and how I respond to the events of this world.

Movie that inspires me:

When Kate Hudson plays Marley Corbett in the movie *A Little Bit of Heaven* and was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, I began to cry. The way she continued to look at her life and react to her situation with grace and humility has encouraged me to continue to have a positive attitude towards life's circumstances, with a smile on my face.

Song that inspires me:

While I was in my abusive relationship, I lost who I was. The song, *Apologies* by Grace Potter & The Nocturnals helped me to overcome the words Paul said to me and take my power back.

My hero:

My daddy, William Jewsbury, will forever be my hero.

Quote I live by:

Isaiah 43:18 states, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past."



Maimah Karmo

“You never get a chance to make a first impression... Just smile!”

THE FEARLESS WARRIOR

BY MAIMAH KARMO

Every version of our selves demands a new version of ourselves, much like a rebirth.

Similar to our actual spiritual selves being birthed into human form – the painful pushing, kicking, screaming, arching of our souls into a new world. As human beings, we are afraid of change. Transformation comes to us through circumstances we wouldn't call to ourselves. Transformation is often unwanted, because it requires the shedding of our identities, it requires us to question our existence and it shakes up our lives. But, in order for us to grow, we must learn to embrace change, for it is a gift.

My story began in Liberia, West Africa. One of the earliest memories of myself is of me standing and looking out the window at the rain. In Liberia, it rained in sheets, and when it did, the dry earth was drenched

and hungrily soaked up the drops of water. Physically, I felt as if I was alone, yet, I knew spiritually, that I was not. I was surrounded by angels. A part of me knew that I was in the world, but not of it. I had an otherworldly knowingness that I was birthed into this human child body, but was not of it, and in that place, I lived, but never felt that I belonged.

When I was eight years old, I had a dream. In my dream, I was having a conversation with God; and he told me that my life would have challenges, but no matter what, He would always be with me. I knew then, that my life would never be ordinary. I awakened from that dream a silent warrior. I knew that whatever happened in life, I would be someone who changed others' lives, minds, hearts and directed others to the paths of their souls. I would be a quiet catalyst.

Within months of having that dream, Liberia broke out in war. The year was 1980. My family fled then, and returned after the war. We fled two more times. The third time, we never returned, as all of our belongings were stolen, ravaged and destroyed.

At a young age, I learned the meaning of life, sacrifice, conversation with God, heart and soul over material things and I knew that my

human body was just the shell that housed the mission, ministry and mastery of soul purpose that was before me. I didn't know what to expect, but I knew that God would lead my way. I saw myself as a fearless warrior, with a crown of hearts, a heart laced with courage, my hips girded by faith and strength, my feet wrapped in discernment, my body cloaked with protection, and my sword was love. This image of myself would serve me well over and over again. I had no idea what was yet to come.

On February 28, 2006, at 4:45 p.m., I was diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer. The trajectory of my life changed. The next eleven years was spent working to create change in the lives of others – being a catalyst and a warrior. Besides the birth of my daughter, no other experience had transformed my life in such a powerful way – one experience was the birthing of life through me – God breathing into a new creation, that manifested through my body. The other experience was looking death in the face and having everything I knew of my life, all at once fall apart, yet become crystal clear.

After being diagnosed with breast cancer, I thought that my transformation was complete. However, it was only the beginning. The

Universe calls upon us over and over to evolve. I was taking baby steps, but situations would pop up that would nearly break me - life would push me over and over again to pull myself up off the floor and dig into myself, calling out that inner warrior to get me through.

In 2013, I got an email from a friend's sister. Michael had committed suicide. He had hung himself. I fell to the floor. He had been one of the most brilliant, successful people I knew. He mentored kids, he helped others, he was funny as all get out. Yet, he lived with depression, and his inner voice would constantly judge, criticize, eviscerate, and create situations that were not there, spinning him into a downward cycle, that left him hanging from a rope in his apartment. Again, I found myself broken into pieces. The hurt was too much. I loved Michael so deeply. My heart was shattered. For weeks, I cried. I was inconsolable. I assumed personal responsibility – none of it was my fault, but I wondered what I could have done, by showing up more, by pushing myself to be braver in my soul work, that may have possibly helped him. Months passed and I couldn't seem to get my life back together. I lived in a fog. The tears constantly poured out from me. A good friend recommended that I go to a retreat. On the way there, I got totally lost. My car GPS wasn't working and then my phone and ipad died. I was

stuck on a one-lane road in a rural area, with no idea of where to go. I pulled over, and called to God and my angels out loud, "please help me get to where I need to go". Then, I got back on the road. I would rely on my inner compass to get me through this. Out of nowhere appeared a little restaurant. I went in to charge my electronics, then got back on the road. It turns out that the place I was going to was just around the corner.

When I finally arrived at the lodge, a lady looked at me as if startled, then she looked away. The next morning, I would learn why. She told me that when I entered the room, there was an angel behind me. He was tall, bright and beautiful, and his name was Michael. "He guided you here," she said. Then she told me, "he wants you to know that there was nothing you could have done to save him. You loved him the best you could. He also wants me to tell you that you are loved by the greatest love of all. Share that love. She wrote the words on a heart and gave it to me. I still have it on my bathroom wall today.

So, what did this all mean? It meant that I needed to no longer be afraid of showing up. If the greatest love of all lived within me, I needed to not be afraid to show up. Michael's death became another

defining moment in my life. I began to be open, vulnerable and brave in a way that I never had before. You see, other people's lives depend on us showing up.

Inspired by Michael's life and transition, I knew that it was time to begin the next phase of my work. My experience with breast cancer had called me to break open in a way that I never had before, but God was calling me to do deeper lightwork. I knew that I was a healer, a catalyst for others, a silent warrior, and a soul worker. I knew that God wanted me on a bigger stage. I needed to stop being scared.

I began to listen more closely to God, and I had to make time to do this. He told me to create a digital magazine around "bliss", and so I did. Next, I felt propelled to launch a podcast, so I did. Then, I felt the inner nudge to create a workshop series called "I Manifest Bliss", but in my mind, it was too much. You see, when I was helping breast cancer patients, I was doing that work to help others. This new "I Manifest Bliss Experience", would call on me to be vulnerable in every way, if I wanted others to do the same and to heal. I had envisioned this type of event more than six years ago, but had to allow for the space between then and now, in order for me to evolve and mature enough spiritually,

into a place where I was confident enough to show up as who I was, and allow the vision to boldly unfold. I'd envisioned an event where people came together for a day of soulwork, sharing their stories in a series of powerful, authentic conversations, looking deep within, unearthing, and through this sharing, inspiring awakenings and shifts in the attendees.

I launched the first event, thinking I'd have 20 people, nearly 50 came. We ran out of room, so some people had to stand up and others stood outside the room. At the end of the event, everyone asked, "when is the next one"? I had not thought that far yet. I had the next one in September. I'd planned for 50 people, and more than 150 came. I was shocked and in awe of the magic that was happening. I was also truly realizing for the first time what I'd said many times, "when we live in our truth and are brave enough to show up vulnerably, others will too". The work we were doing at the I Manifest Bliss Experience was life transforming.

Recently, I had another powerful experience. This would shift my spiritual transformation into another stratosphere.

Life is truly a series of experiences that call upon us to show up as the powerful beings we are. In every experience, we are faced with the truth of ourselves, challenged with our idea of who we think we are, versus who we show up as when the pedal hits the metal and the rubber hits the road. I recently held another "I Manifest Bliss Experience". This was our most powerful one yet. I was basking in the emotions of the day. During the event, time stopped, and we were all wrapped in a beautiful web of powerful storytelling, transformation and deepening love for self and others. When the event wrapped up, I didn't want it to end. I was eager to see how the Universe would integrate these lessons into all of our lives, and where the transformation would take us. When the elevator came, we got in - ten deep - talking and laughing, basking in the energy of the day. We were going to have dinner, then I was going to head home to my daughter.

I found myself stuck in an elevator along with a few friends, and we were confronted with the reality of ourselves, as we hung in a limbo between our past and our future. We had 45 minutes to reckon with our truths.

The elevator started to go down...I felt a bounce, then a jolt. Then, it stopped. The Universe wasn't going to wait. We were being called to integrate what we'd just learned, and to manifest the soulwork we'd

just started. As several people in the elevator panicked, I found myself growing eerily calm. Initially, I began using the word "stuck", but I realized that we were not stuck at all, but that this limbo, this cocoon, being together in the elevator was a microcosm of our lives.

"What do you do when God doesn't want you to wait to grow tomorrow, but wants you to start today?"

"What do you do when you are forced to confront yourself and it's uncomfortable?"

"What do you do when you find yourself in the middle of here and there, and you are forced to become the catalyst that you seek?"

Within that 45 minutes, we had to manifest all the shit that we had learned that day, and it was beautiful to see the transformation - while we hung in limbo, between our past and our future. We had to walk in the truths that we had talked about.

- One of the things I talk about is that the soul always knows what we need to evolve, and our 10 souls could not wait. We came

to the event that day with the desire to accomplish rapid self transformation. Our human selves have this idea that things have to take time to happen, but that's a figment of our storytelling. We can manifest in an instant. Many thought we were in a crisis, but we weren't - we were creating something magical on a whole other level. When faced with our fears, anxieties, other personalities, panic and the swirl of human emotions, do you manifest as the higher soul self you truly are, or do you melt into a puddle of emotion and forget who you were born to be? On an even deeper level, the experience called us to look at who we surround ourselves and have relationships with. If you were to be trapped in an elevator for 45 minutes, are the people closest to you people you'd want to be "stuck" with?

- In life, sometimes we think that we are stuck. We are never stuck. We were where we were supposed to be and we have every spiritual resource at our disposal – if we recognize them as such. You see, our truth isn't just what we say, but the truth of our lives show up as who we surround ourselves with. We can never be stuck in life, because we have angels everywhere around us. The other truth of the matter is that we need to "see"

these angels around and recognize that the friends, family and strangers we take for granted are actually put into our lives for a reason, and we need each other. The Bible says, "Each person gave each other something during that 45 minutes that enabled them to look at his or herself and grow. One of my favorite parts of the Bible is 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27. It says, "There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body. ...And so we are formed into one body...So the body is not made up of just one part. It has many parts. God has put together all the parts of the body. And he has given more honor to [all] parts. All of them will take care of one another. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is honored, every part shares in its joy. You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it."

- We must train ourselves to notice our thoughts, and to be aware of where our minds are taking us. "Stuck" hanging in mid-air, all the iterations of what could happen ran through our minds, but we had to be mindful of our thoughts. We had to make a choice - allow ourselves to panic or focus on the fact that the Universe might just be conspiring in our favor.

- We had to push from within to shift our thinking. Were we stuck or were we in a place where we had to rapidly grow? How do we view life's experiences - as victims or do we realize that in every moment, life is calling US to be catalysts for transformation. Another powerful truth is that we are the ones we have been looking for! What we need is not outside of us! It is within! We are the catalysts. We are the game-changers. We are the sparks that change the world!
- There were some amazing light and energy workers on that elevator, and we had to remember that, because we didn't know how long we were going to be in there. It can be a challenge to "be the light" when you're scared shitless, but realizing and stepping into a place where you can be a light to guide and inspire others is powerful.
- As we are evolving, we find ourselves in situations where we could easily revert to former versions of ourselves - less spiritually mature, less centered, less sure, less connected with soul. Manifestation is about holding the highest vision of yourself and striving in every moment, to create and live there.

The experience of being "trapped" in the elevator has forever changed our lives. No matter how "small" we might see ourselves, we are powerful manifestors, and powerful beyond measure, in every moment, calling into our lives experiences that enable us to live as God expression in human form. And so, we must continue to be brave. We must continue to be strong. We must continue to be love. And, I will continue to pursue my bliss; and I will live my life as a fearless warrior.

ABOUT MAIMAH KARMO

Maimah Karmo is the Founder/CEO of the Tigerlily Foundation (Tigerlily). While undergoing her second round of chemotherapy, she made a promise to God that if she survived, she would create an organization to educate, empower, advocate for and support young women affected by breast cancer. After her second treatment, Tigerlily Foundation was born. Tigerlily is a national organization, with hundreds of volunteers nationwide, providing breast health, wellness and transformational programs to young women.

After working with Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz to develop the Breast Cancer Education and Awareness Requires Learning Young (EARLY) Act, in October 2011, Maimah was appointed to the Federal Advisory Committee on Breast Cancer in Young Women, a committee established by the Affordable Care Act, on which she works to develop initiatives to increase knowledge of breast health and breast cancer, for women under the age of 45 and those at heightened risk for developing the disease. She is a speaker and media personality, regularly called upon to speak on Capitol Hill.

Maimah has appeared in *USA Today*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Black Enterprise*, *Oprah Magazine*, *Essence Magazine*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Seventeen*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Marie Claire*, *Redbook*, *Women and Cancer*, *Cure Magazine*, *Traditional Home Magazine* and more. She has also been featured on *Fox 5*, *ABC 7*, *CBS*, the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, *OWN*, *Good Morning America*, the *Today Show* and more. She is a sought-after speaker by the media and for Congressional policy events; she is a philanthropist, who supports various charitable causes. Most dear to her heart is her 16-year old daughter, Noelle.

In 2010, Maimah published her memoir, *Fearless: Awakening to my Life's Purpose Through Breast Cancer*. In 2018, she also published the "Badass Girl's Prayer Book".

You can find Maimah on Twitter @maimah, on Instagram @maimah-karmo and on Facebook @maimahskarmo.



Dr. Richard Kaye

“When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change including your smile.”

ONE OF YOUR SUPER POWERS IS YOUR GENUINE SMILE!

BY DR. RICHARD KAYE

Today I am a successful entrepreneur. It wasn't always like that.

I remember so clearly my high school guidance counselor, with me in her office, telling my parents, “Don't waste time and money sending him to University. He doesn't have the aptitude.” Young and impressionable, on some deep level I must have believed her.

I went to Northeastern University, in Boston, to pursue a degree in electronics engineering; it didn't take long for me to realize that was not my calling, I was indeed a lousy student. I left before I was asked to leave. I went back to Long Island, New York, to Long Island University,

to pursue a B.S. degree in business management.

That program ended on a Friday; on Monday I embarked on a new adventure at the Columbia Institute of Chiropractic. I realized I had pivoted, made a profound change in my life, and graduated with honors. I found my passion – contributing to the quality of the lives of other people. That pivot set me in a new direction, I decided no one will tell me what my aptitude, attitude, or perspective on life is.

Shortly after graduating with my Doctorate of Chiropractic, I got into my MGB and drove to San Diego to establish what turned out to be thriving practice; an entirely new lifestyle.

Life was good, and continued to get better. I was able to share my gifts internationally as well as well in the U.S., teaching programs and workshops, and working with people, including other chiropractors, to help them improve the quality of their lives, as well as the quality of lives of the people with whom they come in contact.

After practicing for about 15 years, I was introduced to someone who would quickly become one of my very closest friends: Dr. Donald

Epstein. Donny introduced me to an evidence-based approach to wellness and body awareness, called Network Chiropractic. (Today part of a much broader umbrella called EpiEnergetics.) This is an approach to developing new personalized strategies to evolve health and life to more effective, energy rich, conscious levels.

This was another pivot. I was at the top of the field in what I was doing; I was Chairman of the Board of the world's largest chiropractic teaching organization. I surrendered to what I was being guided to do, which was to start all over in sandbox one. Leave what was known and comfortable and step into something entirely new. I went from certainty to total uncertainty; learning from one of the greatest facilitators of personal change on the planet. My practice was no longer about headaches, neck pain, back pain, etc. I learned that how you feel about how you feel is so much more important than how you feel. You may want to read that again.

I was on a new trajectory, a new and exciting adventure.

I was soon traveling nationally and internationally, sharing my gifts.

From the work I was doing, my purpose was made clear to me:

“My soul’s purpose is to elegantly inspire people to awaken to their magnificence, through love, humor, passion, and joy.”

If you are a seeker, and have you have an inkling. A knowing. Maybe even a calling to more. That your life, your body, your relationships, your experiences, can be more. Explore epienergetics.com

Why did I retire from a thriving practice?

A friend of mine invited me to a gathering, to explore Income Builders International (now evolved to CEO Space International), a business growth conference. It was there that I met the Founder and Chairman, Berny Dorman, who also evolved into one of my very closest friends.

I was reticent to attend the weeklong conference; in my New York arrogance I figured, “What can I learn?” I had my B.S. degree in business management, I was at the top of my game, top of my field, how much more could there be?

Over the next nine months, after I got up out of my own way and attended the conference, my practice came just a few points shy of doubling. Wow!

Another pivot in my life.

I’ve been involved with CEO Space for over two decades, and met some absolutely amazing people along the journey; from emerging entrepreneurs to those at the top of the entrepreneurial world. Again I was able to share my gifts with people and inspire them to awaken to their magnificence.

After about five years of working with CEO Space, I shut my practice, and moved to Taos, New Mexico, where I already owned 80 acres. Another major pivot. Living in a town with about 5000 people; sure is different than living in San Diego.

Some years later I was at a meeting when I met Barry Shore, this guy with his crazy Keep Smiling cards.

Barry made the decision to become a member of CEO Space. It was

there he met Ken Rochon, and a new movement was born. The Keep Smiling movement. To bring smiles, joy, laughter to myriad people on this planet. Perhaps one of the saddest things is when someone loses their smile. One of your Super Powers is bring smiles to everyone you meet. Through Ken and Barry's efforts, person after person poses for one of Ken's pictures with one of Barry's Keep Smiling cards; look through this book, you will see huge smiles on their faces. And they pass it along.

For the last ten years CEO Space has been cited by Forbes, Inc., and myriad other third-party press, as the business growth conference *you cannot afford to miss*.

From creating and launching the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* empire, having products in over 65,000 retail stores, and helping people raise so many billions of dollars we've stopped counting, CEO Space is the premier business growth conference.

If you have a business, project, or idea, or as I was, a doctor who wanted to expand his practice, I invite you to check out CEO Space at ceospaceamerica.com

Had it not been for the synchronicity this universe provides, whether we recognize it or not!, my making the decision to be a member of CEO Space, meeting Barry, Barry making the decision to be a member of CEO Space, and Ken being a member of CEO space, and the two of them meeting at CEO Space, who knows if this Keep Smiling movement would ever have evolved to bring smiles to so many people.

.....

On a very personal note: I recently had open-heart surgery to repair a worn-out mitral valve. Had no symptoms, just a routine echocardiogram revealed I needed surgery.

My son had a list of people to call to tell them I did not make it, or if I was still alive. Fortunately he was able to tell them I'm still alive. Smile.

My first night in ICU I heard someone say, "Well I guess I better call the mortician." My first thought was, "Well, since I'm hearing that, it's not for me!"

My first memory was waking up with my son gently squeezing my hand.

I later learned they lost two people that night. They survived surgery, but didn't last through the night.

Another level of spiritual awakening is profound. Things change. Talk about a major pivot in my life.

I share these things with you from a very deep level. I share my experiences. Is it really important the dishes are done immediately after dinner? Is it really important for the yard work to be done when you'd like it to be done, the laundry be done now? What's really important to you? Do you hang on to anger, rage, being pissed off at someone? Invite you let it go. In the bigger scheme, it doesn't matter. Will it matter in ten years? Live your life to its fullest.

Love those closest to you, let them know you love them. Heck, love everyone in your life. Let them know you love them. Life is too friggin' short.

And – share your smile!

ABOUT DR. RICHARD KAYE

Dr. Richard Kaye received his Bachelors of Science Degree in business management, from Long Island University. He went on to receive his Doctorate of Chiropractic from the Columbia Institute of Chiropractic, in New York. After 30-years in private practice in San Diego, California, he retired to pursue the entrepreneurial life. Prior to entering the field of health care, he was an electronics engineer working in the field of communications.

In addition to having appeared on numerous television and radio shows, he's an internationally acclaimed lecturer, having presented seminars, programs, and workshops, in Australia, France, Japan, and Russia, as well as in the United States.

Richard sat on the Advisory Board of Brian Anderson Entertainment. He served as an Advisory Board Member for Pacific Rim Institute for Development and Education (PRIDE), a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) member of the United Nations, and Excelledated Enterprises, a

DR. KEN 'DR. SMILEY' ROCHON, JR.

multi-national teaching organization. He served as a Founding Board Member for the Enchanted Circle (Taos, New Mexico) Sirolli Institute. He served as Vice President of Investor Relations for RacelandUSA, LLC (a 1,140 acre motocross complex in the desert, east of San Diego). He was a member of the board of directors of the Global Gateway Community, and was Secretary of the Board of Directors for Style for Life. He is faculty member of CEO Space (a multi-national business development organization). He serves on the Board of Directors for the Taos Entrepreneurial Network.

Richard has been featured on KTLA television, Los Angeles, California, on several occasions, discussing two of his specialties: Team Building and Super Networking. He was also featured on PBS; an in-depth story about the leading-edge health care he practiced.

He is the author of the highly acclaimed book: *The Secrets of Creating Customers for Life*.

He speaks around the nation about *The Secrets of Empowering Negotiation*.

Richard resides in Taos, New Mexico.



Brian Kelly

All it takes is a smile to turn your day around.
Go ahead – smile :-)

SMILE – THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

BY BRIAN KELLY

I almost didn't make it – twice. I am lucky to be alive. I am even more lucky to have been brought into this world at all. My brother Brad had been born before me, and my parents were planning on child #2. They had decided that they only wanted 2 kids, so this was going to be “it.” As the story goes, my mom conceived a 2nd child. Their last. The thing is ... that 2nd child wasn't me.

What happened was that the life of child #2 would end before he or she would be birthed. My mom had miscarried. She was distraught, as any mother-to-be would be. She and my dad decided to give it another go. Child #3 was soon conceived. This one made it all the way to his “birthday.” When that day arrived, my mom was rushed to the hospital and began the seemingly torturous task of progressing through the 4 stages of labor.

It was time ... child #3 was ready to journey through birthing canal. The doctor got into position, then noticed that something “wasn't right.” Child #3 was in what is called “breech presentation,” where his feet were positioned to be delivered first. This was incorrect. The “normal” delivery position is where the head is positioned first.

In general, breech pregnancies aren't dangerous until it's time for the baby to be born. With breech deliveries, there is a higher risk for the baby to get stuck in the birth canal and for the baby's oxygen supply through the umbilical cord to get cut off.

The solution was for the doctor to grab a pair of metal forceps, insert them and weave them up until he could “blindly” find the head of child #3. Then, using the forceps, clamp down on the child's head and wriggle it into the correct position. I can't imagine the trauma this would inflict on child #3, and he hadn't even officially entered the world yet!

The doctor successfully maneuvered the forceps and child #3's head into position, and now it was time for the delivery. Child #3 was finally, successfully extracted by the doctor. He grabbed the child by the ankles

with one hand and held him up while his head dangled towards the floor. The doctor noticed that the child wasn't breathing.

Whap! The doctor spanked the child in an effort to stimulate him to cry, and thus, breathe. The child did not respond ... nothing. Whap! The doctor paused. Nothing. Things were getting tense. The longer the child didn't breathe, the more dangerous the moment became. He would give it just one more try.

WHAP! At that moment, child #3 finally began to wail. At that moment, Brian Carl Kelly took his first breath of oxygen, and thus began his amazing life. Yes, as you had probably guessed, child #3 was and is yours truly.

I have truly been blessed. Had it not been for child #2 literally dying in my mother's womb, I would not exist today. Had it not been for the doctor's efforts and expertise in repositioning me with those forceps (the marks from which are prevalent on my face to this day) ... had he not been persistent and given me one more “Whap” ... I quite simply would not be here to today.

I truly have mixed feelings about child #2 ... even though I would never have come to know him nor her had he/she survived. I've resigned myself to simply say "it was just meant to be this way."

That day, I was brought into the household of a lower-middle income family. As a young boy growing up, I really didn't realize that my family rarely "had money" to do things beyond those that were borne out of necessity. Things like, the mortgage, food, clothing (I often wore hand-me-downs from my brother), etc.

I actually had a very happy childhood. My parents were always very loving and supportive. And my brother and I always seemed to have plenty to do to escape boredom. Ah, my brother. He was (and still is) 3 years my elder. I always looked up to him. I would try to be like him. He was my role model. I remember that he got into sports at a very young age (around 7 or 8 years old). I remember going to watch him play baseball, then football, then basketball as each respective season rolled around.

I couldn't wait to reach the age where I too could play team sports like my big brother. I absolutely LOVED competition, and sports would

consume my early life. As soon as I was old enough, I played all of the sports my brother played, and I also played ice hockey and even raced Quarter Midgets competitively. I loved sports. I loved competing. I loved the comradery w/ my teammates.

The concept of money and the fact that my family had so little never really entered my "world" until I was in Junior High (age 13). I remember talking with my friends. There was quite a buzz going around. You see, there was this absolutely EPIC movie about to come out, and seemingly EVERYONE knew about it. ALL of my friends were making plans to go see it ... so, of course, I wanted to go and see it too.

Then, it came time. The movie had come out and was now officially playing and available at theatres. I was so excited! I remember getting the news from my classmates during school. When school let out, I raced home. I normally walked the 1-1/2 miles to/from school. But on this day, I RAN!

I remember getting home, then realizing that I had to wait for my dad to get home from work before I could pop the question. After an agonizing wait, he finally came through the door. I sprang up to greet him,

and now that I had both my mom and dad in the room, it was time for that big moment.

“Mother, daddy, there’s a really big movie that just came out called Star Wars. All of my friends are going. I was wondering if I could get a ticket to go see it?”

My mom and dad glanced at each other, then down to me ... and my mom said those fateful words that I had heard so many times before ... but only this time it stuck. It was only 4 little words, but these little words would become the driving force for me for the rest of my life.

My mom looked at me and simply said, “We can’t afford it.”

I was devastated. In a micro-second, my emotions had swung from absolute elation and anticipation, to utter disappointment, soon followed by outright anger. I wasn’t mad at my parents. Not in the least. It was just that, at that very moment, at that instant, that the reality of our family’s lack of money had hit me square in the forehead, right between the eyes.

And I was pissed that my family had always “just gotten by.” Again, I wasn’t pissed at my family, just at our situation.

That anger grew, because the next day, then the following week, and then what would seem like several MONTHS that followed, ALL I would hear about at school was how amazing Star Wars was. I would hear things like C3PO, Darth Vader, Skywalker, Chewbacca, Han Solo. This wasn’t even English! My curiosity would grow manyfold each time I would hear another factoid about the movie from another classmate.

A burning, MOTIVATING anger grew inside of me. To be clear, this wasn’t a rage-like anger ... nothing like that. It was more of an intense frustration kind of anger.

I vowed that when I grew up and had my own family, that we would never be in a position where we couldn’t afford a measly movie ticket. NEVER!

I knew I was destined to make a difference. I was always driven, and it just took a very long journey to realize where I should channel this drive. In school, it was never good enough just to barely squeak by

with a plain old “A” for my grades. It had to be an A+ ... ALWAYS! I had straight A's throughout my elementary and Junior High days. I took all of the “advanced” courses I could find in High School. By the time I graduated High School, I had received a grade of B in just one class, in all 4 years. The rest ... all A's.

My parents taught my brother and I the only thing they knew to teach. Go to school. Get good grades. Get a “secure” job. I looked at what they had ... and I didn't want to toil my life away making scraps, just to retire and live off of even fewer scraps. Really? This is it?

The thing is, although I knew I didn't want what they had, I didn't know any way to get/have something better. So, like a good soldier, I went to college, got my degree, then went out and got that job. That job ... working for someone else ... helping them to achieve THEIR dreams. The proverbial J. O. B. (Just Over Broke).

Ugh, just saying that 3-letter word brings me down. I'll never forget my “first day.” I got a job working for a major defense contractor (a multi-billion dollar company). I had been chosen to work for a particular project, and it was time to report to the location where I would

work. I drove up to the gate, stopped, and presented my badge to the guard. I was let in.

I parked, walked up to the entrance of a large building, and there was greeted by another guard behind a large desk. I had a briefcase at the time, and he asked for it ... and then proceeded to search through it. Now, keep in mind that this was LONG before the 9-11 disaster, so having one's personal effects inspected was FAR from the norm then. My boss then led me into the elevator. We got to our floor, then marched down the window-less hallway, flanked on either side by door after door with cypher AND spin-dial locks each designed to keep out ALL but those who had a NEED to enter.

We finally reached “our” door. I stood dutifully by as my boss carefully entered the combination, then opened the door to my new home. The door opened to a narrow walkway, in a narrow room. On each side of this narrow walkway were cubicles. The room was dimly lit, and eerily quiet. And yes, there were employees seated in each and every cubicle.

My boss led me to the end of the room, showed me to my cubicle and then shortly returned with an 8-1/2 x 11” document that was about

800 pages thick (really), then he retreated to his own cubicle. I remember sitting there, now in total, absolute disbelief. It was like I had been handed a death-sentence and I was left there awaiting my fate.

It was so quiet. It was too quiet. And then it hit me. THIS is what I'm destined to do ... to spend every day, 8 hours per day, 5 days a week, for the rest of my life!?!?! NO WAY! That all-too familiar "anger" (frustration) began welling up once again.

I began searching for "a way out." Working for a large corporation didn't define me. I didn't realize it then, but I could not stand being TOLD what to do, when to do it, and often times even how to do it. I felt like a robot. I was unfulfilled. So, I began doing things on the "side." I sold greeting cards on consignment. I drove all over Southern California, often on my way home from my long hour and a half commute from work, to plant new greeting card racks, to stock them, to replenish them, to collect payment, etc.

I also joined my first Network Marketing Company, also referred to as Multi-Level Marketing, or MLM.

Years later, after having been involved in quite a number of MLMs, I was given the opportunity to be involved in starting up a Travel-based MLM, as a co-owner. Once again, my ever-present drive kicked in, and I became 1 of 4 co-owners of the company and Vice President of Operations ... while STILL holding down a full-time job.

Our company struggled mightily for all of the 6 years of its existence. But I wouldn't trade the experience for anything. I learned a lot. What TO do, and what NOT to do. We started that company in 2000 and closed it up in 2006. I was then immediately scanning for the next opportunity. That next opportunity that would give me what I needed to finally get out of my corporate jail.

Then I discovered this "thing" called seminars and workshops ... ones that were designed for entrepreneurs and small business owners. After attending the first one, I was hooked. Over the span of the next decade I attended seminar after seminar, workshop after workshop. I even began helping out at bi-annual workshops for one prominent speaker. Constantly searching, constantly implementing one business idea after another. Constantly looking for how to get out of jail.

I went to so many of these events that I have since lost count. I would often use my vacation and sick time to go to events that weren't held on the weekends. I was driven beyond words.

Well, after a (long) while, I had not yet found a proven method, business model, or jedi mind trick that would result in my ultimate freedom. I got burned out. I decided then to stop attending these events and “cool off” for a bit. So I backed off and recharged my batteries. So I laid low for a whopping two months (sarcasm intended ☺). I couldn't stand it anymore! I simply HAD to keep moving forward!

I was surfing the internet one day and another seminar caught my eye. It was being put on by someone I had not yet heard of. Yet it was obvious, upon further investigation, that this gentleman had achieved a good deal of success. The ad copy on the website for his event was very appealing. The event was being offered at no cost. As I scrolled down the page, I then noticed that he had invited a number of guest speakers. “Uh-oh, this smells of another pitch-fest,” I told myself ... having witnessed this first-hand many times. A “Free” event combined with a slew of speakers usually meant that every speaker was coming to sell something. Putting on events is costly, and money had to come from somewhere, right?

As I scrolled further down, I saw testimonial after testimonial for this guy. I scrolled a bit further, and I saw a face I knew. It was a woman I had met and gotten to know from previous events. Since she had been to one of this guys events in the past, I reached out to ask her if this was just another pitch-fest. She told me that she could not recall a single offer being presented. I was shocked, and pleasantly surprised. That's it, I'm going! I'm Back!

Here's the really cool thing. As I sat near the front row in the audience, the “guy” introduced one of his guest speakers. As I looked back to see who was coming up the middle isle to come up on stage, I saw that it was a fairly young guy, dressed in a blazer, an un-tucked dress-shirt underneath, nice jeans, black-rim glasses, and a fedora. He was all of 5'5” or so and had long black hair. For some reason, before he even reached the stage, I KNEW that I would like this guy.

To make a long story short, this young man (who, by age, could literally be my son) offered a free ticket to HIS 2-day event. He barely finished speaking before I was out of my chair and in the back of the room signing up. Little did I know at the time; I would spend the next 4 years learning from this gentleman. I first attended his 2-day weekend event. I then

attended another and brought my son with me. There, I signed up for his advanced courses, and attended the first intense 4-day course with my son. Then I attended his 5-day course. Eventually, the 6-day course, which is where I learned advanced techniques for public speaking.

Ultimately, I was invited to become part of my mentor's inner circle. I volunteered my time at ALL of his events. I ran microphones, ran his affiliate program, made marketing calls to fill the seats for upcoming 2-day events, you name it.

And then, my dream of dreams happened. He invited me to speak on his stage, training his students on the very skills that I had previously learned from him as I had sat in the audience long before.

I found that I absolutely LOVED speaking from stage. For a full 2-years I continued to hone my craft of speaking. As I improved, I was given more and more stage time. Ultimately, I would become his lead trainer and would end up opening up his 2-day events and speak the entire first day. I was literally training a full ½ of his 2-day live seminars. It was an experience like no other. Then, I was given the award of Entrepreneur Trainer of the Year.

And get this ... this was ALL happening while I STILL held a full-time job as an employee. Crazy, eh?

Ultimately, I felt I had finally found a recipe for success (hint: it ALL centered around mindset), and that I had learned enough, to the point that it was time for me to leave the nest. I then went on to host 3 of my own live events.

It has now been several years since then. And my mission, my purpose has always been to help others to never be in a situation of constant and continual "need," and to help them to do so by doing what THEY wanted to do, not by what was imposed on them to do. I want to help not just my own family, but everyone I can get in front of to empower them to reach their goals and their dreams, by simply modeling those who have achieved success before them.

By letting everyone know that there IS a way out. That there ARE alternatives to working for someone else.

I now host a weekly LIVE "TV" show where I interview prominent, successful entrepreneurs from all over the world. The value that the

show has brought has been immense, and the wider spread it becomes, the more lives can be changed for the better.



My “why” - The reason I do what I do is first and foremost my wife. I love her beyond words, and she is the reason I get up each day with drive and zest for what each day holds ahead. And then there are entrepreneurs. Amazing, creative, resourceful, driven, motivated individuals who are all looking for ways to serve others and to make an impact. I am excited by the fact that I can have even a tiny part in another’s growth and success.



It is SO fulfilling when I learned 2 of my apprentices who were originally destined for corporate employment, changed their minds and now each have thriving businesses of their own, due to the mentoring and coaching I provided during our 90-day duration together.

ABOUT BRIAN KELLY

Brian Kelly is a Professional Speaker, international best-selling co-author, and founder of Reach Your Peak – The Entrepreneur Training Company..

Brian helps entrepreneurs and busy business professionals to achieve peak performance through Mind, Body, and Business. He hosts a weekly interview-style live show called The Mind Body Business Show that streams live to 9 platforms and then distributes the show to 15 podcast platforms, along with Roku and Amazon Fire TV.



Dylan Wade King, The Bearded Real Estate Expert

“Have the luxury to face challenges & the audacity to succeed while always smiling!”

– Dylan Wade King

SMILES THAT HAVE EMPOWERED ME!

BY DYLAN KING

I was born in Riverside in 1987 & raised in Oceanside California. I am the oldest child of my brother Shane and my sister Tana to our loving mother Laura & fun yet stern father Wade who I am eternally grateful for. They showed me what life is all about. How to pivot & dance through life's challenges with my head held high while plastering that goofy smile on my face. I was always an active go lucky high energy loving life kinda kid. At the end of my 9th grade year I was diagnosed as having bipolar. Which was a shock to not only myself yet to my family and friends who knew me best. It was a shock because I was always had high energy and loved every second of life. I was and have never been depressed in my life. What caused the doctors to believe that I was bipolar was because on the last day of the 9th grade I started having audio, tactile & visual hallucinations. My mom thought someone

had drugged me. Mind you I've never taken any drug prior to that time, I don't like to even drink. The next day she took me to the doctors and without running much tests, automatically diagnosed me as having bipolar at the age of fourteen. I was always a go getter and had my first real job was when I was fifteen and half. From the age of 18 on I worked 2-3 jobs not because I needed to financially necessarily just because I loved the freedom of what money can do. In 2016 I moved to Columbia Maryland, to be closer to my brother who was stationed there since we had absolutely no family on the East Coast. I had to find a doctor to manage my bipolar medication. After one or two sessions and the doctor speaking with my brother and then girlfriend the doctor thought I didn't have bipolar yet had an extreme form of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder). She requested that I do an extensive long multiple hour brain test to find out for sure. When the results came back, sure enough I did not have bipolar, come to find out I had an extreme case of ADHD and what created the "mania" aspect which can be confused with having bipolar, which is the "H" part in the ADHD of Hyperactive. After finding out that I have been misdiagnosed for over 13 years I didn't hold any grudge or anger yet I felt a massive sign of relief and clarity. After experiencing with multiple different types of jobs throughout my life, I found my career home in

real estate. I quickly became a successful realtor and starting to shift into the investing side of real estate as well. My pops taught me work ethic & integrity is everything. My mom taught me the art of walking a fine line of compassion & a no nonsense attitude. My brother taught me to flirt with being light hearted and also to be serious when it is necessary. My sister taught me responsibility & how to be a champions for others. Joxi my wife, my life my everything, who without her by my side encouraging me to be a better man each and everyday all while accepting, appreciating & loving who I am, has given me the gift to believe in myself.

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What drives me, is empowered, through the inspiration from the unconditional love of people who I choose to surround myself with. Real estate is my passion because it encourages me to constantly improve myself. Which also grants me the opportunity to be a loving family man who supports & gives back to my family, friends, community and anyone in need.

•••••

I consider myself to be an optimistic leader, I have learned that your word is the most valuable aspect that anyone can ever have, and because of this value, I hold myself to the highest of standards. Which allows people to trust and count on me to get the job done no matter what it takes. With my get-er-done attitude while rocking that goofy smile even in the face of difficult situations is just icing on the cake.

ABOUT DYLAN KING

Dylan King is The Bearded Real Estate Expert, an optimistic leader who is always rocking a smile. Passionate about his family and loved ones. Lives each day with a purpose to empower, motivate & inspire not only himself and everyone around him.

Book(s) that changed your life:

Personal: Quiet Mind Epic Life by Matthew Ferry,
Vivid Vision by Cameron Herold - Business: The 4
Hour Work Week by Timothy Ferris, Rich Dad Poor
Dad by Robert T. Kylosaki

Movie(s) that inspire you

Rudy, Lone Survivor, & the Secret

Song that inspires you:

Country & Classic Rock

Your Hero:

These beautiful smiles in this book as well as a few
others not pictured.

Quote you live by:

“Wether you think you can wether you think you
can’t you are right.” - Henry Ford



Tim 'TK' Klund, Entrepreneur, Celebrity Brand Expert, Philanthropist

“Your attitude reflects the smile you wear every minute of the day.”

THE “QUICK” STORY OF MY LIFE

BY TIM ‘TK’ KLUND

I was born on October 13th, 1970 in Denver Colorado and moved to Marion, Illinois when I was four, where I went to kindergarten. Then we moved to Scott City, Missouri where I started first grade on one end of the building and graduated high school on the other end of the building in 1988.

I was the oldest of five kids. From my dad, Jim’s, first marriage to my mother Jackie, there was me and my little brother Greg who is three years younger than me. Next came my little brothers Marcus and Matthew who are fourteen and seventeen years younger than me respectively and my step sister Niki, who was two when my dad met Barbara, my step-mom, or Mom #2.

We were a middle class at best. The financial struggle was real but my dad and both of my moms did a great job covering up the fact that we were poor. I always wondered why my Nike shoes had an upside-down swoosh and didn't match the other kids but again, we did not have money.

I was an above average athletic person; I could hold my own but I was never that athlete that took your breath away. I was a class clown and I truly enjoyed getting a laugh from people but my dream was always to play professional sports. Although, there were a few problems I had in achieving my dreams. I was lazy, a horrible student, I loved chasing girls and being the class clown, all of which are not the attributes of a successful individual.

With the help of several teachers, I graduated high school. When asked by my dad what my plans for after high school were, I told him I would try to walk onto the football team at our local college, Southeast Missouri State University. After laughing for a few minutes, he told me that wasn't going to happen, but that he would take me to get a job the next morning because he knew some people hiring. The next morning, we drove to Cape Girardeau, Missouri and pulled into the parking lot

of the United States Armed Forces Recruiters. Reality had just showed up on my doorstep. "Not happening," I told my dad. "Oh this is happening!" he replied. After about two hours of arguing and pitching him every idea as to why this would be a bad decision, we went inside the United States Air Force Office. Within thirty minutes I had signed on the dotted line with my dad, because I was only seventeen. I actually turned eighteen while I was in basic training! (Fun, right?) The Air Force turned out to be one of the best things my dad could have ever done for me. He couldn't do much as far as material things but the biggest thing he did for me was truly love me and always tell me so. That was enough for me.

My Air Force career was great. I was an electrician both interior and exterior but I was better at playing slow pitch softball in the Air Force. That is where I actually would make my mark. There is not much to talk about as far as my military career. It was pretty boring, to be exact, but you get the idea. In 1995, after six and half years, I was given an "Early Out" Honorable Discharge. I couldn't have been happier. At this time my goal was to go back home to Cape Girardeau and walk on to Southeast Missouri State Football team. My little brother Greg was already there and was an All-American pre-season pick that year. I got

enrolled and started working out with the team when I spoke to a dear friend, who was like an older brother to me, Clint Estes. Clint asked me why I was wasting my time on college. I told him I wanted to be in Sales and Marketing. He told me not to waste my time and to come work for him selling trailers. After I stopped hysterically laughing at the idea, he invited me to lunch the following day but I had to come by the trailer lot to pick him up. Now, I grew up in trailers, but there was no way that I would ever want to put a family into one of those boxes. I showed up the next day, went in Clint's office and he said, "Klund-boy, what is the most money you have ever made?" "Well," I replied, "about fourteen thousand dollars a year in the Air Force." He laughed and pulled out his pay statements. He was averaging about seventy-five hundred dollars per month. My eyes almost bugged out! This was during the height of the manufacturer homes market. We looked at some of the homes and I was blown away at how much these homes had changed and how nice they were. It was for sure something I would have lived in and I would have no problem selling these homes to a family. So, I went and talked with Coach Mumford, the head Coach for Southeast at the time and he told me, "Klund, if you can make that kind of money, why build yourself up with student debt? Most graduates don't make that much money even when they have their degree!" That was all I needed to hear! The best

part about all of it is that by the time I had this opportunity and talked to Coach Mumford, my name was already in the program for that entire season, which meant that I at least somewhat accomplished my dream!

As far as the trailer sales, I was a fast learner and all my faults quickly became assets. I could get people to like me from the word go and as we know, people buy from people they like. So I did well. I also had a great mentor in Mike Bien, our sales manager and Glyn Ferrell who was the owner of Ferrell Mobile Homes. "Pops," as we called him, was hard on me but I look back with great admiration, knowing he was hard on me because I had more talent than anyone else and he knew how to get every ounce of it out of me.

Fast forward several years. From Ferrell Mobile Homes, I was recruited by top brands in the Manufacture Home Industry, which eventually brought me to Fort Worth, Texas in 2000 when I was twenty-nine years old. This is the place that would come to be where my most life-changing events occurred to jump start my life and career.

On October 8th, 2000, just seven days before my thirtieth birthday, I was in a car accident that killed me. That is correct. I was dead on the

scene, put on a Care-Flight, and revived four times from flat-line situations. It was game over! The State Patrol somehow got ahold of my brother Greg and told him to round everyone up and to get them to Harris Methodist Hospital in Fort Worth, Texas, and that I had been in an accident and the hospital would keep me alive long enough for everyone to get there. It was not the call one ever wants to get. My brother did his job and rounded up my parents, family and friends. I woke up in ICU in a panic and scared. By the Grace of God, I survived. I had to have my forehead and partial face replacement from the fractures I sustained. The operation was on my thirtieth birthday; October 13th, 2000. I am reminded of this opportunity in my life with every birthday. The bigger struggle I faced was the question of why God spared me? What was it that he wanted from me? I do not remember the accident or the in-between until I woke up in ICU but I can tell you that I have never been at more peace. The moment I woke up and still to this day, I truly appreciate God and his son Jesus for giving me a second chance at life. I decided from this time forward not to waste a minute of it and to take full advantage of my life.

With all of this being said, it was time to change my life! I literally had zero dollars in my account, I was on disability for four months and

I decided working seven days a week was not going to work for me. While in the hospital, my mom told me something that actually would change my life. I was worried about losing my job at the time and when I told her that, she said, "It would seem to me that your employer would be more worried about losing you. With the money they pay you, you must be making them great money. It seems to me, that no matter what sales job you had, you would be great!" This is coming from a lady that has a huge amount of loyalty for her employer. She, the kind of person that starts with an employer at eighteen and walks out with a gold watch upon retirement, is now telling me that I am great at what I do. That was the second biggest life changing moment I had.

Again, with a new perspective on life and the fact that I should be earning more, the next question was how do I get there? First step, I had to start looking for employment opportunities in the corporate world where there was an actual office and not trailer park gravel under your feet. I found a position in Healthcare recruiting, I stayed there six months and I received another call to come back into the trailer world and this opportunity was a one year opportunity in Denver, Colorado. One of my best friends and big brothers from the trailer world, Jeff Davis and Hal Golden, called and told me to get my rear-end up there.

They were printing cash! It was true, the money was flowing in. Still, it was not where I wanted to be in my life. One night, while watching one of my favorite movies, "Jerry McGuire," I thought to myself, "That is where I want to be! Too bad I do not know any professional athletes. Oh well, back to the grind." Well, the one year came and went and it was time to get back to Texas. After returning to Texas with the same company, I met Lemuel Stinson or "Lemonhead" from the Chicago Bears through a semi-pro football team I decided to try out for. I was quarterback and Stinson was the offensive coordinator. It was funny, I thought, why is a two-time pro Bowl Defensive Back coaching offense? Stinson educated me on the proper reading of a defense and while we spent hours together, we quickly became family. The next thing I know, Stinson asked me to represent him with his marketing opportunities. At first I was really excited but then I quickly realized I could not do it. It was the moment I had dreamed about in my mind for years and now, here I was, turning it down. I told Stinson that I did not want him to put his family's financial future in my hands because I didn't know what to do. He laughed and told me not to worry about it and that he would show me how to get us in, and once I got him with the potential opportunities, he would do the rest. He educated me that professional athletes and celebrities cannot represent themselves because

they cannot be the good and bad guy of the situations. Meaning, if he goes into an opportunity and tells the group that he needs a certain amount of money and they counter with less, he is then the bad guy if he says no. After spending a lot of time together, we started getting some great opportunities. At that point, Stinson started introducing me into his circle of friends, professional athletes and celebrities. We did VIP Superbowl parties together and other big events. You name it, we did it and attending these events expanded my influence to current professional athletes, when up to that point, I had only been working with retired professional athletes.

After a while, one day I received a call to see if I would be interested in coming to work for a group with the intention of being the Vice President of Sales. I was told the current VP was only there to get the company off of the ground and then he would soon be leaving. Of course I was interested! I went in as a sales person and learned everything I could until the day came that I was promoted. I was making a silly six-figure income and feeling on top of life! Everything had really come together. Then one day came when I was recruited by another company, my current company's competition, to come and be their Executive Vice President of Sales. They paid me even more money and

gave me total control of everything that was needed to make that company a success. Now I had two companies working in parallel, I had my company working with professional athletes and celebrities and the company paying me to help make their dreams a success. It was an incredible learning experience. My family was really enjoying life and I don't really remember a time when I was happier with my life to that point. All of this had happened within three years of my accident. (Talk about being on a locomotive train of success!)

Then 2007-2008 came, and with it, one of the worst times in America's History. Times were tough in the corporate world and with sales slowing and marketing costs increasing, the numbers weren't adding up and like most companies; it was time to cut costs. One day my shareholders and CEO came to me and said it was time to do a "Reduction in Force" or "RIF" and we needed to cut about 50% of the company. "Not happening!" I told them. After about two hours of going back and forth trying to come up with a solution, I decided, if we were cutting fat, to start with my salary. I was done! I had no backup plan but felt in my heart that if anyone needed to take the heat, it would be me. I immediately turned in my resignation letter, cleaned my office of four years and walked out of that office for the last time. That was June 2nd,

2008. That was one of the worst and best days of my life. When arriving home at 1pm in the afternoon, my wife was surprised. "What are you doing home?" she asked. "Well, I resigned today, long story" I said. "What are we going to do for money now?" she replied. "I am not sure, but I would rather be broke than let 50% of the companies employees go today!" Well, that is what happened. We almost lost everything trying to find employment opportunities. All of the extra money I had with my athletes dried up and corporates were letting more executives go that they were hiring. After two years of living off of savings and other odd jobs I would get sporadically consulting with companies or opportunities with my athletes, the day came. I gave up! I hit my knees one day and prayed to God that I could no longer carry the load and that I needed almost ten thousand dollars to save my house and get caught up on bills. Think about that for a moment, you need ten thousand dollars today, or else. It was a tough time to say the least. Later that afternoon, I got a call from one of my NFL brothers, who was playing for the Dallas Cowboys, inviting me to lunch the next day. I tried to play it off, telling him that I was busy, but the reality was I didn't even have the gas money to get over there. He replied that I needed to come, so I accepted. There must have been something in my demeanor or the worn-out look I had on my face, but he knew something was

wrong. We went to Fire House Subs for lunch and on the way back to his house, he asked how everything was going. I told him the truth and when we got back to his house, he walked me into his home office and wrote me a ten thousand dollar check! “TK,” he said, “I know times are tough and you have always helped me never asking for a dollar, take this check as payment for everything you have done for me.” I never told him what I needed, he just decided ten thousand dollars was the amount. Now tell me God does not answer prayers! Within 24 hours of prayer, not seeing any saving light, I was now back in the game of life. After he gave me that check, my phone started pouring in with opportunities. I have never looked back and when I tell you God has poured blessings on us that would be an understatement.

It has not been easy to build or sustain a life for my family and me for last several years but God has always provided for us. Sometimes in the eleventh hour and fifty-ninth second before we would have been done and completely broke, He had shown up. I truly cannot tell you how many people have helped me in getting to where I am today. It has taken every friend and family member I have ever had to help me along my path. I believe everyone you meet has an opportunity to leave a footprint in your life. I encourage you to be that person that

leaves an everlasting great impression on everyone you meet during your journey.

That was the quick story of who I am and where I have been. That story is not all success. I left out some of the details of the lows I had. Dark days that would give you every reason to give up, but the idea is you must get up and fight for your opportunities with every ounce of your being and never give in or give up. I have had a lot of ups and downs in my personal life. I had more not-so-good times than I had good times on the road to where I am today. A lot of days it may seem like you are heading for success, then boom, another setback! What makes you a winner is refusing to lie down and giving up when getting knocked down. Be prepared to have more losses than wins in life but if you keep waking up every day with the right attitude, you will always be a winner. Now you know that if I can achieve my goals and dreams, you can too!

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The above is an excerpt from TK's book, *“Stop Whining, Start Winning”* published by Tactical 16 and sold on Amazon.

ABOUT TIM 'TK' KLUND

Timothy Klund is a United States Air Force Veteran and is regarded as one of the top industry leaders as a "Relationship Specialist" in the world of Corporate and Sports Marketing. He is a leading authority when working with professional athletes and celebrities on their personal name branding campaigns and potential endorsement opportunities.

TK is currently the CEO and Founder of Verve Systems, LLC which is focused on the performance and protection of our athletes and military members. (Official announcement regarding Verve Systems, LLC will be made in the 4th Quarter of 2018.)

Mr. Klund is also a serial entrepreneur that loves working with organizations in helping them reach their corporate goals by maximizing their revenue potential through his leadership as a previous corporate executive with successful corporate knowledge.

His book "Stop Whining, Start Winning" was published in 2017 by

Tactical 16 Publishing Group and focuses on helping individuals get out of their current personal rut and to get back on track to winning and reaching their goals in life.

He is also the Founder of the Red River Celebrity Softball Game held at Dr Pepper Ballpark in Frisco, Texas the Thursday before the College Football Red River Rivalry between University of Texas and University of Oklahoma. The game is made up of celebrity alumni from both universities and benefits several charitable foundations, including the Toby Keith Foundation, the Roger Clemens Foundation and J.K. Livin which was founded by Matthew McConaughey. www.rrcsg.org

TK works with several charitable foundations assisting in raising monies and awareness as well as sitting on several boards for National Organizations such as: "Lone Survivor Foundation", "Big Brothers and Big Sisters", "Hounds and Heroes", "Miracle League of Parker Country" and many more.'

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www.rrcsg.org



Curt Kowalski, President and Founder of Team Network Corporation

“Connecting people makes many smiling faces.”

CREATING COMPLEMENTARY CONNECTIONS, REAL RELATIONSHIPS, AND TEAM SPIRIT MAKES MILES OF SMILES

BY CURT KOWALSKI

I was born in the city of Chicago, in April 1958. Three years later we moved to “the suburbs.” I’m not sure, but I might have had Wally and The Beave living a few doors down. These were the times when, as long as you stayed out of trouble and came home for dinner, us kids were allowed to roam free, all day, every day. By the time I was five, I’d go out after school and start knocking on doors. One, then the next, and the next, until I would find someone around my age who was home

and could come out and play. I only had one brother, and he was three years younger. It was not unusual in the mid 60's that 4, 6, 8 kids lived in one 3-bedroom cookie-cutter suburban household.

On some days, I would run into a group of kids large enough to pick teams. We could get a game of kickball going, maybe dodgeball, football, or softball (of course). The two oldest kids automatically became Team Captains, and they'd flip, or guess a number between one and ten, to get "first picks." This was a brutally honest process. One found out quickly where you ranked as a young boy. This was when I first learned there was something different about me, at least when it came to running, kicking, hitting, throwing, or whatever athletic skill was required. I was always getting picked high in the ranks. This was the case even when going against kids a year or two older than I was.

When I turned seven in the spring of 1966, I began to notice something strange. "How come Daddy isn't coming home from work anymore Mommy?", I asked. "Oh, he's living with Gramma now," she answered. "Why?" I asked. "You'll see him this weekend. Just go out and play," she commanded. These were also the days when kids were seen and not heard. When June arrived and 2nd grade was over, my mom, my

brother and I, we moved out into an apartment. My brother and I also discovered we had a different man in the house now, a man who would soon become our stepdad, Jim.

My dad? Well, we continued to see him on the weekends. He'd pick us up every Friday evening after he got off work, and we'd get to be back in our former full-time suburban dwelling. For the next four years, he never missed. Ever! Except once. The Chicago blizzard of 1967. Look it up. It started on a Thursday and ended on Friday. To this day, it remains the greatest one storm snowfall in Chicago history.

My new normal set in and the years rolled by. In the spring of 1970, I turned 12 and my years of elementary school were coming to a close. I soon found out, so was my life living in the mid-west. My mom told me that my stepdad, an electrical engineer, had gotten an offer for a new job with a company doing contract work for the Navy. She said we were going to be moving to a place far away called College Park, Maryland. "What about Daddy?" I asked, "Does he know?" "You'll get long stays with him in the summer and on Christmas vacations," Mom continued. And that's exactly what happened.

Maryland was so different. The hills. The trees. Our nation's capital, Washington DC, was minutes away. So beautiful and so exciting to see all the things we only saw in our history books. Summer was coming to an end as September was closing in. I was starting Jr. High School. It was so big! It was 7th, 8th, and 9th graders all in one school. Some of the boys had facial hair for God's sake. In Jr. High, they had real sports teams you could try out for, and play on, and travel on buses to compete against other schools. "Wow! What can I try out for?" I asked. "Huh? Soccer? I never played that in my life!" But, ok, I'll try out."

This is when I met the teacher who had the most influence in my young athletic career. He was the soccer team coach, Mitchell Hoffman. He was old. Probably 25 at least. But he ran around and played just like he was one of us! He took a liking to me, and I was one of only two 7th graders to make the team.

As the following years continued, my dominance as an athlete really began to play out. I worked hard, and Mr. Hoffman guided me along and encouraged me. In 9th grade I played soccer, basketball, and I was on the gymnastics team too! But where I really excelled was in baseball. I graduated Jr. High, while being awarded "Athlete of the Year,"

and started setting my eye on high school sports, college, and beyond. That summer in 1973, I had the privilege of playing on the 15-year-old Prince Georges County Babe Ruth League All Star Team. We won the state championship. We went on to win the regional championship, qualifying us for Nationals. I was then handed the ball to be the starting pitcher in the final game of the Babe Ruth World Series National Championship. We won that game 6 to 2 against California. I just knew, it was my destiny to become a professional baseball player like my heroes, Tom Seaver, Nolan Ryan, and Ferguson Jenkins.

Although I had a wonderful and successful high school baseball experience, and although I went on to win a full-ride college scholarship, and was drafted by the Baltimore Orioles, and had many other awards and shining moments, as a college senior it became clear to me that my "dominance" in the sport was waning. Scouts were no longer following me. All at once, I had to absorb the truth that my dreams of being a pro athlete were over. How could this be? What am I to do now? I was devastated.

Although playing college baseball was over in June of 1980, I was still about 18 credits short of acquiring a business marketing degree. That meant two more semesters at East Tennessee State. I had promised to

marry a girl I met while attending my first two years at a Jr. College in the Orlando area, and I was itching to go start my life there. I could have said the heck with it. Yes, I always excelled in sports, but I was always just an average student. I was not one of those people who loved reading, and writing, and arithmetic. It seemed to me like I had to work twice as hard as most just to get B's and C's. But I decided to tough it out. I stayed in Tennessee, worked odd jobs part-time, including humming and strumming, doing solo music gigs around town. But I persevered and I got that sheepskin.

Why was that a good decision? That's obvious, one might say. It boosted your resume. It gave you an upper hand when applying for a job. But looking back, that wasn't it. Most of all, it gave me an inner feeling of pride and accomplishment that had nothing to do with sports. That was new to me. It was about the fact that I didn't quit even though it was unpleasant, filled with frustration, and many sleepless nights cramming. I was alone. No friends around. No family. I was living in what was nothing more than a shack. No one was there to attend and celebrate my graduation, so I didn't even go to the ceremony. But I discovered, if I reach down, put blinders on, and put my mind to it, I could do almost anything.

I went to Florida, got married, and started a family while bouncing around doing work I didn't much care for. Then adversity struck again. In 1987 I was fired from a large building and materials company. It was a job in their management trainee program. My dad was in construction. I thought maybe I too had a possible future in that industry. I found out quickly however, that being on salary, I was making much less than everyone around me on hourly wages. I became resentful. I was up early and got home late. Day after day I was being ordered around, commanded to do menial tasks that I felt were below me. After all, "I was a baseball star who had a college degree," I thought angrily. My lousy attitude showed through and they let me go. This was at a time when I was responsible adult, with wife at home, a one-year old baby girl, and another one on the way.

In the local want ads, I found a position in a start-up business. It was under the sales section, "Sell Advertising to Small Businesses." It was described as a commission job with a small monthly base salary. Here I was, my back against the wall. But I tapped into that former experience of that last year in college. I've never been a salesman, but like before, I put my blinders on and went to work.

Within just a few weeks, I once again I learned something completely new about myself. This sales thing... I was good at it. I could meet someone who was a virtual stranger, and in minutes, I could establish rapport, make a connection, and make them smile. And the connections I was making were real, not your proverbial car salesman thing, and I genuinely loved meeting new and interesting entrepreneurs. I would ask them about their business, how they got started, what they liked, and about their struggles. I found it fascinating. I also learned another lesson about myself. I thrived on being in control of my own destiny. Unlike that corporate manager trainee job, where it didn't matter how hard or how long I worked, I brought home the same paycheck, being on commission fit me like a glove. You might even call it a ball glove.

Then fate struck again. Even though things were going well for me, the owner of the new start-up decided to close shop. The numbers just were not working to sustain the overhead. I was again without the means to pay the bills.

It was March of 1988. The kids were one and three years old now. My wife and I had made a commitment that she would stay home to take

care of the girls. Little did I know my next hire would be my last. A gentleman by the name of Dave Rizer, out of Kansas City, was looking for a salesperson in the Orlando area. This was another start-up, currently open in three cities, totaling about ten people. They were selling advertising to small businesses. Dave was working in cooperation with local real estate offices. I would be given a desk and a phone in the Realtor's office. To help me get started, the agents were encouraged to give us a handful of leads of local businesses they referred in their course of buying and selling homes. I was to call these leads, set up an appointment, and sell them an ad. One catch was, I was only allowed to sell one business per category. There was enough ad space for about 35 businesses. The other catch was, and it was a big one, the position for hire was straight commission. No signing bonus, no base, no guarantees. It was sink or swim.

Here I was, still responsible to support a very young family. Straight commission? That was scary, but on the other hand, I did like the opportunity to control my own destiny. This was another wrung on that life goal ladder. One thing was glaringly exciting and true to me. When I saw what these guys were selling, I knew I could sell a truck-load it! I decided to take the position. I thought, I will put together

three of these projects, show this company what I could do, and then move back home to Maryland and start my own city. But I was wrong about that. My first assignment would be in Ormand Beach, just north of Daytona, about an hour's drive from the mobile home in which we lived. I knocked the project out in less than six weeks. No one in the company had ever come close to finishing it that fast. A week later, my family and I were on our way to what would be our new home in Maryland.

Once back in the Washington area, I got right to it. We got an apartment in Maryland just north of DC, but my first project was all the way down in Dale City, VA. Next one a little closer in Woodbridge. Then Leesburg, VA and then up to Arlington. Finally, I got a chance to work out of a couple real estate offices in Maryland, first Bethesda, then on to Laurel. The cool thing was, within 30 days or so after finishing these projects, we threw a big party for all the local businesses who bought ads. All the agents in the office we worked from were invited as well. It was all part of the deal. No one had ever brought advertisers together like that before. Of course, these local business people were anxious to meet all those Realtors.

By this time, over a year had gone by and it was time to go back to Woodbridge, Leesburg, Arlington, to renew those past projects. I thought, this is going to be much easier and go much faster. Wrong! I started calling all the advertisers from the year before. Some did sign up, but most said, "Oh, those agents never referred us. That was a good idea that never went anywhere. Curt, the party was great, I met a couple of the businesspeople and we're referring some business to one another, but it just didn't work."

It turned out even harder to find all new businesses the second go-round. In fact, it was a real struggle, and took longer to finish the projects. This was not the way it was supposed to go. I wanted to build a sustainable and growing business! I wanted to build a client base of happy customers. I believed in this thing. If it "didn't work," I knew in my heart that I could not look these local businesses in the eye and "be real" in my sales presentations anymore.

I listened to the feedback and I began to think. I noted, the managers of the Real Estate offices loved it and welcomed me back. Why wouldn't they? The parties were great. They didn't pay anything, and I was promoting their agency all over town. The businesses didn't get

much, if anything, from the agents, but they developed relationships and got referrals from one another. What if we did more than just one party? What would happen if we got back together regularly? What would happen if all these businesspeople got to know, like, and trust one another?

You've got to realize, in the late 80's and early 90's, there was no such thing as small business networking groups, at least not in the Washington area. I later learned there were a couple businesses out of California that were sweeping across the country at this same time. One was called "The Network" which soon was to be called Business Networks International, or BNI.

Over the next two years, I found myself running these clubs, or groups, made up of small business owners, one of each business category. We were having a meeting and a party, for which we coined the term "Marty," one every month on a designated evening. To my delight, it began to work. And even better, a much higher percentage of the businesses that I now called "team members," were happy to renew and go another year of "Martying" together. They were having fun, doing business, and smiling all the way to the bank... and so was I.

There was one thing still wrong, however. Remember that guy Dave in Kansas City? I was still working for him, under his umbrella. Nobody else in his salesforce was running membership groups like I was. I had developed a whole new concept, all on my own. In September of 1991, I made a phone call to Kansas City. I said, "Dave, I'll continue the way things are for the rest of this year, but on January 1st, 1992, I am going out on my own. I want full control of my own destiny." I was not challenged. "What are you going to call it," Dave asked. I told him, "You know, I played baseball and other team sports all my life. I know how powerful uniting people, as a team, can be. I think I can inspire businesses to do that. I am going to call it, Team Network."

As Team Network approaches finishing up its 29th year, I certainly have had my share of ups and downs. The technology revolution gave me great cause to make major adjustments. Now we are dealing with COVID-19. Major adjustments had to be made as a result. But what business hasn't had to change with the times? I look around and see other networking groups who have come and gone. Others have become much bigger and much more financially successful than Team Network, but I have no regrets. In fact, I am enormously proud of Team Network, of our reputation of being a top-notch and respected

networking organization. Our brand is unique and stands on its own. The company certainly has real value, so it is not over!

What I am most proud of is the legacy I will be leaving, and the impact Team Network has had on improving the overall quality of people's lives. Most of all, my own. If you were to look at my bank account, I am not a rich man. But you know what they say, "money isn't everything." I have met people with plenty of money who hardly ever smile, so I feel blessed.

This leads me to the greatest and most meaningful compliment I ever received. It was expressed by a Team Network member and very close friend. She said, "Curt you are like George Bailey in 'It's a Wonderful Life.' Just think if you had not been born. Thousands of lives and all these people who have become friends, friends that are like family really, would not even know each other."

I truly have had a wonderful life.

ABOUT CURT KOWALSKI

Before there were formal business networking clubs, Curt Kowalski founded the Team Network Corporation. He has been organizing and managing small business networking groups in Maryland, Virginia, and the Washington, D.C. Metro Area for more than 30 years.

His knowledge and hands-on experience qualify him as one of the leading experts and authorities on the social dynamics of small business networking.

Team Network has an excellent reputation with its own style and brand in the world of networking organizations.

Curt is known for his leadership abilities, motivational skills, enthusiastic attitude, and his ability to make things happen. Locals know him as the "go-to guy" for anyone looking for a referral of a quality local business in the Washington Metro Area. He has been praised by local Chambers of Commerce and other groups for his informative, practical, and immediately useful business networking seminars and workshops.



Ken Krell

“A smile is the fastest way to make a new friend.”

THE SMILE FACTOR...22 LIFE LESSONS FOR YOU TO CHANGE THE WORLD.

BY KEN KRELL

People see my smile and seem to be put at ease. They don't feel threatened...Instead they feel safe and comfortable.

I wish that the person behind my smile always felt the same way. I'm Ken Krell and despite the ever-present smile and happy public persona, I've dealt with insecurity and depression for most of my adult life.

After studying the lives of many successful entrepreneurs and thought leaders, I've discovered that I'm not alone. It seems that most of us have experienced feelings of inadequacy, unworthiness and other less than empowering sensations.

I can't blame an abusive childhood.

My mom was a loving mother who became a single mom a year after I was born. The story would be more interesting as a country music song... if my dad ran away with another woman and took the truck and the dog.

Unfortunately my dad's disappearance was nothing quite so colorful. He was on the way to work one morning and had a heart attack on the way. He was 29.

I didn't realize that one singular event set things into motion that would impact each day for the rest of my life.

You see when my dad died, the little 1-year old me felt abandoned... and lost.

And that feeling of abandonment would rule me for over 5 decades.

But despite the insecurities, I've persevered. I can't recount a colorful childhood. There were no hookers, no drug or alcohol abuse. There was no poverty or starvation.

I went to decent public schools in New York and Florida.

The one thing that drove me was the desire to achieve something. I got my first job at a sailboat manufacturing company. I was hired to clean the offices but quickly became a salesperson on weekends.

I'd ride my bike to the factory every day, never realizing that those rides would create the sexy legs I'm blessed with now (hey, I was told I have great legs just yesterday, so I'm giving credit where it's due!).

From that start, I've always had a business mind. I was captivated by the old radio programs of the 1930's through 1950's and began collecting recordings of the amazing shows like The Shadow, The Jack Benny Program, Amos and Andy and more.

That led to my first business. "Nostalgia Time" sold those recordings to collectors from around the USA. It didn't make much money, but it began my marketing and business career.

Around that time, my parents (Mom remarried and she and I were package deal) moved to Fort Lauderdale. I hated living there so found

the best solution—go to college as quickly as possible.

I got accepted to 3 major universities at the end of my junior year of high-school, which allowed me to skip senior year and get out of the house a year early (I wonder if my parents were as glad to get rid of me as I was of them!?).

It was this sense of urgency that would continue to drive me for the rest of my life. If there's a way to get something done right now, why wait? (see Life Lesson #8)

I majored in business and my first job after graduation was as acting executive director for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation in Massachusetts.

My job was to raise money and awareness for the crippling, youth-killing disease. Unfortunately I was working for a committee of emotionally-involved parents and despite the fact that I was the 7th person in that position during the previous 2 years (I may be off by a person or two—let's just say that they couldn't keep a director for long!), I thought I could turn things around.

I was wrong.

Life Lesson #1: Don't work for a committee—especially an emotionally biased one.

The board of directors wasn't ready to take risks and try new things. They wanted “more of the same”, and I didn't see that as my job—especially since what they were doing wasn't setting the world on fire.

My next job was selling computers for Digital Equipment Corporation. I learned my next three major life lessons:

Life Lesson #2: People buy because of relationships. If they feel respected and understood and enjoy the buying experience, they'll buy from you. I made customers feel important and rapidly became the top salesperson at our location.

Life Lesson #3: I can't work with morons. My boss was the nicest guy on the planet, but he wasn't any sort of intelligent role model. If you want to get better at something, hang around people better than you (as a skier, I always prefer to ski with better skiers).

Life Lesson #4: Big corporations don't like people that rock the boat. When I called to complain about my boss's inadequacies, I found myself looking for another job.

My next job was working at a candy store. They sold some pretty cool chocolate items, so I contacted the manufacturer and started a mail-order business selling their unique molded chocolate golf balls, tennis racquets and even a chocolate pizza!

I would also sell chocolate covered fresh fruit...which gave me another life lesson:

Life Lesson #5: Positive cash flow is king.

I would pay cash each day for the fruit and the chocolate...but when I would sell the finished product to local retailers, they would pay me 90 days later. I simply couldn't make the numbers work and my naivete buried the business.

Well, it really wasn't just being naive. The real killer of my business was that I wanted to avoid conflict and wouldn't stand up for myself.

I made bad decisions and wouldn't enforce agreements—all so that people would like me.

Life Lesson # 6: You've got to come first in any business deal. Yes, you want the deal to work for everyone, but unless you take care of your needs first, you don't win.

For those that consider that selfish, remember your last airline flight. When they perform the mandatory safety announcement, do they tell you to put the oxygen mask on other people first? Of course not. You can't help anyone if you're dead.

You **MUST** come first—but not at the detriment of others.

So that business failed and I took the advice of a shady lawyer and went bankrupt at the age of 24. It was the most shameful and humiliating experience of my young life.

What was worse is that I didn't need to go bankrupt. My debts were completely negotiable and I could have worked things out with the creditors.

That realization caused me to become a champion for fairness—I went to the state bar association and was instrumental in getting him disbarred (justice!).

Life Lesson # 7: Everything is negotiable. Bankruptcy is a last resort and even that is negotiable. For those that insist that death and taxes are mandatory, I suggest that while death is inevitable, more and more it can be negotiated.

And as for taxes, I've discovered a remarkable legal structure that millionaires use to effectively defer their taxes for generations (visit www.WealthSpringUSA.com for details).

How do you recover from a bankruptcy with no credit, no money and no job? Well for me it was to become a Realtor and with my father's help I became a real estate investor.

I loved making deals. And I loved finding run-down and abandoned houses and fixing them up; turning them into desirable homes for young families.

My biggest mistake was “flipping” those homes and not keeping them for the long term. If I had kept them...or if I'd set aside the profits from those sales in non-risky investments, I'd have multiple millions in cash today.

Life Lesson # 8: Cashflow, Cashflow, Cashflow. If you can structure recurring cashflow into your business, you can create true wealth.

Life Lesson # 9: Play the long game. If you're in it for the short term, you're not building a lasting legacy and you're running your business (and life) as if you're a hamster on that ever-spinning wheel. Lay a firm foundation and grow it and you'll end up with something significant, worthwhile and rewarding.

My partner and I were doing so many house deals that we were invited to go into the mortgage business. How could my ego refuse the opportunity to become “President” of my own mortgage company?

I remember the day that the sales rep from the company we were selling our loans to came to my office (which was a bedroom in my home!). It was clear that he didn't take us seriously.

But that would change during the next 12 months.

A couple of my friends were living on the island of St. Croix and needed financing for a housing project they were doing. For over a year, they urged me to come down and do home loans there.

Life Lesson # 11: Money Loves Speed. Talk is cheap. Decide on your direction, make a plan and “Nike It”.

We became the first non-bank to offer loans in the US Virgin Islands, thanks to federal mortgage laws and that formerly skeptical mortgage sales guy who became president of that mortgage company. He believed in us and helped us grow the company.

I quickly gained a reputation of being “The Virgin Islands Guy” in mortgage circles, which made it easier for us to sell our loans.

The local real estate community now had a reliable way to fund home purchases fast and dependably.

Today there are numerous other lenders in the US Virgin Islands,

and competition has given the community more choices and better options.

Life Lesson # 12: Be a big fish in a small pond.

Play in rewarding niches and profit big. The US Virgin Islands is a very small marketplace and was off the radar for the entire industry (until we got there!). That gave us first-mover advantage and we grew the market. “Different” is better.

When people ask me what I’m most proud of in my business career, it’s the way I was able to transform the way people finance their homes there.

Life Lesson # 13: Give yourself credit and celebrate your wins!

It took me over 20 years to recognize my legacy in the USVI. I guess I considered it all in a day’s work, but when I was encouraged to step back and look at my history, I was blown away when I realized the impact I’ve made on the marketplace and on people’s lives, saving them thousands of dollars by making home ownership more affordable and helping the economy recover after Hurricane Hugo’s devastation.

After an ill-fated expansion into the continental USA, I returned to my roots as a real estate investor and speaker/trainer.

I would travel throughout the USA and Canada teaching aspiring investors how to buy, fix-up and sell/rent their properties. From a 90-minute sales presentation to 3-day intensive masterclasses, I inspired tens of thousands to reach their life and business goals. And I had a blast traveling all over Canada, exploring places such as Red Deer, Moosejaw, Timmons, Sudbury (home of the Big Nickel!) and Thunder Bay to name a few places that even my Canadian friends never visited.

As a trainer and speaker, I refined my sales skills, becoming one of the top-selling speakers in the industry. In fact, my courses usually had a waiting list. Here's why:

Life Lesson # 14: Give people an amazing experience and they'll become your best advocates.

I would arrange special room rates at my host hotels with an amazing buffet breakfast included. I also arranged class dinners at local restaurants so everyone could bond together. Then I made sure that

the actual learning experience was surprisingly fun and content rich.

I pursued a large real estate project in Central America...500 breathtaking acres overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The project appeared to be a total no-brainer. I knew the area and made what I considered to be a fail-safe deal. I raised over \$2 million from investors, including friends and relatives, and I put all of my savings and retirement money into the project as well.

Then came what Australians euphemistically call the "GFC"—the Global Financial Crisis (I love the way they can make even the most devastating experiences sound nice). Values came crashing down, loans became virtually impossible to extend or refinance and our project ultimately failed. Not only did I lose all of my money, but my investors lost their money as well. Many of them blamed me for the failure of the project, and I also blamed myself.

Given the offshore nature of the project, and the paranoia of the time, some of the investors thought I'd done something evil with their money and they took legal action. Meanwhile my income had ceased and I was left with huge mortgage payments on my home in Atlanta.

Since the age of 21 or so, I had taken many positive mindset courses in order to bolster my self-concept, so I thought I could manage the stress of the financial meltdown. I was wrong.

One day I was in Miami waiting to pick my Mom up from a 6-week trip to India (Mom taught me all about traveling and living a fun life-style—more on THAT later).

I had a few hours to kill so I went to the movies. About 10 minutes in, I started getting some chest pains (you see where this is going, right?).

I had a feeling that it might be something serious, but since I had no insurance and no money, I hoped it would be indigestion or gas or something.

I lay down across some of the movie seats and tried deep breathing and visualization. That didn't work. Finally, I accepted the reality. I needed to get to the hospital. FAST.

Rather than incur the expense and drama of calling an ambulance, I crawled out of the theatre, got into the car and drove to the hospital.

Life Lesson # 15: If you think you're having a heart attack, do NOT lay down. Get your ass (and the rest of your body) to the hospital immediately—and for heaven's sake, DO NOT DRIVE THERE YOURSELF!

The amazing team at the hospital had me in surgery within 30 minutes (they answered my iPhone when my mom called to tell me where to pick her up at the airport—boy was SHE surprised!). The good news is that it was basically a simple plumbing job—they cleaned-out the blockage, put in a stent and BAM! I was done.

Which brings me to:

Life Lesson # 16: You're not invincible.

I came face to face with mortality. And promised that I wouldn't repeat the same high-stress behavior that almost killed me.

Despite the heart attack, the bad news of the GFC continued and I was forced into bankruptcy (my 2nd, if you're counting—yes, I'm a high achiever). The worst part is that the bankruptcy trustee also thought I'd buried money offshore and was relentless.

Between more bad lawyers, the unhappy investors and the overzealous trustee (I learned that they make their profit on the money they collect, so they thought they'd hit the mother lode with me—imagine their disappointment when they discovered that I really WAS broke!), my life was anything but fun. There was a scarcity of smiles during those days.

I was at a Thanksgiving dinner and my best friend (who remained my friend despite losing money in the project) suggested that I spend a month in Thailand, since it was inexpensive and was far away from the drama taking place in the USA (I was homeless for awhile.)

So, I took my remaining frequent flyer miles and went off to Bangkok. I had no idea what to expect, but I figured it couldn't be any worse than the loser-life I was living living on my mother's couch for over 6 months.

Some people find the thought of traveling half-way around the world to a strange country to be terrifying. To me it was just another adventure.

Bangkok was amazing. I explored ancient temples (including the incredible ancient Angkor Wat temples in Cambodia). I was totally

broke (I recall having only \$20 to my name), but I was having the time of my life (and yes, I was feeling totally guilty and ashamed about it).

Life Lesson # 17: You don't need money to be happy. New experiences and meeting incredible people along the way can be completely inspiring.

The wonderful thing about Thailand is that really does offer a terrific lifestyle for a fraction of what it costs in the USA (and most other countries). After about 6 weeks, I returned to Mom's to pack-up what little I had left and returned to Bangkok.

By that time, I had started a digital information business, so I could work (and live) anywhere and since it would have cost a fortune to replace my furniture and my car (which was repossessed—a major humiliation), a furnished apartment in Bangkok seemed to be the most logical and stress-free solution.

And if you're thinking that medical care would be an issue, rest assured that I was blown away by how great (and incredibly affordable) health care is there.

Life Lesson # 18: Plot your own course.

Nearly everyone thought I was nuts to move to Bangkok. It may have been a bad move for them, but it was perfect for me. “Their” opinions don’t matter. Only yours does.

Over the past 8 years, I’ve loved living in Thailand. As an expat, I’ve been away from the political and social drama in the USA (thankfully!). I’ve been eating the best food in the world...for a fraction of what others pay elsewhere.

Over the past few years, I’ve recovered economically and have been speaking again on stages from Hong Kong to Singapore to London and major cities in Australia and New Zealand. I’ve launched a software company with a terrific team in the Philippines and my iBoostify™ Society helps Filipinos create more prosperous lives.

I’ve taken my Mom trekking in Nepal. A couple of summers ago, we did two months in Israel and Portugal and last summer we did Ireland, London, Scotland and Spain together. Our Facebook Live videos were so well received that we’re now creating our own channel!

Life Lesson # 19: Travel with your Mom (and Dad) when you can. Celebrate the time you have together. And shoot tons of video!

We’ve also decided to launch our own tours for gay men and women and their parents and friends. So many of our friends tell us how much they wish they could travel with us, so we’re making it happen (visit www.FamFriendAdventures.com for details)!

Life Lesson # 20: Do it for fun and love. The money will follow. If it’s only about the money, it won’t last—or won’t give you the real satisfaction you desire.

One of my most satisfying experiences is when my students and consulting clients share their successes with me. I’ve always loved to teach and to help people reach their goals, and it’s always gratifying to hear that my guidance has helped them achieve milestones, such as \$50,000 in a weekend (as one client recently did).

Sharing my experiences—the good and the bad—has helped people recognize that they’re OK...and that they’re creating positive momentum.

Here’s are the biggest life lessons:

Life Lesson # 21: Don’t give up.

I confess to having been through countless “bad days”, deep feelings of inadequacy, guilt, shame, unworthiness and generally feeling not good enough. I’ve even considered suicide (though not seriously—it’s difficult to seriously consider suicide while you’re in the middle of a downward dog!).

I’ve been so committed to creating a life of joy and prosperity that I’ve always picked myself up and done whatever it took to get my life back on track. It’s not easy. But I don’t know any other way.

Years ago I discovered that my life mission is to learn to become happy. And then to inspire people to achieve happiness as well.

I thought that was such a foolish and shallow mission.

After all, others shared their missions of feeding the hungry, teaching impoverished children or creating the cure for (insert anything bad here). And all I wanted was to be happy.

How simple and small, I thought.

But I’ve discovered that it’s not easy to be happy. Yet if I can achieve happiness and help others achieve it too, then perhaps that “happiness ripple” can create peace in the world.

After all, when you think about it, why do people fight or create conflict? Why do they embrace the “dark side”? It’s because they’re not happy.

Look at the behavior of some of our world leaders (now and throughout history). Do you think our planet would be a safer place if they achieved their own personal happiness? I do.

I’ve learned to recognize that the mission of creating happiness is really the mission of creating peace and justice. And if something as simple as a smile can help along the way, then let’s smile as often as we can.

I’ll never forget the gorgeous children in Siem Reap, Cambodia who would smile and wave as I drove by in my tuk-tuk. They didn’t have all the “benefits” and “prosperity” of western culture, but they could effortlessly express love and friendliness in a split second—without hesitation or judgment.

The world needs more of that. And if I can play even some little part in it, I will have fulfilled my life purpose.

I’m often asked “How”. How did I do this or that. How did I cope with the down times?

The answer comes down to a few basics.

Life Lesson # 22: Keep your perspective.

If it’s not a deadly medical or life-threatening situation, then you’ll live through it. Losing all your money or your home or your car or your business isn’t the end of the world. You can make it back—or say “screw it” and create a totally different life.

When I lost my historic \$2.4 million home and the Lexus was repossessed, I was devastated. But losing all the “stuff” meant losing all the bills and other obligations that went along with it.

Living a simple life in Thailand made me so much happier—there was none of the stress that came with having to feed that “lots of stuff”

monster. In other words, “losing everything” gave me freedom (now I can easily travel for 5 months at a time with just a carry-on rolling suitcase and a backpack—and think nothing of it).

And finally,

Life Lesson #23: Stay positive.

I was in Cambodia and had literally just \$20 to my name. I was speaking with another digital nomad about money and lifestyle and he asked me if things had always worked their way out with money—even when there was a crisis.

My response was “Yes, it’s always worked out”.

“So why worry if you know it’s going to work out?” he asked.

Why worry if you know it’s going to work out? That’s such a perfect question and one I recommend you use to not just maintain sanity, but to keep yourself focused on the solution, not the problem.

I hope these few life lessons can inspire you to live YOUR best life. I hope you will quickly and effortlessly win the battle with your own inner demons.

Just remember this. No matter how bad things get, they can always get worse! So cheer the hell up so it gets better! Focus on gratitude and what's working—and what's worked for you before and you'll pull through.

Since you've been with me this far, I'll leave you with this one short quote from Stephen Schwartz' musical, Pippin: "Easy, Baby! You're on the right track!"

ABOUT KEN KRELL

If you'd like to learn more about how you can create an amazing life, visit www.WealthSpringUSA.com to discover how you can create bulletproof protection for your assets and legally defer your taxes for generations.

If you'd like to follow the adventures of Mom (aka "Pepper"), visit [www. PepperandKen.com](http://www.PepperandKen.com).

And if you're a member or friend of the GLBT community, check out our new adventures and come travel with Mom and I. Visit [www. FamFriendAdventures.com](http://www.FamFriendAdventures.com).



Kris Krohn

“We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do. ” – Mother Teresa

INTERVIEW OF KRIS KROHN

EDITED BY
DR. ANDREA ADAMS-MILLER

I was born in Seattle, Washington. My father was a German immigrant who came to America because he never found happiness in Germany. His family lost his father during the war when he was just a baby, so I am sure it was difficult. When he came to America, he left everything behind. He came as a hard-working immigrant who started his own construction company.

I remember him raising me in the middle of nowhere in Redmond, Washington, in now what's known as the Microsoft campus. We had five acres of land that he had purchased to build a custom home for his family of nine kids.

As a child, I remember feeling a lot of stress from my family to perform well in school and get good grades. Because my dad, who was a business owner, said, "Son, if you want to achieve anything and become anything, you've got to get good grades now, so you can go to college. Then, you will work for somebody else; you'll have a better life than I had that I've given you."

I started following that blueprint, but no matter how hard I tried in school, I just couldn't get good grades, and that was really disheartening. I thought I was doing everything I could, but, honestly, I was just robotically going through life. If I'm frank with myself, I felt like I really wasn't in control of anything; if anything, I thought I was a zombie just going through motions. I felt dead inside. I never felt like I had taken my first real breath of fresh air.

My Dad tried to light the spark in several different ways. For example, he put me in many sports. He had me try soccer and basketball. None of it really connected with me.

When I turned 15 years old, I think my self-esteem was at an all-time low. Somewhat depressed, I experienced an overall sadness. I just felt

purposeless, and I'll never forget the day my Dad pulled me into his office.

He said, "Hey, son, I think I found an exciting opportunity that you might like, and he introduced this idea of becoming a paperboy. This paper route was small; it was only 23 papers through this one neighborhood.

Honestly, I wasn't really good on a bike. I was chubby, and wearing the paper sack around my neck and shoulder was really uncomfortable. But I remember when this opportunity was presented to me, it excited a tiny spark inside me.

It took me over two hours to complete the route and find the 23 addresses on the first day. I had to learn how to read the street signs and addresses of the houses. The papers were uncomfortably heavy digging into my shoulder.

Of course, the bike was just awkward for me, but something spoke to me. I got excited about it.

After a couple of months of this paper route, I started getting faster and faster. Then, I hit my growth spurt. I grew more muscular on my traps and shoulders.

I had the opportunity to pick up two more routes in really hilly terrains, and I got up to the point where I had 17 paper routes spread over three neighborhoods.

Then, after six months, I was offered a manager position, which meant they would pay me \$100 a month to put the papers out for the other three boys.

All of a sudden, this newsboy job was becoming something.

I had reached the point where I was timing myself, and I had gone through two to three neighborhoods wherein, checking the watch, I was breaking records.

I was on the homestretch to hit the third and final neighborhood, and I was down to just a third of my papers left; they felt like nothing on me now with this strong body.

I remember this moment where I was feeling incredible; I was going over this gravel. I was about to lose control as I was going so fast entering my third and final neighborhood. Mentally, I paused for a moment. Rocks were flying everywhere; I didn't fall. Instead, I caught myself, and at that moment, I took a deep breath of fresh air.

I feel like it was the first breath I had taken of my life. I felt in control; I felt in charge. I felt strong, and as I put muscle into it, I felt my confidence rise. I felt like I could do anything that I wanted with my life. Entrepreneurship had just sparked life into me, making me believe that I could create something...that I could become something.

I broke a record that day; I felt like I took my first breath of real fresh air. And that was the day I decided that I was in control of my life. I started getting good grades, not because of what came naturally to me, but because I knew I could make the difference with effort, and my life continued to progress.

The next challenging moment that I faced was when I was 19 years old. I had decided outside of high school that I wanted to spend two years serving a Christian mission for my church before I went to

college. I wanted to donate two years of my life to doing something that I believed in, such as spreading a message of faith. I was told that it would be hard, challenging, and demanding. In preparation, my family was taking our last vacation together.

We were vacationing in our family's old favorite spot of Cannon Beach, Oregon, a sleeper touristy town with a very calming beach present with frigid water temperatures and beautiful waves.

My sister and I were going to go ride the waves for one last time together. Although my sister is not a very strong swimmer, and despite it being a very windy, blustery day, the lure of the Cannon Beach coastline called to us. The sandy bottom requires you to wade far into the water before the water level becomes waist-high.

Further and further, we walked out, and the waves were so high and exhilarating. I became nervous and thought that we should pull back. She called out to me to keep going so we could ride these 8-10 foot swells. We barely touched ground between the waves when all of a sudden, I felt a riptide pulling me out to sea.

Looking ahead, I saw my sister far in front of me. I could tell she, too, felt the riptide and was trying to swim back into shore. I saw the panic in her eyes as she was pulled further out. I tried to ride a wave to get above the riptide, but I couldn't swing my arms up to levitate myself in the water.

I could see back at the shore that my father, deathly afraid, sensed there was trouble. I saw him turn away so far from me that his tiny little body appeared like an ant scurrying off into town to get help. Turning around to look for my sister, she was pulled further, so far away that I knew I was going to watch her drown.

As a trained lifeguard my mind said, "Don't try to swim to save her," as I knew the riptide would pull me down further. But I remember asking myself how I could live if I did nothing and just watched my sister drown without even trying.

I knew that prophecy would come true if I didn't even try, so I jumped deeper into the water. At that moment, I felt heroic; I felt the confidence that I knew that I would save my sister's life. I quickly made it to her, and I put her in the proper swim carry position. Coincidentally,

she's big and tall like me. Where I'm six foot three and a half; she's six-two. As I tried to swim back in, I realized that all my lifeguard training had been on children and average-sized adults.

Swimming was more challenging with a taller, bigger adult, and despite my efforts, as I tried to swim back in, I could barely keep my head above water. At that moment, I thought my sister would drown, and I realized that I might drown, too. This is it.

I only knew how to do one thing, pray. There was nothing else that could be done in the situation. My sister united in screaming prayers above the crashing sound of the waves.

I started preparing myself for the end. I was tired; she was tired, and I could not keep her head above the water.

I felt my life flash before my eyes, and I started thinking about everything I had done. I also started thinking about all the things that I regretted. I thought to myself, I'm just about to enter the real world, yet I've created no value. I can't go, not now.

The next thing that happened is pretty unexplainable; one large rolling non-breaking wave carried us all the way back to where we could stand waist-high.

I remember that moment thinking my life has been saved. As we walked out of the ocean that day, my mom thought I saved my sister's life. The truth is my life was spared. I started asking why? For what purpose?

I started searching for the answer. I started realizing that doctors can't explain how long our hearts will beat. We can't explain why people are taken away by freak accidents. Whatever time we're given is a gift. I decided that I had an obligation to use the time wisely with passion and love every day to make the most that I could.

Later in life, I lost two friends to a horrific plane accident. The very last social media post one of them wrote eight hours before the crash simply said, "I've spent all my talents. I have nothing left to give. It's been an amazing day."

I thought that's how I'm going to honor my life every day. I'm going to

spend all that I got. I'm going to make sure when I climb into bed that I left nothing on the table. Since that time, I've been living my life as completely as possible.

A lot of people look at a lot of my accomplishments. They say, "Wow, Chris, it's amazing the impact of your social media influence, given that you have millions of organic views every single week. Look at all the people you're helping."

And, they say, "Look at your real estate business and how successful it is reaching an eight-figure business. This means that you've achieved something that one in 16,000 businesses hasn't figured out, and yet you're still growing."

Although, for me today, it's not my achievements that put a smile on my face. The achievement is simply crawling into bed at night, knowing that I've spent everything that I've been honored within my life. I have honored its purpose by giving all I can to create enough meaning in life that's worth smiling about.

That's just a choice that anyone can make. In fact, I would urge everyone

to consider that real success only happens when you first choose to become a happy person. Become happy instead of hoping that success will make you happy.

No one makes you happy, and no one makes you sad. Happiness is a choice, and this is your one life. You got this. This is your one chance, so don't squander it. Don't leave anything on the table, and just smile.



Caroline Labour

“I’ve found that the secret to living an abundant life is in owning the quality of every day and every moment - this is what makes people smile like they mean it.”

HOW TO SMILE LIKE YOU MEAN IT

BY CAROLINE LABOUR

I was a child who always got good grades at school – I was ambitious, I worked hard and got into a top university on a business scholarship. I also worked my way up the corporate ladder and had a very rewarding 17-year career as a management accountant. From the outside, I probably looked confident and successful, but the truth is, I often wasn’t smiling on the inside.

My job was really stressful and I always had so many things on the go – a catering business, online ventures and I also sang in a band on weekends. I was really good at hiding my stress and people would often tell me that I always had a smile on my face, no matter the situation. Little did they know that my smile was my cover-up for the fact that I was on the verge of total burn-out.

In my early 30's, I decided it was time to expand my horizons beyond accounting. I drew on my passion for personal development and started my first coaching certification. I put all my spare time into learning coaching and internet marketing, but despite my hard work and persistence, I just couldn't get my coaching business to where I wanted it to be.

I made the same mistake that so many entrepreneurs make – I spent my time working on funnels, paid ads and content creation but the whole time I ignored the little voice inside that kept telling me I wasn't good enough to succeed. I even tried to silence that voice by using affirmations, but that didn't work either because affirmations respond to your inner vibration and self-image, not to your goals.

I felt like I was living in a constant state of conflict where I understood how to have a great mindset and achieve my goals theoretically, however in practice it just wasn't happening for me.

I set out on a really deep soul search and I ended up finding a mentor who taught me about money blocks. I had no idea what money blocks were and I'd certainly never come across that term in any of the

hundreds of personal development books I'd read. This was a massive turning point in my life - for the first time ever, I found a way to reach the pain and frustration I felt that didn't show on the outside.

Every aspect of my life improved once I started to work on my money mindset and overcome my money blocks. My life actually began to transform in unexpected ways – and I say 'unexpected' because my goal at the time was to escape the stress of the corporate world – but as my mindset started to shift, here's what happened:

- I made really big health and fitness improvements and wellness became a priority in my life. I got into my best shape ever and I haven't looked back since.
- I re-discovered my passion for singing and I started a new band with some of my best friends.
- My leadership capability also took off and I started to get promotion after promotion in the corporate world. The funny thing is, things that used to stress me out (that caused me to hate my job) started to feel really insignificant, and that's

because my energy changed and I stepped up to become a better version of myself.

The common thread with these results is that because my mindset shifted, I learned how to think differently and how to operate with more abundant energy. I became incredibly focused and productive and that allowed me to build my coaching business in my spare time, while I worked my way up to a dream job that I didn't even know was my dream at the time. The best part is, when I finally did leave my corporate job behind in 2018, it was because my business needed me full time, not because I was running away from my life.

I now have a lifestyle that I can truly smile about – I'm building a business I'm totally passionate about, I get to choose the hours I work, I get to travel to awesome places and most importantly, I get to hang out with my favorite office workmates – my two gorgeous dogs!

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Clearing my money blocks changed my life and I feel driven to show other entrepreneurs how to find the same freedom I did. My passion is

helping entrepreneurs who are on a mission to make the world a better place - I love nothing more than seeing entrepreneurs thrive and share their gifts with others without limitation.

Because of my own journey, I know that many entrepreneurs who are struggling have no idea what's keeping them stuck, they're just caught in a vicious cycle of pain and frustration. The pain they experience usually falls into two main categories:

1. Staying Poor: not making enough money (or making money and spending it all), having little to no savings and getting into debt.
2. Feeling Poor: making good money but feeling guilty about earning it and spending it.

Many entrepreneurs fall into the trap of thinking that making more money is going to solve all their problems – but this isn't true and here's the reason why. As you make more money and you become more successful, everything that you do gets magnified. If you haven't dealt with your money blocks, especially feelings of panic, fear or guilt around

money, then they'll get magnified too, and you'll find even bigger ways to lose money and get yourself into financial trouble.

Money blocks are also more common than people realize – they affect most people who grew up in middle class families or in poverty because of the experience of feeling like money was never enough.

So where do money blocks come from?

One of the most important things my mentor taught me is that money blocks form when you're a young child, when your mind is still impressionable because the conscious mind isn't fully formed. This means you can overhear a conversation about money and totally misinterpret it in such a way that it ends up affecting things like your self-image or your sense of safety and security in the world.

What's worse is that negative money memories from childhood can end up being stored as trauma because children rarely know how to process and deal with these experiences when they occur. The impact of this trauma occurs when entrepreneurs are trying to go after a big goal and

they end up triggering stored negative, dark feelings which causes them to sabotage their success.

My earliest negative money memory dates back to when I was only four years old. I was a very serious and introverted child, and I concluded at the age of four that I wasn't rich. This belief came about because I had a friend at school who used to get free snacks from her mum who volunteered in the school canteen. I had no awareness of the value of money and it never occurred to me that my friend's mum paid for those snacks behind-the-scenes.

I learned a hard lesson about the importance of money one day when I asked my friend's mum for a frozen yoghurt and she told me that I would have to start paying for my own food. For the first time in my life, I realized that I needed money and I felt extremely embarrassed about not having any. Instead of telling my parents about the incident, I kept it to myself and it ended up shaping a lot of my beliefs about money.

Without a mentor, I never would have worked out on my own that this traumatic incident was the real reason I struggled to grow my coaching

business. I not only learned the source of my struggles, I also learned how to shift my energy around money so that I would attract money into my life rather than repel it.

Helping people with their money blocks is a no-brainer for me because it's really a reflection of my own journey and the struggles I went through. Once I found the answers I was searching for and got my hands on the missing piece to success, everything in my life started to improve. I now have a clear blueprint to help people break through their darkness so they can take action without self-sabotaging and without being held back by their past.

If you're an entrepreneur and you've found yourself in a cycle of doing course after course in the hope of finally breaking through, or if you're seeing other people get great results while you remain stuck, then it may be time to look deeper. There's a good chance there are money blocks standing in your way.

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Most entrepreneurs I encounter have heard a statistic along the lines

of: 'Mindset is 80% of success' (with 20% being strategy & execution). The gap though is that most people have no idea how to work on their mindset so they only focus on their strategies, and they leave the mindset part to chance.

With this gap in mind, I've developed a Money Mindset Accelerator Bootcamp with a 3-step approach to show entrepreneurs how to get better results by boosting their money mindset and building a healthy relationship with money:

- Step 1 involves finding their hidden money blocks. We use targeted diagnostic processes to identify the money blocks that entrepreneurs formed during childhood and continue to reinforce as adults. We explore things like family paradigms, money trauma and beliefs about worthiness & deserving.
- Step 2 focuses on the use of transformational clearing techniques to permanently shift these money blocks and self-limiting beliefs. The primary technique I use is called Tapping (also known as the Emotional Freedom Technique or EFT) and it's a mind-body tool that uses the body's energy to bring about

authentic and permanent mindset change. One of the biggest challenges with personal development is that the mind is so complex and you can't fool your sub-conscious mind with positive thinking. Tapping works so well to solve this problem because it deals primarily with energy psychology rather than conscious thoughts.

- Step 3 is where I empower entrepreneurs with simple & sound money management techniques based on my many years of experience as an advisor to CEOs & Executive Directors. I often hear people say "I'm not a numbers person" – and this is fine because I break down complex financial processes and get entrepreneurs to focus only on the metrics that matter for running a successful business. Over time, business owners learn how to become empowered money managers and any anxiety around money and numbers becomes a thing of the past.

By following my proven 3-step process, my clients learn how to develop a powerful money mindset and experience massive breakthroughs with their money and their business.

Ironically, the biggest benefit of fixing your money mindset has nothing to do with money! I show people how to overcome their deepest inner pain around self-worth and self-belief that prevents them from making the money they deserve. We do this by changing their energy around money and clearing childhood trauma about lack and scarcity.

There's nothing more rewarding than seeing someone break through a barrier that has been keeping them stuck for years – whether that's smashing through an income ceiling or finally clearing crippling debt balances. When I see people heal these life-long wounds for the first time, it warms my heart because I know first-hand that they're free of financial trauma and they're finally able to smile like they mean it.

ABOUT CAROLINE LABOUR

Caroline Labour is a Money Mindset Expert, specialising in showing entrepreneurs how to break through their money blocks so they can have the amazing business and lifestyle they desire.

Following a solid 17-year career as a Certified Practicing Accountant, Caroline faced major burnout after years of climbing the corporate ladder. This led Caroline to discover her passion for Money Mindset coaching and she established Personal Empowerment Academy. Caroline left her senior corporate job in 2018, having set up several successful online programs, which allows her to travel, live the highly sought-after laptop lifestyle and spend quality time at home with her beautiful dogs: Fuji & Daisy.

Caroline is passionate about helping others tap into their highest potential and she is a strong advocate of living an enriched and abundant life. Caroline is based in Sydney and is also a professional vocalist with her retro & pop band, The D'Lights.



**Nadine Lajoie, Speaker, Best-Selling Author and
Business/Tax Consultant**

“Smile in your helmet, even when life feels like
180 mph!”

SMILING AND BEATING THE ODDS AT 180 MPH!

BY NADINE LAJOIE

From suicidal to champion in many areas of my life, in 2006 I discovered my mission, my passion, my spiritual quest: inspiring people to never give-up in life! I was so negative because of my job, the weather, my ex-boyfriend, my teenage years, the boring city I was born in, or anything and everything else I could complain about, my life was miserable. I was miserable because I made it so, because I thought so. I was always focusing on the bad things! “What you focus on expands” as the saying goes.

Later on, after a lot of personal growth, positive books and seminars, I understood that in many areas of our lives, we have limiting beliefs, bad habits and lack of knowledge. At one point, whatever our skills, experiences or results are, we all hit the glass ceiling or we don't even try hard enough or we simply give up too easily. This is what we have to avoid at all costs!

Piano and volleyball saved my life

I was always unhappy even if I was good at school, good parents, good family and I excelled in everything: finished 4th in piano in Quebec, 9th in the Canadian Volleyball Championship, even after breaking my knee 5 times and despite my 5'1". But no, I was not a setter, I was a smasher and had 24" of vertical while average women had about 18". I was playing and training in a league where 5 of my friends made it to the Olympics in Athens in 2004. In the Canadian Championship, we lost against Guylaine Dumont and Annie Martin, who lost the Bronze Medal to Misty May and Kerry Walsh in 2004.

My dream was crushed in 2000 because of my 5th knee injury: I stopped playing in 2001 after my ACL reconstructed surgery and 2 meniscus, giving up a big part of my life and one of the 2 passions that saved my life in 1995, volleyball and piano.

I was depressed and didn't know how I can replace this passion, so the day before my surgery, I bought a motorcycle, just in case I needed another dream to go through life. I wanted a motorcycle at 16 years old, I forced my dad to buy a Virago 750, so I can practice and take my license. Unfortunately, I dropped the bike in my 1st ride and my dad

said no way: I was too small, barely touched the ground and was only 100 lbs at that time, he said it was too dangerous!

Finally, at 30 years old, I bought my 1st motorcycle and I even had to store it in my living room for the winter, got my Christmas lights around it since I didn't have enough space for a Christmas tree. I made a lot of people smile and laugh at me for that. But in my mind, I had to do whatever it takes, which is one of the major skills of a champion.

MAKE IT OR BREAK IT

Over 65% of people think about suicide at one point in their life. Many have good reasons like mental problems, bad family, abuse, health issues, divorce, bankruptcy and many other reasons, but I was one of them with absolutely no reason! Everybody made me feel even more guilty. Supposedly since the age of 4 or 5 years old I was saying: "Life is bad, if life doesn't get better by the age of 25, I'll kill myself." I tried for years to understand why I had suicidal thoughts, but I came to the conclusion that when you have the hole inside yourself, it doesn't matter. You cannot explain it or people cannot understand it, so you isolate yourself even more. That big hole was hard to fill, so this is why

I had 2 major passions. I needed to occupy my spirit and “freeze” my brain so bad!

In 1995, I became sick for 3 weeks and lost 18 pounds because of a bad pneumonia. That last night, 7 days before my 25th birthday, I was watching TV (usually never do) because I was trying to escape my life. I was crying so much! That was a show against suicide and the TV host (famous Janette Bertrand in Quebec) said: “You can do it but you need to call at least one friend, family or SOS suicide lines, before you do it!” So I finally called my mom at 2-3am and she really listened to me, let me vent, without lecturing me that I had no reasons and she made me agree to call her again the next day.

I hated my job as a secretary at \$18k a year, instead of being an actuary at \$180k, my boyfriend and I were breaking up and I needed to find enough money to buy back his 50% of our house. My dream was to live and work in Australia or Los Angeles, but I was living in Montreal, in 5 feet of snow. Not so much about my dream to travel the world, with beaches and sunsets... I thought that life was so painful, I was done! Luckily, there is no coincidence in life and this event became the turning point of my life. My mom listened to me with her heart and her soul and she saved my life.

Your darkest moments become your mission

I never realized until years later, that the darkest moments of my life will become the fuel for my mission, passion and road to success. This is the main reason why I started to become a speaker around the world for schools, women and business events, wrote different books and built coaching programs, to “IN-Power” (1) people to never give up their life or their dreams. I never became an artist with my piano and singing like I wanted to. I was hoping to replace Celine Dion (I was born and raised a few hours from her) when she sang for the Pope. I thought she would be sick and I can raise my hand and replace her at the last minute, since I was there in the first few rows! But no... I decided to always sing during my training, radio or TV interviews, so I can share my gift and touch the hearts and souls of people, while realizing my dreams.

“If you stop dreaming, you start dying”.

From there, I finally went to the road of recovery and decreased being so bitter and dwelling into the negativity that I never got a job in actuary after my Bachelor Degree in 1992. I put so much effort into it, but it was the recession 1990-1991 and the worst timing again. I saw a small

ad in the Newspaper saying something like “Become your own boss, flexible schedule and good money”, I went to the interview and decided to embark on a new journey in the financial industry, with a lot of training, sales classes and positive people at the office. I started smiling again, had new goals and dreams and focused on a positive outcome. I was able to see myself to be successful again, in math and finances.

After only 3.5 years owning my financial business, I was able to help many wealthy clients, and my actuary bachelor degree increased my credibility with them, their CPA and their attorney. I became a millionaire at age 41, because of one of my small clients: her husband was a multi-millionaire and he was impressed by how much service I was giving to her and my level of knowledge. This client brought me over \$125,000 in commissions in one day, because he saved \$10M in a legal tax shelter with \$1M of his money, and he would get 39% more money at his retirement. This strategy is always a win-win-win situation, and when people are in their 40's, we can even see double revenues at retirement. Unfortunately, because it is complicated, probably less than 10-20% of the brokers understand it and most of the CPA's never go deeper to find out why this program is one of the best solutions on the market.

They were so impressed about this new “Tax FREE/Saving Strategy” I explained to them, the CPA and lawyer started to refer me other rich clients, which boosted not only my bank account, but my confidence, knowledge and networking skills, and here I was in the high-end and multimillionaire clientele. In life, it is always about who you know, what you know and how you use it to serve people. I won 12 awards by being in the Top 10% in Canada with Peak Financial Group. Therefore, I was able to semi-retire at age 36, sold my house and my Lexus SC430, to buy a 23' Motorhome and realized other dreams: racing and traveling!

Beat the Odds to become a Champion

Now that I was semi-retired with a lot of time on my hand, I decided to buy a RV. I was determined to do my 1st solo 4-month trip in the USA; I traveled 21 States, drove 10,000 miles, bought a second motorcycle and raced on motorcycle race tracks I never imagined possible on the National circuit. I became a Champion Motorcycle Road Racer at 180 mph. In Canada, I won the “Women's RACE Championship” and in the USA, against 75 men, I finished 3rd at Daytona bike week, the first time since about 1982 a woman was even on the grid! A New York Team recruited me for the 6-hour Endurance Races during the summer on

the National Level (3 riders). They picked me up at the nearest airport, and if we didn't crash the bike, I could use it for the Sunday solo races. I finished a few races in 2nd or 3rd position against men, so this was enough to earn me a spot at the Grand National Finale at Road Atlanta, and this is where I placed 9th in a National WERA Championship against probably thousands of men who wished they would qualified.

In total over the years, I won over 50 trophies. If I would not have broken my knee at volleyball and not having a job in actuary, I would have never been able to pivot in my professional and personal life like I did! We never know where life will bring us to our next step, as long as we stay open and willing to move forward, learn and grow in all possible ways.

Just remember, I never drove a motorcycle before I was 30 years old! I joined the last women's race of the season when I was 33 years old: this was my 1st women's race ever and I finished on the podium with a 3rd place, even if the other women practiced all summer long. During my 8 years of racing, I broke 1 collarbone, had 4 concussions and probably another 15-20 crashes. My parents were so happy when I stopped racing in 2011. There is nothing like the adrenaline of motorcycle racing,

the racetracks, the friends I made over the years, the compromises and practices it took me to get there, and all the amazing memories I cherished the most. To this day, I still turn my head when I hear the sound of a motorcycle, and I still have dreams about racing almost every week. I miss it so much and as I always say: "You can get your life out of motorcycle racing, but you cannot get the motorcycle racing out of your heart!"

Motorcycle racing and traveling forced me to start speaking English around 2007. I lived like a hippie for 4 years between my 23' RV and my 8' X 12' back office in Montreal. I applied for my immigration, got denied twice and eventually got 3 Visa and 2 extensions. After this long 13-year battle, I finally got my permanent resident card in 2019. It took me that long, even if I started my Fix & Flip real estate business, hired over 50 contractors in the USA and spent so much money into the economy, it was never enough! What a frustrating road, but way too often, life is unfair, the struggles are endless and you wonder where is the light at the end of the tunnel? Is life really worth living?

That long spiritual quest brought me to my next project: speaking on the biggest stages, like TEDx and the California Women's Conference.

I spoke worldwide (USA, Europe, India, Africa and Canada), along with many of my teachers, mentors and idols, including Les Brown, T. Harv Eker, Marianne Williamson, Tom Hopkins, Mark Victor Hensen, Jack Canfield, Stedman Graham and many more. I was featured in the same magazine as Oprah Winfrey, Donald Trump and Zig Zigler. Not so bad for a farmer's daughter who barely spoke English and didn't know one soul when she came to the USA, right?

Life comes back full circle

Finances and mathematics were my first dreams when I studied in Actuarial Sciences, and now the real estate market is too high for Fix & Flips, I decided in 2018 to go back in the finance industry to help clients again, to save taxes, protect families from financial disasters and show them how to create their FREE retirement accounts and SAFE money growth. All my dreams merged together. The moral of this story is that you need to be flexible and adapt to different versions of your dreams, you never know where it will lead you in your journey.

It is especially important for women because the majority of women become poor after retirement or when their husband dies, the nursing

homes are filled with 75% women (more costs for long term care and health services), and unfortunately, the Social Security is insufficient. The sad reality is that their pension plans (if any) are way less than men (because of raising kids and income inequality is still existing), they are more averse to taking risks, they are more emotional during market crashes and they don't prepare as well for their financial future!

We need to reverse this trend, and this is why my new focus is to speak on this topic for conventions and groups, while meeting one woman at a time to give them access to new products they don't even know exist. Everyone can eliminate risks, eliminate fees, eliminate emotions and still get decent returns when the market is good, but can avoid the negative returns in the next market crash, exactly like the rich people do forever... Usually, the rich people get richer and the poor or middle class people get poorer. I'm so happy I can help regular and middle class people, entrepreneurs and small business owners now!

From 180mph to 8 knots ~ The 5 Secrets of a High Achiever

After all that, I thought it will be hard to find another passion, even impossible to top off that adrenaline of 180 mph, but 3 years later, I

discovered a new sport: Yacht Racing at 8 knots! This transition is really funny and makes people smile a lot during my training. In 2014, I put all my soul and focus into this new sport and, surrounded by the right people and best coaches, I raced on 4 champion sail boats in my first year. After only 10 months of racing, I was coaching other women to improve their racing skills; I switched from 180 mph to 8 knots successfully!

I share more of those stories in my book “Win The Race of Life, With Balance and Passion at 180 mph” along with many tools and strategies that I learned along the way. Through breakdowns and breakthroughs, competition and determination, struggles and accomplishments, life taught me a lot and I want to show you how to develop the champion mindset, with the “5 Secrets of a High Achiever”. Once you apply this in one area of your life, you can become a champion quickly in other areas. Here they are:

- 1- Focus
- 2- Adrenalin
- 3- Discipline
- 4- Coaching
- 5- Practice

The road is never easy for you or me! It took me tons of seminars on personal growth, communication and business, books, CD's, meditation, friendship, coaching, putting my Ego aside and asking for help, to get through my endless challenges. Every element was essential for my “recovery medicine”. I had to change my belief system, surround myself with better friends and colleagues, but mostly learn from the best coaches, “La Crème de la Crème”, as we say in French.

Even if so many people are discouraging you and telling you to forget about your dreams, don't believe them! Surround yourself with the right people, the high achievers of this world and the movers and shakers like you meet here in this book. You can improve your life like a motorcycle racer: one corner (step) at a time. First, you need to start the race, stop being on the sideline or chasing perfection! You can win and get through the finish line but you need to focus on every detail, all the daily habits, and all the knowledge along the way, one little step at a time. With the right plan, tools and strategies from the best coaches, you can accomplish anything!

You need to dance with your bike, smile in your helmet, hear your breath, even at 180 mph! Experience the “grace” like athletes do, be

in the “eye of the tornado”, get out of your comfort zone, ride to the edge without crashing, and get back on track when you crash, while rebuilding your confidence. You need to get that “do whatever it takes” attitude and never give up. Keep pushing in life, like I did and beat the odds for yourself while smiling!

(1) “IN-Power(TM)” is a world that I invented, meaning 3 things: empower, inspire and go inside yourself to discover your inner-power.

ABOUT NADINE LAJOIE

Featured in Forbes, USA Today, ABC, FOX, CBS Money Watch, Nadine Lajoie has a Bachelor in Actuarial Sciences and is a Business/Tax Consultant, International Speaker, Real Estate Mentor, Ex-Champion Motorcycle Racer, and #1 Best-Selling Author with her book “Win the Race of Life, with Balance and Passion at 180 mph!”.

With 31 years in Finance, Nadine is consulting and training businesses, entrepreneurs, realtors and CPAs about “The 45 Unknown Tax Saving Strategies”. She was featured in magazines, including one with Oprah Winfrey and Zig Ziglar, hundreds of Radio & TV Shows and she spoke on many stages in many Countries, including TEDx, California Womens' Conference & India Entrepreneur Bootcamp, among Top Speakers like Jamie Lee Curtis, Les Brown, Tom Hopkins, Marianne Williamson, Mark Victor Hansen, John Gray, T. Harv Eker, etc.

Books that changed your life:

French: Ash and you shall Receive

– Pierre Morency

The Monkey who sold his Ferrari – Robin Sherma

Who moved my cheese – Dr. Spencer Johnson

Song that inspires you

You've got a friend - Carol King

Your Hero

Les Brown

Quote you live by

“Get out of your comfort zone,
smile in your helmet and live on the edge.
If not, your competitor will pass you!”



Mamie Lamley

“A Smile is **S**imple, **M**emorable, **I**nspirational,
Loveable, and **E**nergetic”

SMILES OF INSPIRATION & INFLUENCE

BY MAMIE-JEAN LAMLEY

Yesterday I smiled, and the world smiled with me...

The Honor...

On that prestigious day in June 1960, President Eisenhower and First Lady Mamie Genova Eisenhower stepped out of a military transport and into the arms of the people of Hawaii.

At 6:29 am, June 20th, 1960, I was born. My father declared, “this daughter of mine, she is destined for greatness.” My mom smiled, and two days later, they officially named me Mamie Jean Valdez.

Ohana is Family...

Ohana is Family. We don't leave anyone behind. We respect our self,

others and our elders. Be in integrity and treat others with kindness. This is our Aloha spirit!

Other than Ohana, my parents made sure to put education and learning at the top of our priorities. I took pride in my schooling and being a straight “A” student with perfect attendance. Responsibilities such as Student Body Secretary, Captain of the Track and Cross-Country Team, Honor Student and Winning the title of “Most inspirational” throughout middle and high school made me proud. Majority of the boys on the football, basketball, and baseball teams were my best friends, not someone I dated. I was an avid boogie boarder, enjoyed watching other people surf, and when I was not at the beach, I dreamed of traveling the world, reading books, and planning my next adventure. My motto: “I’ve got places to go, things to do, and a whole lot of people to meet!” My dream, the Olympics. My career, a traditional elementary school teacher. My best attribute, my positive outlook on life and my smile!

George...

My first “shift” in life came when a student with disabilities beat me with a chain. I got a few welts, a bump on my head, and road rash when I fell. We were both escorted to the nurse. Waiting for mom to arrive, I

listened to the gentle cooing from the boy on the other bed. The principal spoke to both parents. Then they asked me if I had any questions. My attention went to the boy who was now in the principal’s office, he looked so sad and misunderstood. I decided to take the opportunity and approached him. He flinched as I came closer. I put my hand on my heart and he gave me a big smile, thumped his chest and said, “My name is George!” I smiled back and said, “See you George!”

A few years later, I volunteered for Special Olympics. I checked athletes in and escorted them to the starting line. I also helped with the awards. The 100-meter race was my favorite competition because I was one of the fastest AAU—sprinters on the Leeward coastline. To my surprise, there was George. As I took his hand to escort him to the starting line, he gave me the biggest smile and squeezed my hand. “I got this,” yelled George, as he threw his arms up in the excitement and jumped up and down just like “Rocky” did when winning a boxing match. I smiled, slapped him a high-five, and shouted, “You are a winner, George. I’ll see you at the finish line.”

George stepped up to the starting line. The starting gun went off, and the eight runners ran forward. George was in the lead. At the 50-meter

mark, one of the runners fell. George stopped in midstride and turned around. Without thinking, he ran back to help his fallen friend. The crowd went silent as George dusted his friend off. They locked hands; George pointed his friend in the direction of the finish line, and together they ran. The crowd went wild, and the judges put up the finish tape so the boys could complete their race. George finished in 7th place with a massive smile on his face. Although he did not win a medal, he wore his ribbon proudly on his chest. As I walked away, I knew, without a doubt, my degree would be in Education - Special Education!

The Olympics

The Olympics were a part of my dream. Florence Griffith Joyner, my hero!

I made the ALL State Track Team three years in a row. In 1976 I went to the AAU Championships in California, Washington, and Canada. Olympic Track and Field Trainer Jim Santos was one of our celebrity coaches in California.

At the Track Meet in Canada, we saw some fantastic athletes. My butterflies in my tummy were working overtime. Yet pride, excitement, and

exhilaration ran through my veins. We were all getting ready for our first event when I heard the call of my name to report to the 100-meter hurdles. "Coach," I called out, "Why are they calling me to run the hurdles?"

"That's your event; get down to the field," he pointed, reading his clipboard.

"Coach, I don't run the hurdles, my sister does, and she isn't here," I replied. He looked up at me in such a surprise. Then he said, "If you drop out of this race, our relay team won't be able to run."

I stared at him as the "F" word slipped out of my mouth.

Coach asked, "Can you run the hurdles?"

"Yeah, but that's not my best race," I yelled. I could read it in my coaches' faces as the last call for participants came over the loudspeaker. My original coach, Coach Thompson, had a family emergency, so he went home. This coach didn't know me at all. As he looked at me with a "dumbfounded" expression, I pulled off my sweats, put on my "whatever it takes attitude," and picked up my starting blocks.

The starter gave the command, the gun went off, and I took off running. I was in the first position when I jumped my last hurdle. As my foot contacted dirt, a sharp pain went through the arch of my foot. It was as if someone had taken my foot and wrung it like a towel. I completed the race in third place. I never saw the end of the track meet. The ambulance arrived and whisked me to the hospital. From there, I boarded a plane back home.

From High School to Published Author to Rhode Scholar

Life changed for me after Canada. There were no more interviews, no more scholarships for me, and after wearing a leg cast for most of the summer, I did a reality check on what I was going to do after my Senior Year of High School. Instead of moping around, I signed up to be the student aid for Mr. Sanemitsu and his special education class. Inspired by the students, I took the opportunity to think outside of the box. We engineered a floating device so a student with a club foot could compete in swimming. I developed a pictorial learning technique to teach my students to read. Mr. Sanemitsu commissioned me to write a curriculum book to help several of his students with reading, writing, and math. He paid me \$645 to create handouts, worksheets, and activities to enhance their learning. The curriculum writing then led to winning

a short story contest, and the title was “Morning Walk with Dad.” I now was a published author!

Graduating with honors, five Universities offered me full-ride Scholarships. I settled for the University of Hawaii Manoa and accepted the prestigious Leon J. Rhodes Scholarship for academic and community achievement. In four short years, I graduated with honors and a Bachelor of Education Degree.

Special Olympics “If I Cannot Win, Let me be Brave in the Attempt!”

The woman stood at the sink washing her hands meticulously. Her hair was disheveled, there was a run in her nylon stockings, yet her clothes were of distinction and class. She looked at me as I entered the door and said, “Hello.”

“Aloha,” I responded, and we engaged in a conversation that lasted two hours. She was well-spoken, charismatic, fascinating, poised, straightforward, and intense. When I finally asked her name, someone called into the restroom, “Eunice are you in there?”

My heart skipped a beat as I whispered under my breath, “Oh my God!” Eunice called out, “I’ll be out in a minute Dan.

I tried to excuse myself, and she would not have it. She took out her card, told me to call in the next week and she would introduce me to her “Let’s Play to Grow” program that needed implementation into the schools in the state of Hawaii. I stood there, not able to speak. She touched my chin, gave me a smile, and said as she left the restroom, “I’ll see you in the training. You pass this class, and I’ll be seeing you in higher places!” Tears filled my eyes, as I watched the woman, Eunice Kennedy Shriver walk out with her head held high, and her card in my hand.

A week later and true to her word, Eunice Kennedy Shriver answered my call. After 45-minutes, I’m named the coordinator of her Let’s Play to Grow Program in the state of Hawaii, with full funding. She sets up the appointment with Easter Seals Society, the Adaptive Physical Education Program on the UHM campus, and introduced me to the Board of Directors of Hawaii Special Olympics as their Volunteer Coordinator.

For 30 proud years, I served with the Special Olympics programs. From Volunteer Coordinator to Director of Coaching, to Director of

Training, and finally Director of Area Development and Outreach. I worked with all branches of the military, over 20,000 volunteers, 12,000 Special Olympic Athletes, and certified over 3000 coaches in my life-time. I was one of very few certified to teach in 150 countries and one of the first inductees into the Special Olympics, Hawaii Hall of Fame.

Over the years I learned that although I did not fulfill my dream of running in the Olympics, I have surely come home to witness the joy of a true champion as I watched a girl with no limbs finish a 25-meter free swim. Watched as 12 Hawaii athletes won gold medals in the 1985 Park City, Utah World Special Olympic Winter Games in Speed Skating, Figure Skating, and Downhill Skiing. Even prouder to walk into the Yale Bowl for opening ceremonies to a crowd of 70,000+ onlookers. This experience, priceless.

War in our time...

The war in the Middle East, opened a new paradigm. All my life, I believed Hawaii was a “tourist” State. However, with the deployment of our Military Troops to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the reality became “Hawaii was a Military State.”

When the troops left, communities went bankrupt, the rental market plummeted, and the investments we made in rental properties sucked us dry. Our tenants were all soldiers. In an instant, Landon and I inherited the guardianship of five children. The soldiers had no time to get them to family in the continental United States. It took two weeks to reunite the children with other family members.

Without any income, we soon depleted our life savings, and had already tapped into our retirement. Depression overcame my husband, and it was a struggle to survive. I took on a Physical Education Teachers position during the day, and an overnight part-time job at Walmart. I stopped in at my parent's house each day to check in with Dad who had leukemia and rare bone cancer. I did this for a whole year until I collapsed from exhaustion. On November 29th, 1992 my father passed away.

Dad's death was a wake-up call for us, and if we didn't do something, our marriage would be another statistic. We simplified our living expenses. I quit working at the School, and Landon found a new interest in a Direct Sales Company, and by 1993 we were back on our feet and rising to the top as leaders. We built a team of business partners that span the globe. We had business in all 50 states, Philippines, Japan, and Taiwan. We traveled

to Utah three times a month to visit our warehouse and take our partners to meet the owners. When the company wanted to open Korea, we were on a plane with the wife of a neural surgeon. Opened an office and built a team of a 1000 quickly. When word came that Thailand and Malaysia were about to open, we found a key player and on opening day, during a presentation I gave, we signed up over 997 partners into our business in less than 90 minutes. For a year we continued to grow our Asian Market.

The King and I...

Thailand was bittersweet. We built a massive global business and in a blink of an eye, it was gone. My family had just arrived three weeks ago, when my partners closed down our business accounts, and left me and my family in Thailand with only the \$1040 we had in our pocket and \$9999k that we had just deposited into a Thai Bank. Most people would have given up by now. Landon and I had no choice. The good news, our Ohana was together.

To clear my head, I went for a walk and stopped by a sweet shop for my favorite dessert. Have you heard the saying "When a door closes, another one opens?" Well, another one was about to swing open and hit me on the butt.

Kuhn Wanwipha, the owner of Chatwittaya Bilingual School, greeted me with a smile. "Hello, Miss Mamie. I've been meaning to call you." I smiled and she continued, "I wanted to see how long you are staying, and if you would be interested in a project here in Thailand."

My heart skipped a beat, and in less than three hours, Kuhn Wanwipha had sent twelve men and three trucks to pack up the rental home we lived in and moved us into one of her town homes behind of her School. When everything was in its place, one of the men handed me a note and heavy brown paper bag. The note read:

Dear Mamie, I hope the home is comfortable and to your liking. In the paper bag is the money I am paying you to help file for "International School Status." A car will be waiting for you and your children tomorrow morning at 8am. Please bring them by School and we will fit them with a uniform and provide them with the supplies needed to begin School on Monday.

Yours Truly,
Kuhn Wanwipha

Landon opened the paper bag and gasped. Inside of the bag was over \$10K in American money. From that moment forward, we were grateful and thankful for this blessing in disguise!

Life in Thailand was full of surprises. Our children learned to read, write and speak Thai in under a year. We traveled north, south, east and west of the country. We spent time at beautiful beaches such as Pattaya, Phuket, Koh Samui and Krabi. Visits to the Queens Elephant Hospital, crocodile farms, Chiang Mai to see silkworms, and various temples and palaces across Thailand were just a few of the adventures our kids experienced.

The invitation to the Palace to meet the King and Princess of Thailand was my most precious memory of Thailand. Instead of walking as most foreigners do, I crawled just like a Thai citizen. I spoke to the King about our English Program and did a demo for the Princess. By the time I got home, I thought something had happened to one of my kids. The village we lived in had surrounded our home. People were everywhere. As the car pulled out front of the house, cheers rang through the air. When I stepped out of the car, everyone bowed in unison. Pride and respect shown on my families faces as I entered our

home. The television was on, and a replay of my visit to the palace was playing. Priceless.

Cancer does not equal death...

Our family came back to Hawaii in July of 1999. What I did not expect was to go through a routine check-up and find that I had stage four cervical cancer. To be clear, I am not a cancer survivor. I am a Thriver. I am alive, healthy, and grateful that I took control of my life and was a partner in the decision of what treatment I would and would not do. I owned my attitude, my mindset, my spirit, and my right to choose. I surrounded myself with positive people who loved and supported me. I chose the best female physician combined with an amazing Naturopath. I changed my eating habits, I read uplifting books, and enjoyed coloring mandalas, meditating and walking on the beach. I went through six surgeries and by the grace of God and Choice was cancer free by January 1, 2001.

For Today...

I am committed to moving servant leaders from invisible to invincible.

I stand for freedom & opportunity, culture & traditions, relationships & connections, and self-mastery & Expertise. I will continue to ignite, inspire, and influence others to find their Heroic Voice, their stories, and their passions to speaking it into existence with clarity, confidence and purpose. You can count on me to be there with an open mind to listen, guide, and empower you to act. I invite you to take a “Heroes Journey” to make a global difference.

What my future holds...

My mission is to ignite, inspire and influence 21 million global impact leaders to lead with integrity and strengthen their communications to generate intentional support, money and reputation. I empower people to clearly define their vision, values, and vows to align their mission with clarity, purpose, precision, mastery and connection.

ABOUT MAMIE-JEAN LAMLEY

Ignite | Inspire | Influence

Mamie is committed to moving servant leaders from “Invisible to INVINCIBLE!” She stands for culture & tradition while integrating innovative, industry disruptive technology and personality science to build trust, create lasting relationships while providing systems and structure to build communities who are people-focused and profit-driven. Today, Mamie skillfully masterminds and trains with corporations, business owners and entrepreneurs.

Mamie is a Founder of Empowerment on Fire and Heroic Voice. Her legacy is to influence 21 million global impact leaders to lead with integrity and to authentically communicate with precision, mastery, and connection to generate a return of investment in the form of money, support, and reputation.

Hawaii Special Olympics honored her as a Hall of Fame Inductee. Codebreaker Technologies® recognizes her as its International Nurturing Icon. Women Economic Forum named her an International Award-Winning Speaker and an “Iconic Woman Making a Difference in the World.”

Books that changed your life:

Think & Grow Rich, Napoleon Hill

If It's Going to Be, It's up to Me, Robert H. Schuller

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Steven R. Covey

The Four Agreements, Don Miguel Ruiz

Start with Why, Simon Sinek

Why They Buy, Cheri Tree

Movies that changed your life:

Jodha Akbar

The Blind Side

The Karate Kid

Song that inspires you

Thank you by Edo and Jo

Your Hero

My Dad, Valentine Tihano Valdez

My dad had a fourth-grade education, and my first example of what a life-long learner is all about.

My mom completed her GED after giving birth to me and became our expert in providing the "Big Picture" to everyone. Both parents were logical and encouraged us to stretch our learning. They built a foundation of trust and honor and expected us to know the difference between right and wrong. Culturally, they passed on our Hawaiian traditions to respect each other, to all get along, to stand our ground and when to be quiet too. Most importantly, to always do our best, be proud of who we are, and to live in alignment with what we stand for.

Quote you live by

"When you want to go fast, go alone. When you want to go far, go together!"



Mistie Layne

“A beautiful person with a beautiful smile gives us reason to smile.”

SMILING AS A 3%ER

BY MISTIE LAYNE

I am a survivor! They told me only 3% would ever make it. My newly realized purpose in life is to create a global transparency movement because I believe transparency is necessary to educate others, teaching us to JUDGE less and MENTOR more. What is transparency you ask? To be transparent implies openness, communication and accountability, without skew. I went from living as a successful mother of two on my way to becoming a surgeon to facing a forty year prison sentence and spent many years hiding my life in fear of judgement. Once I realized my life experiences could be life changing and life saving for others, I discovered how valuable transparency is because it provides a spiritual cleansing or freedom like no other. Through each of us stepping into our raw truth and sharing our adversity, we can possibly prevent what happened to me from happening to others. Nobody else needs to die!

I grew up in a small southeast Texas town a pretty spoiled, not wanting for much; confident, competitive and successful at most everything attempted. Growing up competing in the Texas beauty pageant system, I learned at an early age the power winning gave me and used it to propel my every day competitive drive. Unfortunately, when I didn't succeed or win, I equated it as failure and grew insecure and put undue pressure on myself to be perfect, people- please and seek constant validation from others. With aggressive and driven expectations, I was sure to have ups, downs and hiccups. Unfortunately, little did I realize the perfectionism pressure I put on myself would actually catapult me into a lifetime quest for something I would never find; happiness through validation from others. I hadn't learned happiness comes from within, but I sure made a mess of my life learning that lesson. Thankfully, my MESS eventually became my MESSage.

I set my sights on becoming a surgeon around age thirteen and developed and worked my plan to reach my goals. I married my college beau and we started our family young at age twenty-one. We had two beautiful blue eyed daughters and lived a happy life, me, the girls, him and Budweiser (his best friend.) Eight years later, I had positioned myself for success with Bachelor of Science degrees in Chemistry, Psychology

and Nuclear Medicine. Although I was at the brink of fulfilling my lifelong dream of becoming a surgeon, a volatile series of events and choices prevented my dream from becoming reality. After a ten year marriage where I witnessed alcoholism slowly kidnap my husband and hold him hostage, I found out about his many affairs and that he had gotten another woman pregnant. Adultery ripped our family apart, leaving me devastated, angry, resentful, depressed and insecure. I internalized this failure as my fault, convincing myself I wasn't good, smart, or pretty enough and set out on a quest searching for loyalty and validation from anyone that I was.

I found a new best friend that I could depend on, a friend that was there for me day and night, no matter what. My new best friend and I were inseparable, but soon my friend, Cocaine, became jealous and no longer wanted to share me with my job, family or friends. At age thirty-one, educated and a mother of two, I didn't respect my moment of choice the first time I did a line of cocaine, and that choice became my lifetime of decisions. As addiction is a progressive disease, lines of cocaine turned into rocks and I became a full blown crack addict spiraling out of control and soon became unrecognizable to my family and friends. This was the beginning of the end of the Mistie everyone

knew, respected and loved. I had crossed over from reality and now merely existed, no longer coherently PRESENT in the world.

As the law of physics states, what goes up must come down and after the high wore off, I was still running from all the same insecurities, anger, resentments and denials, but now I was a crack addict too! To further escalate things, I fell in love (so I thought) with my drug dealer. He and I were determined we could kick the habit and did the geographical cure by moving from Albuquerque, New Mexico to Austin, Texas. We were able to stay “clean” a few months, but both lived on edge as our cravings were insanely intense. He became angry with me and went into a rage one night and hit me for the first time. I was devastated as I had not seen this side of him emerge before. I did the right thing and kicked him out, but was too ashamed and embarrassed to go to the hospital. Two hours later he returned with dope and knew it was the pain reliever I needed for my eye which was completely swollen shut, and also knew that I would give in and let him back in the house. This became a viscous cycle of him inflicting pain, then being the hero bringing me the anecdote. I used to judge women that allowed men to beat them because I thought they were just weak or never understood true love. Never say never because until we walk in those shoes,

we have no idea what master manipulators abusers are. They prey on every little insecurity we have while convincing us they love and care about us. Our life became a roller coaster of him loving and wanting me one day, then the next he beat me and called me horrible names. I couldn't keep up and eventually lost my own identity. It wasn't until I was physically separated from him by incarceration that I realized I didn't even know what my favorite food was anymore, or what music I liked to listen to because he dictated every aspect of my life. Honestly, through everything I have endured and survived, domestic abuse has left the deepest scars as they are rooted deep down into my soul and existence.

I was trying to balance the façade of a normal life, hold on to my job in nuclear medicine, and keep my addiction a secret, all while I was submerged in abuse, loss of integrity and criminal activity. As all addictions do, it progressed and I could no longer hold on to reality and realized I needed help. Finally, I reached out to my family and asked to go to rehab. They knew something had happened to me beyond depression after my divorce, but they had no idea the monster of addiction we were all facing with crack cocaine. I kept hearing, “no, not mistie!” and it would only anger me as If I were some immortal, incapable of

mistakes. Just once, I didn't want to be on a pedestal with all the high expectations. I wanted the relief of FAILING to escape the perfectionism I lived by. I had successfully hidden the abuse and addiction under my tiara, sash and fixed smile up to this point, always getting away with things because I didn't "look" the part. But now, finally, it was out in the open. I was excited to go to rehab as I was convinced it would instantly save me. Sadly, I was wrong! Rehab only works when we are ready to face our fears and willing to do the work consistently enough to allow change. Although I wanted to stop, begged God, bartered and pled, I was unsuccessful, time and time again.

Insanity is defined as continuing with the same behavior yet expecting different results. By this definition, going back to my abuser time and time again proved insane. He would get off the drugs, Bible up and use scripture against me to keep me in his reign, guilt me to stay because we had a son together. I ran across states in hiding, only to be found and convinced God had changed him. Eventually, his fist would become my dictator and keep me under his control. How did I go from a Texas beauty queen, full of confidence and ambition, to this dead end street? I loved and yearned for my three kids and meant it each time I promised to get help. I truly wanted to be a better mom, the mom they

knew before, the mom that made them the center of my world instead of hiding behind a locked bathroom door getting high. They didn't deserve this life, neither did I.

September 18, 2007 is when it happened. I will never forget this day, nor will I ever want to as this is the day my life was saved. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time, doing the wrong things with the wrong people when I was attacked and robbed. I sped away to escape the danger my family warned would one day take my life, and lost control of my car when a brick was thrown at my window. Instantly, I flinched and jerked the wheel which caused me to slide sideways down the road and slam into a parked vehicle. What I didn't know, nor could have prevented, was that the parked vehicle hit a woman standing in her yard, knocked her under her house and killed her. Yes, I killed her! I had been up four days without sleep and slipped in and out of consciousness but vividly remember waking up in the emergency room with my mom hovering over me weeping. I looked up and said "its ok momma, I'm not hurt, let's go home to Austin (my son)." She replied "baby, don't you know what has happened?" " It was when I reached up to console her that I felt the cold angry steel around my wrist, chaining me to the gurney and realized something was very wrong. My next recollection

was waking up a few days later in jail and feeling guilty with every breath I took. I didn't feel I deserved to live, know if I wanted to live, or even how to live with the cocaine coursing through my body. This was my absolute rock bottom. When I saw my arraignment papers which screamed "forty year sentence" at me, I instantly thought of my kids. I knew I could do the time, but could they? All the should of, would of and could of's started playing with my emotions. Regret, remorse and depression quickly took over.

I received a letter from my oldest daughter Lauren encouraging me to forgive myself, reminding me it was an accident. She told me to write everything down that was haunting me and keeping me awake at night and pray over it to let it go. It took me three days to compile the long list of wrongs I had done during my ten year hiatus from life. After releasing the initial pain, I was able to find a little solace and began writing my life story. I didn't compile an agenda, outline, or even intend to write a book, I merely started emotionally vomiting thru my pen onto the paper which was order from jail commissary. Seven months later I had written my now best-selling book, What Goes Up. I truly believe writing my story provided the therapy that saved my life and provided focus to survive while incarcerated.

My prosecutor visited me and flipped through the stained and tattered pages of my life. He felt empathy and knew the cocaine had robbed me of ten years of my life, believing I was merely a product of an addiction. He reduced my sentence to Negligent Homicide, with a max of five years. I served two and one half years and returned home to my family to start rebuilding my life. As we heal and work through our addiction, our inner circles are still stuck in the addiction right where we left it. They still saw me as a liar, manipulator, conniver and thief. It took patience and time to rebuild trusting relationships rebuilt on transparency and accountability. Now that I presented "safe", they could let their anger come lashing out at me. This was a difficult time as their anger alone made me want to run right back out and self-medicate the pain again. As addicts, we go through remorse and beat ourselves up over wrongs we have done far worse than anyone else ever could. However, we must allow them to get their anger out as part of their healing process as well. I would advise a mediator through this sensitive time to allow constructive and healing progress to take place.

Life felt good and hopeful and I was delighted to hear my first grandbaby was due on September 18th. I thought, wow, God is replacing a life with the life I stole. My sweet grandbaby Eliana was born that day

with an oxygen deprivation which left her with grade III HIE, severe brain damage. She is blind, deaf, doesn't suck or swallow, has a g tube for feedings into her stomach, and can't hold her temperature. For the first few months of her life I felt disconnected because I was letting the devil convince me it was my fault, my punishment. I mean the date, 9/18, that couldn't be a coincidence, right? Then I realized that when I was in rehab they told me only 3% would ever make it to the other side of addiction. I was standing there a proud 3%er and realized how strong I truly was. It was that moment I realized I had a moral obligation to share my raw truth and life experiences in hopes of saving lives. I shout my truth with pride as an authority now, realizing I have power as a survivor. Furthermore, I realized that everything I went through, everything I drug my three kids through, left them STRONG, INDEPENDENT AND RESILIENT. They are armored, ready to face life head on. Lauren is the best mom to my two grandbabies and I am so proud of her. She is patient and loving with my sweet Eliana and Harper and displays strength I've never seen. She is a SUPERHERO, a survivor. Amber is successful, driven and happy. Even though she holds a Junior Olympic Silver Medal in Cross country running, she remains humble and grateful. She graduates next year with her PhD in Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA). Austin is an Eagle Scout, competitive goalie for

soccer and marched indoor and outdoor competitive drumline. He has become a motivational speaker, and at nineteen is figuring life out as it comes. Just because we are dealt a bad hand, it doesn't mean we can't win the game. We CAN overcome our worst to live our best! I am proof we can turn our MESS into a beautiful MESSage. We have to retrain our brain to shift from seeing the negative to focusing on the positive. There is a silver lining in every situation and we should never stop looking for it. I honestly feel I was chosen years ago for this journey and am thankful as I now have empathy, sympathy and compassion I didn't have before. God's mission is unstoppable and I'm merely along for the journey. We must educate to JUDGE less and MENTOR more!!

It took me twelve years to find the courage to release my book. I was fearful of the judgement I thought would come with my truth. However, what I have discovered is that when we speak our truth with pure intentions, people don't judge. We are all starving to interact with authentic real people, instead of the fake people taking fake pictures on somebody else's mansion stairs, or the pic in front of the Porsche (which they now sleep in because they lost their house.) I discovered the world is thirsty for transparency and ready for a shift. Transparency is necessary so we can educate others with our life experiences. Through education

comes compassion, empathy and sympathy. Had I been educated about crack cocaine and all the things that REALLY come with it, I might would have given that moment of choice, when I decided to do that first line of cocaine, the respect it deserved. This is why I am so passionate with empathy in my heart to educate others. We should strive to be transparent and love each other through the difficult and trying times we all go through. I lead others into sharing their raw truth and finding confidence through honesty, transparency and forgiveness because my heart transformed from being cold and judgmental to compassionate and sympathetic. Additionally, my heart leads today with accountability and forgiveness instead of blame, anger and resentment.

When we are down and feel defeated and hopeless, there is a way to shift the negative energy from ourselves and use it in a positive way. Look around you and find somebody else that has circumstances a little worse than you and reach out your hand to pull them up. Be a lighthouse in somebody else's storm by letting your inner strength shine. I promise, as a survivor, this act of kindness to #bethatONE will put a SMILE on your face, and theirs! Let's each do our part to keep the SMILES coming by leading with our hearts. Be a proud 3%er too, I believe in you.

ABOUT MISTIE LAYNE

Are you letting your past rob you of your future by keeping you depressed, ashamed, remorseful or angry? Mistie went from being a Texas beauty queen at the brink of becoming a surgeon to facing a forty year prison sentence. Cocaine and domestic abuse robbed her of ten years of her life and led to a horrific rock bottom she courageously describes in her newly released book "What Goes Up." Mistie teaches her four step C.O.P.E. method which walks you through the steps to allow release of TOXIC guilt and shame. Self-forgiveness and love is the key to true joy and inner peace. After hiding her dark ugly secrets for years, she now SHOUTS with passion and transparency how she overcame her worst to live her best. Her message inspires you to face your fears and release the skeletons from your closet. She founded the movements #transparency is necessary and #bethatONE , which encourages us to step up and share our raw truth to educate others so we can JUDGE less and MENTOR more.

#whatgoesup

#thenextimpactor

#COPE2live

#transparencyisnecessary

#pullyourselfup

#JUDGElessMENTORMore



Keith Leon S.

“A smile a day keeps the opportunities in play.”

IT'S NOT WHO YOU KNOW: IT'S HOW YOU ASK BY KEITH LEON S.

I am someone who was told I would never amount to anything. I was called fat, dumb, poor, stupid, and I was ridiculed in school. Even my grandfather was mean to me. I barely graduated from high school and only attended a year and a half of city college before choosing to leave school. I was paying for school myself and was out of work for some time, which made it hard to continue.

My first marriage was a mess. I was married for 13 years and I often say, “at least 5 of those years were great.” After my divorce and taking time to heal, I eventually did the inner work I needed to attract the woman of my dreams, who is now my wife of 20 years. Once I met her, I realized that I had never really known true love.

I had a good career when we met, and we were engaged in record time. I quit my job in TV production thinking that I would be able to find another “even better” position once we returned from our honeymoon. Upon our return, I looked for a job and came up short. Not only did I not find a better job, I couldn't get hired in the production business at all. I had to go back to my history of being a restaurant worker. I thought life was over.

In order to feed and have medical insurance for my son I had to apply for government assistance. Growing up poor (a welfare child), this was that last thing I ever wanted to do. I had always had judgment on my mother for not working, and for living on government assistance. Now, I found myself in the same position with a choice to make. What was more important, my son or my ego? The answer was my son. I put my pride aside, got assistance, and continued to look for work.

The good news: I had a wife who believed in me and kept telling me that I was worthy and capable of anything I put my mind to. We wrote our first book together called, *The Seven Steps to Successful Relationships* while I was on welfare. And we got John Gray, author of *Men are from Mars Women are from Venus* to endorse our book. I thought this was

going to be a game changer for us. The book could have been a success; however, I had no idea what to do with it. I didn't know it was my key to free press, large stage speaking, and that I could now use the credibility from those who endorsed me to get clients. I thought the book was going to fly off the shelf because we had John Gray's endorsement. Not only did the book not fly off the shelf, it didn't even fall off the shelf. I was someone on welfare with a beautiful book in my hands.

It wasn't until my second book called, *Who Do You Think You Are? Discover the Purpose of Your Life* that I experienced business success. The reason: Because the superstars I interviewed in the book (famous authors, speakers, marketers, celebrities) took me under their wing and taught me everything they knew about the business of books, speaking, publishing and marketing. I took copious notes and implemented what they taught me. The difference was, this book was a huge international bestseller.

Joe Vitale, Chris Attwood, Gina Romanello, and Alex Mandossian taught me how to market the book, by getting the email support of all the superstars in the book. Because they all agreed, over 1.5 million emails went out the day of the launch saying, “I'm in this book. Buy

it today and you'll receive over \$3,000 in free gifts from me and other superstars in the book. This includes free tickets to our events, audio courses, and more. Go to Amazon right now, get the book, and come back here to claim your gifts."

Next, the most remarkable thing happened. Two weeks before my book launched, Oprah Winfrey held up Eckhart Tolle's book called, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* and made discovering life purpose the topic of the world. I am still trying to figure out how to get Oprah and thank you note and a bouquet of flowers to thank her for this!

My book took me from being "Keith who?" to being well known as, "The Book Guy." Quite a shift in just one year of time. It was just one year from the moment my wife gave me the great book title until it was an international bestseller. Eckart's book was #1 and mine was sitting right underneath it on the list for weeks! This changed my life forever.

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Because all of the mentors took me under their wing, taught me everything they knew, which helped launch me to the stratosphere, it wasn't

long until I realized that it was now my job to help others to get their mission, message, and story out to the world. This is what I've been doing ever since. I have helped thousands of people to write their books and have published hundreds of books.

My life purpose is and always has been, "to touch and inspire the lives of everyone I come in contact with." I used to do that one person at a time. Now, as an author and a publisher, I can say that millions of lives have been touched. All the people who have read my books and the books of those we've published and helped to write and self-publish their books... have made a difference in the world.

As a speaker—from the moment I was allowed to stand on a stage and talk—I've always ended with the same message. No matter what the topic I was speaking about, I would and continue to always end with the same message. It's what I want everyone to know.

Here it is:

You make a difference in this world! It would not be the same without you. People assume that you know you've made a difference in their

life, so they forget to tell you. Truth is, you are making a difference with every hug, every smile, every hello, and every greeting. Who knows, someone you smiled at and said hello to on the street may have been going home at that moment to kill themselves, because they thought no one saw them. Your simple greeting may have made them think, “If that person saw me, who else sees me? Maybe it would make a difference if I killed myself. Maybe it would hurt those I love after all.”

I am blessed as an author and a speaker. People constantly come up to me and tell me how my talk or my book has supported them in making life changes that have dramatically shifted things for them. They constantly give me feedback and I know that I am living into my purpose. Being a difference maker is what I live to be. This feeds me and keeps me moving forward even on my worst day. My “why” is being fulfilled.

For all the people who have forgotten to tell you that you make a difference in their life, for them, I want to thank you. Thank you for being the gift of you. No one can be you but you. Who you are matters, and you do make a difference in this world.



When my wife and I started our business, we knew we’d probably end up writing a book, so we registered our business name and a DBA (doing business as) as Babypie Publishing. After the success of the second book, *Who Do You Think You Are?* I quickly realized that I was the only person on earth who had been mentored by all the greats, and given everything they knew about writing a book, and the business of books. It would have taken me years and hundreds of thousands of dollars to receive all the info they freely gave me in just 3 months-time, if I had paid and attended all their courses.

It didn’t take me long to realize that because I was mentored by all these incredible master teachers, it was now my responsibility to take that knowledge and help others to get their mission and message out to the world! I would show entrepreneurs, people who wanted to be speakers, medical professionals and would be authors how to write and more importantly use their book as a launch pad to success. I stepped into this fully back in 2007 and have been doing this ever since.

On the other side of the *Who Do You Think You Are?* book project, I found out that I had been blessed with a new gift. I am still not sure which one it was, or the collective of all their energy that gave me this

new power, but I was now able to look at something that seemed difficult and make it easy. I could see how to make it easy! I had been doing everything the wrong way and the hard way for so long. I was walking talking proof of how not to do business before this book project, and now I could see things objectively, and see a way to make something hard, simple.

I went from the king of “wrong asking” to a teacher of what I call, “right asking. There is a way to ask someone for support that they will absolutely say NO. When we make things hard, or sound difficult to participate in, it’s a no answer every time. When we ask someone to participate as an endorser for our book, or to interview for a project, or to lend their name to a life changing program, if we make it simple and easy for them to say yes, they will say yes!

On the other side of *Who Do You Think You Are?* I had the three personal mentors I had wished for when I saw the hit movie, *The Secret*. In essence, being mentored by these three men gave me the ability to be a problem solver. At first, I wondered, “How do these men know all of these things? Why do they just know exactly what I should do? And so quickly?” I soon realized that because they were not in my drama, in

my story, they could clearly see the solution. They were observers, not caught up in all the stuff I had been making up about what was happening. I am now able to do this for my students, clients and mentees.

These mentors also kept me from making costly mistakes as an author and in business. Because they had already made these costly mistakes themselves and were willing to share their stories with me, I cannot imagine how much money I have saved by not making the mistakes. Lord knows my upbringing was rough and I had already been to “the school of hard knocks.” Their support kept me from failing repeatedly in the book business. I am forever grateful to these mentors for taking me under their wing and teaching me what they have learned. Not only did they mentor me through the book project, but the same three still take me calls today! They said they would support me back in 2007 and have been true to their word ever since. “Right asking” was and continues to be a game changer for me. It’s not who you know, it’s how you ask.

ABOUT KEITH LEON S.

Keith Leon S. is an **international best-selling author**, co-owner of a successful **book publishing company**, and a speaker who's well known as, "**The Book Guy**." Keith authored the best-selling book, ***Who Do You Think You Are? Discover the Purpose of Your Life***, featuring **10 people** from the hit movie, ***The Secret***.

Keith has appeared on many popular radio and television broadcasts, and his work has been covered by ***Inc. Magazine***, ***LA Weekly***, ***The Huffington Post***, ***Published Magazine*** and ***Succeed Magazine*** just to name a few.

He has spoken at events that included **Jack Canfield**, **Bob Proctor**, **Neale Donald Walsch**, **Barbara De Angelis**, **John Gray**, **Michael Beckwith** and **Marianne Williamson**. He's also a member of the **Evolutionary Business Council**. Keith's passion is teaching people how to go from first thought to bestseller and to create what he calls, "**The World's Greatest Business Card**."



**Dr. Emily Letran, DDS, Author, Business Mentor, Speaker,
Philanthropist**

“Smile, it is the key that fits the lock to everybody’s heart.” ~ Anthony J. D’ Angelo

PRICELESS SMILES

BY EMILY LETRAN, DDS

It was a grey, gloomy Wednesday afternoon in November, several years ago. My assistant knocked on my office door, “Patient waiting in room 2.” In the dental chair was a lady in grey jacket, blue jeans, wearing sunglasses, with her head down. “Hi, Mrs. Jones,” I said, “How’s it going?” As soon as I finished the sentence, my gut feeling told me I should not have asked. Mrs. Jones looked up without removing her sunglasses. Her lips trembled, “It’s not good...my husband, Joe, just died.” I was speechless!

My patients shared stories with me all the time, but I felt there was something different about THIS story. Mrs. Jones slowly told me that her husband was killed in an accident at work on Monday. As of today, she still could not see his body because “OSHA was still investigating the accident.” After her story, I asked the unavoidable, stupid question. “Shouldn’t you be... doing things to take care of his funeral instead of being here...what can I do for you?” The sunglasses came off Mrs.

Jones' face. I could feel the tears coming up in my own eyes as I heard her answer..."You see, Dr. Letran, I am here to get my teeth. I lost my upper plate. Just last week Joe gave me money to get my new teeth. He said he wanted to see my beautiful smile again. Now he's gone, but I want to get the teeth...for him."

There was not a dry eye in the office. Everyone was crying. In our profession, we know the smiles are priceless, because that's part of who we are, how we show our beauty, confidence, personality, and how the world sees us. Mrs. Jones, in this case, just missed the opportunity to show the man she loved her beautiful smile once again. I started the exam for Mrs. Jones and recommended a complete upper denture and a lower partial denture because she only had her lower front teeth. Without the natural teeth, her face had fallen in, and she looked at least six to seven years older than her true age. We needed to make the dentures fast. The funeral would happen as soon as she would get her husband's body back...in about a week. I told her I would try my absolute best and got on the phone with my lab technician Bill.

There were four steps in making the dentures. I told Bill he would have one day in between each visit to make it perfect. I was bossy, and

luckily he was listening. We proceeded to take the molds for the dentures. My assistant called the lab to come pick up in one hour.

During her second visit, we took the measurement of Mrs. Jones' bite. I went through every step to ensure I could make the most beautiful and good fitting dentures. Mrs. Jones then chose the color for her new teeth. She shared with us that she was going through her husband's "things," looking at old photos, and missed him more. We all sat, listened and reflected on how fleeting life can be – how a short and unexpected moment can leave the first, or in this case, the last, memory of someone we love. When the third appointment came, I was extremely nervous. If the teeth didn't look right, we would need another appointment to re-set the teeth. That would mean TWO lost days. Mrs. Jones arrived and sat in the chair, looking nervous...just like I was! I gave her the dentures. The fit was perfect. The teeth looked nice because she had picked a good color to match the tone of her skin and her natural teeth. "Please smile for me," I asked. The forced smile was decent, with all the teeth and the pink gum in harmony with the curves of her lips. She tapped her teeth together so I could check the bite. I asked her a few questions and listened carefully to see how natural and accurate the words were pronounced with the new teeth.

Lastly, I handed her the big hand mirror. "I'd like for you to take a look," I said, and slowly walked out of the room. I was hardly three steps away when she burst into loud sobbing, choking with tears. "Joe would have loved these!" Mrs. Jones continued sobbing until my whole office was in tears again. "Do you like the way they look?" I asked gently. "Yes, Dr. Letran, they look beautiful!" She smiled through her tears. It was the first genuine smile I had seen on her face during the last few appointments. "I'm ready for Joe's funeral now!" Her face was beaming with joy.

On the day of the denture delivery, our office was happy because we completed our mission of helping our patient gain back her confidence, her image, and be at peace with her husband. Mrs. Jones put the final dentures on. The dentures helped her cheeks perk up, smoothed out the aging lines, and the new teeth made her look more youthful because there were no more drooping lips. She actually showed us her smile, a priceless smile, not a forced one. And there were more tears with all of us, but tears of happiness! Mrs. Jones left the office a different woman than when she first came in a few days before. I felt I had done my very small part to make her day of "saying goodbye" to her husband much more special. I realized my profession was more than working on the teeth. We create and preserve that priceless connection, the smiles between

human beings in their family lives, whether on a daily basis or for a special occasion.

A few weeks later, during a busy afternoon, my assistant ran in and told me, "You've got to come outside. Someone is here to see you." In the lobby was a beautiful young lady with a huge poinsettia at least 4 feet tall. She smiled. "You don't know me, Dr. Letran, but I'm here for my mom. I wanted to bring you these." She handed me the flowers, a note card, and gave me a big hug. "My mom took a trip out of town after the funeral. She sent her love. And our family is thankful too."

The young lady left. I opened the note card. It said her dad must be happy looking down from heaven. I felt so blessed because I was able to make a difference in Mrs. Jones' and her family's life.

So, you may ask, what is a priceless smile in life? My answer, "it depends." It could be the smile of a baby with only two front teeth, and the mother sees them as little pearls. It is the smile of a little girl who just got asked to her first school dance. It may be the smiles of the school team after winning a championship. Certainly, you can relate to the smiles of the groom and bride. Then there are those smiles of

anniversaries, reunions, family get-togethers, birthdays and graduations. We communicate with smiles, share our thoughts and feelings with smiles. Sometimes we don't realize the impact a smile can make or how priceless a smile can be, as was the case of Mrs. Jones, when it was a little too late. Time is indifferent; it keeps on moving, changing people and changing things. What we have to hold on to is the lasting memories made with those beautiful smiles.

As a dentist, it is my job to serve my patients and help them keep their unique "assets," their priceless smiles. People around us deserve our smiles, attention, and care. I cannot tell you how many times someone commented to me that they got through a job interview with the confidence the new smiles had given them, or a bride-to-be becoming ecstatic with a whitening make-over, and yes, the 70 + gentleman who started dating again after his implant dentures are made, tight and good-as-new.

I am thankful every day that I can make a small difference in people's lives by preserving and enhancing their priceless smiles. The family dentist is a health team member who helps you take care of one of your greatest assets, the priceless smile that reflects confidence, self image, and love - improving and changing your life for the better.

ABOUT EMILY LETRAN, DDS

Dr. Emily Letran is a general dentist who owns two multi-specialty group practices in Southern California. She received her Bachelor of Science in Biology from UC Riverside (*magna cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa) in three years. She is a graduate of UCLA School of Dentistry (Dean's Apollonian Scholarship) and received her Master of Science in Oral Biology from UCLA at the same time in four years. After graduation, she participated in the General Practice Residency at Loma Linda VA Medical Center in Loma Linda, CA. and a mini-residency at Rancho Los Amigos Medical Center in Downey, CA., where she attained additional training in treating geriatric and medically compromised patients.

As a mother of three, Dr. Letran creatively balances work, family life, after-school life and her personal life as a growing entrepreneur. She continuously takes courses in clinical dentistry, practice management and marketing, attending multiple business forums to improve her skills to better serve patients. Her favorite activities include reading, creative writing, and "hanging out" with her three children - whether playing tennis, watching Netflix or enjoying Starbucks together.

Dr Letran is an author of several books. “From Refugee to Renaissance Woman” shares her story coming to the US as a refugee at 13 years old, and her newest book, “Commit to Embracing Your Big Life” offers insights and strategies to building a strong business. Dr. Letran is also a Certified High Performance Coach, helping business professionals achieve highest performance in personal and business life, streamline business and increase profits, winning back time from work so they can enjoy that time with their family, children and pursue their passion.

Dr. Letran is actively involved in community services, sponsoring multiple local school and charity events. She created the Emily Letran Foundation dedicated to providing basic dental care to veterans and families of disadvantaged background, including the monthly Free Dentistry Day, where she and her dental team work to provide free dentistry for the less fortunate in area communities. Her Foundation is raising funds to attain a mobile dental unit where she can carry her services to outreached communities. The Foundation will also provide scholarships for high performance coaching to help business owners from disadvantaged background get a jump start in growing and accelerating their businesses.

For additional information on how to create and preserve “priceless smiles,” please contact Dr. Letran at:

Foothill Dental Center
837 W. Foothill Blvd., Monrovia, CA., 91016
(626) 305-5722
www.cosmeticdentistmonrovia.com

Mountain View Dental Group
4639 N. Peck Rd., El Monte, CA. 91732
(626) 444-9281,
www.myelmontedentist.com

For HIGH PERFORMANCE COACHING in business and personal life to achieve CLARITY, ENERGY, COURAGE, PRODUCTIVITY, and INFLUENCE, please contact Coach Emily Letran at:

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Mitchell Levy

“A smile is the shortest distance between two people.”

CREDIBILITY: THE KEY TO A PROFITABLE BUSINESS

BY MITCHELL LEVY

Mitchell Levy is a Global Credibility Expert that has touched millions with the books he's written and published, his teachings, and his frameworks. Companies and individuals looking for a path forward find ideas and approaches and they adapt one of his frameworks to generate success.

Mitchell grew up poor in New Jersey, although he has said that he never realized it. His mom did a great job giving her children a good life regardless of their financial situation. She was a schoolteacher supporting three kids. She had a regimented dinner schedule serving peanut butter and jelly sandwiches on Wednesday nights and hot dogs on Thursday nights. Every night had a “special” meal. The kids didn't know that was because those meals were inexpensive. To a kid, that

was great. Besides giving her children lots of love, she did an amazing thing. She told her children that they could do whatever they wanted.

Mitchell went to the University of Miami because his grandparents were local. That's when he came into his own. He graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Stochastic and Deterministic Models of Operations Research. He often reflects on how much he learned in his undergraduate days that he still uses today. After Miami, Mitchell got a full scholarship for a Master of Business Administration from the College of William & Mary.

In business school, Mitchell had a professor who he did an independent study with, and he was able to prove the professor's stock trading hypothesis. Instead of writing an article and getting "published," the professor used it to get a job trading securities in Boston and he brought Mitchell with him. Mitchell stayed in Boston for three years before following his girlfriend (now wife of thirty years) out to Silicon Valley.

In 1997, Mitchell left corporate and has never looked back. A key to doing that is continually changing what he did and being cognizant of "presents" when they came his way. Since 1997, he's started more

than twenty businesses; published over 850 books; sat on the board of a NASDAQ-listed company; been part of more than 100 advisory boards; created four executive business programs at San Jose State University and the University of California, Santa Cruz; ran four conferences for Comdex, the largest IT conference in the world at the time; gave a couple thousand speeches; and coached tens of thousands of individuals—to name some of his accomplishments. Each of these opportunities came because Mitchell was aware of a "present."

During the dot-com days, Mitchell was known as "Mr. E-Commerce" because all he did was talk to companies and the media about e-commerce and how life was going to change. That was good during the dot-com days when he ran his company from 1997–2000, and bad during the dot-bomb days of 2000–2004 and afterward. His highly paid consulting and keynote rates dropped to zero almost overnight. Fortunately, he co-founded a group called CEOnetworking and, although it wasn't a lot of money, it was a lot more than zero. That kept him going.

There were two lessons Mitchell learned from that transitional period: 1) have multiple sources of income because you never know when one

source will dry up; and 2) it's not personal, the world keeps changing, and you need to change with it.

In 2005, Mitchell started a publishing company. From 2005–2017, he and his team published over 800 books. What he realized toward the end of 2017 is that he was serving the wrong audience. He always thought that his job was to make it easier for a business executive to write a book. He did that by creating systemized formulas for books that would make it easier to write. Happy About® were books of less than 25,000 words, 42 Rules® had forty two 500-word articles, and THiNKaha® had 140 bite-sized quotes.

While preparing for a TEDx talk in 2017 (<http://aha.pub/TedTalk>), Mitchell got to thinking differently about the world, including what he was doing. He realized that, instead of making it easier for busy executives to spend their time writing their book, he needed to make it easy for them to share their knowledge and expertise and for his team to write the authors' books for them. While his team still publishes books that authors write themselves, they spend most of their time on increasing their capabilities and services around ghostwriting and offering approaches to generate what the authors "really" want, which is more business.

Mitchell loves pulling the genius from an author's head in a 2–3 hour interview and having the team of ghostwriters write the book from there. In essence, he loves pressing the easy button for executives to get their books created. His team works with busy, successful professionals who want more credibility and success by writing a book, but don't have the time. After Mitchell conducts a 2–3 hour interview, his team writes, publishes, and makes the book an Amazon bestseller within four months while the author spends as little as five hours of their time. Here's a video with customer testimonials to view how this process worked for them: <http://aha.pub/testimonials>.

Mitchell says, "I do what I do because it's what I love. I believe that work equals play and that, if you love what you're doing, it's not work at all. I have fun when I help professionals succeed, and I love seeing their excitement when they publish a book and successfully utilize it."

Mitchell is curious. He's interested in who he's talking with and wants them to be the best that they can be. Sometimes, as humans, we just need a little push. We just need a model of thinking that will allow us to move from where we are today to where we want to go. That's where Mitchell shines.

One thing Mitchell is not proud of is that he can only speak the English language. For the last two decades, his family and friends have gone to Europe once a year and he's always amazed at the ability of people who speak three or four different languages. Although he only speaks English, he did realize early in his career that he speaks finance, IT, marketing, sales, customer service, and operations as well as having the ability to communicate in visual, verbal, and kinesthetic modalities. When he looks back at the jobs that he excelled at while he was in corporate, it was always those positions that allowed him to communicate among multiple silos of the organization.

What Mitchell does best is to see, REALLY SEE, the person who is communicating with him and he is able to share a framework that can help that person. For Mitchell, this is fun, this is where he thrives, and this is his super-power which brings him joy. If you interact with Mitchell, you'll feel how infectious this joy is. To that extent, he looked at the concept of a book and the value a book brings to the author, and figured out how to get an expert the book they need with a small amount of time and effort on their part. The key element is to have a book that focuses on the CPoP (the customer point of pain) that the

expert solves for their clients. Once the author focuses on the CPoP, everything else falls into place.

It all starts with a 2–3 hour interview where Mitchell pulls the genius out of the head of the expert. There is nothing else like this. Most people don't have someone spending 2–3 hours focusing on them, what they do, and how they serve their customers. From there, the AHAt that team works its magic by writing the manuscript, creating the cover, laying out the book, distributing it, and making it an Amazon best-seller. His team prints paperback and hardcover books with color on the inside and they also help the author read their audiobook. An expert sharing their Amazon bestselling hardcover, paperback, Kindle, PDF, and audiobook smiles all the way to the bank.

The smiles that appear on the authors' faces happen many times. There are five times worth highlighting: 1) during the interview; 2) when they first see their manuscript; 3) when they see their printed book; 4) the first prospect, who's holding the book in their hands, and says, "Tell me more, it seems like you can solve my problem;" and 5) when they reflect on their career and how helpful the book has been for them.

When Mitchell looks out at the masses he's impacted so far, he'll say that he's extremely happy with his life. What gets him up and ecstatic every day of his life is who he's going to impact that day and the next.

ABOUT MITCHELL LEVY

Global Credibility Expert, Mitchell Levy, is a TEDx speaker and international bestselling author of over sixty books. As The AHA Guy at AHAtat (<https://AHAtat.com>), he helps to extract the genius from your head in a 2–3 hour interview so that his team can ghostwrite your book, publish it, distribute it, and make you an Amazon bestselling author in four months while you spend as little as five hours. He is an accomplished entrepreneur who has created twenty businesses in Silicon Valley, including four publishing companies that have published over 850 books. He's provided strategic consulting to over 100 companies, and has been chairman of the board of a NASDAQ-listed company. Mitchell has been happily married for thirty years and regularly spends four weeks in Europe with family and friends.



C. Mike Lewis, Author, Publisher, Speaker, Coach

“One of the biggest smiles you’ll ever have is on the day you hold your book in your hands.”

– C. Mike Lewis

HERE’S YOUR CHANCE TO SMILE AS YOU BECOME THE EXPERT IN YOUR FIELD

C. MIKE LEWIS

I grew up in Flint, Michigan. My grandfather was the vice-president of the UAW, and my dad worked for General Motors most of his life. Working for GM had its perks, but I was a rebel. I didn’t want to be on the assembly line for the next 30 or 40 years. I wanted to push the boundaries and step out of the box.

While going to school and raising a family at 16, I had no choice but to support my family. I knew what I didn’t want to do but didn’t quite know what I did want to do. I took on whatever I could get, working at night, so I could continue my education. I briefly worked at GM. I worked in the dairy. I worked construction. I worked for a realtor. And

this is where it all started to click. I enjoyed construction. I liked how things were put together. But it still wasn't enough. So, at 18, I became one of the youngest people to receive my Real Estate License.

I enjoyed placing people in their own homes. I even worked for and received the highest real estate accolade, a CCIM designation (Certified Commercial Investment Member). In November of 2020, there were approximately 2 million active real estate licensees in the United States, and only an estimated 6 percent hold the CCIM designation. It was even less than that in the 1970s! Having my CCIM designation opened up many doors to me. I was speaking at the National Realtors Association, both state and national, and large real estate franchises such as Century 21 when I was only in my 20s. I spoke with the likes of Zig Ziegler, Joe Girard and Tom Hopkins. Many became my mentor and life-long friend.

Eventually, even though I loved the selling aspect of real estate, I knew there was more. I loved and missed the creating and building part of the business. So, I started a Land Development company and started buying up property and rehabbing. Some I kept as an investment, while others I flipped for a quick profit. Being a single dad of two

young girls, most times a quick profit was the only way to keep a roof over our heads and food in their bellies. But times were getting bad. Do you remember the movie Roger and Me by Michael Moore? Those were my buildings in Flint that were shown in the movie! Shut down and becoming dilapidated. With the economy at its lowest, I decided I needed to make a move. After much deliberation, I chose Atlanta. Things were booming there, and for a while, I could barely keep up.

I persevered, and by the late 90s and early 2000s, we were building in four different states. We built high-end single-family units, condos, marinas, and multi-family subdivisions. Life was great. My wife Carolyn and I got engaged in Jamaica and married in a hot air balloon over Napa Valley. We flew in private jets and lived in million-dollar houses and on a 100-foot houseboat. Then the housing crash of 2008 came. As much as we tried to prepare ourselves for what was to come, we couldn't stop the tsunami. Like many of our friends in the same business, we lost everything. We went from having a hundred-million-dollar company... to a 60-million-dollar bankruptcy.

But through all this, the most devastating part of losing everything was the turmoil it caused for our family: our tradespeople, our office

workers, even my brother and father, who had moved to Atlanta to work with me, were now out of a job. I wasn't sure I could survive this. It wasn't my first bankruptcy (after all, I came from Flint), but it was definitely my last!

Reinvention

I knew Carolyn and I couldn't go through another real estate heart-ache. We worked so hard to make a beautiful life for ourselves, and it all came crumbling down. But both of us have always been strong and resilient. And when you have a partner that has your back and believes in you, you can weather any storm and come out on the side of sunshine.

We weren't sure about what our next step was going to be, but I knew I was done with real estate. After 30+ years in the business, it was time to hang up my shingle. We took some time off to regroup and recharge and figure out a new plan for the second half of our life. Being entrepreneurs, we knew that the next step was creating more of an online business, as that's where the future was headed. However, even though we had both owned and ran very successful businesses, we were still novices in the online world. Everyone knew us in real estate and land

development, but that was no longer our demographic. We were starting from scratch.

The first thing we did was to find business events that were going on in the Atlanta area. We needed ideas on which path(s) to take. So, we started going to event after event, learning how to reinvent ourselves. When we each picked a new niche, we perfected it and needed to get it out to the public so we could start making money again. But we were still so new and nowhere near as well-known in our new niches as we were in our old, so it was a tough start. We needed to learn how to fast-track.

So, at each event, we made it a point to get to know the speakers. After all, speakers are the experts, right? We would ask every speaker that we met, "What's the one major thing you did that gave you the prestige of being the expert in your field?" Each and every time we got the very same exact answer: "It happened when I become a published author. Once you publish a book on your business, you are automatically perceived as the expert."

What a concept, right?

Next step...write a book about our businesses. Books completed, check. Now, where do we go from here? As I said, we are strong and resilient and smart, so we researched how to publish our books. Amazon publishing was just as new as we were, so this was not an easy task. As we struggled through all the intricacies of learning and perfecting how to publish our books, once they were published, we were amazed at how quickly the doors were now opening up to us.

Not only that, but:

- People actually RETURNED our calls and emails
- New Clients and Opportunities were SEEKING US out
- We were being offered more SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS and MEDIA EXPERIENCES
- It INCREASED our businesses
- All this brought in MORE \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

Through it all, it gave us a feeling of personal pride and now, we had a lasting legacy. Why? Because a *BOOK IS FOREVER! Once you're a published author, no one can ever take that away from you.*

But a crazy thing happened along our new journey. Our peers were noticing how quickly we were growing, and now they were asking us for our secret. Once we told them that everything came together once we published our books, they asked us if we could help them write theirs.

We weren't writers perse. It took what seemed an eternity to write and publish our own books. How were we going to do this for others? Well, we thought it over and figured that this could be some good supplemental income while we were still building our new empire.

So back to the learning table!

As we perfected our new craft, took on a few clients and helped write and publish their books, we eventually saw how their businesses were starting to grow. Others saw it, too, and asked us to help them with their new book. It came to a point where we had to choose what we wanted to do. And you know what? Helping to increase our friend's and colleagues' status with a published book became an even better fit for us.

But as we worked with more and more professionals, we realized, because of their busy schedules, that we had to find a way to minimize the time that they needed to commit to their book.

So, what would make it easier on our clients?

What if we interviewed them, transcribed the recordings and wrote their chapters? This way, they were assured that their voice was on each page. All they had to do was to review and make minor edits. It would save time and frustration.

Well, ten years and 900 authors later, our system works.

Our Authors know the power of becoming a published author and how their books have increased their business. The only complaint I hear is that they wish they had done it sooner!

Listen, credibility and esteem are what give authors an inside edge. This is an invaluable tool, which used properly, can translate into \$\$\$\$. When your customers trust their source, it makes it possible for them to make important decisions in their business.

The trust and authority granted to authors are already formed in the minds of the public. This knowledge is worth more than a king's ransom! This knowledge should be the foremost reason for becoming an author. It's all about the new opportunities, the previously closed doors opening, and the enhanced business relationships that being an author create.

The bottom line is that being an author automatically makes you a branded expert. If you want an enormous advantage over your competitors...then let me help you become a published author and brand yourself as the business expert in your niche... and leave a Lasting Legacy.

There's No Such Thing As A "One Size Fits All" Book

You have your own unique message, your own unique market you're going after, your own unique price points, and your own unique way of selling. So, anybody that tries to blindly tell you that "this is going to work great!" without taking the time to really understand exactly how your business works are either just trying to make a sale or blindly naive.

And that's why I review your business and give you a custom Book Blueprint, free.

Here's Why I'm Doing This.

It's simple.

I know that a certain percentage of people we do this for will want me to write and create their book *for them*.

But rather than try to convince you of how great that would be, I figure I'd just demonstrate that I can help you by ... actually helping you.

For free.

How can I do this?

I set aside some time to personally review your business and your current sales process (or your plans for future offers). Next, we'll work with you to determine your sales goals, how many leads you want to get, and what you want your lifetime revenue per client to be. After that, it's time to get to work.

Based on what you tell me, I'll give you a custom "blueprint" of a complete book and marketing system specifically for your business, free.

And I believe that once I do this for you, one of these three things will happen:

1. The first possibility is you love the blueprint, you immediately see the power and the potential it has for your business, and you decide you want to build the system yourself. If that's the case, great! I'm happy I could help, and I wish you the best of luck.
2. The second possibility is that you don't like the blueprint, and you think your time was wasted. This has never happened before ...but if it does, I'll immediately send you \$100.00 to compensate you for wasting your time.
3. The third possibility is you love the blueprint, and you'll want my office to create and publish the Book for you. And if that's the case, we'll get to work immediately.

Here's What Happens When We Decide To Work Together

We will work with you to schedule your first interview as soon as you have an opening. And then at your convenience until completed. We know you are busy and will adjust our system to accommodate you.

Our Author Assistance is designed to help you achieve your publishing goals. From the initial planning stages to the moment you crack open the first page of your book, we will be your very own dedicated writer, professional consultant, and industry expert.

This is what we do, and we're good at it. Our impressive client list is a testament to our expertise and dedication to our authors, and we want to provide you with the same excellent service! Our writer assistance includes everything you need to transform your concepts and ideas into a well-written, published book.

Let us put your words to the page and guide you through the entire writing and publishing process. Your dream of becoming a published author is about to come true.

Why Choose Us to assist in writing Your Book?

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“Writing a book is a tremendous experience. It pays off intellectually. It clarifies your thinking. It builds credibility. It is a living engine of marketing and idea spreading, working every day to deliver your message with authority. You should write one.”

– Seth Godin



**Jesse James Leyva, Speaker;
President & Founder Outlaw FitCamp Franchise**

The simple gesture of a smile to a stranger can change their day as well as those in their lives

HARD TIMES LEAD TO GREAT FUTURES WHICH LEAD TO BEAUTIFUL SMILES.

BY JESSE JAMES LEYVA

Dad left when I was around 9, in and out of my life.

Single mom (awesome mom) raised me & my younger sister in some of the roughest parts of Southern California. She worked in Watts (Bad city in Los Angeles) and we barely made it on what she was making and it also wasn't uncommon for us to be evicted two or three times per year from different apartments or homes, many times hearing her cry in her bedroom with the door shut so we wouldn't know. **(Leads to my protective nature of women and the single moms in my company and in my life)**

I had learning disabilities throughout school and she would help me with my homework at night after her long days at work. She helped me up until my high school years where it became more difficult for not only myself but her as well to help me. I would struggle to read, especially out loud in front of class because of my poor reading ability and I also battled Tourette's syndrome and some bad nervous ticks, so it was very embarrassing. I found myself ditching school most of my 10th and 11th grade years and was later held back, as my friends graduated. I decided at that point to just drop out of high school and that led to trouble. **(This taught me to accept myself for who I was and to understand that my disability would build me into a stronger man than I initially thought)**

By the time I was 19, my father came back into my life and lived in Texas. He asked if I wanted to move to Texas so I did, with the intentions of finally getting to know him better. That lasted about 2 years, then he moved to Australia with his wife, leaving me here with my aunt and uncle and some local family. Thank god I was introduced to bodybuilding and fell in love with my new hobby. (Little did I know, my future career) **(My father issues I had my whole life lead to anger & trust issues. I learned to forgive him, love him and accept that**

this is how my life & story were to be written. Now it was up to me to make something beautiful from it)

Spent the better part of my 20s bodybuilding, competing and soon found myself selling different drugs to help pay for my new hobby. That soon led to me liking the money and getting myself into trouble which lead to trouble with the law, arrests, etc. During that 10+ year stint, I was personal training, working a multitude of jobs and still dealing. I later saved up some cash, along with a friend and we purchased a gym, my first. **(Owning something for myself was a turning point in my life, helping me realize that I wasn't meant to be a loser, drug dealer or an uneducated lowlife that I thought I was destined for. I realized that I could actually be something or someone.)**

I ran that gym to the best of my ability until we ran into financial troubles and with our demographic turning into section 8 housing, our revenue dropped over 20% within a year. Struggling to deal with the realization that I couldn't pay myself to keep paying employees, putting my own responsibilities last. This lead to one day while training one of my clients on my birthday, I watched a tow truck tow my truck away. I starred in awe and a few months later I was soon forced to close that gym down.

During that time, I had an opportunity to partner with another gym in the Flower Mound that a friend of mine owned and bring all of my memberships/customers to that gym to make the best situation out of a poor situation. This lasted about 2 years before we were faced with the reality that we were extremely undercapitalized and in an old dilapidated location that we could not financially turn around, including a co-tenant that continually bounced rent checks putting us in a worse situation with the landlord. This put me right back into a situation that I was all too familiar with, I had to put more of my personal money into the gym to cover expenses. This took me to an even worse situation than before with my truck being repo' d in front of me. I again couldn't pay my own bills and was soon evicted from my dream home, and that was the start of me mentally starting to break. My poor decisions and lack of leadership put a severe strain on my marriage at that time and that all lead to multiple separations and eventually divorce. I was even living out of my car and staying at friends' houses during some of these horribly turbulent times.

With this second gym, we were running so far behind in rent that I knew we were weeks away from being evicted, so we were forced with making the decision to shut down this gym as well. Two days were

spent moving out equipment with literally no sleep so the landlord wouldn't take possession of the equipment and I could return it to the equipment company and not have to file bankruptcy. After those two days of moving equipment and no sleep, I had the painfully sad task the next day of meeting my members, which were like family to me at the front door, and all morning tell them that we were closing down. It was an extremely emotional day I will never forget. **(Taught me to be a man and face my failure head on)**

The weeks leading up to closing, I had to make a really hard decision. Do I just go get a job with stability and work for someone else or do I try to start over again with what I was passionate about and I felt my calling was. This was a very tough decision with a wife to care for. We were still trying work things out at the time. So, I chose to borrow money from friends and family, \$3000 and put it down on another location up the street, partnering with private training studio owner, starting over again doing just personal training in a 1000 sq ft facility after operating out of 45,000 sq ft. This was a massive change to get used to!

This situation lasted for about 1 ½ yrs and then we soon realized that we had different business philosophies and goals, so we decided to

go our separate ways. I would remain at the current location and he would move to a different location. That was the restart that led to the development of the brand that we have today. That is when Jesse James Fit brand was born. We focused on personal training only in a boutique fitness studio setting, with higher than normal standards of cleanliness, scent, and customer service and the most important factor in a successful business, which is the incredible and memorable customer experience. No more big box gym. **(Learned to focus on what I was great at, and stay in my lane)**

Business starting booming and by 2014, we hit \$1.2 million in revenue, being one of the first personal training studios on North America to gross over \$1million in revenue. With hitting that goal, I still was feeling empty and wanted to do more and expand the company but knew I couldn't replicate the large facility of 7,700 sq ft I was operating. **(Found my niche)**

That is when after a mastermind meeting in San Diego and being laid over at the airport, I designed on a napkin in a restaurant the Outlaw FitCamp group fitness and personal training concept. I spent the next couple months obsessed about this new concept that was completely

separate from my big personal training studio. Once I designed the concept and did the financial homework, I looked for a location and took my savings and credit cards and opened up a 2,900 sq ft facility multiple cities away and named it Outlaw, to purposefully not piggy back of Jesse James Fit success, to make sure the concept would work. Luckily, it took off and within 2 years was doing \$336,000 in revenue. **(SCORE, Finally started to not feel like a failure anymore)**

Big trust problem. During its first years, I discovered my cousin and manager of that location was stealing money from the company and sleeping with women from the location, which was detrimental to the brand, our friendship and trust so I had to make the hard decision and fired him immediately. Because he had developed such great relationships with the customers over those years, it was a major punch in the face to the business and it took about \$120k and over 2 years to recover from. **(Learned that family could sometimes be a mistake and that people have to earn trust and once it's gone, it's often best to remove them from your life and or business)**

•••••

I do what I do for a living now because it's my calling. I spent half my life, searching for who I was. It was in me the whole time, it took my life experiences to help me find it. This new life excites me and brings joy and value to my heart and makes appreciate everything I now have. I change lives for a living now and it doesn't get any better than that. Well I guess it does now, because I'm now franchising my passion and sharing that joy with others that want to help people.

.....

I now have a team of people who love their job helping others and changing lives. We all wake up with value and purpose and that is unmeasurable. The feedback we get from customers if life changing and the video testimonials and forever a reminder that God gave me a purpose and it wasn't to be the loser I once thought my life was to be. I HAVE A PURPOSE IN THE WORLD!

Book(s) that changed your life:

Awaken the giant within, Leadership Skills of Navy Seals, Relentless, Necessary Endings

Movies that inspire you:

Rocky series

Song that inspires you:

Lose Yourself by Eminem,
Best Rapper Ever Tom McDonald

Your Hero:

My mom

Quote you live by:

Leave every day making an impact
on our world or someone else



Dr. Kimberly Linert

“You will get all you want in life, if you help enough other people get what they want.”

– Zig Ziglar

SMILE AND SAY, “HELLO!”

BY DR. KIMBERLY LINERT

I’ve always been very curious.

I was born into a loving family in Port Huron, Michigan where high morals and values were taught. I was very happy until I experienced kindergarten.

We lived outside the city. I attended a country elementary school that looked like a square with a circle drive going all the way around it. There were five classrooms and no principal’s office. The kindergarten classroom was in the basement. The other four grade classrooms were on the main level. My mom used to say that, “If you start something you must finish it.” When someone asked me how kindergarten was going I said, “It’s okay, but I wish I never started.”

My kindergarten teacher was quite abusive to the students both

physically and mentally. She would scream at the children and say mean, threatening things. She picked up the small children and shook them violently. Our desks were the kind that the table opens completely to put supplies inside. One day a boy was getting something out of his desk and she sat on the top of the desk with the boy's head and neck sandwiched in between. I was shaken up one day because I did not walk up the stairs fast enough. There was no administration or principal there to observe what was happening and if the other teachers were aware of it they looked the other way. Unfortunately for me, when I moved up to the first grade, so did my kindergarten teacher. So, she was my teacher for two years in the beginning of my young life.

I was anxious and very afraid at school. Afraid to do something wrong and feel the wrath of the teacher. I was so afraid that I would get stomach aches and sometimes would sit there uncomfortably because I was scared to ask to go to the restroom.

This fear that began at school continued at home. My dad's way of communicating when he was angry was yelling and losing his temper. I did not like being yelled at, so I learned to be quiet. If I don't respond with words there will be no fuel for him to continue yelling.

The decision that I made at that time was: I will stay under the radar so I don't get hurt. Become invisible. Blend in. Keep quiet. I won't bother people or ask for anything and I will be safe.

I was very driven to do well in school. I love learning. I realized that doing well in school is rewarded with approval and I really wanted that from my parents. I also wanted that for myself. Being a high achiever gave me self-esteem.

I was quiet and shy most of my growing up years. I was curious about everything and I was a great listener because I rarely talked. I was uncomfortable interrupting someone or becoming part of the conversation. In my heart I wanted to say something, but I did not think of what to say. It made me anxious, so I remained silent. I was uncomfortable being the center of attention.

When I first arrived to begin my freshman year in college I realized that I was all alone and knew no one. I thought to myself, "This is going to be a very lonely four years unless I make some friends here." So, everywhere I went on campus—cafeteria, class, chapel—I would smile and say, "Hello, my name is Kimberley. What is your name?" I

did not know what to say after that, but most of the time the other person would start talking. I became quite popular and at the beginning of my sophomore year ran for vice president of the student body and won. The saying, "If you want a friend, be one" is so true.

Even though I was a very reserved person, I have always loved to perform and be on stage. I avoid being the center of attention in social situations, but when I am in the spot light I transform into that person who is not afraid. I was in plays and musicals. I played in the band and I was the afternoon deejay at my college radio station.

After eight years of college I graduated as a doctor of optometry. Because of a positive experience I had helping a nine year old boy succeed through vision therapy while in school I decided to specialize in vision therapy and became a behavioral optometrist. A behavioral optometrist looks at the whole person, not just their eyes to assess their abilities. I would create customized brain / vision programs that would allow my patients to succeed at school, at work and at play (sports, etc). I had a therapy center for many years. I love seeing others doing well and reaching their highest potential. I would train my patients in a way that gave them the slight edge they needed to succeed.

My parents are two of the most generous people I know with both their time and their money. Through them I learned to be generous, too. I love people. I see the people no one else sees. When I see someone without a friend or who is sitting alone, I make a point of becoming their friend. When I see someone in need of necessities I help them with money. A restaurant I frequented in Atlanta used to call me the "Good Samaritan" because I would often invite a homeless person to dine with me. What I learned from that is each person has something to give. I have an intense interest in people. I would talk to the people I met on the streets and listen to their stories. Everyone has a story to tell and I love a good story.

I have a passion for learning new things. Obtaining wisdom has been important to me from a very young age. Proverbs is my favorite book in the Bible because of the profound wisdom found there. As I continued in my career I studied and practiced many modalities within the health and healing arena. Nutrition, bioenergetic medicine, functional medicine, syntonics (light therapy), micro current therapy, several emotional trauma clearing techniques, NLP (neuro linguistic programming), Reiki, Essential oil therapy, timeline therapy, hypno-therapy and Stress point brain training to name a few.

People who were looking for a more natural way to heal were drawn to me sometimes from miles away. I even had a child from Bermuda come to the states and my staff and I did therapy with her eight hours a day for a week to get her performing at her true potential. Other doctors sent me patients that they did not know how to treat. I had the opportunity to treat some of the most difficult issues patients were having. I loved the challenge.

After about twenty years as a behavioral optometrist I began to feel that even though I loved serving the people I was serving, there was more for me to do. I wanted to help even more people discover who they are and what their gifts are and be able to expand to their highest potential and then share their talents with the world.

I had been helping one person at a time. With all the knowledge and experience I have accumulated in my brain for over twenty years, I felt an urgency to impact and influence people on a much larger scale. Rather than one person at a time I wanted to influence and share my gifts and knowledge with thousands of people. I began by getting some training in public speaking. I have always tried to blend in, unnoticed, but I realized to have an impact on the lives of other people I would

have to step out into the light. For me this takes so much courage. I would prefer to stay home and paint. I am an artist. I love art and creating. But, my mission is of utmost importance and I will do whatever it takes to get my message out.

This is the reason I am here and why I had the opportunity to experience and learn all the things I know and can share. My mission is to: “Empower people with the knowledge that they are loved, important and valued. Promote health and wellness in all areas of life. Inspire people to accomplish their goals and use their talents to serve the world.” I am doing several things to connect with people and help them to live an incredible life.

I wrote a book called “Visualizing Happiness in Every Area of Your Life” (available at Amazon.com). This book is a step-by-step guide to creating an incredible life through learning about yourself, what gives you fulfillment and how to share your gifts with the world. It is full of stories from people from different walks of life and how they are finding happiness and fulfillment in their lives. Buy this book today and begin creating your incredible life.

To reach even more people I started a podcast called “Incredible Life Creator”. You can find it on iTunes and several other platforms. On this podcast I interview people from different walks of life to find out what they are doing that gives them fulfillment. As they share their stories you will be inspired to create an incredible life of your own. It also includes episodes in which I share different ideas about how to create a life that is happier, healthier and wealthier. If you have an amazing story to tell about your life and how you are sharing your gifts and talents with the world, then I would love to have you as a guest on my podcast. Contact me via email: incrediblelifepodcast@gmail.com or private message me on Facebook: www.facebook.com/incrediblelifecreator

I am happy to come to your group live as a keynote speaker or as a podcast guest. Please let me know if I can add value and be of service in this way. I also do private mentoring and NLP sessions to help people overcome barriers to their success. These processes are powerful and can help you get to the next level in your life and help you move forward if you are feeling stuck.

I am using every means possible to accomplish my mission here on earth.

I wake up happy every day because the work I am doing now does not feel like work. It energizes me. I have arranged everything so that I spend time with the people I love and take time to take care of myself physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. I am using my gifts and talents to make the people and world around me better. I love my life!

ABOUT DR. KIMBERLEY LINERT

Dr. Kimberley Linert is the voice of Incredible Life Creator Podcast and author of the book “Visualizing Happiness in Every Area of Your Life”. She inspires people to live an incredible life through finding what fulfills them and putting their gifts out into the world.



Alex Lowy

“The smile you wear, every minute of the day, reflects your attitude. Be happy. Be Positive. Attract positivity.” ~Alex Lowy

ASPIRING FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTISTRY – MY PATH

BY ALEX LOWY

When I was very young, I was given my Grandmother’s Brownie box camera, with a lid you flipped up. I looked down and saw what the camera saw, up-side down ... and it was intriguing to figure out how to tilt the camera to get it right, which forced me to carefully consider “composition.” So, early on, I was detail-oriented, figuring out what to include in each shot, making the shot count (film was not cheap). AND it took some skill to load the camera with rolls of the same film used for the camera I would acquire decades later, the Hasselblad, both now being collector’s items. But the real gift was learning to do darkroom work when I was ten. The first time I saw an image that I had taken come up in the developer was pure magic...AND I WAS HOOKED! Intrigue became obsession,

looking at LIFE and National Geographic Magazines...and others, thinking about composition, light and what made great images “work.”

Fast-forward to college at the University of Wisconsin where I tried out against eleven other “wanna-bees” and became the sole photographer, the campus “representative” for Leidner Studio. I handled the Fraternity and Sorority parties on campus, and I shot parties every weekend, taking a date and having a blast...and made some decent money. And got very good at shooting fast to capture moments and great expressions, knowing I'd get a quarter for each photo sold, on top of my hourly. That was the beginning of a career of shooting events at the highest levels, whether it was a thousand travel agents for American Express (“Destination 2000” at the World Trade Center, with Tom Brokaw being the Keynote Speaker, a year before 9/11)...or their event that night at the United Nations...or Hans Blix denouncing “Weapons of Mass Destruction” at the US Constitution Center on Independence Mall... where (as an aside) I shot Independence Hall for Kevin Bacon's Father, Ed Bacon for a job I did with the reknown architect for his project for rehousing the Liberty Bell. (As an official photographer for almost 20 years for the Philadelphia Folk Festival, I later shot Kevin with his brother, when the Bacon Brothers killed it on the Martin Guitar Main

Stage the next year). Ultimately, meeting Kevin at home one time when I went to meet with Ed was memorable, when he answered the door and yelled to his Father, “Hey Dad, it's Alex Lowy!” Hearing Kevin Bacon say my name was surrealistic. So, reading this might now qualify you as “2 degrees of separation from Kevin Bacon.” LOL

I digressed....Back to Madison, Wisconsin: Shooting for Milt Leidner led to skills that gave me the confidence to begin shooting for the U. Of Wisconsin school newspaper, The Daily Cardinal. It was the early 70s and Madison was a hot bed, politically in the midwest and anti-war sentiments were being stoked by the “Chicago Seven” who often came to give speeches against the war in Viet Nam. I was out there with a camera, getting tear-gassed at demonstrations and getting shots that were priceless (to me, now). Years later I was devastated when I lost a lot of personal possessions in a flood, the most gut-wrenching being my prints and negatives from that era. Shots of Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and Dave Dellinger (Jane Fonda's 1st husband) were tough to lose, but even more so was a portrait I did of the director and co-star of “Easy Rider”, Dennis Hopper in a Donald Duck hat. With his long hair and that duck bill which I spotted on a bookshelf, I directed the director to the right of a naked bulb hanging from the ceiling, side-lit

for a heavy shadow. Hopper came to UW to give a presentation on the making of the film, and I got the nod to do the shot to go with the interview. But before we got started, he asked us if we wanted to get high. "Hell yeah!"...It's been years since I've smoked, but at that time, to all of my hippie friends, it was a big deal to say that I got stoned with Dennis Hopper...though I truly wished it could've been on the set with him AND Jack Nicholson, Peter Fonda and Karen Black. I've shot countless celebs, but that was my first, and I wish I had the negative.

My college graduation gift from my Father was my first Nikon, the F2. With that and 2 great lenses and 6 weeks in Europe and a lot of Tri-X film, I was somewhere between heaven and wonderland, followed by countless hours in the darkroom, creating images that I dry-mounted and showed at ASDA Day at PITT Dental School in my freshman year. All members of the American Student Dental Association could display their artistic endeavors. I won first place for mine, and it was the first of countless shows, many in prestigious galleries, performance photography (8 images with ASMP) at a Grammy's Holiday Party; And dance photography in Philadelphia's City Hall and the Carnegie Museum. How did I get to the place where I could show images of Michael Jackson, Liza, Bette, CS&N, Dylan, Patrick Swayze, The Stones

and dance companies like Momix or PA Ballet and others in performance, something I am often asked? Read on.

It was the end of a challenging first year at PITT Dental School, and I was ready for summer's reprieve. I was introduced by a mutual friend to Randy Mims, who was producing 14 year old Michael Jackson's concert that night and was just starting the sound check at the Civic Arena. It was the beginning of a memorable weekend being on stage with MJ and opening act, Mandrill. That led to an invitation to spend a month on Randy's farm in Chapel Hill, NC. While visiting him there, he got the call from Hanley Sound (Hanley Sound provided sound for the Newport Jazz Festival and Woodstock) to set up the sound system for the 1973 Hampton Jazz Festival. Randy made me a "roadie" for a weekend...my responsibility: set up the microphones for each group, putting me around a series of musical titans: Charles Mingus, Duke Ellington, The Staple Singers and so many more...oh...AND two of my favorites, BB King and Stevie Wonder.

Meeting Stevie Wonder was like meeting GOD. Seriously. With the curtain down, they brought him out to one of his three keyboards and left him with me as I was finishing up. After exchanging a few words, I

backed up and took a few shots of him at close range as he performed his first song (copies are available on paper or aluminum, my favorite surface for displaying images without the need for a frame). Snapping those few shots of Stevie was life-changing, in a sense altering the course of my life. I was on a professional track with dentistry and already passionate about photography with a lot of significant history there, but I'd now had a taste of something too exciting, not to deal with it. I'd already attended many concerts, but now I wanted to go with my Nikon which was generally not permitted. TRUE CONFESSION: I developed a sure-fire way to smuggle my F2 and my 135mm/f2.8 lens in with me. I shot undetected for years using high speed films, pushing the ISO as far as 25,000 ASA, without flash, and never shot before the fourth song. By then, they discovered any unauthorized shooters. Just not me.

In time, my prowess (and portfolio) was sufficient to become involved shooting concerts and events for the classic rock radio station on Grandview Avenue in Pittsburgh, WMYG, decorating it with a commission for 30 framed photos. That led to being gifted two tickets 12th row center for the "Steel Wheels Tour." Eventually, after a move to Philadelphia, compelling images got me in with WXPB and various music festivals which has satisfied some of my needs for shooting live performance artists. BUT I am

not limited to musicians or any one genre. I cherish my work with classical musicians of two major orchestras, or opera or theater. Dance has been an undeniable penchant, starting with the ballet in 1980, when a choreographer I was dating introduced me to the Pittsburgh Ballet and some of the dancers who appeared in the movie filmed in Pittsburgh, "Flashdance" done at the time I was working with them... "What a feeling" (Irene Cara) to be doing what I have done with the Arts. This is work that satisfies some of my needs which drive me to capture other artists, and to do it artistically, whether with straight photography or with "Special effects"... whether with controlled time exposures, for blurring that "works," or with multiple exposures ...or with other tricks that have people wondering what the heck I did to get such an image when first seen on the walls of an exhibition like one last month dedicated to 45 years of images of Bruce Springsteen, where I showed with 4 others lovers of The Boss.

Do not get me wrong...shooting performance is a small part of what I shoot. I work in so many realms and am equally passionate about anything I do, whether it is portraiture, family or business or corporate events, fashion, work with models and doing portfolios, shooting product in my studio or on location and handling fund-raising events, especially ones with golf and tennis associated with them which is one

big way to make a difference, providing images of famous sports figures for their auctions from shooting World Team Tennis for 20 years and golf majors. No, I do not sleep much. :)

My “Why”:

Trying to “Make a difference” has been my “m. o.” for much of my life. Utilizing my gifts of passion and an array of skills, including photography, but much more than photography, I provide photography that people need. My work has been my “joie de vivre.” Whether it’s my award-winning family portraiture that becomes a legacy to be enjoyed now and for generations, or defining images of businesses and business people to enhance their public perception, I enjoy each new situation, which calls on my creativity and decades of learning and skill sets that ultimately provide for client satisfaction. AND personal satisfaction.

How I inspire Hope:

Taking the “Golden Rule” to heart and using it with kindness and smiles, is like the pebble in a pond...sending ripples out and affecting people and the world in a positive way. In a world of so darn much negativity, being responsible for positive experiences, loving ones, caring ones can create a “domino effect” and be a game-changer in any situation.

ABOUT ALEX

Alex grew up in a musical family in Pittsburgh, where everyone played instruments. A love of music developed and evolved into a penchant for shooting any of the Performing Arts. A forty year retrospective is currently hanging in an award-winning performance venue, and his dance photography has hung in the Carnegie Museum. Eight of his images were showcased at a Grammy holiday party.

An award-winning studio and location photographer, and voted “*Best Photographer*” 4 times in Philadelphia’s Main Line (The Main Line Life “Reader’s Choice” Award) and most recently, *Best Artistic Photographer* and *Best Family Portrait Photographer* for 2014. He aspires for artistic results in any work that he does and for capturing “decisive moments,” a phrase coined by Henri Cartier-Bresson.

After graduating from the Art Institute of Philadelphia, he took over a studio where his work focused on portraiture, events and a range of commercial endeavors, which these days has seen more and more demand for business use of his images on web sites, social media

and for marketing efforts. He enjoys providing product photography, loving his Nikon 105mm Macro lens, whether it's jewelry, a clothing collection, chocolates or sushi.

His monthly presence in several local magazines, has often led to his providing family portraits for their covers, like Merrill Reese's (the Hall of Fame announcer for the Philadelphia Eagles).

A notorious "Foodie," (and "closet chef") his restaurant and food photography is often seen in magazines, social media and print materials.

His *restoration of photographs* (and even art work) is unparalleled and was written about in a feature magazine article "Where to Get Things Fixed in the Main Line." Examples of his work (before & after) can be seen in his web site's PORTFOLIOS section (www.LowyPhoto.com) where you can see how he has salvaged priceless images. Using the internet, Alex offers free consultations to people *anywhere, if you can show him a photo that you want to have restored.*

Besides do weddings and mitzvahs, Alex has enjoyed providing coverage for *all kinds* of events, charitable, corporate, sports, etc.,

having handled one very special one at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, capturing Patrick Swayze and his wife, Lisa Niemi performing scenes from their movie on stage and then speaking about "One Last Dance" a film about three dancers in New York City, directed and written by Lisa. The film was being world premiered at the Philadelphia Film Festival, and I photographed the entire event, including the reception to follow with many dignitaries wanting to be photographed with the gracious couple. If only I had a time machine to go back and get one more shot of them ...holding the "Keep Smiling" Card!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8R7rctVenc>

True to his marketing tag line, "Anything that moves. *Anywhere!*" Alex's passion extends beyond photographing celebrities and the "Who's who" in entertainment to covering many sports (being on court yearly since 1999 as an *official photographer for the Philadelphia Freedoms and World Team Tennis*). His *golf photography has been displayed on aluminum* with images taken at a number of major golf tournaments, yearly, starting with the 2013 US Open at Merion.

A retired cosmetic dentist, Alex and Dr. George Felder used a smiling Cheshire Cat logo to advertise "Smile Dental Associates." Alex and George shared a devotion to creating or restoring and ultimately preserving wonderful smiles. Alex has, in a sense "shifted gears." Now it is about *capturing* smiles, the focus of this book, featuring a few of the thousands of smiling faces that have been in from of his Nikons. Wouldn't you like to be the next? Alex and the photographers with Umbrella Syndicate can handle your next event and using the card, and social media, amplify your message and raise awareness of your "cause" and help you make a difference...and help spread the magic of smiles, captured.

Book(s) that changed my life:

"Sidhartha" "Papillion" "Many Lives, Many Masters" "A Bridge Across Forever" "The Secret"

Movie(s) that inspire me:

"Braveheart" "A Field of Dreams" "Dances With Wolves" "An Inconvenient Truth" "Gandhi" "Schindler's List" "Moscow on the Hudson"

Songs that inspire me:

"Imagine" "Fragile" "Man in the Mirror" "If Ever I would Leave You" "On the Street Where You Live"

Your Heroes:

Robin Williams, Greta Thunberg, Steven Spielberg, The Cuomo Brothers...and a number of stand-up comedians.

Quote you live by:

For MANY decades I have lived by a quote I saw somewhere, "My goal in life is to die young...at a very late age."



Jurate Luckaite

“Keep smiling no matter what is going on in your life.”

YOUR SMILE IS YOUR POWER

BY JURATE LUCKAITE

We are two sisters from a small Eastern European Country, Lithuania. We were born to a beautiful and most loving mother and a very successful, driven by desire father who left a huge legacy behind. He died when I was very little while chasing his dream. There are documentaries made about him as the most driven and successful captain, an extraordinary man, an amazing husband, a father and his passion for the sea. I think that's where I got the desire to do big things in life without any fear. I made a choice to chase my dreams just like my father did.

I came to United States when I was 19 years old with \$200 in my pocket. My mom borrowed the money and paid for my trip so I can see this huge country America. My \$200 disappeared like a cloud in the sky within few days and I was left with nothing in the foreign country,

not knowing anyone but having big dreams, no fear and courage. 5 years later I graduated from University of Colorado in Denver with International Business Degree, bought my first brand new beautiful house, had a sports car that I paid cash and brought my mom to celebrate my American Dream, my graduation, my new house and the life that I built. That moment when I saw my mom feeling proud of me and happy, was the most important moment in my life. I felt accomplished and living my American Dream. Since then I knew, that everything and anything is possible if only you believe it and work hard to achieve it. I was proud of myself.

While I was studying, I was also working at two jobs. I would walk every day to work looking at the sky scrapers in Denver downtown, hoping that one day, I can take an elevator to the highest floor and sit in my office in a beautiful women's suite. As soon as I graduated, I was hired as a Project Manager by the International Marketing Localization Company that was on the top floor of the highest building in downtown and I had my own office overlooking the mile-high city. Pretty amazing! And you know the main reason they hired me for? For my smile first and for my personality and credentials next. Smile was my power. Even my first job, as a nanny, I was hired because I had a huge

smile when my boss opened the door for the first interview. She said she hired me because of my smile and she never regretted the decision that came from her heart.

After working as a Project Manager for a year I felt that something was missing within. I was proud to be a project Manager and work with the biggest companies in the world; I was proud to be taking an elevator to the highest floor; I was proud to be working with all the languages in the world and being able to understand many of them; I was proud to be wearing a different suite and high heels every day, but I wasn't truly happy. It was a job but not a passion. It was a status, but not a happiness, it was a lot of stress and not enough satisfaction. I was fulfilling someone else's dream but not living my dream.

So, I decided to seek for the answers and search for my purpose. There must have been something more and I had to find it. I left everything I created for many years behind including my career, my house, my fiancé, my closet full of fancy suites, shoes and make up. I packed one suitcase and moved to Hawaii. I had this urge to go to Hawaii for a long time but it was never the right time. Finally, I listened to my heart and landed in Hawaii with an open heart to explore and find the missing

link. I did not have any agenda, any plans, I just wanted to understand what is my purpose and why am I here. I stayed in Hawaii for 5 years...

It was a major breakthrough in my awareness, my understanding, my being. I was ready for the answers and the answers came to me. The truth is, whatever you are seeking is also seeking you.

Since I remember my sister Violeta was always painting. She would make me sit in one position for three hours and paint my eyes and my face. It was a torture for me to sit still for that long especially because I was a little girl, but she always made me pose so she could capture true essence of my soul. Painting eyes was her thing and now I understand why... I was helping her to master her talent and her gift.

Now she does it on a live medium silk, where no mistakes can be made, and everything must be perfect from the first brush stroke. She is the most talented artist who will leave her legacy behind as a master of most extraordinary masterpieces ever created and most beautiful eyes ever captured.

While living in Hawaii, reading hundreds of books on awareness, frequency, energy, power of the thought, power of faith, I took a leap of faith and followed my heart. I always had a desire to be in fashion and express myself transforming women, making them feel and look amazing. I was a fashion designer and stylist since I was born, just without the certificates.

I always thought that a woman can become a masterpiece if she is styled right. She is like a piece of silk where no mistakes can be made, and everything must flow in harmony. The clothing woman is wearing and her style, must be an addition to her beauty and should bring out the best of her. There is no ONE style that fits all, because each woman is unique. But I didn't want to be just another ordinary fashion designer or stylist. I wanted to create something extraordinary, out of this world, out of this dimension, something amazing and unique. That's when it all came together. My sister and I! Our talents! Our passions!

Violeta – artist, European Master on Silk, creator of masterpieces, the talent and gift to this world through art.

Jurate – fashion stylist, designer, expert of how to transform a woman into a masterpiece, into a classy and elegant feminine energy.

Having this understanding and fusing our talents together, we decided to create a new dimension fusing fine art and couture fashion where every piece is one of a kind, hand painted on silk, signed and transforms every woman into the masterpiece shifting her female spirit into true magnificence. This is how Violeta Luce was born – the brand of extraordinary masterpieces that is a Universal Intelligence seeking its expression through art.

Hawaii was transformational, inspirational and that's where everything started. We created our business and our brand being inspired by the beautiful nature, mountains, ocean, sky, waterfalls, flowers, blooming trees of crystalline island Hawaii. Opening to the unknown allowed me to find my purpose and fuse it with my sister's purpose. That's how we started our first collection of hand painted scarves and hand bags that led into so many different collections of art couture. During that time, I decided to dive into the fashion full force and studied fashion styling and design while my sister Violeta was mastering her skills painting on silk.

Today, not only we have hand painted luxurious resort wear collections, scarves, wraps, dresses, but also fine art couture masterpieces of world-famous masters recreated and hand painted on silk, bridal

couture collection, kids' collection, but also paintings on silk custom created and framed for the interiors.

Today, we transform women as I was dreaming years ago. We work together as a team, following our passions and listening to our hearts. That ticket, my mom borrowed money for and bought my ticket to go to the US, was the best investment ever made.

Today Violeta Luce art couture can be seen on many red carpets all over the world. We create custom pieces for women who want to look unique, be one of a kind and transform into a walking art. We work as a team, we think, we create, we laugh, we cry together, we are best friends. However, it was never an easy road. More times it was harder than I ever imagined, more times we hit rock bottom, more times we were broken. During this journey, we faced so many obstacles and challenges from people trying to take advantage of us and our business, very little to no sales at all, losing self-confidence, listening to other's opinions, doing what others think is better for us, to so much more.

To be where we are now takes incomprehensible strength, it takes unstoppable desire, it takes enormous patience, it takes faith and belief

that no matter what, we will succeed, it takes breaking into pieces and gluing them back together, it takes courage, it takes climbing the mountains and fighting the obstacles, it takes holding hands and not giving up, it takes lots of sleepless nights, heart brakes, being thrown to the lowest points and our strength, our desire and our faith being tested. It takes believing in ourselves, talents, our vision and our passion.

From this journey the lesson I learned was that you must have faith, love, burning desire, awareness, understanding, giving up the career and knowing that you will never ever give up even if it looks the end of the road, failing, losing, falling... It comes to that. I am not exaggerating one thing... It is really hard but I'm glad I chose my heart over my career and my sort of comfortable life and found my passion. It is so much more rewarding and fulfilling.

•••••

Why we do it? Because we found our purpose, our passion and we want to share this passion with all the women who truly appreciate the art and who are looking for something extraordinary and unique...

Something that has a meaning and a soul... Something that is not mass produced but rather created from our hearts... Something that takes days, weeks even months to create... Something that needs the purest intention to seek beauty through nature and through women's eyes. Something that we are so passionate about and what allows us to use our imagination and fulfill our purpose through creativity.

We create for a woman who wants to stand out, who will never run into a friend with a similar dress and gets discussed who wears it better. We create for a woman who wants to become a masterpiece of the best version of herself.

Each woman can become a masterpiece if she is styled right. She is like a piece of silk where no mistakes can be made, and everything must flow in harmony. The clothing woman is wearing and her style, must be an addition to her beauty and should bring out the best of her. There is no ONE style that fits all, because each woman is unique. Having this understanding, we are able to transform every woman with a unique style and create her original work of art to that fits her body and reflects her soul.

Our brand is all about a woman and the ability to bring out her inner beauty. Everything is about the meaning, the flow of energy and the femininity. Each one of our pieces is a fusion of fine art and haute couture that connects everything into ONE. This message and its meaning can be seen in every Violeta Luce painting. The silk becomes alive when the brush strokes the surface and the finished results capture the true essence of beauty and femininity.

Why Silk? While painting on silk, we are working with such an incredible energy because silk fiber has a structure similar to crystals so that whatever energy it has been infused with - light, healing, purity or love - is amplified in a painting. After the painting is completed, we start designing the masterpiece. It takes two of us - Artist and the Designer to create that exquisite masterpiece.



The biggest reward is to see the smile on our client's face after they experience their custom created Violeta Luce masterpiece that reflects their beautiful being. Sometimes we even see the tears of joy and tears of happiness because of the transformation. These moments are the

moments that are worth living, following our hearts and worth creating. It's truly amazing when we see a woman who suddenly becomes self-confident, feels beautiful and feminine, becomes elegant and feels extraordinary.

With each new work of art, we are celebrating a woman through the uniqueness and grace of original artwork draped over her body, transforming her into a fine art masterpiece while truly creating "A Feast for your Eyes and Inspiration for your Soul."

ABOUT JURATE LUCKAITE

Jurate Luckaite - International Fashion Designer, Stylist, Entrepreneur, Speaker and Creator of a new dimension fusing fine art and haute couture creating the most extraordinary masterpieces that can be draped over a woman's body transforming her into a fine art masterpiece while shifting her female spirit into true magnificence.



Mimi Madden

“Smile so big and so much that it makes people say ‘Wow!’”

SMILE, CONNECT, AND COLLABORATE

BY MIMI MADDEN

“When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?” That question, which we were all asked at some point in childhood, quickly elicited over 200 responses. Maybe 5% had ended up doing what they dreamed of as a child. The rest expressed either amusement over how far-fetched or mismatched their ideas were or regret that life’s practical demands had edged their dreams out of the picture.

In spite of all the mixed messages that shape and often limit our expectations when we are young and vulnerable, some dreams still emerge, dreams that may go far beyond the original vision. Sometimes we find our way there by serendipitous experiences or sheer determination, but often it’s because of another person who believed in us. How many remarkable stories we’ve all heard about people who were severely

deprived in childhood who had even one adult in their lives who recognized and encouraged their potential. Belief is transmuted, it can be a source of power that turns on a circuit wired into our very beings and completely transform our journey.

In my unremarkable middle-class, suburban upbringing during the 60's and 70's with very practical parents, I was drawn to the imaginative, the artistic, and the magic of the outdoors. I was oblivious to the family legacy of narcissism and control, but these dynamics exerted a powerful, limiting influence on what I expected and accepted in life. People loved having me around, but on the unspoken condition that I limit my light and downplay my gifts to accommodate the psychological needs of others. In my early adolescence, my interest in God began to grow, enlivened by what now I might describe as intense mystical experiences during which I was overwhelmed by an emotional, intellectual, even visceral certainty that at the heart of the universe is purpose, design, and empathy. The depth of divine love that poured into my life over those years created a lasting belief in the immense value of every person and the invisible connection between myself and all humankind.

In college I studied literature and the arts, and afterwards continued my own pursuit of dance, music, and writing. Still young, I married a painter/printmaker whose artistic gifts were prodigious. Eventually I had a glorious tribe of little ones, whom I decided to homeschool, which turned out to be an effective, fun, and inspired way to learn. One of the greatest privileges has been to share life with these six wonders, to learn together and see them find their different callings for work and expand in love through their own families. During these years, my spiritual journey found expression in various church affiliations and styles, often creating inner tensions—there was my heart knowledge of God's profound love and radical acceptance, and then there were the doctrines, social issues, insular cultures, and political persuasions.

As the older kids began to go off to school, I launched into what would become a career in the nonprofit arts arena by directing a performing arts series at a beautiful nearby Episcopal church. The artistic director was a well-known musician, composer, and choral director with wide connections in the music world, so we produced an exceptional program of music, dance, and theater while I learned the ropes of arts management. Most important, I began to understand the work of creating a meaningful community experience where an audience is

invited to pause and consider the most important aspects of life that lie under the surface of our busy days—those things that unite us, make us human, and give us a sense of meaning.

Meanwhile, the strain of continuing to live within the narcissistic personality dynamic was taking an increasing toll on me and beginning to duplicate itself in various ways in my children. I decided that passing on the legacy of this damaging dysfunction to the kids would be worse than inflicting divorce on them. So, I who was a kind of Pied Piper always leading the way toward a creative and harmonious domestic life for my family now was the one to break everything apart. During that most painful process, with much criticism from religious and other quarters, I was sustained only by the plumb line of God's love and guidance on my way to establish truth and emotional health in my family. In the years since that time, I'm so grateful that healing and truth have really changed the course of my life and all my kids. Here's a poem I wrote about it.

Map

Scrounging in the drawer for a scrap of paper,
I find an old index card with the scrawled words bird-tremulous air
hollow water-throated notes of a thrush

and on the other side
an old list of what the kids decided to exhibit one fall at the Riverton fair.
Deeper down, on lined notebook paper,
A confusion of broken branches
jutting into dark and complex rooms of mystery
and turning it over, scrawled ideas for Christmas gifts and stocking stuffers.
And on a yellowed piece of vellum, Insects search in weak confusion
Lost like me, the earth's so bright—
words of a song, typed on my old Smith-Corona,
backed with a hand-drawn map to our house.
And scribbled on the corner of a love note from one daughter
during the hardest year,
The wind pulled the world around the windows,
Thin panes kept out the panic.
And another piece underneath with phrases about traveling a hot jungle path,
keeping my eyes on the ground, on each step as I take it, to ward off the fear.
Looking up, I see the summer's sun spreading gold on the lawn and the way
it hazes the field in the distance.
In my hand, a last scrap of lyrics...
Weary walk upward, heavy like stone,
the hilltops of winter,

the curve and the rush of a full stream
in the valley's embrace.

All the woven texture of my life to this point, and I wonder
at how I gained my liberty
and saw love restored
and found the way back home.

During this time of healing and change, I worked at a museum writing grants and then transitioned to directing a poetry festival held each summer in the historic sunken garden on the grounds, a beloved event famous among a poetry audience for presenting US Poets Laureate and other exceptional national and regional poets. I loved the mission of the program—to nurture the art of poetry and make it accessible to a wide audience—and in my position worked to cultivate the importance of the communal experience that focused the audience, in one shared place and time, on the common things that unite us as human beings and move us beyond the categories, divisions, and hierarchies that define our lives.

Concurrently, I finally formalized a long-time focus on personality theory by becoming a Kiersey Temperament Consultant and began leading training workshops in corporate settings for a few years. This

core understanding of the hard-wired part of who we are is a topic I've always found fascinating, and it's something I still use every day to communicate more effectively, accept personality differences, and better appreciate the people in my life. It's one more layer in figuring out who we are at heart and getting more aligned with our best strengths.

In recent years, I have been privileged to partner with two very different organizations to amplify their missions and impact. I believe that when we are intentional about growing and changing our mindset, our invisible frequency attracts like-minded people. Through a friend, I met and began working with Ellen Griesedieck, a remarkable artist whose lifetime focus has been to create a massive mural that honors work and workers in America. We all spend the majority of our waking hours working and the diverse contributions we make through our work are what make the world go round. It really matters how we do our work, and it matters that we feel appreciated and valued for what we do. The 120' x 50' American Mural Project (AMP), comprised of Ellen's oversized portraits of real workers (firefighters, farmers, teachers, linesmen, assembly workers...) and 3-D elements by thousands of young artists from around the country, will be the largest indoor, collaborative mural in the world when fully installed.

The purpose of this project is to awaken us all to the wonder and art of work. In a sadly polarized nation, AMP is a rallying point for all Americans around a purpose that can create connection and communication across economic, racial, social, and political barriers. Everyone can agree on the importance of celebrating “American ingenuity, productivity, and commitment to work.” In addition to regional and online education programs, AMP will be a gathering place to explore the American work experience via workshops, the arts (storytelling, music, poetry, theater), and forums on critical issues such as vocational training, social enterprise opportunities, and work equity.

Ellen’s journey has been one unexpected step at a time, one recommendation after another to connect with other inspirational leaders making a difference in the world. She has partnered with President Jimmy Carter and Habitat for Humanity, environmentalist Paul Hawken, visionary artist-educator Bill Strickland, Steven Squyres and NASA, and Andre Agassi and his Democracy Preparatory School, to name a few. In recognition of AMP’s important mission, Ellen was invited to participate in the 2015 Worker Voice Summit in Washington, D.C., organized by President Obama to discuss and provide solutions to the challenges for the American working class.

I love seeing people’s eyes light up when, during tours, I ask how they feel when someone else expresses appreciation for the work they do. The simple habit of noticing how people do their work and encouraging them in it creates a new mindset in both the beholder and the beheld. I want to go through life more awake, seeing what matters to more people, and helping them see themselves and their work as valuable in the world.

Back to those high-frequency energy waves...in 2013 I was connected to another beautiful project that has opened my life to the opportunity and excitement of being an entrepreneur. Along that same theme of releasing the dormant power and growth we all hold within us, I have been helping pioneer what is arguably one of the most important advances in medical history, based on the newfound ability to re-activate genetic pathways to improve cellular health. Created by notable scientists in Western medicine, the first activator was a synergistic herbal formula with a measurable and proven impact on resolving the core cause of inflammation, aging and disease—oxidative stress. There are currently over 30 independent peer-reviewed studies validating this patented plant compound, and that original discovery also launched a very fast-growing field of science on Nrf2 activation as scientists work to develop pharmaceuticals that can also turn back on the system.

The original biotech firm with this new technology transitioned into person-to-person distribution about 11 years ago, landing it squarely in the cutting-edge world of e-commerce as a publicly traded company. The apprentice-style approach to the work involved—learn by doing—is what I prefer, and the non-hierarchical culture and low barrier of entry align with my personal ethics. I get to build a large business by amplifying the good news about what is now possible for the human body. Even though I have raised millions of dollars through my nonprofit work, that work had not gained me the financial security I needed. As an entrepreneur, I've moved to the other side of the cash flow equation, with a repeat income based in large part on work I've already done. I am fueled by the wonderful results I see when the body is in full healing mode and blessed to see the difference that I've been able to make by educating customers and mentoring my business partners. And on a side note, I've been able to leverage this business model to create substantial monthly support for Guiding Light Orphans, a small but mighty medical nonprofit in Uganda.

To weave this all together... People attach themselves to projects and initiatives they know at gut level are important and universally true, they want to align themselves with something that brings goodness to

the world that is larger than their own lives. I love being a connector, someone who shares initiatives and projects that have deeply inspired me, and to do so without an agenda and with an open mind about what might emerge. As a dancer, my favorite part has always been partnering. I love the sense of improvisation, catching the energy and style of my partner, being responsive and creating something new between us. It's especially exciting to see how collaborating can at times create a new whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. That's the story of AMP's growth over the years, and it's the story of activation with five herbs doing something together they can't do alone.

So, in that spirit, I invite you to reach out for a conversation, to connect around whatever might intrigue you that I've shared. I promise I will enjoy learning about the things that inspire you and will look for ways to offer something of value in return.

I love this Keep Smiling project that was begun by Barry Shore and Ken Rochon. I think we all feel the loss of smiles in our lives with the necessity of wearing masks around others. I've never before realized how powerful an expression of acknowledgement, encouragement, and connection my smile is. It's a contagious and powerful way to

transmit my belief to someone else, even briefly—my belief that they are a child of God of great value and infinite potential. It's in that spirit that I express gratitude to be included in this project, especially at this moment in history. In this book, our masks can be off, we can all share in this project to generate more goodness in the world together.

Warming

The earth opens and the night songs rise.
Emerging from their cold burial
the frogs release their held breath
into choirs of upward, rhythmic, ecstatic chant,
suspended and pulsing in the pine scent of the chill dark air.
When the weight of cold lifts,
How can it release such a song?
The wind picks it up in the day, warming to the theme, twisting the rollicking
pale leaves on their stems
to point out the blue sky where the birds call out.
Years ago, I found the body of a stiff dead frog in the cold dirt. Only it was
just cold, not dead, and it came to full life
on the grass in the sun before my eyes. The frog knew nothing

of good or evil,
of purpose or chance,
of the balance of things in the world,
but when he was warm, he woke up and had to sing.

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www.americanmuralproject.org

www.guidinglightorphans.org



**Joan G Magill; Business Owner, Educator, Author,
Creating opportunities for woman and children**

“All it takes is a smile to turn your day around.
Go ahead - smile :-).”

BREAKING BARRIERS WITH A SMILE

BY JOAN MAGILL

Pay it Forward with a Smile!

“I try to show by example change is possible, one step at a time, one SMILE at a time because everyone makes a difference.”

I believe when I give myself with total commitment it will reflect the best in others and return to me a sense of fulfillment.

Who we are, why we do things and how we do them come from what we have learned from our upbringing, environment and circumstances. Parents, others in our lives and role models all influence us for good and bad. Everyone is different. Learning to live with and accept differences can change the world to a more tolerant place. We each have special talents and gifts to share and be appreciated.

Growing up, I thrived on the creativity of music and art that was part of life from the day I was born. I painted, loved to dance, and climb trees to see the top of the world. I got a nickname of

“Smiley” because I loved getting in a packed elevator facing everyone without turning around to face the door and smile. I loved to make people laugh.

As we grow up, certain moments, both good and bad have big influences on the person we become. Of course, we never stop evolving. Since no life is perfect, it is good to embrace the imperfections and learn from them.

Reflecting, here are three events that had a significant impact, changing my direction in life.

Chapter 1

WHAT IS MORAL FIBER?

I stood in front of my third-grade teacher and handed her my graded test paper from the day before. I pointed to the first fill-in-the-blank

answer and said, “I think I got this right.” At a brief glance, she agreed. Then she paused, looked at me, I darted my eyes away, she said, “did you erase this and put in another answer?”

Indeed, I had! The day before I had gotten a test paper back with a poor grade. I took the test home and erased the wrong answers and put in the correct ones.

I had not thought about consequences of my actions until that very moment. I froze.

That was several minutes before school was about to begin. As classmates entered the room, it was as though a magnet sucked them directly to where my teacher and I were standing. The scene became a frenzy of pointed fingers and shouts, “look there is another answer that was erased, and another, and another!”

At that moment, the noise became a blur. I remember feeling the thumping of my heart trying to pound its way out of my chest. I remember the feeling of isolation and embarrassment, I wanted die right there and disappear forever. How could I face my friends, my parents, my

teachers again? How could I ever survive this public humiliation and loss of respect.

The whole encounter that morning may have lasted five minutes, but for me, it lasted a lifetime. I remember the moment as clear today as it was some 60 years ago! I had to come face to face to answer the question, at the ripe old age of seven, was I a cheat? What was my intent? Do I tell the truth?

Chapter 2 MORAL FIBER CONCLUSIONS

I did tell the truth and own up to my dishonesty. It was a tough lesson to learn, knowing my relationship at school changed with one thoughtless action.

In truth, the days following were the hardest, having to continue to face everyone while my heart was aching in silence at earning their respect back. I knew I never wanted to feel that way again.

Knowing I made the hard decision to go in the right direction taught me to take responsibility for my actions and keeps me smiling!

Chapter 3 UNSTOPPABLE DETERMINATION

It was just another Monday morning at the office of our family owned business, which had been gaining momentum and clients the past two years. Except, that morning, the office remained black. There was no one to turn on the lights, no staff ready to work, and certainly no one to answer the phones. That didn't matter because they weren't ringing.

The man we hired to run the business decided our family owned business belonged to him. After all, he was doing the work and we were merely the investors! He sent letters to our clients, stating the company had a new name, address, and phone number. He walked out and took our staff!

That was the day I received a call from my Dad, "I need your help."

My parents were hard-working, self-made people in business, television production and theater. They lived by way of example to their children and community, raising money for causes they cared about, with time to help the homeless and others improve their lives. Their generosity was unconditional, full of integrity.

At the time of this call, I was building my own business and teaching. I was a young adult, a few years out of college and having my own difficult time finding my way emotionally and professionally, as I searched for who I was and my purpose in the world.

My dad wanted me to step in and rebuild the business so we could sell it. Because we had only been involved in the beginning concept and not the operation of the business, I had no idea what I was doing. I thought "OK, I am a teacher, start from the basics and figure it out!"

So, there I was, with a whopping \$250 in the bank, joking about all the places I could spend it. Humor helps me keep situations in perspective.

I started feeling an overwhelming new emotion. I was thinking about the injustice to my family. How could this man take advantage of the

opportunity we provided and twist it around until he thought he was entitled to the ownership?

That moment changed my life. I felt a driving passion to make what was wrong, right again!

My passion fueled my determination to achieve my goals. I knew I had to stretch both self-imposed limitations and capabilities to succeed. I set to work. Within a few months, I was able to rehire our office manager and reinstate the accounts.

In order to expand the business and to gain knowledge in the industry, I started volunteering for the national advocacy organization related to the business. Once involved, I had so much respect for their philosophical positions and values, I joined the grievance committee (helping owners with issues) and remained on the Board of Directors, holding Officer positions for 10 years.

Life in this arena brought to light new problems. In the beginning, I was a young woman. For several years, I was the only woman, sitting among men who did not take me seriously. The first time I received

a service award, it was labeled as “25 D” and it was presented to me publicly, “as not her bra size!”

Unthinkable today, but true. I kindly smiled, defended myself and left the room. I realized I had a long way to go to be respected as a woman in a man’s industry. Crazy as that was, I was completely oblivious to discrimination against women.

I grew up with dynamic women, it was the 70’s, women’s lib was in vogue, and I was a product of the time, a love child. A love child who was serious about a career, and one in which I was going to open the doors to support and provide opportunities for women in business.

That started my passion with a mission!

UNSTOPPABLE DETERMINATION CONCLUSION

The experience of taking over the business changed the direction I took as a career. I never imagined I would be creating businesses and opportunities for those less fortunate. I decided, because I was a

woman business owner and was treated condescendingly by my male counterparts, I would act. I owed that to the feminist movement at the time. To keep that door open, I would move forward one step at a time.

I have never looked back or regretted my chosen path. I keep smiling thinking about the competency, strength and intelligence of the women I am honored to work along with side by side.

Determined women keep me smiling!

UNSTOPPABLE UNDERDOGS

In the late 70’s I lived in a gated development in Baltimore of mostly working professionals. I was blessed with the good fortune to meet a neighbor who was a few years younger than I, working in media at the local television station.

She was easy to talk to, sincere and genuinely interested in others. She had no pretense, just her inquisitive nature wanting to know who you were and what she could do for you. She became a local celebrity

co-hosting as the second seat on a daytime talk show. She was witty, with an uncanny ability to use humor and be naïve, all at the same time.

She was a natural. She wanted to give people a platform to be heard. She even offered me a spot on her show to talk about my struggles at that time, going through a divorce. I graciously declined; I was not ready. I sometimes wonder if I had spoken on the show, if I could have made a difference for others in my situation.

We used to jog with another friend around our neighborhood with the security car trailing behind on patrol watching out for us! I loved listening to her stories and her disappointments. She came to my son's 10th birthday party. He personally wrote the invitation and she responded. She brought joy and kindness connecting with people.

I felt a kinship with her as women in the working world, close in age, persevering through the inequalities of pay and stature against women in our generation. I genuinely cared for her and wished she had stayed in Baltimore a longer time so I might have had more inspiration time with her and the ability to stay connected.

When she left for Chicago, I cheered her on. She had an opportunity to have her own show, make great money and blossom into who she is today. The Oprah Winfrey Show went on to be a cultural phenomenon.

UNSTOPPABLE UNDERDOGS CONCLUSION

Our brief time together had a huge impact for me. She was not the icon she is today. She was just someone special to me. She touched so many lives and opened so many doors for women. She taught me to keep moving forward and believe in yourself, take care of others, always keep your moral compass. She will always be my role model for challenging and contributing to make the world better place.

Oprah keeps me smiling!

MY HEREAFTER...

Today, I keep my skills sharp by making my continuing education a high priority in personal development. The world keeps changing and

the need for visionary and effective leadership only increases with time.

I am currently authoring a book about my experiences to help others reframe and overcome challenges that inevitably come in our fast-paced world.

In addition, I am creating a course that will be useful to train people in our industry. High stress and high turnover make keeping good people focused and rewarded a challenge.

Like many challenges before, I am focused on adding my knowledge and expertise to help people achieve their potential while making strides forward in our ever-changing industry.

Helping others keeps me smiling!

ABOUT JOAN MAGILL

Ms. Magill is a successful woman Entrepreneur of for-profit and non-profit companies of 40+ years. She is recognized in Baltimore as one of the 50 largest women owned businesses in several categories; net revenue and employees.

She was awarded Women of the Year by a national non-profit organization, the first woman who received the highest award an associate can receive, Associate of the Year, by a national trade association, and the first woman to be on the cover of a national industry magazine recognized for her contributions empowering woman in business

She is a visionary, creating niche businesses that fill voids in the marketplace, both regionally and nationally. She is an educator, a certified team building coach, and curriculum creator.

At the start of her career, she persevered through difficult circumstances,

DR. KEN 'DR. SMILEY' ROCHON, JR.

as the only woman serving on professional association Board of Directors. Her leadership quickly earned the respect of her peers with her uncompromising work ethics and proven record of success.

Being top in her industry she is a national consultant and expert witness for high profile cases. Joan@JoanMagill.com

Song That Inspire Me:

Imagine by John Lennon

We Are the World by U.S.A. for Africa

Somewhere Over the Rainbow by Judy Garland
and Israel Kamakawiwo'ole



Alex Mandossian

“There is a Smile of Love. And there is a Smile of Deceit. And there is a Smile of Smiles, In which these two Smiles meet.” – William Blake

KEEP SMILING

BY ALEX MANDOSSIAN

As the son of George and Carol Mandossian, for the first four years of my life, I wasn't allowed to speak English. I spoke Armenian as we are 95% Armenian heritage. Therefore, my sister and I grew up in the Armenian culture of Pasadena, California, in a lower-class family in a twelve hundred square foot home. My grandparents lived next door.

Since both my parents worked, I grew very close to my grandmother. She taught me how to play backgammon competitively (with candy). Growing up, I was a good student, an athlete, a cyclist. Starting in high school, I was sponsored by companies that make bicycle parts and bicycle frames. Therefore, I competed professionally for four years, two years in high school and my first years at college.

I attended Loyola High School in Los Angeles, which is a Catholic High School, but I wasn't raised Catholic. That was a great experience

in my life as it was an all-boys school. There is where I learned the importance of being a good student and a good athlete because that was the consummate student and citizen expectations for the Jesuits, the Order of Priests that educated me.

In 1982, I went off to the University of California, Irvine, receiving two degrees in psychology and economics. Although, I was a good student who graduated with Honors, I was not employable. Because I always thought I was smarter than the people interviewing me for employment. I did do some work in the restaurant business where I waited tables. However, because most of my life, I was an athlete that outlet was my creative avoidance from the workforce.

When it came time to graduate and make a living, I persuaded my parents to give me control of my inheritance from grandparents, Esther and Alex. That money went towards a franchise called Polar Frozen Yogurt and Bakery, one of seven franchises that were in existence at the time. In Long Beach, California, this was a great location at the entrance of a supermarket, a well-known chain back then. I put all that money towards that business; I knew nothing about frozen yogurt and nothing about how to run a business.

Because it was a franchise, there was a user's manual, which wasn't very extensive or detailed. Nevertheless, the store opened, and 18 months later, I had never broken even in a single day. My best revenue day was \$500, and I had payments due to the Small Business Administration, based on SBA funding I had. I fell short and ended up \$242,000 in debt. The humiliating moment was watching my equipment be sold for 17 cents on the dollar.

Just before that, my girlfriend kicked me out because I wasn't that fun to be around. It was depressing, losing money every day, seeing the ship going down. My poor mother, Carol, worked every day to help me out. Unfortunately, my employees were stealing from the shop as I wasn't keeping a close eye on things.

I reached the point of thinking the unthinkable and speaking the unspeakable. I felt like taking my life because I'd gone from having it all, showing off this amazing venture to severe debt. The debt was so bad, my mother's home was going into foreclosure. All because she put up her house for me, and I couldn't repay it. It was a terrible time to be me. So, I needed to live somewhere else. I packed all my stuff, everything I owned, into my Volkswagen Jetta and headed to Pasadena to my mom's.

On the way, I decided to stop at MacArthur Park. Since I didn't have any money to eat or for gas, I started hustling backgammon games. I'd let people win the first few games and then con them into playing more, betting money, then beating them. Ironically, this is the game my grandmother taught me how to play using candy! And she taught me well, and I was very good.

So, for a couple of days, I lived at MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, just outside of the main part of the city. While I'd love to say that being homeless was horrible, freezing cold and snowing, it wasn't. It was comfortable as it was summer and sunny out. It was only a terrible time because of the deep rut I had put myself in financially.

On that park bench in between backgammon games, I watched an elderly heavyset woman, built like my mother. She would put a nickel in the birdseed machine. If you have never seen a birdseed machine, they are like those Jelly Bean machines at the store, where you put a quarter in, you turn the knob, and then the jelly beans come out. I watched her take the birdseed into her palm to feed the pigeons. As she walked towards them, the pigeons would walk away from her their heads bobbing. She walked slowly with a little bit of hesitation and

grace. It became apparent that she wanted them to feed on the palm of her hand, but they were afraid of her.

Invariably, she would turn away, and a curious few would turn around to look at her, and she would stretch out her hand to show them the birdseed. In the language of digital marketing, we refer to that birdseed as a lead magnet. The prospects for that birdseed were the pigeons.

Of course, it wasn't until later, when I started Internet Marketing Consulting after 1995, pre-Google, that this idea came to me. What that woman went through, in about 600 seconds, about 10 minutes, taught me everything I needed to know to later shape my life as a digital marketer. Come the year 2000, I became the Founder of MarketingOnline.com and became the teacher to some of the best-known Internet Marketers living today.

As I said, the lady at the park would turn away from them yet show them the birdseed, the lead magnet, and they'd walk toward her their interest peaked. As she would turn to talk towards them again, they'd again walk away, bobbing their heads back and forth. Then, she would turn away from them, and again, she showed them the bird seat, and

they would walk towards her. She would turn to face them, and the birds would walk away. Over and over, she turned around, walked away, and showed them the birdseed, and again they would walk towards her. Each time the space between them became closer. It was a little dance that she was willing to go through. Not trying to sell too hard, but not being overly passive either. Otherwise, the pigeons wouldn't be interested.

Eventually, she uncomfortably bent down on one knee, almost genuflecting, and the pigeons came closer. One pigeon who was very courageous, maybe an adolescent pigeon, picked some birdseed from the palm of her hand. She succeeded. In the digital marketing world, we call that an opt-in, where the prospect gives us their email address, and eventually they buy from us. Then, the other pigeons started feeding on her hand. We call that a community, where people gather in a Facebook group or a member's area or a workshop because someone already has had success. Now the other pigeons are following because they know it's safe.

Pretty soon, the pigeons were landing on her shoulder, pooping on her head, which in Armenian tradition is good luck. Odd, but it's true. The miracle was that she didn't have to go through that dance to palm feed

them the following day. Which in relationship marketing means that when someone buys something from you, it's more likely that they'll buy again and again. Now you have stick strategy; they stick with you for life. Hopefully, they never leave.

Because it was summer, there was a little kid there with his mother. He was maybe he was seven or eight. He wanted the same result that the woman had achieved, the pigeon to eat from his hand. In today's entrepreneurial world, it's as if he saw the results other internet marketers have had, such as earning millions in digital marketing. But, this little boy didn't observe the evolution that that woman went through with the dance, which was only 10 minutes, 600 seconds or so. He didn't see that. What he saw was what the woman had - the result.

The kid didn't see what the woman had gone through the previous day. As a result, he didn't realize, didn't have the recipe, and didn't have the patience to build the relationship of trust with the pigeons like you or I would with human beings. I don't believe in business to consumer (B2C), business to business (B2B), business to patient (B2P), or business to government (B2G). I don't believe in that. I believe in H2H, human to human.

I was taught that by a former student, 2002, Ryan Deiss, now the founding partner of Digital Marketer, one of the most successful and largest digital marketing companies. Now, he's my teacher. So, referring back to the little boy, instead of H2H, human to human, it was P2P, people to pigeon. The boy ran for the birdseed, ran for the birds, and they flew away. They, the pigeons, were afraid; they didn't know the boy. They knew and trusted the woman. But, the little boy didn't know this dance. Upset, he ran crying to his mother. He didn't even notice that in throwing down his birdseed, all the pigeons flocked down to eat them. Sadly, he never experienced the beak to palm relationship feeding the pigeons. Only the woman experienced what would be called a success in the digital marketing business world. When the prospect is eating out of your hand, that business, no matter the type, is a success.

That story, I didn't think of it much, until ten years later. Now, I've used it as the central metaphor and as the origin story of my business because it is a true story. Within a short time, I moved home to live with my mom. And, I did get out of the financial mess as I paid off all the loans, through digital marketing, direct response marketing, which initially started through infomercials. Eventually, I turned to online marketing, which was a lot less expensive than

buying media for television, but it was the same principle of electronic marketing.

That experience at MacArthur Park is what I teach all my students, of which I have had nearly 800,000 students from six continents to emerging nations. Often referred to as the third world, we teach in India, Brazil, and South Africa. In Asia, we teach in Kuala Lumpur, where people come from Thailand, Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong, parts of China, and Indonesia. We teach them digital marketing strategies that are considered very beginning strategies for Americans. However, for people outside of North America, these ideas are very new. It gives them hope, as well as the ability to become entrepreneurs. Excitedly, it raises income for them to buy their first home, which is my goal.

As I mentioned, I use that story as my origin story to open my presentations. You can't sell too hard, and you can't sell too passively because you won't have people feeding on the palm of your hand. But, if you're willing to do the dance, build rapport, and allow basic human to human interaction, just like the woman with the pigeons, then eventually, hopefully, your prospects will become customers, and stick with you for life. That story marks my central theme of what I teach and how

I teach. I masquerade as an internet marketer, but I smuggle in human potential and personal development, the way that Tony Robbins has done for so many years. More overtly, I do that covertly. I'm teaching marketing, so people believe it's possible to become financially liberated to buy their first home.

My goal was to become the world's first work-at-home billionaire, not in net worth, but to create a thousand other millionaires. The question asked when I go and teach in workshops, and onstage is "Who wants to be one of them?" I don't know how many millionaires I have influenced to become millionaires. But, it's somewhere in the range of 150 meaning I have 850 to go. I want to do it before my 77th birthday. I'm 55. So, there's plenty of time. Fortunately, it looks like the momentum is building as I get more social influence thanks to social media.

Today, I run MarketingOnline.com, where we teach first-time authors to self-publish and have Amazon best sellers with over 100 certified reviews. This feat is hard to do. It means that someone had to buy the book; then write a review. Therefore, we have a service, which is scalable. Additionally, I don't have to get involved other than conducting an interview. We've worked so far with over 108 authors, and it's

very profitable for us. But we've created lots of bestsellers, which eventually became New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and USA Today bestsellers as well. We enjoy working with first-time authors because typically, it's tough to get a good publishing deal.

These days, the publishing model is broken; it's an obsolete model. And the author's job is to use the book; this is a platform builder. Not only is it a 200-page business card, but to have the Table of Contents as the outline of a year's worth of social media, posts, and videos and audios are perfect for a podcast. We typically work with speakers and authors; then eventually, they become high end or private clients to build their digital marketing platform. So, MarketingOnline.com is the business. And, I learned most of it through multiple mentors and spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on training. If I hadn't seen what that woman went through in MacArthur Park in 1989. If I had observed what the kid did not do, then I wouldn't know what it takes to become successful in any business.

One of my success stories came from a five-day event called the Ultimate Internet Boot Camp that I ran with my friend and partner T. Harv Ecker. It was a very expensive event to host as this took place

before digital clouds were available on the internet. We shifted the data center so that everyone's laptop connected to the internet. We would let people rent laptops if they did not own one; if you can believe that. By day five, everyone made money on the internet by having a website that they started from scratch based on the templates that I had developed.

When in Melbourne, there was a six-year-old of Indian descent with her parents. She went right through the process, and she made money, five or six thousand for something like continuing education, coaching, and advancing their websites. So, it actually could be scalable and make serious money.

Initially, I didn't allow her to come on board because I thought she was too young. I reasoned that I didn't want to take their money because I couldn't imagine what a child could sell. Her parents were very upset with me, lecturing me, "How dare you not allow her." They even threatened to sue me, so I said ok. She came on board, did very well. That was so inspiring for a six-year-old to make money online when many adults thought it was impossible, including me, because their head trash was in the way.

Then, there was a world war two veteran of Greek descent from San Francisco. At 91, he had cataracts, walked with a cane, and didn't even know how to turn on a laptop. He came to one of the events in LA as he wanted to create a membership site. I was biased, I admittedly questioned, "Look, you're 91, you don't know technology? Do you honestly believe that you're going to continue doing this? Because I don't want to take your money for continuing education if you are buying hope. I want you to follow through with it because you'll earn a lot of money."

Once again, I was editing someone's potential success; shame on me. The elderly gentleman responded that he knew what he was getting himself into and questioned who was I to doubt him as a man three times my age. He ended up having a successful membership site at age 92.

I'll never forget these two, six years old and then 91 years old. After those occurrences, I would announce, "Look, I don't know how old you are, but if you're between ages six and ninety-one, then this program is for you. Those are two of my most interesting stories because of the dynamics of age and my personal bias, in which I was proved wrong.

Coming from a lineage of teachers, I was destined to be a good teacher. My mom, dad, grandmother, sister, and my brother-in-law are all teachers. The difference between myself and other teachers in the Internet Marketing world is that I taught future leaders, future teachers. Many of my students are now famous such as Russell Brunson, Click Funnels, and Vishen Lakhiani, Mind Valley, and many others. Now, they are my teachers, because they become very successful and expanded their learning beyond what I taught them.

Now, my focus is on the little guys and gals. I want them to know what I know to give them hope and confidence to build their own digital marketing business. As a result of my accomplishments, I've ended up having a strong influence on lots of people within the internet marketing, entrepreneurial world. After we stopped doing the Ultimate Internet Boot Camp in 2012, I decided to focus on the emerging nations in the third world.

There is an excitement in teaching them what I know because they are hungry. These students are committed, and they follow through. They spend a huge chunk of their annual income on continuing education. In that case, they are ultra-committed and dedicated, and I enjoy

teaching them. I have the most International students compared to my peers, and I have taught in six continents.

Pretty much, I teach outside the US, regarding the seminar side of things. Inside the US, I have lots of high-end clients, and I belong to some high-end masterminds. Through those resources, I stay connected with folks who are the movers and shakers inside the industry of digital marketing.



Beenie Mann

A smile is the most underused free resource
available to EVERYONE in this world.
– Beenie Mann

YES, YOU CAN! BY BEENIE MANN

You can accomplish anything you set your mind to (and it is a lot easier and more fun when you smile).

If anyone would have told me that at age 52, I would start a new business, write books, become a public speaker, start my own radio show, be happy, and more, I'd have told them they were crazy! NUTS! Yet here I am! How did this happen?

Born and raised in Germany under less than desirable circumstances, I grew up being afraid. Afraid of my mother. Afraid of her unpredictability and what it would mean for me. My parents divorced when I was six. My father left and felt no obligation to support his only child.

From the beginning, my mother never wanted me. For her, I was the means to an end. At seventeen she decided to get pregnant so my father

would marry her and take her out of her parents' house. It worked. She became pregnant, he married her, and they moved in together.

Everything before the big fight that ended their marriage is a blur. But boy, do I remember that day! The screaming, yelling, and furniture smashing drove me to hide under a desk, scared out of my mind. I was a little six-year-old girl trying desperately not to get caught in the crossfire of the people who were supposed to love and protect me.

Somehow, I survived. After my father left and my mother was stuck with me, she made it clear I was neither wanted nor loved. The constant bombardment of “you are just like your father,” “you are no good,” “I never wanted you anyway,” “you are ugly,” “you are fat”, “you’ll never amount to anything”—those epithets were my constant companions.

Then, there were the beatings. Sometimes it felt as if my mother was looking for a reason to beat the daylight out of me to relieve her built-up frustrations. When I was a teenager, she pounded on me in the bathroom because I didn't clean the sink exactly as she wanted it. She laid into me; I held my arms up to protect my face and head as much as I could. For weeks I wore a deep purple belt of bruises around my back

and sides. The physical bruises were deep and faded fairly quickly. The emotional scars were deeper and lasted for decades.

Growing up longing to be loved and accepted made me vulnerable to all sorts of predators, even long into adulthood. With open arms I welcomed anybody who showed me kindness. Fortunately, my guardian angels protected me from extreme danger.

Food was my friend. It comforted me and never judged. It hugged me when I was physically and emotionally hurting. It kept me company when I was all alone, bored, and wallowing in self-pity. Though food provided temporary comfort, it also made me resentful toward myself as I piled on the pounds. Inside I felt I would never be happy, never love or be loved, never be pretty or smart, never successful. It was an emotional roller-coaster.

I went from anger, to frustration, to hate, to despair, to grief, to hope (fortunately, I always managed to have some hope), and back to frustration. The cycle continued for far too long. I cried enough tears to contribute greatly to the oceans. I wept to let it all out in hopes I would feel better.

Because I didn't know how to love myself, my self-worth and self-esteem were non-existent. The hopelessness was so vast, I felt as if I couldn't escape. Occasionally, I'd see a little glimmer of light, of hope. A kind word from my mother. An embrace. Maybe she does love me after all, and I am worth it! Do I dare to hope and cling to that dream?

Too many times my little flame of hope was snuffed out before it could grow into a beautiful, all-illuminating flame. Back I fell, into the darkness of my abyss. Back to the negative self-talk and self-hate.

Fortunately, some people showed me true kindness and compassion. They fanned that little spark of hope and love. They taught me to love myself. They showed me I was worthy. I began to cling to them.

Piece by piece and little by little, I learned to love and honor myself. I suffered setbacks, but I always managed to pull myself back up and out of the abyss. Getting back up and climbing out became easier and easier.

The struggles and setbacks were daunting. At times I felt I had moved three steps ahead, only to fall back four or five. The fact that I carried over 360 pounds on a 5'6" frame did not help. I saw how people looked

at me and whispered behind my back. Maybe they were right. Maybe I didn't deserve to be happy and loved or successful...

WRONG!!!

We all deserve to be happy and to be loved! Something had to change! I had to change. My self-talk had to change. I had two young children and a loving husband. Because I didn't like myself and couldn't love myself, I was subconsciously pushing them away and keeping them at arm's length.

One day in early 2004, I was at my breaking point. The physical and emotional pain was incredibly overwhelming. How could I move on? This was my darkest hour—and my turning point. You see, I was contemplating suicide. End it all. Be done. The end.

But I discovered that, even though I had no self-esteem, self-worth, or self-love, I was not a quitter! I thought of the people who were most important to me. My kids needed their mom. My amazing husband needed his wife to help raise these incredible young humans. Checking out was not an option!

That insight was my turning point. That day I took charge of my well-being and my happiness.

Within days I enrolled into college classes. It was something I had always wanted to do for myself.

However, a few things were seemingly against me. First, English is my second language and although I was very proficient back then, I had enormous self-doubt. Second, I was 37-years-old. Oh, it was scary! My amazing husband signed up for class with me, so I didn't have to go alone! Later that same year, I underwent gastric bypass surgery. Those were the beginning steps of claiming and loving myself.

I lost weight, 180 lbs to be exact; I passed my classes with a 3.6 grade point average; my physical pain diminished. With that, the dark clouds in my mind began to lift. Very slowly I gained self-esteem and self-worth. I started to love myself, and as time went by, I even started to like myself.

The conversations I had with myself became less self-sabotaging and less self-destructive. My self-respect grew, and I gained more and more confidence. I began to shift from within.

Eventually, I started to dream again. Suddenly, where there was no way out, now I had possibilities. Where there was hopelessness, now there was a glimmer. A future!

What I learned along the way is it does not matter how fast or slow you go nor how long it takes - as long as you are putting one foot in front of the other, get back up when you fall, and heading into the direction you want to go. I am the first one in my family to graduate from college! The certificate hangs on my wall as a reminder I can achieve anything I set my mind to.

I always did what I had to for our family. Generally, it meant putting my needs and wants on the backburner. Way in the back. In addition, being a military spouse had its own set of challenges. My husband was gone quite often either on deployment, extended training exercises, school to further his career, and other reasons. This essentially left me to raise our two children, while worrying about my husband. If I had to choose, I'd do it all again!

Once the kids were old enough and didn't need me to be available as much, I started to figure out what it was that I wanted. For so long my

identity was defined as being the mom, the wife, the military spouse, the friend... But who am I? What did I want to do next? Who did I want to be?

Yes, my kids still needed me part time, my husband was a senior non-commissioned officer (there were military obligations that came with that), but now I had time on my hands. How would I fill it? What could I do? What am I good at? What interests me? What is my purpose?

At some point I began to embrace the entrepreneurial spirit I knew lives inside me. So, I started dabbling in multilevel marketing. It was a way for me to get my toes wet in owning my own business without taking a financial risk. I learned a lot during that time. Mostly, I learned the value of personal development! Oh, what a portal that opened! Who knew there was so much information out there on how to discover and how to grow into the person you knew you are meant to be?

There are books, seminars, workshops, audio books, and so much more. With each one, I discovered more and more about who I am and what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to make a difference - a

difference for my family, others, and myself. I knew at some point I'd be sharing my story to encourage others, help them smile, and give hope.

For quite some time I had entertained the idea of writing a book, share my story in written form. But how? I was not a writer. I didn't know the first thing about writing a book. I told myself, maybe someday!

So, I continued my quest to find that thing that would make a difference in my life, the thing that would fill the gap. Flash of brilliance... What if I got a license and become a mortgage loan officer! So, I did, and I was - for less than a year. Oh, I tried to convince myself that I was happy, but I was so very miserable every single moment.

FINALLY! On April 1, 2018, at the age of 51, I liberated myself. I quit yet another thing. That day I decided to finally do on purpose and with purpose what I had been doing my whole life! I fully stepped into myself and my gift. You see, for as long as I can remember, no matter how miserable I was or how dark it was inside of me, I always found a way to help others smile, be better and see a different perspective. Nudge them into their greatness.

Honestly, I had no clue what I would be doing or what it would look like. All I knew was I had to follow my heart and my passion. Here I was 51 years old, starting something totally new. It was very scary for I didn't even know where to begin.

Coaching! I have been doing it my whole life so why not make it official... Said and done! My plan was to get certified (which I did) and put a coaching program together. Well, that was my plan. Apparently, the powers that are, had a different plan. Nothing flowed and I ran into one roadblock after another. I felt lost again. Isn't coaching my calling? I thought IT was my purpose.

Although nothing came together on the coaching side those first two weeks in April, I received nudges (more like pushes) from the Universe about writing a book. What? I didn't want to write a book, not then, I wanted to start my coaching business! Well, I caved and wrote the book. To my surprise, it just poured out of me, and I was able to write and publish it in under three months! Talk about being in the flow! I decided to launch it on my 52nd birthday with a great party. It was a success!

Life is an incredible journey! The best part, we get to decide the direction we are going! If we don't like where we are headed, we can adjust, and course correct. We can change direction or simply start fresh and go on a totally different journey. Only if we give into the 'voices of reason' and the 'well-meaning' friends and family, do we doubt ourselves and get off course.

When I announced my vision, people were 'helping' by telling me all the reasons it wouldn't work. I didn't listen! I encourage you to not listen either. Follow your heart, it will never lead you wrong! Tell them what I told them: "Thank you. I love and appreciate you and I know you mean well but I don't care why it won't work. Help me figure out HOW it can work or step aside. "

I am now 55 and branching out on my journey. Age is only a number, and it is never too late to start something new to follow your heart and passion. The best time to change your course and start is RIGHT NOW! There is so much power in this very moment! In this very moment is where you have total control of everything. That is powerful. You are powerful!

Set your sight on what you want and go after it with all your might. Course correct if necessary but get started now. Are you afraid? If so, what are you afraid of? Why are you afraid? Where is that fear coming from? What is that fear based on? Instead of imagining all that could go wrong, imagine all that could go right. What if it does all work out? The effort of imagining the best-case scenario is the same as imagining the worst-case.

It's alright to be afraid of the unknown. Do it anyway. Actually, a little fear is not a bad thing for it keeps you vigilant. Remember the first time you got behind a wheel to drive? That was scary and exciting all at the same time, wasn't it? Now you don't even think about it anymore. You simply get in the car and drive. This is no different! The more you do it, the more confident you will be. Confidence will replace the fear.

You've got this. YES, YOU CAN!!!

•••••

Sharing my experience with others and giving them that glimmer of hope that there is a light at the end of the tunnel (and NO, it is NOT

a freight train!) feeds my heart and soul. It is incredible to watch their confidence rise and then take steps toward a better future for themselves. Witnessing them stepping into their gift and lighting up like a Christmas Tree when they find the courage to be themselves and follow their hearts desire. It's simply a beautiful thing.

ABOUT BEENIE MANN

Beenie Mann is an Entrepreneur, Visionary, Transformational Speaker, Award-Winning Best-Selling Author, Show Host, and the Founder and CEO of Matters of Perspective.

Born and raised in Germany, she has always looked at the brighter side, even when there was only darkness. She has been changing mindsets for more than thirty years, during most of which time her husband was on active duty in the U.S. Army.

Beenie's drive to encourage and empower people has earned her the Shield of Sparta – Heroine of the Infantry award from the National Infantry Association, the Essayons Award from the Army Engineer Association, the Commander's Award for Civilian Service and the Outstanding Civilian Service Medal from the Department of the Army.

Books That Changed My Life:

Who Moved My Cheese by Spencer Johnson, M.D
Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill
The Power of Awareness by Neville

Movies That Inspired Me:

Too many to list

Song That Inspire Me:

I have a dream by ABBA

Your Hero:

My husband ~ Soldier, Dad, Husband, Amazing
Human

Myself ~ getting up more than I fall and always
finding the positive and staying happy
Those who have come before me who keep get-
ting up and keep moving forward.

Quote You Live By:

"Life is full of choices, most of which I would not
make." ~ Beenie Mann



Michael Mann

“You can walk a mile if you put an S
in front of it.” – Michael Mann

KEEP SMILING

BY MICHAEL MANN

I think the first smile I ever produced was when my mother gave birth to me. Other than that, I mean, I guess, I was cute. Every mother thinks their kid is cute, so I was very happy to enter the world very blessed through my mother's efforts.

Born in 1942, five years later, my mother decided that I was cute enough to be in magazines, on commercials, and whatever media was available in those days. Magazines were illustrations as they didn't print photographs as magazine media at that time. There wasn't anything called television that existed. There was only radio entertainment so you couldn't see anybody. Film was basically limited to California, and I grew up in New York, where the theater was the focus.

Determined to show me off, my mother checked with the Better Business Bureau, seeking a model agency. She discovered the Harry

Conover Agency, a high-fashion model agency with a children's department. They took me on, and I had photographs done. The next thing, I was modeling for magazine shoots. Soon after, they were looking for kids for this new invention called television. That's when I expanded my career from a child model to a child actor; at only seven years old, acting on live TV, live radio, and Broadway.

The first commercials that I modeled for including the specific brands, Dr. Denton's pajamas and Pepsodent toothpaste. I did some jingles, too. Another memory I recall happens to be one of the first jobs I ever had as a model alongside a new friend of mine. She was a young girl who eventually went to school with me. I don't remember what the product was, but we were literally on the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral back in 1947.

As I got older, at seven years old, I did my first television show. I acted in over 300 live television shows, including a yearlong recurring role on a radio show called Hilltop House did. At ten, I started on Broadway.

My first play, called Carnival in Flanders, which nobody ever heard of, was with John Raitt (Bonnie Raitt's father, who was also cast in

Carousel, Pajama Game, & Oklahoma) and Delores Gray. The show was about Flanders. But then, the directors figured they didn't need kids in it, so we were fired.

However, my first Broadway show where I appeared on stage was a show called Two's Company. I acted in front of 1200 people, six nights a week. At ten years old, I was very blessed to stand on stage at the Alvin Theatre, which is now the Neil Simon Theatre. It was a musical revue starring Bette Davis, and there was a sketch written up called the Child Actor Sketch directed by a young kid from Brooklyn named Jules Dassin, who eventually directed /Zorba the Greek.' (In that sketch, I worked with one of the great comedians of all time, David Burns. After that, I did another Broadway show called "Hole in the Head). That play later became a movie starring Frank Sinatra. Then, I did a couple of Off-Broadway plays.

Another treat was being in the original company of Damn Yankees. It was great; I loved it. In the musical, I was hired as one of the three boys in the Joe Hardy fan club with Jean Stapleton, cast as the club president. It was pretty wild as I had the pleasure to work with the Damn Yankees cast members, including Gwen Verdon (Lola in original musical &

film, 4x Tony Winner, Grammy Winner), Bob Fosse (Choreographer, Chicago, Pippin, & Pajama Game; 1 Oscar, 4 Grammys, & 8 Tonys), and Ray Walston (Devil in the original musical & the film, My Favorite Martian).

I love the theater. It was my favorite place in the world. It still is...

Although I loved the theater, it was also the first time I had cause to lose my smile! To put it bluntly, I got fired after being hired by one of the world's great theater directors. Mr. George Abbott (Director, Pulitzer Prize, 8 Tony's, Kenny Center Honoree) hired me because, as a kid, I was a triple threat, as they say in the business. After all, I could sing, act, and dance. I sang this very interesting specialty number, which got me the role. However, during rehearsals, singing the top note of the three-part harmony, I couldn't reach the high note due to puberty. I was fired; Nobody likes to be rejected, especially not at twelve years old.

Fortunately, I rebounded and got offered to do the Child Actor Sketch that I did on Broadway on the NBC comedy hour hosted by Gail Storm in 1956 in Hollywood. I was approached by a manager Walter Myers

who just happened to be Gail Storm's (My Little Margie) and William Frawley (Fred Mertz, I Love Lucy) manager. Walter took me to meet Fred Zinneman (Director, Oklahoma & High Noon; 24 Oscars, 4 Academy Awards) to read for the "The Old Man and the Sea" with Spencer Tracy (75 films including Guess Who's Coming to Dinner). I didn't get it. Walter arranged for me to screen test for a new series at Walt Disney TV series called The Hardy Boys with Tim Considine (Frank Hardy & Mike Douglas, My Three Sons), and I lost the part to Tommy Kirk (Joe Hardy, & Travis Coates in Old Yeller) who earned a seven-year contract at \$750 a week. I didn't get the part as I had too much of a New York accent.

My career did not go as planned, but I didn't go into a ditch and stick my head underwater; I took it in stride, moved on, and life became good from there.

We went back to New York so that I could do another sketch with Ernie Kovacs on his morning show. I attended the Professional Children's School, where I could do all my work by correspondence. You had to be there to take your finals as accredited by the New York State Board of Regents. So, it worked out to be back.

From 56 to 59, I focused on television, Broadway, and radio. Then, in 1959, after high school, my parents divorced for over five years. My mother's side of the family decided that I needed a little discipline in my life at 17 and a half years old. They had a big family circle meeting where they said, "We think it would be wise if you went into the military to understand what real life is about and not just dancing and singing on Broadway, being in this bubble." Being naïve, I said, "Okay."

Next thing, you know, I was on a train to Great Lakes, Illinois, for service in the Navy for three years, eight months, 13 days, and 42 seconds, but who's counting? So naïve was I with nobody there to tell me how naïve I was. I thought since I had this incredible background as an actor, I knew all these people like the Producer Marlo Lewis of The Ed Sullivan Show, and the director, Paul Bogart, who eventually directed me on "All in the Family."

I gathered all these letters of recommendation stating Michael should be in special services where he should put shows together. When I arrived at boot camp, I realized that special services consisted of a ping pong table and a pool table. There were no special services. We weren't

at war. It wasn't like Bob Hope was going out. I begrudgingly realized that I was trapped in the United States Navy.

As usual, I made the best of the situation and went up through the ranks. First, I was put on a ship and then went back to Great Lakes to become a Navy corpsman at Hospital Corps School. Then I was stationed at the Philadelphia Naval Hospital, where I ran the cystoscopy genital/urinary clinic. I helped set up surgery and minor surgery at the hospital in Philadelphia.

Being away from my showbiz friends, I gave thought to be a doctor. I was seriously thinking about letting the Navy put me through medical school, and then I would have given them a few years. I loved medicine. I think I would have been a great surgeon, but I wanted to get home to my friends who were doing very well.

I got out the day before my 21st birthday. It was a pretty exciting transition because I missed my previous life as one of the most successful working kid actors in New York. Then I disappeared through the ages of 17-20. A lot of my friends were on Broadway in shows like Bye Bye Birdie and Best Foot Forward Off-Broadway.

Looking back, I didn't know if I was talented or just cute when I got those kid jobs. I didn't know if I had the tools to be an actor because most of the stuff I did was just being a kid, which came naturally. I had concerns. However, I wound up getting another agent and doing two episodes of *The Secret Storm*, a soap opera playing a drug addict with the new young actor on the scene Dustin Hoffman.

Then, I kind of drifted away because there was a transition from 1963-64 with the New York nightlife society supper clubs, like El Morocco, The Stork Club, The Little Club were ending, and this new craze called discotheques emerged. People danced to records and live bands. A friend of mine, who has since passed, Robert (Bob) Webber, was an investor in this brand new, very famous discotheque owned by a woman named Sybil Burton, who had just divorced Richard Burton. She soon married Jordan Christopher, who was in a band appearing at the Peppermint Lounge. She and three other people put this together, and they opened the most famous discotheque in the history of New York called Arthur (named after a character in a Beatle movie). By circumstance and insanity, I wound up working there because Bob was one of the investors.

Then I graduated to own and operate my little cabaret, a small bar called Michael Mann's, at only 25 years. One night a very dear old friend Larry Blyden, who I'd starred with on a series called *Joe and Mabel*, came to the bar and said, "What are you doing here, Mike, you need to be back on stage?" He was preparing to direct a play, and he asked me to read for the understudy for the male lead. It was the first time I had stepped on stage at the Palace Theater since seventeen, and I felt like I was home again. Although we both knew I was ten years too young for the part, he was the one who lured me back on stage. Then, my dear friend Marvin Hamlisch had written this little musical called a *Chorus Line*. After I went down to see it, I said I have to be back in show business.

Going home, I told my wife at the time that we were moving to California so that I could repursue my acting career. She eventually declined, so I packed up my VW bus with my dog, my cat, my saddle, and off I went.

By the way, Marvin Hamlisch went to the Professional Children's School with me as well; he was two years behind. As part of our curriculum, we had these showcases we put together. These shows included: Marvin Hamlisch, Lorin Hollander (the most magnificent concert

pianist), Leslie Uggams (Roots). I was the Master of Ceremonies. Amazingly, Marvin wrote all the music for the showcases. Also, Marvin went on to win the Academy Award for "The Way We Were" Sophies Choice and The Sting. By the way, other classmates at the school included Elliott Gould (MASH, The Long Goodbye, & Ocean Film Series), Christopher Walken (100+ films, The Deer Hunter, Pulp Fiction), and his younger brother, Glenn Walken (Apocalypse Now), Josh White Jr and Warren Berlinger, to name a few.

Before I moved to LA in 1975, I went out to scout the land after seeing Chorus Line in 1972, while there I got a play (Mr. Roberts) at the Pussycat Theater in San Diego. My very dear friend, James Burrows (Jimmy), who co-created Cheers and Will & Grace, was at the beginning of his directing career, son of Abe Burrows (Guys & Dolls & How to Succeed in Business). Ironically, Jimmy and I knew each other as we grew up on West 78th Street, only a block from each other.

After successfully working as an actor from 75-78, I decided that I needed to do more for myself because I couldn't get proper representation. Therefore, I opened my own management company representing actors and eventually writers and directors. I managed that business for 43 years.

My first client was Melinda Cordell. She was a classmate of mine at the Professional Children's School as a prima ballerina soloist with the American Ballet Theatre. Her husband, Nicholas Pryor, a well-known actor, was working, and she wasn't. They wanted to put on this play, a production of Clifford Odet's 'Country Girl," a very famous play that won an Academy Award. Bing Crosby, William Holden, and Grace Kelly were cast in the movie. She wanted to play Georgie in it. They asked me to produce it. It got rave reviews.

She asked me to manage her. She had only had three interviews in three years at 36 years of age. It was a now or never for her. I agreed, wrote up the agreement for services, and within a month, she was in her first 'Movie of the Week." It was the beginning of the beginning for me as a talent manager!

The client list began to grow with some pretty amazing people. The clients whose careers took off include actresses Allison LaPlaca (Fox Series Duet & Open House) and Leslie Easterbrook (Lt. Callahan in the 'Police Academy' movies & 'Rhonda' on 'Laverne & Shirley'). Additionally, the actors whose careers took off include Wes Studi (Native American known for 'Dances with Wolves,' 'Geronimo,' 'The Last of the Mohicans & Avatar)

Some other famous actors include Molly Shannon; I got her a job as a General Hospital nurse. She was too big for regular television; they just didn't know what to do with her. Only after she moved on, she became famous with SNL (Saturday Night Live). Also, I worked with Don Most (Ralph) after Happy Days, among so many other famous actors, all such amazingly talented actors.

My last client before transitioning to producing was Louis Gossett Jr., most known for 'Officer and a Gentleman,' 'Roots,' and 'Extant.' We are both from Brooklyn; we met in the late 50s when there was an incredible organization put together called the Broadway Show League. John Efrat put together all of the people who were on Broadway and Off-Broadway and put a softball league together every Thursday afternoon. The dancers and the singers from the shows; some of them couldn't even run or throw a ball, came together to play softball. I was in it, and Louis was playing for the Negro Ensemble Company League with George C. Scott and others.

I played for a show called "Say Darling" that my friend Elliott Gould was in, and that's when I met Lou. Then I kind of lost track of him. I went into the Navy and came back, and I was in California many years later. About eight years ago, I got a call from a very prominent

executive, a former major agent Ron Meyer who asked if I were interested in talking to Lou as his agent and manager had both died.

I drove out to Malibu. We hung out; we caught up with everybody we knew, and I ended up managing him. Three weeks later, I made a nice deal for him to star in 'The Book of Negroes,' a six-hour mini-series which was required reading in Canada. From there, he played Halle Berry's father in 'Extant.' Then other projects that we have worked on together for many, many years. Fantastically wonderful, wonderful man.

David Carradine came to me later on in his career when I was working for another agency. David was brought to me by his then-wife, I didn't know David, but his father, the late John Carradine, co-starred on Broadway with my friend David Burns in a 'Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum.' David and I had a lot in common, but he couldn't get a job at that time. We worked together really hard, finding it very difficult to resurrect his career after all the Kung Fu shows. We only worked together a short time, and he tragically passed a year or two later.

Navid Neghaban came to me because I was putting a movie together. I asked a casting director friend for recommendations, Iranian/

Lebanese actors, for a movie film to do with Islam. Navid came to do one of the readings. He wound up being on Homeland in the second and third season as the villain, Abu Nazir. We had an excellent experience together for years.

In 2018, I made a deal for Lou to star in a film called "On Smoother Dirt" about the great Chicago Icon, Ernie Banks. The movie was due to start in the fall of 2018. I was asked to join the producing team, so I closed my management business and moved to Atlanta. As soon as the COVID situation ends, we will begin filming. As it stands, I am producing features, including The Odyssey of Bobby Summers and four other features in various stages of development; I am also co-developing a one-man performance piece to direct.

In closing, reliving my childhood memories as a child actor brings such joy to me as you never knew where life would take you. 'Man plans, and God laughs.' Here I thought I was coming to Georgia to make a movie, and I ended up making a marriage. I am marrying my fiancée, Mira D. Bergen, in September 2020 in Atlanta. Also, I am the proud parent of six children and twelve grandchildren and counting while I look forward to making more memories.

Books That Changed My Life:

The Five Books of Moses The Old Testament;
Being There

Movies That Inspired Me:

Schindler's List, so we never forget,
Johnny Got His Gun, so we never forget,
the Horse Whisperer, The Original Pink Panther,
and The Producers by Mel Brooks so we can
always laugh

Song That Inspire Me:

How Do You Keep The Music Playing
by Tony Bennett

Quote You Live By:

"No regrets."



Dr. Sher Mathews

“Keep smiling through the #FAILS. What makes you whole is the sum of all your beautiful chaos.”

KEEP SMILING THROUGH THE #FAILS

BY DR. SHER MATHIEW

Undeniable grace... for in my weakness He is strong

My name is Sher. I am Doctor Sherry Mathew if you want to be formal. You would think with a prestigious doctoral degree tacked onto my name, I of all people would not be authoring anything called #FAIL. Well the truth is, if I could keep a record of everything I sucked at in this lifetime, the list would definitely be endless from playing sports to reading long fictional books as I am definitely more of a visual hands-on individual. I'm talking about all those really big books, the 2,000 page Harry Potter type books. Those really scare me. This also may include my writing skills which can be a bit crude, so hopefully you can enjoy muddling through my very real and very raw ways of expression. Welcome to my short memoir of just a small list of failures

that took me beyond the place of exceedingly abundantly above all that I could ask or think.

Be inspired.

CHILDHOOD #FAIL

I was born in the great state of Texas into a humble immigrant family. Even though I was first generation American born, my first language was not English, but my native tongue Malayalam. I was excited about my first day of school, but soon that excitement turned into a nightmare of confusing memories for any child trying to acclimate into a new world outside of family. I remember my poor dad who didn't speak English too well taking me to kindergarten and the principal separating me from the rest of the bright eyed grade schoolers. I had my first taste of feeling like an outcast from the start. Back in the '80s, no one knew what a Malayalam or a Malayalee even meant. I guess they assumed since we were brown, we were Spanish, most probably Mexican, since most Spanish speakers in Texas were Mexican, with Mexico being at our state's borders. So here I was all of a sudden torn away from the "regular" kids and shipped off

to a Spanish speaking school, unable to understand a thing. I was constantly bullied and harassed by all the Spanish speaking kids. Being bullied is bad enough, but bullied not even knowing what the bullies were saying is worse, because you don't even know how to defend yourself. After what seemed like forever in this nonsense, I finally begged my dad to go back to my school principal to reconsider her decision. I wanted to go to the "real" school with the "normal" kids. I wanted to just be normal and fit in. However, life will soon teach me that "normal" was just never in the cards for me. After some coaxing, I finally get to walk into a real classroom, with a real teacher, and my very own real desk with a little cubby hole for my amazing smurf lunch kit complete with matching thermos. I wait for the other students, eager to make new friends, but no one came in but a little boy placed in the opposite corner who couldn't seem to communicate. I noticed this little boy had something different about him. Well, I was now placed into a children with special needs class. At that age, I did not understand what a special needs child was, but I knew I did not belong there. Another mistake, but my parents were working long hours to make ends meet, not fluent enough in English or affluent enough to try and fight the decision, so I went with it, accepted the label, and just rolled with it. I can't remember the kid's name, but he was nice even though he could not communicate. I really had no choice. I remember always walking past the

front of the “normal” kids’ classrooms with the down syndrome kid by my side, because we got to go ahead of everyone else at lunchtime. Their eyes were like laser beams staring a hole through us, like we were some kind of zoo animals. Eventually the school corrected their error, but the stigma and feeling of being “special”, not fitting in, and not being good enough followed me throughout grade school with no turning back. There was one thing I was good at though, church. I was born and raised under the ministry of the famed late Pastor John Osteen, father of Joel Osteen. We were close to the Osteen family at the time, and I was a prayer warrior from birth. So no matter what, misfit or not, my faith and trust in God was the rock on which I stood on. I may not have had many friends and I may not have been seen as the smartest or sharpest tool in the shed, but I could go to God with anything and I felt like I was everything in my Father God’s eyes. I knew this much from Sunday school, that according to Philippians 4:13, I could “do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”

TEEN #FAIL

Well if there ever was a teenage awkward phase embodied, ‘tis was I. For some reason, as much as I loved God, He decided to “bless” me with

the biggest early puberty growth spurt of them all, complete with large Coke bottle thick glasses, curvaceous-ness galore, a height taller than most of the boys along with clumsy uncoordinated matching big feet. I was definitely no Cinderella, maybe a close Drizella.. and oh yeah, did I mention I was one of the heavier girls in the class, or fat, to put it more bluntly according to both my family and the mean boys at school. Since I was uncoordinated, I was always last to be picked on any sports related teams. Health Ed. was not exactly my strength. Being born into an indian-asian family meant your focus was not on looks, boys, make-up, school dances, cheerleading, definitely not sports, but academia. Your goal was to study hard, become valedictorian, and get a scholarship so you can find the highest paying job as a doctor or engineer, or some kind of descent money making career. All this to help you land an amazing arranged marriage, to an amazing equally educated successful life partner, to help you pay for your parents in their old age, and all the family back in the mother land, and all those living in poverty. This was our American dream. Well it turns out, I was not as good at the academics either, but eventually did make it into the “Gifted and Talented” pool of students. I didn’t want anyone to know, but I struggled to read most years and I couldn’t figure out what was wrong with me. Did I have a learning disability after all? Was my kindergarten principal right..

should she have left me in the class with the downs kid? My English teachers would red ink all my papers and I was told to my face that my writing skills were awful and my calculus skills soon followed suit. I was the worst at standardized testing and my SAT scores were less than impressive. My weight gain was getting worse at one point teeter-tottering around 185-190s. Of course boys will be boys, so the bullying commenced and now the fat shaming plus xenophobia enter the scene. I would walk home from school and the neighborhood Caucasian boys would chase me down with real hunting bow and arrows hurling racial assaults at me such as go back home Indians or we're gonna scalp you, and with time the term "sand nigger" made its way out on to the stage. I had no clue what that even meant. Then to make awkward puberty matters worse, out of nowhere, came a storm that would change me forever. The biggest fail moment of them all as a child was about to rear its ugly head out of the dark. My parents were loving enough to host 2 Christian priests at our home one summer. These monsters would soon take advantage of their benevolence, and sexually violate me. For some reason I blamed myself for the abuse. I was too embarrassed to tell anyone, especially my parents, for fear of being a less than perfect child. I didn't want anyone to know that I was not as pure as God had wanted me to be, because I was supposed to be saving all that for marriage,

right? All I kept thinking for years was how stupid could I have been for allowing this to happen. I was in denial that such a holy man of God could ever be capable of committing anything sinful, so surely it was ok, right? As this terror went on, I eventually realized there was nothing ok about any of it. My parents were busy working tirelessly to pay the bills, take us to prayer meetings to keep our spiritual life strong, and making sure we studied hard to get into college. I thought to myself, the last thing they had time for was this, so I kept my mouth shut.

I started blossoming the last year or so of high school, becoming super outgoing and involved. My faith grew stronger in the Lord and I submerged myself into every facet of Lakewood Church's ministry from volunteering at the nursery, the children's church, and lots of Vacation Bible School in between. I also started to sing on praise and worship teams like an American Idol champ. I was becoming a superstar for Jesus! As time went on, the Jesus freak within would come out in full force covering up all of my mess. I knew this much, that Psalm 91:1-2 told me that "he that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in Him will I trust." And boy did I have a lot of secret places I needed to hide and lock up into those shadows.

COLLEGE AND DAUGHTER #FAIL

Moving off to another city 4 hours away to college helped me cover up all the dirt, making it easier to forget the shame. I attended the ever amazing University of Texas at Austin, becoming a forever Longhorn. These were some of the best years of my life where I challenged myself to become more healthy and lose the weight. My spiritual life started to explode. I discovered my absolute passion for God and basically became a Jesus Super Heroine for the Lord. I may as well have walked around campus with a big red cape representing the blood of Christ and donning the letters WWJD in typical holy roller Holy Spirit filled fashion. I was both leading and creating Bible studies on multiple levels and praise and worship leader for several Christian bands. I even travelled to sing at conferences from Texas to Canada, and even on missions singing overseas in China. I preached the Gospel to the prostitutes, at the strip clubs, to prison inmates, to gangs on some of the most dangerous areas and ghettos, and fed the homeless. I was a force to be reckoned with and my mom, my dad, my pastors, my youth group, youth leaders were for but a moment so proud of me. I felt completely whole again, pure and white as snow. From an academia perspective, eh..UT kicked my butt and my first couple years

of transcripts were riddled with bottomed out GPAs. I was in one of the toughest Pre-Doctoral curriculums with my head just barely above water and about to drown. Once again reading was tough and Organic Chemistry was killing me and my grades. I just wanted to make my parents proud by being the first college graduate in the family, especially my mom, who tried so hard to go back to school when she came to America, but could never finish because of her strenuous work schedules and family obligations. I wanted to show her that I could do this, and someday earn enough money to buy them a better house out of the crime-ridden ghetto we lived in. I took the Pharmacy school entrance exam around 3 times unsuccessfully. The dean even told me to my face that that I was unqualified, unfit, and would never get my Doctoral as long as she was dean. The disappointment of my mom and dad was daunting, but nevertheless they had the perfect plan B solution of course, marriage. Since I was pretty much failing at the whole college thing, I thought to myself, well I managed to lose 40 pounds at that point and I was looking pretty good, so surely even without this fancy doctoral degree, I could land a good man to be arranged with, so why not. Well the first few proposals didn't go so well. Comments from parents included the following: too loud, laughs too much, sat with the men during the tea ceremony instead of going back into the kitchen.

My dad was indifferent, but my mom was definitely at the opposite end of proud. So after several more attempts, my “reviews” went from bad to worse..too tall (well is it my fault your son is too short?), wearing too high of heels, not educated enough, showing too much skin, which by the way was a little bit of my shoulders, weird accent, etc. The list of my flaws was longer than a CVS receipt, and after 16 proposals or so, rejections from Texas to India, I was done, and so were my parents. They decided to give it a rest. By God’s miracle soon after, I was actually accepted into the Doctor of Pharmacy program and I thought I was on my way to making everybody proud once again! However, the biggest disappointment ever was just lurking around the corner. My “non-dating” self, that was saving everything for marriage down to the first fairytale kiss, falls in love with a man at church. Holy crap hits the fan because, he was not Indian. After a few months of absolute confusion on how this whole dating thing worked, I decide to tell my parents the truth and ask for guidance. After all, honesty is always the best policy..right? That did not go well at all because in our culture there is no dating. Many weeks of arguments, tears, and possibilities of disownment from the family continued until one day we all hit a truce without resolve and lots of silence. Then came one of the most life altering moments that would shatter our lives forever. My mom is

suddenly killed in a car accident with my dad at the wheel. The devastation of it all cannot be fathomed, leaving me numb for years to come. There are days I still wonder was she ever proud of me? Or did she leave this earth not so much. Did I fail her too? Not that it really matters anymore, because she is in paradise not worried about such foolishness like doctoral degrees, if the guy was white, black, or purple, or whether I am wearing high heels or not. All I knew at that point was I needed God more than ever and I clung for dear life to His words in Psalm 34:18 that said our God is “close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” .. and I was truly crushed.

MARRIAGE #FAIL

The death of my dear mom who left this earth an angel helping children and orphans in India, became a harrowing storm of brokenness all around. She and my dad were about to break ground on a children’s home for orphans in India just months before her fatal accident, so we as a family decided not abandon her lifelong vision and move forward with it, but the years after were just a blur. I don’t know how, but eventually I graduated and officially became Doctor Sherry Mathew. Because

my mom was not there to see me walk on graduation day, after so many years of wanting this for me, I decided not to attend if she could not be present. Instead I went and did something that I thought she would love even more. I decided to travel overseas to help orphans in Honduras on mission. To my ultimate surprise, I would meet the absolute love of my life, my husband, who I met there, working beside me in this effort. No it was not arranged and no he was not Indian. He was another white dude that didn't exactly fit their mold, but he did mine. I think my dad just wanted me to be happy, so accepted it all. It wasn't entirely a bed of roses making the whole interracial thing work back then, but we tried everything in our power to do things as right as possible and make this courtship work so that our parents would be proud and honored of our union. We held to our promise of purity in the best way we knew how. The proposal was perfect, the ring was perfect. My husband's family were the most loving beautiful souls. The fairytale black stallion horse and carriage wedding was perfect and our marriage just blossomed as well as the strong bond of our friendship. He was my healing from so much, from the devastating loss of my beautiful mom, to restoring my confidence as a woman after years of body shaming, past insecurities, and those painful secret sexual abuses. He was prouder than anyone I knew of my achievements, my career, and

my vocal capabilities as a singer. He was my adventurous travel and life partner, my crazy lover, and my best friend. In the beginning of our relationship after 911, I suffered many racially motivated assaults as America tried to adjust to the horrific thing that happened to us as a country. Every brown person seemed to be suspect and I was discriminated against often. Things got out of hand when I was stopped one night, handcuffed and then assaulted outside a small town by several Caucasian police officers. With loaded guns to my head and face to the ground they taunted me that fateful night which I thought would end in rape, but instead I was wrongfully imprisoned on false allegations. The case was a costly nightmare, but my husband was my protector and defender through it all. I thought to myself, thank God I found a man already, because whatever arranged marriage proposals that may have been on the horizon were probably running in the opposite direction now that I have a mug shot on file and a prison record.

We were two peas in a beautiful pod living the dream traveling the world and helping those less fortunate. I prayed for a man that had a compassionate heart for philanthropy like myself. Still to this day some of the best moments of my life and it seemed like the 3 fold cord could never be broken. Then one day, about 7 years down the road, the

unexpected happened. It snapped. He snapped. Too many unresolved mysteries and abuse in the end to even write about, but in a nutshell, my beloved left me, never to be seen or return again. What the hell happened? Again.. how could I have failed, failed as a wife now, failed at this one thing that I saved myself for like all the good Christian girls. How could I have let any of the abuse and manipulation happen? I was smarter than that, or so I thought? He left me and took everything, right under my nose. My love was so blind, I wasted 2 years waiting and hoping for him to return with no avail. That was a #FAIL and a #DUMB. Left in the dust till this day I have zero answers. The entire gut wrenching process left me broke, busted, and emotionally bankrupt. I had to create my own closure in order to move forward. My divorce was as devastating as a death. To be that bonded to someone in the decade I knew him, and then suddenly disappear with no explanation was a heartache from hell. My husband's disappearance and abandonment may as well have been another death of a loved one like my mom. The divorce set off a chain reaction of #SuperFail sentiments with my father ashamed and just about disowning me along with my cultural community, because marrying interracially is one thing, but add a divorce and you're #TheUltimateFail for any parent, a woman, and a Christian. Besides that, he left me after moving me far away from

familiar friends or family. I was like one of those pets you hear about that a family gets tired of and then finds themselves driven far away into some field and dumped on the side of the road, left wondering what the hell happened and where did everybody go? There was no other way to go, but God. Through all of the darkness though, I somehow still believed that "yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I would fear no evil, for HE was with me." (Psalm 23)

#ULTIMATEFAIL

The Death Sentence

After my broken heart accepted the fact that the love of my life would not return, I started the arduous process of trying my best to put some of the pieces back together. As I was in the courtroom alone and broken as the judge finalized the divorce, I realized that God had given me a new family of friends in Washington, DC, where he had moved me, who would be there for me through it all in the absence of my own family back home in Texas. Once you know that you did your very best already, even if it wasn't enough, you just have to be grateful

for another day of life and just move forward. It was a new start that I really did not ask for, but some things in life will just flow in the way they must. God of our universe will take you to where you need to be. I was now ready and armed with new people in my life, new goals, new dreams, and new vision. I even decided to take a few unsuccessful jabs at my first go at dating at such a late age, which included some hilarious absurd Tinder and dating app foolishness. Let's just say Washington, DC with all its madness is not exactly the best place to dump your southern Christian wife in, for her to start over and start learning how to date. It wasn't long before my heart led me back out into the mission field. This time I left for Africa on mission to help orphans affected with HIV in Ethiopia. I saturated my life with philanthropic efforts as a way of healing my heart by offering up my life to God as an instrument of healing to others. It was like physics where God's universal laws of energy applied in Newton's Third Law of Motion, also applies to the positive energy we give to one another. When you are in need, give to others in need, and in time healing and restoration will return and springboard back to you. Pretty soon my heart was on the mend through these precious children. This was my destiny. Philanthropy and charity was my first love, the core of me. It's how I met my husband in the first place and it was also my mom's legacy. This time I was not

letting any past failures stop me or bring me down. I would go back to Africa 2 more times on orphan care projects and the philanthropic opportunities started to pour into my life like rivers of living water. In between it all, I even landed modeling opportunities having the honor of walking the New York Fashion Week runway. I had a new lease on life and light was coming through all the darkness. I was about to take my rightful place back as the Jesus loving super heroine for the world again, except this time in new territory with new experiences. I got a do over. It felt like I had on a shiny brand new pair of shoes and that God made some beautiful treasure out of my trash and short comings. The feeling of wholeness was starting to return mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. I was ready for anything, or was I?

Upon a routine doctor visit came the mother of all #MegaFail diagnoses: Cancer. Disbelief followed with dark thoughts that maybe God or something was really seriously trying to take me out. These thoughts came over me like billowing dark clouds. The doctors basically gave me a death sentence if I did not get the appropriate treatment immediately. I literally went home, threw up my hands, got on my knees for 3 days and surrendered. I cried out "what the hell do you want from me Lord." As one of the dudes on Christian Mingle put it, I was the

queen of damaged goods. I was a divorcee, both a victim of sexual and domestic abuse, ex-inmate, the underdog, overlooked, and now add to that, diseased and about to be financially sunk on cancer hospital bills.. if I'm still alive to even see them. I was officially stripped of my coat of many colors and in the pit, buried alive. One or more of my family members even asked me what the hell did I do wrong to piss God off. They were convinced I was living my life wrong and that I had displeased the Lord and earned my laundry list of cray cray failures and tragic events. Was this all just a cruel joke? I was saved, born again basically from birth and all my life I tried to do the right thing. I never drank a drop of alcohol, I was celibate before marriage and only intimate with one person in my life whom I was married to, never smoked, I helped orphans around the world. They say that God will never give us more than we can handle, but I felt like my life was in some kind of pressure cooker experiment to see how much was too much. Hello God, the chapter of Job has already been written..no need for a Chapter of Sher. I gave up and said Lord your will be done and if the doctors are right and I had an estimated 5 to 10 years left to live if this organ removal surgery and/or treatments did not take, then so be it. I felt like I was not done yet, but if so, I asked God to use me to the fullest to leave a legacy of faith and love declaring His glory to

others helping as many orphans and cancer patients or whoever in any capacity that He could before He took me home. So I declared this among many other scriptures believing Isaiah 43:2 that when I pass through the waters, He would be with me; and through the rivers, that they would not overwhelm me; when I walk through fire I will not be burned, and the flames will not consume me and that I "shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord" Psalms 118:17

BEAUTY FOR ASHES

Isaiah 61:3 "He gives beauty for ashes, strength for fear, gladness for mourning, and peace for despair"

That was 2015 and today I am alive. I am a survivor of all the above guilty as charged life bumps, bruises, and fails and yes even the cancer, praise God Almighty. By the mercy of God the Father and the incredible team of oncologists, nurses, and medical staff that helped removed the cancerous tumor, I am cancer free and thriving today with a second chance to live. It turned out cancer was my burning bush. It's like I woke up all of sudden with a new life perspective and

through a new lens. All of my failures and shortcomings shrunk from their Goliath proportions with just one stone's throw. My eyes were wide open like a new born baby and I could see that the world was mine and everything in it was to bless me and all that happened to me was actually steering me down a path I was meant to be on. If it were true that we could make life's lemons into lemonade, I had a stand that was as wide as Texas itself. My brush with death had freed me to no longer feel cursed or condemned, but to see that God uses it all, all my past, all my series of unfortunate events, laying not one of my failures to waste. These failures are what qualified me to rise to the next level to move even bigger mountains. My "misfit-ism" was part of a greater plan to better equip me to lead in the appropriate arena where my gifts and talents were most needed to reach the ones that most needed it. True destiny will chase you even if you try to outrun the not so pretty parts of the journey in order to propel you to your higher purpose. I learned that we must be careful not to curse the desert you are in on the way to the place you are going. Looking back, I can see now that destiny was always chasing me and doors were open the entire way. While in that prison, I used the opportunity to pray with prostitutes that struggled with drug addiction that were broken in spirit. While in Africa with those precious orphans, we discovered that most of these

beautiful children were taken advantage of and molested by those who preyed on their vulnerability. It was the first time I felt courageous enough to use my own testimony of past sexual abuses to comfort them and let them know they were not alone. Opportunities to help women affected by domestic partner abuse and victims of childhood bullying came knocking at my door. I had the chance to show them the beauty beyond their scars. A once obese, clumsy me had qualified for New York Fashion Week's runway. No one saw that coming. Trust me when I say NO ONE. The unexpected tragic death of my amazing mom compelled me to carry that torch onward to help the less fortunate, orphans, and the sick. My cancer experience catapulted me into another world of tremendous philanthropic opportunity when two major cancer foundations nominated me for positions that would afford me the opportunity to make monumental global impacts helping others fighting cancer. God had showed up and showed out truly giving me exceedingly abundantly above all that I could ever ask or think according to the power that works in me (Ephesians 3:20-21). Those very same failures and shortcomings created an avenue to help others going through the same rejections, abuses, and struggles I had experienced. They were all like rivers guiding me to the streams of people and places that needed what I had to offer most, even in my

brokenness. With so many #FAIL boxes checked off, God has shown me that even an underdog can still become an overcomer.

So where does this story really end. Well it hasn't and it won't. The next chapter is just ahead for both you and I. So keep turning the page my friends into your next season; Your next season of change, the good, the ugly, the glorious, and those moments in the fiery furnace that will lead you right into your great purpose. Embrace the process of your continuously evolving destiny and understand that God's favor is unmerited. He freely gives us His love, grace, and mercy even in the pit to make it out at the right time with His peace that passes all understanding, if we just put our trust in Him and trust the process. Sometimes our life's truest potentials are waiting to awaken in our deepest pits, as long as we keep pushing through the "pit process." Neither you nor I have the time to waste trying to understand it all because life is just too short and that would waste a lifetime. It will make it a little easier when we accept the fact that the only thing constant in life is indeed change. Change will always be your ride or die. But through the changes, God has promised that His grace is sufficient for you, and His power is made perfect in weakness (II Corinthians 12:9), as you go through, awaiting all the amazing things God has for

you just around the bend of your next ups, downs, all your successes and of course, all your #Fails.

Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

ABOUT DR. SHER MATHEW

Dr. Sher Mathew is a native Texan residing in Washington, DC. Raised in a missions focused home, her involvements include extensive world travel working in impoverished countries. Her family helped build AGAPE Children's Home orphanage in India providing health care, education, and basic needs to children experiencing poverty.

After obtaining her Doctorate of Pharmacy degree, she has travelled to over 71 countries and also globally provided aid and medical assistance as a missionary in places such as Mexico, Central & South America, near the Amazon basin, India, Africa, and as far as China, with a focus on orphan care. Her current international project included her efforts to help build a small clinic for orphans at the Lusungu Children's Home in Chingola, Zambia, Africa.

As a humanitarian, she has joined disaster relief teams helping to rebuild communities and homes after natural disasters in Texas. As an influencer, philanthropist, and fashion model, she is also a cancer survivor.



**Dr. Scott McComas; Performance Coach and Superhero Trainer;
Founder of HeroYou2**

“Superheroes Make Impact and Legends
Everyday.”

SMILE LIKE A SUPERHERO!

BY DR. SCOTT MCCOMAS

There I was sitting on my bed, struggling. I was 30 years old, had come out of a relationship two years prior, and woke up to find myself still grieving over its ending. Like, hard. It wasn't the first time I had found myself feeling the same feelings, having the same thoughts, wanting her back. And I was tired of being sad and frustrated and bitter. The good news? That morning was the straw that broke the camel's back. I was fed up and just wanted to be over these feelings. It was time to figure my shit out. So I took action, found a counselor, and started getting help.

After many months of fruitful journeying inward and discovery, we started delving into life purpose. As in my life purpose and figuring out what the heck I wanted to do with the rest of my life. At the time, I was an Information Technology professional, a job I had fallen into

after college when I realized that success in my first career path was going to require much more effort than I was willing to put in (sports broadcasting/video production).

Work as an IT Systems Administrator in academia had its perks; decent pay, lots of time off, great 401k matching, and wonderful people to work with. But something was missing. I didn't feel fulfilled. I wanted to make more of a personal difference in people's lives, but I didn't know how.

My counselor suggested psychology.

Yeah, okay, that sounded interesting, I thought. Overall, I enjoyed the process of my counseling experiences, deepening my awareness and knowledge of who I really was, and how my past experiences shaped me. It wasn't easy a lot of the time, growth usually isn't, and at the same time it was incredibly rewarding. The thought of helping others find their answers and lead better lives appealed to me.

I took a couple of community college psychology courses and found that I really liked it. The next step was deciding how I wanted to enter

the field. In the end, I chose to go to grad school for a doctorate.

I walked into an open house for a psychology doctorate program at John F. Kennedy University. I was wearing my standard casual garb; baseball cap, t-shirt, athletic shorts, and running shoes. The first person to notice and greet me was a blonde lady with a British accent. She took one look at what I was wearing and asked, "Oh, so you must be here for the Sport Psychology open house."

I had never heard of sport psychology before, but it immediately intrigued me, having been a sports fan since childhood.

"Nope," I replied. "I'm here for the doctorate program open house."

With a huge grin on her face and a sparkle in her eye, she said. "Come with me. I've got a deal for you."

The school offered a linked Sport Psychology MA and PsyD (clinical psychology doctorate) program. For me, it was like mixing chocolate and peanut butter. Two great tastes that go great together. I was sold.

Thus began my 10-year graduate school journey.

In 2009, I received my MA in Sport Psychology. In 2014, I earned my PsyD.

It was an amazing triumph for me, tempered by struggles that nearly derailed the completion of my doctorate degree.

For the majority of my life, I've struggled with anxiety. That's led to complicating issues with insomnia as well. I want to say that I did everything in grad school in order to help others. But the truth is that I also wanted to help myself.

At the heart of things is my childhood, as it is with most of us. Our childhood formulates many of the patterns of behavior that we exhibit as an adult. Some of those behaviors we're conscious of. Others maybe not so much.

Growing up, I had two brothers, both younger. My middle brother was diagnosed with autism when I was 5 and much of the attention I had been receiving up until that point vanished as my parents fought to

overcome the predictions of psychiatrist on the assessment team who said he would be institutionalized by the age of 15. At the same time, my mother struggled with severe depression, and while she was able to keep us fed and clothed and take us to soccer practice, it took a toll on her ability to be emotionally available during her depressive episodes.

(My parents' efforts with my brother paid off. He graduated college, married, and now works for the school system, helping others on the autism spectrum. He's also one of the most loving and authentic men that I know.)

As for the five-year-old me, I wanted to know what I did to lose my parents' love. I thought I had done something wrong and so I never saw myself as someone who was worthy of love. I found external validation from my gifts and skills in sports and academics. Positive attention and praise from others; that was where my value came from. If I didn't get that, or was criticized, I would relentlessly beat myself up.

So I felt the need to try and control life. To make sure I engineered everything so that I wouldn't have to face fear or anxiety. To be safe and comfortable in everything. To be perfect.

I also tried to be what others wanted me to be and over the course of my teenage years I developed a skill for being a chameleon, showing others what they wanted to see, but not being able to truly be myself much of the time. Hiding in secret identities.

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One of the ways I coped with my anxiety was through the worlds of science fiction and fantasy. I saw Star Wars when I was six and was hooked for life. The worlds of Middle Earth, Krynn, a Galaxy Far Far Away, Star Trek, Amber, the Justice League, and countless others provided an outlet, one where I could explore who I was and, more importantly, who I wanted to be.

Let's fast forward to May 2019.

There I was sitting on another couch, this one in the house of my business coach. The previous five years had been a roller coaster. Going from the highest of highs in graduating with my doctorate and experiencing an amazing trip to Hong Kong, Japan, and Australia...to a near-suicide attempt after struggling with insomnia, having to give

up what I thought was the job of my dreams, and spending two years recovering from the effects of that struggle with sleeplessness and anxiety.

When I got to the point where I was ready to start again, I leveraged my psychology background and started a consulting business in 2017, helping companies improve their performance through sport psychology mental skills training. In April 2019, I hired business coaches to help me move my business to the next level.

So there I was, on the couch, being trained in creating a 5-minute pitch for my business. The beginning of that pitch is always a hook question. Up until that point mine had been, "What percentage of life is mental?"

It was a good question as most of the time it got a conversation going. Which means it did its job. However, my coach looked at me and said, "I can see why that works, but it hits me in the head. I want you to hit people in the heart. What are you passionate about?"

"Well," I replied. "I'm passionate about sports. I'm also a lifelong nerd and geek. I love Star Wars, Star Trek, comic books, superheroes..."

“Wait, wait, wait,” she interrupted. “You mean to tell me that you have all of this fantastic material helping people create transformation and positive results in their life...and you love superheroes!?”

She let that hang in the air. In that moment, what I loved to do connected with my authentic self. Two things happened in that instant. One, I finally figured out what I wanted to be when I grew up; a superhero trainer. Two, I got my hook question for the new direction of my business.

Have you ever dreamed about being a superhero, or having a superpower?

I would love to say that I have completely overcome all of these challenges and I still occur to myself as anxious, and powerless, and inauthentic at times, because I have bad days like the rest of us. And what I can say about being on my 30-year (and counting) personal development journey is that I've learned how to better let go. To let go of others' expectations and to care less about what others think of me. Because it's not my business what others think of me, but it is my business of how they treat me.

To be mindful of the now, because that's all we truly have. The past is already gone and the future is not yet written. All we have is the now.

To be in action, because there is no change without action. Hope, combined with action, can make dreams come true.

To focus on controlling the controllables. We have full control over three things in life; our mindset, our responses, and our effort. We only have limited control over everything else, including our thoughts.

(I dare you not to think of a pink elephant. Gotcha.)

To lean into others and allow myself to be supported and helped. Superheroes don't do it alone. It takes a community.

That being kind costs nothing and can mean everything.

That the name of the game is awareness. Awareness leads to choice. Choice leads to power.

That life is full of possibility and that we can create and engineer those

possibilities into reality if we allow ourselves to let go of the past.

Finally, that everyone's endgame is to triumph over the challenges that life offers us. Challenges that help us grow into the hero we were meant to be. To truly be our best, authentic selves. Our superhero selves.



I'm Dr. Scott McComas. I'm a performance coach and a superhero trainer. My mission is to help people be free to be who they truly, authentically are, and to live with purpose, empowerment, and success.

We're all on a hero's journey. And the truth is that you already are a superhero. You have a spark of greatness inside of you, and that spark is an amazing thing.

I create transformation through helping you discover and step into their inner superhero, the best version of yourself. Leveraging my background in psychology, I mainly work in seven different areas to achieve this:

- **Purpose and Identity** – What does the best version of you look like? And what is your purpose on this pebble of a planet?
- **Mindset** – Our perceptions define our reality and our mindset, being one of the things we have full control over, is key to being successful in life.
- **Shadow Thinking** – The limiting beliefs and stories that we tell ourselves such as “I'm not worthy” that hold us back from being empowered to be our best selves.
- **Motivation** – How to create stronger, more consistent motivation to fuel your best you.
- **Goals** – Most of us don't set goals effectively. Through being SMARTER, and following practices like using present-tense language in your goals, you'll make your goals more productive, effective, and increase the chances you hit them.
- **Communication/Emotional Intelligence** – Being about to

effectively communicate our needs and deal with our emotions is critical to being our best self.

- **Stress and Resilience** – Stress is a part of life. Dealing with it in the right ways can help you build resilience, and use it to help you in your journey.

I offer superhero workshops, coaching, and VIP experiences. I also do speaking and training, and work with people who are feeling stuck in an area of life, or just want to get better. And while enjoying superheroes is not a requirement, it is fun. Because personal development doesn't have to be broccoli.

ABOUT DR. SCOTT MCCOMAS

A lifelong nerd and geek, Dr. Scott McComas is a performance coach and superhero trainer. And the truth that he has discovered is that everyone has the capacity to be a superhero in their own lives, and in the lives of others. He is dedicated to empower others to step into their inner superhero and improve their performances in business and life through workshops, coaching, speaking, and superhero VIP experiences. How he does this is by teaching the tools and skills gathered in a 30-year personal development journey, and two graduate degrees in psychology that covers purpose and identity, mindset, limiting beliefs, goal setting, motivation, communication, and stress resilience. While the location of his superhero base is secret, you can connect with him at scott@mccomascg.com.

Book(s) that changed your life:

The Deed of Paksenarrion, Elizabeth Moon
Blackest Night, DC Comics

Mindset - The New Psychology of Success, Dr. Carol Dweck
The Surrender Experiment, Mickey Singer
The Power of Now, Eckhart Tolle

Movie(s) that inspire you:

The Matrix, Star Wars, The Princess Bride
Pay It Forward, The Avengers

The Surrender Experiment, Mickey Singer
The Power of Now, Eckhart Tolle

The Deed of Paksenarrion, Elizabeth Moon
Blackest Night, DC Comics

Mindset - The New Psychology of Success, Dr. Carol Dweck
The Surrender Experiment, Mickey Singer
The Power of Now, Eckhart Tolle

Song that inspires you:

"I am Iron Man (Main Theme)" - Kevin Debnay, Iron Man 2

"Legends Never Die" - League of Legends

"Main on End" - Avengers Endgame

"Thunderstruck" - AC/DC

Your Hero:

Life: My parents, Skip and Elena McComas, my brothers Ryan and Tony McComas, my mentors Dr. Alette Coble-Temple & Dr. Peter Van Oot, my coaches Iman & Afrin Khan.
Comics: The Flash.

Quote you live by:

"Watch your thoughts, they become your words.
Watch your words, they become your actions.
Watch your actions, they become your habits.
Watch your habits, they become your character.
Watch your character, it becomes your destiny."
- Frank Outlaw

"Do your best until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." - Maya Angelou

"Everyone fails at who they are supposed to be, Thor. The true measure of a person, of a hero, is how well they succeed at being who they are." - Frigga, Avengers Endgame



MJ McFarland

“Be accountable for your smile!”

THE RESILIENT SMILE

BY MJ MCFARLAND

WHO- My name is MJ McFarland, I am a son, a brother, a future husband and soon to be father. I was born in Watertown, New York but lived in many different cities, states and countries due to my fathers service in the military. During my childhood, moving all the time was tough and at times uncomfortable because it was never easy saying goodbye to old friends and coping with the uncertainty of the unexpected. But now, I am thankful for these experiences that force you to adapt to whatever life throws at you because I believe that your ability to adapt has a direct correlation to how you deal with the inevitable up's and down's of life.

Whether I was living overseas or here in the states, one thing my parents always taught me was to serve and have compassion for others which eventually led me into finding a passion through sports. With the uncertainty that comes with the military lifestyle, sports was a safe

ground for me because it offered me a platform to serve others, build a foundation of responsibility, as well as representing something bigger than myself. I started to play sports around the age of five and never looked back since! After many years of traveling and moving, my family and I were able to settle for a bit in El Paso, Texas where I spent some of middle school and all of high school. Being in a new city, trying to build new relationships with my dad being overseas majority of the time during my adolescent years was an even tougher transition, especially going through puberty ha ha! Luckily, sports was the outlet for me to help during this time, as well as ease the process of making new friends. Knowing that, sports became more than just a game to me, it became a way of life. Sports led me to meeting my best friends at the time, Daniel Quezada and Paul Millian.

Throughout high school, I focused majority of my time on basketball then later was persuaded to give football a try even though I was not interested. However, according to Daniel and Paul, people in Texas live and breathe football, especially the girls ha ha! On that note, I told myself if my brothers are doing it, it can't be that bad. It was at the moment, I learned a very valuable lesson about life that I will forever believe in. That lesson was to always get out there in the world and try

new things. Without Daniel and Paul, I am not sure if I would have learned that at such a pivotal time of my life. I valued their friendship and the time we spent together. Everything started to come together and I was thankful there were no future plans to up and move again.

September 20th, 2009 will be a day I will never forget. It was a normal Sunday afternoon and I was driving back home from a friend's house and I saw an incoming call from Paul. I decided not to answer because I was driving and planned to give him a call back once I got home. At this time, Paul had moved to Washington due to his step dad's job so we would keep in touch over the phone. I forgot to call Paul back that day and it was one of my biggest regrets for many years to follow. The next day after football practice, Daniel and I were notified that Paul had passed away. We found out that Paul was being bullied at his new school and he was having a tough time transitioning which led him to committing suicide. I have never felt so much emotional hurt in my life. I thought I knew what it was like to experience tough times through moving all the time, but nothing compared to how tough losing your best friend was. This first thing I couldn't get my mind off of was not calling him back the day before. I felt so guilty as I know he was probably calling for guidance and I was not there for him. Ten

years later, I feel like I failed him as a friend but I know Paul, he would want me to be strong and resilient. The death of Paul Millian made a huge impact on my perspective on life. At 16 years of age, I realized that bad things can happen to good people but how you deal with it means everything. I told myself no matter how bad life got or how low I felt, could never take my own life because of the pain it caused in others. I promised myself that I would remain resilient no matter the circumstances. Despite the tragic event and experiencing many different emotions that I didn't know how to explain, one thing I knew I could express myself through was sports. That season of my athletic career was dedicated to Paul. Everything I did, I wanted to honor him in his memory and I was determined to do everything in my power to make up for not calling him back that Sunday afternoon.

With everything that occurred, Daniel and I grew even closer leaning on one another through this tough time. As high school went by I started to put a lot more energy into sports as I considered it a positive outlet for me. My hard work and focus paid off as I received a football scholarship to The University of Texas at Austin my junior year. I was so thankful for the opportunity to continue to play sports and honor my best friend, Paul.

I graduated high school a semester early because I was so eager to for a new chapter in my life and being the competitor that I am, I wanted to get a head start and acclimated to the college lifestyle. With Daniel still being in El Paso, him and I kept in contact pretty often and he eventually moved to San Antonio where he went to The University of Texas at San Antonio. It was reassuring to know that my best friend wasn't that far away from me.

Stepping on campus with over 51,000 students can be intimidating for any freshman, especially a freshman that would normally still be in high school. However, I was not the only one that felt this way because I came in early with three other teammates which eased the transition. Coming to a school like UT as a student athlete comes with a lot responsibility and expectations. The pressure to perform on the field and in class can be challenging at times without proper mindset. Coming from a military background, I was accustomed to this type of environment however my personal challenges at the college level came from football when I was asked to switch positions from wide receiver to tight end due to coaching staff changes. In order for me to be a successful tight end, I needed to get stronger, gain weight, increase flexibility, and learn a different style of play in a very short time. Eventually, I was

encouraged by my position coach to red shirt for my first year. A red shirt is a developmental year for student athletes that doesn't deduct from your college eligibility to play sports. I was motivated to get better but at the same time, I was disappointed that I didn't get to play and contribute to the team as soon as I expected, especially after graduating early to avoid a "red shirt" year. It was tough to put the work in and not seeing the benefits being reaped on game day but I understood this was what was best for the team and I knew my time was coming.

After many late nights and 5am wake up calls I started to see some improvement in my performance. The disappointment I had of sitting out a year started to turn into gratitude because my confidence started to grow. The following year, all my work started to pay off as I became a key part of the team as I was able to contribute to winning games. I felt a lot of momentum and I was looking forward to the future here at UT. Little did I know, another coaching staff change would be occurring soon after my first season of playing that would effect me directly. Our new style of play did not involve a tight end and that entire year, leading me to riding the bench majority of my sophomore year. I became discouraged and frustrated during this process because deep down I knew I could help the team but it was out of my control. I decided to

use that frustration as fuel and I started to make time for extra workout and film sessions so when my number was called, I would be ready. I am a firm believer that it is not about what happens to you, but how you deal with it.

Junior year came around, and I started to see the light again. We had another coaching change that was known for being tight end friendly therefore, I had hope that i'd be able to make a contribution again. I told myself " Here it is, this is my time!" Throughout the season, I started to notice that my playing time was starting to decrease again but I did not understand because I was a starter and key factor on the team. It was not adding up to me, and I began to become confused. After multiple meetings and my position coach being let go of his duties during this time, I decided it was best for me to transfer to another school for my last year of eligibility. At this time, I was already a graduate of UT and I was eligible to play right away at another D1 college. This was one of the toughest decisions of my life because it was never in my plans to leave and have to start over again. Making the decision to transfer started to trigger many emotions from my childhood of always picking up and leaving the relationship I built. However, I felt everything I had been through in my past was Gods way of preparing me for this exact

moment. Therefore, I needed to have courage to do what was best for me and my future career. I was DETERMINED to play football at the next level in the NFL and I knew I couldn't do that by spending my senior season on the bench.

My decision to transfer led me to The University of Texas at El Paso. I decided to go to UTEP because the head coach there at the time was a former tight ends coach of the NFL and I believed he could help me get to the next level as I could help him win games. Even though it was tough being away from all my family, friends and former teammates back in Austin, all I wanted to do was pursue my graduate degree and play football therefore, nothing else mattered at the time. Even though I was familiar with El Paso, I still had a difficult time adjusting. I felt like I was behind and the pressure was on to perform to my best ability in order to have a shot at the NFL. Spring ball came along and I started to realize I made a great decision to come to UTEP as I was a focal part of the offense. I felt like I could thrive in this offense and put myself in a position to hear my name called come the NFL draft.

Unfortunately, that would all change when I received a severe concussion during a spring ball practice. I ran full speed into another

teammate as well collided helmets causing me to suffer a head injury that would put me out for the rest of the spring football. After many weeks of headaches, dizziness, sensitivity, and lonely days in a dark apartment, I decided to take matters into my own hands as I felt bed rest was not sufficient enough to speed up my recovery. I was getting worried about my health because I started to fall behind in grad school and if you don't do well in school, you aren't eligible to play. With all these pressures in mind, and my concussion not healing as quickly as I hoped, I went to a doctor who recommended me a supplement that would assist in aiding the recovery process for my brain. Desperately wanting to get better, I ended up taking the supplement not even thinking about needing to run it by the athletic training staff. Boy would I regret that, I ended up being randomly selected for an NCAA drug test that usually occurs in collegiate sports. I have taken these drug tests any times in my collegiate career and I thought this one would be no different.

A couple months had passed, I started to feel better and spring ball had concluded. It was in the interim of summer break and summer workouts when I received a call that would once again, change my life forever. On May 19th, 2015 after a training session I was informed

that I had failed the drug test due to a banned substance in my urine sample. At first, I believed they had made a mistake and that they had the wrong person. I had never failed a drug test in my life nor would I do anything to jeopardize my last year of eligibility knowing what's at stake. Completely devastated, I appealed the accusation and wrote a letter to the NCAA explaining my situation. The only thing I could think that could have caused the test to come back positive was the supplement I was recommended to aid in the recovery of my concussion. On my appeal day, I was informed by my head coach that I would be getting a call from the NCAA drug committee to explain my situation. I was hopeful that they would be understanding of my situation and knowing my pure intentions since it was not a performance enhancing substance, they would withdraw my accusation and allow me to finish my eligibility.

Thirty minutes later, I received a callback from my head coach stating that my appeal was denied and I was no longer eligible to play my senior year. Full of pain, confusion, and anger, I took full responsibility for my actions while still having the fear of losing everything I worked so hard for. I ended up packing all my belongings and moving to Dallas to come up with a plan to still pursue my dreams of playing in

the NFL. Knowing the importance of this football season and having to sit out while watching all of your teammates from both colleges play, was one of the most difficult feelings I have ever experienced as an athlete and I had nobody but myself to blame. Throughout this time, I was experiencing a lot of guilt and unforgiveness towards myself along with feeling like I had let everyone down that was rooting for me. I had a choice to make... I could either feel sorry for myself, or I could find a way to get back on track and fulfill my dream of playing football. Despite all the emotions I had to face, I leaned on what I knew best, which was hard work. I came up with a plan to work at a sports performance facility where I could also train and prepare for the upcoming pro day to put myself in the position to be scouted for an opportunity to play in the NFL.

The 2016 NFL draft came along which would determine my football career from here on out. The draft consisted of three long days of teams calling players telling them that they were selected to be apart of their team. I didn't get a call on any of those three days and I thought my career was over. As I cried myself to sleep the last night of the draft, I didn't want to believe what just happened, so I didn't. I continued to pray and have hope that I would get my shot one way or another. A

few days later, my agent called and told me I had an opportunity to try out for the Philadelphia Eagles. I was stoked! My spirits were lifted and I told myself I am not leaving Philly without a contract. Determined and motivated to prove to the world and myself that I belonged in this league and I did just that. I made it through try outs, and earned an undrafted free-agent contract and I was officially a Philadelphia Eagle! There was no greater feeling than achieving this accomplishment but I knew the work was just beginning. Roster cuts were about to be made where NFL teams trim their rosters down from 90 players to 53 right before the official season begins. The day before these roster cuts were made, we had our final preseason game against The New York Jets. This is the final opportunity for most players to showcase their skills. My game ended sooner than expected after receiving a blow to the knee that would sideline me for the remainder of the game. With the situation out of my control, I knew no matter what, that if I kept a resilient attitude, I would be just fine just like I was in the past.

I ended up taking several weeks to heal and recovery from what was a torn MCL injury but not being able to play, the Eagles organization decided it was best to part ways with me and wish me luck on my future endeavors. This was a tough pill to swallow but I still felt very blessed

and appreciative for the opportunity. The Philadelphia Eagles will forever have a place in my heart. My opportunity with this team, led me to a few other opportunities with other teams such as The New York Jets and The Dallas Cowboys. After spending another two years on and off teams, I decided it was best for me to move on and pursue other endeavors. This wasn't an easy decision and I don't think you ever know the right time to walk away from something that's been apart of your life for so many years, but I am grateful for all the lessons, friendships, and obstacles that have helped shape me into who I am today.

We all have a story to tell and at times, life can throw curve balls at us but with a resilient attitude one can persevere through anything life offers. I tell my story so that others can know that they aren't alone when it comes to dealing with trials and tribulations and that there is always hope if you never give up. We all have to overcome something in our lives and I hope my story encourages everyone to live resilient and to seek the positive out of every situation.



Deborah McNelis

“Wellness happens when we think
and grow smiles.”

THE SMILES OF UNDEFINABLE BRILLIANCE

DEBORAH MCNELIS, M.ED

When you smile, people tend to smile along with you. Smiling makes people feel good, or better about themselves!

What better exemplifies the power of a smile, than the smile of a baby or toddler? Who among us doesn't like to see our youth express happiness through a smile?

Smiling is universal and contagious. The act of smiling actually triggers the release of the chemicals serotonin and dopamine into your brain.

Allow me to introduce a bit about myself and why this is a fascinating area of interest.

I'm an author, educator, international speaker, and perhaps most notably, an early brain development specialist. I create the awareness and critical understanding of the impact of experiences in the early years. I founded Brain Insights, LLC, an organization that strives to guide children to their fullest potential.

Aiding children in developing their brains for long term, positive outcomes, such as confidence and positive self-perception, is my life's work—and I'm very proud of it. Doing my part to bring more smiles to more people by creating awareness of the power of positivity, brings me a sense of accomplishment that's indescribable.

My affinity for smiling began with my own childhood, where smiles were aplenty.

As a child, I fondly recall how much invaluable time I spent with my relatives. I happened to be the first grandchild on both sides of the family, so I was never short on affection or attention.

With time, my family unit expanded. I enjoyed being the center of all the attention in two families, but was even more delighted to become

the older sibling to a brother and sister. We explored, daydreamt, discovered and played outdoors. We enjoyed balls, bikes, forts, friends, sun, snow, leaves, mud, puddles, sand, water and trees.

There were frequent family times also. An avid swimmer, my mother would often take us swimming in Minnesota's lakes. There are fond family memories of singing while surrounding campfires—these activities are what made our summers special. During the winters, we skated on the same lakes that once carried still waters but were now frozen solid. When the cold became oppressive, we stayed inside, kept warm, read books and played board games—a LOT of them!

We were happy. And of course, our collective happiness meant that we smiled together.

However, I still had one thing I needed to overcome. We all seem to have things to overcome don't we?

It became clear to me throughout my elementary school years that whenever my parents' attended school conferences they would hear

the same concern expressed by my teachers: “*Debby* (as I was then known) *needs to talk more in class.*”

I was reserved and shy. That didn't change when I entered high school, where I earned the moniker, “quiet girl.” Overcoming and becoming the type of person who put away her shyness and reservations to boldly assert herself was my challenge. I approached this by gradually shedding my limiting perceptions of self. I've since given this concept a name: “undefinable brilliance,” where we embrace the fullness of who we are. (I say ‘undefinable’ because I've found that the essence of one's fullness cannot properly be described with words.)

My own journey to embracing my fullness began when I was invited to a birthday slumber party, much to my excitement, (I was 6 years old at the time, Receiving an invitation despite my shyness felt awesome.) Seven other girls were invited; we all lived close to one another, and usually played together. One of the invitees was there at the request of the birthday girl's mother; the girl was new to the neighbourhood.

As the party progressed, the time came for us to go to sleep. The new girl found a spot on the family room floor and laid out her sleeping

bag. As she did so, another girl saw her and ran into the other room, declaring all the while that she would not be laying out her sleeping bag anywhere near the new girl's sleeping bag. All the other girls soon followed suit. I am sorry to say I did as well, though I did so in silence.

Once I was in the other room, I turned around to see the new girl, sitting alone on her sleeping bag, with a dejected look on her face. In my haste to feel included in a group that I considered myself lucky to be a part, , I didn't realize that, through our actions, we hurt the new girl's feelings. When I reached that realization, I felt strongly empathetic towards her. With that, I picked up my sleeping bag, returned to the family room and laid it out right next to her. Surprisingly, the other girls followed my lead, and the party resumed.

In that moment, I felt I was totally being myself. It felt fabulous.

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My grandmother died when I was 16. To say that she was a remarkable woman would be an understatement. She loved and laughed in equal measure, and she was unreserved with both. She left behind a

spectacular example of how to live joyously; one which encouraged me to be the person I knew myself to be in my heart, instead of the person I thought I should be.

After my grandmother's passing, the time came for me to attend college. As a freshman, I met with my adviser on a Friday at the end of the first semester, and she told me I had to choose a major by the following Monday. I spent that weekend thinking about a career that I would find interesting and worthwhile. I was undecided until my family and I watched a children's choir perform. Watching them sing made me recognize that *"all of the adults influencing the lives of these children didn't know all they could know to help them become all that they had the potential to become!"*

Right then, inspiration hit me. My ambition in life was set... I would do all I could to help children develop to their fullest potential at the earliest possible stage of their lives.

Since that moment of clarity, I've shared my passion with others through a variety of wonderful initiatives, and programs. Nurturing children's optimal development is my life's call—it's what I'm meant to do!

My convictions are what led me to start Brain Insights, LLC in 2008. In my desire to maximize the overall well-being of each child, I conceptualized and trademarked a new term: Neuro-Nurturing®. This is a term which denotes that there is more to potential than becoming something... it instead supports children in simply revealing the best versions of *who they already are*.

Increasing numbers of adults are realizing that with nurturing experiences, children can develop their undefinable brilliance.

Through my life experiences I have learned that it is an ineffable feeling to fully be ourselves with absolutely no judgement. When we have this feeling, of course, we smile . . . and this beautifully radiates out to the world.

ABOUT DEBORAH MCNELIS, M.ED

Deborah is overjoyed with the response to her passion to create awareness of the critical importance of optimal early brain development. She has an ability to easily communicate this valuable understanding in a way that inspires.

She is an author, international speaker, educator and parent. As a Brain Development Specialist and founder of Brain Insights LLC, Deborah has developed the unique Neuro-Nurturing Series and Naturally Developing Young Brains activity packets. She also collaborates with Redleaf Press to provide a successful series for educators. She has been seen in several national publications, heard on radio interviews and webinars worldwide, and receives rave reviews for her engaging and insightful presentations. Her enthusiasm is considered to be contagious.



Maya McNulty

“When life gives you limes,
rearrange the letters until they say smile.”

THE SECOND MY LIFE CHANGED FOREVER

BY MAYA MCNULTY

It was the spring of 2020. There I was, sitting quietly on my Adirondack chair at Sacandaga Lake, NY. Soon to be traveling the world, speak on national stages and traveling for book tours. The sun was delightful. You can hear the waves softly breaking against the rocks along the beach shore. You can smell the flowers, fresh cut grass, ash burning fire pit from the night before camp fire and lake dewy freshness while being comforted by the shady trees. Calmness fans in from the soft breeze and soothing sounds of the water rolling in. Completely relaxed, and enjoying this slice of heaven in the Adirondacks. I was totally unwinding, unplugged and just relaxing from the everyday hustle and bustle from the city and virtual world daily grind. While resting in my Adirondack chair I enjoy reading and sometimes writing. I began to think of the many chapters of my life. One was closing and

a new decade rapidly approaching. I decided to crack open a notepad and began to journal about the different lives I lived in 4 decades. Who I was. Who I became. Who I'm creating to be. Here's what I found.

Who I was: I was a woman who didn't love herself enough. I trusted people who didn't deserve my loyalty. I gave generously and without expectations. I attracted the wrong crowd who ultimately tried to ruin my life, business and family. Because I didn't love myself enough, I gave others the power to thief my soul, purpose and dim my light.

Who I became: I became a mean woman. Bitterness fueled my emotions like a bad reality TV show. Full of hate and frustration by the lack of respect, trust, friendship, and loyalty. I was being undermined, manipulated, and lied to by many in my life. I started to believe that this was my law of attraction. My self - esteem hit rock bottom as I gave my power and control away powerlessly. I was lonely, lifeless and dying inside from a lack of hope and self- love. I became depressed and felt worthless. In 2001, I had owned 2 failing franchises. The businesses struggled for over 8 long years and took a financial death plunge on our finances and marriage. Owning the franchises wasn't a mistake, but a valuable lesson. I lost clients, friends, my businesses, real

estate, and lots of money. The economy was tanking, people were losing jobs, their homes and even healthcare. It was a really dark time. I didn't want this failure to become my law of attraction. By 2010, I had enough. I pulled the plug to stopped the bleeding, paid thousands of dollars to franchise lawyers and closed this chapter the money pit. I needed to reinvent myself. But how? It was a difficult time. For almost 10 years my skills became obsolete and not marketable. I began searching for jobs only to learn my skill set was vintage. I was a type writer in a Pro Mac world. I was devastated and emotional bankrupted. I lost hope, my businesses, my building, my friends, tons of money and investments. The fights at home escalated and became emotionally draining. You knew you had failed but being called a failure is difficult to swallow. Yes, I've been called a failure and other creative names not appropriate for publishing. These events all shaped me for the woman I am creating to be.

Who I'm creating to be: Jump ahead to summer of 2012, while peacefully sitting in the chair, answers came to me. A vision of a one page business plan designed to assist small businesses and entrepreneurs find creative and innovative solutions to market and grow their small businesses. Since I had no luck with the job market I decided to create

endless opportunities not just for myself but for many small businesses that faced the same struggles. As a joke I named my new Startup “Up IN Your Business” Marketing and Business Consultant for entrepreneurs. I reinvented myself just like that. Educated and armed with a bachelor degree in marketing, I began a new journey. I boot strapped and swam in trenches to gain customer loyalty, business and money. I created advertising booklets to cooperatively work with universities and local businesses. I began hosting my own television show called SCENE TV, which showcases businesses and not for profits their community edge. I began hosting UPTHEBIZ monthly lunch and networking groups to share content and information to advance their businesses and I designed a mobile app called Where to Shop and Dine. The App is a free download on Google Play Store or Apple App store. The app is a marketing tool used to promote local businesses to the best and safest experience 3-7 miles within a college region. Since 2012, the app and UPTHEBIZ lunch and networking group makes a positive financial community impact of over \$15K per month. I’m a self -taught app developer, marketer, TV host and graphic designer. I created a tool that wasn’t available to entrepreneurs, small businesses, colleges and Main Street America. The loss of the franchises was a blessing. I learned that “You miss one-hundred of the shots you don’t

take.” – Wayne Gretzky. If I hadn’t gone out there and struggled trying, it was never going to happen. My journey is still full throttle ahead. I’m filled with gratitude, love, laughter and my self- esteem has been lifted. I no longer feel worthless and incompetent like some have tried to make me feel. Many entrepreneurs, business leaders, general manager and big businesses continually reach out seeking advice and strategic business solutions from my business consult and advertising company. One of my favorite and best books I’ve ever read Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill. The message of Faith, Taking Action and Desire this triangle has become visionary and fuels my passion for success. Along the way I learned many lessons as we all do. Henry Ford said, “Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re right.” I was struggling to love myself, I gave my power away, I self -blamed. This mental abuse was a ticking bomb to the Psychiatric hospital. I fought the odds by believing that there is a better plan for me. I believed that I’m good enough. Through prayers and mediation I learned to embrace and appreciate who I was creating to be. I’ve learned to become a better listener, to give more than I receive. I’ve learned to think with an abundance mindset and to embrace changes. I’ve learn to meet people where they’re at and not where I wanted them to be. But most of all, I learned to forgive myself and others. I’m learning to Let Go! Letting go

of people and things that no longer serve me. It wasn't easy to find my worth and value. Overtime, I found clarity comes from within.

My new self - discovery, came with opportunities to speak on national stages, international podcast interviews, TV show appearances and paid Live Events. I felt as if nothing could stop my moving source of conviction. My belief was that Maya has arrived!

It was March, 2020. I was committed to my weekly gym routine plus I was excited seeing the results. One day, I decided to change things up. This was the second my life changed forever. I changed my flow and treated myself to the sauna. Unknowingly, an invisible deadly virus was cloning itself in the hot sauna. In less than 10 minutes, I had to Get Out! I quickly grabbed a drink of water, washed my hands, grabbed my belongings and headed home. My husband was cleaning up the front yard. I mentioned to him that I was at the gym. I have to go and lie down because I don't feel well. Later that night the body chills took over my entire body. I started to get a fever, became dehydrated and very, very sick. So sick, I drove myself to the emergency room the next day. While in the emergency room, the E.R. Nurses and techs attached me to IV, took my blood and vitals. I tested negative

for Pneumonia and positive for the novel Coronavirus. At the time, the doctors and nurses didn't have much science or data surrounding how to treat Coronavirus. Later that night, I was discharged from the hospital. By Wednesday of the following week, I started to die of respiratory failure from both my feet up. This is a condition in which your blood doesn't have enough oxygen or has too much carbon dioxide. Sometimes you can have both problems. In my case, I had both effects. By the following weekend, I was dying from respiratory failure. My husband carried me on his back down the stairs and put me in the car. I was not alert as we drove to the hospital. It's difficult for me to remember what transpired at the emergency room because code assist was called. I was immediately put into an induced medical coma for 30 days, on a ventilator and tracheotomy for six weeks. While in the coma, my husband, daughter, and parents couldn't visit me, because of no visitor policy in the ICU intensive care unit and the global shut down. I can best remember the pain, shards of glass in my body and how weak I had become. My husband was told to call our daughter who was away at college, to travel home right away to say goodbye to her mom over Zoom. It was a painful time and lots of unknown for the doctors, nurses, my husband, daughter and parents. I've never had any pre existing medical conditions and was in disbelief learning that I

almost died several times. My lungs collapsed for the third time. That's when the doctors started to lose hope. My family was called to make arrangements. After 35 days in the ICU, I was transported to rehabilitation for another 34 days for therapy. I would then have around the clock medical care. Post Covid-19 recovery, I had to re-learn to eat, walk and talk. This felt like inflicted torture. I was being tube fed through my nose for 30 days and then tube fed through my stomach. I lost 30 pounds. The Covid-19 diet, I don't recommend it. The pain was immense. I took my first six steps on May 5th, 2020. It was so liberating and powerful for me. Just a few days before taking those amazing steps, I asked God to take my life. I didn't want to live as a vegetable for the rest of my life. I made a conscious decision to dig deep and fight for healing strength. I told myself out loud that, "I can do it!" Chanting "I can do it, I can do it!" The power in believing that I can do it gave me strength and power to fight. I started to fight for all the healthcare heroes, the chance to see my friends and family again. I bravely took every breath and step with courage and faith. I receive hundreds of cards, prayers of encouragement and hope while laying on my hospital bed hooked up to IV, heart monitor, ventilator and trach. I was starting to make progress. A discharge date of May, 29th was assigned to me by my caseworker. I was discharged from Sunnyview Rehabilitation

Hospital a day earlier on May 28th. The caseworker discharged me under the terms that I would continue with 8 weeks of home care and 11 months of out-patient care. During in home therapy, I learned to shower independently and get dressed. I'm a Type "A" Personality. I was very angry, and frustrated that my independence was abruptly stripped and it started to affect my mind, confidence, self esteem, and family. I struggled to walk independently for 29 weeks. The physical therapist would come in the mornings, three times a week and the occupational therapist two times. I can best remember the struggles I had getting out of my hospital bed. Many times we held our therapy sessions bedside. Once a week, my in-home nurse would come and cheer me up. His name was Greg. He was funny, smart and very knowledgeable about health and recovery. He made our therapy sessions refreshing, fun and the time flew by.

After graduating from in-home care, Nurse Greg suggested that I continue treatment at Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital to recover better by enrolling in out-patient therapy twice a week. It took 11 long months to regain my independence. During this time I lost all my hair and voice. My ventilator and tracheotomy keloid scars became infected and required another out-patient surgery. This wasn't an

optional surgery, I was in chronic pain. The surgery wasn't successful with solving the inflammation issues in my neck. In fact, the inflammation and scars are even more painful and persistent months later. Every day, I apply lotions and scar treatments to aid in the healing process. Monthly, the ENT doctors inject needles filled with steroid into my neck. Yes, it sounds painful because it is! One year later, I'm still battling with acute bronchitis for the third time. I can eat independently and walk with a cane. I've lost all my upper body strength. I'm learning how to drive a car again longer distances. I'm currently only able to drive 3-5 miles because of the tremors, vibrations and brain fog. The Coronavirus, thought me how to see things in a new light. I learned that Vision is Heart and Not Your Eyes. I learned that people will pray for you if you just ask them. I learned that strangers will drop meals off to your home without asking and give your spouse a much needed night off. I've learned that bonds between friends can strengthen or disband. I learned that hope is stronger than not hoping at all. I learned that you are stronger than you think. I learned that things happen for a reason, not necessarily to you, but for you. I learned that my story is saving lives and inspiring others because I chose to share the raw truth. I learned to help others as others have helped me regain my savor for life with purpose. I've learned that love

alone isn't good enough unless you love back. Many people have asked me, "How can you be so positive when so much negative has happened to you?" I reply with a smile, I'm on God's plan. I am brave, I am healed, I am filled with gratitude. It's all about attitude. Believe and you will heal. While laying on my hospital bed in my living room, I would journal. I was making progress and envision what my life would look like if I never totally healed to my pre Covid-19 self. I thought of hope and taking massive action to help other long haulers and Long Covid-19 families. As I began to phase out of hospital care and therapies, I was still in need of recovery, support, help and guidance. I formed Covid Wellness Clinic, Albany, NY as a 501C3 to help patients and families overcome Long Covid and get their lives back. It has been noted that Long Haulers and Long Covid is not a one size fits all diagnoses. It's also not a switch that can be turned on and off just because one has graduated from therapies or doctors care. I want these families and friends to know that there is hope. They are seen. I'm part of a large group of patient led- researchers and science studies. I'm grateful for the support these organizations are acknowledging and taking action. You are not alone!



Dr. Ivan Misner

“One person may not be able to make a world of difference, but you can make a difference in the world, so start with a smile.”

GIVERS GAIN SMILES

BY DR. IVAN MISNER

When I was young, my family moved from Pittsburgh to LA. I lived in South Central as a young boy where every riot you’ve seen historically happened. Yes, those riots happened in LA in or near South Central, which is a pretty tough neighborhood where we lived. Although we left there a year later, we moved to Azusa, which is another very working-class community. My father was never really happy about living in such impoverished communities.

Despite where we lived, my parents were excellent. We didn’t have any money. I didn’t realize we didn’t have any money. I mean, I knew we didn’t have a lot of money, but I didn’t know just how little money we had. They were good parents in how they supported me, by guiding me in the direction I wanted to go.

When I was in junior high, I had run for student council a few times;

I was always interested in Student Council. I lost every time and not just lost; I was decimated. Okay, not just decimated, I was LAST in every election. By the time I got to high school, I was a little gun shy about running for Student Council, so I had no intention of going for it. However, in my freshman year, I found out the student council couldn't be selected the year before as usual. Instead, the representative was chosen from the freshman history class.

I remember vividly, Mr. Romero, who I'd known for a week, says, "Okay, we're going to select the student council representative. Anyone like to nominate?" I was sitting there thinking, "Nah, man, I'd love to do this, but there's no way I'm gonna be elected. No way I'm gonna do that again." Nobody raised their hand. It was, ironically, funny. Cindy, a cheerleader, offered that she would run but she was too busy with games. Again, Mr. Romero asked for volunteers; no hands went up. Mr. Romero stated with no nominations he was going to pick someone randomly with the classroom's approval. With heads nodding yes, he looked at me, "Ivan, you'd like to do this, wouldn't you?" "Yeah, I would," I agreed.

Now, I swear, I'm not making this up. I swear to you, the entire class, THE ENTIRE CLASS, at one time together in unison, said, "Oh, no, not Ivan.

Anybody, but Ivan." I was 13 years old; I didn't have a crystal ball. You don't know that someday you are going to be somebody. You don't know that someday you are going to create a global organization and that you'll write books people WANT to read. So, hearing their response that day it hurt; it cut deep. I didn't know what to say. Cindy stood up, "If you're gonna pick Ivan, then I volunteer." Mr. Romero was blunt, "Sorry, Cindy, it's too late. Ivan's our student council representative. Everybody open your book to Chapter Two." That was the end of that.

I remember thinking, Mr. Romero took a chance on me, and I am going to do the best job I could do in that position. Therefore, my focus that year, in addition to school and football, was Student Council. At the end of the year, that class picked the next year's representative, the same class that said, "Oh, no, not Ivan!"; nominated me and voted me as the sophomore Student Council rep. As a junior, I was the first rep to have a dedicated office space in the school's history. All that work resulted in me becoming an elected Senior Student Council President. To me, it was about perseverance and persistence. I took advantage of an opportunity; I mean I could have thought to myself that they don't want me, so I am not going to do it. Instead, I choose to run with it. The experience that I got in leadership was just outstanding.

However, what was most outstanding about the situation was what my mom said, “Honey, I love you. You’re great. But you’re a bull in a china shop; you’ve got to learn how to deal with people more effectively.” As a reminder, she gave me a paperweight. It’s on my desk to this day, “Diplomacy is the art of letting someone else have your way.” Furthermore, she said, “You have to learn how to collaborate with people. This concept isn’t about manipulation; it’s about collaboration.” Her advice and my high school experience set the groundwork for me to be a better person, and, ultimately, a better leader.

After graduation, I was accepted to Occidental College with a ½ scholarship. However, I didn’t want to take out loans because my future was graduate school, too. Therefore, I had to turn down the award and go to community college. Interestingly enough, sometimes people view someone like me and think, “He has a Ph.D., he had all the breaks.” Truth told, I had breaks, there were people all along the way that presented opportunities to me. However, I created my breaks, too. I attended the community college and state college. Then, I decided to go to graduate school for organization behavior, assuming significant college debt.

I went from no loans to a college semester that cost more than my entire

bachelor’s degree. Although I received scholarships to help with 30%, the rest of the income was on me. Therefore, I continued assuming college debt as I attended school full time while working full time during my master’s and a doctorate in organizational behavior and leadership.

By my mid 20’s, I was consulting businesses part-time. At 27, I had an opportunity to get a huge client to replace my full-time job as a general manager in LA for a manufacturing plant. Consulting full time at 27 years old was interesting because one hundred percent of my clients were older than me. When they first met me, they’d be like, “What? Aren’t you a kid? What can you tell us about how to run a business?” Addressing their concerns, I’d say, “Yeah, I am pretty young. Let’s talk about the issues; then, you can tell me whether I can help you or not.” In the end, they hired me because I was there to solve their problems, and I could do it.

Become successful meant addressing the problems we all have, in my situation, I was too young in their eyes, and by addressing it right away and moving to the real reason I was there I overcame that challenge. That is my advice for everyone; there is always going to be something that others are challenged by hearing or seeing or knowing. Address it and move forward.

Shortly after that, I invested in a house, and three months later, I realized that my biggest client was robbing Peter to pay Paul. He was running out of money. Underfunded, he was going under, and he didn't renew my contract. Deciding to do something to counteract the situation, I thought I should focus on referrals and speaking engagements. The only two ways from which I derived most of my business.

As a means of creating more connection, with trusted friends, we decided to get together with the specification of only one person per profession in the room. The reason I did that was that I didn't want my competition in the same room. I had learned that networking was the most feasible way to build a business. I was in several other kinds of networking organizations and chambers, including being a member of The National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO). There, I found out that as a man, when you join for the right reasons, you make great connections and stand out in the right way.

We started our group, I realized the need for more networking and connection since we met only once a month. So, I started this little group minus any of my competition. With the restrictions of one profession per person in the room, we started meeting. After a couple of months,

someone requested another group because they couldn't attend as their occupation was already represented.

At first, I declined. I was a business consultant; I don't run networking groups. So, I asked him to step up to help, so we opened up the second chapter. From there, more conflicts came up about people who wanted to join but couldn't because of the professional conflict. Again, I said no at first. They made the same agreement, and I agreed. By December of that year, I had 20 chapters.

Then, something hit me that I wasn't expecting. Early on as a business consultant, I believed as a leader; you have to devote time to think about your future. Where do you want to be? Where do you want to go? You can't hit targets you're not aiming at, so, you have to create targets. Goals get a bad rap. But the truth is, you can't hit something you're not aiming at, you got to have a goal and be creative about how to achieve them. Therefore, between Christmas and New Year's every year, I took a couple of days to look at my goals. I asked of myself: How did I hit my goals from last year or not hit my goals? Where do I want to be in five years? Where do I want to be in 10 years? Therefore, I wrote a 40-year plan.

That year the groups started, I spent some time with my goals, but that year in reflection, I mostly thought, "What the hell just happened. This group was not in my goals; this situation was not in my plan. I was entirely out of my plan. Then, It hit me like a ton of bricks; this was my aha moment for being in business. Right there before me was what's called push marketing versus pull marketing. Push marketing is what a consultant does; you push business; work as you are pushing a rock uphill. Pull marketing is where you pull through the marketplace; the marketplace is just a yanking you through.

In reflection, the twenty groups I created was an example of pull marketing; I was being pulled through the marketplace. After that, I realized I needed to pay attention to this reality. As much as I loved being a consultant, I needed to pay attention to this phenomenon because this could be life-altering. If I were able to scale this operation and figure out how to manage it effectively, this could make a big difference. And, I realized as a consultant, I can make a big difference for a few people. But if I could continue to grow these groups, I can make a pretty big difference for thousands. That December of 1985, I decided to create my plan for scaling the company. At that point, I was thinking national, but within a few years, I realized this could be International. That realization resulted in the genesis of BNI.

I get a daily report on membership. As of July 2019, we have 258,921 members and 9,107 chapters in over 70 countries around the world. These results are humbling and what it has become is quite humble. The growth has been incredible. There are over 7000 people now who worked for the company. Last year, I probably shared you these numbers 11 with past 11.2 million referrals in 2018. That generated for our members 14.2 billion worth of business all around the world.

The stories of impact show the reflection of how deep the connections, teachings, and experiences can be from belonging to a BNI group. One of the most heartfelt stories that I have ever been told was by a Hawaiian member. He came up to me with tears in his eyes, stating that he had his two adopted children because of BNI. When I asked, "How did that happen?" He said that I need to understand who he was first. He shared that he was petrified to speak before he joined BNI, and every week it took all his strength and courage to stand up for his 60-second presentation at each meeting. He said he usually cut it short about 50 seconds. Despite his quick move to sit back down, the whole group was caring and supportive. With their understanding, he gradually opened up where he ended up being able to speak well in front of people, including strangers on visitor's day. He became comfortable in his own skin as a

person finally able to talk about his business publicly.

But, his life changed for the better when that comfort gave him the strength to stand up and speak to the Kazakhstan judge to appeal his decision on delaying on their adoption another six months to a year. His wife and he were adopting two twin boys from Kazakhstan, which required multiple visits overseas and up to 18 months total before the adoption would be finalized. During that time, they found out that one of the boys had a heart condition, and without emergency surgery, he would die. In a special hearing, the attorney said it was unlikely that they would win to expedite the adoption even though he insisted on the extra court hearing and despite the expense of another trip overseas. All of a sudden, he asked to speak in court. Although the attorney said no, he insisted he ask. Taken aback by the request, the judge said yes, and a translator was brought in to assist.

Scared, he did what he knew; he started with his 60 second BNI presentation, saying this is what he does and how he serves people in his community. Then, he talked about his family and his desire to bring these two boys home. He explained that his son was likely to die without medical intervention, and how he had insurance and the

familial support to give this boy a chance at survival and a life of love. He explained that his twin brother would always have his twin and that together they would live a life of joy. Lastly, he appealed that their survival and their happiness laid in the judge's hands.

The judge hit the gavel on the table and said, "Adoption approved." The attorney said he had never seen that happen. That type of story brings tears to my eyes as I don't always get to hear all the emotional impact that BNI has on people's lives in ways that matter so deeply, and it brings me joy to see the difference it has made all over the world for so many people. For that I am so grateful

One person may not be able to make a world of difference, but you can make a difference in the world, so start with a smile. ~ Dr. Ivan Misner



LuAn Mitchell

“It is always a good time to smile,
no matter what time zone you are in.”

FAIL OFTEN SO YOU CAN SUCCEED SOONER

BY LUAN MITCHELL

I am a blessed woman who has grown through adversity and challenges. I have an incredible God who is Love and I turn to guide me in all circumstances. I was widowed young with three small children and have many angels walking with me. I am forever grateful for the Gift of Life, and cherish the ability to smile.

.....

I believe in “giving back” and it is my life purpose to serve others and be a builder. I am excited about the collaboration with like-minded friends and colleagues.

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I surrender to a higher power, there is no spot where God is Not. Knowing this truth makes me smile.

ABOUT LUAN MITCHELL

LuAn Mitchell knows the business world. She is the President and Co-Owner of Big Media USA a multi-faceted Media company. With long experience as one of the most accomplished women in the world, she has an intimate understanding of the issues of competitiveness and global pressures on the “playing field” in today’s tough “business of life” world. She has successfully turned around, played on, and WON the game on Tough corporate fields in male-dominated industries, and sat on boards with Global female leaders like herself. In fact, the prestigious McGill University of Montreal, Quebec presented her with their Management Achievement Award and she was named Canada’s Number One Female Entrepreneur by Profit and Chatelaine magazines

in a nationwide search, for THREE consecutive years. Ms. Mitchell was inducted as a “Leading Woman Entrepreneur of the World” in several countries around the world! She has much to share as a valued author, show host, mentor, and coach.

As a strong believer in building a better planet one person at a time, she takes her “seeds for good” and endeavors to plant this knowledge and experience across the globe. LuAn, often called LA, relays the messages we all need to achieve our greatest heights. LA has been featured by the Napoleon Hill Foundation and is seen in many motivational movies.

Ms. Mitchell has been chosen as a global leader and featured by the Napoleon Hill Foundation in several publications and Voice recordings. As a highly sought after coach, mentor, inspirational speaker, international bestselling author, show host, and first-class personality LuAn is known best around the world for her inspiring message of service, perseverance, and triumph, she is committed to helping others; and is on a mission to share her gifts with the world, and get others to share theirs.

LuAn works hard with like-minded individuals to plant “seeds of good” around our beautiful planet. She has helped others reach their true potential, and she can help you!

LuAn is also the first to roll up her shirtsleeves to help global efforts and has given millions to worthy causes.

She keeps active on many outside boards.

LuAn has served on the Women’s Leadership Board at the JFK School of Government, Harvard University - this international board of more than 100 women globally who work together to increase the visibility, participation, and influence of women and men who walk beside them, worldwide.

Books That Changed Your Life

Think and Grow Rich

Movie That Inspires You

The Pursuit of Happyness

Your Hero

Jesus Christ

Quote You Live By

If you don't like the road your walking,
start paving another one. Dolly Parton



Ron Monk, Captain Charm Maker

“Smiles are the simplest way to touch someone’s heart.”

NOT ALL BIRDS CAN FLY, AND THAT’S OK

BY RON MONK

There I stood: an eager elementary school student wanting to please my teachers and make my parents proud. Brimming with school spirit and an enthusiasm to learn, I was determined to be the first of my family to attend college. Learning that my teachers were instead suggesting that I stay back a year, I found myself at odds with what I was hearing versus what I viewed as my goals and ambitions. The people who I looked up to for educational guidance called me “a nuance, like a bird that cannot fly,” and from that moment on, those words were ingrained in my spirit.

I was a bird who couldn’t fly, so instead I needed to learn how to run.

Despite my humiliation, my Aunt Betty summoned me to her house every night while she cooked dinner to read my homework assignments

aloud. My poor performance was on full display, and it took everything in me to walk a few steps forward.

When my sixth-grade teacher Mr. Zimmerman saw my deficiencies, he never looked the other way and instead he committed to working one-on-one with me before class started each day. He was one of those special teachers that genuinely cared for his students. It was from him that I learned that not knowing the answers was fine so long as I spoke up and asked questions, and this gave me the courage to walk a little faster. It was winter semester, he had all the students take a Polaroid of themselves that he would turn into a Christmas ornament to give each one of us before we left for the holiday break. The outfit in my photo is one I'll never forget--a bright yellow Bugle Boy sweater layered over a grey turtleneck--because it's my favorite ornament to hang on the tree each year to this day.

I may have been the bird who couldn't fly, but I was starting to run, and my hard work was reflected in me making the honor roll every year through high school.

It wasn't merely in my academic life where that phrase had resonated with me. Since the first grade, I had a feeling that there was something

different about me, but I couldn't put my finger on why or how I was unlike my peers. Perhaps because I just didn't fit into any specific mold because I was simply me.

It wasn't until my freshman year of high school that I would come to understand the impact of role models and mentorships with the introduction of my art teacher Bruno Baran and track coach Steve Terry into my life. As a result of their support, guidance, and mentorship over those four years they each helped me advance my academic achievement into the Gifted and Talented program, earned championship medals, and gained personal discipline that would put me on a path for a future of success. Having the two of them believe in me before I could believe in myself was the cornerstone and turning point for a lost child becoming a mature young man.

Despite these triumphs, knowing I was a bird who couldn't fly eventually led me to admit during this time that I was gay, and I faced the difficult decision on how to find my footing in that somewhat pernicious social hierarchy. Did I want to be honest and open or hide part of my true nature from the world? It led to me questioning other aspects of my life, such as whether I wanted to pursue a scholarship

for fine arts, or was it more prudent to strive for one in track and field?

Fine arts eventually won out, as I was accepted to the Maryland Institute College of Art at the end of my junior year with 75% of my tuition covered by a scholarship. Following my first year, I transferred to The Cooper Union in New York City on a full scholarship. It was there that I focused on portrait photography under the guidance of Norman Sanders, a Cooper Union adjunct recognized for his keen technical skills with photography and commercial printing.

During my coursework, I was drawn to photographing people with and without their most valued accessories; a social experiment and a portrayal of how people identify with material objects to build confidence and their public image. As fate would have it, I would go on to take the last portrait of actor, philosopher, and actor, Quentin Crisp, before his passing in late, 1999. Infamous for his accoutrements such as makeup and painted nails, I snapped him without the accessories he was most famous for donning, making him seem vulnerable. Newsweek magazine published these images, the first major publication of my career and a hard-fought validation of my perspective. And it was then again,

that I was struck by the notion of a bird that cannot fly, because this particular flightless bird was running at full speed.

Bolstered by this success and intrigued by Warren Buffet's rags-to-riches story, I mailed him a handwritten letter with a request to hear about his journey. Much to my surprise, he invited me to Omaha, Nebraska to spend the day with him, where I had the honor of photographing him and meeting with his partner Charlie Munger. This once-in-a-lifetime experience propelled my career as a portrait photographer and an assistant wardrobe stylist for some of the most recognized and iconic entertainers and public figures.

Just as I felt that I couldn't be running any faster, the world ground to a halt in the aftermath of September 11th. To this day the image of seeing the missing tower from the promenade in Brooklyn, not to mention the clouds of dust and debris headed towards me and the thought that we had been bombed is something I'll never forget. The trauma of that cataclysmic event caused me to look for an escape from the day to day reality and horrors that man could impose on each other. My need to look for answers elsewhere landed me at the bottom of a bottle and fighting with addiction.

And this led me to question myself: was I, in fact, a bird that cannot move?

By 2007, I could no longer live with the blinding depression and carrying on like everything was fine. Following the end of a photo shoot in California, I hopped on a plane and entered a treatment facility, where I learned that I was also suffering from untreated bipolar symptoms causing me to have suicidal thoughts. I felt paralyzed.

Dr. Triesman, from John Hopkins Hospital, was a saving grace in a time when I sincerely needed a lifeline. He worked to stabilize my symptoms and was instrumental in helping me to understand the power of a chemical imbalance of the brain. It took three years of focusing on my treatment to better myself and to learn about what is most important in my life; health, acceptance, and love for me to reach a healthy equilibrium.

Little by little, I was starting to get my stride back.

In 2012, I started working as a full-time REALTOR®. I love helping people to identify their wants and needs, to find the home of their

dreams as well as using my marketing experience to create a sense of energy and excitement when selling a home. There is an authentic joy in knowing that I not only fulfill the aspirations of my clients, but that I help contribute to building a better Baltimore City; a community that I have grown to love and care for deeply. You could say that it's the city that saved me.

I see the struggles our city has endured, and I want to contribute to finding solutions to make Baltimore a brighter place for future generations; the place it is meant to be, and the place I believe it is. This ideal was only solidified when Reggie, our local homeless resident and dear personal friend, was tragically killed in a fluke Porta Potty fire. His death, along with all the experiences that had shaped my life up until that moment, showed me that I was meant for greater things. I was put on this earth because I am different, and I view things in a fresh light.

This became the incarnation and driving force of Socialyser. It is a celebration of life. A premier social initiative. The desire to make Baltimore the shining beacon on the hill that it was intended to be.

Through Socialyser, we're dedicated to providing the creative outlet and

resources needed to support local charities focused on aiding at-risk and underprivileged youth, with an emphasis on costumes, prizes, and competitions. In fact, 50% of the profits earned through each event hosted by Socialyser will go toward supporting these philanthropic efforts. Organizations that have programs to prevent juveniles from being incarcerated, improve adolescent social skills and provide workforce training, counsel children affected by the loss of family members due to violence, and bolster youth struggling to find their way in the community through social ostracization benefit from Socialyser programming.

Socialyser is a movement to generating new ideas that create opportunities to make Baltimore a brighter place to allow the future generations to fulfill their dreams and aspirations. If I can help just one person reach out of the depths of suffering and pain, then my purpose has been fulfilled.

I want to show other birds who can't fly that they can run too.

Being grounded, humble, and grateful allows me to travel new distances to connect with those who share my belief that by standing together we can make our small piece of the world shine. It is only through the kindness, love, and generosity instilled in me by my parents, that I now know

I'm a bird that cannot fly, and that's OK. I'm like an ostrich, a bird that runs far and fast, and contrary to common perceptions, we ostriches do not bury our heads in the sand.

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Ronald Monk is the founder and Captain Charm Maker of Socialyser, a Baltimore-based social group dedicated to shining a light on the organizations dedicated to making Baltimore a better, brighter city. Using unique and creative events to promote the work of local, youth-oriented non-profits, Monk believes that together we can work to not only make the city one that is better for everyone, but that we can also change the public perceptions around his Charm City.

Books that changed your life:

Start with Why – Simon Sinek
The Power of Now – Eckard Tolle
Illusions – Richard Bach

Movies that inspire you:

Patch Adams
Billy Elliot
Forrest Gump

Songs that inspires you:

Man in the Mirror – Michael Jackson
Beautiful – Christina Aguilera
One Moment in Time – Whitney Houston
It'll be OKAY – Shelby Blondell

Your Heros:

Malala Yousafzai
Martin Luther King Jr.
Harvey Milk
and the Drag Queens at Stonewall

Quotes you live by:

“You cannot control everything that happens to you; you can only control the way you respond to what happens. In your response is your power.”
“Birds of a feather flock together.”



Michelle Mras

Stop apologizing for what you aren't, embrace who you are. Smile while being the best version of you everyday and live unapologetically!

SMILE FEARLESSLY

BY MICHELLE MRAS

I speak internationally, write books, lead online and in-person trainings, contribute articles in compilation books and magazines to reach as many people as possible. I coach aspiring speakers to refine their messages and unleash the power in how they share their messages so they, too can reach more individuals with the lessons they have learned throughout their lives.

Have you heard the expression, “If your friends jumped off a cliff... would you?”

As a young girl of 7 years old, my initial answer would always be, “No”.

But, if my parents asked the more specific question, “If your brother jumped off a cliff... would you?”

I would have emphatically answered, “YES”!

You see... I did, on several occasions.

To sum up my youth with my older brother, I can state: We knew the Emergency Room doctors by name. We lived on a military base in the Philippine islands in the 1970s. We didn't have cell phones, cable television or internet. Children growing up in the 70s had to invent their own entertainment.

My brother and I were deemed the terrible two. He was a daredevil enthusiast, and I would follow him anywhere without question.

One lovely tropical day, my brother gave me permission to jump the big storm ditch that the “Big Boys” jumped with their bicycles.

I mounted my beautiful, new, shiny purple glittered bicycle. It had long handle bars, a banana seat and rainbow tassels on the grips. I followed my brother to the top of the big hill. At the bottom was a large wooden ramp the boys had constructed, immediately followed by a chasm sized ditch.

My brother put his football helmet on me and said, “Watch me, and do what I do”. He speeds off on his bike, down the hill. He is going so fast he looks like a streak of color. He hits the ramp and soars across the chasm. Lands on the other side, he slides his rear tire to a perfect halt.

****WOW**** He is SO cool!

My turn.

I speed down the hill as fast as my 7 year old legs can pedal. My tassels are blowing horizontal, and my pigtails are flapping in the wind. I'm doing it! I am going as fast as the wind! I'm going “warp factor 2”!

I hit the ramp at top speed. The feeling of weightlessness and flying was exhilarating! In my mind I was screaming, “I'm doing it! I'm doing it!”

When I woke up. There was a group of boys surrounding me. I was on the ground and my once beautiful bicycle was mangled besides me. My brother, Mike, Matthew, Mark and a few more I couldn't recognize were staring down with a fearful look in their eyes. I was bombarded

by questions, “Michelle, how many fingers am I holding up? Can you move your legs? Can you move at all?”

You see, I never made it across the ditch. I slammed straight into the far side of the concrete ditch. The only reason I was still breathing was because of the last minute application of the football helmet.

My brother helped me up. I remember hearing the other boys gasp that I was moving on my own. My brother says to me, “You are one tough kid”. I winced a smile... that’s all I wanted to hear.

Many years have passed since that faithful day. I have kept the lessons I learned from that experience. You may ask, “What could you possibly learn from your 7-year old self making a poor judgement call”? My answer, “More than I can possibly cover in one sitting”.

That day is a memory that reminds me of who I am as an individual. It reminds me of what is the foundation of stepping into living a life of purpose. The younger me was fearless and was willing to attempt a challenge without immense amounts of preparation.

As I grew into a teenager, a young woman, a wife, and later a mother, I became more cautious. I succumbed to apologizing for what I believed I could not and should not be. My inner light began to dim.

I’ll explain a high level of each of my thoughts:

- As a teen, I began comparing myself to my peers. I wanted to fit in. The plight of the teen: Fit in. Be the same. Don’t stand out. This taught me to play smaller and not be as daring as I truly wanted to be.
- As a young adult, I observed that being in a field that was primarily dominated by men, meant that I should lessen my intelligence so that I wouldn’t bruise the egos around me. I also learned that other young women would use any private information they learned about me, against me when it came to promotions and recognition.
- As a wife, especially as a military spouse, I learned that I was not issued to the airman and therefore insignificant. Our frequent military moves made employers reluctant to hire me.

It didn't matter how qualified or perfect for a job, I wouldn't receive the offer or the investment.

- As a mother, I realized that my life was not only for me, other small humans relied on my decisions for their very life.

This crushed the 7-year old, free-spirited, dare-devil who was willing to take chances. My saving grace from this plight came as an accident.

Literally, an accident caused me to reflect upon my life and chose to intentionally live my days with more drive, purpose and the willingness to take chances. In 2014, I was in an auto accident that caused a Traumatic Brain Injury. For 25 months I was trapped within my mind unable to speak more than a few singular words or walk without assistance. The hiatus I was forced to take allowed me immense amounts of time to examine the choices I've made throughout my life until that moment.

My "Ah-ha" moment came as a vision of my 7-year old self jumping the concrete storm ditch. I promised myself, the universe and especially God that if I was permitted to speak and walk without assistance,

I would live with the courage of my 7-year old self. I would dare to push through my insecurities, live a life of joy despite my fears and to share my lessons with others so they too would stop apologizing for what we aren't or what we thought we should be.

So, the next time you ask your child or grandchildren, "If your friends jumped off a cliff... would you?" Beware... they just might. They may be willing to keep their inner light bright and brave enough to live unapologetically!

The knowledge I garnered through losing myself has propelled me to help others remove the self-limiting perception of not being worthy. I guide others to rediscover their 7-year old self that believes in miracles, dreams and most of all... themselves. This is my mission in life.

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Why is this my mission? Because I learned the hard way that waking up every day is a privilege not privy to all. We must love and live every-day as if it may be our last. I'm not an advocate to live recklessly, rather to live fully.

I spent 25 months stuck in my own mind regretting all the days I wasted worrying about who I wasn't, what I didn't become, all the anger and resentment I carried with me for most of my life. It was a agonizing experience to argue with all my inner-critics. I squandered precious time not living in what brought me joy. My hope is for every person, I meet directly or through the various avenues I share my core message, to recognize the authenticity of my words.



My joy comes from releasing others from their inner-critics so they can rediscover what brings joy into their lives... what sets their heart soaring, their mind to dream beyond their nine-to-five and most of all, take active steps to seek their dreams.

What are you waiting for? Are you awaiting some sign to give you permission to do, seek, or be who you always wanted to become? Take this as your sign. Life is too short to squander your days living in regret. Be a little braver every day. Find some reason to smile every day. Take one small step toward your dreams every day. Before you know it, you'll look back and discover that you are closer to achieving whatever you

set your heart and mind upon and are more joyful. Allow my life lessons to be your reminder of how precious life is. This is your permission to love your life, love yourself, to stop apologizing for what you aren't and be the best version of yourself everyday. Be Unapologetically you!

ABOUT MICHELLE MRAS

Michelle is a survivor of multiple life challenges to include a Traumatic Brain Injury and her current battle with Breast Cancer. She guides her clients to recognize the innate gifts within them, to stop apologizing for what they are not and step into who they truly are. She accomplishes this through one-on-one and group coaching, Training events, Keynote talks, her books, Denim and Pearls podcast and MentalShift internet television show. Michelle driving thought is that every day is a gift. Tomorrow is never promised. Every moment is an opportunity to be the best version of you... Unapologetically!

Books that changed your life:

Jonathan Livingston Seagull - Richard Bach
Illusions - Richard Bach
The Shack - William P. Young

Movies that inspire you:

What Dreams May Come
Saving Mr. Banks
Lion King

Song that inspires you:

I Believe I Can Fly - R. Kelly

Your Hero:

Robin Williams

Quotes you live by:

"There are three types of business in the universe:
mine, yours, and God's." - Byron Katie



Aaron Murakami

“A kind heart is a fountain of gladness, making everything in its vicinity freshen into smiles.”
~ Washington Irving

GAME CHANGERS CAUSE SMILES

BY AARON MURAKAMI

My name is Aaron Murakami and I am a founder of A & P Electronic Media, Energetic Forum, Energy Science Forum and the Energy Science & Technology Conference. My online and offline platforms serve as the output for the most highly disruptive information in the energy sciences, much of which overturns the flawed fundamentals, which have been erroneously taught in the text books for over a century.

There is a time-critical need to raise the awareness about paradigm-shattering technologies that solve many of our world's problems. The way they operate may be contrary to what the physics books will have you believe and this does not automatically mean they are supposed to be violating any laws of physics. What it does mean is that there is a gross misunderstanding by the academic world as to the true

nature of energy and potential, where it actually comes from, and the skeptical views of “free energy” systems are rooted in flawed fundamental science. They simply don't know what they don't know and we will change that.

What has been missing in the general dialogue is the true physics of abundance, which has only been explained in simple terms by a few forward thinking thought leaders. Simply, it is the thermodynamics of open systems, which explains all-natural systems in the universe. Contrary to popular belief, closed system thermodynamics as taught in the textbooks does not apply to any natural or manmade system – it doesn't even apply to heat systems, which it was originally developed for. Even many abundance and manifestation “gurus” that teach about prosperity are operating their lives under the influence of poverty physics and this must change because it is incongruent and inauthentic.

For people at all levels to get past this hurdle, they must understand in very simple terms the reality of such a claim and fortunately, it is so simple a child can understand it. If enough people have the correct model through which to examine energy systems, then it will no longer be possible to deny the existence of machines or other systems that

produce more output than what the operator must supply. If nature does this all the time, then why can't we?

Here is how simple the concept is – imagine a child flying a kite in the park. If a little girl spends 1 unit of energy to get a kite in the air and over a certain period the wind contributes 9 units of energy, that is a total of 10 parts energy input into that system. If half of all that energy is wasted in losses, then only half of that energy goes to actual work in flying the kite. 10 parts in and 5 parts of intended work out is 50% efficient. 50% efficiency is not that great, but this simple example is something that nobody can argue with. Efficiency is total output compared to total input.

Now, let's open our eyes to the physics of abundance – it has been sitting in front of all of us but the distinctions have never really been pointed out. 5 parts work in actual kite-flying was accomplished, but how many parts of energy did the little girl have to contribute? Only 1. So, 5 parts of real work energy were accomplished divided by 1 part contributed by the child equals 5.0. The child just realized a 500% return for her investment meaning she received five times more work than she put in.

You see – it is not more out than in as the misinformed skeptics will

lead some into thinking is being claimed. It is more out than we put in since we were able to leverage free energy from the environment and that is a huge distinction that everyone needs to understand. Instead of efficiency, total out compared to only what we contribute is called coefficient of performance or COP for short. This is how heat pumps are rated, but this ratio applies to EVERY system in the universe – a seed growing into a tree, a refrigerator, an electric motor, a financial investment, an organization or network of people, etc. That is because they all have free external input that is above and beyond our own input.

This is one of the most important concepts for any human being to understand because until they do, they will continue to see the world as poverty-stricken, which is in short supply of everything. The reality is that abundance is freely available everywhere and is so prevalent it is practically dripping off the walls. Switching one's perspective to this productive viewpoint is simple and sensible and opens a whole world of possibilities. Imagine a world where everything is built with the physics of abundance in mind – the mindset of a fear-based world is brushed to the side and is replaced by one where the things around us match the words of abundance that we speak. Simply, it is lighting a candle rather than cursing the dark.

This is foundational and is a necessary understanding for there to be true sustainability. The current model of sustainability and the green-energy revolution is still rooted in poverty consciousness where the reasons for doing what they do are based on a lack of this or that. It is incongruent and is only playing into and legitimizing the fear-mongering. However, launching an entire revolution where every system is built with open-system concepts in mind allows our language of abundance to manifest a world of abundance without ever playing into the “lack of” mindset. It's time to take the truth straight to the public while bypassing the self-appointed gatekeepers of the authoritarian, fake-news world. This is empowering, open-source knowledge and the opinions that matter the most come from our peers next door and across the street – not someone the ruling elite claims is the expert. Gerald Massey said it best, “They must find it difficult, those who have taken authority as truth, rather than truth as authority.” Together, we can change this conversation into something that will allow us to build a world of abundance while empowering everyone with their birthright to know and understand that everything has already been given to us!

ESTC started as the Bedini-Lindemann Science & Technology Conference in 2012. The late John Bedini and Peter Lindemann are

legends in the field of Tesla sciences and advanced energy technologies. After a few years, the name was changed to a more generic Energy Science & Technology Conference. This event normally takes place in July in Hayden, Idaho right next to Spokane, Washington. Details are available at <http://energyscienceconference.com>.

Traditionally, it has been a three-day event focusing on energy science, but it has expanded to four days because the demand is growing and business related topics have been introduced so that inventors and developers can learn how to change the world for the better by getting their inventions into the marketplace.

On the surface, the ESTC is where a bunch of techies gather to learn from presenters who are considered the world's leading authorities in their own respective fields, but it goes much deeper. The networking that happens is just as important and the relationships that develop there will last a lifetime. Many people have found partners to help them further their projects, some have met mentors in areas of technology, mindset, business, finance, marketing, etc. and some inventors/developers have been heavily funded.

And, it isn't just techies who come – everyone from homemakers to distinguished professors attend this weekend conference and bit by bit, more of the younger generation are attending and more women are getting involved. This is a very welcome change because it brings more balance to the event and getting more youth involved is necessary to carry this knowledge on as they are the future world-changers.

For those who are unable to attend in person, all presentations are recorded and are offered as paid digital downloads through <http://emediapress.com>, which many have said is the most important catalog of paradigm-shattering science in the world. We would have to agree as many of the presenters are some of the very pioneers of the modern-day Tesla science and free energy movement. There are roughly seventy books and videos spanning many topics including advanced magnetic systems, open system thermodynamics, water fuel and plasma ignition science, how to save money on home energy bills and many others. There are even some presentations and books on increasing one's mental abilities and there is a growing section on healing technologies.

These digital downloads are offered through an affiliate program so for those who are entrepreneurial-minded, they can earn 60% commission

on any sale they refer with an affiliate link. Details are here: <http://emediapress.com/affiliate-program/affiliate-program-signup/>

Much of my work involves connecting people who can mutually benefit from each other's connections, resources, knowledge, etc. This intrinsically solves many problems that people have with their inventions, projects and ventures. For many, their dreams have come true by getting involved with my online forums, published material and most certainly, coming to the ESTC. Many of these people are more than just smiling, it is a life-changing experience that transforms them to the core of their being. This also makes me smile knowing that I had something to do with catalyzing transformation in so many people's lives and my own life is transformed by this.

ABOUT AARON MURAKAMI

Aaron Murakami was born on Grand Forks Air Force Base, just outside of Grand Forks, North Dakota. He spent the first 20 years of his life as a military dependent moving from base to base around the world. Aaron attended high school on Yokota Air Force Base, which is about 30 miles east of Tokyo, Japan. After graduation, he returned to the United States, where he attended Sinclair Community College and Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. His original goal was to get a degree in software engineering, but later decided to explore other fields that were more meaningful to him.

His adult life has been spent in Spokane, Washington, where he has continued to pursue knowledge in natural medicine, free energy technologies and other sciences. Aaron holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Health and eventually came to own a popular nutrition store in Spokane. Despite its success, he closed the store in 2006 in order to pursue other projects full time.

His first and most important mentor was Rodger Estes. Rodger was the first Westerner recognized by the Chinese Qigong Delegation in Beijing as being a “natural born” Qigong Master. From Roger, Aaron learned a great deal about developing and manipulating subtle energies, as well as the corresponding “mind control” methods these disciplines require. Aaron is Rodger’s protégé.

Some of Aaron’s other mentors in the field of Free Energy include Peter Lindemann, John Bedini, Eric Dollard, Paul Babcock and others. He is committed to the development and distribution of disruptive information in the energy sciences and is founder of Energetic Forum, <http://energeticforum.com>, and Energy Science Forum, <http://energyscienceforum.com>, which have a combined membership of over 150,000 people from around the world.

In 2008, Aaron co-founded A & P Electronic Media with Peter Lindemann who has since retired. Today, there are about seventy downloadable eBooks and video lectures available, which are considered the most authoritative sources of information in the Free Energy sciences. His Energy Times and other newsletters and mailing lists have over 110,000 double opt-in subscribers. Both forums are free to join as a service to humanity.

In 2012, he co-founded the Bedini-Lindemann Energy Conference, which is now known as the Energy Science & Technology Conference. This annual conference is held in Northern Idaho, close to Spokane, Washington, and have been attended by people from all over the world.

Aaron has personally authored and produced various eBooks and educational videos, including The Quantum Key, A Course in Mind Power, Ignition Secrets, Water Fuel Secrets, How to Build a Jet Engine, High Voltage N-Machine, Hacking the Aether, Electro-Biohacking, Ideomotor Effect and others.

Today, Aaron Murakami is a multidisciplinary researcher, inventor, and web publisher. He holds a patent for the world’s most efficient plasma ignition system and continues the work of Stan Meyer and others toward the practical applications of “water fuel” and other “on-demand” synthetic fuels for internal combustion engines.

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Dr. Ellema Albert Neal: President, Forerunner Coaching Advisory Group, Author & Futurist

“With foreknowledge of acceptance and grace, a smile is a welcomed and cherished embrace.”

A SMILE TO LIGHT MY WAY HOME

BY DR. ELLEMA ALBERT NEAL

I am proud that I was born in Caribou, Maine. Caribou is the Northeastern most city in the United States. It is the first place where the sunrise first meets the shores of our beautiful country. I lived in a modest home on what seemed an enormous parcel of land. My sense of place was derived from the perspective of my childhood swing-set. Ahead of me, was a field of billowing grass that led to a row of great conifer trees situated to the distant left. To my right, a field of tall golden grasses where I imagined strong, young, native heroes rode gloriously maned horses bareback. I heard a Micmac tribe lived over the rolling hill, but I never saw them. The sky above was domed by jet streams left by bomber planes that flew overhead from nearby Presque Isle. When the jets broke the sound barrier, the booms shook the ground and forced the legs of my swing-set from the ground. I was born with the imagination and observation skills of a writer.

When I write, I am connected to my inner core and most able to express my being and the world around me. This is my external orientation: as a writer. For me, writing is not only a way of expressing myself, it is a way of opening and losing myself, then making myself available for whatever is forthcoming. It is the way I create knowledge for myself that can be shared with others. Often times, upon reading work I have written I barely recognize it as my own. This is because when I write I completely lose myself and am actually not the same person who later reads the same work. The only exception to this has been my poetry. When I write poetry, I know it is mine no matter when or where I read it again.

Writing has always been my silent partner, lover, and friend—it has brought me through every light and shadow of my life. My idyllic childhood in the farming lands of Maine, ended abruptly when my parents divorced. Immediately after the divorce, it felt like I was thrown into a parallel universe where I was ignored, stripped of my possessions, endured hunger, and was surrounded by yelling and screaming. I waited each night for my father to come home. I prayed my life would be restored, and that my parents would fall in love again.

My mom became addicted to alcohol and other drugs, and my step dad suffered from a severe and violent form of alcoholism. He had suffered personal trauma that not many people would be able to withstand as a result of his alcoholism. He had run over his youngest child, killing him in the garage where his first wife, Jacqueline, ultimately took her on life. Growing up, I witnessed physical violence against my mother and sisters. I endured constant fear, verbal abuse, neglect, shame, and lack for most of my childhood. We moved 17 times by the time I graduated from high school. I was a straight A student with parents who were too drunk to notice.

My father eventually returned into the picture and visited as much as he could before moving to Florida. My father was my world, the person who made me feel loved, special, and alive. I wrote him letters that began, Dear Old Dad, for years. He was a joyful soul, but he also drank along with his new wife, who said horrible things to me when she drank that cast doubt on my paternity. Despite the many challenges I faced, there were three success factors that enabled me to maintain my identity as a writer, and to develop my own character as a force in the technical profession, a life-long learner, and community advocate and leader:

1. an immutable belief in a higher power and faith in my connection with it
2. natural talent and ability with a powerful mind and tenacious will
3. despite my family situation, local, state, and other supporters provided equal opportunity for me to succeed

Because of all the support of counselors, mentors, teachers, friends, neighbors, pastors, and strangers, I learned how to appreciate the value of empathy, compassion, and generosity. If I could live three lifetimes, it wouldn't be enough to return the kindness of the beautiful, loving, and caring people who gave selflessly and smiled upon me. My parents overcame their addictions, and I came to admire and rely upon their love, courage, and strength to this day.

For these reasons, it was only right that I dedicate my life to helping others, especially children, to develop the same opportunities for success that I had been given. But first, I had to rise myself. I left home, and moved to Philadelphia, PA when I was 18 years old, put myself through school and worked fulltime. While there, I discovered computer programming and became known for my speed and accuracy producing code. Eventually, I returned to the northeast, raised two daughters, and

ran my own IT consulting business leading, staffing, and implementing large scale IT projects for multinational corporations like Stone & Webster Engineering, General Electric, Dannon Foods, General Foods, Skandia Life, Ford Foundation, SmithKline Beckman, and more. Although I had a fulfilling career and my hands full with my amazing daughters, I could never turn my back on my commitment to helping others. Moving from town to town and place to place for fulfilling professional roles was a natural way of life for me and my daughters.

Once I became financially stable and comfortable with my professional career path, I began a parallel vocational life. I sought ways to impact children's educational experiences. Although I lacked the academic credentials to work in the field of education, I became involved on an extra-curricular basis, and was active in the local community. I was selected and trained as an ELCA transformational lay leader and educator, and served the local community and across regional New England. I developed and "sold" a business plan to renovate a dormant historical landmark into a children's communication iTV station to the Mayor of Naugatuck, Connecticut, and the local historical society; founded the Earth Day Celebration in the same town, organizing the first event that is still celebrated today. When my children were

younger, I tutored Spanish children in math. Teaching the non-English speaking children was life changing. I have never seen such commitment, passion, and gratitude toward learning than I witnessed in those lovely Latino children. When my daughters reached middle-school, I created film making classes for young people at a local community television station, and worked to bring NASA STEM programs into my local middle and high schools. Not all of my efforts were successful, but I continued to work to make a difference. My social life during those years consisted of raising my children and working with others. My educational interests had a common theme: keep an eye on current events with the other toward the future of humanity.

Year 2007 came around and I was a little burned out and feeling like something was missing. An irresistible call from spirit came and urged me to reconnect with the powerful forces that had brought me this far. I wanted to connect with God personally, directly, and verifiably. I turned to writing as a channel. I joked about it and told people I was going to sit in my chair and write about Spirit until Spirit called my name. Four years later, the book *Paradise Trees: On Earth as in Heaven* was written. Spirit had also given me a new name: Elle M.A. I wrote as a spiritual blogger under the pen name Elle M.A. for five years after

that. In 2016, I changed my name legally so I could claim my writing, identity, and truth. I contrived the full legal name of Ellema Albert Neal. Ellema, from Spirit, Albert in honor of my maternal ancestry, and Neal to honor my paternal ancestral name McNeal. Incidentally, I had removed the “Mc” to acknowledge regret for not knowing my father and his side of the family as well as I wanted to.

My spirit name was one of two spiritual touches I experienced as I wrote *Paradise Trees*. The second was what I learned later to be kundalini awareness. One day when I was writing, I must have been in a trance when the word Brahman popped into my head. I had no idea what it meant. By this time, I had done thousands of google searches for spiritual leaders and sages without clearing my cache. On this particular day, I searched the word Brahman. Google presented me with a picture that captured rings in a pool of water at the moment a droplet penetrates a still surface. In my trance state, I gazed upon the picture and chanted the word Brahman over and over again. From out of nowhere, something pinged me on the crown of my head, solidly, like striking a brass symbol. Instantly, my consciousness emptied out, widened, I became the waves, I was the picture, I was the sound and vibration of Brahman.

That experience led me to Hinduism, to the Science of Yoga, to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother Mirra Alfassa. One cannot discover this pair of divine sages without ultimately landing in Auroville. Auroville is an experimental city, supported by an international community, the government of India, and UNESCO. Auroville aspires to become a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and pursue the realization of human unity. Mirra Alfassa founded the city in 1968, at the age of 90 years old. Mirra Alfassa embodies the qualities and success factors that have directly contributed to my own belief that I can achieve anything as long as it is the right thing to do. I share the cause of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, to advocate for the unshakable belief and connection to a higher power, unending education and constant progress, the bold pursuit of future realizations, and dedicate myself unceasingly to achieve human unity somewhere on Earth. Inspired by the Mother, I returned to college at age 52 to complete my undergraduate degree in Leadership. After I completed my Bachelor of Science degree, I was accepted into a doctoral program and travelled to India three times for research, and to present a paper I wrote entitled "Nation Soul Discovery," that was published there. In 2019, I completed my doctoral degree in Education for Leadership and Change with a concentration in Somatics, Phenomenology, and Communicative Leadership from Fielding Graduate University.

Soon after graduating from Fielding, I started a coaching and advisory practice based upon my doctoral dissertation, entitled "A First-Person Phenomenologically Informed Case Study in Life-Coaching Client Abuse." If this title sounds completely random based upon my interests: it is. My dissertation concept started out as a study of spiritual coaching as a socio-cultural support for self-actualizing people. In a nutshell, I wanted the experience of a living, breathing, spiritual guru in my life and wanted to study and share the experience with the world. My professors objected. I argued that spiritual coaches, trainers, speakers, and sages portray themselves in this way, and should be studied. My study was approved. Based on the title of my dissertation, you can guess what happened. Ultimately, the Universe had delivered the experience I needed to heal from the trauma and abuse I experienced in childhood.

I formed Forerunner Coaching Advisory Group, LLC., to help personal clients and coaches navigate coaching relationships and outcomes together, and to help both coaches and clients avoid unhealthy and abusive relationships. The coaching industry is an unregulated industry, which means loss, damages, and restitution cases are impossible to prove unless the coach or client breaks a criminal law. No protections

exist for coaches or clients to protect them from harm under any federal civil statutes.

As fate would have it, as soon as I launched Forerunner, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Forerunner's business model is predicated on the needs created by the exponential growth of the industry. The pandemic immediately changed the trajectory of the coaching marketplace. In response, I put my plans to aggressively market Forerunner temporarily on hold. Doing thus, opened enough free time to reflect on life, reassess my priorities, and return to the transformative experience of writing. My current project is called, In a Perfect World. The project includes a three book series and the introduction of a strategic, transformative self-development system and smartphone app called the Vitality Modality™. In a Perfect World is a roadmap for 21st century men to self-assess, self-instruct and self-direct lives of abundance, reach, and impact. The book and system are designed to strengthen their existing sense of deep interconnectedness with self, others, community, and higher power. The net effect is a consciously evolving humanity that transcends the precarious reality of the 21st century and boldly manifests the divine presence embodied in humanity itself.

As challenging as the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest occurring here and abroad has been, I feel blessed to have been given the time and opportunity to share the knowledge I have co-created with the Master Creator for the good of humanity. The isolation that the pandemic has created has been cathartic for me. In the months since the beginning of 2020, I have been pulled by a strong desire to find home. Having moved from place to place my entire life, I have never considered any place home other than Caribou. On a whim, I called the city of Caribou Tax Assessor office, to search for that little house on the Powers Road with the vast expanse of land that I now know is really only 3 acres! Turns out the house is still there and was recently renovated. Looks like I have a new dream now; I have finally found a way to light my way home. When I arrive, my smile will shine brightly with that beautiful Northeastern sunrise that I love and remember so well.

ABOUT DR. ELLEMA ALBERT NEAL

Dr. Ellema Albert Neal is President of start-up Forerunner Coaching Advisory Group. Forerunner represents coaches, clients, and advocates for the coaching industry by objectively guiding the client/coach engagement lifecycle. Forerunner specializes in personal touch matching and advisory services offered with education, tools, and resources.

Dr. Neal is an internationally published scholar-practitioner, author, speaker and coach. She has been a community leader, transformational minister, elected local official, and local energy committee designee. She plans to gradually sunset a 40-year career as an information technology professional and business integration leader to pursue her lifelong dreams.

Her latest project is the launch of a new book series, In a Perfect World, and the DivineKind™, Vitality Modality™ systems. Dr. Neal plans to utilize Forerunner's transpersonal, leadership, and transitional coaching

and education footprint to strengthen and embolden the truth consciousness in men. Dr. Neal's professional life as a woman in male dominated industries who worked closely with admired men, leaders, and mentors, uniquely qualifies her to support men in their efforts to self-actualize and embrace a truer divine masculine within.

Her published works include Discovering the Nation's Soul, Paradise Trees: On Earth as in Heaven, and the ELCA film, Mission Partnerships in New England. She is an engaging presenter and public speaker, who has presented at the BIMTECH International Conference on Management Cases, Global Minded Educational Conference, and the Aurovilian All USA Meeting (AUM).

Dr. Ellema Albert Neal holds a Doctor of Education in Leadership for Change degree from Fielding Graduate University with a concentration in Phenomenology, Somatics, and Communicative Leadership Practice. Her dissertation, A Phenomenological Case Study in Coaching Client Abuse was the impetus for creating the Forerunner Coaching Advisory Group. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Leadership from Union Institute & University, a Computer Programming & Systems Analyst Certification & Degree from the Computer Learning Center in Philadelphia, PA.

Books that changed my life:

1. The Story of Ping by Marjorie Flack and Kurt Weise
2. The Book of Wisdom (Douay–Rheims Bible)
3. Scarlett Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne
4. In Cold Blood, Truman Capote
5. Animal Farm and 1984, George Orwell
6. Tale of Two Cities, Charles Dickens
7. The Synthesis of Yoga, Sri Aurobindo
8. The Alchemist, Paulo Coelho
9. Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future, Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, Flowers
10. Birth of the Charordic Age, Dee Hock

MOVIES that Inspire Me:

1. Messiah (2020)
2. Bruce Lee: Enter the Dragon; Return of the Dragon
3. Star Wars Series
4. The Last of the Mohicans
5. Mulan
6. Papillon

SONGS that Inspire Me:

1. Here Comes the Sun, George Harrison
2. My Sweet Lord, George Harrison
3. Your Song, Elton John
4. One, Mary J Blige and U2 featuring Bono
5. I've been Searching, Chicago
6. Extra Mile, Laura Pausini

QUOTE I LIVE BY:

Only one thing is absolutely indispensable: the will to discover and to realize. This discovery and realization should be the primary preoccupation of our being, the pearl of great price which we must acquire at any cost. Whatever you do, whatever your occupations and activities, the will to find the truth of your being and to unite with it must be always living and present behind all that you do, all that you feel, all that you think.

Mirra Alfassa, the Mother from the Science of Living



Lesley Nicole, Author, Speaker, Entrepreneur, Founder of Just One Can

SMILES PICK YOU UP

BY LESLEY NICOLE

Where are you right now? How do you feel about where you are? Are you smiling? I hope you are. If you have had times when you didn't feel like smiling please know that I have been right there with you feeling the same way and many times. The wonderful news I offer you today are the ways I found to bring not only the smile back after intense and dynamic adversity; also the joy in my heart that brings the shine into my smile and how you can too.

I have been an entrepreneur for over 25 years owning companies in several industries and as an operational process/programs analyst, trainer, facilitator and advisor for many of those years in corporate, educational institutions and for families. Even though successful in those arenas, I have suffered many setbacks in my life. Growing up my parents adopted me at birth in Wichita Kansas. They had adopted my brother 3 years earlier. Soon after we moved to Tulsa Oklahoma, where I grew up and

“Smile more often to yourself and others,
you'll both feel happier!”

went to school then onto to Oklahoma State University. There are plenty of great memories of my childhood though it wasn't always easy for me as a kid. My mother immigrated from Ecuador and became a US citizen. My father was of German descendants and grew up near the twin cities in Minnesota. With my parents having polarized cultures in which they grew up and then all of us being in the middle of the heartland of the United States there was a lot of opposing parenting and cultural styles clashing. Those were some of the internal struggles. Physically each member of my own family unit looked completely different from one another. My parents are blending their two cultures and then adopting two different cultures as well. I'm from Scotch-Irish descendants.

I was bullied intensely for my entire 1st through 12th grades, starting in 2nd grade especially from the girls on my cheer squads and sport teammates. The reasons are many and most of you know who may have been bullied or who were the bully know that it usually was due to being in some way shape or form seen as different. Up until spring break of my sophomore year my only way of dealing with it was to just keep on trying to be a people pleaser and hope each night as I laid in bed I could find a way in the morning that would make them stop or at best just be kind to me. Each morning I would rise and say, "Maybe

if I do this...or that... they will stop." With a new lease in perspective I went to school. Eventually, starting in 7th grade, I had 2 friends who took the time to get to know me and stop listening to the gossip stories. We all remained friends even after high school and we went our separate ways for university. I learned not all my ideas worked. Though what I did realize one night when we were all at a slumber party together that it only takes one and perseverance!

Then it happened, I'm on spring break during my sophomore year with my cousins. We were 16 year olds in a car at a stop sign in Wichita Kansas. We stopped. We look both ways. Then we proceed. As we crossed into the middle of the intersection a car came over a slight hill going 89 miles an hour. A silver Toyota Celica slammed into the car's passenger side door where I was sitting. Several injuries including multiple broken bones in my back, chipped jaw, and bruised and cracked ribs, and brain concussion. I was out of school for one year. The doctors said I wouldn't walk again, if I somehow could walk again by some miracle, it would always be with a severe limp and hunched over. Then weeks of being in the hospital and months more ahead of me, I demanded my parents bring me home, which of course was against medical advice. Even at 16, I would not take no for an answer! I made the decision I was unwilling

to accept the doctor's prognosis and determined to rehabilitate myself and did so over the course of 1 year. The key lesson I learned was how I made a decision of what I was willing to accept and what was totally non-negotiable or acceptable. I was willing to accept to live in pain the rest of my life if need be. It was completely non-negotiable or acceptable that I would not walk, run, jump or dance again in my life. The circumstances and people around me showed me all the 'evidence' that what I was pursuing was impossible. I was even told that it was impossible, many times and for several years. I would put my mental blinders and earmuffs on and continued to get up as best I could.

Months passed. Progress was slow. My mother had to travel abroad for business and was gone for several weeks. When she left I still could not walk unassisted. While she was away I made significant progress. Not knowing if I would relapse as I had before I asked by dad not to mention it over their phone calls. You know, not to get her hopes up, just in case. By the time the day came from my mother to return home I was able to walk very short distances unassisted. As my mother exited the car in our driveway, I emerged from the front door and walked onto the porch. The smile on my mother's face and tears streaming down it, as were mine, is priceless to me. I can remember her smile and the

joy I had for enduring all the pain it took to get to this moment was so worth it - for BOTH of us!

And I did eventually walk, run, jump and dance again! I also learned the power of a smile. I would sit in front of a mirror for at least two minutes with a smile on my face. Despite any pain, I was committed to, regardless of my circumstances to have a smile to the best of my ability. Many a day it even made me laugh at myself. Try it! It's fun and teaches you a lot about yourself.

During my personal rehabilitation I was assigned a 'homebound' teacher. Who did they pick? The teacher I had that I least liked! Mrs. Green. She never smiled. At first, I was furious. All I was already going through and then having to deal with Mrs. Green. However, Mrs. Green came to our home with a smile on her face. She showed me warmth, compassion, patience and kindness of which I had never seen her display in the classroom. She taught me not only, "not judge a book by it's cover", she taught me even if you think you know someone you do not really know them until you spend some time with them and are open to other possibilities. Remember, you can never know what is going on in a person's life until you have lived it. To this day, Mrs. Green is my favorite teacher of all!

By going through my trials and joys in life and as I examined who and how I was being in each situation, I discovered some of my inherent gifts, talents and abilities. One of them is my being empathetic. I can step easily into another person's shoes. When we do this we are able to understand what that person is going through and offer a personalized approach. Compassion, for myself and others, is one critical driver to understanding a person's needs to bring a smile back into their eyes. These are some of qualities and characteristics I bring to my clients to bring more joy into their lives and smile more often. And you can learn these too, plus your other unique gifts, talents and abilities to let your light shine through.

I also have brought the lessons learned when I was younger with me and apply them in my daily work and family life. Work and family dynamics are very similar. Most people are unable to see the correlations. This is why I work with both corporations or organizations and families. My motto, "Happy Home Happy Life. Happy Work Happy Home". I remember when the motto for the professional world was, "Leave your personal life at the door." That's impossible. What is possible for each of us to realize we are all in this together. My mission is to bring that message. Through my speaking, facilitating, or advising I

seek understanding. Deep rooted understanding, brings clarity out of chaos.

When I am speaking on stage, either keynote or teaching the most important part I desire for them to experience is inspiration! I am not seeking to motivate them. I am seeking to inspire them. Motivation lasts a moment or two. Inspiration can be for a lifetime on a mission to make their life and the lives of others around them to be better. We all have fears at times. The point is not to be fearless... it is to fear less. When you fear less, just a bit, it can make you walk right into that fear and find what lies on the other side and the knowledge you faced it. These are the skills I teach to bring about lasting change and more joy into the lives of others. Joy. Now that is another great one to talk about. Why do some people deny themselves joy? It's true. Many do. This is another reason I am constantly, in every way I can, contributing to a positive shift in people's lives to learn new ways to open up to the possibilities for the wonderful moments and experiences we each can have.

It's been very interesting during my career life, clients have come to me over the years and for various stated reasons. What I have found is the reasons they believe they are seeking my assistance, guidance or

facilitator services usually ends up not being the foundational issues to be addressed at all. This is a marvelous and enlightening process for all the parties involved, including me.

Having guided and facilitated major corporations and organizations, even families by applying many of the lessons of perseverance, tenacity, determination and the willingness to always get up through moments of disruption in their dynamics whether it be change management, interpersonal relationships or efficiencies or effectiveness hasn't always been easy. It has always been rewarding though! Because I am being authentic in everything I do, by honoring guidance of my inner self, while respecting and open to myself and others. And by having gratitude, kindness, acceptance, forgiveness, love and joy this message is 'heard' by others I work with. They too connect to those attributes to find in themselves and then in others as well. It's a beautiful thing to see individuals who were once 'arch' enemies have realizations and misunderstandings cleared up how an important relationship can be brought into understanding and appreciation. This dynamic happened at more than one organization. One in particular was International. Once they were back on the "same team", sales and revenue skyrocketed where once before they were on the brink of collapse right before

I arrived. Even more rewarding was seeing the camaraderie between all the members rise up and thus new membership to the organization rose 200% in a single year. All because of the new confidence in the leadership teams ability to work together.

So it has been and will continue to be my mission to continually grow myself personally and facilitate the expansion of individual's awareness of the potential they have and to provide support, guidance with heart centered caring.

Now that I have been living a life of purpose of being joyful~ full of love, kindness, gratitude and compassion for everyone I meet; I feel the fulfillment of a life continuing to be well lived.

Over the years, I wondered why I was so joyful and not so much so other times; always though remembering the power of smile. When I am with people they say kindly, "You smile at everyone." And I do. So here's the cycle. It makes me happy. Then when they smile back it makes me more happy. Then I know I made us both happy.

Smiles help! Give them often and you'll both feel better.

ABOUT LESLEY NICOLE

Lesley Nicole is a successful entrepreneur, author, speaker, trainer, teacher and business consultant for over 25 years. She had owned companies in several industries such as; real estate, staffing, advertising. For many of those years she was a trusted advisor for corporate process, facilitator, and sales trainer as well as for educational institutions and families. She seeks to gain deep understanding within complex dynamics to create clarity from chaos and bring joy back to work environments and home environments. Even though successful in those arenas, Lesley Nicole has suffered many setbacks in her life. During her school years, she was frequently bullied. At 16, she was in a horrible car accident where she suffered multiple broken bones and a brain concussion. Told she wouldn't walk again by several doctors. Lesley made the decision she was unwilling to accept the doctor's prognosis and was determined to rehabilitate herself and did so over the course of 1 year. Today, many years later she has no lasting effects and has even won dance competitions. Then breast cancer, at 19 years old, started appearing. By age 36, both breasts had to be removed and reconstructed. This happened while raising four small children and

running her company from her home office which was then located in a recliner.

Bouncing back and her determination to always get up – *the title of her upcoming book* – hasn't always been easy though Lesley Nicole has shared with us along the way of how to bring joy and meaning into each moment no matter what life brings our way.

Books That Changed My Life:

The Success System that Never Fails, W. Clement Stone, Parenting with Love and Logic, Jim Fay and Dr. Foster Cline, Encouragement Changes Things, John C. Maxwell

Movie That Inspired Me:

The Matrix

Song That Inspire Me:

We are the World.

Quotes You Live By:

"To laugh often, and much, to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children, to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure

the betrayal of fals friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a it better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

"As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him...

We need not wait to see what others do."

– Gandhi actually said. (more commonly adapted to: "Be the change you wish to see in the world.")



Dr. James A. Omps
President, International University of Entrepreneurology

“Some smiles say ... we’re going to be friends.
Other smiles say ... we’re going to be friends
for the rest of our lives.”

SMILE ENTREPRENEURLOGICALLY ... YOU’LL FEEL THE DIFFERENCE.

BY JAMES A. OMPS, PHD

My passion is and will always be ... to be a musician. It was not necessarily to be my legacy, however, but music is the essence of life, making every day worth living. As John C. Reilly sang in “BEAUTIFUL RIDE” a song from his 2007 movie WALK HARD ... a parody of the 2005 movie WALK THE LINE ... “play a little music every day ‘til I die” because music gives me purpose and makes me smile!

In the quiet midnight hour of February 8, 1944, Doctor Tobias brought me into the world in the back bedroom of my paternal grandparent’s

house in the very small town of Hancock, Maryland. Having performed that task successfully, he was making his way back home at approximately 1:15 A.M. when he saw a fire in one of the row shops on main street, turning in the alarm to the local volunteer fire department. The fire destroyed 3 of those shops that night, one of which was a radio repair shop where my mother's radio had been taken to have a tube replaced. It was the largest fire in Hancock's history and I have often wondered if perhaps it was a sign of some sort. Was I born to be a beacon of light in the darkness? Maybe ... yeah ... maybe?

Over the years that followed, things have taken numerous twists and turns, some good, others maybe not so much. I don't think I've ever lived an average or normal life but rather a life that as always been and continues to be an adventure. It was certainly influenced by my father ... an extraordinary man who was truly an entrepreneur ahead of his time.

My focus as a young man trying to find himself was to balance my increasing interest in music with the fact that it seemed I was always being uprooted and moved to accommodate my father's need to find himself ... a journey from employee to entrepreneur to academician to entrepreneur to visioner!

I was the 2nd of 6 children, surrounded by 4 sisters and my baby brother (he and I separated by 11 years). It seems that my parents regularly packed us up and headed out to find new panoramas in places like Maryland, West Virginia, Utah, Pennsylvania, Virginia, California and then ... on to Pakistan, India and finally Hawaii. Growing pains were commonplace in my world as I experienced life in different communities across, and outside of, the USA. Looking back, it was an amazing opportunity to understand various cultural anomalies ... to learn first-hand how people lived in different regions and cultural environments.

In my 17th year, our relocation to the West Coast took us to Southern California wherein I experienced an amazing, life-changing epiphany. I was in heaven! I was born again! I HAD COME HOME! Within weeks of understanding that I was and had always been a California boy ... I had formed a folk music trio and was performing in hootenannies (look it up) across the San Gabriel Valley. Taking full advantage of the fascination with folk music, I dusted off the electric guitar that dad bought for me at a used furniture/pawn shop auction he and my grandfather frequented in Washington D.C. I mean, with groups like Ronny and the Daytonas, The Challengers, Jan and Dean and The Beachboys heating up, I would have had to be brain dead not to see

what was on the immediate horizon. Yes sir ... I was and had always been a CALIFORNIA BOY!

There is no doubt that the year I spent in California in ('61-'62) developed my vision of the future. It also shaped my greatest challenge ... one that would affect me for years to come. You see, dad wasn't all that crazy about my desire to be a musician although he did respect my musical abilities and aptitude. He would allow me to follow my dream so long as I helped him realize his. It was a trade-off I gladly accepted. In the years ahead there would be other dads ... various other individuals willing to allow me to chase my dream as long as I didn't adversely impact theirs. I learned to play the game because it was necessary. The end result? I became very good at playing the game.

Because I did not want to leave Southern California, my life took the first really interesting turn when dad was awarded a contract through USAID resulting in a stunning 2-year sojourn for our whole family to Karachi, Pakistan. His job was to establish the College of Business for the University of Karachi.

Rather than continuing to live the dream in SoCal, I became my father's

PA spending 5 to 6 hours a day deciphering his hand-written scrolls (literally ... hand-written pages glued end-to-end with rubber cement into scrolls) and cutting Gestetner Mimeograph stencils to be used in the creation of the very first accounting text book for the new College of Business, University of Karachi. I knew that if I did that without complaint, I would be free to walk my musical path unconstrained. It was a win/win for Dr. James R. Omps and the future Dr. James A. Omps – Professional Musician.

Now get this: I had to travel from Los Angeles, California to Karachi, Pakistan to find my way into my first rock band. Once there, I spent endless delightful hours playing my guitar. The band ... The D'Fenders ... became the first rock band in that part of the world. Over the course of the next 12+ months, we would entertain crowds at the finest venues in Karachi. Before it was over, we cut a record on the GRAMMAPHONE COMPANY OF PAKISTAN LTD label ... a totally owned subsidiary of PARLOPHONE COMPANY LTD. ... the Beatles Label in the UK. The record we cut was The Twist Theme from Bees Din ... a Pakistani movie. Due to the popularity of the movie, our contribution eventually made it on to the Pakistan All-Time Top Ten ... at least for a few years.

After 2 years of the international life, I journeyed home across Europe - every young man's dream, right? - and came home, ending up in Utah at Brigham Young University where I opted for a more conventional life. I put together a rock band (The Brethren), impressed the girls, got married, dropped out of college and was summarily drafted by the U.S. Army spending the next two years half a world away from home during the Vietnam war. While I did not choose the military life, neither did I run from the obligation. The unit I was assigned to was treated to an all-expenses paid South Seas Cruise aboard the USNS Upshure - a troop ship that dropped our unit at the military port of Naha, Okinawa before continuing the voyage "down south."

Over the course of the following 12+ months, I followed procedure, went where I was told to go and did what I was told to do without question. I asked my Commanding Officer - a mere 2nd Lieutenant - to send me in front of the Promotion Board. My request was denied because my CO "wasn't certain that I would do well." I appealed to the Battalion Sergeant Major who went to the Port Commander (a Lt. Colonel) who allowed me the opportunity to face the Promotions Board. Not only did I pass the board, I was 1st in MOS and 1st on the

board overall. I earned the destination Enlisted Grade Specialist Five, E-5 and I wore my new grade proudly.

With my ETS pending, I was returned to the U.S. where I simultaneously initiated the process to dissolve my marriage ... realizing it was a youthful mistake. While I did regret the marriage, I never regretted my time in the service. On the contrary. It taught me that doing what you are asked to do ... ordered to do ... and doing it to the very best of your ability can have benefits that you may not fully understand immediately ... but you will eventually see the big picture.

Within 6 months of getting out of the military I met and married a Southern California girl from Indonesia and, shortly afterward, set sail for the east coast with my second wife and first-born daughter. Seemingly following in my father's footsteps, my family paid the price for my career opportunities. We moved to Virginia where I became a Metropolitan Police Department officer in Washington D.C. Another lesson - I was determined to be fair and impartial police officer ... the best I could be. It was a challenge and I am proud of what and who I was. What was most challenging, however, was what it took to deal equitably with the city's totally unique culture and environment;

political anomalies, white list and blue list diplomates, the passes awarded congressmen and senators going to-and-from work while congress was in session. The cultures and sub-cultures of the city could be frustrating, but that was also the kinds of things that made it an interesting place to work. Upon leaving the department some 366 days later, I was glad to immerse myself in my family life as I knew it in the 70s ... and to again play a little (and a lot) of MUSIC!

My scholastic achievements took a hit as I pursued my education only to drop out as a new addition to our family made his/her appearance. The upside of the whole education thing was that the GI Bill was a steady revenue stream and it supplemented what I earned as a musician. As I inched forward, I was able, through sheer determination and perseverance, to eventually earn my Bachelor's Degree in Business Management. And to think it only took me 13 years! Not bad for a program that normally takes 3 to 4 years.

I graduated from Shenandoah University on my youngest son's 1st birthday in 1976. Supporting a growing family is probably not something that everyone would like to do, but it is truly a gratifying journey. Music was likely the element that made it all possible because not only

has it always been my passion ... it is also where I can go to unwind ... my sort of decompression chamber if you will.

My life again became the balancing act I had come to know so well. I was once again balancing my life between my passion and my obligation to appear normal to family, in-laws and well-meaning friends. I was company/corporate from 8:00 a.m. to whenever and Jimmie James after dark. I sold eight plus hours of my time 5, 6 and even 7 days a week if I had to, but the countless hours I spent on bands, gigs, road trips and crazy moments would make you smile. I say that because even now, they make me smile – like the time I fell backwards off a 3 foot high stage pulling a speaker column after me, splitting my pants and returning to the stage more than a little sore to the rousing applause of the audience. What's really funny ... I had just performed the song "Psychotic Reaction" by Count Five.

There are also some indelible memories like the time that friend and former bass player, Jim Martin, put together a "surprise recording session" with the musicians who were the Kingston Trio at that time - Bob Shane, George Grove and Roger Gambill – and Larry Ramos, guitarist and vocalist from the Association. We were on a recording session

of song Jim Martin and I wrote titled "Bakersfield Incident." If these names mean nothing to you, it's because you're a lot younger than I!!

Adaptability and an eager sense of responsibility got me through the years and the role of father has been and still is a major plus to my life. I now have 10 grandchildren and two great grandchildren. A legacy indeed. I have been a Pizza Hut manager where I managed a harmonious crew who created happy customers in spite of hold-ups where we were marched to the walk-in cooler at gun point. I have had a sawed-off 12-gauge shotgun shoved in my face as a gunman demanded all the money in the till ... surviving to tell the tale. I became Director of Franchise Operations and later Director of Training and Human Resources Development at Major Video, and went from Trainer to Director of Educational Services for ClientLogic, a multinational outsourcing company and, upon my father's retirement, President of the International University of Entrepreneurology. Life is magical and there's more to come, I'm certain. I met my soulmate Pauline at an international conference in Budapest in November of 2011 ... a conference neither one of us wanted to attend. Magic happens when you least expect it.

Now you see what I have done wherever my journey has taken me. For all that I've done, all I really wanted to be was a professional musician. I am happy to say that I was given the opportunity to share a stage with some amazing musicians over my lifetime, and I was able to experience the thrill of knowing that a room would fill with people who had come to hear what my contemporaries and I were creating. I never got used to that feeling nor did I ever take it for granted.

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For what it's worth, I learned decades ago, what really excites me. At the age of 19, while our family was in Pakistan, a friend (the lead guitarist of the D'Fenders) talked with me as we were preparing to depart Pakistan. He looked at me and said, "No matter what you do in your life from this day on, you will always consider yourself a musician first, and anything else second." Lead guitarist Bill Gardner was right on the money.

I have now been working in the area of education and training for a few decades as well and in the International University of Entrepreneurology (IUE) too. The IUE was established in 1972 in the State of Hawaii by my father, Dr James R. Omps, and two friends/colleagues; Colonel

William (Bill) Long, USAF Retired, and Orrin G. Hatch Esquire who would go on to distinguish himself as a United States Senator from the State of Utah over the ensuing 42 years.

I have been – over the years - blessed to meet, come to know and work with so many intelligent and productive men and women from various parts of the world. Yet, for all those I have met, my mentor was and shall forever be my father. He was a successful entrepreneur and the world's very first entreprenologist. I am proud to say that I am his son.

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Every time I stand in front of a room of program participants or when I sit across from a man or woman wanting to know more about what our institution is and/or does, I am humbled just as I was when I was earning my living as a musician. Why? Because I never know what I might do or say that will resonate with someone in the audience.

My wife and I, while presenting a program over a 6-month period to 35 female entrepreneurs in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2014/15, were caught by surprise during one particular session when the presenter

and a program participant became locked in what appeared to be a verbal “dual to the death.” It became apparent that we had to intervene to break the stalemate if program was to move on. The student was not happy and voiced her opinion to me during the lunch break. I apologized as I explained that it was necessary in fairness to the group as a whole. I left her with some “words of wisdom” the actual words of which I cannot recall.

I was very gratified, however, when some months after the program was over, she saw Pauline and me out somewhere and came over to have a brief chat. During the short reunion, she looked at me and said, “Dr. Jim ... I will always be thankful for the advice you gave that day in class. You made it possible for me to move through what was troubling me. Now I have a successful business and I'm doing what I always wanted to do.” After she left, I talked with Pauline and neither of us could remember what I had imparted to her that day although we both could recall the incident. I have had similar moments since, but this one really stands out.

Another occurrence that I recall was when a young man from class we were working with engaged me in a casual conversation. At one

point I asked him what he wanted to be when he was out of school and pursuing a career. He looked at me and said ... "I want to be you." I was absolutely stunned. You will never remember everything that you put out there ... nor will you know how it impacts someone else. Let me suggest two things: (1) Make it something that you believe, and (2) of greater importance ... Be certain it is positive.

Decades ago, when dad asked me to create the motto for IUE nearly half a century ago, I remember thinking ... "You know, it's funny ... dad brought his knowledge and experience to this venture as did I. When we started imagining where things could go, we took the blinders off."

That what it takes to move forward ... no matter what or who you are ... that's what it takes!

The International University of Entreprenology

**"BRINGING KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE
AND IMAGINATION TOGETHER"**

Books That Changed My Life:

ILLUSIONS by Richard Bach

Movies That Inspired Me:

THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL -
1951 VERSION

Song That Inspire Me:

DESPERADO by Eagles

DRIFT AWAY by Dobie Gray

Your Hero:

DR. JAMES R. OMPS (05/15/1921 - 12/30/2014)
Professor Emeritus, University of Hawaii, Manoa,
Founder of IUE

Quote You Live By:

"Imagination is more important than knowledge."
- Albert Einstein



Cevin Ormond

“The best smile is the best value to your face.”

CHOOSE TO WIN AND KEEP SMILING BY CEVIN ORMOND

A number of years ago while riding in the front seat of a pickup truck between two social workers, my brother and his boss, his boss does what social workers do so well – he starts asking me questions.

After a while of this process he looks at me and says, “You’re the only person I’ve ever met with a background like yours who has not been to prison! Why is that?”

As you can imagine I’m a bit shocked by his question and don’t have much of an answer at the time but, as I think about it later, the answer comes. I made a decision at sixteen that changed the course of my life forever.

You see, while I don't hold the animosity any longer and have no desire to throw anyone under the bus, I have to be honest. I was badly abused in almost every way you can imagine by the one person who should have been my advocate and encourager, my mother. My dad allowed it to happen because he worked much of the time and didn't really see much of it but also because if I was taking the heat of Mom's rage, he was then out of the line of fire. So, he was willing to ignore it and let me deal with it rather than step in and stop it. The world was a different place in the Fifties and Sixties than it is today, so the lack of outside intervention in such things was much more common than it is today.

In fairness, both my parents were raised poorly – especially my mom. Both were young – Mom was nineteen when I was born and Dad was twenty, and my mother was mentally ill. Also, the family grew large very quickly - I am the oldest of ten children – which creates a lot of commotion, etc. in the house to say the least - so that was a factor. Taken into account, I believe it is possible that they were doing the best they knew and were capable of – which is sad because it wasn't very good.

Being the oldest I had considerable responsibility thrust upon me from an early age. I was always responsible for the house and the other kids

when my parents were away. If anything went wrong while they were gone (which it usually did), I would be beaten, verbally abused, and banished to my room because I had failed to prevent it from happening – never mind the fact that it happened all the time when they were there too. The situation was such that even adults were unable to control it, although I was expected to.

With all that going on the only safe places for me were outside and elsewhere. The first significant opportunity to legitimately spend a much longer time away from home came when I was eight and my father stated taking me to work at the butcher shop in the evenings. (That was his trade for over forty years). I started working long and late hours as he trained me in his trade. At nineteen I ran a butcher shop. That is what I was doing when, at age twenty and newly married myself, I “won” the draft lottery – it's the only lottery I have ever “won”!

More on that later but first, back to the pickup truck and the decision I made at sixteen.

So, I'm almost sixteen, the oldest of a large and very dysfunctional family (if you look up dysfunctional family in the dictionary you will probably

see our family picture!). I have virtually no friends, am small for my age, angry and mouthy, and often getting into fights and other kinds of trouble, and I'm (unknowingly) headed in a direction that almost always leads to prison or death (or both). Then my dad gets a contract to run a butcher shop in a small town, American Falls, Idaho, that is about a hundred miles away from the small town where we are living and it dawns on me – nobody knows me there! I can make a fresh start and things can be different for me! I determine that I am going to be different! I am going to be outgoing and friendly! I am going to make lots of friends and do things with people! I am going to do well in school and I am going to be much more popular than I have ever been! I realize that this is my big chance to change my life and I going to do it!

And that's exactly what happens! We move the day after my sixteenth birthday and from day one things are different because I am behaving differently. I'm in the Pep Band at school. I make friends and spend time with them doing things. My grades improve to the point that I graduate with honors. I work in the butcher shop and at a number of part-time jobs. Also, I enter a growth spurt and am soon over six feet tall which stops the physical abuse once my mother realizes that I can easily overpower her, if necessary. Plus, I am rarely home because I am so busy

and involved. My whole life is better than it has ever been before. All because of making one decision and sticking with it! BOOM! Just like that! Amazing!

So, I finally got my answer. The reason I haven't been to prison (at least not yet – there's still time I suppose ☺) is because I learned that I can make a decision, change my behavior, and change my circumstances and my life. Victimhood is a choice – and a very poor choice at that! That one lesson – repeated many times – has made all the difference in my life!

Back to the draft lottery...

I make another decision that changes my life forever – perhaps even saves my life. Instead of letting the draft board complete the process and draft me into either the Army or the Marines, where I will likely be carrying a gun in a rice paddy and dodging bullets (if I'm lucky), I join the US Air Force. They train me in electronics and I become a radio technician. After I am discharged, I go to the University of Washington and, thanks to the GI Bill and a lot of hard work, I graduate cum laude in Electrical Engineering and go to work for Boeing Aerospace designing

part of the Space Shuttle system (you remember the part that never broke? That's the part I designed! 😊)

My graduation present from my ex-wife is a divorce that I don't want for many reasons, not the least of which is that we have four daughters. I decide that I will not marry again, at least for a while, but God, in his wisdom, has other plans and I soon meet and marry my wife, Carol, who has a little boy who I adopt, and we end up having three more boys. That marriage and the decision to stick with it has impacted my life as much or more than anything else. We have now been married over forty years and, along with the eight kids, we now have thirty-one grandchildren – despite the fact that my family of origin was so messed up that I vowed NEVER to have more than two children! Such are the best laid plans of mice and men, I suppose...

When I was twenty-nine, I got a job in Utah and, at age thirty, decided to go to graduate school. I got an Executive MBA from the University of Utah (Dean's List, Highest Honors) when I was thirty-three and immediately quit my job because I had decided to become an entrepreneur.

A sidebar here...

I have not listed all the academic honors and other things to brag but to illustrate a point. Once I make a decision to do something I am "all in". That's a big part of the lesson I learned at sixteen that changed my life forever. It is one of the most important keys to success that I have found over the years. Helping people learn and understand true principles and success keys like that one is a HUGE passion for me!

This small chapter is, of necessity, just the "Cliff Notes" version of my story, the lessons I have learned, my passion, and what I have to offer to help people improve their businesses and all other aspects of their lives. There is much, much more so feel free to buy and read my books and, better yet, to bring me in to speak, mentor, coach, and train you and your people. After all, that's what I have been doing successfully for over thirty years and I am still going strong!

Now back to the story...

I am now thirty-three and an entrepreneur and I'm excited! I work in various executive roles with several start-ups and finally, as the CEO of a company that we start and take to \$6 million in sales (in today's

dollars), I lose a proxy fight and, in one phone call, I lose everything! I am devastated to say the least!

As I scramble around and try to figure out what has happened and what to do next I come to the realization that, while I have excellent technical and management skills, I am not much of a leader and leadership skills are, by far, the most important and valuable of all the skill sets. Given my background, it's no mystery why I don't know much about good leadership skills, so I make another life changing decision that I am going to become a great leader. I don't know what that really entails, I don't know how I am going to do it, but I know that I must. Then, almost immediately, an opportunity appears.

A guy moves into the neighborhood and, while introducing himself at church, mentions that he travels around speaking for a living. I am intrigued so I take him to lunch the next day. He makes an introduction, and the next thing I know I am the only speaker at a three-day seminar in Puerto Rico! Total sink or swim situation! As I do more and more speaking, I read everything I can find on speaking, leadership, and training and then practice something new each day, gradually learning more and more and becoming better and better. I fail, learn from each

failure, and keep moving forward. It is grueling and rewarding at the same time and I discover something about myself. I find nothing more rewarding than seeing the light come on in someone's eyes as they realize not only can they change and improve their own life but now they know what their next step is.

You see, I have discovered that while it's important to know the big picture and where you want to be, the most vital thing to know is the next step. Once I know that next step, I can take it and then look for the step after that and take that one. Then I can look for the following step and take it too. Using that process I can eventually look back and say, "Wow! Look how far I have come!", and then look ahead at the goal and how far I need to go, then search for, discover, and take the next step, the next step, and so on until I eventually reach my goals and dreams. I love the Billy Crystal quote, "I've spent the last twenty years becoming an overnight success!" It's taken me a little longer than Billy but the process has worked and continues to work for me as well.

Another critical thing is I utilize true and proven principles in all that I do. Using true principles is the ONLY way to win long term. There simply is no other way. Because of that, I am fierce about finding and

utilizing true principles in everything I do. Not only am I passionate about this for myself, but I am passionate about helping others do the same thing because I love to see people win long term. In fact, I am so passionate about this that I devoted a large section of my newest book, “The Constitution of a Great Leader – Leadership in the 21st Century” (available from Amazon and from Indigo River Publishing), to the subject of true principles and how to use them.

I have found that improving my leadership is essential for my long-term success and the same thing is true for everyone else. I am also passionate about improving not only my own leadership skills, but helping others to improve theirs. They say that a rising tide raises all ships, so better leadership improves the world for everyone.

I help people become better leaders in several ways. First, I speak to people who know they want and need to become better leaders. The truth is that everyone needs to become a better leader, but many people don't realize that or are not interested for one reason or another. I am always looking to work with those who care and who are motivated. I do keynotes, breakout sessions, workshops, etc. to guide people down the path of continuous improvement.

In this process I work with the “Three C's of Leadership” – Character, Conduct, and Charisma (Kevin with a “C” – Three “C's” – makes sense to me ☺). I use this model to develop a framework for constant improvement (the “Next Step Method” discussed above).

Second, I also take people a step further with a fourth “C” – Credibility. At this level, I help experts (by the way, everyone is an expert at something) to become more recognized and credible by helping them publish a book (usually in a hundred days or less) and by improving their speaking skills (a critical part of the “C” of Charisma).

All of these engagements, tools, and processes are designed to boost another critical “C” for people – Confidence! And who couldn't use more confidence?

The fact is – these things work and they work well! I have helped many people improve their leadership, their skills, and their lives. I have spoken to over 350,000 people at over 4000 live events worldwide with an average quality rating of 9.8 out of 10. Every one of those people walked away with something they could use to take the next step to improve their lives.

I have helped a number of people publish their first book and become best-selling authors. This usually happens in a hundred days or less after they start working with me when they have often been stymied and stuck for years with no real progress. And, several of those people have come back to me to help them with their next book. That's the real litmus test, if someone wants to work with you again.

So, here's the deal...

When you bring me in to speak, you and everyone else in the room will Smile...

When you leave after hearing or working with me you will Smile because you will know your next step...

When you become a better and better leader, you and all your people will Smile...

When you become a published, best-selling author you will Smile...

When you stand up to speak you will Smile and the whole room will

Smile back at you...

When you win, you will Smile...

Finally, at the end of the day you will look in the mirror, be grateful for our friendship, and you will Smile...

Contact me today and let's see what Smiles we can develop...

The Smiles will never end...



Aditya Oza

“A MASTER sees a day as an opportunity in time to create avenues of reality and emotions that are unborn so that the day becomes a fertilization of infinite tomorrows.” – Ramtha

KEEP SMILING, GROWTH HAPPENS!

BY ADITYA OZA

When I was a 14-year-old high school student. I came home to collect a signature from my father for an F I received on a physics test. Staring at the grade, he became visibly upset and started to yell. Not knowing what to do, I remembered what he said to me earlier in the year: “if you do your best and fail still, I will not be upset at you because I know you did your best.” I thought reminding him of his own words would calm him down... I was mistaken. He looked at me and then in a tone of utter exasperation he said, “when you succeed that is when you have done your best.” That statement defined me for life.

I am Indian by origin but American by culture. I am not a doctor, nor a scientist, nor a computer programmer. I am an actor, writer, producer, entrepreneur, and management consultant. I choose to define myself

as such as because it was ingrained from an early age that opportunity must be respected and treasured, and if you are given the chance, you must take it not only for you but the shoulders on whom you are standing on. This belief's origins came from my parents' experience with poverty in India. I had heard stories of hardship such as how my mom- the charming youngest of six children- only had three to four pairs of clothing at a time, how my dad lived with ten family members in a small room, or how my grandparents had five babies and only one surviving to adulthood. My parents made me realize that poverty is not just a lack of financial wealth but also a lack of opportunity and care.

To break this cycle of poverty and to find new fruitful opportunities, my parents decided early on to immigrate to America, and, after eight long years, my parents did exactly that when I was six years old in 1993. At the time, I could not read or write and spoke only broken English which makes learning anything at school or making friends quite difficult. It was this obstacle that would help give rise to one of my earliest passions: acting and movies. I learned the English language and American culture by watching movies and cartoons, and anything else I could get my hands on. I loved film as a medium early on because it was such a great way of showing a culture, learning a

language, understanding societal norms. This experience represented a theme that is true even today for me: When facing a great obstacle or goal, there is also the prospect of tremendous growth, which is worth more than the actual goal itself.

After moving to America, my parents struggled on a variety of levels such as not being able to see their family for years apart, having very little communication with them, moving to a different state every few years, and social isolation, but none affected me more profound than our finances and my dad's job. I saw my dad doing the job of three employees, dealing with unruly bosses, and then not getting compensated properly for it. It put a strain financially as well; things that I wanted oftentimes I couldn't have, we wouldn't travel a whole lot, and being money conscious became a must. Among immigrants, it is quoted that this is often the price you pay for immigrating to a different country; "we all have to pay our dues to society" I once heard a family friend say. The more crucial lesson I learned was to own my business and control my own destiny. For me, it was why my parents came to America: to build that shiny future called the American Dream. Now I was standing on their shoulders so it was my job to reach even higher than them.

To this day, my family is as alien to the thought of doing business as day is from night. My experiences would often come from books, then it was from my early jobs, then mentors started to show then I started taking the risk and jumping in. For ten years, I failed and failed and failed. It didn't make sense at the time and though I hated the process during the time, I can definitely look back on it with greater appreciation of what happened: I was going through the failure learning curve and the failures were representing what not to do more than what to do. Today, if I could go back I would actually tell my younger self to fail faster and more often without looking at anyone else's success. The lesson only became more apparent with my first big breakthrough.

On January 2016, a mobile app game that I was lucky enough to be a part of hit number 1 on the Free App Store and stayed there for 28 days in a row- a record at the time. What was more exciting was the popularity it picked up in the next two years. We would get 250 million downloads in total and it allowed me opportunities that I would dreamed years earlier. It also represented a bit of a problematic question: What next? The answer is where I am today.

I am still creating my acting career through building content that I care

about and partnering with those that are likeminded. Also, I consult other entrepreneurs, artists, start-ups, venture capitalists, and solo-prenuers build their businesses, mitigate their costs, and scale their companies faster. I do not advertise online and only market myself through referrals and strategic partners. I want the experience that anyone has to speak more than any advertisement ever can. It is a level of standard of excellence that I hold myself and my clients because making a big shift requires great work and requires you to be at your personal best. I am certain that it came from what my dad told me that faithful day when I was 14 years old.

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Les Brown had said it best: "Live full, die empty." It is my privilege to be alive and not my right; my form of gratitude is making sure that I leave this world a better place by every means that is readily available to me now or in the future. That is my creed, purpose, and drive. The best way that I can do that is by creating and helping others do the same. Whether it is building a business, consulting a client, or making movies, I love actualizing opportunities that helps elevate people's consciousness and results in win-win-win situations because it makes

me feel that I am living at the highest level of vibration on a daily and continual basis: Love. In my humble opinion, there is no great joy that can happen when you are working with people that there is mutual love, respect, and co-creation happening.

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I find that the deeper purpose of any creation, problem, and inspiration we have or want to create in life is really a symbol for growth; a rebirth in the form of a change in perspective, behavior, and/or identity. There are questions that we are asked and the solution- to paraphrase Einstein- cannot be from the same mind that created the question. I only understood the importance of this recently, but the seed was planted when I was in college in 2008. Whenever handing out an assignment, my computer science professor would always say: “Start early and work often.” The reason was that he knew we would not be able to complete the project because the goal was failure not completion. By forcing us into playing at a higher level than what we thought are capable of, he was helping us learn, do, achieve, and become more. Before learning this lesson, I used to always just take the first solution that came along. The results were mixed but the emotional burden

would often be excruciating when it didn't work. After adhering to my professor's wise words almost 8 years later, I realize that when I am in the process of answering and creating, it is much more important to do what I call a “brain dump!” I create a mind map on paper or on my mac and write down any and all possible ways that I see the solution. Creativity is not linear thinking, it is exponential thinking. By allowing myself this opportunity, I see an abundance of possible solutions from a very emotionally detached state versus picking the first one from a state of desperation.

ABOUT ADITYA OZA

Aditya is an actor, writer, producer, serial entrepreneur, and management consultant. He has helped build a successful mobile app company which accumulated 250 million downloads in two years and is a cofounder of a successful home renovation business which is the one and only business that helps create voice controlled smart homes for owners where they can change the lights, sound, and features based on their moods. Aditya also helps other venture capitalists, funded start-ups, creatives, and entrepreneurs mitigate their costs and scale their businesses.



Barbara Palmer

“A cat may have your tongue,
but a smile can always prevail.”

KEEP SMILING THROUGH THE PAIN

BY BARBARA PALMER

I am an African American woman who grew up in a very dysfunctional household along with my parents and two brothers. I was never nurtured by my parents and did not have a relationship with my mother. I was never told I can do and be anything I wanted to be. Therefore, I had very low self-esteem as a child and young adult. Although I did not grow up in a happy home, I will say that one of the lessons my childhood taught me was to never depend on anyone else. This was a lesson that I found not be true once cancer decided to pay me a visit.

My first cancer journey started one day after my 47th birthday – February 28th, 2003 when I went to the GYN for my annual pap smear. A lump was found in my right breast and a mammogram revealed that it was cancer. I think my first reaction was like most people who are first diagnosed

with cancer – a state of shock and disbelief. I felt as though there was no way the doctor could be talking about me – he must be talking about someone else. I went home that evening feeling a little numb and trying to decide if I would tell anyone and, if so, who and when.

Being diagnosed with an illness that can kill you is devastating enough, but when you are single with no significant other it takes on a whole new dimension. I am, however, very proud of the fact that I never for one minute thought why did this have to happen to me. I realized right away that God was going to use me to help other women through their breast cancer journey and that I would need my sense of humor to help me through the greatest challenge of my life thus far.

My oncologist advised me that with the type of breast cancer I had it was a possibility that it could return, and that if it did, it would return in the same breast. Armed with that information, I chose to have a lumpectomy (removal of the tumor) followed by 8 rounds of chemotherapy that started in May of 2003 and did not end until October 2003. Chemotherapy is the worst thing I had ever experienced in my life and I vowed that if my cancer ever returned I would not select that form of treatment again.

After I completed my chemotherapy treatment I was able to get about a three week break before I had to start my radiation treatment which occurred every day for six and a half weeks. On December 24, 2003, I took my final radiation treatment which was such a bitter sweet moment for me. Sweet because all of my cancer treatments were finally over and bitter because I was really going to miss these wonderful health care professionals who took such great care of me. I sang a farewell song that I had written in their honor and went on my merry way to start a new and improved life!

Almost exactly 8 years later, cancer decided to pay me another visit in 2011. When I received the call and was told my cancer had returned you would have thought I had won a million dollar lottery. I was so stressed at work that all I was thinking was that I was going to get some much needed time off. It is pretty sad when you are shouting for happiness when you have just been told your cancer has returned and all you can think of is that you are now going to be able to get some time off work.

Back in 2003 when I received my first cancer diagnosis and was told that it was a possibility that the cancer could return, I had already made

the decision I would get a double mastectomy if it did. I knew my second breast cancer diagnosis was God's way of saying, "Barbara, I am going to use you even more." Since 2004 I have been assisting women through their breast cancer journey. However, when I met someone who had had a mastectomy or about to have one, I could not identify with the emotions she may be going through because I had not walked in her shoes. So with this re-occurrence of breast cancer, I said "God, because you are going to use me to impact even more women, as a reward, I will be getting some perky breasts, (any size that I want) a tummy tuck and so I might as well get my hammer toes fixed as well so I can really be the woman!"

One day after my surgery, the plastic surgeon walked in the room and said, "Boy, you don't have to worry about tipping over now." I woke up from the surgery 15 pounds lighter. For the first time, I had an opportunity to actually see my stomach and wondered where in the world did it come from? I could not believe how big my stomach was! I really couldn't see it before my surgery because my breasts extended beyond my stomach. I guess other people didn't pay that much attention to my big stomach either because my breasts used to overshadowed it.

After my double mastectomy, I went back to the oncologist I had in 2003 to see what other options would be needed for treatment. He suggested I take chemotherapy again along with another drug that I would have to take intravenously. This drug would be injected into my veins on a weekly basis for 52 weeks which I did not want to do because one of the possible side effects was heart problems. I did not want to risk this side effect, especially since heart problems run in my family and chemotherapy was definitely not an option for me. I then went to get a second opinion and this oncologist put me on a hormonal drug. After walking like an old lady and dealing with joint pains, I stopped the treatment without her knowledge after using it only for one week. Now please listen to me closely, I am by no means telling anyone what to do. This was a very difficult and personal decision that I had to make and it was the right decision for me...that was back in 2011 and in 2020 God is still using me so I guess he ain't through with me yet!

I look at both of my cancer journeys as a blessing and I suggest to others facing this journey to do the same. You don't have to be thankful for cancer, but you should be thankful for the many valuable lessons cancer will teach you.

Cancer has changed my life in so many positive ways. It has shown me how much I am LOVED! My friends and family were such a great support system that it was almost unbelievable. One of the hardest things for me as a very independent woman was to reach out and ask for help even though I really needed it at times. I later realized that people who care about you often feel helpless when a loved one is going through an illness. They feel they need to help you in some way, regardless of how small the task may be so we need to allow them to do that.

Cancer also gave me courage and strength that I didn't know was possible. You never know how strong you are until you don't have a choice. Everyone has been in a storm, about to go through a storm or just came out of a storm and it will always be that way as long as we are here on this earth. We don't always understand why certain things happen to us, but we do need to understand that whatever this storm may be, the journey may not be ours. It may be for someone else...perhaps even someone that you haven't even met yet.

In 2016, I celebrated my 39th work anniversary with the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company (BGE). While sitting at my desk one day in August of that year, I decided I needed to retire. I loved the Company,

my position and my boss, but I knew there was more to life than depending on a paycheck from someone else. I knew to reach my full potential, greatness and purpose, I needed to get out of my own way and step out on faith and not fear. Therefore, I made the decision to leap and retire in 2017 and that is exactly what I did. I became a retiree on April 1, 2017.

I had no idea just how important and how timely this decision would be until I became the primary caregiver to my oldest brother who resided in a nursing home. For several years, my brother and I were estranged because he was never there for me when I battled my cancer journeys and this left me very angry and bitter. I later realized he always saw me as this strong independent woman and the fact that I had an illness, not once but twice, that could kill me, frightened him. Quite often when you are faced with a challenge, loved ones react this way out of fear. I knew in order to move forward with this part of my life with no regrets, I would have to forgive my brother before it was too late. I did not want one of us to die while the other one had to live with the guilt that we never repaired our relationship. When I made the decision to forgive my brother he was in the hospital after having a surgery. I walked in his room and simply said, "I forgive you" and from that day forward I never left his side.

The last 15 months of my brother's life, I was able to be there for him and took tremendous joy in being able to do so. Had I still been working, I would not have been afforded the opportunity to be available for him whenever he needed or wanted me. I got an opportunity to see what a wonderful person my brother was and enjoyed spending time with him in the nursing home and accompanying him to his many doctors' appointments. He got a big kick out of me advocating on his behalf. He would tell me "the staff is scared of you" as he smiled. My brother would constantly tell me how much he appreciated me and that he did not know what he would do without me. The many memories we made up to his death will be forever embedded in my heart and mind. I was there with him when he took his last breath at the hospital on January 23, 2018 at 7:58 pm.

Up until that point, I had been so focused on my brother's needs that I almost lost myself and I realized it was now all about me. My brother was no longer here and needed me, so I asked myself, "What do I want to do now?" Of course, mentoring women through their breast cancer journey is, and will always be, a part of that answer.

In February 2018, I launched two t-shirt lines with matching caps. One line is "Courageous Diva" and the other line is "Dare To Lively Boldly".

I made a conscious decision to make an investment in myself and create a product that envisioned part of my purpose and came up with these two ideas.

I have so much work I must do. I want to impact the world on an international level and leave a wonderful legacy. God gave each of us unique gifts and it is our duty to use them to assist others. We all have a testimony we need to share so we will impact the lives of those who may feel hopeless.

As I travel through this journey called life, God has placed people in my path that have been a blessing to me. On a regular basis I meet both young and older people who are working on or are living their dreams who are so inspirational and encouraging. So why can't I live my dreams as well? Who is stopping me other than me?

I have been told I have been a blessing to others. I have been able to assist others in using laughter as medicine and to look at the bright side of their challenge while coping with a stressful situation. How can I not be happy and let my light shine now that I have boobs that gravity will never defy! The bottom line is, we all are here on borrowed time

and we have no idea when that day and time will run out. Therefore, each of us need to live boldly and follow our dreams...we never know what we can do unless we try. There will be times when we will second guess ourselves and not be successful at our endeavors, but that is a part of learning, growing, developing and getting one step closer to our dreams.

I have no idea what future blessings God will bestow upon me...the possibilities are endless. God knows I would like to start a foundation in honor of my brother who lived in a nursing home and was also a double amputee. I would like to financially assist those like him, in addition, to financially assisting my beautiful sisters who have to go through the cancer journey.

So take my hand... Who better than a two-time cancer survivor who dares to live boldly challenge others to do the same. LET'S LIVE BOLDLY AND UNAPOLOGETICALLY EVEN THOUGH WE MAY BE AFRAID AT TIMES. What's next in each of our lives... there is no limit to what we are capable of achieving, regardless of our age. Remember it is up to each of us to create the life we want. What is stopping you?

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Fortunately, I have always been the type of person who likes to give back to mankind. I started making my contribution to humanity at the age of 16. Nothing gives me more joy than to be able to put a smile on someone's face, especially if they are going through hard times or have had a bad day. My passion is assisting women through their breast cancer journey using laughter. When you are going through a challenge it is important and impactful to have someone by your side who has been through your journey. Nothing excites me more than putting a smile on a woman's face who has lost her hair, hope and/or desire to live. It gives me such joy to make a difference in someone's life and help them understand that getting a cancer diagnosis is not necessarily a bad thing.

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Money is not the only abundance a person can have. I have an abundance of people in my life that are supportive and motivate me when it is hard for me to motivate myself. I create abundance by treating everyone the way I want to be treated. I have the ability to make

people feel comfortable and as a result, they sometimes share personal things with me that they need to get off their chest.

I can be a silly person at times and unfortunately, due to previous cancer treatment, I have a memory problem. Because of that I am funny even when I am not trying to be. You cannot help but laugh at some of the things I do and say and if this can bring a smile to someone's face what greater joy can there be. I think my personality makes people realize that it is OK and sometimes necessary to be able to laugh at yourself.

ABOUT BARBARA PALMER

Barbara Palmer aka "Courageous Diva" is a two-time breast cancer survivor who is a Breast Cancer Awareness Advocate, Spokesperson as well as a Motivational Speaker. She has been teaching, encouraging and inspiring numerous women locally and nationally through their breast cancer journey.

Since the age of 16, Barbara has recognized the importance of serving others. Some of her volunteer efforts include feeding the homeless, volunteering at the Maryland Food Bank, and even volunteering in 2013 at the White House Easter Egg Roll hosted by the 44th elected President of the United States, Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama.

Barbara has an accessories business and an on-line store specifically for breast cancer survivors and their supporters. She also continues to do her passion which is assisting women one-on-one who have recently been diagnosed with breast cancer. Her website is a one-stop resource center for newly diagnosed breast cancer patients. Her resources include everything from emotional and financial assistance to how to get free wigs, scarves and retreats.

<https://courageousdiva2011.com/>

Barbara also facilitates a monthly women's group at a Senior Center which she calls "Courageous Diva's Circle of Hope and Inspiration." She believes we all need to share our testimonies to encourage and inspire those who may be broken and feel hopeless. Your story may be the next person's survival guide.

Earlier last year she became certified as a Laughter Yoga Leader. (Laughter Yoga is a group exercise with the concept that you can laugh for no reason at all and it is combined with deep breathing and meditation). This training has assisted Barbara in being more effective in spreading her light and joy to the world.

Barbara is excited to be a part of Ken Rochon's "Keep Smiling Movement." She is also a co-author in the Anthology, "From Trials to Triumphs" and most recently is a co-author in the book, "You're Never Too Old". Each of the authors in this book is over 40 years of age.

Barbara gets her greatest joy from inspiring, encouraging and giving hope to others while putting a smile on their face. She looks forward to future opportunities which will allow her to LIVE BOLDLY and dares each of you to live boldly as well.

Book that changed your life:

Jump...Take The Leap Of Faith To Achieve Your Life Of Abundance By Steve Harvey

Movie that inspire you:

The Pursuit Of Happiness

Song that inspires you:

Ain't No Stopping Us Now By D Train

Your Hero:

All those who have a dream and get knocked down by challenges and keep getting back up to fight...all those who never give up regardless of how bleak the circumstances look

Quote you live by:

You are never too old.



Andrea Partee

Having a heart of gratitude, makes me SMILE

KEEP SMILING WITH SERVICE

BY ANDREA PARTEE

It is truly a blessing to put pen to paper and share, matters of my heart. I must acknowledge the wonderful teacher, guider, protector, who has been a part of my life since the day I was first formed. Thank you Lord for being my first Father. No matter where I started and where I've traveled, you have been omnipresent in my life!

For many years, several friends have gently nudged me, about writing a book. My response generally resulted in a gentle laugh, followed by, "When would I have time to do that?" To my surprise and dismay, our world is dealing with one of the most horrific attacks on mankind. So, our lives have come to a screeching halt, with no time to plan for such a crisis. In my solitude, I've had time to reflect upon many things. Do I have answers to things that are unfolding, due to COVID19? NO!

However, we must take this time to reflect, become mentally, physically and spiritually stronger and serve one another! An unexpected offer was extended to me by Ken Rochon, Jr., to consider becoming a part of the “Keep Smiling Movement”. I would capture smiles and quotes from various people and embed them into a book that Ken and I would create. I thought, “how fun to share a bit of my heart and capture winning smiles and quotes!” Decision made; done deal!

If you're ever blessed with the opportunity to meet Ken, you will immediately note some of the following... Ken is kind, tender, high energy, well traveled, a giver, LOVES his family, is energized by humans & nature and loves to smile. Ken, I am grateful for this collaboration and your tireless efforts to generate positivity and keeping alive, the simple act of smiling!

I'm also grateful for my humble beginnings. I was raised in a household consisting of two parents and three siblings. My parents laid a wonderful foundation and imparted verbal and non verbal examples of being good citizens and people of good character. My dad was the provider (in the traditional sense). He demonstrated an outstanding work ethic and lived a life of serving others. As a child, I witnessed his desire to serve my mother. Even though he worked outside of the

home, my father was an active team player, in the home! He was a tailor, our personal chef and so much more. My mother was a homemaker. What a blessing it was to have her at home, to nurture and guide us from our waking moments, until our precious good nights. She was our first teacher. Mom seized opportunities to teach us about self respect, good character, kindness, advocacy, justice and living with purpose. We also witnessed her desire to honor and serve our father. Both parents exemplified the power of service and team work.

Some may wonder why I chose to write about service, the human spirit and the importance of giving back. In the pages that follow, I will provide examples of my personal journey of service. I will also share brief stories of others who demonstrate service and humanity, in their own special way.

My elementary acts of service started in the home. I truly enjoyed serving my mother, by assisting her with as many household chores as possible. We spent many hours in the kitchen. During that time, there were always “life lesson discussions”. The lessons ranged from how to prepare certain meals, friendship, marriage, the power of words, commitment to family and the importance of serving our fellow man. I was a very inquisitive child. Therefore, our discussions were rarely brief.

Inside the home, I became the family baker. Each weekend, I baked a cake for my immediate family. Outside the home, I volunteered my time sitting with a family friend's aging mother. Unofficially, I became her daytime companion, when her family needed periods of respite. Looking back, serving my family and elder friend was a segway into future acts of service.

Fast forward... I earned a degree in business management. Upon graduation, I was offered an opportunity to work in the insurance industry. I spent 16 years of adjusting insurance claims and acted in the capacity of a claims supervisor. I realize that the insurance industry can be misunderstood and seen as self-serving and complicated. However, I was blessed to work for two reputable/outstanding companies. During my tenure, I truly saw it as an opportunity to provide outstanding service to individuals, whether they were our insured or the claimant. Our approach was "do unto others, as you would have them do unto you". So, my teams and I endeavored to process workers compensation, auto and homeowners claims, timely-fairly-equitably.

I later transitioned into family life which netted a husband, four children, two dogs and a geco. Needless to say, life was beautiful, fulfilling

and we served one another. Once the children were of school age, I utilized the day time hours to be of service in my community. So, my time was spent actively volunteering at church and two other organizations that are near and dear to my heart.

I served as a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) for five years and later became a board member. There are so many opportunities for us to serve and lend a hand... lend a heart! If you're curious about CASA, visit their website and learn about the organization and opportunities to assist children who have been neglected and/or abused. www.nationalcasagal.org

I also volunteered for the Salvation Army for six years. You may be familiar with their motto: "Doing The Most Good". How wonderful it was to work with other volunteers on projects such as: "The Angel Tree program" / Pantry Closet / Comfort Bags For The Homeless/ Back To School Initiatives / Fundraising Events and of course, ringing the bell and accepting donations in the bright red kettle. Wow! Unforgettable experiences! To learn more about how you may lend a hand and "Do The Most Good", visit www.salvationarmyusa.org

So, enough about me and my days of service. I'd like to share brief stories and highlight examples of humanitarians who have demonstrated tremendous acts of service.

SAM

A husband, father, author, retired business executive, a friend to the masses and the BEST mentor one could hope for. Sam has never met a stranger! He has the gift of connecting people and making all of us feel like we have value and purpose. He's an encourager, who utilizes his resources to send folks pages of motivational quotes, a pertinent book or a card that reads, "Thank you for your service". Sam, we salute you!

WILBERT & SHEILA

Hats off to this couple, who consistently makes a difference in the lives of others. Wilbert is a gifted musician, a family man and one who enjoys pouring into our youth. He leads a ministry that is committed to feeding the spiritual souls of many. Sheila has a thriving counseling practice. She is a keen listener and has a discerning spirit. She and her staff endeavor to restore and facilitate healing to those that need

psychological support. Even now, they are meeting the needs of people who may be suffering from anxiety and depression, due to the COVID 19 crisis.

WALTER aka "JUNIOR"

He is the epitome of service! Walter served his country, via The U.S. Military, his outstanding culinary skills were noted while serving as a chef and merchant seaman for many years, and post retirement, he faithfully served his pastor and church family. Walter and his wife, Ann, opened their beautiful home to several family members who were widowed, elderly and/or ill. Those family members did not lack anything! All of their needs were met! Walter and Ann amplified what it means to "give back".

IN UNITY MINISTRIES aka "IUM"

The power of vision! Pastor Bailey, Sister Janice and Sister Horn are the founders of "IUM". They, along with a team of other prayer warriors, have been facilitating a live prayer call, Monday - Friday evenings. The ministry leaders recognize the need for and the power of prayer.

They have been interceding on behalf of hundreds of people for over a decade and continuing.

CHARLENE

I desire to highlight the accomplishments of Charlene, as she has made a tremendous impact on her family and in business. Before she became a mother, Charlene suddenly inherited nieces and nephews, due to the death of her sister. Without hesitation, she provided a loving home for them. Fast forward, thirty years later, she remains a faithful and giving aunt! I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge her outstanding entrepreneurial skills. She's been in business for more than two decades. Many would describe her as a visionary, creative thinker and one who has sound business practices. I'd say, "she's a mover & a shaker". When Charlene is not working and serving her family, she is giving of her time to church and mentoring others. Check her out...

www.cngpetroleum.com / www.creativeic.com

STEPHEN & MARSHA

They truly have hearts of compassion! I have first hand knowledge of how they invested love, time and care of a young boy, who lost his father. Their involvement was not intermittent! It has been a decade of unselfish acts of love. It's a beautiful thing to watch a friendship blossom into a relationship that says, "you ARE family!" We must never underestimate the power that we have as human beings, to positively impact a life. Stephen and Marsha, you are true humanitarians!

"THE ROLAND SISTERS"

These ladies are in a class by themselves! They are creative, classy and compassionate. Whether they are whipping up culinary delights or utilizing their creative skills to produce unusual crafts and masks for those impacted by COVID19, it's always done with a spirit of excellence. One of their most memorable acts of service occurred in December 2017. They adopted a family whose mother succumbed to cancer. "The Roland Sisters" prepared a feast for the family. If the event were live streamed, one would have thought that they prepared a meal for kings and queens. Hats off to "The Roland Sisters".

“TEAM SABRINA”

What a beautiful term of endearment! From spring 2016 through January 2017, Calvary Baptist Church (Woodbridge, VA) saw a need and immediately filled it! One of their church members was stricken with cancer. At the time of diagnosis, Sabrina worked part time, had a few children still at home and lacked health insurance. The pastor, elders and church members “jumped to action”. They knew that Sabrina’s chemo treatments were administered at a hospital, two hours away. The church family organized a team of volunteers, who transported Sabrina, to/fro her treatments. Members prepared meals for her family and others attended her childrens’ choral and sporting events. WOW! Service at its best and perfect examples of good samaritans, teamwork and synergistic love. Thank you, Calvary Baptist Church!

Perhaps, one of the quotes, winning smiles and/or excerpts of stories relayed, will nudge you, someone in your community or inner circle to “lend a hand”; “lend a heart”.

Life is precious and short. May we all find ways to exercise the power of contribution.

Here’s wishing you peace and many blessings. Stay healthy and KEEP SMILING!



Dr. Karen Renae Perkins

“The best smile is the best value to your face.”

THE VALUE OF ONE SMILE

BY DR. KAREN RENAE PERKINS

For over 30 years, I've traveled the world speaking and coaching people on being their better self, engaging in positivity, and reacting to others a manner that gives value and validity to each person.

In early 2002 I was hired for was to help an organization improve their working environment.

Their workshop will always stand out in my mind. We had just reviewed and practiced some Instant Calming Sequences (ICS) and I was moving onto the emotional, scientific and healing powers of laughter.

Quite often there's one obnoxious employee who either covertly or overtly tries to sabotage these events. This day was no different.

This activity had partners smile at each other for two minutes. As fate would have it, the perpetually happy employee and the havoc creator were paired. The negative man refused to smile. Unintimidated, the positive man remained steadfast and smiled sincerely the entire activity.

The activity unnerved the negative man and he stormed off. His partner smiled at me with a single nod of understanding.

The group discussed their feelings on the activity. Some were extremely uncomfortable, others brought to tears for some unknown reason. Most felt the smiling made them feel a deeper kindness towards the others.

I asked for their reaction to the team with the person who refused to smile. One of man nearly shouted, as he pointed at the man who smiled, "Not surprised he smiled. He always smiles and is nice to everyone." The group nodded in unison. "His happiness makes this place bearable."

When they shared their reaction to the man who refused to smile, well you can imagine the responses were not as positive. It did however, provide a great object lesson.

To refocus the group, I asked the positive man about his experience. His response was profound.

He stated something along the lines of, "Smiling is key for remembering that no matter what is happening in life, I can create happiness if I choose. If I stand tall and smile, it will always spread from my face, to my mind, to my heart. I also know that a single smile may mean the difference between life or death for the person receiving that smile. I believe it is my obligation, no privilege, to smile for myself and for others."

As we reflected on his words, I asked what had led him to this belief.

He stood tall, his smile radiated, and he simply stated. "Because a single smile saved my Mother who in turn saved me."

I asked if he would care to expound. He said it was a long story but in short, it was a single smile from a stranger that gave his mother the courage she needed when faced with a life or death decision. Because of that, her personal mission was to smile at everyone she saw, even those who glared. Her smile was the most beautiful example of pure love.

The experience from that day reminded me of things I have known and practiced for a very long time but hadn't thought about consciously in some time. For over 30 years, I had purposely smiled and watched as that smile was reflected in others' faces. I know that subconsciously the first reaction the mind and body have when seeing someone smile is to smile back. This starts a mental, physical and emotional chain reaction.

There's an entire science behind smiling. Studies show that smiling and laughter produce endorphins that relieve and mask pain. Smiling assists in molecular healing, lowers stress, lowers blood pressure, improves the immune system and has a positive effect on our overall happiness and physical health. Studies also revealed when facing stressful situations, the heart had lower elevated rates and recovered more quickly.

Scientific studies are great, but what came to my mind was a greater need to focus on the human and emotional impact.

SMILING IS CONTAGIOUS. We never know who needs a smile at any given moment or why.

When I was a young mother, I emotionally crashed. Depression doesn't

begin to describe it. I felt trapped in a bad marriage, overwhelmed with 3 children under the age of 3. I felt like a failure in the home, in the community, and constantly questioned my ability to make good decisions.

Finally, I sought help. My doctor said I had to rewire my mind to get out of the hole I was spiraling into. My assignment for the next two weeks, was to laugh for 5 minutes a day. I gaped at him as I processed this stupid request. If I had anything to laugh about, I wouldn't be sitting there.

He claimed laughter would bring happiness. "But Doctor, I'm not a big laugher. When I hear something I think's funny, I do the double ha, ha, chuckle and feel satisfied. There is no way I can laugh five minutes."

He said, "That's alright Karen. Smiling for 20 minutes is equivalent to laughing for 5. For the next two weeks, you're to smile for 20 consecutive minutes daily. Make it simple, take a 20 minute walk every day. Walk for 10 minutes smiling. At the 10-minute mark, stop, do one of your quick ha, ha's, turn around and walk back home smiling. Keep a log. Write down how you feel before and after. I'll see you in two weeks with that daily log."

So, for the next two weeks I walked with a forced smile on my face. Quite honestly, I think most of my neighbors were a little freaked out. This was not something they were accustomed to seeing me do.

The first two days, I avoided people and they avoided me. I felt stupid & annoyed and my depression wasn't improving.

A few days in, I found that I wasn't feeling quite as stupid. It helped that a few people along my route had smiled back as they passed.

Another few days and the annoyance began to fade a little. I noticed more and more people were smiling. Some even saying, "Good Morning". The Good Mornings turned into, "How are you?" or "How are the kids?" etc.

To my complete shock, I started looking forward to my walks. At the end of the two weeks I reported my findings to my doctor. I was still depressed. I still felt trapped in a terrible marriage, etc. but there was something about those 20 minutes that brought me a small sense of peace.

Next assignment. Continue walking 20 minutes daily while smiling,

AND I was to go to the mall a few times a week and smile at every single person who made eye contact with me.

Two more weeks passed. I was feeling a tingle of happiness and hope for the first time in a very long time.

The next assignment: Continue the activities from above and add a, "Good Morning." Amazing things started happening. People smiled at me, wherever I went.

As time went on, I realized smiling was the most common reaction people have with one another. Along with the smiles, strangers started talking to me in grocery lines, on elevators, in fact, sometimes strangers would stop and tell me their life story.

And yes, it all started with a smile. Some people desperately need to know they matter. A smile, from anyone including a stranger lets them know they do.

Now, as I've said, I've known for years how contagious smiles are. Not just for those receiving them, but also for those giving them.

Here is another example. It was fall 2009. I was speaking in a city where I'd spoken several years earlier. As I arrived at the hotel, I was reminded I had stayed there before. How did I know? Well, while I was standing in the lobby waiting for my turn to check in, the concierge ran up to me, gave me a big hug, pulled out her phone and started showing me photos and telling about her child. For the next several minutes, she proceeded to catch me up on her life from the past few years.

I was somewhat ashamed, I didn't remember her. I meet thousands of people a year and sadly they begin to blend together.

The next day, it happened again. Someone greeted me like we'd known each other forever. This time it was a very impressive, well dressed, confident and radiant young woman who was registered for the seminar. She asked if I remembered her. I honestly acknowledged she did look familiar, but I did not remember any specifics.

Half whispering and half laughing she said, "It's me, Sarah. Remember? You saved my life." I had to ask, "Really? How did I do that?" "I'm the one you kept smiling at when you spoke here three years ago" was her tearful reply.

Now, to be fair, I try to smile at everyone in my audiences.

She continued, "I was the mousy girl in the back corner who was slouched and basically tried to hide. You came and stood by me, looked me in the eyes and smiled. You must have singled me out a dozen times throughout the day.

"When I arrived that morning, I had decided to end it all. I carefully planned the entire day. When we broke for lunch I was going to drive off our local bridge that was under construction.

"Each time you looked into my eyes and smiled, a chunk of despair was chipped away. When we broke for lunch, you called me by name and said you hoped I'd have a great lunch and looked forward to seeing me when I returned.

"That's when I knew I couldn't do it. That's when I knew, I had a reason to live. Someone cared about me. I mattered."

Sadly, I really don't remember singling anyone out that day or at 99% of any of my events. But I do acknowledge that I've made it my habit, to

look people in the eye and smile at everyone I see. And frankly, if that habit saved her life, I'm gratified beyond expression.

With the young woman's permission, I told this story in other courses I taught over the next few weeks. The reaction to her story were nothing short of amazing. After I told the story, someone either publicly or privately said they or someone they knew had experienced something similar in their life.

A stranger smiling at them, when they needed it the most, changed their life.

As you're walking down the street, working, or even shopping, you never know who needs a little validation, who needs to feel like there's still some good in the world, or who just needs a little emotional bump.

You never know what your smile will do for someone else. And you never know who needs it the most.

The gentleman I spoke about at the beginning of this article sent me the rest of his story. I'll give you the extremely short version here.

His mother had been raped and her abusive father had beaten her throughout her pregnancy. Then 3 days after her child was born (the man from the event), her father kicked mother and child out of the house.

She purchased a bus ticket to get as far away as possible for her baby's sake. Her plan was to leave him with a note on a church's doorstep and then she planned to leave this world.

A stranger at the bus station had smiled at her.

That single act of kindness gave her hope. That smile encouraged her to give a hesitant smile to someone else, who in turn smiled back. More courage, another smile. One smile led to another, which led to meeting a woman who helped her start a new life. A new life that brought happiness and kept her and her son together.

Three things I can say without doubt: Smiling saves you: Smiling can save others: Smiles most definitely improve the world!

Now it's your turn: Keep Smiling!

ABOUT DR. KAREN PERKINS

Dr. Karen Perkins, or as her students like to call her, Dr. K., is an engaging and highly sought-after international motivational speaker, a best-selling author, a personal growth coach, and a leading expert in emotional intelligence and change management.

For over 25 years, Dr. Perkins has inspired and enriched literally hundreds of thousands lives. These great people learn to overcome limiting beliefs and go on to achieve what they once may have believed unachievable. As a premiere Emotional Intelligence consultant, she has developed a keen insight and ability to guide her clients to pinpoint their core values, find their passions and develop plans to leap into a personal destiny filled with extraordinary rewards. Dr. K is a certified hypnotherapist, mentor and coach.

Her specialty lies in unveiling the keys to personal growth in such a way that people quickly recognize and begin to fulfill their own immeasurable

potential. In her seminars, chats, and consulting, she uses her best-selling book, "Emotional Power" as she exposes the blueprint for living a first-class life. Dr. K has taught thousands of individuals to create internal strength, overcome bad habits, rebuild self-confidence, and harness their unlimited personal emotional power.

Dr. Karen's clients now know how to attract wealth, health and lasting relationships. They continually learn to overcome barriers and personal fears. They and polish their communication skills and are masters of conflict resolution and stress management. They understand the value of emotional intelligence and negotiation skills and use them to enhance personal and business relationships. They are the masters and leaders of their lives. They experience great success using these enhanced skills to convey their own ultimately dynamic image and build positive lasting relationships.

Dr. K has changed countless lives for the better. Each of her students rediscovers their personal genius and passion, and lives their own personal first-class life based on their core values.

Join her at one of her Living First Class events and see your life change for the better forever.



Mali Phonpadith

“Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.”

THROUGH THE STORMS – HEALING HAPPENS BY MALI PHONPADITH

Laos is the homeland I fled with my family at the tender age of four, half asleep, in the dark of night, across the Mekong River. According to The Guardian, “Laos was hit by an average of one B-52 bomb load every eight minutes, 24 hours a day, between 1964 and 1973.” That’s more bombs than were dropped in all of World War II, giving my homeland the distinction of being the most heavily-bombed country in the world.

It took three years, but through secret letters and encrypted telegrams to relatives living in Thailand, my father was able to coordinate and execute an escape plan. We went in the middle of the night, escaping with only the moonlight, and made it across the Mekong River. Relatives who were living in Thailand met us and hid us in a produce truck, stacking boxes of vegetables to hide us. When we reached a safe house, we stayed

with these relatives for a couple of weeks while my father and uncles mapped out a way to get us inside a nearby overcrowded refugee camp.

On the night we traveled to the refugee camp, we quietly waited until there were no guards in sight. My grandmother recounted how she, along with my father and uncle, shoveled dirt underneath barb wired fences so that we could each crawl under and find refuge within the “walls” of the camp. Our family was very fortunate. We lived at the refugee camp for only a year before we were sponsored by Davies Unitarian Church, a small church in the State of Maryland that helped us become permanent residents of the United States of America.

During my childhood, life was confusing. At home I was a traditional Lao girl and at school, I was either hiding or trying very hard to fit in. Identity was a struggle during this phase of my life.

When I was fifteen years old, I began working at a fast food restaurant to support my parents with household bills. Every other check went to the family expenses and what I was able to keep was in preparation for my college tuition. I worked every night after high school, including weekends, knowing that this was the only way I could afford college. I studied

very hard with full intention of qualifying for academic scholarships and eventually graduated at the top of my class. My high marks awarded me several scholarships, covering the first two years of my University tuition.

In order to graduate, I worked full-time, studying very late into the early mornings with only a few hours of sleep each night. This went on for five years. When I finally graduated, it was one of the proudest moments of my life. Two months from college graduation, I was hired by a government contractor to join their commercial marketing division. At age 22, I would be responsible for submitting a marketing plan to the Vice President for consideration. In preparation for this project, I was introduced to a gentleman named Chris, who was part of the federal marketing team. I shared an office with him and he became my friend and mentor. After working closely together for months on end, our friendship blossomed into admiration, which then turned into love. He was a kind and sensitive soul whose laughter was infectious. He was the light of the party and had charisma like you wouldn't believe. It was this natural charm and humor that attracted me to him. Five years flew by and he finally proposed marriage.

On a hot summer day in 2003, Chris and I went on a family picnic. I was excited to introduce him to my extended family and friends as my

new fiancé. It was during this picnic that my world came to a halt. As I was finishing up with food preparations, I walked toward the water to see that Chris and my brother-in-law were waist high in the Potomac River, talking and laughing while our nephews and relatives were splashing water at each other. Within seconds, Chris must have felt my presence from afar because he turned around and waved at me. He motioned for me to join them but I held up five fingers, as I still needed a few minutes to finish up with the food prep. He nodded as if to say, "OK" and gave me a thumbs up signal. I smiled, waved and made my way toward the picnic tables. That was the last gesture he ever offered me, telling me he was going to be ok.

Soon after I walked away from the scene, there was a riptide that came in and swept away the five of the boys who were wading in the water. My brother-in-law and Chris swam out to rescue them. They were able to bring four to safety with help from nearby jet skiers. Unfortunately, Chris lost his life trying to save the last child, my brother-in-law's nephew, and they both left this earthly plane together that afternoon.

The months that followed, and steps I took, the weight of an elephant sitting upon my chest, would be the words which would fill up my

journals. My family and friends were there to support me and yet I needed to find other ways to grieve and to heal from within. I felt so smothered by care and love that I just wanted to be left alone. I didn't want to pretend to be alright. I didn't want to have to shed (or hide) tears. I just wanted to "be" and I was frustrated every day because I didn't know what "being" meant in my despair.

It was at least eight months before I could see or think straight and another year before I fully reached acceptance that my life had taken a different course than the one I had set out to travel. I had to come to terms with this reality and create a fresh starting point. As I embarked on creating a new start, it included a change in my career. I started a financial practice with the goal of educating others on the importance of planning, helping them prepare for unexpected life events like the one I had just experienced.

At my first networking event after launching the practice, I remember feeling nervous and very much alone. There was a moment when I thought to myself, "What am I doing? I have no idea how to run a business. Is building this practice even going to work?" I thought to leave the networking event and just go home, curl up in my bed and cry. But

then I heard another voice in my head say; “You have no other choice but to move on with your life. He cannot come back and the only place for you to turn is forward”. I took in a deep breath, drew out a sigh and challenged myself to stay. I rallied my inner thoughts to focus. I challenged myself to find the first friendly face that walked through the doors, look forward and go make a new friend.

Several people walked in and then I spotted a man who entered the room with a smile. I walked up to him, learned that his name was Victor, and told him that this was my first time at this networking event. I learned it was his first time also. We navigated the room together that day and stayed in touch. He became a client of mine. We became good friends, like so many of my other clients.

Three years after Chris’ passing, we learned that my father had aggressive liver cancer. Within three weeks of learning of his illness, he passed away. I spent every possible hour with my father in those final weeks. I learned so much about this man and his vision and mission for his life. He told me that the moment he got his entire family safely across the Mekong River was the moment he had accomplished his life’s mission. Everything else was an additional blessing that he negotiated with the

Universe. When he prayed for us to survive that original journey, he promised he’d raise us to be incredible souls. My father did not fear the afterlife; he only worried whether his family members were going to navigate through life without too many challenges.

My journey of grief and healing included other experiences after Chris and my father. Within a timespan of ten years, I dealt with the loss of my godfather to cancer, best friend, Rafael, to suicide, uncle to lung cancer, and grandmother to a decline in health after two hip surgeries. I also had to care for my mother after a full knee replacement and am currently on a journey with my sister as she bravely battles cancer.

I came to understand that we all experience life’s tragic events. With each painful setback, we also are set up for a higher level of awareness and consciousness that prepares us for future challenges. I have found some solace in knowing that we, as human beings, have the capacity to move forward. We can find within us the will and strength to nurture and heal the broken pieces. I did this by seeking help. I read countless books, got counseled, worked with transformational coaches, attended retreats, practiced energy modalities such as EFT (emotional freedom technique), sought support from Reiki practitioners, learned

meditation and released my emotions through my writing and poetry. For years I went on this journey to free myself of worry, anxiety, insomnia, and an unwillingness to open my heart to loving or being loved.

At age 36, I left my financial practice and decided to launch my own business. The company has grown into what is now the SOAR Community Network. In that same year I published my memoir, *A Million Fireflies*, and coauthored a business workbook, *Seen and Sustained*, with three female entrepreneurs. That July I traveled to Spain for one month to participate in a friend's wedding and allowed myself the first vacation in seven years.

When I arrived back to the United States, Victor, yes the gentleman I met networking, called me to share that he had separated from his wife. He was living with an old childhood friend from Puerto Rico, and wanted to start writing and playing music. He knew that I was a poet and that I had collaborated with a friend on writing songs. On that call he was very honest in sharing that he was trying to uncover his own gifts and talents to create ways of healing and moving forward with his life. He asked if I wanted to meet his roommate and join them in writing original songs.

A year after we started writing and playing music, our feelings for one another grew but neither of us truly knew when it had turned from friendship into love. It slowly happened and it grew through our shared values and vision for life. As complex as it was, both understanding that he was still in the midst of a separation, there was a knowing that we would be fine regardless of what direction our friendship needed to take. We both agreed that peace had to be a part of the equation.

As fate would painfully have it, the same week that he and his wife submitted their divorce papers, she was diagnosed with Leukemia and within 8 months she passed away peacefully with her loved ones, including Victor, by her side.

Life is full of unexpected twists and turns. It offers so many contradictions including pain and joy, hatred and love, light and dark, life and death. I have come to learn that our life experiences, especially the most painful ones, create an empathy bucket that stretches far and wide. Because I truly understood what happens to a human heart when you lose someone you love, I was able to support Victor on his personal journey of loss and healing. It made us grow closer. I got him. He got me. This newly, yet unwanted experience, bonded and solidified

our friendship. Today he is my best friend, husband, business partner, and life companion. He accepts my humanness and knows the purity of my soul like no other on this planet.

The beauty (and pain) of life means that everything moves forward. In time, assuming you keep walking toward the light, our spirits eventually find a sense of harmony again. One day when we arrive at the end of the dark tunnel, we are greeted with new blessings and lessons that will add to the wisdom of our empathy buckets. That bucket will become the reservoir we get to draw from when we realize and accept that some of the greatest roles we will ever play in this life include friend, lover, teacher, and light bearer.

If you're out there and are feeling alone, remember to look up into the sky and trust that there are infinite souls who see you, have experienced what you feel and are shining their light upon you. There will come a time when other souls will be looking up at you and drawing hope and inspiration from your life experiences and the lasting contributions you offered when you were here, living on this earthly plane.

ABOUT MALI PHONPADITH

Mali Phonpadith is the Founder/CEO of the SOAR Community Network (SCN), Cofounder of the SOAR Community Nebula, TEDx Speaker, #1 International Bestselling author, business and marketing strategist, leadership and personal development expert, podcaster and the Executive Producer of Tea with Mali TV Show. SCN supports Conscious Leaders and their organizations with strategic planning and leadership development to spread their mission and create social impact. In 2015, Mali was selected as a Belief Team community partner for the Oprah Winfrey's OWN Network BELIEF initiative.

Mali is a four-time author, including *A Million Fireflies*, her memoir about her voyage from war-torn Laos to America. She coauthored *Seen and Sustained: Best Practices in Communication that Increase the Visibility of Small and Diverse Businesses*, a professional workbook for small and mid-size businesses. In 2017, *Born to Be Me*, a compilation of authentic stories from 19 international female authors, made Amazon's #1 International Bestseller List. In 2018, *The Balancing Act*, also made the #1 International Bestseller List.



**Suzi Pomerantz; CEO of Innovative Leadership International LLC,
Master Executive Leadership Coach, Bestselling Author**

“Your smile is a light of kindness for someone who is in darkness.”

LEADERSHIP IMPACT: SHARING SMILES CREATES POSITIVE CHANGE IN ORGANIZATIONS AND THE WORLD.

SUZI POMERANTZ

I'm alive today because of my brothers. I'm grateful for the lessons survival has taught me. Growing up in Virginia in the 1970's, the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, and a first-generation American daughter of an Israeli immigrant and an electrical engineer from Philadelphia, survival was a prevailing theme. Surviving child abuse, surviving anti-semitism, surviving humiliations, surviving trauma. The summer before I turned four my younger brother was born; I recall pledging my life to protect him from the suffering I'd already survived during those early years. I became his “mom”, and when our youngest brother was born four years later, he called me as

“mommy”. I was eight years old. Since the boys were too young to do household chores, I felt like Cinderella; the lawn mowing, weeding, washing dishes, setting and clearing the table, vacuuming, cleaning my room, cleaning the playroom, sorting the laundry, and taking care of my brothers was my responsibility. Still eight years old, I ran away from home, for which I was beaten with a wooden hairbrush.

Small kindnesses extended to me by others literally got me through my childhood. Kindness matters. Middle school was brutal, and I begged my parents for both therapy and braces. They refused, and by the time I got to high school I was deeply lonely, depressed and suicidal. “These are the best years of your life” they’d tell me. I was certain that if THESE were the best years, I wanted out. Death was my way out. I’m alive today because of love: my enormous love for (and desire to protect) my brothers. I had a moment, knife in hand, initial cuts to the wrist veins, when I thought about those boys, who I loved more than anyone or anything, who I had vowed to myself I’d protect. How could I protect them if I was gone? Who would protect them? I had to live.

In college I discovered a passion for leadership service through wonderful extracurricular activities that at UVA were opportunities for

student self-governance. It was there that I started learning how to shift gears from survive to thrive. Finding a way to pay for college challenged my creativity; I condensed my graduate degree and undergrad degree, doing both at the same time which saved me a year of tuition and expenses, and served on the Resident Staff which saved money on housing. I led multiple student organizations, and landed a coveted room on The Lawn.

During the launch of my teaching career, I continued to engage in extracurricular activities that expanded my knowledge capacity as a leader. I loved teaching, but was quite disillusioned to find that the reality of working as a teacher was not about teaching and not about kids. It was about bureaucracy and administrative requirements and politics. Over three years, I tried three different schools, three different teaching scenarios, three different grade levels and decided it was three strikes and I’m out. This was a leap of faith and an important pivot point in my life. I knew teaching wasn’t for me, but I didn’t know where (if anywhere) my master’s in teaching and my teaching skills could be applied in another job. I had 6 months’ worth of savings, so I gave myself a 6-month deadline to find my next career, otherwise I’d go back to school for a Ph.D. and seek work in student affairs. Meanwhile,

I was asked to volunteer as a coach in the leadership development program I had been taking for fun on the side.

During those 6 months I conducted 150 informational interviews. A couple of themes emerged; corporate training would be a good use of teaching skills, and consulting kept coming up as a suggestion. I dismissed that out of hand, since I'd never worked in corporate so how could I possibly be a consultant? But then during the interviews I met the president of a company that was providing executive leadership coaching at the highest levels in corporations and they were licensed to use the proprietary Transformational Technologies in corporate management. They were looking to expand their capabilities and invited me to learn their coaching methodology. After rigorous training and their support to establish my company, Innovative Leadership International LLC was born. They had me working with 15 pairs of managers of high-performance manufacturing companies who were learning how to use coaching with their employees. Simultaneously, the head of an accounting firm that was also volunteering with me in the leadership development program said that she wanted to contract with me to coach her 11 employees. At 24 years old I had a company, I had 40 clients in my first two contracts, and I was off to the races!

Then, another pivot point. A year into my business, those contracts ended, my clients moved on, and I had to teach myself how to get new clients. I dove into learning networking, marketing, and sales in addition to my continued studies in all things leadership. I was paying for my living expenses on credit and found myself in serious debt for the first time in my life. My coach expanded my thinking and shifted me from viewing that \$10,000 debt as a failure to considering it an investment in my future. He showed me that if I had gone to get an MBA, I'd have spent 2 years and \$40,000, so given all I'd learned in the last year I was ahead of the game both in terms of time and money spent. Now I had to choose how to apply that knowledge. That shift got me out of debt and generating sustainable revenues in my business within 6 months.

Then, I met my husband, bought a house, and gave birth to two amazing kids.

The next few decades were spent providing corporate training in the areas of diversity and leadership, writing articles and books, delivering keynotes, facilitating executive teams, coaching executives and leaders, serving on boards, building organizations that serve the global coaching community, earning awards, and raising my brilliant kids.

One important lesson all my survivorship taught me is to take action to create the life you want and take full responsibility for your own happiness. Over the last couple of decades I've enjoyed a special relationship with my Choice Mom, the parent I needed but didn't get as a child. She and I chose each other when I was in my twenties and recognized the need for a supportive, loving mentor and guide for my life as a grown woman. She is also a business owner and community leader, so we understood each other's worlds. Everything is a choice. You can't choose the circumstances life throws at you, but you absolutely can choose your response to those circumstances, and you can choose to create ways to meet your needs and realize your dreams.

Mantras that help me survive include:

- Be kind; kindness matters
- Smile at everyone, including yourself
- Fail fast and pivot quickly
- Don't believe everything your brain tells you
- Trust your gut
- Seek to serve and add value, make a difference

- Practice an attitude of gratitude
- Everything is a choice.

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Why I do everything I do is to be of service, to make a difference in the world, and specifically to amplify the impact of those who are at the forefront of leading world changes. If I can make a difference with a leader who then impacts hundreds, thousands, or millions of lives, I have done my part to heal the world.

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In my customized leadership strategy work with executives and leaders, I have a unique ability to listen at the cellular level, to connect dots others don't see, and to help leaders navigate through their blind spots to expanded impact. I am highly committed to my clients' success and sustainable transformation. I inspire trust and bring a subtle integration of warmth and wisdom to their growth work. My strength lies in helping leaders and organizations find clarity within chaos. I work best with highly intelligent, dedicated professionals who want

to get to the next level and craft a memorable brand legacy in their organization and the world. I love my work and serving leaders who influence and impact the world. I help mission-driven leaders who want to make an impact to both accelerate and amplify that impact. I customize and tailor how I work with each client to their unique circumstances and needs. Often, I'm helping them make sense of chaos and complexity, remove obstacles, leverage their past successes, create space for expanded mindsets that will serve them better, navigate the strategic relationships necessary for their best results, and find ways to add value at every turn.

ABOUT SUZI POMERANTZ

Suzi Pomerantz, CEO of Innovative Leadership International, LLC is an award-winning executive leadership coach and international bestselling author with 26 years experience in 250+ organizations internationally. Suzi specializes in leadership strategy and leadership influence, helping executives, teams and organizations find clarity in chaos.

She was one of the first executive coaches to receive the ICF Master credential 21 years ago and is a thought leader in the coaching industry. She currently serves on the advisory boards of Harvard Business Review as well as choice, the magazine of professional coaching, and the international journal Philosophy of Coaching. She has authored over 50 publications about coaching, ethics, and business development, and 11 books including bestseller, Seal the Deal and #1 international bestseller Ready, Aim, Captivate, co-authored with Deepak Chopra and others. She founded the Leading Coaches' Center and co-founded the Library of Professional Coaching (world's largest free online coaching library).

Books that changed your life:

The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy,
not time is the key to high performance and personal
renewal by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

All I really need to know I learned in kindergarten
by Robert Fulghum

Untethered Soul by Michael Singer

Movies that inspire you:

Princess Bride, Black Panther

Songs that inspires you:

Dream Weaver (Gary Wright)

Ariel by October Project

Your Hero:

Maybe Barak Obama, my grandfather Leon
Shmukler, maybe Oprah. Maybe my kids?

Quote you live by:

"Kindness Matters. You always have a choice.
Choose kindness."



Sabrina Protic

“A Smile is the best way to hypnotize the world to respond with happiness.”

FIND THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH IN A SMILE

BY SABRINA PROTIC

My mother gave birth to me in her early twenties and named me after the 1954 movie Sabrina starring Audrey Hepburn who played the role of Sabrina Fairchild. My mother said if she ever had a daughter she would name her Sabrina and that she did. My parents loved me as I was their first and only child together. They would soon divorce fifteen months later. My mother remarried and I gained a brother and a sister. As far back as I can remember I felt a sense of family even though I had a different last name. Mom showed much affection for the three of us kids with plenty of hugs and kisses. Dad worked two jobs so we did not see much of him during the week. He worked a weekday job, would come home eat a quick dinner and then out the door for night time office cleaning work. From the time we could count and read mom taught us kids how to play games that kept us laughing and having fun.

Our card games included Old Maids, Uno and then graduated to Gin Rummy, Bid Whist and Spades. She taught us dominos, and board games such as Monopoly, Probe and Rummikub. I smile when I recall mom and us kids laying on her bed and playing “who and I” as we giggled trying to solve the character. These games generated endless smiles, fun and bonding. Often times I see parents today watching their kids play games. Create memories with your kids now by interacting with them in their favorite games. My mother could cut a rug and tear up a dance floor. We always had music going, back then it was vinyl records and tunes from singers such as Sam Cook, Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight, the Temptations and Dionne Warwick. I remember one time my mother was baking a cake from scratch and I was way off key trying to sing one of Aretha’s songs when mom flicked flour in my face because I messing up the song. We all laughed to no end about it. Can you see the smiles? We just enjoyed silly times. Drive in movies was the big thing back then and dad was on board to take the family to see a good John Wayne western movie. We would put our jammies on; make a big tub of TV Time popcorn, loaded up in the car for family fun night out. Who remembers hanging the movie speaker on the hand crank window? What about the mosquito repellent smoke ring that we would light up? Those were the days. Now we are young

teens and mom taught us how to roller skate. It was a little intimidating at the skating rink, but she knew how to make it fun. The music was cool and so was hanging out with other kids and their parents. We never saw mom as a stick in the mud, she was always one of us in terms of enjoying life with us and smiling often. She was a superwoman mom. Laughter and smiling kept her young. Mom taught us how to play volley ball and actually out played us. How did she do it? I wonder to this day. She worked full time at a local school, served hot home meals for our family, and kept us spiritually grounded. I never had boxed food until I got out on my own. Mom made everything with love and the food was always delicious. We always ate our meals together and had good wholesome conversation at the dinner table. Chores did not bring smiles on our faces, but did teach us responsibility. I did not like washing dishes and hated ironing clothes. Back then permanent press and wash wear fabrics were not around. Every Sunday us kids took turns ironing and starching my dad’s work shirts. I hated it! It was so boring and tedious. Mom said dad deserved to have fresh pressed shirts and that we should do this out of love and respect. She was in a way preparing us for the world outside by teaching us principles and getting tasks done. We helped with laundry, sweeping and mopping floors and dusting furniture. Kids do need balance and

structure which contributes to family happiness. Smiling fosters great relationships, unity and harmony. My first year of high school was rough. I had never experienced division and did not know what a racial divide was. I remember the school going on lock down, screaming, glass breaking and sirens blaring. A racial riot had erupted and mom had to come pick us up from school that day. We were escorted by police out of the school for our safety. I was confused and afraid. The student body was torn. I was taught to love, to smile, to care about others. My door was open to anyone that received my friendship regardless of gender, culture or race. Eventually, trust and acceptance surpassed tension and hate in my racially mixed circle. In my senior, I was crowned homecoming queen of which I represented the minority student body. This was a historical moment not only in the history of my high school, but of the entire surrounding cities and counties during that time. Smiles unite. Our present world still has many divisions. Can you share a smile to bridge these gaps? My adult life included marriage, employment, kids and college in that order. All I knew was family life and so a big highlight was to get married and have a family. Mom worked and raised kids and I followed in her footsteps. She always encouraged us to get good jobs which we did. I kept up the tradition of having fun with my kids and never missed an opportunity to

play games and sports with them. We hugged and kissed our children often and reassured them of our love. As our kids became preteens I was feeling a burning desire for knowledge and wanted to enroll in college. The decision to seek a college degree created friction in my marriage. I was working fulltime and had designed a schedule that would only require me to be in the class room Monday evenings. Study time and writing papers would be done on weekends and at night once everyone was asleep. We lost the smiles and happiness during these years. The kids were walking on eggshells and felt the uneasiness. My husband and I divorced one year before I would graduate from college. As I walked across the stage clutching my degree I could hear my kids cheering me on with a sense of pride and happiness. They were smiling and hugging me tightly when I returned to meet up with them after the ceremony. Mom had done it they said! We went out to a celebration lunch and my words to them were "I want you to know that you can be anything that you want to be, at any age...never give up". My mother advised me to take care of my kids with my full attention until they turn age 18. During my singleness I bonded with three other ladies that I call my pack. We had so much fun, going to the beach, meeting up for dinner and just plain girl time. We would sip on wine and chat while my teenagers were hanging out, going bowling and to the

movies. We would laugh until we cried sometimes sharing funny stories. Can any of you single parents relate to this? I remarried after my son graduated college and moved out of the house. It's never too late in life to love and be loved. I must say the man I married has a beautiful smile. His smiles remind me of the many reasons that I chose to marry him. The future looked bright for my husband and I but life threw us a curve ball. I had a great corporate career job that afforded us the opportunity to travel, dine out often without financial difficulty. As a result of the pandemic I lost my job of 41 years leaving me without income, health insurance and life insurance. This is the time in life to kick back and enjoy the fruits of your labor, but instead I had to pivot into something to replace what was lost. We were not financially ready for me to completely retire. The year before I had published a book, became a certified life coach and was preparing for coaching and speaking gigs around the world. All of that had to be put on hold because of the sheltering in place. Talk about a challenge. I kept smiling. It's true. I counted my blessing. I had not lost my life. The blessings of empowering and enriching others became a blessing for me. Back in 2016 I founded a women's empowerment organization called W.E.E. (Women's Entrepreneurial Empowerment) which strives for continuous opportunities for women to expand their networks, develop

relationships, and grow their businesses. Members of this organization rallied to support me as I pivoted to start a financial coaching business. I owe so much to these ladies for helping me transition into something new. My heart is in helping families, friends and our community. I had already been education and instructing start ups, businesses and the community through W.E.E. I receive the greatest inner reward when I see women entrepreneurs smile because I have connected them with a person or platform that features their business.

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Cast your bread out on the water and it will come back to you. Those words ring true in my life especially during these challenging times. I had invested so much of me into helping women entrepreneurs often times at my own expense. As an organization W.E.E. contributed financially to Dress for Success Tampa Bay, Ferrell's Girls Preparatory Middle School and other local organizations in need. When I had, I gave. When I was in need, it was given to me. I learned to be humble and ask for help. Starting over later in life is no easy task. What is Age? What is later in Life? Who says I cannot be what I want to be, when I want to be it? Those are the empowering words I conferred to my

children at my college graduation lunch. Smiles are ageless and timeless. Live by your words Sabrina, I told myself. I committed to getting my license in financial services by studying and sitting for a two hour state test. I passed! My kids were watching me and I so glad I lived up to my own words. I am now a financial coach in what most people would consider my retirement years. My kids tell me they are proud of me. I feel like I am growing and evolving with them as they move forward in their life choices.

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My gift to the world is the sharing of love, enlightenment, encouragement and empowerment. I manifest this in several ways. I dress for success in that I show up looking my best ever. This is not vanity; it's capturing energy and vitality. How we feel about our inner self is expressed by our outer appearance, verbal and facial expressions. I meet and greet others with a smile whether in person, on the phone or virtually. I am always thinking of ways to add value to my circle of family, friends, clients and business associates. As a financial coach, I absolutely love offering education to those rightly disposed. I love seeing smiles on their faces when I have empowered them with education

to make right financial choices. My life coaching mastery enables me to help people navigate through real life trails, listening to them sharing the power of hope and gratitude. I am a co-host on several international streaming live shows through Thriving Women Network. Our talk shows enlighten viewers on Life Strategies in Money, Business, Health, Education, empowering interviews, hot topics, everyday warriors and women athletes. Before the start of each show our executive producer sends out a message: Remember to Smile! Our organization W.E.E. is moving through the pandemic by donating gloves, mask, hand soap, paper goods and hygiene supplies to various organizations in need. I have found the fountain of youth in giving and smiling. I want to share it with you.

ABOUT SABRINA PROTIC

Sabrina Protic is an energetic and vibrant wife, mother, and grandmother. She loves educating and empowering her community as a Licensed Financial Coach, Certified life coach, Author of the Book: Growing Ageless, Think Young-Live Younger, and International Streaming Live Co-Host of Thriving Women Talk Network. Sabrina co-authored: The Top 25 Change Makers – How Florida Entrepreneurs Thrived During Challenging Times. Sabrina founded Ageless Techniques to promote an active healthier mind/body at any age. She co-founded the Sharper Woman Quarterly Newsletter that provides resources to help women live longer, younger, stronger and smarter lives. Sabrina founded W.E.E. Women's Entrepreneurial, an organization striving for continuous opportunities for women to expand their networks, develop relationships, and grow their businesses. Sabrina Protic Life/Financial Coach Author/Speaker International Streaming Live Co-Host Thriving Women Talk Network Founder W.E.E. Women's Empowerment Phone: 833-322-0888 Email: Sabrina@sabrinaprotic.com Website: Sabrinaprotic.com Website: ThrivingWomenNetwork.com FB: @Sabrina Protic FB: @Sabrina Protic - AgelessTechniques FB: @WEE-Women's Entrepreneurial Empowerment Instagram: @Sabrina Protic LinkedIn: Sabrina Protic

Book that changed your life:
How To Win Friends and Influence People
By Dale Carnegie

Movie that inspire you:
Harriet (Harriet Tubman)

Your Hero:
My mother is my hero. She has lived her life through love, laughter, pain and gratitude.

Quote you live by:
"hen You Know Better, You Do Better." Maya
Angelou



Todd Radus

“Take on every challenge with a smile and you have already increased your chances of success.”

KEEP SMILING

BY TODD RADUS

I had a “Leave It to Beaver” childhood until the age of eleven when my parents divorced. At that point, I kind of went downhill as a kid as I started getting in trouble. When I was 17, I decided I was going to join the service, I wanted to work on airplanes. I ended up having to go in the Navy as I couldn’t get in the Air Force as all the aviation ratings were full. Therefore, I joined the Navy and went to the Persian Gulf. After the Gulf War, I was discharged. I came home to open a tattoo studio, which failed miserably because I had no idea how to run a business. That became the challenge in my life - to learn how to run a business.

Then, I went to business school and dropped out after about 90 days. I determined there was nothing in business school that they were teaching me that was going to help me run a business. I mean, they give you the math, the numbers, and some basic rules. But I had already crashed and burned one company. Frankly, I knew better from what I learned

by failing a business then what I was learning in school. Business just wasn't as simple as the academics were saying.

So, on the side, I ran businesses through my 20s while I held a job. I always had like a part-time business at home. For a couple of years, I had a couple full-time companies while I was working, so I was busy. I worked my way all the way up to district manager in Philadelphia for a parking company where I had up to 17 different locations underneath me. Honestly, I was really good at what I did. I always tried to encourage the people around me to do the same kind of thing.

What I learned about businesses is that it's not as much about business as it is about the people who are running the business and how they treat the customers and the people around them. This led to me making a lot of friendships and learning a lot of different things about running a business. To me, that meant when you understand the technical aspects of running a business, what you should do regarding technical operations should come really easy. The challenge is that it's always with the people that you have an issue. Therefore, I became a coach, a business, and a personal coach, to help people get through those hurdles to find the success that they want.

I try to target people who are doing things that they like to do. If you come to me, and you say that you want me to help you out in your business, I'm going to examine the situation. First, I'm going to examine the people working there. I want to see if they appear flexible enough to get the business going. Also, I am looking to see if they like what they're doing. However, what I am looking for most of all is the one person in that group who really likes what they're doing. That's the person I'm going to focus on, and everyone else becomes secondary.

There's a reason that everyone else becomes secondary. The reason is that the person who loves the business is going to be the person who's driving the business. I don't care whose title is what, those people are the people in charge. Being successful in business has nothing to do with being in charge or how much money you put into the business. That's a tough concept for the people who put in the capital. But it is the truth, and I try to stick within those truth grounds.

My goal, my lifelong dream, is to help as many people succeed at whatever it is they want to achieve, and for them to have a lot of fun doing it. Like my most significant rewards were the times when I was in management when I got people out of their current positions and let them

come up with new jobs that fulfilled them. In that case, they were more productive and profitable because they were more than satisfied.

I was able to do that kind of work repeatedly throughout my career. Now, I am basically retired from working for other people. I have the business consulting company, and I actually take clients on with little or no money. That way, I choose who I believe will be successful, and where my time is best spent. Because if they don't end up becoming successful, then I don't get any personal reward in seeing them be successful. My monetary compensation for what I do with them is based on how much I can help them make a profit. Therefore, saving somebody's business is a big reward. And, it can be done a lot more often than people know if you find the right people in the right places.

My best story to date is about a valet who would become a doctor. I've always strived to get that feeling again. It's hard to repeat as the first time is still the sweetest. He was a young man from North Philly, and he lived in a bad neighborhood. His mother was raising him alone with one or two brothers. I can't remember. I just knew I knew him, and he wanted to become a supervisor. He asked me if he could become a supervisor. I asked him if he thought he could and if he had the skills.

As his coach, we devised a plan to get him ready for the supervisor position. While a few things happened, we were never able to get him into a supervisor position.

He decided to change gears. He wanted to be a nurse. So, I switched gears with him to get him ready for nursing school. Being in Philly at the time, there was plenty of organizations that would help him get the money for school. But halfway through nursing school, I heard he was going to quit. I called him out on his behavior. I said, "Are you a quitter now?" He got mad at me, and I honestly thought he was going to hit me. He was angry because he had higher hopes than nursing! He said that he wasn't going to quit, in fact, he wanted to be a doctor instead. Wow! Talk about raising the bar. When I last talked to him, he was in his internship. He was going to be a doctor. If I can turn a valet into a doctor, then just imagine what I can do for your business.

www.ToddRamus.com



Krystyle Richardson

"A smile is a choice. By sharing it, you let people in to see the reflection of your inner persistence to 'always look on the bright side of things'." – Krystelle Lynne Richardson

LIVING A LIFE OF FOCUS, SMILES, AND IMPACT BY KRYSTYLLE RICHARDSON



This is Krystyle's smile as a young girl in elementary school where she grew up in Flint, Michigan and was born in 1964. She was very focused and loved to get good grades to make both her loving parents and her awesome teachers proud of her. As a child, everyone always said that she had a nice smile. But don't most kids? (SMILE).

Krystyle's mother and father sent her to elementary school on her first day of kindergarten with her little plastic briefcase. They told her that

she could be anything she wanted to be when she grew up. She believed them and studied and did her best every single day. Although she was the victim of bullying and racist acts, she still kept her head up and her briefcase in her hand. She used those experiences to help shape her into the international business consultant and public speaker that she is today.

Krystylle had great teachers in elementary school, junior high, and high school. She also had great mentors and role models. Her mother and father were the first. Even with the supportive family unit, Krystylle suffered from low self-esteem many days and nights even through adulthood. She had focused more on the negativity of comments from people, rather than believing that she was uniquely created to do great things, and that her voice mattered. All of her experiences taught her valuable lessons that she now uses as “positive learning experiences” as she consults and coaches clients all over the world.

Lessons are not always obvious. Especially when you are in the midst of them. When she looks back, she reminisces on lessons from many cities, countries, circumstances and situations. From Flint, Michigan, to almost 40 states, Canada, providences across Europe, China, Japan,

India, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Jamaica, Barbados, Bahamas, Budapest, and Switzerland (and probably some she cannot recall at the moment) ... there were and are millions of lessons to choose from to write a short story about focus, smiles and impact. The same goings for her job experiences, outreach activities and hobbies. From ice fishing, to motorcycle races to braiding hair for the homeless, her life experiences have been quite interesting and most of all fulfilling.

When living a life of focus, smiles and impact, there are big and small things that tend to make Krystylle smile and maybe even snuffle a little bit. One such time was recently when writing her newest book *Flint Out Loud*. 11 Lessons on Strategy, Leadership and Success. Krystylle mentioned that she smiled over and over and over again (like over 100 times actually). Every time a new definition of success was submitted for her book, it would make her smile. Along with teaching business and life principles in her book, she also gathered and published over 100 definitions of a simple word called success. She was in amazement of the many facets of the word. It is her hope that those that read the book *Flint Out Loud* have just as good of a time reading them as she did collecting them from her tribe. There were definitions that came

from countries all over the world. She was very humbled and grateful and still is. This is an excerpt from the book, at the end of the definitions pages: The 100 Faces of Success was a SUCCESS! The Strategy was to unite for a greater purpose. The Leadership came from you, taking the helm and steering your thoughts towards the destination that only you could define...your definition of Success. The Success was in your contributing to something bigger than one person, bigger than us all. What is bigger than us all? The impact of future generations, due to the sacrifice of our ancestors and our willingness to freely share what is in our minds eye. Thank you 100+, sincerest appreciation, this all meant a lot to me. Hope you have enjoyed reading the definitions as well. Don't just read them though, think about how to use them to find your Maximum Impact.

Krystylle thanks God for his angels and for being that solid foundation that she clings to daily. She has written about angels in several books and poems including this one:

Angels of Focus
Angels of Smiles
Angels of Impact

It is now time to join together and make this short chapter be exactly what it needs to be for each person that picks it up.

For each person that starts from the beginning and reads it to the end. For the person already plotting to implement every inch. For each person that flips to a section and just gets a few nuggets here and there. For each person that does not have English as their first language and hopes to understand and execute concepts. For each person that knows me already and wants to see what I wrote that may pertain to them. For each person that cracks a small smile while reading through this chapter and those that have vowed not to smile no matter what may be funny, or cute, or impactful ... yes for them too.

Angels of Focus | Smiles | Impact, stay awake, stay alert, be on your post. Figure out who is who and do your do. For together, you three make up the force that is called M-a-x-i-m-u-m IMPACT!

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As part of the WHO section of this chapter, Krystylle wanted you to read her definition of the word Flint. She was born in Flint, Michigan

and shared lots of fun times with family. She appreciated and treasures those years and dedicated her 3rd book to give people more insight on the beauty that dwelled in her hometown. The beauty still dwells in her heart to this day. Here is what she wrote:

F.L.I.N.T. – The use of the English letters put together for this context is recapped as the following:

- F – Fortify your toolkit imperatively
- L – Lead with Uncompromisable Integrity
- I – Imitate Wisely and with Caution
- N – Never Underestimate your Impact
- T – Tenaciously Pursue the Best You

•••••

WHY

Why does Krystylle do what she does to help people find their purpose, their voice, their impact and yes, their smile?

Well, she loves teaching, training, speaking and mentoring. Krystylle's whole face turns into a big fat cheesy smile when she talks about how she love to see her students when the light pops on regarding a new concept they picked up. Some times it takes much effort on both her part and the participant and sometimes not. Either way, she loves to celebrate their victories and sometimes takes off running victory laps around the room, shouting whoo-hoo and heck-yeah and other interesting word combinations. This obviously brings smiles, laughter and strange looks from all involved. Krystylle lives for those ah-ha moments and says that she can't wait for the next celebration. In heels or flats, the laps will take place and the shouts will burst forth, she simply loves seeing people one step closer to their dreams...their maximum impact.

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HOW

The question here is how do you create abundance, smiles, impact and do you have proof that you are effective?

Well, the answer has a few twists. She stated that she was thankful that

she had the honor to speak to many, share her smile and gifts and talents with many, and have impact in numerous lives. Those same lives have in turn impacted her life and continue to give her that extra “umffff” she needs to know that what she is doing is worth it! This brings smiles and tears to her face just thinking about it. When one person says thank you and says how their life was forever changed by something she said or did, she gets goose bumps. She mentioned that she always considered herself to be a humble and grateful person, and actually doesn't like people making a fuss over her. So whether it is off stage, in the ladies room at the wash bowl, or on a center stage platform, or in a short text or email, she is appreciative of those that have taken a moment to let me know that she is making a positive difference. One gentleman recently commented on her smile. The conversation about the passion she had for her purpose in life and his, brought the elderly gentlemen to tears. He said that he had not told that particular story to anyone and was not sure why he told me, but he was grateful to share and celebrated their common purpose, to have impact not just wealth.

Along with the story above, Krystylle wanted to share a few testimonials of others that have been kind enough to pen special words on how her work has affective their lives and businesses:

SUCCESS “Krystylle is such a great speaker, so passionate and glowing when she speaks. You feel connected and feel her love for what she does”. E.A. SUCCESS “One word describes Krystylle’s work performance, work ethic and dedication ... BRILLANT! She can succeed in anything she desires; she is a Rock Star!” T.M., AVP Operations | STRATEGY Krystylle’s effectiveness comes through in the practical implementation of her plans tailored to each individual situation, and not just limited to her theoretical knowledge.” G.S., Director, Project Mgt | LEADERSHIP “Krystylle Richardson has captured the essence of the power of next generation leadership. Her training as outlined in her book significantly impacted our ministry and we are grateful for her as a necessary gift to the Body of Christ.” Bishop B.R. Fountain of Life House of Worship. |STRATEGY “Krystylle’s Give Hope initiatives pairs a great need, feeding the homeless, with adults and youth who want to meet that need but don't have the logistics.” Dr. V.P., Inventor & Gynecologist |LEADERSHIP “My heart was touched hearing her speak about the homelessness. If you can support her great work please do. You can trust Krystylle, I do. “T.H. of CBL. STRATEGY “Krystylle has an amazing ability for speaking and can help people with all aspects of their business. What I love also is that she has a business with a social aspect to it. She is amazing.” D.M., CEO |STRATEGY “Build That Biz gave me a fresh perspective and valuable

insight, along with solid workable solutions.” K.M., CEO |SUCCESS “Oh my gosh!!! Partnering with Krystylle and Build That Biz has just been amazing for my business. She helped me look at the opportunities and the challenges. The energy she puts into what she does for you is as if it were her own business. Brilliant ideas!” A.M., S.O.M.

One of Krystylle’s favorite quotes is: “Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.” ~ Thomas Jefferson, American former president from 1801 to 1809

Another HOW, is Krystylle’s use of her 7 Ls of Success: Lead, Leverage, Use a Litmus Test, Be Limber, Links, Liberate and Laugh). When students and participants understand how to apply the 7Ls and her philosophy about Mindfulness, Momentum and Money, she feels that she has fulfilled her duty as a catalyst (helping to get them one or two steps closer to their destiny and their maximum impact).

Some people marry based on their concept and relationship with money, and some divorce.

The point is, our relationship to money, how important it is to us, how we use it, how it drives us, etc....is key to unlocking what Strategy will be used in any given situation, how we will Lead and thus influence our definition of Success (and in some bases our ability to smile, or not).

In closing, Krystylle wants to share what she wrote in Flint Out Loud and her ending related to SMILE:

Sharing What Flint Had To Offer A Young Girl

What Did I Learn In Flint?

I learned strategy in Flint.

I learned leadership in Flint.

I learned success in Flint.

I learned patience in Flint. I learned communication in Flint. I learned honesty in Flint. I learned assertiveness in Flint. I learned compromise in Flint. I learned confidentiality in Flint. I learned diversity in Flint. I learned acceptance in Flint.

I learned to share in Flint. I learned proper diet in Flint. I learned to play fair in Flint. I learned systematic approaches in Flint. I learned practicality in Flint. I learned to exercise in Flint. I learned to Be watchful in Flint. I learned to sell in Flint. I learned to wash my hands in Flint.

I learned to say I'm sorry in Flint.

I learned that miracles do happen in Flint. I learned cleanliness in Flint. I learned remorse in Flint. I learned nutrition in Flint. I learned to rest in Flint. I learned to wake up before the sun came up in Flint. I learned how to write a plan in Flint. I learned how to protect in Flint. I learned how to de-stress in Flint. I learned to dance in Flint. I learned how to hold my breath under water in Flint.

I learned how good it feels to yell out loud in Flint.

I learned to knit in Flint. I learned how to write music in Flint. I learned choreography in Flint. I learned how to network in Flint. I learned how to ski in Flint. I learned right from wrong in Flint. I learned about death in Flint.

I learned life in Flint. I learned to ride a bike in Flint. I learned to ride a skateboard in Flint. I learned to swim in Flint. I learned to play tennis in Flint. I learned football in Flint. I learned hockey in Flint. I learned to run track in Flint. I learned volleyball in Flint. I learned boxing in Flint. I learned karate in Flint. I learned how to ice skate in Flint. I learned how to roller skate in Flint. I learned how to flip in Flint.

I learned that good things "sometimes" come to those who wait in Flint.

I learned that sometimes you have to go get what you want in Flint. I learned to hold my peace in Flint. I learned how to get a passport in Flint. I learned how to keep a promise in Flint. I learned salvation in Flint. I learned happiness in Flint. I learned how to have fun in Flint. I learned competition in Flint. I learned about rewards in Flint. I learned trials in Flint. I learned temptations in Flint. I learned what PTSD was in Flint.

I learned about the solar system in Flint. I learned to cherish rations in Flint. I learned calculus in Flint. I learned Six Sigma in Flint. I learned marketing in Flint. I learned operational excellence in Flint. I learned to hate hatred in Flint.

I learned the pain from prejudice in Flint.

I learned to drive in Flint. I learned the power of preparation in Flint. I learned pride in Flint. I learned creativity in Flint. I learned to speak French in Flint. I learned to speak Spanish in Flint. I learned to speak Swedish in Flint. I learned to speak Norwegian in Flint. I learned to speak Danish in Flint.

I learned about politics in Flint. I learned how to play the piano in Flint. I learned how to play the clarinet in Flint. I learned AutoCAD in Flint. I learned how to work on car engines in Flint.

I learned how to let go of anger regarding “things” that were taken from us when our house was broken into repeatedly in Flint.

I learned time management in Flint. I learned how to appreciate nature in Flint. I learned how to deal with difficult people in Flint. I learned how to drive a manual / stick shift in Flint. I learned how to back up a trailer and not hit a tree in Flint.

I learned to never say never in Flint.

I learned that my Flint was not like thousands of others that lived there during the same years that I did. You see, my parents created an atmosphere full of smiles and great memories of love. They did not have much. What they did have was a specific and systematic strategy to give their children the best Flint had to offer. The best in terms of what they could afford and our bond had no monetary value, it was awesome.

And... I learned that I was clueless as to a lot of what was really going on behind the scenes until after I watched *Roger & Me* by Michael Moore. My eyes were then opened to a different side of Flint. I learned that I still love Flint and still want the best for the families that reside there.

Do you see Leadership? Strategy? Success? YES I learned to be Novaturient in Flint. **Novaturient**, “Desiring or seeking powerful change in one’s Life, Behavior, or Situation”

Last but not least, I learned to SMILE in Flint. I cherish the memories of my dad’s big smile, laughing until he would cry crazy breathless tears. I remember my mom’s sweet smile, so cute, so darling, so supportive. I remember my brothers smile, so thin, smirky and devious looking. It always made me wonder what he was up to (actually it still does).

ABOUT KRYSTYLLE RICHARDSON

S.M.I.L.E. by Krystylle L. Richardson © 2019

- S – Live life simply, focus on your purpose and let God do the rest
- M – Live life in the moment, don't fret over what you cannot change
- I – Live life with intention, be the best you and continually celebrate your own uniqueness everyday
- L – Live life always showing love and taking the higher road, even when it is uncomfortable
- E – Live life with endless effortless smiles for everyone you meet... everyday

Krystylle is a *Dreams to Destiny Super-Catalyst* and has been called an Expert, Driven, Brilliant, Anointed, an Amazing Business Coach, Innovative Thinker and a True Leader. She has 38 yrs experience in international business, engineering, leadership, operational excellence, public speaking and missions in 25 countries. Entrepreneurs/Inventors hire her to unravel their mind-webs and propel their businesses to the land of Impact, Financial Freedom and Fulfillment of their Powerful Purpose with a meaningful Give Back Model as a must. She has authored 3 books - the newest "FLINT OUT LOUD, 11 Lessons of Strategy, Leadership and Success." Her next books - "The **Lead~Serve~Win** Addiction", "Rising Above Depression for Women", "The Quality Side". Krystylle's radio show, SOARING WITH EAGLES has had 17k listeners in 22 countries in just 9 months. Krystylle and her non-profit has won Humanitarian awards, and her work has been featured in domestic/international news publications & news shows. Contact Krystylle to speak, conduct training, analysis your business

DR. KEN 'DR. SMILEY' ROCHON, JR.

structure and monetize your unique win today! Then, refine and repeat as often as necessary, until you reach your maximum impact!

KrystylleRichardson.com
BuildThatBiz.com
non-profit FullColorMovement.com

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Heather Rine

You have had an extraordinary life experience smile, its now up to you to discover the gifts that experience gave.

INSPIRED SMILES: HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT TO PRINCIPAL

BY HEATHER KRISTINE RINE

My folks opted for the country life after I was born so they packed everything up from our little house in Buffalo NY and moved us to Youngstown New York when I was five years old. I had a busy childhood playing sports, taking dance lessons and playing the violin while also working hard on the chores demanded of a country lifestyle.

I grew up in a strict household as my father was a navy Vietnam veteran trained by the seals. He ran a really tight ship which meant that everyone contributed to keeping the house running in an orderly way with their specifically assigned contributions, and a 'better to be seen and not heard' mentality was enforced.

I guess it would seem like a beautiful childhood, but there was another side to it. One that I haven't spoken of until now.

My father suffered from PTSD and had been sprayed with Agent Orange twice during his service in Vietnam. He would have instances of incredibly violent anger and rage, but there was also another side to him that was all heart, where he would do anything for anybody.

Throughout my childhood I experienced times where he would fly into a rage and hold me against the wall by my neck, or push my head under the waters in Lake Ontario, only to be pulled up at the last moment to take one breath and be plunged back under again.

These are just examples of the physical abuse, but the verbal abuse was just as bad, and would continue until I finally saved myself and ran away from home at 14 years of age.

Before I was able to run away though, I experienced the worst day of my life.

I was washing dishes at a restaurant on the lower Niagara River and I

was invited to a party that night and I thought it would be a good idea to steal a bottle of vodka to take with me, I just wanted to be accepted.

The owner of the restaurant happened to come down at the same time I had my hand around the bottle, and she asked me what I was doing. I told her the truth.

I was fired on the spot, but the worst part was that this woman was my mom's friend. I begged her not to tell my parents, or at least not to tell my dad. She just paused, looked at me and told me that she was going to hold me accountable and tell both of my parents. If she only knew how this would set him off maybe she never would've told him.

I was in the backseat of my mom's car and I don't completely remember what happened, but I was told I was being a smartass to my father as we were driving and my father came over the seat and pinned me with his arm across my neck and against the seat. I couldn't gasp for air, not even a little bit. All I remember was that we were driving, my father had me pinned by my neck against the seat of the car, and then all of a sudden we were in the parking lot of the restaurant.

I was so scared, but I got out of the car and walked into the restaurant where I sat at the table with the owner, my mother and my father. I asked to go to the bathroom because I didn't feel well, and that's when I looked in the mirror and I saw all the capillaries had been popped in my face and neck and both my eyes were filled with blood, this is the first time that there was visual evidence of my abuse.

When I went back to school the next day I was called into the assistant principals office and was asked what had happened to me, and I lied. I didn't know what else to do. I told him I ran into a tree at the Peach Festival, and didn't say another word. The consequences for me at home for telling him the truth wasn't worth the risk. Who would protect me from the next attack if I told the truth?

I started getting poor grades in school and was only scraping by so I could play sports. I couldn't handle being benched because of bad grades. But when my patella was chipped in my knee right before softball season and I was no longer going to be able to play, I didn't see much point in going to school. Sports was the only place I felt a sense of belonging. I was one of the best players and it was the only thing I had left that also kept me out of the house for longer.

The teachers became harder and harder on me, making me feel more insecure, telling me that I was a bad person, a loser, that I was stupid and wasn't going to amount to anything for missing class, for not turning in the homework and failing tests. It wasn't that I wanted to fail, I couldn't do anything more, I was just trying to survive.

They didn't ask the right questions, they didn't call home or even notice that I didn't have lunch. They just kept reminding me I wasn't going to graduate in front of my classmates, and even in the halls during passing periods. Everything was falling apart and I thought about suicide to escape the abuse, pain and failure that was projected on to me from the adults in my life that were in positions of influence.

I believed their words, because they were affirming everything my family was telling me, that I was no good. There was so much humiliation in that space, and so much fear that I eventually moved out of town to Utah, and then Utah led to Nevada.

•••••

Nevada is where my healing journey really began. I got married, had two amazing sons and I started going to church as well as leading children programs. The church I went to had a private Christian school and after a couple of conversations after they found out that I had a biology background; I was serving as part-time teacher which gave me the opportunity to be a full-time mama to Matthew and Nicolas.

In between teaching I went to college classes while the boys were in school and one night class a week. I loved teaching, but even more than that I loved to innovate the classes I taught and made sure to always bring a true sense of community to the classroom. I desired to create a culture where my students could be themselves while learning who they are becoming.

This is where my passion began to build.

The students and I collaborated, and the only question I asked then was what they wanted to feel like when they entered the school. It's their heart that answered and that gave me direction to my 16 plus years in education. I had a new purpose which was to serve students where they were at and create possibilities to accomplish their dreams.

I fell in love and smiled recognizing that as my purpose was unfolding, healing was taking place through service to others and self development. I was going to become the person who I needed during my K-12 years.

I was still working on my degrees at that time and, eventually, we moved to Colorado where I became a paraeducator so I could have more time to work on my graduate degree and have less work to take home. I stayed with an innovative school and was a part of a team of four that opened a school in Parker Colorado; a school of distinction. Much needed autonomy allowed for creation which meant there were more opportunities to serve students emotional growth and avenues times 10 in partnerships with 4-year colleges, community colleges and trade schools. Nineteen year old students were graduating with bachelors degrees, associate degrees and accredited certificates and opportunities to go to some of the most prestigious schools, far ahead of their peers taking traditional routes.

So here I was, a high school dropout serving as a paraeducator, biology teacher then Dean.

As much as I loved the children and families we were serving, our families were getting more of me than my own sons, self care-out was out the

window, I was tired and my health was declining. Then, when I was about to drop, something special showed up. I was offered the opportunity to open another school that was going to be innovative in completely different ways. I made the decision to go with a brand new concept school, applied and was hired to build another school out of 435 applicants.



Smile headlines, high school dropout opens innovative high school as a principal.

Rising to walk more in my purpose of disrupting education to infuse emotional intelligence into a school culture and curriculum; that's what all my experiences were building to. To serve in this special place. With heavy influence from my intellectual property and full charge we created inspired routes that included entrepreneurship, emotional resilience, habits of success, project-based learning lessons, creative rubrics that inspired action with a solution oriented approach, concurrent enrollment, emotional/academic advising and a team that would choose me to lead and gave all of their talents.

What we were learning as a team would cultivate emotional wellness paths with a golden thread weaved through all their class work designed to help students improve their self image, resiliency, purpose and remove barriers learned and give students the freedom to use their imagination to prove subject mastery. We earned performance our first completed year, which is extremely rare.

Learning the path of a student, some had been bullied, abused in many ways and had suicide in their deck as a tool for coping. These stories were my story but now I was in a position to help influence them and had a team who knew how to activate a higher purpose, rather than passing state exams. Pillars of strength, emotional resilience, self love, self compassion, these are the building blocks to further learning. To not address the emotional needs of our students would be neglectful. Who cares about algebra, when a student is not safe at home, homeless or doesn't have anything to eat.

I made a choice not to be a victim, but an advocate. An innovator, a solution oriented approach to a system that serves students no matter where they are in their path so we can create individualized plans to meet their needs. To be a part of something that was just so beautiful and needed.

I'm not a victim of abuse.

I'm just a regular woman who was put on a hard path so I could learn the deeper needs of our future generations. And this path opened me up to experiences I never could have imagined, and for that, I'm endlessly grateful.

ABOUT HEATHER KRISTINE RINE

Seeing people succeed and serving them in the highest and best way possible is my passion. Committed to each of my client's success, and work with them as they undergo their transition while they learn to tap into their limitless potential. For the past 20 years I have grown and served in the realm of helping others, especially through the educational field where I thrived as a high school principal, shaping young minds and giving them the skills to truly believe in themselves and how to find their place in this ever expanding world. On top of this, I have also opened two schools from the ground floor, which meant that I was able to instill my own unique guidance into these structures right from the get go.

One of my most prized accomplishments is that I also hold Master's degrees in Industrial Organizational Psychology as well as Counselling Psychology with an emphasis on Human Behaviour. While I'm still working on myself and my growth, my purpose in this world is to cultivate prosperous environments that encourage productivity for both myself, my family and those I serve.

Books that changed your life:

The Four Agreements, Think and Grow Rich,
Psycho Cybernetics

Movies that inspire you:

Life of Pi, The blind side, Good Will Hunting,
The Notebook

Song that inspires you:

Alisha Keys-Brand new me

Your Hero:

To KJ Rine Scrimshire (momma) Your ambition
became mine and through that connection,
well its eternal.

Quote you live by:

“Cherish your visions and your dreams as they
are the children of your soul, the blueprints of
your ultimate achievements.”



Sherrie Rose

“A smile is a priceless gift.”

SMILE + LOVE = RELATIONSHIP BY SHERRIE ROSE

“The Real Currency is Relationship Riches.”

Relationship Riches is *The Ultimate Act For Making A Difference In The World.*

Making a connection with another person often starts with a smile. A connection that develops into a relationship is the core of our purpose. Relationships that are deep and heartfelt make life worthwhile. As Ken Rochon asks, “What better gift can you give the people you love than making yourself the happiest by seeing the people you love be happy?” This is what Relationship Riches is all about.

I enjoy researching subjects that spark my intellectual curiosity. I have contributed to several books including Ken Rochon's, *Science of Smiles*, *The Chemistry and Psychology of Happiness*.

Fortunately, I have had a good life and a good upbringing. That is not so say that my life was a perfect childhood. But it was and continues to be a blessing.

My dad was a doctor and my mom a nurse. I have loving relationships with my siblings. I had a good marriage and two lovely children. On Sept 11, 2001 I was in Lower Manhattan and that was the end of my marriage. The clarity of the World Trade Center tragedy identified that we wanted different things and we went our separate ways and are friends.

My parents are my role models.

My father was born in Oranmore, in the County Galway, Ireland, the eldest of seven children. In Galway, he attended St. Mary's followed by many years at St. Joseph's. He often spoke of cycling six miles to and from school each day. While he was growing up, he was a member of

the militia and trained as a young soldier which he excelled in especially as a sharpshooter. He subsequently entered medical school at the National University of Ireland, Galway (formerly University College Galway).

A talented sportsman, passionate about the Irish sport of hurling, he was on the inter-varsity college hurling team, winning three Fitzgibbon medals. He was also a boxer.

Additional medical education at the Coombe Hospital, and other Dublin hospitals, allowed him to do locum tenens in the industrial cities of northern England. Later, with a desire to see more of the world, he joined the British Merchant Navy sailing on P&O vessels from England to the Middle and Far East as Ship's Surgeon, twice encircling the globe.

Dad joined the Canadian Army as an officer in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps. He served in Korea during and after the hostilities before being posted to Japan. In peacetime, Dad continued his education at the University of Toronto, in Canada, receiving his Public Health Degree. He was posted to Montreal and this allowed him to meet my mother who was soon graduating from Nursing School. He

was able to “talk shop” with my mom which was key to their long and happy marriage. Dad rejoined the civilian population and began service with the Dept. of National Health and Welfare including senior port Doctor and later medical officer in charge at Pier 21, the major port of entry of immigrants to Canada at that time.

In recognition of his service, my father was invited by the South Korean government to a revisit at the 50th anniversary of the end of the Korean War in April, 2003. Unfortunately he passed away on February 1. I took my Dad's place and accompanied my mother to Korea. My mother represented him at the honorary banquet and was she was presented with his Ambassador for Peace Medal. This was one of the highlights of my Mom's life.

My Mom was born in Montreal, Canada. As a youth, she traveled to the Canadian Rockies with the Girl Guides. Through the Girl Guides she met Daphne Montefiore. The Montefiore Society helped plan the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal. She earned a diploma from the Jewish General Hospital School of Nursing and became a registered nurse. Her lifelong nursing career included positions in pediatrics, home care, and as a supervisor at Northwood.

Mom met a dashing doctor and they were married the same year. The couple continued to practice medicine and raise a family despite their different religious backgrounds.

Mom was an extraordinary woman driven by boundless intellectual capacity, she excelled at most endeavors. She was an outstanding, caring listener, and had a unique ability to engage in deep, meaningful conversation with people from all walks of life. She developed wonderful friendships and after dad's death, and she reconnected with her Jewish roots. Her personal interests included history, swimming, gardening, singing with choirs, and volunteer positions.

She was a travel enthusiast and visited Ireland, her husband's home country, many countries in Europe, Israel and the Middle East, Egypt, China, across Canada, the USA, and cruised Mexico and the Caribbean. An avid reader and historical researcher, she often knew more about the places she visited than her tour guides. She also frequently enjoyed visiting her daughters in California, Seattle and Victoria and Paris and loved to tour with her brother in the beautiful American Southwest. She enjoyed photographing her travels and family life and kept wonderful photo albums which are treasured by her family.

Through her strong will, she bridged a family with different religious backgrounds and beliefs, dealing with adversity across oceans and continents and took charge in many lives as a caregiver, head nurse, and matriarch.

She raised her children into good capable people who continue to propagate the best of her tremendous spirit into their own lives and progeny; certainly to the clear benefit of our future generations.

Family has always been the first priority in her life. She was a dedicated daughter and as a mother and grandmother has infinitely touched and positively influenced her children and seven grandchildren.

One of the lessons that my Dad taught was that our main choice in this world is whether or not to act with goodness.

He often said our world is “going to hell in a hand basket.” He said that our world is lacking moral underpinnings, celebrities have become role models, and the reverence for God has subsided. People have become bitter; feel entitled, and lack kindness and generosity. This is all because their souls are empty. He followed his religion and felt that connected him to God.

He implored, “How do you change this world?” His reply was always the same and it hit home. He said, “It is by your words, deeds, and actions. You become a gentleman by acting like a gentleman. You become a lady by acting like a lady. You become kind by doing deeds of kindness. You become generous by giving. You become good by sharing goodness.”

Do you want to be liked? I know I do.

It is a deep-rooted desire to be liked and with billions of people on our planet, living in harmony, getting along, and boosting others up, is vital to being effective and happy.

You may want more to be liked. You may want to be popular. Being liked or being popular starts first with liking other people. When you genuinely like other people, in a sincere way, not for a purpose, you will generally be liked in return.

This all seems rudimentary, but it is not always easy. Some people, well, are difficult to like. Liking requires practice and the more you do it, the easier it becomes.

As mentioned earlier, my personal motto is: “*The Real Currency is Relationship Riches.*” When you first meet another person it may begin as an interaction as a medium for an exchange just like currency changing hands. As the relationship develops, there is collective experience which goes beyond the ‘you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours’ transaction. (This idiom was first recorded in 1704.)

Almost 100 years ago, Martin Buber wrote a book, *I and Thou*. His main point was there are two ways to relate to another person: as objects or as subjects. As objects it means, “How can I use this person;” as a means to an end. As subjects it means someone who comes to the encounter with needs and feelings of his or her own. Focus on the other person as a subject and give your full attention. It is no longer about doing favors favor in hopes that a favor will be returned but about the relationship as a whole.

The primary person in *Relationship Riches* is you. It is your relationship with yourself, the longest relationship you will ever have. This does not mean that you only focus on yourself as your primary concern. Drop your self-consciousness about what you think is a flaw. When you are suffering (on the inside) people unconsciously pick up on your

tension. You accept yourself and strive forward. This means that you work on yourself to remove fear, anxiety, worry, and self-centeredness. This results in becoming more joyful and warm-hearted. Your vitality and charm will begin to exude and people will be delighted to be around you. Shift your attention to other people. Why does this work? William James, an American philosopher, psychologist, and physician said, “The deepest drive in human nature is the desire to be appreciated.”

Who, when they hear your name, “lights up” with a smile and is delighted to see and speak with you? Who in your life wants to be appreciated by you?

We often allow the greeting card companies to schedule our interactions because the advertisements, the store displays and the internet banners are all screaming out to you. This can be helpful but, reaching out to a friend or family member, “just because,” is often better. You don’t need a reason. Like the Nike slogan, “Just do it.”

Words of encouragement or appreciation can be shared if you know someone is working towards a goal. Checking in before the goal is completed can be just as reassuring as after the goal is met. If the

situation is problematic and you show understanding and patience, your thoughtfulness will be well received. When you help to bring out the best in another person their self-esteem and confidence will grow.

Another important trait of being liked is to have a high tolerance in times of stress. You do not get irritated or annoyed easily. Those people with a high spiritual attitude often are more poised and even-tempered.

There is also a way to turn criticism into a positive situation. Apart from the lesson to be learned, you can expect criticism (ask any teacher or politician) and not be surprised by it.

The art of listening is one of the great secrets to being well-liked. Sometimes advice is not what is being sought-after, it is an open ear. Listen quietly, sympathetically, with love in your heart. This often helps the person to talk out their problems and find their own solutions. You will be liked for being a person who truly listens.

When you go a little deeper to find out what really is going on with someone who seems in a bad way, you can make more of a connection.

To gain a place in the heart of others, have an upbeat attitude, inspire others, and supply courage, strength, and appreciation. Lift someone's spirit.

The dialogue below, started with a quote from Napoleon Hill shared by me, Sherrie Rose, in a Facebook group: *"One of the most important principles of success is developing the habit of going the extra mile."* Here's the dialogue with Scott Lovingood, Marxua Murhpy, Jeremy Stuzka, Ben Brooks, and Paulo Roldan.

Scott responded: *I honestly think the bar has been lowered in the last decade. Just going the extra few feet makes all the difference. So many people have decided to do just enough to get by. Doing above and beyond is seen as extraordinary these days.*

Maruxa says: *I was just having lunch today with a successful marketer here in Austin, and we got on the topic of creating relationships that truly make an impact. The power of relationships that go above and beyond makes all the difference in the way marketing and selling works. I absolutely believe you can create more sustained money/income by growing relationships through being a valuable and extraordinary person. Sometimes, that extra-ordinary is the small things you do to show you care.*

Scott replied: *When I train our people every year I make sure they know this one key fact. **If people like you, they will forgive if you making a mistake.** You don't have to be perfect you have to be liked. We are in the relationship business. We just happen to do our job while we build them. The relationship is what separates us from our competitors and where we can make the biggest difference in people's lives. We learn about our customers, feel for them and work to provide them the best value we can just like would for our friends and family. One lady in our office refers to every new customer as her New Best Friend.*

Jeremy replied: *Wow that sounds exactly how my grandfather would describe business! ... The circle is closing!*

Ben says: *Treat every customer as the most important person in the world.*

Paulo says: *And the rest of your business partners should be treated the same way.*

Jeremy replied: *There was one progressive company I worked for. They taught me partners and co-workers are really internal clients, and thus*

should be treated as clients that you want to work with again. How you thinking about them makes all the difference to your happiness, which affects how you make that money and of course, the actual revenue generated.

Relationships are powerful. From international relations to human social, interpersonal, intimate relations, relationships are the experience we have with each other here on planet earth.

You cannot separate relationships and conversations. How we collaborate and get along with each other is a factor on an international scale and a personal basis. Communication takes many forms.

Sometimes the best conversations have no words. Body language can speak volumes. A nod, a wink can be all the gesture you need to get your point across.

Conversations, whether online, text, or in person, are the basis of relationship building. Most commerce revolves around relationships whether business to business or business to consumer. Mathematical and database models also use the term relationship. Even automated

businesses start with people planning the strategy and implementing the tactics. In business, and particularly if you are a coach or a consultant providing a service, you can use conversations to create trust and strong connections to build relationships.

Unfortunately, if you have bad habits in your personal relationships, then your conversation style spills over into business, and you may fall into patterns such as “talking over” each other, not listening or needing to ‘being right’ or wanting the last word. When this happens, the conversation then triggers fear and judgment to takes over. The neuroscience does not matter (but it is interesting to discover hardwired circuits in all human brain functions).

Daniel Goleman defines relationship management as the combination of your self-management and your social awareness to understand emotions in strengthening relationships with others.

Improving relationships begins with communication.

How you talk to your spouse, partner, children, and neighbors is the core of your conversation style.

Close relationships is one area of life where using positive psychology can make a big difference. According to Professor Shelly Gable, conversations are either active or passive and constructive or destructive. She found that out of four possible ways to respond to a partner’s positive news, only the “active-constructive response” is good. Couples or business partners who react in any of three less positive ways are at greater risk of separating.

Consider the following example Gable gives to illustrate: Your significant other comes home, beaming, and announces that he/she just got a great promotion at work. You could react with:

1. Active-constructive response (BEST). “That’s great, you’ve earned it, I’m so proud of you!” followed by questions. *Conveys enthusiasm, support, and interest.*
2. Passive-constructive response. “Great job, honey!” then shifting to the next topic. Like dinner.
3. Active-destructive response. “Wow! Does this mean you’ll be working later hours? Are they going to be paying you more? I can’t believe they picked you out of all the candidates.” *Generally deflating.*

4. Passive-destructive response. Can take either of two forms: “Wow! Wait until I tell you what happened to me today,” which is very self-focused, or, “What’s for dinner?”—*Ignoring the event altogether.*

Moving into the business realm, because of the impact of financial gain and career advancement, when you improve conversations you tap the power of communication so you can create even deeper, more impressive results with your clients, team and the whole organization.

You don't need to be a business leader to take advantage of investing in Relationship Riches. However, you will find politicians and spiritual leaders are at the core of those who are driving change and achieving superior results by leveraging communication and building relationships. Communication and cooperation have close ties.

In negotiation, the relationship often involves posturing and jockeying for position. If there is a transaction involved (Quid pro quo: you give me this, I'll give you that) that requires a contingency then, once the transaction is complete, the relationship may plateau and not grow.

In both our personal and business lives, if there is fear of conflict unless you are someone who does not mind confrontation and getting everything out on the table, then the ability to communicate with honesty and care, diminishes. Then there is a block and lack of movement and the relationship stagnates.

This is a good time to mention Stephen Covey's fifth habit – **Seek first to understand, then to be understood.** The rule is that understanding must precede any advice. The first goal of the conversation is only to understand, not to problem-solve. The reason that understand must come first is because premature problem solving tends to shut people down and close up. You want openness. Problem-solving and advice should only begin when both parties feel totally understood.

In business relationships, when there is a standstill, a mediator or communication coach is brought in to facilitate conversations. The goal is to help resolve conflict and deadlocks, and mediation is a voluntary process to settle disputes with an impartial third-party. What may also be uncovered are the interaction dynamics between the parties. If you are paying attention to the patterns (and breaking and interrupting the patterns), you may find that it strikes a chord and provides valuable insight. Then you can apply

this going forward in with your colleagues and other business relationships. Individuals, teams, and organizations can shift to conversations that fundamentally transform the future of the company. A positive side effect is that you can make decisions faster, with higher levels of wisdom and a greater ability to see the impact you have on others.

As we have evolved from the basic transaction, we move up to the transformational level where you'll find conversations that spark movements and organizations that want change the world for the better. Core values are part of the transformation conversation and they encourage new ideas and openness.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs published in 1943, "*A Theory of Human Motivation*," identified the highest motivation as self-actualization (defined as realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences). You must satisfy lower level basic needs before progressing on to be able to reach self-actualization and this is the transcending level where there is an awakening and giving component. There is a deep understanding that the culture and conversation within an organization impact not just profits and customer satisfaction, but how they are perceived as "doing good" in

the world. The culture conversation is a mirror of the people and what they think about and how they act. The quality of relationship dialogue is what will take you and your organization to the transcend level.

Who is making deals in business? Those who have built relationships. Who do you have on speed dial? That's Relationship Riches. And of course, those riches also mean more profits. Business relationships are likely the ultimate lever for making a difference in the world.

Relationship Riches in business give people the ability to have conversations that create businesses from the 'inside out' for more impact, more meaning, and more happiness for everyone involved.

ABOUT SHERRIE ROSE

Sherrie Rose spiraled into online membership and digital product creation after her first interview with the \$10 Million Dollar man in 2009. As a Relationship Investor she blends marketing and her “Relationship Riches” philosophy with webinars.

Sherrie is an independent thinker, who takes action, trains others and presents high-impact, results-oriented web seminars and conferences.

She is known for her book, *The Webinar Way* (now in second edition), and for her coaching at WebinarCoach.com and *Power of Webinars* training program. Contact Sherrie for your webinar strategy session in preparation for your very first pilot webinar, or learn how to uncover more profits from an existing webinar.

Sherrie Rose has led high performance teams, as well as pioneered profitable webinar projects for business owners and organizations. She has worked in a wide range of companies such as Telecommunications, Insurance, Movie & Television, Software Development, Marketing,

Event Planning, and with various businesses and entrepreneurs.

Here's what a few co-workers and clients have to say about Sherrie:

Sherrie has exceptional leadership skills and great people skills to bring diverse people together. She takes ownership and blends vision for what a project should be with commitment through completion.

She is natural translator to bring teams together and ensure smooth, clear communication behind the scenes. The integral role and value of this communication cannot be underestimated.

Amazing mentor. Willing to help the team learn new things. Smart, calm, patient and dedicated. You create a bond like a family and put trust in your team. You take time to explain situations and context around goals to create momentum. She acts with professionalism and grace.

Your positivity and enthusiasm makes working with you a pleasure. You always put your heart in everything that you do, and projects are a success because of your efforts. Everything is brilliantly organized.



Audrey Ruttan

“Smiles are the soul food of your mood.”

LIFELIFE LEGACY OF AUDREY RUTTAN A.K.A. CHARLIE CHAPLIN

BY AUDREY RUTTAN

I was born and raised on a farm in Ontario Canada 100 miles north of Toronto in Gravenhurst Muskoka I was growing up on the phone with your vegetables potatoes corn milk cows killed pigs pork and we had goats chickens etc. I walk to school or church I bought a mile away on the dirt road and when I came home from school I had to go out to the barn and clean the staples out before I had supper oh so we had to haul our water from the pump to bring the water to the house to have water and we are we took baths and a little brown 10 bathtubs. My parents were always fighting and yelling at you and fish Friday night each other they both have bad tempers we also hunt deer Do you have meat for the winter I also catch frogs for fisherman and made a little money My

parents on 4000 feet of Lakeshore +300 acres of land 100 acres of that
Was clear for haying we made our own maple syrup because we had
lot of maple at the eight when I cam home from school I went to take a
nap our house caught on fire got up and walk out my oldest sister save
my under sister we lost everything my Dad build a brick house I have
four sisters and one brother on the farm we work hard the most sad
part is my parents could not live together always Arguing and fighting
At the age of 14 I went into town and got myself a job at working in a
restaurant name salons restaurant and washing dishes by the I didn't
talk til I was five the following 1967 then 1968 I went and worked and
live then I worked in restaurant as a waitress short order cook and
cashier When I was your age 14 I said to my dad that I would like to be
an undertaker when I grow up my dad said working with them dead
bodies and I said that won't bother me At the age of 18 I moveTo British
Columbia for three months and I decided I didn't like it there and then
I moved to run Calgary Alberta and then at working for the University
of Calgary doing the anatomy and teaching students This is when
people donate cadavers to medical science are there at the University
of Calgary and where people can learn anatomy for for the medical
students for for their career and students are studying and becoming
doctors Bracebridge Muskoka Ontario Canada I went to a trade school

and I took up hairdressing and in order to do you have a trade but I
didn't go in that direction now you're not going into the medical field
because I wanted to do autopsies and becoming a mortician and I end
up doing becoming a big old is assistant and I work in a lot of different
Hospitals in Ontario Canada and then in 1984 I just cited to move to
the stage to live in America and I came to California and I negotiated
with my cousin and I worked at a job delivering housekeeping took
care of a man drove him to the veterans hospital etc. and I got involved
in being a clown doing Bruyne animals and and I did studying for the
become a professional clown because I was illegal here for three years
living in America then I got my green card through the Ronald Reagan
Amentsy I continue to do my clowning for kids parties and I also a face
painter and balloon artist I always had a job 1992 I worked in a hospi-
tal for six years doing autopsy and also worked at LA Coroners office to
learn forensic pathology I was still doing clown parties on the weekend
I did company picnics etc 1996 quit the hospital and took up acting and
worked on lot of movies men in black 1and2 nick of Time Then I got
my Sag card movie business slowed down I got three months behind in
my rent so I had this old jacket and hat and study Charlie Chaplin and
then I went out to worked in Hollywood at the Grumman's Chinese
theatre millions of tourists come from all the world took pictures with

tourists my first day was exciting until after two hrs police came up to me and ask me to leave I was so depressed I talk with a friend of mine and told me go down to the watch commander so I did he I can go out there and worked I did that till 2005 then I move to twenty nine palms and did shows on the base private parties in 2006 I got a job working as Charlie in front of copy katez celebrity impersonator shows the that fold up and end up becoming emansdar for Palm Springs walk of Stars for ten years also did a lot of benefits when I was in Hollywood I was silent spoke person of the Rose Breast Cancer Society plus done so many charties and some TV Shows I have been written up in news papers LA times Desert Star PBS over The world my life was like a roller couster grown up on a farm taught me a lot as today I am semi retired but I still do Charlie Chaplin by the way 1992 I also impersonate Michael Jackson after six months scandal that ended that career I work on splendid as Michael Jackson in this type of business you half to be versatile I was a working entertainer for over thirty years now for the last few years I played music worked with different bands as a percussion I am lady of a thousands faces I have done a lot of parades one of the most famous parade is New Years Tourment of Roses as Jiffy the Magic Clown parade member of the Hollywood Magic Castle

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My deepest is that I like people and see smiles on there faces in my life I had a lot of anger and sad ness so I had to create something and for that Ivan have a purpose in life I get when people come up and give you comments and appreciate you for what you are doing I also done shows in assistant living places my calling is would like to do lectures for thee young kids how to have a purpose in life trouble with lot of these kids they have to much handle to them

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You abundance by being nice to people no matter what job or nationality they are by me being Charlie Chaplin people love it I am very well known in the whole Palm Springs Palm desert LA area and around the world I must stay being Charlie my strongest character laughter is the best medicine laughter provide oxygen and good oxygen can kill cancer cells it's very for kids to follow there dream no matter what comes in your life never give up music is very important always talks about life issues.

ABOUT AUDREY RUTTAN

One of the best Charlie Chaplin in the World I am a character actress
Michael Jackson look a like professional Clown Magician I worked as
a Ailen on amen in Black 2 done charity events such as the rose breast
cancer society veterans hospital assistant living homes Well of the
Desert festivals experience 1994 Los and your aid walk Los Angeles
Hollywood Park Casino tribute to Alvas Hotel robber chat for low
income housing for children Los Angeles actors for animals seen on
Fox News CNN news Rickie Longshadow Marshall judge for your-
self hard copy Is Michael Jackson I've done so much done SAG magic
Castle member

Books That Changed Your Life

Nutritional real human life when people escape
from communist world Charlie Chaplin etc

Movie That Inspires You

West side Story Wish Man good humor
modern times lot of the silent movies

Your Hero

Wonder Woman

Quote You Live By:

"Do unto others as you would
have them do unto you."



Noah St. John, #1 Bestselling Author and Founder of Power Habits® Academy

“Let your true light shine through your smile.”

AFFORMATIONS®: THE NEW TECHNOLOGY TO KEEP SMILING

BY NOAH ST. JOHN

AUTHOR OF 15 BOOKS INCLUDING POWER
HABITS® AND THE BOOK OF AFFORMATIONS®

Have you ever had an “Aha” Moment in the shower? Sure, it happens all the time. You’re holding the shampoo bottle, when suddenly it hits you: the idea that would change everything, the solution to the problem you’ve been facing, the answer to the question you’ve been asking.

And it was right in front of you all along...

April 24, 1997. A crisp spring morning in New England. I’m living in a dorm room at the small liberal arts college where I’m majoring in

religious studies. The dorm room itself is so small that if you stand in the middle of the room, you can touch the walls on either side.

I'm 30 years old, divorced, and have less than \$800 to my name. I also have no idea what I'm going to do with the rest of my life.

On the night before *The Shower That Changed Everything*, I'm sitting in my tiny dorm room when three thoughts occur to me. The first thought is that something is terribly wrong with my life. The second thought is that I have no idea how to fix my life. And the third thought, which bothers me even more than the first two, is that if anyone should be successful, it's me; and since I'm anything but successful, I definitely feel like a complete and utter failure.

Let me explain.

I grew up poor in a rich neighborhood. Although I was raised in one of the wealthiest communities in New England, my family was dirt poor. I mean that literally, because we lived at the bottom of a dirt road, in a drafty, unfinished house.

When I was about nine years old, I once asked my mother, "Mom, how come you and Dad are always fighting about money? And how come we never have enough food?" (Yes, I was constantly thinking about food, or the lack thereof, in our household.)

My mother told me that she and my father fought about money because she was constantly afraid they wouldn't be able to pay the bills and keep food on the table. When she said that, I was very confused, because I saw both my father and mother working all the time. Weeks would go by and we'd hardly see my father, because he'd work 80 hours a week or more, while my mother worked part-time jobs too.

So I asked her the next logical question, a question any kid that age would ask: "Why don't we have enough money?"

I don't think my mother really knew how to answer that question, so she took out the family checkbook and showed me how much money was coming in and going out every month. And sure enough, there was more month left at the end of the money.

At that moment, I made two decisions. First, I decided that I wouldn't ask my parents for anything. Now, I'm sure that was not my mother's intention; nevertheless, I decided to not ask for things, because I didn't want to be a burden to her or my family.

Second, I decided to make something of my life, even though I had no idea what that meant, let alone how to do it. But I decided that I hated that life of lack and fear and poverty, and that it wasn't the life I wanted.

That's when I began devouring books on self-help, written by authors like Dale Carnegie, Napoleon Hill, and Stephen Covey. I spent most of my childhood in the library reading books, because books were a way to escape from that life of poverty, fear, and not-enoughness.

I also made sure to work hard and apply myself to my studies in school, because I naturally assumed that the best way to get ahead in life was to get good grades (since that's what they told us). I got straight A's, skipped eighth grade, graduated at the top of my class, and got full scholarships to college. By the time I graduated from high school, my parents, teachers and friends were telling me that I was going to be a big success.

Yet, all those years later, there I sat in my pint-sized dorm room with nothing to show for all my hard work but a series of missed opportunities, failed relationships, and less than \$800 to my name.

For as long as I could remember, I'd had this inescapable, gnawing feeling that there was something missing. Some vital piece of information I'd overlooked. Some secret key that would unlock the vault to success.

Yet the more I looked, the harder I tried, the more the answer seemed to elude me.

That was the morning of *The Shower That Changed Everything*.

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The night before *The Shower That Changed Everything*, something else happens that's important to our story. As I'm sitting in my tiny dorm room thinking about how badly my life sucks, I notice something. In fact, I notice lots of somethings.

I realize that the walls of my dorm room are covered with sticky notes on which I'd written dozens of positive statements. Statements like, *I am happy, I am wealthy, and I am good enough.*

Why had I posted all these positive statements all over my room? Because that's what all those self-help books I'd been reading for so many years had said to do!

That night, I finally admit something that I'd never wanted to admit before—that even though I had spent most of my life trying to convince myself of the truth of these positive statements, I never really believed them. As much as I wanted to believe that I was *happy, wealthy, and good enough*, I didn't actually believe any of those things.

And the harder I tried to believe those positive things about my life, the more the cold, hard facts stared back at me and seemed to say, "*Yeah, right!*"

I turn out the light and go to bed feeling depressed, defeated, and discouraged.

The next day, I get up and get in the shower, just like any other morning. Except on this particular morning, my mind is still racing from the night before. Questions start bouncing around my head; questions that are simple, yet profound.

If you could have heard what was going on in my head at that exact moment, it would have sounded like this:

"If I've been saying these positive statements to myself for so many years, how come I don't believe them?"

"And if I don't believe these positive statements after repeating them over and over again for so long, what's it going to take for me to finally believe something good about myself?"

"There's got to be an easier way to change my life. But WHAT IS IT?"

That's when it hit me. (No, not the soap.)

I realize that what I'm doing at that very moment is asking and searching for answers to questions. In that instant, I realize that *human thought*

itself is the process of asking and searching for answers to QUESTIONS.

Suddenly, a question forms itself in my mind. A simple question that changes everything...

“If human thought is the process of asking and searching for answers to QUESTIONS, why are we going around making statements that we don’t believe?”

Suddenly, I finally understand why I never believed all those positive statements I’d been saying all those years. It all came down to one simple thing.

Of course!

It was so obvious now that I saw it.

I realized that no matter how long or how often I repeated those positive statements to myself, if I didn’t fix this one simple thing, all of my efforts would be for naught.

Something else occurs to me. I realize that there are millions of people just like me—people who are trying really hard to change their lives, people who are “following the rules” just like we were told, but who still haven’t manifested the abundant lifestyle they really want—because they don’t believe the positive statements they’ve been saying to themselves, either.

At that moment, I have the realization that if we start to ask ourselves the right questions, and stop asking the wrong questions, it would literally change everything.

For the first time in my life, I know exactly what I’m here on Earth to do.

That’s how, on April 24, 1997, I got out of *The Shower That Changed Everything*...and realized that everything had indeed, changed forever.

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After The Shower That Changed Everything, I sit down at my computer and type out a question consisting of four simple words. As I stare at

the words glowing on my computer screen, I realize that if I *accept the truth of this question*—and start *acting as if it were true*—then my life would have to change.

Then I write another question, as simple as the first one. Then another. Then another. The questions keep coming. I keep writing. For the first time, everything in my life finally makes sense.

After I have typed several pages of questions, I stare again at the computer screen. The words I have just written are different from every positive statement I'd ever seen or heard or read or written in my entire life. I know this, because in all my years of research and study, I've never seen anyone articulate thoughts in this way.

This is so cool! I think to myself. *I can't believe no one's ever thought of this before!* Then I have another thought, one that stops me in my tracks: *"What am I supposed to do now?"*

I didn't yet know the answer to that question. That's why, after *The Shower That Changed Everything*, even though I knew my life was about to change, I still didn't know what to do to change it.

So I went about the business of being a broke 30-year-old religious studies major—and tucked my discovery away, until I could figure out what to do with it.

Six months later, on October 20, 1997, I had the second epiphany that changed my life, when I realized the existence of a condition I named *success anorexia* that causes people to starve themselves of success.

That realization led to the publication of my first book, **Permission to Succeed**®, and eventually my other books like *The Book of AFFORMATIONS*® and **Power Habits**®.

I also begin doing keynote speeches, leading seminars, and coaching entrepreneurs on how to master the Inner Game and Outer Game of Success. Today, my coaching clients have added more than two billion dollars in sales as a result of using my methods.

As a result of using my Inner Game and Outer Game methods, people in over 150 countries have seen incredible, life-changing results like:

- Getting promotions after feeling completely stuck in their careers

- Growing their business after sales had been stagnant for years
- Adding six, seven, and even eight figures to their income
- Losing weight after they'd tried every diet and exercise program out there
- Finding the man or woman of their dreams after giving up on relationships
- Starting the home-based business they'd been dreaming of
- Writing their book that had languished unfinished for years
- Healing family relationships that had been broken
- Quitting smoking after they'd tried everything else
- Sleeping better after pills and medications hadn't helped
- Schoolchildren improving their grades almost overnight
- Winning golf tournaments and other sporting events for the first time, and more!

Go to www.NoahStJohn.com/coaching-reviews to get inspired by real-life success stories of people just like you from around the world.

And it all started with *The Shower That Changed Everything*.

Would you like to know how AFFORMATIONS® keep me smiling every day?

Well, one month after my 40th birthday, I decided to move from New England to a small town in Northeast Ohio. Before I moved there, I'm not sure that I could have pointed to Ohio on a map of the United States. However, a friend who lived there told me it would be, and I'm quoting here, "fun."

And while it didn't make any logical sense to me, I had been Afforming to find the person who I was meant to be with. So I decided to follow my heart instead of my head.

The day I arrived in Ohio, I said to God, "What the heck am I doing here? This doesn't make any sense!"

Three days later, that friend who convinced me to move there introduced me to one of his friends. Two weeks later, that friend introduced me to this gorgeous blonde named Babette.

And a week after that, I got up the courage to ask Babette on our first date. I was absolutely certain she was going to say “no.” To my utter astonishment, she said yes. And we’ve been together ever since.

Babette and I were married at an idyllic ceremony on April 30, 2011. At our wedding, in front of family and friends, I gave her this toast: “Because you loved me for who I am, you made me want to be a better man.” And I was crying when I said it!

The years since I turned 40 have been the happiest of my life, because in Babette, I finally found my **Loving Mirror**, something I write about in my books like *Power Habits*®.

A *Loving Mirror* is someone who believes in you before you believe in yourself. And even though I had been teaching people for over 10 years about the necessity of having Loving Mirrors, I had never had one myself—until Babette came into my life.

Today, our days are filled with family and friends, love, laughter and smiles. I also have an amazing support team that serves me and our amazing coaching clients in over 120 countries.

In addition, I lead life-changing seminars called **Freedom Lifestyle Experience** where people come from around the world to have me help them master the Inner Game and Outer Game of Success. I also lead exclusive coaching and mastermind groups for entrepreneurs who want me to help them add multiple six- and seven-figures to their businesses without information overload.

My books have now been published in 18 languages, and I’m always humbled every time I receive a letter or social media post from someone thanking me for something they learned from me, that changed their life or their business.

Every night, I thank God for the gifts of my life. I thank God for my beautiful wife, our lovely home, my amazing support team, and for our coaching clients around the world. I love you all so very much!

I hope my story inspires you to know that, no matter what challenges

you may be facing right now, there IS a way out—if you let go of the past, step into your best future, and take new ACTIONS based on the truth of Who You Really Are.

I would love to help you do that!

Connect with me at www.NoahStJohn.com and get my new book *Power Habits®: The New Science for Making Success Automatic®* at www.PowerHabitsBook.com

ABOUT NOAH ST. JOHN

Noah St. John, “The Power Habits® Mentor,” has helped his coaching clients add over \$2 billion in sales. Noah is famous for inventing AFFORMATIONS® and is the founder of the world’s most advanced Inner Game and Outer Game Mastery event, FreedomLifeX.com.

Books that changed your life:

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Movies that inspire you:

Field of Dreams, Gladiator, The Princess Bride

Song that inspires you:

Living on a Prayer by Bon Jovi

Your Hero:

My wife Babette, because she’s the most loving person I’ve ever met.

Quote you live by:

“What if I could...?”



Chris Salem

“The best smile is the best value to your face.”

MASTER YOUR INNER CHAMPION – UNBLOCK EMOTIONAL BARRIERS FOR SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

BY CHRIS SALEM

Over 20 years ago I was working relentlessly building wealth but emotionally, spiritually, and physically was bankrupt. This was tied to an unresolved root cause with my father associated with anger from my childhood. It created limited beliefs within me that lowered my self-confidence and esteem along with seeking constant validation from others. This validation subconsciously was tied to my father looking to him for acknowledgement. It nearly killed me twice with habits and behaviors

that were destroying me while the whole time it appeared to others I was a true success by the wealth accumulated. In reality, the money meant nothing if my emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being were not synchronized. It took hitting tock bottom over 20 years ago to have that “aha” moment to finally realize the solution to my problem starts with looking within you taking my moral inventory and learning to be in the moment for clarity. It took a good two years from that time to come full circle with my true self. I was able to experience true success living in the solution by resolving the root cause and striving for balance or what I like to call “harmony”.

What is harmony? It is being true to your purpose and not being distracted by shiny objects, surrounding yourself with family and love ones, nurturing your spirituality, maintaining healthy harmony of emotional and physical health, and being present in the moment. Since completing this process back then I have created awareness about unblocking emotional barriers to have sustainable success at the next level through speaking engagements to organizations by working with business leaders, entrepreneurs, and all types of people as a Business & Emotional Intelligence Strategist and Wellness Advocate. The secret to sustainable success which is built from harmony is found in the process. It is

maintaining harmony during the emotional roller coaster of ups and downs in life & business. Think of see saw! It never will be balanced evenly at the axis point. However, we strive to achieve harmony with teetering on its axis point so we do not stay in the high and lows of the emotional roller coaster.

Have you asked yourself from time to time why your life has not unfolded the way you have envisioned! What holds you back from getting things accomplished and being successful? The answer lies with past events in childhood through the teen years which is the Cause that leads to Effects that most people live in that keep them trapped in self-doubt that leads to procrastination. Your habits and behaviors unconsciously in adulthood are tied back to trigger events that have molded you into a pattern of self-doubt or success. It is your inner critic that has a choice of tapping into the positive or negative that dictates your habits and behaviors that either server you or not long term. When the emotion(s) are negative it creates negative energy that attracts new situations to experience the feeling over and over again. It further gives these limited beliefs control over us that keep us in doubt or lack of confidence. These beliefs are strong because they are deeply rooted but by no means not reversible.

For example, you see a man who has never been able to live up to his full potential with his career. He may have had a father that was overbearing and always on him to improve his performance or skills. He may have also felt neglected as his father was never there for important events or did not acknowledge him for his successes growing up. These are trigger events that develop the Cause that leads to the Effects that in adulthood will mold habits and behaviors that may be detrimental to his success due to self-doubt. Living in the effect will not change his current situation operating from self-doubt. The inner critic defaults to the negative and feeds of the Cause unconsciously that creates habits and behaviors that do not serve him. He has lived his entire life not being his authentic-self always looking to be someone else his dad or what other authoritative figures wanted him to be in life.

Another example is a man who struggles being overweight and cannot seem to gain respect from women in his life. He relatively had a decent upbringing with no traumatic events. However, his mother slightly domineering would often comment during his growing years to eat everything on his plate because good food is expensive and others in third world countries were not as fortunate as him. His mother while not malicious with intent planted a seed of guilt in this man as a

boy. In addition to struggling being overweight without long term success despite using several weight release programs he also gravitated to women more dominant than him. See the pattern here. He was not conscious to this during his adult years and during coaching did not recognize this as first. It was only through consistent questions were we able to lock in this was his Cause. Once he acknowledged this as his Cause and truly forgave his mother and most important himself then fully release it was he able in time to adopt healthier habits. These new healthier habits and mindset allowed him to make better choices with food to keep the weight off and choose wisely with a woman that was not dominant and also not submissive.

Can someone that is stuck in life change and move toward success operating from a place of peace without anxiety? The answer is YES but only when you start with addressing the Cause(s) not the Effects in your life. Your life is an evolving story and can change when you choose to change for the better. Your life is not confined by past events that negatively affected you as they can used to only strengthen to what you can become in a positive way. The start to eliminate self-doubt begins with addressing the Cause(s). Go back and write down what they are even you perceive them not to really bother you. Often, people do not realize

that certain events that happened long ago have affected their lives and play out every day in what they do that does not serve them. Confront the Cause by looking at yourself in the mirror. Accept responsibility and appreciate this negative experience if you created it. Acknowledge the cause if you did not create it but were of victim of this circumstance. Forgive the people that hurt you. You do not have to forget but just forgive. Let is go either way as the story of your life is always evolving and is not defined by just these Causes from trigger events. This can be scary for many people but the only way to release the Cause that creates the Effects that no longer serve you. You can also do with a therapist, coach, or trusted friend. Use them to build your strength in a positive way and continue to develop a story that operates from a place of joy, happiness, and peace rather than negative emotions such as anger, shame, and guilt.

When you release the Cause(s) and truly let go it will unlock the feeling of true peace and joy. You will know your life is about choices and when you come from your authentic self your story will only lead you to success over time. Coming from joy and peace your decisions to act promptly rather than procrastinate will be easier and the fear of failure less. You will have more confidence in your abilities coming from authentic-self and know the universe will play it part if you play yours

with 100% commitment and action. You will know fear is just fear itself not tied to actual objective or goal you have planned. Know success is a journey not a destination and the only true failure in life are not to start, confront, or follow through to something you fear. Always know that fear is an illusion. It is not real but only appears so when you focus and give energy to it.

Fear can manifest itself in many forms and often stems from your current emotional state. Anger is a manifestation of fear that is directed outwardly at someone else while guilt and shame are forms of fear directed inwardly at ourselves. These faces of fear can sometimes be difficult to see in our daily lives. Here is an example when you operate from fear.

For example, back in my twenties I once bought a car through a salesman that was referred by a friend of mine. My friend me told this salesman was having some personal financial issues but was a genuine good person that helped his friends. The reason I decided to buy from him was because I held my friend's recommendation in high regard and always liked to help out people that helped others without expectations. I figured if he earned a commission from me for helping purchase a car this would be a win-win situation.

I wrote a check of \$1,000.00 to hold the car I selected and handed over photocopies of my driver's license including three recent month statements from my bank. That same night after dinner, it dawned on me that I have handed over confidential documents to him without a second thought – documents that a conman can make full use of. I've read of conmen who used another person's documents to apply for loans and then disappeared, leaving the unsuspecting victim to settle the loan with the bank.

When I thought about it, I realize that I do not really know this person at all other than being referred by my friend. Who knows what kind of a person he is. Perhaps he may be in such deep debts that he might be desperate enough to cheat.

My train of thoughts just continues to move on from one fear to another, each thought making the fear bigger and more terrible than the one before. By the time I realize what I was doing to myself, I was about ready to panic. As it turns out, none of what I fear was true. This was an honest person just trying hard to earn a decent living. All the fear that was self-created serves only to perpetuate this negative habit.

Most of our fear arises in the same way - subtle and unsuspecting. It starts with one fearful thought, which leads to another and another. Before you know it, it has taken on a life of its own. If we are not careful or have very poor self-awareness, this type of habit can literally create panic in us.

This fear tendency is actually very common and we can see it in ourselves almost every day. When we are not aware of it, this tendency tends to perpetuate itself each time we allow it to manifest in us. The good news is that we can change this tendency simply by increasing our self-awareness through mindfulness. The sooner we see this pattern, the easier it is to stop it or replace it with something more positive. When we do this repeatedly, we eventually release the power that fear has over us.

The key is to focus the energy toward your goal, dream, or something you desire and not waste it on fear that truly in reality does not exist. It is a choice like anything in life. Growth and fulfilling your dreams only comes when you operate out of your comfort zone and do things that you initially fear. You can begin to change your life living for your "Why" and knowing fear is just a loss of your oneness with your true essence. Here are ten steps to minimize self-doubt.

10 Steps to Eliminate, Reduce, or Minimize Self Doubt to Achieve Success

1. Address and confront the Cause(s) that lead to the Effects that create self-doubt and to truly let them go through forgiveness.
2. Make the conscious choice to change toward success by looking at it as a journey and growth process not a destination.
3. Incorporate a daily schedule of meditation, personal development, clean eating, and exercise to create balance and overall well-being. Important life decisions are best made when grounded and coming from a sense of peace, joy, happiness, and feeling of confidence.
4. Always be grateful where you are now and where you are going forward.
5. Be in the present moment always and know fear manifests itself when you dwell too much on the past and project too much into the future.

6. Come out of your comfort zone early and be willing to be consistent but never strive for perfection when it comes to adopting new habits that best serve you toward the journey of success. Never become complacent as greatest growth comes from outside your comfort zone.
7. Write down short term and long term goals and set up for attainable goals over time. Reward yourself in a positive way for each goal met along the way.
8. Recognize your fear and know it is fear itself and never label it as a feeling of nervousness or anxiety.
9. Always know failure is only when you do not start or follow through. If something does not work during this journey always look at it as a learning experience and part of the process to something better. The universe will test you and when you make the choice to really go for it through belief and action then the universe will untimely do its part.

10. Know and commit to action consistently with your “Why”. Know your strengths and weaknesses. However, always focus on your strengths to be better not perfect and leverage your weaknesses to those that can address for you.

We are all worthy of success. It is a choice and process that comes from an internal place of peace and joy inside of you. The choice to listen to your inner critic will be either positive or negative. You will find success when you truly let go of the Cause(s) that create the negative effects that hold you back. Adopt healthier habits over time through the steps depicted above so more positive energy and greater motivation can lead you toward a better life. The choice again starts with you.

It is through this personal experience operating from once limited beliefs to know limitless beliefs how well the process works to yield the desired results we strive for when we commit to it. This personal experience has allowed me to help people from around the world reclaim their true self and go on to do great things they never imagined. When people ask if I can solve their problem, the answer is always “no”. The answer is always “yes” when I guide them through the process to help them help themselves to it. The success rate is always close to 100% when both

parties do their part. There is nothing in this world that can solve someone's problem unless that person does their part to fulfill it. This process has not only worked with individuals to become their “better self” but also for companies overall. This process with people leads to building stronger interdependent environments to offset co-dependency, which results in more effective communication, higher engagement, productivity, and profitability. It plays a role with building transparent leaders regardless of title.

Be the example and come from empathy and kindness to empower others to find within themselves. People grow and will do more when they take ownership and starts when they observe in others being the example. A quote I like to conclude with is “Give without expectation – Receive without resistance”.

ABOUT CHRIS SALEM

Chris mentors and consults with entrepreneurs, business leaders, sales professionals, and companies overall to build and protect their brands by raising their level of influence as trusted advisors to maximize their results. This starts from the inside out building your level of influence by shifting from a fixed to growth mindset and adopting a process to scale your business through mastering the art of influence.

Chris is also an accomplished business & emotional intelligence strategist, world-class speaker, award-winning author®, certified mindset expert, radio show host & media personality, and wellness advocate. He works with individuals around the world including business leaders from organizations such as JP Morgan – Chase, Ralph Lauren, UTC - Pratt & Whitney, Raytheon, Microchip Technologies, Anthem, US Consensus Bureau, United Healthcare, Laticrete Corporation, Hubbell Corporation, Conning & Company, and NYPD Forensics Department including universities such as University of Hartford, Bay Path University, Worcester State University, and spoke on overcoming limited beliefs for peak performance at Harvard University's Faculty Club.

Chris is the originator of the term Prosperneur™—an individual whose health and wealth are in alignment in a way that leads to true prosperity. His book Master Your Inner Critic / Resolve the Root Cause – Create Prosperity addresses this and went international best seller in 2016. He also co-authored the recent edition to “Mastering the Art of Success” with Jack Canfield. His weekly radio show Sustainable Success is part of the Voice America Influencers Channel.



Lynn Sanders

“Your attitude reflects the smile you wear every minute of the day.”

“GREAT STORIES HAPPEN TO THOSE WITH A SMILE IN THEIR HEART.”

BY LYNN SANDERS

WELCOME!

I'm excited to be part of the “Keep Smiling” movement, because it resonates with whom I am. My passion is sharing positive stories to motivate, empower and inspire people to believe in themselves. We all have so much to offer. The question is – do we dare to recognize our own inner greatness?

Over the journey of my life, I've come to realize the truth behind the saying, “Belief becomes reality.” While we may not connect with everyone, we get to choose our attitude. We get to decide who we are by the thoughts and words that we tell ourselves.

So this is my chance to say -- PLEASE be kind to yourself! Love yourself. The world needs more positive people, more Difference Makers to spread a ripple effect of love, joy and peace throughout the world. It all starts with the power of believing in ourselves.

While I'm now a best-selling children's author (DancingWithTex.com), as well as a story marketing consultant, media host, speaker, educator and piano player, wife and mom, my story journey wasn't always easy. In fact, I believe I learned the most from overcoming some major obstacles.

A Little Background About Me

While I grew up in a very loving, Jewish middle-class home, the oldest of four children on the South side of Chicago, with an emphasis on learning and spirituality, my soul often felt like I wasn't good "enough." I believe it was something that I may have brought into this lifetime.

My mom, a highly educated teacher, divided her time between caring for us and teaching Hebrew and Sunday School at three different synagogues. My dad, a dedicated doctor turned psychiatrist, was often busy working,

but still found some time to give us learning projects. I remember the small plastic greenhouse to learn about plants, collecting rainwater to study under a microscope, and learning Spanish phrases from a "See It & Say It In Spanish" book.

Each Friday night, we celebrated the Sabbath, the day of rest, with blessings over the candles, challah and wine, and it felt so special to share the stories of our week together as a family. I loved writing poems on paper napkins, playing piano, riding my bicycle, taking ballet lessons and singing songs to musicals from our record player. I loved going to Interlochen, the National Music Camp in Michigan at age 11 and 12, where I could be close to both nature and all the arts. It was (and still is) one of my favorite places on earth.

Something Changed Inside...

But something changed after that last year in camp.

I returned home to learn that my grandfather had just died. My mom didn't want to spoil my final week at camp to tell me, but I felt upset

that I missed the funeral. It was the first personal loss I ever experienced, and I'd cry in my pillow at night. Around that time, I was invited to a girlfriend's Bat-Mitzvah, a recognition of one's passage into being an adult.

"Can I have a Bat-Mitzvah?" I asked my mom.

My mom grew up in a very traditional Jewish home. Her reply was, "Girls don't need a Bat-Mitzvah. It's for boys."

In my subconscious mind, I heard, "Girls aren't as important." How could I ever be just as good as my brothers?

In high school, I'm driven to achieve. The honor roll. News and feature editor of our school paper. A 1st place trophy in a speech contest. I marry a wonderful man. I work at a commercial music house, and hear Lou Rawls sing my WGN-TV lyrics.

In 1985, I start my own business, Park Avenue Productions, a writing shop, and clients come to me from everywhere. I'm writing everything from ads and commercials to brochures, videos, speeches and articles.

I have two sons. At age 48, I study to become a Bat-Mitzvah with a group of other women. The ceremony is meaningful. My parents attend, beaming with pride. Am I enough? I don't know.

My mom later confesses that she never realized how important that Bat-Mitzvah meant to me. "We were busy... moving... I didn't want to spend the money on a party," she explains. We have an understanding, and I feel so close to her. Everything seems to be moving along smoothly. Until one cold winter's night.

When My World Fell Apart

I'll never forget December 16th, 2004.

At 11:30 pm, the phone rang. I had just finished practicing the song, "Look To The Rainbow," one of my mom's favorite songs from Finian's Rainbow. I was going to play at a funeral for the friend of another friend in the morning, and I felt ready to perform. It was odd to get a call so late. My brother Mark was on the phone, and his voice was strained.

“Mom had a heart attack, and it doesn’t look good.”

“What do you mean?” I said, as my world suddenly became very still.

He could barely get the words out again, and he said he’d have to call me back. My heart literally felt like it was being ripped from my chest. My mother was my anchor, my dearest, sweetest love of my life. I often told her that I couldn’t imagine living without her. Twenty minutes later, I got the second call. She was gone. Just like that. I threw my head back and wailed an unearthly sound, tears streaming from my face. I was falling into a bottomless pit, and there would be no way out. Coldness. Blackness. Emptiness. I started shivering uncontrollably.

It would take a long time to recover. A best friend from high school, Nancy had also suddenly died from a heart attack six weeks earlier. Then, ten days after my mother’s passing, my former boss, Shelly Elias, from the music house, passed away. Three deaths in eight weeks. It was too much for me to bear.

My back gave out, and I felt like I was living on pain killers. I found a grief counselor, and couldn’t even sit up in a chair. I had to lie on the

ground, crying, with a box of tissues at my side. Meanwhile, my father broke down, and began sending angry emails to me.

I found it difficult to want to live. Yet, I knew that at least for my sons, I must find a way to become happy again. I’m led to books on spirituality, self-help books and healing, and self-improvement seminars. I discover energy healers, and the slipped discs in my back slowly move back into alignment. I begin to feel better. I come to a realization that my mom wouldn’t want me living life feeling constantly depressed. Gradually, with the help of close friends and counselors, I pull myself back to the land of the living. I sense the world through a different perspective.

What’s really important? How do I want to live my life, knowing I have a limited time on earth? Why am I even alive?

At the time of my mom’s passing, I’m grateful to have a mental distraction. I’m collaborating on an independent video project, which becomes a nationally award-winning patient safety video, “Things You Should Know Before Entering The Hospital.”

It opens my eyes to a new, important topic. Staying healthy in a hospital. As writer and producer, I learn that medical errors and unnecessary infections is one of the leading causes of death. It's shocking. How could this happen in our country? It's unreal. Until one day two years later, when a medical error happened to me...

The Spiritual Awakening

The strangest things happen when you least expect them.

After a cousin's wedding in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, we made plans for our final day. We always wanted to go river rafting, and we felt excited to ride the waves. I stopped at a local deli, and munched on sandwiches before our little adventure.

But after getting off the raft, I started feeling queasy. I didn't want to spoil the family's fun as we walked around town, looking for a nice place to eat dinner. I just didn't feel quite right.

By the time we return to the hotel, my pain started getting worse. I kept

thinking – “food poisoning.” After four hours in the bathroom, I ask my husband Joel to take me to the closest emergency room. Ironically, the doctors misdiagnose my problem. They believe what I tell them about food poisoning, and don't even check.

I'm given a shot, a few pills, and told to come back if I have pain in the morning. Their diagnosis was gastroenteritis. I'm supposed to take the pain pills for relief.

Even after working on the patient safety film, I had forgotten an important lesson. If you're sick, you don't remember everything a doctor tells you. All I remembered was, “Take these pain pills.” Joel, as my advocate didn't remember their advice about returning to the hospital. It was around 3:30 am, and he was exhausted!

The next morning, at the Denver Airport, I can't walk enough to make it to the gate. I ask Joel to find a wheelchair. When we reach the gate, I'm doubled over. I'm not thinking clearly, and believe I must have constipation. (But there is no food in my stomach!) I still plan to board the flight. Joel notices my grimaces, but doesn't think it's serious.

The gate attendant sees my hunched over back and my miserable state.

Can she board?" she asks Joel.

"Sure!" assures Joel. "We were at the hospital last night, but now she's *perfectly fine!*"

Fortunately, the flight is cancelled three times. By that time, I finally realize I can't get on the plane.

"I can't make it!" I call out, lowering myself to the ground. Joel finds a paramedic, and I'm oblivious to the time. I'm rushed by ambulance to the Aurora hospital, where the doctor confirms the paramedic's suspicion. I have a ruptured appendix!

If I boarded that plane, I wouldn't be alive. I know I was watched over by spirits, especially my mother on the Other Side. After emergency surgery, I have to recuperate for a week at the hospital. Joel and our sons can't stay, so I'm usually resting alone. I feel lonely and unhappy. The IV needles keep falling out, and the nurses must keep pricking my arm in search of a decent vein. It's painful. I keep wishing my mother could be with me.

The Breakthrough

As an answer to my prayer, my mother's spirit comes to me in two dreams at the hospital. One night, I hear her sweet voice sing an original song, "This is the day that God hath made... A day to spend with you..."

I wake up at 5:30 am, writing down every word. I'm awed by knowing that she just visited me. It was such a clear connection. A demonstration that love is eternal. I never realize until much later, from one of mom's friends, that those opening words are from the Bible. It would be like mom to take a quote, and add her own personalized message.

As if further proof is needed, when the nurse comes into my room, she opens the blinds and says, "Rise 'n shine, it's a beautiful day."

My heart starts pounding. When I was small, my mother would come into my bedroom, raise the blinds, and say, "Rise 'n shine, it's a beautiful day in Chicago." How could it be that the nurse would repeat the same words? I feel it must be a sign... "b'shert..." the Yiddish words for "meant to be." My mom wanted me to definitely know of her presence.

In a second dream, mom is sitting at a kitchen table, sipping coffee with my husband's grandmother, talking about me. I feel like a kid, eavesdropping on their conversation. It was wonderful to feel their closeness.

Those experiences prove to me that our loved ones are just a spiritual call away. My mom loved the phrase, "Carpe Diem" – "Seize the day." She used to say, "I'm "carping as much as I can." She certainly did seize the day in stopping by for those visits with me.

Why I Love Bringing Positive Stories To Life

Those spiritual experiences left me with wonder and gratitude.

How could I ever doubt that our loved ones are always with us? I know they want us to live our lives fully. They want us to know our own worth. Their loving energy radiated a clear message... We all matter!

On the Other Side, what lasts is our soul. When we come to that understanding, we can appreciate each other more fully. We share a oneness with all living things. What better way to reflect our connection with others than with a smile?

Through the story of my life, I've become sensitive to the power of words. I listen to how others talk about themselves and others. So often, people speak without conscious knowledge of the impact behind their words.

Remember: we get to choose the words we live by. Choose them carefully. Pick words that nourish your soul, and uplift you.

Being more aware of my mortality, I've made it my mission to leave a legacy of telling and sharing as many empowering, transforming and inspirational stories as possible. I want to spread a ripple effect of positivity to the next generation. Do you want to join me?

Over the last five years, I renamed my business as, "Difference Makers Media." Why? Because I want to reach out to everyone who is a difference maker. I'm using the power of the words, "Difference Makers" to attract like-minded people to rise up.

Are you a Difference Maker? It's up to you to answer that question.

I encourage you to say, "YES!"

We get to choose what we call ourselves. What do you want to believe? Can you give yourself credit for what you do? Can you focus on believing that you DO make a difference in the lives of those around you?

By believing in my ability to make a difference, I took on the challenge of self-publishing a true children's friendship story that had been in my heart for twenty years. In 2016, I self-published the picture book, "Dancing With Tex: The Remarkable Friendship To Save The Whooping Cranes." In 2017, I was honored by The Illinois Conservation as their "2017 Conservation Author of the Year." The book also became a best-seller on Amazon. Isn't the power of belief amazing?

Since then, I've been interviewing heart-centered entrepreneurs and nonprofit leaders on my online program, 'The Difference Makers.' The programs are recorded into YouTube, promoted on social media, and shared on my website to build a momentum of positive influence.

I've written articles, blogs and content that reflects the goodness within us. And, I'm enjoying giving talks about the importance of caring for our endangered species and keeping your dreams alive through the example of "Dancing With Tex."

Now more than ever, the world needs YOU! Each one of us makes a difference. Only by speaking up can we make a greater impact.

It's time to join hands and hearts. Spread the message of love, compassion and peace. Join me in being a Difference Maker.

"GREAT STORIES HAPPEN TO THOSE WITH A SMILE IN THEIR HEART." Lynn Sanders

Lynn Sanders, Founder/President of Difference Makers Media, LLC.

<http://www.DifferenceMakersMedia.com>

<http://www.DancingWithTex.com>

<http://patientsafetyvideo.com>

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LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lynnsanders/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/>

[UCW8CnmIFewPTEBwReTZJTJTxg?view_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCW8CnmIFewPTEBwReTZJTJTxg?view_as=subscriber)

ABOUT LYNN SANDERS

Lynn Sanders, Founder/President of Difference Makers Media, is a story expert who helps “difference-makers” – small business owners, nonprofit leaders and entrepreneurs learn how to craft, deliver and share their stories of triumph to inspire others and build a positive impact in the world.

For 30 years, Lynn has helped clients raise awareness, expand their following and attract revenue. Lynn is an award-winning writer, strategic attraction coach, marketing consultant, speaker, video producer, musician and host of the online WebTV program, “The Difference Makers,” dedicated to sharing stories and tips from inspiring business leaders.

Lynn’s credits include being honored as “The 2017 Conservation Author of the Year” by the Illinois Conservation Foundation for her children’s book, “Dancing With Tex: The Remarkable Friendship To Save The Whooping Cranes.” This book is based on the true story of friendship between a man and rare bird that helped the Whooping Cranes survive extinction.

Lynn also authored the children’s book, “Social Justice: How You Can Make A Difference,” published by Capstone Press. Her writing has been featured

on commercials, including the WGN-TV station logo, “Chicago’s Very Own, Channel 9,” featuring noted singer Lou Rawls. Lynn’s earliest writing award came for a “Clean Up Chicago” poem in 2nd grade. She also received writing awards from Writers Digest, for a Museum of Science & Industry video, literary publications, and a national Telly award for her patient safety video, “Things You Should Know Before Entering The Hospital.” Lynn has spoken publicly on patient safety and the power of relationship marketing.

Lynn’s volunteer work earned her the 2007 Community Angel award from A.G. Bell Montessori School. She also entertained children during three healthcare missions to Ecuador, and provides musical outreach programs at senior centers. Learn more: www.DifferenceMakersMedia.com.



Captain Laura Savino

“Keep smiling and brighten someone’s day.”

TAKE RISKS AND FLY HIGH

BY CAPTAIN LAURA SAVINO

*You had the power all along, my dear.”
Glinda, the good witch from the Wizard of Oz.*

Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. Please fasten your seatbelts, it’s going to be a long flight to freedom and turbulence is expected.

Born at a time when paging through magazines only showed me examples of delicate ladies consumed by makeup tips and housewives seeking the best cleaning products, I had little hope that I would ever be free to choose my own path in life. But one impulsive teenage act propelled me on a journey to become a leader in the most testosterone charged world today, the aviation industry.

Out exploring in my parent's stationwagon, I found my way to a local airport and for just twenty dollars took an introductory flying lesson in a tiny propeller airplane with dual controls in cockpit. I surged up into the brilliant blue sky with an enthusiastic, young flight instructor beside me, awed as the world below me turned into a child's playroom filled with Matchbox cars and doll houses.

"You give it a try," the instructor grinned, raising his open palms as he released his yoke and nodded for me to grab mine. I took a breath and wrapped my fingers around the smooth control column cautiously. Feeling the plane's movements flow through my hands was all that it took. I instantly caught the "flying bug," and my dream to be a pilot took off.

Flying lessons were expensive, though, and I was just a broke teenager. Then, I had an idea.

"I'd really like a job here," I tentatively approached the flight school owner, "but I'd like to work in exchange for flying lessons."

"I think we can work something out," he countered. Soon I was busy

behind the front desk after school and on weekends, working hard to earn my time in the air.

I fell deeper in love with aviation with every breathtaking trip up into the open sky, but that joy is not what finally allowed me to break free from both the cultural and self-imposed limits that I had long accepted. Something completely different freed me to believe I could do anything: the way I was treated at the airport.

There, I was surrounded by people who understood and accepted me for who I genuinely was. They believed in me and my dream to be a pilot, and for the first time I was able to believe in myself, too.

One simple drive to the airport had triggered a lifelong passion for aviation and changed how I pictured myself in the world.

While women were still blocked from pilot positions in the military and other traditional opportunities to the cockpit, I found my own unique path to the airlines. Working my way through pilot certifications, my first paid flying position was as a flight instructor, where I returned to the same small flight school I learned to fly at, but as a teacher. I realized

a big part of my love for flying was sharing that feeling with other people and helping them to discover their own excitement for the sky.

To build flight hours and experience, I persisted through many extraordinary jobs from a sightseeing tour pilot over New York City, to working for a banner towing company at the Jersey Shore. Ultimately earning my wings at United Airlines, I enjoyed a brilliantly exciting career, where I flew everything from narrowbody aircraft on short domestic hops to heavy widebody aircraft circling the globe as an international airline pilot.

Life in the sky came with many thrilling highs along with some challenging bumpy lows, but the most unexpected turbulence struck many years into my career when I took a fall in a flight simulator during training. A debilitating neck injury and permanent neurological damage ended my pilot career in the blink of an eye, though it took me months of fighting before accepting that it was really over.

Not everyone gets to live out two passions in their life. After a long career in the cockpit, I am now an award-winning author, motivational speaker and STEM education activist. Returning to my love of teaching, I help young people discover that Science, Technology, Engineering

and Mathematics are a tangible part of everyday life, and each person is a master of it, but in different ways. Helping students connect with something they didn't even know existed, much less thought they would be interested in, is my most fulfilling accomplishment.

Ladies and gentlemen, please stow your tray tables for landing and open your window shade for a beautiful view. The landscape has changed, but it will still make you smile.

Book that changed your life:

The Glass Castle, by Jeannette Walls

Movies that inspire you:

The Aviator, Imagine a Life without Limits

Song that inspires you:

Fly Like an Eagle, by the Steve Miller Band

Quote you live by:

"If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're right." – Henry Ford

ABOUT CAPTAIN LAURA SAVINO

Captain Laura Savino flew as an international widebody commercial airline pilot. She is a graduate of Purdue University, with an AS in Applied Science and BS in Aviation Technology. Laura was awarded the Civilian Medal of Honor for transporting American troops to war as a CRAF (Civil Reserve Air Fleet) pilot during Operation Desert Storm.

On her way to becoming a captain for United Airlines, she worked as a flight instructor, charter pilot, freight pilot and aerial sightseeing tour pilot. As a regional pilot Laura flew for Eastern Airlines and Pan Am, and the last uniform in her closet came with United Airlines where she was privileged to navigate the globe in the cockpit of the Boeing 777, 767, 757, 747, 737, 727 and Airbus 319/320.

She is an active member in multiple professional aviation, political and educational organizations and is involved in outreach and mentorship programs, as well as being president of her area Toastmasters club.

Laura is a motivational speaker appearing at conferences, universities, and on aviation and woman empowerment themed podcasts and videos. She uses her personal story as a blueprint to encourage all individuals to recognize their own talents, believe in themselves and take risks to live their best lives.

An award-winning author, Laura took First Place in the 2020 Pennwriters Conference writing contest. Published in multiple *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books, her inspirational story about becoming a pilot is featured in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Be You, 101 Stories of Affirmation, Determination and Female Empowerment*.

The heartbeat of her memoir, *This is Your Captain Speaking, Take Risks and Fly High*, is to embolden the most ordinary person to fight for an extraordinary life for themselves, even when they feel like the world expects them to crash and burn.



Scott Schilling

“The number and size of your challenges in life are in direct proportion of the breadth and depth of your mission! **Smile**...and enjoy the journey!” – Scott Schilling

YOUR SMILE CAN BE HEARD!

BY SCOTT SCHILLING

By profession, I'm best known as an Executive Coach, International Trainer, and Speaker. In reality, what speaking, and training has done for me has allowed me to share the stage (and therefore meet and befriend) virtually every name you know in the speaking and training arenas.

So many times, people think in such a linear fashion and miss opportunities sitting right in front of their eyes. Many are so focused on being able to speak at an event, they miss the opportunity to meet the other speakers, get to know them on a personal level, spend time with the audience, understand what makes them tick, and most importantly, find out how you can be of service them...both audience and other speakers.

Because I have had that good fortune, and a basic desire to serve those I meet, it has allowed me to become a Master Connector...putting together those that have a need with those that potentially have a solution. Another reason I am the Chief Visionary Officer for *BeeKonnected* - *Where Entrepreneurs Connect!* <http://JoinBeeKonnected.com> In other words, because I have invested time into relationship building at events, additional opportunities have shown up that I am uniquely qualified to fill.

Not every situation throughout life or our career will be optimal. Just because it is not optimal does not keep it from being valuable. You have the choice to categorize it and frame the experience however you choose to frame it. Why not carry it all in the best light possible?

Success is hard...Lack of Success is hard...ultimately, you have to pick your hard! Hard by the way is a state of mind in your control. Pick the hard that is actually easy!

To say that life has been nothing, but sunflowers and puppy dogs would be a flat out lie. I, like all of us have had my share of "unfortunate incidents and instances" throughout my life and career. I suffered a

completely severed Achilles tendon in college...was told I would never walk without a limp, play any kind of sports, and certainly end any dream of being in the NFL.

I came back...on the field 75 days after my accident...do not have a limp 40 years later...won ten racquetball championships at my local sports club...and while I did not play in the NFL...I did have four professional try-outs. There hasn't been anything that I wanted to accomplish that severing my Achilles Tendon kept me from. I don't say any of that to impress you but rather to impress upon you that when bad things happen, great outcomes can still be possible.

I was married...have two amazing kids...and was divorced in about five years...terrible! But I used what I learned from that experience, along with counseling and personal self-development to now be happily married for twenty-four years to my Honey Bear Peggy. No one goes into a marriage believing it will not work...or at least they shouldn't. Sometimes even the best of plans doesn't end up as intended. Learn from it, *smile* at the great memories, and move on with some very valuable experience. Experience you didn't buy but you certainly paid for!

I had a full-blown Cerebellar stroke and lived through a near-death experience only to come out the other side with no residual physical issues or limitations. Believe it or not, I truly believe I came through the experience better for having it. I seemingly confused the medical community by living through an event many people don't. And I swear, they were not initially concerned with keeping me alive...they seemed far more concerned working to understand WHY I was alive. Sorry, I've always been an over-achiever!

What these and many other events have taught me is that it is not what happens to us throughout our life that counts...it is a combination of how we respond to what happens and what we learn from it and apply going forward. Bad things happen to good people...so do good things. Life happens...it is truly amazing what the simple act of smiling can do to make life more enjoyable.

My latest book, "THAT SUCKS...WHAT NOW? Real-World Solutions to Getting Through What You're Going Through!" details not only the incidents, but many of the solutions I came up with to fight through the challenges. <http://TSWNBook.com> It gives the readers real world

solutions that can be acted upon immediately to address and improve many of the challenges that will come along in life.

The Keep Smiling Movement is designed to keep a smile on your face and a positive attitude top of mind. Zig Ziglar said it this way, "Positive thinking will let you do everything better than negative thinking will." To enjoy is to BE in Joy. The exciting part is that you are 100% responsible for how you categorize things in your mind. Being your choice... choose Happy!

Because of what I have lived through and observed, I created five questions to ask yourself in any situation (positive or negative) to provide you value from the experience.

They are: 1) What's the Lesson? 2) What's the gift? 3) What did I do to create it? 4) How would I modify it next time to make the result better? 5) How is this going to serve me the rest of my life.

When you use these five questions, you will find that ALL things do truly work for your good...and that there is no such thing as failure... there are simply learning events! That's something to Smile about!



My life purpose statement is to: Inspire and Empower others to serve humanity through living their life's purpose in Spirit, Love, and Joy! Simply put, I'm on purpose when I help others be on purpose provided, they are living their true desires and passion for being on the planet.

What excites me most is when something I say, share, or help someone experience sets off the light bulb in their eyes. To share something and see the positive impact it creates in the life of another is irreplaceable. Giving someone a hand up is invaluable. It gives them purpose. It gives them confidence. It gives them a positive outlook into what can be.

I speak because God has granted me the talent and capability to stand in front of literally tens of thousands of people at a time and deliver messages that enlist and enroll them into a vision of their future going forward. Helping people pursue and achieve their goals, dreams and visions is an amazing feeling. The rewards of contributing to another can almost not be measured. It is the feeling you get deep down inside where you just know you made a positive impact.

I train because I asked all of my mentors to give me everything they had, and committed that I wouldn't keep it...I will share it with my students thus increasing the reach of those that have come before me. Being able to assimilate and deliver information across a wide range of topics and areas of expertise allows me to further the worldwide ripple of good that was started long before me and will continue long after because of our collective efforts.

We have each been given unique gifts and talents and with receiving those Blessings, it is our responsibility to pass them along and share from a place of working together for the greater good. Setting and nurturing one another on a consistent and ever-expanding path is what I believe we all have been asked to do during our time on earth.



What shows that what I share has been effective? There are many ways to share the social proof... observation is one way. I, and many others, can observe those that I have had the pleasure to engage with over my life and career, and see the results of what has been passed down in the

lives of those that have come through my trainings. Receiving phone calls, emails, and Thank You notes is another way.

I have a Memory Box in which put all written notes, Thank you, gifts, etc. into so that should there ever be a day in which I need to Smile, or have some additional encouragement, I can go to my Memory Box and review the comments and stories students have shared to lift my spirits, bring a *Smile* to my face, and recharge my batteries for another day (or longer!)

I've had the honor of presenting at over 2,500 live events speaking to nearly one million people live, as well as millions through TV and social media outlets. Typically, that only happens if there is some pretty effective problem solving and or messaging be shared (you don't get asked back if you're not effective).

Most importantly, everything in life starts by making a decision. And long ago, I made the decision that the very least I could do as I encounter anyone is work to make their day a little bit better by sharing a *smile*...it doesn't cost anything...we all can do it...and it immediately positively impacts two lives...yours and theirs!

I'm honored to be part of this book, and more broadly with this campaign to bring more Smiles to the world. Amazing thing a *Smile*...it can defuse a lot of upset...it can encourage those that give and receive... and it can warm the heart to start the process of living a more fulfilled, happy, and joyful life!

ABOUT SCOTT SCHILLING

Scott is an Executive Coach, International Sales Trainer and Speaker who brings a unique combination of 35+ years of life experience in sales, marketing and training to corporations, entrepreneurs and individuals. He has presented at 2,500 live events. Sharing stages with General Colin Powell, Steve Forbes, Suze Orman, Jack Canfield, Les Brown, and many more.

Scott has written 15 books to date including the recently released "THAT SUCKS...WHAT NOW? Real-World Solutions to Getting Through What You're Going Through!"

Scott's Life Purpose is: To Inspire and Empower others to serve humanity through living their life's purpose in Spirit, Love and Joy! To contact Scott, he can be reached by calling at (844) 955-7283, via email at Scott@ScottSchilling.com

Books that changed your life:

The Bible

"The Success Principles" – Jack Canfield & Janet Switzer

"See You at the Top" – Zig Ziglar

Movies that inspire you:

"White Christmas"

"Tommy Boy"

Songs that inspires you:

"Bring Me to Life" – Evanescence

"I Can Only Imagine" – MercyMe

"What a Beautiful Name" – Hillsong Worship

"Oh, My Soul" – Casting Crowns

Your Hero:

Coach Hayden Fry

Quote you live by:

"You can have everything in life you want, when you help enough other people get what they want!"

– Zig Ziglar



Jerry Schwartz, Referral Master, Speaker, Author and creator of my own great life.

“The best way to eliminate stress, is to smile, move forward and take action.”

HELPING BUSINESSES CREATE REFERRALS, ONE SMILE AT A TIME.

BY JERRY SCHWARTZ

The theme for my life has been independence, never coloring inside the lines and keeping an open mind to new thoughts and ideas. My journey was ever evolving without ever wanting to have a do-over. I truly can say I am a happy person. So everything I ever did, whether good or bad or somewhere in-between has led me to this great path of true happiness.

The first lesson I learned to start my stress-free happy life came from my father. In my early teens, I was arguing with my mother. My dad said to me, why are you arguing with your mother? You're not going to win... I never have! In the Book of Joy, the Dalai Lama stated, “If

something can be done about the situation, what need is there for dejection? And if nothing can be done about it, what use is there for being dejected.” I think business people especially need to pick and choose their battles. Don't stress over the small things. As I got older my mother used to tell people that I never disagreed with her. She said he also never listened... Jerry would just smile and nod his head and then do whatever he wanted.

My strong work ethics started when I was in 7th grade and drove my bike on weekends about 5 miles to pump gas at a local gas station. I don't remember ever not having some type of way of making money which helped me be completely independent my entire life. While attending Drexel University with a full-time curriculum I always worked 25-35 hours a week. From the midnight shift of loading trucks and then going straight to school or a retail job leaving right from my classes. Fortunately, I did not need a lot of time to study... or at least that is what I thought.

This might not have sounded like I was relishing life. I subscribed to the old adage work hard and play hard, and I did! After college, I went into Retail Management and then there were a few jobs I had gone

through as I was trying to figure out what was next. Ski trips, sailing excursions and scuba trips were on my travel lists. I was always hoping that one day I could afford the lifestyle that I was becoming accustomed to!

When I was in my late twenties, I had a dream that I would live on a sailboat before I was thirty. I was flying to N. Carolina for AAMCO Transmissions as a corporate liaison and made the decision that it was time. Within one month, I was living in Baltimore and shortly thereafter the boat was bought and I was living on it.

While living on my sailboat I met my new neighbor Bob Green who became my best friend. We were thirty years apart, but he acted as young as me. Bob was the salesman of all salesmen and a great mentor. A couple years had passed, marriage and kids and living on land and Bob had the answer! We were going into the environmentally safe pest control business together! With my new family starting to grow and needing some stability, I said sure! What was I thinking! We knew nothing about this business, had no money to back us and two families to feed! Going back to my roots of work hard and play hard, Bob and I built a multi-state business and shook the pest control industry up. I believe that it is more important to

have good marketing and sales skills to build a business than knowledge of the industry. Understanding the needs of your customer and coming up with the plan that is most important to them is the key to success.

The next phase of my life happened by sizing an opportunity that led into a life changing experience. One day I volunteered to pick up a couple who were flying in to conduct a sales seminar. I thought that if I drove slowly, I might pick up a few pointers on how to improve my business. This amazing couple, Don and Nancy became the best of friends and eventually led me to the life I live today. They asked me to be their partner in developing this new business in Baltimore called BNI. Never did I ever think that it would turn out the way it did. In networking, it is important to learn as much as possible about everyone you meet. Once you know the range of skills, knowledge and resources around you, you can work out ways to help achieve each other's goals.

BNI's philosophy is Givers Gain. It is not just a philosophy it can be a way of life. Twenty-Four years ago when I first started in BNI, I cannot tell you that I fully appreciated or understood the meaning. Over time it has become a true part of me. I really enjoy connecting business people with other business people that can lead into business and

long-term relationships to help them be successful. It is a fantastic feeling when I can share some of my business experience with younger business people. Through BNI, I really have made a difference in many lives and that is the best feeling you can get. Recently, someone honored me at their celebration of a milestone at their business for the help that I have given them over the past 20 years. I was floored by this. I never realized the impact that I had with them. This is how you measure a great life. When I go to a BNI meeting and talk to very long-time members and see how their lives have changed and how their business has grown over the years is truly a wonderful experience.

I have continued to build relationships with key people – other BNI Executives, networking partners, local business associates, new colleagues who help me grow my business. These experiences have taught me valuable lessons. Two in particular stand out.

Listen carefully to learn about others.

Seize every opportunity to achieve mutual goals

By keeping these principles in mind and not letting the small stuff get you down you will have a successful and happy life.



Explaining your WHY is like what do you want on your tombstone. Your WHY is how you hope to be remembered. It would be great that after I'm gone and when I was mentioned they would say... "Jerry really enjoyed life and was just a happy person. When he offered to lend a hand or help someone, he did it from his heart."

In a way it is selfish. Everything I do, whomever I help brings more happiness to me.



Our philosophy in BNI is "Givers Gain." When you can make that philosophy a focus in your life, abundance and smiles are created. It is a pro-active approach to building your business, your personal brand and having a quality life. My approach is a simple process of NETLINKING your contacts and connecting business. It is a three step approach. Define your purpose; Build your story; Follow up and don't give up.

The only person that you have to prove your effective to is your self. My favorite poem is "The Man In The Glass." Here is a part of it...

"You may fool the whole world down the pathway of years
And get pats on the back as you pass
But your final reward will be heartache and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass."

ABOUT JERRY SCHWARTZ

Jerry Schwartz is a pioneering focused goal maker who's divergent out of the box thinking has made him one of the top Networking Professionals in the United States. As Executive Director for BNI in Maryland, his duties include training and educating directors and ambassadors, conducting leadership team training and developing new programs to help members have a prosperous BNI membership.

His experience and knowledge is gained from 24 years of BNI experience and working with BNI directors around the world. Jerry has been a featured speaker at many BNI conferences in the USA as well as Canada and South Africa.

Jerry is a contributing author to 3 Best Sellers "Masters of Networking", "Masters of Success." And "Masters of Sales"

Jerry is happily married with 2 amazing daughters and two fantastic step kids and a beautiful dynamic grand-daughter. He loves golf, traveling and just sitting on the beach with his wife and a glass of wine!

Book that changed your life:

The Book Of Joy

Song that inspires you:

Billy Joel - My Life

Your Hero:

I am my own hero! If you truly believe in your self and the abilities that you have you can accomplish anything you desire and everyone should look up to their self.

Quote you live by:

"It's 5 O'clock Somewhere!"

It's more than just go have a drink. It tells you to enjoy life to it's fullest and take that next step to success!



Dr. Marilyn Scott

Smile and Be Happy!
You will understand what AMAZING feels like!

SMILE AND BE HAPPY!

BY DR. MARILYN SCOTT

I am a leader. I've come a long way. I think sometimes in order to be a leader, you have to be a follower first. I didn't know the good until something bad happened to me. In essence, I didn't know the happy until I experience the sad. All those different feelings that I felt motivated me to push forward regardless.

My goal in life is to do more keynote speeches, and enlighten people about natural ways to heal and tell people how amazing they are because we live in such a negative world. You'd be surprised how many people have low self esteem. That's why I wanted to be involved in the keep smiling movement because we all need to smile, we all need to be happy. We all need to find a happiness in our life. We all have the same 24 hours, what are you doing with yours?

I don't like to be sad. I don't like to be stressed out. So I just do my best to take a breath and go on and not worry about the fact that I was stressed. Move through your issues and the challenges you may have. Because once you do that, you're going to find that a lot of things are going to happen.

I got out of my comfort zone a couple years ago, I started a TV show called, "Healthy Living with Marilyn" which was simulcast on YouTube and Facebook. And I did 58 shows in less than a year and a half. I told this one friend that I was finally getting out of my box. She looked me straight in the eye and said, "Marilyn, there is no box." That is when I flew! When people realize there is no box, and you can break down those walls, you can do anything.

Now one phrase I have on my Facebook page is the following. "If you want something really bad, and you have never had it, You gotta do something you have never ever done. And I've written two books. Did I ever think I would write two books in one year? Absolutely not!

I've been pushing forward with my second book. I really thought I wrote my second book in eight months, but after reviewing my calendar, I

wrote my second book in five months. My second book, "Pulling It All Together For a Healthier You!" is out on Amazon. However, Amazon doesn't sell your book for you. So I go out and talk to people, schedule keynote speeches to enlighten people about how they can pull their health together naturally and be amazing as stated in my first book, "Be Amazing! Powerful Results Are Just A Leap Away!" By the grace of God, I wrote two books in one year.

It took me a long time to take the courage to go out and invest in myself because I'm the one that's important. When I realized that I was the one who was important, nothing stopped me. When I was growing up. I didn't feel important. My parents made me feel I was not important. They never said, "Great job, Marilyn! This is wonderful. You're doing a great job." My self motivation is what keeps me going. I learned how to Self Motivate.

I see my daughter doing that with my grandboys. She is always saying, "Great job, Jacob. Great job, Sammy," and the boys motivate each other. It just rubs off. Unfortunately for me, I never had that "great job Marilyn, doing a great job." So for a long time, I felt pretty darn useless. I always asked myself what am I going to do with my life, when I

decided that I was going to go back to naturopathic school and get my naturopathic degree, I started helping people. And I started to make them feel better.

Even though my self esteem was in the tank, I was still making people feel better. It took me a long time to realize that I can do something in the world, I can make people happy. I can tell people I Care About You! It makes them feel better.

I realized when you have a passion, and you love what you're doing, the money will follow. I want to make people realize that they are worth something, whatever they're doing. I don't care if they're working in the back of the house or have a restaurant.

For example, I did my book launch last year, at the Silver Diner. The Silver Diner offers excellent food which is delicious and nutritious. Most of the people who work there are friends of mine, including the Chef. Before I hosted the launch, I sat at the counter, and I gave an autographed copy of my book to every person who worked at the Silver Diner. And everybody from a person who cleans the floor, to the person who serves the food, to the managers, as well as the owners. I

did that because they are special to me. When you make people realize that, they start to realize I am approachable and they will talk to me.

I have a wonderful strategic advisor and coach, and with the help of his wife, my editor, inspired and motivated me to write two books. The day I press publish on my first book, he said, "Whatever you do, remain humble."

My strategic advisor and his wife got me excited about writing and about life! I became excited about life. They are the ones who turned me around and helped me get my act together and be more cognizant of the people I was around. So you know, when you learn something like that, whether it's positive or negative, especially when it's a negative, you have to turn that into a positive.

A friend of mine lost his son. And his son was three years old. They went through a lot of surgeries and health issues as he was born with a heart defect. And he had multiple surgeries and was doing quite well. And then one day, when he was three, he just died. My friend then turned that sorrow into helping parents who have lost their children and started a nonprofit organization. When you have something

that has happened to you that has impacted your life, you can turn it around and make it better.

I felt like I was useless when I was growing up as if my parents didn't love me. Last year, I said to my mom, "Mom, you've never gone to bat for me. You have never had my back." I felt so hurt. My mom replied, "I'm going to start going to bat for you now." I told her that was not going to happen. She was way too late for that. I got used to living on a tightrope without a net. This is why I am such a strong woman today! My intuition always told me, "This is the road I paved for you. You will be a much stronger woman." I guess my intuition was right!

When I had my practice years ago, which was before internet, cell phones, emails, and the World Wide Web, people came to me because they knew that I could help them. And they were people who had cancer, when the doctor said, "Go get your papers together, because you don't have much longer. They heard I could possibly help them. They would ask me How much longer they had to live. I would tell them that I was not God, but I would give it my best shot. And I did. And they really appreciated that because I gave them a happier time on this earth.

So My main goal is to make people feel the best that they can be. I'm known as the "Be Amazing Doc". Because I just want everybody to realize there is happiness out there, and you can be amazing. You really are capable of turning your life around and be amazing. Unfortunately, people don't look at it that way, especially when they're down and out. Just remember, wherever you go, there you are, you can't escape yourself.

So you might as well start liking yourself and really start loving yourself. And that's what I've been doing. I love me, I really do. And when I met Ken a couple years ago, with this keep smiling movement, and I thought about his movement. I wanted to be a part of Ken's Keep Smiling Movement. When I look at the books, I smile because like laughter, happy books make me smile. By the end, I'm crying happy tears. Because all these people are happy. And I can feel their energy and how they're feeling, how they feel and how they're just so happy. You've got to keep smiling! Smiles are just as contagious as laughter!

I've just blossomed in the past 10 years. Truly gotten out of my shell, and eliminated the walls around me. Right now, I'm so far out of my comfort zone, I've lost the map, and I can't get back. So I'm not going back. Because the only way to be successful is to get out of your comfort

zone. You gotta step out! It's necessary if you want to succeed. Even if you don't think you can do it, make the attempt. Just say, "I'm gonna do it! I will do it." One tiny step at a time. That is all it takes!

I got this and that's why I keep moving. That's why I keep telling people that you can do this. Saying, "I got this!" Whatever negativity or lack of self esteem is in you, be it the fear blockage, the wall, whatever, just move through it and keep going. And that's what I do.

My micro premie grandson has shown me courage. He was born three months 10 days too early. He weighed one pound six ounces at birth and was 12 and a half inches long. He looked like a ruler. Through adversity and illness he kept living and he kept pushing through all the health issues. My five grandchildren are my purpose and my why. They show me how to have fun and be resilient.

The reason I wrote my two books is I've been through a lot of stuff. You don't become the person you are without going through difficult times. I think we all want to be the best person we can possibly be. And that's what I want for everybody. I want everybody to be the best person that they can be.

Truly, and that's why I wrote my "Be Amazing" book. We live in such a negative society. The reason why I wrote, "Pulling It All Together For A Healthier You!" is because I want people to pull their lives all together, and to pull their health all together, because they can do it. You can do it. And that's what is important to me. People need to know they are amazing and can pull their life and health together.

I have a business partner, and she's going out to be with her grandson for a little bit. He was having some issues, and she stopped the world to go out and see him, and I gave her my "Be Amazing" book. And I personally autographed my book for him. She gave it to him the last day she was there. She said, "I wish I had taken a picture of his face when he saw that book. He absolutely lit up!" She told him there are people who really care for him. She said to me, "I hope you realize what you have done for my grandson and what you've done to me." Just by giving a book, supporting a friend and letting people know someone out there cares about YOU! It means the world to those people.

I didn't sugarcoat my book. I was scared to death to publish that book, because that was about me. I was going out on a limb. You know, there is no box, you got to get rid of the wall. You got to keep moving around.

Once you realize there is no box, you can soar. Once you realize that it's when you're uncomfortable, you're out of your comfort zone. That's scary. It really is. But it's important. It's important to get out of your comfort zone. It's important to be uncomfortable. Because that's where success comes. You can't be complacent. You can't be. You can't stay in the same place all the time. You're not going to feel success. You do not want to be treading water, and I did that for years.

You gotta get out there. I got up at 5am in California. Simply because my body is on eastern standard time, and I don't do jet lag well, but I'm out here. You know, I'm out here flying by myself, taking a Lyft, and I'm by myself on the West Coast and literally going out on a limb for me. I get used to it after a while. I don't have anybody holding my hand. My intuition tells me, "You just have to get out there and do it and take that step!" People need to know they have to take that huge step! It's scary, but if you want to taste success, you gotta get out there.

I'd say 85% of the people who walked into my office do not know how they handle their stress. But I had to give them multiple guess. So you're gonna get upset? Do you have a queasy stomach? Do you get a headache? Do you get butterflies in your stomach? Do you get grouchy?

Are you quiet? They don't know how to handle their stress, they get sick.

Ninety percent of the people who go to the doctors nowadays are truly sick. Generally, the underlying root cause is stress. They don't handle it. Many times, they do not know they are under stress.

Sometimes stress gets to me, particularly in my back. It grabs me by the butt. But I stop and say, to myself, "Start breathing in fresh air, close your eyes and relax. You need to breathe. You need to stop for a few minutes, close your eyes and meditate." Figure out how you can get everything in order and move on.

I had that happen a couple days ago. My husband looked at me and he says, oh, you're stressed. It's like, yep, let me stop right now. You have to recognize your emotions. Your body will tell you what's wrong with you. Your body gives you messages. Your body tells you exactly what's going on. You have to listen to those messages, and you can correct those situations. Just read my book, "Pulling It All Together For A Healthier You!"

You know, I was telling somebody yesterday, we are a nation of sugar-holic. We're addicted to sugar. Sugar is more addictive than cocaine. She's a nurse practitioner sitting next to me on the plane. She didn't know that. But we are. We are as a nation of sugarholic. And the food industry loves us because our addictions are putting money into their pocket. You don't need to put money in their pocket.

Take care of yourself, eat smart. Choose your foods wisely. A colleague of mine is a chiropractor. He was my chiropractor for many years. He is a Native American Indian, and he said to me one day, "It's all in the choices that you make." That statement has stayed with me for many years.

So I want people to start making smart choices. I want them to realize that they have to take care of themselves, because we only have one body which is the temple for our soul. Take care of it. It's important because if you're not taking care of you, you won't be there for everyone else. And sometimes, you have to be selfish and do stuff for yourself to get back on target. Then other times, you do for other people, but if you can't get back on target and get better for yourself, you won't be worth anything to somebody else. If you're not feeling well, if

you're pushing yourself too hard, you will eventually run out of steam. If your pitcher is empty, you can't help others.

The issues I have had, the struggles I have faced, the oppositions I have endured have all made me the Successful "Be Amazing Doc" I am today. I have not made it the past sixty-six years without moving through the dark valleys I encountered in my life. Be Amazing! Keep Smiling, Laugh, and Start Enjoying Life! For You Can Do Anything!

I am accessible. I love to motivate people. I am now offering seminars and workshop which coordinate with my books.

ABOUT DR. MARILYN SCOTT

Dr. Marilyn has been a holistic healer for over 35 years. She is a graduate of the California College of Naturopathic Medicine as well as the Loomis Institute. She is also a Certified Natural Health Professional bringing natural healing modalities to the forefront. Her company, Healthy Living with Marilyn, is her new venture adding a special touch to natural healing. Dr. Marilyn also had a YouTube TV show which she simulcast on her Facebook page called "Healthy Living with Marilyn" which premiered on April 6, 2017. She produced 58 shows in 15 months. Her new website, www.HealthyLivingWithMarilyn.com, has a plethora of information concerning the most up to date info on living the natural and healthy way.

Dr. Marilyn is an Author as well as an International Professional Speaker on Natural Health Issues, Caregiving, and a Positive Outlook on life. Dr. Marilyn wrote two books in one year, "Be Amazing! Positive Results are Just a Leap Away" was published on June 1, 2018, and "Pulling It All

Together For A Healthier You!" was published exactly a year later on June 1, 2019. Her website is www.TheBookBeAmazing.com.

Her main goal is to enlighten people and show them how AMAZING They Are!

She resides in Richmond, Virginia with her husband Xen, and is the proud mother of three children and five wonderful grandchildren.



Heshie Segal

1972

KEEP SMILING BY HESHIE SEGAL

Atlantic City, New Jersey. Where it all began . . . in my grandmother's home on New Jersey Avenue. It housed my mother, my brother and me and sometimes my father, when he wasn't on Army duty. My Aunt Sarah and Uncle Sam had their own little apartment on the second floor. My other aunts and uncles and cousins would appear often and without an invitation. The steady commotion created a convenient cover for the bad things happening to an innocent little girl, things that would cause a life time of hurt and mistrust.

Other than this, the house itself seemed idyllic. It was just two blocks from the ocean and beach, perfectly located for a child who liked to build sand castles, jump waves . . . and look for treasures. Ah yes . . . treasures . . . the most important of the three because they gave me the chance to earn money and to buy my very own homemade ice cream. I kinda think of it as my first job. I had a need and purpose so I took

1973

action. I don't think anyone worried about me, even if I went missing. I could almost always be found under the boardwalk looking for coins that had slipped through the cracks or for soda bottles someone had carelessly left behind. My little hands gathered every bottle I could find and fit into my sack. The heavier it was, the greater the reward. Sometimes I got lucky. My Uncle Sam, the ice cream man, came to find me. He would empty my sack, and in return, give me the money I had earned. Uncle Sam was really important to me, not just because he was the same Uncle Sam who lived under the same roof with me. He was important because he was the only male in the house who honored my childhood.

When I look back at what happened in that house, I feel saddened and sometimes sickened. Yet, I often feel fortunate for the lessons learned, ones that have made me stronger and ones that have given me the "insight")" to become a resource for those who have suffered a similar journey and have yet to cross to the brighter side.

I remember a specific incident. It was probably the source for my becoming a staunch supporter of children, and certainly for helping girls evolve into the women they were to become. It also stimulated

diversity, celebrating the joy of being different rather than the single-minded focus around staying in the comfort zone of likeness.

I was just five years old and brimming with excitement. I had run home from school that day and raced up the steps of the house on New Jersey Avenue. The ladies were sitting there as usual waiting for their children to return from school. I was the first to arrive and I wanted to tell them about my new friends. They all smiled and sat forward to listen. I talked about the little boy who spoke another language. I wasn't sure what it was. He did not understand me either until we found something we could share. Crayons. We were both coloring and he offered me a color I did not have. And then I offered him one I thought he needed. We both smiled; even without words, a smile is the same in all languages! I noticed one of the ladies sit back. I just kept rambling. I told them about the little girl with the most wonderful smile and big brown eyes. Her hair was kinky and brown. Her skin was also a very pretty light brown. I wanted to invite her to my house to play.

Some of the ladies pulled back and became very quiet. "Did I say something wrong?" They looked at each other and then one of them said, "Honey, these new friends are different than you and it would

be better for you to be with your own kind.” “But why?” I demanded. “Because it's easier,” they answered almost in unison. “I want them to be my friends,” I cried. But these grown-ups just said, “No, sweetie, it won't work. We're older than you and we know better.”

With my head down, I thought to myself: “I don't want to grow up. And I especially don't want to be a grownup like any of them.”

I was eight when my father got out of the army and we moved to yet another place. I thought it was going to be different this time and for a while it was . . . until my father announced my cousin David would be coming to stay with us for most of the summer. I was mortified. Was it going to be like living in my grandmother's house again where all those the bad things had happened . . . where my father, my uncle and two of my male cousins had used me as the family toy, abused me at will? Years later, when I asked my mother why she had not protected me, she said she had no idea what I was talking about.. Really?? How could a mother not know? The truth will be forever hidden because she has long since passed away.

While my parents had never been particularly religious, they did decide to keep me out of school for Jewish holidays. I never really knew why

since I have no recollection of ever going to services. In any case, it made a very big difference to my teacher and the school district. When I returned to school the day after my absence, I listened to the teacher tell the entire class I was different from them because I was Jewish. She informed me that Rosh Hashanah was not a real holiday and it could not be used as an excuse for being absent from school. And to prove her point, from that day on, she gave a test on every single one of my holidays. I was just in third grade and quickly learned how teachers really do make a big difference in the life of a young child. I put my head down and thought to myself, “I don't want to grow up to be a teacher.”

I cried throughout most of that year. I wanted to move. Why did I have to be with people who didn't like me simply because my religion was different than theirs? I thought “Maybe we could learn from each other.” No, that was not to happen. I hung my head and determined, “I really don't want to live here anymore and I see no reason for me to want to grow up in a world like this.”

This thought, this lesson, has given me tremendous insight into why kids commit suicide. There is no reason for any of us to stand alone or

tolerate a situation in which any person, especially a child, could feel so tortured as to want to bring an end to life itself.

And then one day, even as young as I was, I found myself feeling defiant. I knew I would have to grow up and somehow I was personally destined to create change in this world. I had no idea how I would accomplish that. I only knew I would not allow grown-ups to make little children cry. In my world, grown-ups would help children discover who they were and who they could be . . . no matter what they looked like, what religion they celebrated, what language they spoke. There would be enough room for everyone in my world. My grown-ups would be able to live a life they loved at any age. And I had to re-think my not wanting to be a teacher. Maybe, I would be a teacher. Somehow knew I could and would make a difference.

I created a strategy. I would cry and complain every day until my parents could no longer tolerate my whining. They would move to keep me quiet. And that is exactly what happened.

On the very first day in my new school, I was able to do something I had not done for very long time. I SMILED! I smiled the next day and then the next.

A few years later, when I entered junior high school, I made a new discovery: boys and girls did not have the same opportunities! There were more sports teams for boys, more leadership positions, more everything. And then, by listening to the news, I heard about men and women doing the same job and men getting paid more. This didn't seem fair to me. Here was another thing for me to work on when I grew up.

I was sweet 16 or so I thought. I was sitting at the top of the steps when I heard my mother and father talking. Something was very wrong. My father said his partner had been stealing from their business and had withdrawn all the money. There was nothing left. He told my mother he dropped his insurance that morning. He cashed it in to pay the bills. I sat there frozen in my place. I suddenly realized being a grown-up meant having responsibilities children did not have. It was another reason not to want to grow up . . . And yet I did . . . overnight. You see, the next day, my father's heart stopped beating . . . forever.

His death was to change the direction of my life forever. Even to this day I think how different my life could have been under other circumstances.

In less than a week, I discovered there really was nothing left . . . no money, no food, no guidance, no belief system, no hope . . . nothing. The next words I heard took my breath away. "There is no money for college." My mother was going to file for bankruptcy. And she did.

Now it was up to me. If I wanted to go to college, the only person I could rely on to get me there was me. I took on this challenge with a vengeance. Nothing, absolutely nothing, was going to deter me. I applied for every scholarship and grant I could find. I applied for jobs. If I had to go door-to-door, I would do it. In the end, I had to do all of the above. And so I started college, carrying a full load of classes and working 40 hours a week.

If someone told me I couldn't do something, I proved them wrong! My mantra was "Watch Me". By 17 years of age, I believed I could do anything I wanted, especially if I did not need outside support. I listened to people say they would do things and then not do them. Everyone had excuses. Seriously? Why did people do that? Little by little, I became the only person in my world I could trust . . . because I knew if I said I was going to do something, I would get it done. And I did.

What I lost in the process was a sense of my humanity and I did not even feel it slipping away.

I refused to be vulnerable, to rely on others, to be a team player, other than, of course, on my own team of one. I saw myself standing in the middle of a seesaw, glancing at both ends. On one side sat my life of self-reliance. It seemed so strong, strong enough to counter my mistrust of that part of my world that had betrayed me . . . or so I thought.

So many stories, so many lessons, so much to share, so much to learn from the early years and the three decades that followed during which I live more like a machine than the human being.

Perhaps this might be a time for you to reflect on your own story, be it something that came up for you via the words you have read or some memory emerging from the blue. Take some moments to digest the challenges, and glean from them, lessons and knowledge you may want to use in pursuit of a future endeavor.

As though it were meant to happen, you are about to you open a new chapter in life, and with it, you will have a new tool at your disposal.

This new tool is called hope. Hope that with any challenge you face, whether self-inflicted or cast upon you by outside forces, can be accepted and leveraged into a turning point for good.

Now, as you read the coming pages, think about some relatively odious experience of the past that has blocked you from moving forward. What could be waiting for you if you just released the shackles? If you have never faced a life shattering experience, consider this as preparation . . . because few people pass through life without a challenge. Think about how you will feel when you turn the corner. Think about how others will feel when they encounter your presence, when they see how you have come out of the depths with an open heart and a smile on your face. Get ready to unlock the door you will walk through. On the other side, a new world of unlimited possibilities will shine before your very eyes.

As you embark, remember the lessons from your past and how they shaped your life. The death of my father at age 16 created an indelible imprint that was to shape the direction of my life for decades. As I look back today, I find the major lessons to be mind-boggling in both their limitations and possibilities.

- If I wanted anything, I had to do it myself; self-reliance and independence were key.
- Do not trust anyone; they will not honor their word.
- Do not allow anyone to get too close; they will harm me or leave me.

Seriously?

If you are ready, let's start on your journey. It's time to unmask the future you too can create.

Do you any of the above traits? Or perhaps some others that might be limiting you? Recognize your beliefs and their limitation, challenge them and seek alternatives.

I invite you now to start a journey with me; a journey that may unmask a future you too can create. I'll weave it into a second story of transformation.

I was taking a five mile hike around the perimeter of the Von Trappe Family Lodge in Stowe, VT. Around the halfway mark, my foot began to drag. It hurt so badly, I could barely walk.

As soon as I got home, I saw a doctor. He told me I had a dropped second metatarsal (whatever that meant) and he could go in, crush the bones and put them back in place. I would be off my feet for 7 to 10 days and I would certainly be able to make the speech I was to give two weeks later. He was head of the orthopedic department so I trusted him. I guess I had forgotten about lesson Number Two. In any case, I agreed to the surgery.

It was September 12, 1996. I walked into the hospital in pain. When I woke up from anesthesia, I found myself in a sterile, white room . . . alone. My mind was racing. What if it took longer than ten days, or even seven, to start walking again? Who could I ask for help? My entire inner circle consisted of three people: my daughter, the person I was dating and my life coach. That realization hit me like a ton of bricks. I had hundreds and hundreds of acquaintances. I probably, in some way, had helped at least two thirds of them, making an introduction or connection, being a resource, being a mentor, teaching them how to succeed in business. And of course, how to become self-reliant!

The challenge for me, being Ms. Independent, was I did everything on my own terms. I did what I did on my schedule and for the most part, helped people when it was convenient for me. None of what I was doing

was really conducive to building long-term relationships, or for that matter, even becoming a friend. That's why I had no friends. I didn't want any, because it could make me vulnerable. And now I needed them and my very own way of being prevented me from having them.

Ten days turned into two weeks. I could make the speech I was slated to give. I was in such pain I could barely walk even with the aid of crutches. At five weeks, my foot was swollen and very purple. My regular doctor was out of town so my appointment was with his partner.

It was 10 AM when I saw the doctor. As he examined my foot, his warm smile began to disappear. His face turned ashen. He obviously knew something I didn't. My heart started racing and I could feel myself trembling.

“My foot isn't healing, is it?” I asked.

“I want you to see Dr. X when he returns next week. I believe you have a non-union.”

“Wait, what does that mean?”

“It might mean you will need to have another procedure to take care of this. Since you are my partner’s patient, you are best served by having this discussion with him. It would just be a few more days.

One week later, Dr. X examined my foot. He attempted to debunk his partner’s diagnosis of a non-union. It just needed more time. If it hadn't healed in 10 weeks, it could then be considered a non-union. Ten weeks turned into ten months . . . in a bed or in a wheelchair. It gave me plenty of time to think. I was lonely. Why hadn't I ever taken the time to make friends? Why had I been so thick-headed?

One surgical repair followed another. It was gruesome. One day I woke up and found myself in a pool of blood. Rushed to the hospital, bleeding profusely, I was told I had made it just-in-time. I was on the verge of losing my leg.

That was it. My life had to change. I wanted to become part of a community, to be surrounded by friends. Although I had no idea how to be a friend or have a friend, I was ready to learn. I went online. I read stories. I asked questions. I listened carefully to the answers.

I took my success in building business acquaintances and dug deeper. How was I to translate this into friendships? I learned I had to give help before receiving it, and doing it on the other person's terms, their needs and not my own.

One of the hardest things I had to learn was to give myself permission to become vulnerable, to rely on others. And yet, when I did it, the most amazing thing happened! A whole new world opened up for me. I found people really wanted to help. The more help I accepted, the easier it was for me to take off the mask I had been wearing; the mask that said, “I don't need your help, I can do it myself.” With the mask finally off, I became a regular person, someone who was able to admit she did not have all the answers. And with that, my world expanded.

I decided I would build myself a new tomorrow, one based on possibility and openness to trusting others, a tomorrow that would include helping other people discover their infinite possibilities . . . if they could just be open to the power of possibility thinking, of what could be rather than what was. If I could somehow get beyond the baggage of my past, perhaps I could help others do the same.

And so it was during this time of confinement in a wheelchair, I devised my JetNetting™ system; an alternative to pushy networking. I based it on the premise of building relationships fast, deep and long-lasting, and definitely before they are needed. I positioned Relationships as Currency For The 21st Century.

Little by little, I built a tribe. I could teach others to do what I had learned to do. I became what I now call a “center of influence”, a go to person, one who was ready and willing to be there for others, to champion the cause.

Several years later, facing yet another big surgery, I knew I could ask for help in advance and I did. Instead of sitting in a post-surgical room, wondering how I was going to survive this time around, I had people busily setting up shifts so I would always have someone by my side. My hospital room was filled with laughing visitors, who became so boisterous, the nurses had to intervene.

This story is still unfolding. I take nothing for granted and am open to the wisdom and suggestions of others. I get to pick and choose what I do and do not want to do. Probably my biggest challenge, like so

many others, is wanting to do it all. I think my passion for helping young people create a life of value and purpose will always be close to my heart. I feel for them. They are inheriting a world of dissension, discordance, and disparity. They are bombarded by unkind words and unkind acts. They see their environment being trashed and think it is OK because the adults around them, their role models, are not being responsible nor are they being held accountable. There IS a bright light in what I can only call a “mess”. Young people in different parts of the world are talking to each other and they are taking a stand. They are unwilling to accept this present world is what could become their future if they sat silently by without taking action.

I stand with these young people. I support them. I think back to when I was collecting the soda bottles to earn money. It was not about the environment then. It IS about the environment now and saving our world. We have been told we must act before it's too late. We have 10 years to make amends. I will do what I can and I implore you to work with me. Join my global campaign to stop using plastic bottles. If we don't take action, by 2050, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. We already know there are microplastics in the food we now eat. Sound crazy? Fish and actually acquired a taste for plastic! Please stop

and think about this. Become a doer, not a bystander. We can join forces. Even small actions add up. If you don't know where to start, reach out to me, join my global clean water campaign through my non-profit Kids Better World.

When I was little, I didn't want to be a teacher because I had a teacher who was so mean I did not even want to go to school. She made it hard for me to get up in the morning, to face my classmates. She taught me how bad it was to be different. She instilled fear in me. She was the perfect example of what and how not to be.

I re-thought the lesson she taught me and turned it around. I have become a teacher . . . and more . . . albeit not always in the classroom. I made a choice to turn my life around and be a better example for those who might follow in my footsteps, on the path to creating their own.

We live in a world of such uncertainty, if I can be a guiding light for even a few, my heart will be fulfilled.

I hope the words I have written will inspire you to truly design your own tomorrow's. You can transform the frowns. A smile is a frown

turned right side up. Go for it. You can do this. One moment at a time. One smile at a time.

Sending you tomorrow's smile . . . Today!



Frank Shankwitz

“You smiled at the stars like they knew
all your secrets.”

1992

KEEP SMILING

BY FRANK SHANKWITZ

I had a very unusual childhood and adult life, interestingly enough where Hollywood decided they want to make a movie about it. Born in Chicago, at age two, my mother divorced my father and left. For two to five years, I lived with my grandparents, my dad, aunts, and uncles, which was such a happy period of my life.

At age five, in kindergarten, during recess, a lady came up, grabbed me and dragged me away me stating, “I’m your mother.” I had no idea who she was. Although I was kicking and screaming, a couple smacks from her on the head stopped me from acting out. She threw me in a car, “We’re going to Arizona!” For the next five years, we ended up in Michigan, and our life was a survival thing. In the summers, we lived in a tent in a state park. When it got cold, we were sleeping in the car. When those Michigan snows started, she’d find some old flop-house somewhere. And, there was always the issue of food, rather a

1993

lack therefore. The biggest thing was that I had to learn how to take care of myself.

Somehow at age 10, my mother discovered my father found us, and he had sent the sheriff's office to get me out of there. My mother grabbed me, again with me kicking and screaming, threw me in the car, and off we went, "We are going to Arizona." It took several weeks to get there as she would have to stop periodically. When she would run out of money, she would get a job as a waitress, get enough tip money to get some gas and food, and off we would go again. Again, food was always an issue.

Eventually, we landed outside of a little town called Seligman, Arizona, off old route 66. If you have seen the Disney animated movie "Cars," the featured city in the film "Radiator Springs" is Seligman, Arizona. It is a little town of 500 people predominantly Mexican and Native Indian. It is a railroad division point and a big ranching community for stockyards. A rancher took us into his home where we slept for the next six weeks on his kitchen floor on bedrolls.

During that time, I got a job as a dishwasher at ten years old, and my mother got a job as a maid. I was making more money than she was.

While working one day, a man was building something, and I went over out of curiosity. He said, "What's your name?" I replied, "Frank." His response was, "Now you're Poncho! Grab a hammer, kid. My name is Juan," he said with a twinkle in his eye, "but people in town call me, Juan." All of a sudden, this man became my father figure. I had never worked with any tools. He taught me carpentry.

He started introducing me to sports. I never played any sports because of how we moved. I never had any friends whatsoever due to the moving. He introduced me to music, too, and eventually got me involved with drums, into the dance band and in the school band. He taught me so much, but the most significant thing he taught me was, "you can give back."

Note, this was the 1950s, and that was not a widespread discernment to give back as people were in desperation to fend for themselves. I asked Juan, "What do you mean? We have nothing. We lived in an old wrecked travel trailer the townspeople found us for shelter. It didn't even have a shower." Fortunately, I could use the Santa Fe work showers to clean up every day. But he explained that while we didn't have anything, you didn't have to have money to give back.

This important lesson he taught me was that you can always give back with your time and talents. He said, "Look at the widow, Mrs. Sanchez. She's always bringing you and your mom rice and beans. She is helping you with food. But, look at her yard; it's a mess. Look at the front of her house. It's a mess. She can't do it. But, you can; you're big enough to go over there to help her, and when you do, you're paying back; you're giving back."

He continued, "Look at old Mr. Ortega. They got an old wrecked box-car from the Santa Fe line that they're trying to make into their home. They're trying to clean it up and paint it. They help you; you help them." Giving back was a vital lesson. Juan helped develop my character and integrity. I like to say, "Those two traits are developed, not inherited."

When I started seventh grade, my mother told me, "I can't afford you anymore. You're on your own. I'm leaving." And she did. I went to Juan pleading that I was not sure what I'm was going to do right then. And again, the second most crucial lesson Juan taught me came out. "Frank, always learn to turn that negative to the positive." When I inquired, "What do you mean, I don't know what to do." He said, "I've arranged for you to live with widow Sanchez; you make \$26 a week.

She's going to charge you \$20 a week for room and board. For the first time, you're going to have your own pocket money because everything you ever made in the past went to your mother." He continued, "The most positive thing is you, for the first time, you're going to have your own room. You're going to have shade, a shower, and plumbing." Wow, was that ever positive! "The other big thing is she's the best cook in town, so no argument that you're not going to have to worry about food anymore."

She also got the first Television in the city of Seligman, Arizona, so I got to watch the Mickey Mouse Club. All those negatives turned into the positives. The third biggest lesson was also never to feel sorry for yourself because there's always something you can do to better things. Everybody has some little downer type things. I was learning to make those negatives into positives.

Starting in high school, my mother contacted me saying she needed help. She'd moved to Prescott, Arizona. It's north in the mountains of northern Arizona where I currently reside. She needed help financially, so she wanted me to come to get a job to help her. I did. My mother and I never had a close relationship. But she's was my mother, and I

respected her. I went to Prescott right away and got a job. About that time, I was able to get involved in sports. Although I didn't play on the team, I was allowed to practice with them to learn the sport. The coach asked me to try out, and I made the team immediately.

However, the teaching standards were quite different in Prescott, and when it came to my aptitude tests, I failed math. They want to put me back in eighth grade. Here again, is where people helping out changed the course of my life. The coach said that's not going to happen. He worked with me all summer to bring up my math skills. When I retook the test, I passed with flying colors. Again, people helping out caused life to be good for me. Another example is my employer, worked around my schedule, so that I could play in the football and basketball games. When the games were over, I'd come back and finish my shift.

Following high school, I went to the Air Force as I just felt this need to serve during the Vietnam era. I'm not a Vietnam combat veteran as I was never in the country. Instead, I spent the majority of my four years in England in the air police on special assignment with Top Secret clearances. One of the highlights of my career in the Air Force was my selection to be an honor guard for the funeral of Sir Winston

Churchill burial. What a big, big thrill to be associated with that great man. I had studied him in school history, and especially World War II history and Mr. Churchill was one of my heroes. Because I respected that man so much, his ideology, as we completed the honor guard procession, where I am supposed to be standing at professional attention, I couldn't wipe the tears that were streaming down my face, just out of respect for that man.

Just as I was ready to fulfill my Air Force enlistment, Motorola came over overseas. They were interviewing people for jobs in the Phoenix area, which was a small world thing. They were looking for people that had top secret clearances because Motorola was now involved with the Atlas missile program for space. I applied. When back in the states, I got a call to come down and interview with Motorola as they were having trouble with hiring college graduates, engineers with the degrees as they couldn't pass a background test for the top seven clearances because of the drug's use in the era of hippies, sex, drugs, rock & roll. I accepted the position at Motorola, and they sent me college where I use the GI Bill. Ironically, I ended up being a statistical engineer which my former math teacher just cracked up upon hearing the news of my graduation!

Motorola was an excellent move for me. Excellent job and so much advancement, and but I was very bored as I did not care for living in the big city, I am much more the small-town tomboy. About that time, several of the people I went to school with had joined the Highway Patrol and their egged me on to join them due to my air patrol background with the top clearances along with my engineering degree, I would be a perfect fit.

I teased that I'd love to do that and that it sounded like a good adventure. But I made in one week what those guys made in a month. I couldn't afford to do that. But I kept thinking about it, so I decided to go ahead with an application. After the test, I was offered a position, and I said well what the heck, let's try something new! It was the best decision I ever made because 42 years later, I retired from my law enforcement career.

My first assignment was down in Yuma, Arizona, down by the Mexican border. And I was also continuing taking college courses down there when the coach said he knew my coach from my Prescott High School. He told me he'd like me to get involved with the Special Olympics program which I had never heard of. "I'd like you to teach some of these kids the baseball throws and how to throw a football and basketball; just work

with some of these boys." I loved it and kept thinking about giving back. Shortly after that, the Commander in Phoenix called me up and said we're starting a new motorcycle unit. It's going to be a 10-man squad; it's going to work the whole state of Arizona. We'd like you to go through motorcycle training, and if you pass, we will assign you to that squad. We would spend two weeks in one town and then another two weeks in another town.

About this time, the TV show chips became very popular. It was an NBC TV show about the adventures of two California Highway Patrol motorcycle officers, Poncho, and John. The kids love this show. All of a sudden, we're riding into the towns just like the CHiP's show. People would wave and yell, "Hello," to us. It was so positive! I asked our commanders if we could go to the little towns and talk about bicycle safety as it would be high PR and a fabulous connection to the kids especially with the similarity to the Chip's actors Larry Wilcox who played John and Eric Estrada as Ponch.

In 1978, our whole team was assigned to an area called Parker, Arizona, on the California border, Colorado River, Arizona, California border. Easter time, there's a little town of park or 2000 people turned into

80,000 people, and Easter break was just crazy. Again, drunk drivers, drugs, homicides, you name it. During this weekend, I was involved in a high-speed chase with a drunk driver going 80 miles an hour in a 25 zone, when another drunk driver pulled directly in front of me. I hit him broadside at 80 miles per hour. The crash was spectacular, and I pronounced dead at the scene.

My partner tried to revive me, but he could not do it. He called in the code 963A; officer killed the line of duty. Now every police officer I work with myself believes in a higher being no matter what religion it might be. We go to work every day; we say a prayer. "Please allow me to come home." We get home at night; we say a little thank you prayer. I always feel we have a guardian angel. I've been in so many situations where I think the guardian angels are getting tired. God sent down to the guardian angel this day in the form of an off-duty emergency room nurse from California. She stopped at the scene; she saw what was going on. She said I want to try and revive him. My partner said there's no pulse, no heartbeat. For the next four minutes, she performed CPR. I don't know if anybody reading this has performed CPR. It's incredibly exhausting, extremely exhausting. She wouldn't give up, and obviously, she brought me back to life.

When I was going through counseling, the doctor was asking me what I recalled. We talked about the tunnel that happens with people in emergency rooms. When you die, you're looking at lights, like both driving through a tunnel and all of a sudden; the light closes; you're dead. When you're brought back the life, you see that little pin of light, and it gets brighter and brighter. When it opens, all of a sudden, your eyes and senses come back.

When I came back the first sense I had was hearing, I could hear in the background. I could hear them saying, "She brought him back; she brought him back." I hear sirens, all this commotion. The sense of touch, something is tickling my face. Something is on my lips, the sense of smell; something very pleasant, an odor like a perfume, the sense of sight, I open my eyes, and there's a beautiful blonde with a lip lock on me. And, I think if this is heaven, I am fine with this, this is OK. Then, I also learned that my partner had performed CPR, big ugly guy bushy mustache, bugs always in it. If I were to wake up to him, it would have been so traumatic that I would have thought I went the opposite of heaven! I ended up with a traumatic brain injury, skull fracture, broken bones, a lot of missing skin, and it took almost six months to recover. At the end of that, the counselor

told me that God spared you for a reason; it's up to you to find that reason.

Two years later, in April of 1980. Way up in the mountains in northern Arizona, I get a radio call from a dispatcher to telephone in for an emergency message that did not involve my family. Mind you; this was in 1980, there was such thing as cell phone or internet. I had to drive 40 miles to find the nearest telephone. I learned that there was a seven-year-old boy named Chris with terminal leukemia. Chris had only another week or two to live. Chris told his mother when he grew up; he wanted to be a Highway Patrol Officer, just like Ponch and John. His favorite TV show, of course, was CHiPs. The family contacted the highway patrol to inquire if there was any way that he could meet one of the motorcycle offices with the highway patrol, maybe hang around the headquarters building and look around?

With the permission of his mother and the doctors, our department was all out on this. We would meet Chris at the helicopter port where they were flying him to our headquarters from his hospital. We timed it, so we were pulling up as he was flying in. We could see this little boy

peeking out the window, and I had no idea what to expect. I figured the paramedics would help him out of the helicopter as he had just come off his IV's. But, all of a sudden, the helicopter lands, the door opens, and a little red pair of sneakers jumps out runs over the motorcycles. "Hi, I'm Chris. Can I get on your motorcycle?" This little boy is laughing and giggling.

He had watched CHIPS so much, and our motorcycles were identical to the California Highway Patrol. He knew where everything was on the bikes. "This is a siren? Can I turn on this button to turn on the flashes? What's in your saddle bags? Is the same as Ponch's?" He just laughed and giggled. I was getting the biggest kick out of this little boy.

Then, I looked at his mother, and she's crying. I didn't understand that at first. Then, it dawned on me. She has her seven-year-old back; he's not laying in a hospital bed. He's running around like a typical seven-year-old. Chris, on that day, become the first and only honorary Highway Patrol Officer in history of the Arizona Highway Patrol complete with his hat, certificate, and badge. His badge is still numbered and assigned to him today. He got to go home that night! His doctor, who was with him, was flabbergasted, "I don't

understand how his vitals are so good. Let's let him go into his comfort zone – home.”

We felt good about what we did. One of the guys said we'd got a new trooper, but he needs a uniform. In those days, the uniforms were custom made. We rush over to the uniform shop at closing time. We tell the story of this little boy, and two ladies stayed up all night sewing the uniform. I got permission the next day to lead a whole group of motorcycle officers out to Chris's neighborhood to present him this uniform. Red lights and sirens at eight o'clock in the morning, neighbors were running out to see the ruckus. Chris comes running out; we see a big smile. We hand him his uniform and, oh boy, this little boy was a quick-change artist! He runs out of the house, just beaming. Wearing his brand-new uniform, he comes over to me and rubs the motorcycle wings on the bike and wishes something I heard for the first time, “I wish I could be a motorcycle officer like you and Ponch and John.”

I started teasing Chris. I explained all the training that we had to go through, and I said it's a shame you don't have a motorcycle because we would set up cones and test you right here in the driveway. Chris runs in the house and comes riding out on a little battery-operated

motorcycle in place of a wheelchair. He is complete with his motorcycle helmet and his aviator glasses. He's got on rancher high rubber mucking boots that looked like motorcycle officer boots. He asks, in all seriousness, “I will take my tests now?” “Yes, you will.” He goes through the cones, comes back, “Did I pass?” “Yes, you did Chris.” “When do I get my wings?” “Well, Chris, those are custom made. I will order them and have those to you, I promise.” We shook hands on it — a cowboy handshake. Chris got to stay home again that night.

A couple of days later, I picked up the wings when I got a phone call that Chris is in the hospital. He is in a coma; he's not likely to survive the day. As I walk into the hospital; his uniform is hanging right by his bed. As I pinned the wings on the uniform; Chris came out of his coma. He looks at me, “Am I a motorcycle officer now?” “Yes, you are Chris.” He had a weak smile. He asked for his uniform. He rubbed the wings. He seemed to be so proud. A couple of hours later, he died. I always like to think maybe those wings helped carry him to heaven.

Our commanders learned that Chris was going to be buried in a little town southwest of Chicago, they asked my partner and me to give him a full police funeral as we had lost a fellow officer. The press picked up

that two officers were going to bury this little boy. In response, the City, County, and State Police Agencies showed up to show respect for this little trooper. He was buried in uniform, and his grave marker states Chris Greicius, Arizona Trooper.

Flying home, I started thinking about how that little boy had a wish, and how we made it happen. Why can't we do that for other children? That's when the idea of the Make-A-Wish Foundation was born about 35,000 feet over Kansas. We were fortunate to make actual wishes granted and be worldwide! However, the hardest thing to do was to start the foundation; we had the idea. It was harder to make that idea work. Everybody I went to who was involved with helping Chris said, "That's a bad idea; it will never work." Their response was based on the fact that nobody heard of this idea before. But I remembered what Juan taught me regarding 'turn that negative to the positive.' In Arizona to start a nonprofit, we had to have a total of five people for the Arizona corporation commission for the board of directors. It took me six months to find those four other people because everybody said it wouldn't work. As a reminder, I'm the co-founder. I never want to diminish the fact that the four other people helped put this whole thing together, and since 1980, over 450,000 children have received wishes.

We've impacted millions when you count their families and friends. All of this happened because we granted the wish of one little boy.

Now, I am excited that Greg Reid, a mentor of mine in the speaking world, said he wanted to do a movie about me. I thought documentary, and nope, he meant a full movie! It took two and a half years to write the screenplay. David Davies, who is the director, also wrote the original screenplay. We started filming actually in 2017 where I lobbied very hard to get it shot in Prescott, Arizona because of how the community gave to me when I was a kid in need. The lead actor that played me in my mid-30s was Andrew Steel, an Australian actor. Additionally, we have a casting highlight with Larry Wilcox (John from CHiPs) as a cameo guest, and Robert Pine who played the Sergeant on the TV show played the Sergeant in *Wishman* which was released June 4th, 2019 in Hollywood.

At last update, *Wishman* received Best Narrative for a Feature Film at the 2019 Prescott Film Festival. To date, the Make-A-Wish Foundation has honored over 450,000 wishes, and the movie based on Frank's life is also told in the authorized memoir entitled *Wish Man: Kindness, Close Calls, and the Magic of Making Wishes Comes True*.

ABOUT DR. FRANK SHANKWITZ

Frank is best known as the Creator, Co-Founder, and first President/CEO of the Make-A-Wish Foundation, a charity that grants wishes to children with life-threatening illnesses. From humble beginnings, the Make-A-Wish Foundation is now a global organization that grants a child's wish somewhere in the world on an average of every 28 minutes. Frank is a U.S. Air Force veteran and has a long and distinguished career in law enforcement. He began as a Arizona Highway Patrol Motorcycle Officer, and retired as a Homicide Detective with the Arizona Department of Public Safety, with 42 years of service.

In 2015 Frank joined six U.S. Presidents as well as Nobel Prize winners and industry leaders as a recipient of the Ellis Island Medal of Honor. In December 2015, following his commencement address, Frank was presented with an Honorary Doctorate Degree, Doctor of Public Service, from The Ohio State University. In December 2015, "10 Most Amazing Arizonans" In January 2016, "Forbes Top Ten Keynote Speaker". In

April 2017, Unite4:Humanity Celebrity ICON Social Impact Award, joining past recipients Matthew McConaughey and Morgan Freeman. In February 2018, he shared the stage with Matthew McConaughey at Universal Studios at the LA City Gala and was presented the first City Gala Hero Award. In May 2019, following his commencement address, Frank was presented with an Honorary Doctorate Degree, Doctor of Law, from St. Norbert College. In June 2019, he joined 89 celebrities, and received his "STAR" on the Las Vegas Walk of Fame. In October 2019, a Lifetime Service Award from Women of Global Change. In November, 2019, a "STAR" on the Coronado Island Walk of Stars. In November 2019, Arizona Ambassador of the Year Award. In January 2020, appointed as a Honorary Commander of the U.S. Air Force 161st Air Refueling Wing.

Frank's life story, "Wish Man", a feature motion picture, was released in June 2019, and has won several awards, including being qualified for an Academy Award for Best Picture Oscar. Frank is a board member on several non-profits, including U.S. Vets, The Wounded Blue, Broadway Hearts, Women of Global Change, and Level Up Home Seattle. His new book, "Wish Man", is available at Amazon.com. To contact Frank for a speaking engagement, visit www.wishman1.com



Bhairavi Shera M.S.Ed.

“Smiles speak volumes.”

SMILE BRIGHT LIKE A DIAMOND

BY BHAIRAVI SHERA M.S.ED.

When I was a young child, around the age of 8 or 9, my father told me that we were diamonds inside. He told me that we got mud and dirt stuck to our diamonds and we were gifted human life for a chance to cleanse ourselves so that we could shine once again. My childhood memories are few and far between. I remember being very quiet and watching more than interacting. I have few memories of speaking as a young person as well as having few memories of acknowledgement and praise from my elders.

My house didn't use words of affection to express love, rather acts of service and quality time. I'd hear other families say, “I love you,” I thought something was wrong with me, that I wasn't good enough to receive love in this way and that I was unwanted. The culture in which I grew

up in just wasn't conditioned in this way, rather was stoic in emotional expression, with seldom affectionate touch and little eye contact either.

Although my familial relationship wasn't close in ways that I understood, those words my father shared that day were the foundation of all of my self-inquiry and self-empowerment for the duration of my life thereafter.

I started my journey as a helper as a reading buddy for a second grader when I was in 4th grade. When I was in 5th grade I was volunteering in the learning resource room with students younger than I whom had special needs. My heart was always so content assisting others and helping them find their source of joy and success.

When I entered high school, I started to get bullied. I could make up a story about why I thought I was bullied, though I'd be speculating. Girls threw me into trees, pushed me up against lockers and asked me, "Who do you think you are? And what are you doing?"

I was left with my own internal world and the words that circulated within it. I'd spend much of my time alone and with few select friends. In my

free time, I was either working at the library or volunteering at the local nursing home. At the nursing home, I was feeding residents their meals and spending quality time with them playing games and going to the tuck shop. It always boggled my mind that they didn't have many visitors and that they were hidden away in this place with little quality of life and virtually no laughter or smiles. I did my best to make those whom I interacted with smile, and it would light me up to see those toothless grins.

While in high school, I had the chance to be a part of a co-operative education program where I'd be able work in the field for half days and get school credit. At the time, I wanted to be a pharmacist, because they deal with medicine and help people. I went into the hospital for my first day and my preceptors gave me the medical drug dictionary. I was put in small room with a window and told to read it. I knew in that exact moment that where I was, was not where I wanted to be.

I went back to my co-op teacher and told her that the placement was a bad fit and she told me that I had a Dr. Jekyll / Mr. Hyde attitude; that she didn't trust what I was going to choose and where my focus would be. I was determined to show her that I was a great candidate for this program and requested to be placed in a school classroom.

My first day in a classroom I learned to my delight, that my own 4th grade teacher was now teaching a speech/language special needs class, was my supervisor. Through that placement, I learned that I wanted to dive deeper into the helping arts and my desire to become a speech language pathologist was ignited. I met the speech pathologist that was overseeing the communication goals for each student of this specialized class and she helped me map out my course of study so that I'd complete all prerequisites to eventually become a therapist. In reflection, I was definitely being guided, but at the time didn't know it.

My interest in speech pathology lied in language acquisition, learning disorders, speech production, communication disorders, head and neck diagnoses such as voice disorders, issues with breathing, neurological diagnosis such stroke and neurodegenerative diseases and swallowing disorders. My parents' dream of me being a medical professional was going to be true! Through my ongoing experiences, I'd fall in love with neuro-cognitive rehab mainly communication restoration after stroke.

But school didn't go as I planned. I failed the second year of my undergraduate program and was suspended for a year. My low self-esteem led me down the tube into addiction using various substances.

When I returned to school for my third year, I was still addicted and was seeking other methods of fulfillment that included binging on sugar and food. I eventually increased my grades from a 2.0 to 2.7, despite my addictions, and began to ask for referrals for grad school applications. The chair of the program looked me in the eyes and blatantly said, "You're never going to get in. Why are you wasting your time? You shouldn't even apply." The other referrals weren't as terrible, but they weren't great either. I remember crying and berating myself for all of the mistakes I had made, though when I received unsupportive words from others, a small feminine voice in the right side of my head would soothe me. I kept hearing that there was a way and that I knew I was supposed to be a speech pathologist. I had faith that I would indeed make it one day, no matter what these professional humans were saying about me, and in spite of the negative self-talk circulating in my mind.

I applied to several graduate programs that denied me and ended up getting into post-graduate program at a community college close to my hometown where I got certified as a communication disorders assistant. During my clinicals, I did a placement in the same school system as I had done that original co-operative education program in

high school. When I looked to see the name of my clinical supervisor, it was the same speech pathologist that helped me map out my entire career to becoming a therapist! Yet another magical coincidence!

My grades improved greatly and I graduated in the top tier of my class though I was battling addictions and low self-worth. I held myself together on the outside while I was never good enough on the inside, yet that small voice in my head that told me to keep going... so I did.

Since I didn't get into any grad schools when I applied the first time, I was worried about getting in this second round. Another magical surprise was waiting for me, though. The college program that I had attended was very closely affiliated with a small private school in Albany, New York, and I got in! I finished that program in the top 10 of that class and I was super proud of myself, though my addictions continued under the surface, binge drinking alcohol on weekends and binging on sugary foods and energy drinks.

When I finished my graduate studies, lovely fellow Canadian in my grad program let me stay with her and her husband as I looked for a job in Florida, which happened very quickly. I was so grateful for the

time we spent together and the love they shared with me with words and actions of affection. I felt truly loved.

I moved to Jacksonville where I started my clinical certification year. I was finally a real speech pathologist and I had a real nametag to prove it! During that year, I had a patient with mono-syllabic speech as a result of a brain hemorrhage that occurred after she elected to have neurosurgery to clip an arteriovenous malformation - bundled up veins in the brain - that were causing her immense headaches. The hemorrhage resulted in her having minimal/reduced functioning and the ability to say just four syllables, "luh, mee, nuh, maoo".

Medical research suggested that she would never make speech recovery since it was three years after her brain injury, however she was determined to speak and I was determined to help her succeed! I use a therapy method that would take the syllables she already knew and shaped them into babbling, kind of like early language, then into short words, eventually into phrases and then short sentences. We worked for six months every day for about an hour or more. I reinforced all of her effort focusing only on praising correct productions and never told her when was she making errors. We cried together.

We laughed together. We were frustrated, together. We triumphed, together!

I walked into work as usual one day to find all of her care staff clapping as I got to the nurse's station. My patient ordered her entire breakfast meal with speech that day! Shortly thereafter, my patient was discharged from the facility, and I'd never see her again.

Living on the beach was on my bucket-list so I planned my return to St. Pete Beach, thereafter. I moved with my fiancé at the time, though our relationship was volatile and aggressive. He was also addicted to substances and didn't have a good home life growing up. I ended up debilitated for 16 weeks after a motorcycle accident where I'd be thrown off the back end when my fiancé accelerated quickly without notifying me. On the ride that resulted in the accident, I heard that soothing feminine voice in my head tell me to, "Relax, otherwise [I'd] break something." I listened and ended up with only bruises and moderate road rash. The hospital didn't debris my wounds because I denied full body x-rays and sent me home to care for myself. My fiancé scrubbed the largest wound I incurred and I felt my body completely succumb to pain as I cried the hardest I have ever cried. The pain in that moment

was so excruciating that I felt nothing at all and experienced my body being taken over by light. It was the most intense sensation I had ever felt.

During my recovery, my fiancé also physically abused me once during an episode of aggression. I was face-to-face with my inner demons as they manifested in this relationship. Our engagement was short lived as I had little tolerance for violence. I do remember thinking that I could help him, which is why I tolerated the aggression and verbal abuse for that short time. Ashamed and embarrassed, I finally escaped to my fellow Canadian friend's place.

My friends helped me look for apartments and we saw a lease sign on the main strip of the beach on the Gulf of Mexico. The apartment we saw was the one in my dreams! The front view was the Gulf, and the back view was the Gulf Intracoastal. I was left with no money having not worked for 13+ weeks, yet I moved to St. Pete Beach for work, so I knew that things would turn in my favor soon. I told the building owner my story and he saw the bruises on my body. He asked for a minimal security deposit and told me that I could pay him the rest when I started my job. He helped me get a moving truck and officers to

escort me as I retrieved my things, where I'd see my fiancé for the last time ever. After I settled into the new apartment a beautiful rainbow was gifted to me that spanned the whole Gulf as I viewed from the balcony. I knew that the nightmare I had just endured was over, and a new chapter of life was beginning.

It was also a dream of mine to become a traveling speech-language pathologist that moved from state-to-state offering services in rural areas. My first placement was in Abilene, Texas, where I worked with a patient whom was severely depressed. Activities of daily living were difficult, he'd rarely get out of bed, his body and muscle mass were declining and he wasn't eating. One particular day, I went into his room with colored markers, paper, scissors and tape. I asked him to tell me stories his life stories of love and connection. I made cursive keywords with the colored markers, cut them out, and then taped them to the wall directly in front of his bed making a word collage. He had no choice but to look at those words every moment he was laying in that bed. Two weeks went by and he began taking himself to the bathroom. He then began to do physical and occupational therapy. On the last day of his treatment, he wanted to share vanilla ice cream, which he didn't have in months. We enjoyed a small pint together and he walked

out of that facility completely independent. Before he left, he told me that those words on his wall saved his life and that he loved me for that.

I took the next placement in Napa, California, where I worked at a forensic mental health hospital. Two-thirds of the population were incarcerated secondary to a manic/depressive episode that lead them to breaking the law in some way, and the other 1/3 was geriatric and with other mental illnesses. We were in the first week of training learning about statistics of woman abuse and the teaching nurse said that essentially 100% of women encounter some sort of sexual assault in their lifetime. This discussion unlocked my subconscious mind of all of my experiences of sexual trauma that began at the age of six when three teenage boys had molested me. I learned that this was the reason for most of my low self-value, where my addiction stemmed from and why every intimate relationship I had failed.

This marked the beginning of my spiritual awakening and my pursuit of spiritual healing.

My next placement was in the Northern burbs of Chicago. One of my final patients was an elderly woman whom had a massive global stroke

that left her wheelchair bound and with no meaningful communication production or comprehension. During therapy, she began yelling at the top of her lungs while staring me in the eyes, "It's about the language! The language! THE LANGUAGE!"

In Chicago, I met my tribe of heart connected soul-friends, and was introduced to sacred ceremonial plant medicine that tapped me into my source of self-empowerment, self-love, self-worth illuminating my purpose on the planet and began healing my addictions. Coincidentally, two weeks after my first ceremony, my work place fired me and hired the less expensive new grad.

I went from making 80k+ a year to zero in a matter of weeks. I met another man whom took me into his life and assisted with the rebuilding of myself. That year, while I was without work, I sat in more medicine ceremonies, meditated for 6-8 hours a day and birthed my workshop series on the power of language through the reflections of my life and all of what I had endured. I now spend my days helping others discover their voice of empowerment so that they, too, can live magical, successful, purposeful and passion-driven lives.

Language, words, and self-communication helped me through all of my struggles, all of my pain, all of the abuse, and recovery from addiction. That small feminine voice in my head would become more and more empowered until eventually she was the only voice I heard. Language creates meaning, meaning creates feelings and feelings create life. All of our mindsets are communicated in words. I learned that words either destroy us or elevate us. My patients were a product of the powerful results of positive language. I learned that words were my savior, too, and that communication and language were my most potent superpowers.

My highest calling in this lifetime is to master my inner communication, my internal stories, and to teach the methodology of self-healing through language. All is created with the blueprints and maps of words. My entire life has been an uncovering of this lighted truth to help me see all the mud that was covering my diamond and to help me realize that I was shining all along. The mud was the thought patterns that kept me choosing addiction and relationships that served my pain. I didn't have a foundation of affectionate words until I experienced all the adversity and challenge that I did. My healing self-communication was birthed through the lack of vocabulary as young learner and

words got me through life's colorful peaks and valleys. It is my soul's work to share this superpower with everyone I possibly can!

I now inspire others to empower themselves through healing communication. I witness as their lives shift and transform from lives of disempowerment to lives of ignited passion and purpose. Because of my story, I am able to assist others with theirs and that's the reason why I am SMILING now more than ever, today and every day!!!

ABOUT BHAIRAVI SHERA

Bhairavi began the practice of Bhakti Yoga at the age of 11 being raised within the philosophy of Jainism. She began her commitment to the practice of yoga asana in 2007 and completed her 200 hour Hatha Yoga Teaching Training in 2016. Bhairavi's continued devotion to self-inquiry includes Reiki Master Teacher Holy Fire III, Holistic Plant-Based Nutrition, and Dynamic Bodywork. She also became an experienced practitioner of the mystical arts, including quantum healing, shamanism and hypnosis. She completed a Master of Science in Education in 2009 with a focus on Communication Disorders with an understanding of the conceptual mind as it relates to cognitive distortion and recovery from neurological trauma. Bhairavi currently serves as a transformational coach and consciousness mentor as well as an influencer and public speaker with a focus on overcoming fear and limitation in order to unlock passion, purpose and highest potential via self-healing through language. She is originally Canadian and resides in Chicago and her favorite places to be is exploring a forest preserve or chilling on the beach near the lake.

www.sheraspeakslight.com



J Shoop

“In your smile I see something that I already know, nothing that I fear to know, and everything that I need to know.” – J Shoop

SOME OF THE BEST MOMENTS IN YOUR LIFE WILL BEGIN WITH A SMILE!

BY J SHOOP

All I wanted to do was disappear...

It was late 2009, and I had just suffered several crushing failures and financial losses during the mortgage crisis that had begun two years earlier. (These were the types of losses that included a bunch of zeroes and a couple of commas!) The culmination of these events resulted in my having to appear before a judge in US Bankruptcy Court.

If you had known me growing up you would have never expected that I could be capable of building my own version of a real estate empire. I'm the third of four boys, with very humble roots. My family would

have be considered lower middle class, although I never realized it as a kid.

It's like my friend Larry Winget says, "We weren't dirt poor... but we were dusty!"

My Mom was in charge of caring for us boys, and somehow my Dad managed to always wear a smile while working hard to keep us housed and fed on his relatively small income as a shoe salesperson. (I, as a single father of one daughter, give mad props to anyone who successfully raises more than one child! I don't know how my folks did it.)

I worked at a handful of different sales jobs before fortuitously stumbling into the world of real estate finance. Since I never graduated from college, I'm pretty sure that no one ever anticipated that I would ultimately become one of the nation's top producing mortgage guys.

Fast-forward to the mid-2000's, and I was on my way to earning my first million. Things were going really well. The real estate market was hot and mortgage loans were almost too easy to get. While I never participated in that whole sub-prime ordeal, I was riding the legitimate

mortgage wave for all it was worth. I had acquired and invested in multiple homes, rental properties, and several speculative development deals.

As a top producer, I'd built up a lifestyle that never even *considered* the possibility of the "money faucet" being turned off. Lots of luxury cars. Lots of real estate... Soon to all be gone as a result of the Mortgage Meltdown. It was eerily similar to what many are going through because of Lockdown 2020.

Nothing would ever be the same.

Flashback to that bankruptcy courtroom – So my wife and I are waiting for our turn to be called by the Judge. Nobody in the room wants to make any eye contact. I call that place the Hall of Shame because everyone in there is just praying to God that no one recognizes them! During this process, the Judge is asking this series of questions of each debtor. He asks, "Name? ...Address? ...Occupation?"

And then, his final question is, "*Have you ever filed for Bankruptcy before?*"

Man, my heart jumped into my throat! You know the feeling like when one of your darkest secrets is about to be exposed? My hands started sweating and my heart was beating so hard in my chest that I'm sure you could have seen it from across the room. And I lean over to my wife and whisper, "When the Judge asks ME that question, don't freak out when I say, "YES".

Oh... My... God... If you could have seen the look on her face... If you can imagine how a fire hydrant might look at a dog, it was pretty-much like that.

At this point, I'd been married for nearly 10 years and I had never told her that I'd previously filed for bankruptcy back in the 80's. That day she found out a secret that I thought I would be taking to my grave. (Sometimes I wonder how things might have been different if I had been 100% transparent in the beginning of our relationship.)

I've learned over the years that the truth always finds a way to be revealed. *Always*. Take my failure to be transparent as your lesson to never hide the truth. I heard a quote once that said, "The truth will set you free, but not until it is finished with you." – Well, my Truth was not quite finished with me yet...

The hour-long car ride from the courthouse to our house seemed like it took forever. My wife was just gazing out the passenger window of the car, with a look on her face that I'd never seen before. It was like if you could ball up the emotions of anger, disbelief, hatred, pain, and sadness and mix them all into one expression.

She was heartbroken, and I was just... broken.

When we finally got home, I slowly walked upstairs, locked myself in my room, and had what most people would probably call a mental breakdown. That was when I started planning how I could take myself out. (Now I do not know if I could really take my own life, but I could sure understand why someone might want to.)

Then I just started sobbing. It must have lasted hours. Have you ever cried so much that you ran out of tears? You KNOW you've been crying awhile when you run out of tears! So I'm curled up at the foot of the bed, and I'm all out of tears, and I just said, "God... I know you're a good God... But why? Why me? Why now? How could this be happening? What is this all about?"

I don't think I was really expecting Him to answer, but right about then things got very quiet. You know, like after a storm, when the clouds are gone and the rain is gone, and everything just seems fresh and clean? My mind was finally clean. Then like a lightning bolt, this thought flashes into my mind.

It was a quote from one of my mentors, Les Brown. I don't know how many times I'd heard him say this quote before, but this time, it was like his words were speaking directly to me. He said, "*When life knocks you down, try to land on your back, because when you can look up, you can get up!*"

When you can look up, you can get up.

With what little strength I had, I literally forced myself to roll over onto my back, and I just laid there for a while, looking up. Then I forced myself to smile. I'm sure it must have looked ridiculous, but immediately, something in me started to shift.

Never underestimate the value of a smile.

In that moment, I had an epiphany or what I now call a PFB... which is a Profound Flash of Brilliance.

Here's what I realized.

Even though virtually all of my material possessions were liquidated, those possessions only represented a fraction of my assets. The skills, talents, and abilities that allowed me to create this life were not gone.

They could take away my stuff, but they could not take away my smile.

I was still here... And so are YOU.

Maybe you're dealing with some serious money problems right now? Maybe your company shut down during the Covid19 pandemic? Maybe you are the one whose spouse has told you, "I just don't love you any more". Maybe you are facing some other unmentionably scary stuff?

If that is you, please know this. If I can make a comeback, you can make a comeback. Like the Phoenix rising up from the ashes, you can

get up, even if it's only in your mind, for now. And it can all start with a smile.

A smile has been referred to as, “sunshine to the sad” and “nature’s best antidote for trouble”.

Your smile has mystical, magical powers that can change your entire outlook in an instant. Yet by itself, your smile is not enough. The essential next step is to follow up your smile with inspired actions.

Like you, I want to experience a life worth living.

When I began my comeback, I needed to have a framework in place to rebuild both my mind and my spirit. It took an enormous amount of self-discovery and inner work to get things back on track, and by no means do I have it all figured out. But I have figured *some* of it out, and my hope is that these ideas may help you if you're having trouble in your life right now. Don't leave it to chance.

My mentor Jim Rohn said, “Life doesn't get better by Chance, it gets better by Plan”.

The first element of my plan included creating a foundation of 3D Integrity. This is a lesson I learned from Dr. David Gruder, and the three dimensions of integrity are Authenticity, Connection, and Impact. (Me, We, and Us.) When these are in alignment, things start to naturally fall into place.

First, I had to get to work on Me, which required rethinking and reprioritizing what mattered most. I had to learn in some ways that it wasn't “all about me”, yet in some ways, it was. It was time to create new, healthy habits and start taking much better care of myself, inside and out.

Next, I began to work on the “We”, resolving and redefining my Connections and my relationships. Although my marriage ended as a byproduct of the financial crisis, I learned how to forgive my former wife and myself, and how to grow stronger through the experience.

It was also important for me to get around people who were optimistic, excited, and committed to my success. No matter what, you've got to surround yourself with people who want to see you win. You always want to be upgrading your relationships. You want to seek out mentors, teachers, and coaches who have expertise and experience in whatever it is you're dealing with.

Lastly, I started to look at what Impact was I making in my networks and community and began intentionally looking for ways to serve the “Us”, the collective good.

Not long after that, I came across my first Keep Smiling Card.

I'm not exactly sure when I received the first one, but it contained a little note and a website on the bottom of the card with instructions on how to order additional cards, free of charge. So that's what I did.

And I've been re-ordering them and passing them out ever since!

Whenever I hand a Keep Smiling card to someone (and especially when they take the time to read the back), it makes a positive impact and always creates another smile. No one can deny that we are certainly living in times in which many people could really use a smile.

I've found that most of the best moments in life begin with a smile!

The hardships and life events that I've experienced have taught me that we are not designed to do Life by ourselves. We need high-quality

people around us to support us, encourage us, and share smiles with us in the difficult times – AND to celebrate the great times, too. No matter what, I want you to decide that the temporary setbacks and failures in life are not going to define you, nor defeat you.

Understand that you have incredible value and worth. Now would be the perfect time for you to begin living more fully from that truth.

I believe that I was put on the planet to positively and profoundly alter your trajectory. I've seen far too many people accept failure as permanent because they didn't have somebody in their life to believe in them, or stretch them, or encourage them when things got tough. Sometimes a smile is all it takes.

We can all use a little bit more encouragement than we tend to reveal to others, and it is my sincere hope that you will allow me to be a voice of encouragement for you today, tomorrow, and in the years to come.

Keep smiling!

J Shoop

www.CoachShoop.com

ABOUT J SHOOP

JJShoop is the proud father of one amazing daughter, a Communications Consultant, and a friend and mentor to many! Over the course of his three-decade sales and leadership career, he uncovered his passion for coaching and teaching. Subsequently dubbed “Coach Shoop”.

Along his journey, he also realized that he had a unique talent for helping others discover “just the right words,” to effectively and powerfully communicate their personal stories. He collaborates with entrepreneurs and aspiring speakers to discover their best stories and use them as a force for good.

As the father of a female entrepreneur, he believes that women in business must always be treated with dignity, respect, mindfulness, and equality. Subsequently, he founded Guys That Get It, which is a global network of purpose-driven guys who are devoted to encouraging, equipping, and collaborating with female entrepreneurs.

Any success or notoriety that he experiences, he first credits to his

relationship with God, then to his mentors, and finally to the success principles that he has studied, adopted, and freely shares with others. And, he shares Keep Smiling cards every chance he gets!

www.CoachShoop.com www.TedWorthyTalk.com

The Death of Mediocrity • 52 Maxims For Living Your Life to the Max • Forget Your Why

Books that changed your life:

The Bible

As A Man Thinketh – James Allen

The Science of Being Great – Wallace D. Wattles

Resurrection – Neville

The Master Key Principle – Charles F. Haanel

Song That You're Embarrassed to Admit:

Will Get You on the Dance Floor Every Time:

Burnin' Up by the Jonas Brothers

Movie that inspires you:

The King's Speech

Most Influential Mentor in Your Life:

Jim Rohn

Quote you live by:

"It's better to be prepared for an opportunity and not have one, than to have an opportunity and not be prepared."



Barry Shore

“If you smile when no one else is around, you really mean it.” ~ Andy Rooney

THE AMBASSADOR OF JOY LIVES SMILE

BY BARRY SHORE

With Joy, Happiness, Peace and Love, I learned from early age, that the struggle in life is what brings the most benefit, not only to self, but to everyone as well. A clear example was my mother. She was born with a red wine stain birthmark that covered more than three quarters of her face and it was pockmarked. Yet, she married a fine man. She had 3 children. And friends who loved her. Growing up, we experienced her as the most powerful, positive, purposeful, pleasant influence on everybody she met. She didn't just overcome obstacles, she faced them head on, pushed through them, and lived life to the full. That was the example I grew up with on how to live life.

Mark Twain, one of America's greatest authors and insightful wits wrote that the two greatest days in a human being's life are: the day you're

born, and the day you realize your purpose. My life became full of purpose, overwhelmingly full of purpose on September 17, 2004. I was then 55 years of age, happily married for twenty-seven years with a seventeen-year-old son, and I was doing very well in business. That morning, I was hale and hearty; able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. That evening, I was in the hospital, completely paralyzed from my neck down.

It was not an auto accident or a spinal injury, but a rare disease took over my body and rendered me a quadriplegic in a matter of hours.

I lay flat on my back in the hospital for 144 days and in a hospital bed in my own home for two years. Thankfully I spent four years in a wheelchair and had braces on both my legs from my hips to my ankles. And that was progress!

However, through prayer, therapy, and love, I was able to regain some of my bodily functions. Today, I am able to be vertical and ambulatory with the help of a 7 foot walking wand made by a Zen master. I still can't walk up a stair by myself or a curb and I have help 12 hours a day, seven days a week.

But You can hear my words resonate with positive, purposeful, powerful pleasant exuberance.

JOY animates me because I found and use the 3 Fundamentals of Life. First, Life has purpose. And when You live with purpose You can go MAD, an acronym meaning 'Go Make a Difference.'

The third fundamental is to unlock the secrets and power of everyday words and terms. One of my favorites is SMILE which stands for 'Seeing Miracles In Life Everyday'.

With gratitude, I open my eyes, I can sit up and I can actually get out of bed albeit with assistance. Today I have re-learned how to swim. After years of aquatic therapy, I can now swim 2 miles a day, six days a week. Over the past 12 years I have accumulated more than 8,051 miles.

I am persistent. I am patient, perseverant, and purposeful. This is what I share when I speak with people and this is why we built our website www.BarryShore.com.

I have been dubbed by the World press as the Ambassador of Joy.

With JOY we find the power in everyday words and terms. Simple examples: WWW = 'What a wonderful world,' and WOW = 'Words of Wisdom.' When you do this with words, you create neuro linguistic programming that's purposeful, powerful, and pleasant. CREATE is a great acronym, because you Cause Rethinking Enabling All To Excel.

As we create insights we create new worlds. Now, it happens to be that I use the four-letter F.U. word. FUNN. FU, capital N, capital N. Make sure you always add those two Ns when you say that to somebody. People often say, "but Barry, FUNN is only spelled with 3 letters." I respond, not in the world of positive, purposeful, powerful and pleasant. In the world of JOY it's FU-NN! Let's teach the world to say FU... with the N, N! and a twinkle in Your eye.

That's what I do. I literally teach people JOY through the Eleven strategies for living in JOY daily. These strategies have helped thousands of people because they are practical tips and toos that work. The Eleven strategies involve things like "be a good friend", "be kind", and "get uncomfortable". "Don't take it personally". "Your words matter".

These are the strategies that make for a life that enables You to live in JOY daily.

No matter the circumstances.

In today's America, the richest, most opportunity-based place in the world we have a crisis. 68% of Americans say they are either mildly depressed or dissatisfied with life. Almost 20% of millennials say they do not have close friends. Most people over the age of 69 feel terribly lonely and isolated. Teenagers, especially girls, are prone to consider suicide and have committed suicide in unprecedented numbers.

Living in JOY daily is imperative right now. The life of Barry Shore is one reason to show that it can be done. Going from complete body paralysis happening in a matter of hours from a rare autoimmune disease to sharing how-to live-in JOY daily. And share that JOY with the world.

Yes, I'm the ambassador of JOY. A motivational speaker for thousands of people including myself. And a successful serial entrepreneur making millions of dollars through two exits and three issued patents. And with my share of stumbles.

But I'm here for one reason only: to provide positive, purposeful, powerful pleasant insights into living in JOY daily.

Books that changed your life:

Psalms, The Road Less Traveled, and
Man's Search for Meaning.

Song that inspires you:

Impossible Dream.

Movie that inspires you:

Endless Summer.Your

Hero:

My father, Bernard aka Bernie
to those who loved him.

Quote you live by:

"Choice not chance determines Your Destiny."



Colette R. Smith, Speaker, Author, Distinguished Toastmaster

“She is broken but she is beautiful because of her ability to still smile.”

FORGIVE AGAIN, LOVE AGAIN AND SMILE AGAIN

BY COLETTE R. SMITH

I was born in Vancouver Canada barely weighing five pounds. My Dad, Michael Lionel Levesque was an alcoholic. My Mum, Karen kept it all together and made sure her children were safe. Though my childhood had many good memories, as I look back through those childhood memories, they are filled with my dad being in and out of my life. When he was in my life it never ended well. When he came back into our lives it was always with gifts, joy and hope that this time it would last.

There were times when Mum would take Daddy back because he was sober. The last time Daddy came back home, he had a job. We were all so happy! Though I am young, I know this won't last. The inevitable happens and Daddy relapses. This time he wasn't just drinking but he

was using drugs too. I don't remember all the details. I just remember it was bad. Mum tells Daddy, "If you come home high and drunk again, I will throw you out for good!" A few nights later I was in a deep sleep, snuggled in my bed when yelling drew me out into the hallway. Daddy was yelling again. His speech was slurred and he was really angry. I peeked around the corner. Mum stood at the top of the stairs with a huge duffle bag in her arms and a determined look on her face. "Get out NOW!" She heaved that duffle bag over her head and hurled it down the stairs at him. I snuck back to bed and hid under my covers. I felt scared and alone. Daddy was gone again ...

Even when my parents weren't together anymore Mum still made an effort to make sure I could spend time with Daddy when he was sober.

One summer she agreed to let me go to a farm with Daddy to pick berries. Imagine a huge berry farm with acres of berries and several wooden bunk houses each filled with rows of bunkbeds for seasonal workers. I thought it was summer camp! I enjoyed haphazardly picking berries during the day and having fun around the fire in the evenings. Then the evening parties and drinking started. Daddy kept getting into scuffles with the other seasonal workers. Finally, we were

moved to our own small bunkhouse, but Daddy was never there. I got sick with a cold and severe laryngitis but Daddy still wasn't there. The farmer's daughter actually took care of me which I thought was weird. I woke up one morning and there he was passed out on the floor. I couldn't get him up. When he finally got up hours later, I demanded to go home. He wanted to stay and told me to hitchhike home. I was so scared that I would never get home and no one would know what happened to me. He finally agreed we needed to leave so we hitchhiked to the nearest bus stop and made our way home. I remember asking a lot of questions. "What bus are we taking?" "Where do we get off?" "How long will we be on the bus?" No child should feel like it's up to them to protect themselves but that is how I felt when I was with Daddy.

Faith and religion were a huge part of growing up. I don't remember when Mum started attending The Worldwide Church of God because it was all I knew. There were many instances when the support of church members provided a much-needed life raft. It meant that when we had to leave because Daddy was out of control Mum could turn to our church community. Sometimes your community is your savior.

The Worldwide Church of God is also where Mum met and started dating a new man. Fred was put through the ringer by three kids who didn't like him at all. "Mum, that strange man with the big nose is at the door again!" "Send him away we don't like him!" Thankfully Fred was a patient man and Mum didn't listen to us.

Fred was a humble man of slight stature who stuttered. I remember him at church walking down the aisle at towards Mum in dress pants that were too short and a look of joy on his face. "Look at that, He's wearing floods!" I was utterly embarrassed by Fred. It didn't take long to realize that Fred was there to stay no matter how horrible we were to him. Mum and Fred got married just before I started seventh grade and they never looked back. Fred has been the most amazing example of what a father, husband and friend should be.

Life went on filled with the usual trials and normal hurdles inherent to growing up.

I was pint sized my whole childhood. By the time I was eleven David and Carolyn were the same size as me. I was three and five years older than them but my growth was so far behind my peers that I was always

the kid sitting in the front holding the class sign in all the school photos. When I was in grade eleven my Mum and Fred decided to address why I was so short and not developing at a normal rate.

I walked into Dr. Lim's office and she told me that I was there because my parents were concerned about my slow development and we were going to do some testing. Boy, was I mad! I had been raised to believe I was normal and that there was nothing wrong with me. I was just a bit short! Okay, I was more than just a bit short, I was stuff her in a locker short. I was offended that my parents thought I was anything but normal. I had to do blood tests. What I didn't know is that they were doing karyotype testing or genetic testing. This testing can determine if an X chromosome is missing or partially missing. My tests came back showing that I was missing parts of an X chromosome.

This is called Turners Syndrome or TS and it can come with a lot of different medical needs depending on what type of TS you have and how your genetically faulty chromosomes are impacted. Unfortunately, it was too late for growth hormone therapy but I started hormone replacement therapy. Estrogen and Progesterone were needed to keep my bones and uterus healthy. Even with early intervention almost all

women with TS are unable to have children without medical intervention. I always thought I would have kids of my own but now I knew better. All this was crazy stuff for a teenage girl. I tried to brush it off and went on with things. I felt relieved to have an answer to my short stature and stalled puberty. It is tough to be different especially when you haven't embraced it. Especially when you haven't owned it.

As I grew into adulthood, I had no idea how much my relationship and experiences with Mike would impact my view of relationships and men. Despite the stability of the later years of my childhood these early experiences would impact my decision making in my first marriage. I had seen physical abuse growing up but didn't recognize the emotional abuse and the toll it took on my Mum. This was relived in my first marriage.

I met this attractive blond-haired, blue-eyed man named David when I was in my mid-twenties. He seemed like a good person and he even liked me! Liking me seemed to be my first criteria in developing relationships at the time. I quickly fell in love with his charm and good looks. I didn't see the signs of control and manipulation. We married and this was the beginning of seven years of turmoil, control

and unhappiness. He was an expert at gaslighting, using drugs and cheating.

All I did was work, eat and sleep. In the end this relationship turned me into someone that I didn't like let alone love. I was living a lie and not being true to myself. I couldn't be honest with anyone about what I was going through – what I was allowing to happen to me.

Sometime during all of this upheaval, I met Doug online in a chat room. I know you're thinking, SHE HAS LOST HER MIND! You wouldn't be wrong. Doug was kind and calm. He was the only person I was even a little bit honest with about what was going on in my marriage. Everyone else either thought I was brave for staying, ignored what was going on or simply didn't talk about it. Doug told me what I already knew but wasn't brave enough to face. Get out ... this is abuse ... real men don't treat women like that. Though it was awful to begin a relationship when I was still married – I desperately needed to feel good. It was the simple conversations that I clung to it like a life-raft. This meant lying to my husband, to Doug, and to my family. This meant making things sound better than they were, downplaying things, coloring things to make myself look better or simply not saying anything

at all. Though I was intermittently staying with a friend, there were times when I was bullied back into the marital home. I didn't tell Doug this as I was certain he would wash his hands of me.

I had been "stuck" for a long time and I was the only one who could take action. One day I finally had enough and gave my notice at work, called Doug and told him I was coming to Denver. I made plans to run away. That is what it felt like to me. Running ...

Without a word to family or friends I left Canada and headed to the United States. Was I being brave or ridiculously unsafe? Perhaps a bit of both? I didn't want David to find me or worse ... bully me back into returning. I knew that it would be the final death of who I was at my core. So ... I ran. I've since recognized that abuse comes in many forms and each is equally devastating and debilitating.

Doug turned out to be a good man who loves me unconditionally. Today he is truly my best friend. He has been there through all the crazy ups and down that my relocation to the U.S. has brought to our lives. Divorcing David, getting married to each other, getting my green card, buying our first home together, family and love.

Over the years life has settled into a rhythm. I've learned how to be more open and I know Doug has made me a better person. He has certainly taught me how to love with patience, humor and kindness. I have a great family life with two amazing step-daughters, grandkids and a beautiful support system. No woman has ever felt more blessed, changed, and reinvented.

Despite this, there is a mystery that still hasn't resolved. It has been years since I've heard from my biological Dad, Mike. I often worry that he will end up all alone dead in a ditch somewhere due to his lifestyle. Like most of my childhood – he was absent. When he finally showed up in a hospital in Vancouver, Canada all he had on him was a small bag, his guitar and a tiny tv. He was in very rough shape. There wasn't much hope for recovery.

I found myself on a plane heading from Denver to Vancouver. My brother, sister and I were nervous to see HIM again. We didn't know how to feel after all this time. When I walked into his room, I didn't even recognize him. He was this tiny little man with no hair and no teeth. He looked like an empty shell, a small visage of that large scary man from my childhood.

Thankfully, he did recover and we had a few more years with him. Mike credited us with saving his life just by being there. He was able to rebuild his relationships with his children and get to know his grandchildren. SOBER ...

Though my relationship with Mike was never what I wanted ... not even close. It taught me that you can still generate a lesson of love if you are brave enough to face your past and make amends, even if it's hard. Most people can't do this because of fear and guilt. I recommend you take a breath and do it! It starts with forgiving yourself for being human and imperfect.

Doug has been there through it all. A calm comfort in the storms that life can bring. The lessons of love are all around me and as I look at them all I can do is smile.

.....

I share my story so that others can be inspired and have hope that no matter what life brings, you can pick yourself up and be successful, love, and live life to the fullest. If one person is moved and inspired by

listening to how forgiveness can change your life then my mission is accomplished. Go out, change the world with your story. Afterall, you can change the world with your story one person at a time!

.....

I am an avid Toastmaster. This is one of the ways that I serve others and give back to my community. I believe that serving and helping others to find their voice is one of the biggest ways that I can help others to change the world. One of my favorite stories related to this is when I witnessed an amazing woman competing at the Club level of the World Championship of Public Speaking. She hadn't quite found her voice but her message was out of this world. I simply took her aside and said, "Do you want to win and have your message heard because you are awesome and I can help." She started to cry and shared with me that her message was everything to her. This was the beginning of an amazing relationship where we have helped and mentored each other through the hurdles of public speaking. We have definitely made each other better.

ABOUT COLETTE SMITH

Colette Smith is a survivor of domestic abuse both while growing up and as a young adult. Her passion is telling her story so that others who have experienced the same thing have hope that there is life after trauma. She is also a contributing author of *Hold My Crown*, *Women of Grit*, a book that shares the stories of 12 amazingly powerful women who have lived life's journey and come out the other side. If you've seen her take the stage you might know her as *A PARTY IN A SHOT GLASS*. She likes to live life large and spread joy wherever she goes.

Books that changed your life:

Three Cups of Tea and Stones to Schools by
Greg Mortenson
Tuesdays with Morrie and The Five People you
meet in Heaven by Mitch Albom
How to win and influence people by Dale
Carnegie

Movie that inspires you:

Schindler's List and It's a Wonderful Life are two
of my all-time
Favorites. The King's Speech is another one
that is hard to leave off of my must watch list.
All three of these books teach perseverance,
overcoming adversity and the ability to change
the world despite it all. This is what moves and
inspires me.

Song that inspires you:

You Raise Me Up by Josh Groban –
because it is my husband Douglas Edward
Smith in a nutshell.

Love will go on by Celine Dion –
for all the dreamers and lovers

We are the Champions by Queen –
for all the badass survivors of life

Hero:

My Mum, Karen Lamb is my hero. She doesn't realize the lessons she has taught by her example or the impact she has had on all the children in her life. She has been the biggest influence in my life and is the biggest overcomer I know.

Quote you live by:

"Success is not final; failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts." – Sir Winston Churchill



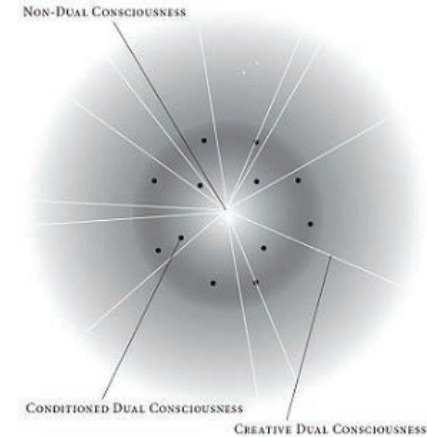
**Dr, Janet Smith Warfield, Consciousness Educator and
Word Energy Alchemist**

“Smiles connect people, aligning unique human beings in dynamic co-creation.”

LISTEN DEEPLY, SPEAK CLEARLY, SERVE WISELY, AND KEEP SMILING

BY DR. JANET SMITH WARFIELD

One picture is worth ten-thousand words. —Frederick R. Bernard



You've got to be kidding! What the heck does that picture mean?

As a child in Unitarian Sunday School, I had been taught the words “. . . resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” Matt. 5:39. Those words never made sense. Why in the world, if someone hit me on my right cheek, would I turn my other cheek and tell him to hit me again?

What I didn't understand, as a young child, was that my parents and teachers had unconsciously conditioned me into one of those little, conceptual black dots of conditioned dual consciousness on the diagram to the left. They had used words to teach me about words in the Christian Bible. The words were not connected to the underlying experience from which they emanated. The words were simply something I had been taught by others. Perhaps the words were also simply something my parents and teachers had been taught by others.

As a child, that little black dot felt very safe and secure. I felt protected within the word walls of that beautiful little sanctuary, loved and nurtured by parents, teachers, neighbors, and friends. The word walls of that little black dot gave me the self-assurance to play freely, explore,

learn, create, and co-create. I thought every child grew up with that kind of wonderful childhood experience.

Little did I then know how fortunate I had been. Many other children did not have that kind of nurturing childhood.

But what did those strange words in Matt. 5:39 really mean? What was the underlying experience that had generated those words? At age thirty, I suddenly found out.

After our youngest son was born, our five-year-old, Bill, began wetting the bed. This new, irritating behavior made hours of extra work for me at a time when I was already exhausted caring for husband, home, and three beautiful little sons.

At first, I ignored the bedwetting. Perhaps it would stop on its own. When it didn't, I explained to Bill why he was too old to wet the bed.

The wetting continued. I felt frustrated.

I raised my voice.

The wetting still continued. I felt even more frustrated. What did I need to do to get Bill's irritating behavior to stop?

I reasoned with Bill, threatened him, scolded him, and spanked him.

The wetting got worse. I was *really* frustrated now. In fact, my frustration was escalating toward anger. Bill's conduct was out of control, and I, too, was getting out of control. Nothing I had ever been taught to do solved this problem.

Around that time, my mother gave me a book called *Summerhill*, by an English schoolmaster, A.S. Neill. Neill had a very interesting way of dealing with "problem" children—the ones who insisted on talking in class, throwing spitballs, or fighting on the playground.

Neill didn't make them stand in a corner until they could be good. He didn't banish them to the cloak room. He didn't make them write 100 times, "I will be good."

Neil just reached into his pocket and gave them a penny.

Gave them a penny? What sense did that make? Rewarding "bad" behavior?

However, more often than not, the student would stop throwing spitballs, stop getting into fights on the playground, and start participating in the classroom educational experiences.

How fascinating! And I *really* was desperate to get this frustrating, bedwetting problem solved. I was willing to try anything!

The next morning, the bed was wet again. I had no idea what I was doing or why I was doing it, but I had a new model to follow.

I didn't say a word. I just smiled, picked up my wallet, pulled out a penny, gave it to Bill, and walked away.

Bill stared at me in confusion. This was *not* normal mother behavior.

However, the next morning, Bill's bed was dry. He never wet the bed again and my anger and frustration disappeared.

I was astonished. It was so simple! When I changed my own thinking and conduct, everything around me changed.

What a powerful tool! And it was totally within my own control!

I began using Neill's ideas with neighboring children.

One day, two of Bill's friends were calling each other names in the backyard and threatening to fight. I was watching from the kitchen window. I decided to go outside and make my presence felt.

Instead of trying to stop the boys from fighting, I simply took each one aside and asked him the same question. "Do you want to fight?"

Both boys said the same thing. "I don't want to fight, but he's making me do it. He's calling me names."

"Do you want to fight?" I reiterated. "If you do, go ahead and do it."

Each boy looked at me puzzled, looked at the ground, mumbled to himself, shuffled his feet, and cautiously eyed the other boy out of the corner of his eye. Two minutes later, they were playing happily together again.

What I was doing contradicted everything society had taught me, but it brought the peace and harmony I desired. Society had taught me to punish people for "bad behavior," but I wasn't punishing them. Society

had taught me to resist "evil," but I was no longer resisting. Society had taught me to fight for peace, but I wasn't fighting.

I was beginning to shift out of my culturally-conditioned dual consciousness (the little black boxes in the image above) into non-dual consciousness (the center point in the image above) and create and co-create (creative dual consciousness), using words and action choices to dance along the white lines emanating out from that center point, observe the results, learn, grow, and experiment with new words and actions. I was shifting into what Zen Buddhists call "Beginner's Mind."¹

*The mysteries of life become lucid . . . and often, nay usually,
the solution is more or less unutterable in words.*

—William James

I don't remember who came to my door. I don't remember what he said. I do remember he was angry, arrogant, and rude. His anger was directed toward me.

¹ "(Beginner's mind) refers to having an attitude of openness, eagerness, and lack of preconceptions when studying a subject, even when studying at an advanced level, just as a beginner would." Wikipedia.
See also Jack Kornfield's article "<https://jackkornfield.com/beginners-mind/>"
The Beauty of Beginner's Mind.

The behavior of the man at the door was obnoxious. However, as long as I chose to detach from his angry words, they didn't hurt me. I decided to allow him to vent his anger, listen to his words, and remain silent. When I finally spoke, all I said was, "I am so sorry. What can I do to make things better?"

I didn't do it because someone else had told me that was how I should act. I did it because I chose to do it. I experienced acceptance of the anger and no desire to retaliate. Suddenly, the anger stopped.

Nothing changed. Our home, the door, the living room, the man, were all still there, just as they had been five minutes before.

Yet everything changed. Suddenly, I understood the meaning of those meaningless words I'd been taught as a child: "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matt. 5:39)

What I experienced has been called a "mystical experience." It contained all four of the characteristics described by William James in his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Those characteristics are ineffability (incapable of description), noetic quality (a profound sense of knowing), transiency, and passivity.

I couldn't describe or communicate the deeper meaning. (Ineffability.) I somehow just knew that I knew. (Noetic quality.) The experience happened and passed. (Transiency.) It was not an experience and consciousness shift I chose (passivity), although I did choose the actions that preceded it.

As a child, my parents and Unitarian upbringing had taught me to doubt, question, and trust my own judgment. My rearing hadn't included education about mystical experiences, so I had no preconditioned words through which to understand what had happened.

However, I *did* know that other religious traditions contained words describing similar experiences. They used words like "salvation," "samahdi," "The Tao," "Nirvana," "I am aware."

I began voraciously reading the words of Christianity, Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, Hinduism, Plato, and existentialist philosophers, I could recognize my own experience in all the different words.

It was as if different people were describing the same beautiful flower garden. Some talked about roses, some spoke of delphiniums, some noticed the color patterns, and some focused on the trellises and

paths. If I hadn't seen the flower garden and were just listening to the words, I would have thought the people were talking about different things. Having seen the flower garden, I knew they were all giving verbal structure and form to the same underlying experience, just as our minds give form and meaning to the fixed lines of optical illusions.

*The map is not the territory.*²

—Alfred Korzybski

I couldn't stop playing with and trying to make sense out of these words and experiences. Was my life the same or was it different?

Externally, not a thing had changed. Internally, my life was totally

2 I like to add, "The words are not the experience. The menu is not the food you eat. Looking at a map of the West Coast of Florida is not the same as experiencing all the beautiful palms, lakes, and tropical flowers as you drive north on Route I-75.

Carmen Bostic St. Clair and John Grinder, two of the developers of neurolinguistic programming, have expanded on Alfred Korzybski's ideas in their book *Whispering in the Wind*. They have added a new concept to our vocabulary, "First Access." First Access is the understanding that our physical neurology is already limited by what it is able to receive and process. There are sounds that dogs can hear but humans cannot. There are light waves that are outside our ability to receive.

transformed. My perceptions, emotions, and actions had suddenly shifted. Words and their experiential meanings had suddenly shifted. Suddenly, I was looking at and understanding the externals from a sparkling new perspective. I was standing in the center of the above diagram in pure, non-dual consciousness, just noticing. Just aware.

These consciousness-shifting experiences were so amazing that I felt passionately driven to share them. As I began talking, blank stares and uncomprehending eyes looked back at me. I was talking, but I was *not* communicating.

That caused me to pull back, stop talking, and start looking at the words I was using. What was wrong with them? Why weren't they working? *I* understood what I was saying? Why couldn't others?

Suddenly, what felt like a life purpose question popped into my mind. "How could I use analytic, divisive words to communicate a unifying, holistic experience?"

The question was like a Zen koan.³

3 According to the Oxford English dictionary, a koan is "a paradoxical anecdote or riddle, used in Zen Buddhism to demonstrate the inadequacy of logical reasoning and to provoke enlightenment."

It felt as if I were trying to use a screwdriver to hammer a nail; a broom to wash dishes.

I knew my words were not Truth. They were only artistic, creative symbols, through which I was shaping the energy of my own personal experiences and consciousness shifts, intending only to offer my words as gifts to others, to support them in creating and bringing into their own lives the meaningful, expansive consciousness shifts of understanding and meaning that had been gifted to me. Yet so many who heard my words, who felt so very safe and secure in their own little black dots of conditioned thoughts, words, and doctrines, experienced my words as terrifying and self-righteous, as telling them what to think, say, or do, as battering down the word walls of their own safe, little, doctrinal word boxes.

Because they felt threatened and not good enough, they either distanced themselves from me, ostracized me, or became angry and abusive toward me. It hurt deeply, particularly when it came from family members. They just didn't understand and weren't willing to open up their minds to allow new ways of thinking to enter. They either weren't willing or weren't able to hear and receive, and simply savor the bountiful word buffet being offered to them, taking whatever nourished them and leaving the rest.

What words could I offer as eye-opening gifts (rather than more doctrinal prisons) to people in the physical world, tormented by pain, suffering, fear, war, disease, hunger, and death? How could I help them pierce the veils of their own word illusions⁴ and reconnect with that center point of non-dual consciousness that some have called "God," "Allah," "Brahman," "Samadhi," or "The Tao"?⁵ What words would best model the values that were becoming so important to me: personal integrity, transparency, accountability, and excellence? How could I stabilize suffering people by inviting them back into that still point of pure conscious awareness, when all they perceived in our physical world was chaos and danger flying all around and threatening their physical lives? Was it even possible to use words as a vehicle to create and co-create vibrant life and inner peace in a world where, on the surface, everything appeared dangerous and frightening?

I began playing with words and noticing their effects—first, on my own mind, body, emotions, and sense of well-being, and then, on the minds, bodies, emotions, and sense of well-being of those around me.

When I was noticing the effects of *my* words on my own mind, body,

⁴ Cf. Hinduism speaks of "piercing the veil of illusion."

⁵ T.S. Eliot used the words "still point." Ram Dass used the words, "Be here now." Teilhard de Chardin used the words "Omega Point."

emotions, and sense of well-being, I realized I was focused on what has been called “inner work,” the upper left quadrant of Ken Wilber’s AQAL diagram.⁶ I was also in that State of Consciousness that Buddhists would call “The Witness.”⁷

I discovered that when I nurtured myself with kind words and positive thoughts (affirmations, vision boards, journaling), my body relaxed, my health improved, and my energy seemed to flow more smoothly. When I started analyzing what was wrong with me, judging myself for not doing better, and beating myself up with “shoulds” and “oughts,” my body became tense, I slept poorly, my health suffered, and I was exhausted.

When I was noticing the effects of *others’* words on my own mind, body, emotions, and sense of well-being, I realized I was experiencing joy, alignment, safety, and freedom, or pain, terror, rage, and shame. I learned I could intentionally detach from the negative emotional effects of other people’s abusive words simply by setting an intention to care for and protect my own energy field from being sucked dry. I then perceived

6 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcbIt6t6lQQ>

7 <https://www.elephantjournal.com/2012/04/what-isembearing-witnessem-from-a-buddhist-perspective/>;
<https://www.ramdass.org/cultivating-witness/>.

other’s words as not saying anything about me or who I was, but simply offering information about the little conditioned, perceptual black dot in which they themselves were stuck, the state of terror and not feeling good enough within which they were existing, and their own full lack of connection with non-dual consciousness. I had shifted into what Teilhard de Chardin called “The Noosphere,”⁸ a pure information exchange.

When I refocused my mind on what we perceive as the outer, physical world, separate and apart from ourselves as observers, my mind could totally detach from all emotional content, stop the flow of sensory data, look at one conceptual frame at a time, separate and divide this flowing sensory data into tinier and tinier “objects,” all separated from one another, yet interacting with one another in what appeared to be a cause and effect relationship.

But which part was cause and which was effect? They seemed to me much more like dancing with one another in a constant shift of flow and interaction. When one concept changed, another concept changed. When one emotion changed, another emotion changed.

In my quest to answer what felt like my “life purpose” question (how

8 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noosphere>

can I use analytic, divisive words to communicate a unifying, holistic experience), I began experimenting with different forms of writing. I wrote stories. (Jesus spoke in parables.) I asked questions. (Socrates asked questions.) For two years straight, I wrote nothing but poetry. I played with alliteration to bring beauty and tone into my writing. I learned how to use metaphor and analogy to connect very different ideas and add context and clarity to what I was trying to communicate. I learned how to use meticulous grammar for clarity and consistency. I learned how to use dialectic for exploring ideas, sharing information, opening up minds, and having conscious, information-exchanging conversations. I learned how to use rhetoric to persuade.

No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.
—Albert Einstein

While I was exploring all the different ways of using words and the intentions with which they were being manifested, I also spent a lot of time journaling to work my way through my own personal challenges.

Journaling is a process whereby you start with a problem your left brain and conditioned mindset have created and can't solve. Then you

sit down and start writing—whatever comes into your head. No censorship. Again, you are in the Buddhist State of Consciousness known as “The Witness.” You are just watching your thoughts as they flow through your mind and documenting whatever comes through. The thoughts flow through in what seems like an uncorrelated stream of ideas, sometimes called a “stream of consciousness,” circling around and back; yet suddenly a solution emerges and you have a new idea for moving forward.

It is vital *not* to censor your mind. You are the only one who can see what flows through, unless you choose to share what you have written with others. When you are done, you can burn what you have written or tear it into shreds if you choose, so no-one else will ever see it. Is this somewhat analogous to the Catholic confessional, except you are doing the process alone, rather than through the listening ears of a Priest?

If you can tolerate looking at what has emerged on the paper, I would strongly suggest you keep it so you can go back to it, as appropriate, in the future. That single piece of paper contains a wealth of information and insight that can support you in creating your own life of inner peace, purpose, meaning, prosperity, and spiritual power.

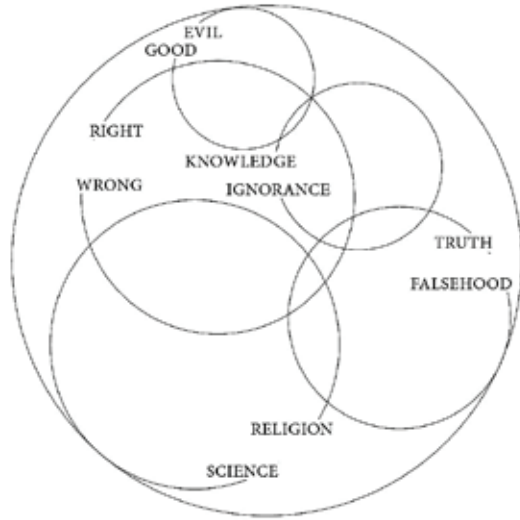
I noticed how resistant I was to using rules and top down, authoritarian instruction, as well as rigid societal structures, with rewards for compliance and punishment for noncompliance. After all, who was I to tell another person what to do or how to live their life? And I certainly didn't like it when other people tried to tell me what to do or how to live my life, particularly when their demands conflicted with my own inner sense of integrity.

My trust had been betrayed so many times by complying with an "expert's" instructions, the societal structures into which I had been conditioned, and the divergent, underlying desires of people I loved and once trusted: a husband who made vows to love, honor, and obey, got me pregnant three times, and then decided that it would be really macho to have an affair with another woman that ultimately destroyed our marriage and family and threw one of our beautiful sons into years of drug addiction; a lover I once believed was a soulmate who morphed into a hell mate when we lived together—the epitome of a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; a university president who screamed at me for asking questions he didn't want me to ask and talking to people he didn't want me to talk to; a doctor who almost killed me by over-prescribing natural nutritionals for which he was receiving commissions; a landlord who promised to let me rent his property as long as I needed to, as long as I paid my rent on

time and took care of the property, and then found someone who would pay him more and evicted me; builders of a home I was trying to build, who, once they received my down payment, ignored the terms of the contract and began using untrained workers, cheap supplies, and inadequate methods to build a structurally unsafe house so they could put money into their own pockets; a person I thought was a trusted friend, who asked me for a short term loan and then ignored me when I asked for return of the money; a politician who slandered me when I was practicing law in Atlantic City and threatened to pull contracts I had with the City, because I refused to put his political sign in my front yard.

Yet I also noticed there were times when I needed and wanted very specific instructions to accomplish a task I wanted to accomplish when another person had already figured out how to do it. And I was very clear that if I were on an airplane that was having engine trouble, I was going to do what the pilot and flight attendants told me to do.

As I explored all the various word forms, there were times when I became so frustrated with analytic, divisive, categorizing words that I began drawing images to relieve my frustration with trying to use words to communicate this unifying, holistic experience.



There was no consistency in the way others understood the words I was speaking. Their understanding seemed to depend more on the conditioned mindset (little black dot in the first diagram) of the person who heard or read my words than it did on the experience I intended to communicate. I simply couldn't predict what a word might mean to any particular person and whether that person would welcome it or resist it.

Each little black dot saw itself as separate from, different from, and needing to protect itself from, all the other little black dots. The black dots (word worldviews) constantly fought against all the other black dots (different word worldviews) for worldly power, control, and a false sense of security.⁹ None had found its way back to that center point of non-dual consciousness and learned to understand its words as nothing but individual, frequently useful, worldly creative perspectives, artistically reflecting our experiences.

*The Way that can be walked is not the eternal Way.
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.
The nameless is the beginning of Heaven and Earth.
The named is the mother of all things.¹⁰*
— Tao te Ching

I *did* notice that certain forms of words seemed generally to work better than others to communicate this unifying, holistic experience. These were the artistic forms of words: story telling (used by Jesus), questions (used by Socrates), poetry (used by Rumi, Hafiz, and Mary Oliver);

⁹ It may be relevant here to mention the Judaic and Christian concept of Original Sin, when Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge and were expelled from the Garden of Eden. Gen 3:5-7

¹⁰ See. <https://www.taoistic.com/taoteching-laotzu/taoteching-01.htm>.

and oral sharing of elders' wisdom (used by indigenous tribes).

Why did these forms of language work better? Because they eschewed self-righteousness and simply used words with magnificent artistry to mirror and reflect meaningful archetypes and patterns of human interaction.¹¹

Why do thoughts suddenly pop into your mind out of nowhere?

After about fifteen years of learning about and playing with different word forms, each created with a different intention, and despairing that there was ever any fully adequate way to answer my "life purpose" question (how can I use analytic, divisive, words to communicate a unifying, holistic experience), a new thought popped into my mind.

"What if I changed the word 'communicate' to 'facilitate'?"

¹¹ "You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things." The Holy Bible, New International Version. Romans: 2:1.

"All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts . . . William Shakespeare. *As You Like It*.

My "life purpose" question then became: "How can I use analytic, divisive, words to *facilitate* a unifying, holistic experience?"

Can you *feel* the energetic difference between those two questions?

The first question separated me from the *experience* of non-dual consciousness (the center point in the first diagram), and stuck me back into one of those little black boxes in the diagram, where I was using words to try to understand how to use words to change other peoples' minds, emotions, and conduct.

The new question infused me with "personal empowerment" and "spiritual authority" if I chose to accept that empowerment and authority, but what a gigantic responsibility! Who did I think I was, anyway, viewing myself in that way? Could I really take on that role? Was I worthy enough to fulfill it?

I felt the heavy weight and physical impossibility of using that kind of power with full awareness and immaculate execution to support and serve both myself and all other living beings with as much love, respect and compassion as possible. I knew I could never do it alone.

I had to stay connected with and immersed in that energetic center point of non-dual consciousness that has been called “God,” “Allah,” “Brahman,” “Samadhi,” “Universal Energy” “The Tao,” “Power greater than myself,” and simply trust it to guide my words and each of my steps, in each and every moment, in creative and co-creative “Power With,” and simply invite others to join me there.

Only when each and every one of us gives ourselves permission to release ourselves from our tiny, little, conditioned, restrictive, human-created, black word box prisons, soar back toward, and reconnect with, that living, breathing, dynamic, conceptually free and unstructured, experience of non-dual consciousness, shall we, together, in self-love and mutual love, self-care and mutual care, self-respect and mutual respect, self-compassion and mutual compassion, be able to return together to that mythical Garden of Eden, and use our dualistic words, creatively and co-creatively, through clear speaking, deep listening, mutual respect, self-compassion and other compassion, to manifest a beautiful, free, dynamic, peaceful, powerful, prosperous planet—together!

ABOUT DR. JANET SMITH WARFIELD

Master of words. Powerful player. What life-changing words can Dr. Janet Smith Warfield pull out of her magical toolbox that just might mysteriously open a door you never knew was there? A door to free yourself from fear forever, transform your rage into right action, release your guilt, position you into a life of freedom, purpose, passion, power and peace, all quite suddenly, unexpectedly, and almost miraculously, with no effort on your part.

Dr. Janet will show you how words map our experiences, immersing you in a sound bath that relaxes your muscles, opens your mind, and supports you in co-creating your extraordinary life.

Book that changed your life:

Summerhill, by A.S. Neill.

Movie that inspire you:

The Song of Bernadette

Song that inspires you:

Climb Every Mountain

Your Hero:

The Buddha

Quote you live by:

"Be here now," (Ram Dass)



**Sherrie Sokolowski, Event Planner and Consultant; Founder of SLS
Event Planning and Consultant**

“Smiles brings happiness to those around you!”

BUILDING YOUR BRAND WITH LIVE EVENTS MAKES EVERYONE SMILE!

BY SHERRIE SOKOLOWSKI

Aside from being an ambitious event planner, I have devoted my life and my career to the One who has given both to me. I consider myself blessed beyond belief, and am grateful to God for the opportunities placed before me to use the gifts He has placed in me for my clients' benefit and His glory. I am married to my best friend who helps me everyday raise our beautiful and bright daughter. They are my biggest fan and best support system I have. My life hasn't always been this glorious, it took me almost 20-years of my adult life to realize my gifts and what I wanted to do with my career. It wasn't until I started working for Bill Glazer of GKIC in 2005 that I had the best opportunity to grow professionally and learn the world of online and offline

marketing in the entrepreneur industry. After 7-years of working with Bill Glazer, I went out on my own and founded SLS Event Planning and Consulting, LLC. With my husband's support, the grace of God and the relationships and knowledge I gained by working side-by-side with a legendary marketer ... I have been on the greatest journey yet in my career. My perseverance early in my career has taught me how to overcome challenges, learn from mistakes, while helping and serving others.

•••••

Have you ever heard of your career choosing you? Well, that is how event planning came to be for me. My job when I started with Bill Glazer was to be his executive assistant. I was an executive assistant for over 15-years when I started working with Bill. In less than 3-months time, I started planning their national events and quickly learned hands-on how to manage events from 20 people, up to 2,000 people in 7-years of working by Bill's side. It was an exciting world for me because Bill treated me as his apprentice. He taught me anything I wanted to learn and for things he didn't know, like event planning, he hired a professional to teach me! It was a dream career, a dream

job and a dream boss for sure. You may be wondering why I left? I know I would if I just read this. Bill Glazer sold GKIC in 2011 and things slowly began to change. It was no longer a place that inspired or excited my passion in event planning. Through lots of prayer and support from my husband, I ventured out on my own in 2012. I quickly started working with other entrepreneurs who saw me run GKIC events. My passion for event planning was back! I love working with people who either haven't put on an event yet and need a plan to start or those that have been doing them but are ready for the next step in their growth. I believe The Lord has given me many gifts, all of which I get to share with those clients who put their trust in me to help them Build Their Brand with Live Events That Makes Everyone Smile!

•••••

While striving to be one of the most efficient, organized and professional event planners in the industry, I've set a goal to make event planning personal. Through building relationships and making event planning enjoyable and creative, I've built a reputation for meeting and exceeding the expectations of those who work with me. In other words, I am very transparent and honest with everyone. To me its a big

deal to be upfront with your clients' expectations, vendors' ambitions and venues who may not understand your goal. Whenever a problem or situation arises, I immediately think of a solution. I don't like to waste time focusing on the negative, why did this just happen, I focus on how can we resolve it. In Live Events, there is no time to waste on 'what ifs' or 'why me' attitude. I like to think this is one of my gifts. A great example of this is from a client's event where my client was facing an attrition penalty due to so many people canceling their hotel rooms last minute and booking elsewhere cheaper (everyones worse nightmare). I had clauses in place to help with most if these rooms outside of our block but for those that went off site I couldn't do anything about capturing them. The solution I had was to use the attrition penalty for our benefit and got the hotel to agree to allowing us to use it towards F&B. So I suggested my client host a Q&A Breakfast Session the 2nd morning for those that bought tickets to next years event! It was a win/win. You see, it encouraged more people to sign up for next year. They had a free breakfast, an opportunity to ask questions of the host and guest speakers (one being a big name in the industry that rarely speaks at other events). We were able to put our attrition penalty to good use that helped make my client money back in the long run!

ABOUT SHERRIE SOKOLOWSKI

The starting point of Sherrie's event planning career began with Bill Glazer and Glazer-Kennedy Insider's Circle™. Sherrie began working with Bill in 2005, as his Executive Assistant but quickly took on the additional role of Event Manager. Not only did Sherrie take on the responsibility for organizing hospitality services, social events, major national events, site selection, hotel negotiations, traveling and accommodations, liaising with speakers and VIPs, and overseeing all event staff, she also learned a great deal of marketing tips, strategies, business planning and so much more working side by side with Bill and listening to the top Marketing Experts on stage. Through determination and hard work, Sherrie learned quickly what it took to run smooth, successful and profitable events to get where she is today, running her own event planning business 7-years strong, having helped over 40 clients Build Their Brand with Live Events That Makes Everyone Smile.

Book that changed your life:

I have a hard time reading books as I always want to stop and take notes as I'm reading. I feel like I'm in study mode when I read. So truly the only book that has changed my life is the Bible.

Movies that inspire you:

Overcomer, War Room, Gods Not Dead
and I Can Only Imagine

Song that inspires you:

Greater by Mercy Me

Your Hero:

Kyle Sokolowski. He showed up in a time in my life (I know God's hand was in it) where I was ready but didn't know it.

Quote you live by:

Honestly I don't have one, but if I had to choose
"What Would Jesus Do?"



Jeff Spenard, Owner Voice America

“You’re braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think... and inspire more smiles than you know.”

KEEP SMILING

BY JEFF SPENARD

Growing up in Smithfield, Rhode Island, a small town where everyone knows your name helped to make me the person I am today. Living in a great community and having a close family is where I learned the art of “one on one” conversation and building on your talents.

Not to toot my own horn, but when I was 9 years old, I was crowned “King of the Playgrounds”, my Queen was Mayor Buddy Cianci’s Daughter and that was out of 6 districts.

When I was 11 I earned Boy Scout of the year and won a free trip to Camp Yago which at the time was \$350 bucks!! Big money back then for my parents so they were as excited as I was.

When I was 16, not only was I working but, I was traveling Southern New England setting up rings and training to be a professional wrestler,

the high flying, body slamming kind not the Olympic kind, which was going to be my career and my future.

As you can see I was never a shy kind of guy. Would I have ever thought then 30 years later I would be the CEO/Owner of World Talk Radio dba VoiceAmerica (www.voiceamerica.com) the pioneer of the world's leading live internet media broadcasting company I would have said you were crazy! The fact that I am able to help box up and share your passions, dreams, talents and education with one other person or even a global audience gives me a strong sense of accomplishment.

Hopefully this book, and our continuing relationship and discussion will maybe make it easier for everyone to formulate, create and “get it out there”. I have paid the dues, fallen down a thousand times only to pick up and brush it off and traveled the roads not taken and now it's my pleasure to help you to learn from my mistakes and we can hopefully do it a better way.

Media can serve a purpose, but it needs to be engaging. We can't let it control us, we must control it. So do a show, don't do a show, but at

least start a podcast, a Facebook Page, a Google Hangout, a LinkedIn group, or join VoiceAmerica, whatever it takes!

If you come up with a solid strategy, work with people that know what they're talking about, don't throw money around like you're a Rockefeller until you understand the basics, and have a commitment to a goal – you can pull it off like a rockstar!



Jess Stainbrook, Emmy Award winning Producer/Director

“A smile makes everyone’s day brighter!”

BRINGING SMILES THROUGH INSPIRATIONAL MEDIA!

BY JESS STAINBROOK

I’ve always been a creative person, that kid running around with a Super 8 camera making movies, or my first borrowed Minolta SLR taking photographs. My mom was an art teacher, and my dad worked hard for the Boy Scouts. We moved every two years while growing up. I went to 11 different schools. We spent a lot of time outdoors as a family - backpacking, hiking, climbing, camping, canoeing, sailing, fishing and building things. Because of my dad, I know electrical, plumbing, masonry, framing, sheet rocking - you name it! He probably forgot more about construction than I could ever take in. My parents both did their best with the little resources we had growing up. They poured their hearts into me, especially my mom. I think that is because my

dad lived with epilepsy. He got kicked out of college because of it. I was prepped as a kid to know what to do, just in case. That's a lot of pressure, believing that your father's life or death could be in your hands as a kid.

I was the first person in my family to ever play soccer. Thankfully, that paid off - due to a soccer scholarship, I was able to go to college. While I still coach and even played up until a few years ago, in college, while you dream of being a pro player, eventually I focused on my major - communications, although I signed up for AOCS -Aviation Officer Candidates School with the Navy, because frankly, I thought there was no way I would ever make it in this industry. There were so many obstacles at that time. Everything changed my senior year of college when I got an internship with the phone company. All my friends thought I got gypped, while they all had internships with the local TV Stations in Philadelphia. Bell of Pennsylvania was the best thing ever. And because of a thing called "divestiture," 15 credits short of graduating, I launched my first ad agency/production company and things took off. I started with corporate clients like Bell Atlantic and ARA Services, and then suddenly, my company was creating content for MTV, ESPN, PBS and most of the networks. It was surreal, but

LOTS of fun! I remember a big decision came a few years into our work; should I buy a house, or a camera? (They were both around the same price back then - \$150k!) I chose a camera, and that led to more work. Then I got a my own Steadicam® and that got me even more, and higher paying gigs. I produced a show on the Olympic torch being run across the USA and that got picked up by PBS and all of a sudden, I was the super creative sports producer. Our teams traveled the world covering events like Grand Prix Racing, Boxing, Horse Racing, NFL Camps, World Cup Skiing – the list goes on and on.

The summer of 1989 would literally change my life and focus. Up until then, I would say that I was living the high life, making lots of money and spending it frivolously. I had all the toys – a hip, warehouse loft apartment overlooking south Philly, a sailboat on the eastern shoe of the Chesapeake. I raced Hobie Cats in the summer, took ski trips to Utah with buddies every winter, rock climbed in Colorado – you get the idea. It was all about me... and fun. That year, my company was chosen to cover the first-ever, inside communist Russia, international athletic event (besides the boycotted Olympics in 1980) – that being an ultramarathon with athletes from all over the world running 1000 miles across Siberia in 15 days. This summer event would follow the

service roads of the Baikal-Amur railway. I was an adventure junkie – how could I NOT go do this?!!

Originally, the race was supposed to run east into Pyongyang for the Youth Sports Festival, the communist equivalent of the Pan-Am Games, but that got nixed at the very last minute and the organizers had to come up with a quick alternative. So we ran west instead. There were a few guys on the Russian team that did not look to be runners, and it came out quickly that everyone thought they were KGB agents assigned to the race to watch me and my friend, because they thought we were CIA. Buy me lunch and I will share the long version of this story, because it is hilarious. But the short version may be what you were already thinking, I was “taken” about half-way through the race and got to spend some time with a group of not-so-pleasant security people who questioned me and demanded I sign some paperwork in Russian. It was uncomfortable, and for the first time in my life, I feared for my life, which made me re-think how I was living. I had not planned for things to end in this situation. I still had things to do! For the first time, I called out for help, hoping that if there was a God, that he would get me out of this mess. And of course, if he did, I would change my ways. Surprisingly, something miraculous happened, and

I was released back to the race, pretending like nothing happened. As we were boarding the plane to come back to the USA, one of the “agents” came up to me, gave me a big bear hug, and whispered in my ear, “This time you live my spy friend.”

Now, you must know that whether I was “all for me” or not previously in life, I have always been an honest person, doing my best to live with integrity. Maybe that is my Boy Scout background that was instilled into me by my dad. So, when I got back to America, I needed to live up to my promise made under duress. I went on a “search.” Many friends and acquaintances would say that I “found religion.” Religiosity has nothing to do with it. But my faith in and practical understanding of God was changed drastically from my experience – a complete paradigm shift for me. Sometimes it takes a shakeup to change your perspective, to let you look at something from a new direction.

I would continue to do all kinds of work in television, but the way I did it changed with this new focus of serving as opposed to selfishness. I got more involved in helping people in need both here in the US and in developing countries. I like to say that I moved from success to significance. I would meet and marry my best friend and climbing partner,

Keena. And we moved to Colorado to start our new life together. Being from Philadelphia, the juxtaposition was jarring as we moved into the high prairie southeast of Denver. Now, I wouldn't change it for the world.

I was a horrible student growing up. Now I am a university professor, sharing the things I know with others, raising up the next generation of creative professionals. I have dyslexia, so it was always hard for me to read and understand. Now I read lots of books, increasing my knowledge and understanding on a daily basis. I'm a published author, speaker, mentor and friend. I have inspirational reading plans that people can access through The Bible App that encourage others in their daily walk of life. I work hard at being a good husband and father, although, I still fail over and over. But I do not let those setbacks get me down. I get up and keep walking. And I keep smiling, which is what this book is all about.

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People today know me for the “inspirational” movies, TV projects and media content I create; Seven Days in Utopia with Robert Duvall, Faith, Family and Football with Tony Dungy. I was an Exclusive Advisor on

The Bible Series from Mark Burnett. I have eight Emmy Awards for my documentary work. I have also gotten deeply involved in serving non-profits that help others. That's just what I do, it's not who I am! Who I am is a person, just like everyone else, broken and hurting, who relies on God to help me make it through every day. And if I can share that hope with others, well, then maybe we can all journey together, sharing the yoke to get through the burdens of life together. As iron sharpens iron!

My friend came up with this acronym that I think says it all using the work family. Take the letters: F.A.M.I.L.Y. and then remember this: Forget About Me, I Love You. F.A.M.I.L.Y. Forget About Me, I Love You! I could not sum it up any better. If we were all to live this way, forgetting ourselves and loving others, the world would be a completely different place. There would be no famine or global warming problems, wars or religious persecution. There would be no starving children in Africa or orphans in China. I promise to try every day to live this way. And hopefully, it will bring a smile to people's faces, even through the toughest of times. Keep Smiling! Will you join me?

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You might call me an entrepreneurial midwife, birthing inspirational ideas that impact lives and influence culture. I believe everyone has a story, and that story has value. I'm a big fan of learning and building strong, trustworthy team dynamics. My Emergenetics personality profile says I'm divergent and bi-modal, with the two thinking attributes of 50% Conceptual and 40% Analytical (only 11% of the population). My motto is "I see the forest and the trees!" My left brain and right brain fire at the same time which means I bring the best ideas to the table along with the numbers/metrics to back successful execution of those innovative ideas. I am self-motivated and a bulldog when it comes to finishing something that I see will impact someone's life in a positive way. I have a strong commitment to integrity, honesty and truthfulness – maybe that's my Boy Scout "Be prepared and do a good deed daily" background. My weakness – I'm hard on myself while being soft on others...for the right reasons. I have no trouble leading hard changes when needed. From a leadership standpoint, I love to see others succeed and grow. I'm a bit of a media diggerati, loving some technology and comfortable in our digital world while sometimes purposefully unplugging to enjoy wilderness sports like technical rock climbing and extreme snow skiing.

ABOUT JESS STAINBROOK

With eight Emmy Awards to his credit, Jess Stainbrook is known for his work in movies and broadcast media, especially directing sports programming at events like the NFL Super Bowl, Grand Prix Racing, World Cup Skiing, the Olympics and more! (<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm2706288/>)

Passionate about helping others, Jess teaches Visual Storytelling and Culture, Digital Media and Graphic Design at Colorado Christian University in Lakewood, Colorado. Jess is also on staff with Athletes in Action, serving as a professional sports chaplain and broadcast sports media director.

Jess serves as the Executive Director of the Invisible Disabilities® Association advocating and raising awareness for people living with disabilities. IDA's National Disability ID legislation is changing lives by allowing for an approved designated symbol on government IDs through voluntary disclosure. For more info: <http://nationaldisability.id/>

Books that changed your life

The Dream Giver by Bruce Wilkinson, Quiet Strength by Tony Dungy, Business By The Book by Larry Burkett, Anointed for Business by Ed Siloso, Good to Great by Jim Collins, The Bible

Movies that inspire you

The Godfather, Rocky, Woodlawn, Amadeus, The Life of Pi, Life is Beautiful, Find Me, Amelie, Dances With Wolves

Songs that inspires you

Floyd Ellsworth - Everything, Michael O'Brien - All the Nations, Dean Martin - Mambo Italiano

Your Hero

My dad, Tony Dungy, Kaka, Jesus

Quote you live by

I believe in God as I believe that the Sun has risen; not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else. C.S. Lewis



Karen Strauss Book Publisher, Author, Founder Hybrid Global Publishing

“I want touch the world with my message and make it smile.”

YOUR SMILE IS AN OPEN BOOK

BY KAREN STRAUSS

I was born into a family with two older brothers I was the only girl and became the apple of my father's eye. We shared everything together - our love of music (he had an amazing voice and almost became a professional singer). He told me once that the only job he was offered was in vaudeville and if he had been on his own - he might have taken it, but my Mother would not allow it under any circumstances. So, he settled for Saturday night singing duets with his daughter. We also shared a love of books and literature. He made reading fun and we had a ritual of reading to each other many times a week.

The joy we shared carried over into my adult life when I was lucky enough to get a job in publishing. I was able to help authors share their message by getting them interviews on TV, Radio, Newspapers and

securing reviews. The biggest high was reaching the New York Times Bestseller lists. Now THAT was a happy author putting smiles on all our faces. I knew I was made for branching out into doing my own thing and at 34 years old finally flew the coop of traditional publishing to start my company helping other publishing companies get broader distribution into Barnes & Noble, Borders, airport stores and the warehouse clubs. I helped bring religious books into the secular market. At that time no one in the secular market knew what titles to bring into their stores so I was at the forefront at this evolution into the secular marketplace.

This morphed into working with individual authors who wanted to get into Barnes & Noble and learn how to become more visible.

Just as my new business was taking off, I was diagnosed with Breast Cancer and Borders went out of business. Almost overnight I lost 40% of my income. And I was in for the fight of my life.

I will never forget the walk home from the Dr's office when I was first diagnosed, with my friend Susan holding my hand. She said, "You are going to be fine. It will be a rough journey for a while, but you will be just fine. You will come to see this as just a bump in the road.

Well, I am not going to lie. It felt like much more than a bump in the road during that long, dreadful year, but during that time I realized how many amazing friends and supporters I had.

The biopsy, endless meetings with surgeons, oncologists, my primary doctor . . . Susan was with me through all of it. I was so grateful to her; she was my advocate. She took notes; she could hear what the doctors were saying, while I could barely listen.

Finally, we found the right team. I had the surgery—I needed a mastectomy. I woke up in the hospital to four worried faces trying to put on a brave front: my family, Susan, my cousin . . .

Everybody said at once, "It went great!" That was the beginning of my transformation, although I didn't know it yet.

You see, I had always been a very independent woman. Even when I was very young, I could always "do it myself." I didn't need anyone to help me; I was the one who people turned to when they needed to talk about their problems. I always saw needing help from someone as weak. I was the strong one. I was not going to be vulnerable—I would manage just fine!

I could take care of managing my business, my clients, my employees, my co-op, my house in the country, my dog—and now my cancer. This was just one more thing . . . right?

Well, I could not have been more wrong! I didn't realize what a big deal this was, and I needed to focus every bit of attention on getting well. From choosing the surgeon, the oncologist, getting second and third opinions to finally undergoing the surgery, enduring more endless tests, and setting up the chemo treatment. And then living with the effects of the chemo itself—the nausea, the fatigue, the memory loss . . .

Throughout this process, I don't know how I would have made it through without my family, good friends— and surprisingly even those that weren't such good friends.

For instance, one person (now an Oscar winner for the movie *Birdland*!) who I knew from the dog park called me and offered to take my dog, Izzy, to the park anytime I wanted. I did not know him very well at that point, and his generous offer floored me.

Similar offers came. A woman in my building is a makeup artist, and when I had a swanky holiday party to attend, she offered to do my makeup—complete with false eyelashes!

And one night, when I decided it was time to cut the remaining hair on my head (a very emotional decision for me), my friend (whose husband works on Broadway) brought over one of her friends who cuts hair professionally for Broadway productions. They made it fun—we had champagne and hors d'oeuvres.

One neighbor, who I knew just to say hello to, came to my apartment every night while I was going through chemo to check on me, see if I needed anything, and offer to walk Izzy. This was a lifesaver, since by then I was pretty wiped out and sometimes couldn't even make it off the couch, let alone get dressed in five layers, dress Izzy, and walk out in 10 degree weather so Izzy could do his business.

I could go on and on about the generosity and support offered to me by friends, family, and acquaintances who were ready and willing to do something, anything, to help me.

And for the first time in my life, I let them! Wow! What a feeling—I went from feeling guilty to feeling grateful and appreciative of the fact that so many people wanted to support and help me. All I had to do was say yes and give them a task.

So many people came to sit with me during the four hours each week I had my chemo treatment. My friends who thought they were stand-up comedians practiced on me, their captive audience. Some of my friends came to gossip, or spill their problems, or just discuss world events. I was SO grateful not to have to talk about “how I was feeling,” or about my illness in general. It made the time fly by.

I have never forgotten this lesson. I no longer want to be a loner, to have to make decisions by myself, to not allow myself to be vulnerable. This has stood me in good stead to grow my business as well as become more intimate in my personal relationships.

I've learned that life is more fun when I let people in. I no longer feel the weight of the world on my shoulders. I know I have mentors, friends, advisors, and loved ones who will keep me grounded, supported, and constantly aware that I do not have to go through life alone.

I have since lived my life in gratitude for the people that have come into my life to create collaborative relationships and share their love, their gifts and their support. And I am much happier for it! I smile all the time now!

It really does take a village—and I am deeply and profoundly grateful

ABOUT KAREN STRAUSS

Karen Strauss has worked in publishing for more than thirty years and has held management and marketing positions at major publishing houses, including The Free Press, Crown, Random House, and Avon.

Karen founded Hybrid Global Publishing in 2011 to help authors, speakers, and entrepreneurs get their message out by writing and publishing a book. She offers publishing, distribution, and marketing services for organizations and individual authors. Karen is the author of *Book Publishing for Entrepreneurs: Top Secrets from a New York Publisher* and offers an on line course called *Publishing 101: Your Complete Guide from Idea to Published Author*.

Book(s) that changed your life:

Think and Grow Rich, Night by Elie Wiesel, The Kite Runner

Movie(s) that inspire you

The Color Purple, Joy, Lion

Song that inspires you:

Amazing Grace, I can't make you love me,
Thankful - by David Foster

Your Hero:

My Father – who always knew what mattered most! who led the best life he could – took care of his family and had limitless love for his daughter and sons and his wife.

Quote you live by:

“There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure.” –
Paulo Coelho



Michael Tabrizi

“A smile is the shortest distance
between two people.”

A SMILE NEEDS A HOME SO BMORE FOR CHARM CITY'S HOMELESS

BY MICHAEL TABRIZI

Three years ago, on a summer night, I had an encounter with a homeless person under a bridge. His name was Joe, he genuinely asked me to help him out, he was hungry and beaten spiritually, I could tell he made an effort to hide his pride behind his tears, and he asked me for few dollars to eat. I gave him some money and my business card and told him he could come anytime to my restaurant and eat for free. After this encounter, I was hit hard emotionally, I teared up and felt a huge lump of sadness in my throat. I thanked the creator for what I have, but then the bulb lit in my head, “If I can feed Joe, why can’t I feed all of them?” I realized it was only a mental blockade. I organized myself in few days, posted few lines on Facebook, and next thing I know I had

300 volunteers signing up to help. Few weeks later, we were planning and preparing for Baltimore Restaurant Week, I thought to myself I am going to cancel that event and invite all qualified homeless people to my restaurant for a week. We did it, I called it "Homeless Restaurant Week", and we fed 1400 homeless people the entire week. It felt great, my employees refused payment for a week, there was so much good energy everywhere, it felt like Angels were helping us invisibly. Since then, I formed Chefs Table Foundation, a non-profit organization, to raise fund for the idea of teaching qualified homeless people culinary skills so they could support themselves. My goal is to open a restaurant for the homeless, where volunteering chefs can teach culinary skills, and offer daily lunch for the needy.



Dr. Steve Taubman

“Your attitude reflects the smile you wear every minute of the day.”

HOW WOODY GAVE ME BACK MY SMILE

BY DR. STEVE TAUBMAN

Imagine for a moment that you're a small child growing up in an extremely unhappy home. Your parents' relationship is bitterly contentious, and you see nothing resembling love. Your father is angry and authoritative and scary. Your mother is insecure and high strung and needy. And each brings out the worst in the other. And imagine that you spend most of your time feeling bad, hurt, broken, and confused. To your father, you're one thing. To your mother, another. You question your reality and your identity on a daily basis. And you're a sensitive kid, so everything goes in.

And it's not any better outside your home where you're bullied, ostracized, and ignored. Your sensitivity is seen as weakness, with which you've come to agree, and your small spark of rebellion combined with

your inherently quick wit turn your attempts at humor into what most see as obnoxiousness. You're socially awkward, isolated, and clueless about who you are. You crave approval to fill the emptiness. And there's nobody to talk to.

The only respites you have are three things. Wonder, the natural ability to see beauty around you, to be delighted by small things and to be kind to all beings. Grandma, who treats you with love and respect and sees the genius and humor in you, reflecting back to you through sparkling compassionate eyes. And, your dog, who just gets you. Hugging him makes you feel better and ends the isolation.

Now, imagine you grow up with the wounds intact. You're smart and driven, and you accomplish big things. People think you're awesome... But you carry with you that sense of brokenness into everything you do. You feel like a fake. You fear confrontation. You put yourself in places where you can't see the eyes of those you're addressing, so the stage, which for some is terrifying is for you one of the safest places to be. Just enough distance to be protected while just enough proximity to express yourself in a way that gets approval. Hopefully!

By now, you know I'm talking about myself. I did grow up in an unhappy home, I did feel isolated and ashamed, and I was bullied, although to be fair, I grew up in a Jewish neighborhood in suburban Long Island, and Jewish bullies don't punch you or cut you... they just shove you and make fun of you and throw you in streams. So I spent a lot of time drying my clothes.

For years, I struggled with the dual characteristics of outer accomplishment and inner shame. I felt isolated and incomplete and afraid that the other shoe was about to drop. And I carried it very well. As my hero, Don Quixote would say, my quest was to bear with unbearable sorrow.

Meditation was the first thing that helped. I learned to quiet my mind, to observe its contents, and to let go of my identification with the damaging thoughts in my head. I learned to get very present and to feel my way through the pain until it dissolved rather than think my way through it, which only made it worse. Overthinking had been my curse, and learning to cultivate the silent witness was the beginning of my salvation. I started getting less afraid, less self critical, and also less judgmental toward others. I began to forgive those who had wronged

me, to see my parents for who they were, other lost souls longing to be found.

But the weight of my pain was greater than the strength I had to bear it, and I needed something more. Something to release the hold it had on me. I clung to my earliest respites; wonder, living in a beautiful place and using the technique of noticing that beauty as a tool to deliver me from my noisy mind. Memories of Grandma Flo and the image of her kind and knowing eyes meeting mine. But that third respite kept tugging at me. What I needed to ease my suffering and to strengthen my consciousness... were puppy kisses. I needed a dog. I needed to feel that love again, that unconditional all encompassing love.

And so on November 19, 2006, as a fifty year old man, Woody came into my life. He arrived in a crate from a traumatic trip, and from the moment our eyes locked and I freed him from his befouled cage, everything changed.

Now, I realize most people get dogs because they want a pet, but often that animal has a peripheral role in their lives, a distant third to jobs and family. They fit dog care and play into a busy schedule, and that

dog might sit at home for hours on end waiting for a few moments with his or her master. A couple random strokes, a leash walk, and maybe some time to run in the backyard. A begrudging nod to the dogs needs, a couple meals per day and maybe a trip to the dog park. And that's considered good. That's the norm.

For many dogs, life is far more brutal. Neglect and abuse of the highest order. I can't even go there.

But I didn't want either. I didn't want an occasional companion who I'd drag around by a leash between other more important duties, and I certainly didn't want to bring an animal into my house only to mistreat it.

To be honest, I didn't know what I did want. But here's what I found. I found that I was a different kind of a pet owner. Having studied meditation, I knew the power of focus, so I wanted to have my relationship with my dog...Woody... be one upon which I would focus. I'd focus on him, and I'd teach him to focus on me.

I never walked him while thinking and planning something else, not knowingly anyway. And if I found my mind wandering away from

him, I'd bring it back, just the way I was taught to do with my breathe in meditation. I watched him carefully, even giving him latitude to move more and more freely off leash as I continued to rivet him with my attention, so I'd know if I needed to reign him in. And this was loving attention. I'd watch him with joy and gratitude and appreciation and laughter. I'd watch him the way Grandma Flo watched me.

And he began to feel it. He knew he was being watched. He'd look back to check. At first, that was a trained response. I'd reward him for simply looking my way, for responding to his own name, for checking in. Eventually, it just became the way we were with each other.

Our signals became subtler and subtler. So, I'd be able to move my eyes slightly in a single direction, and he'd know to move on or off the bike path, to sit, or to wait for me. The quality of the relationship was not that of master-pet but of two very in sync beings.

To this day, others notice this when they see us. I'm asked daily by strangers if I can train their dog to be that way. But it's just not about training. He's not obedient. He's connected. So, I tell them that if they want a dog who's that connected, they need to be willing to make that connection.

What I've learned from this relationship is that it's not an isolated thing. How I've learned to be with Woody has had a direct impact on everything I do and everyone I meet. This extends to sales, teaching, healing, success and happiness. For example, I've learned that...

1. You can't control anyone else but you can influence them, and it's always easier when there's mutual respect, appreciation, and attention. Often we try to bully or shame someone into doing something our way, the same way as some people drag their dogs along by a leash with no concern for that dog's natural rhythms. We say to our dogs, my agenda is more important than yours. And we're in the habit of doing exactly the same thing with others. Neither appreciate it, and generally you spend lots of time pushing and pulling rather than inviting and allowing.
2. Curiosity is more important than control. Every morning we leave the house, Woody chooses the route, and I follow with curiosity and delight. I don't nudge him or drag him or God forbid mindlessly pull him in a single direction without noticing his intention. I only take over when it's necessary. Otherwise, I get the delight of discovering his mind. This too has made

me better at everything I do. In sales, rather than bullishly following a script or a process, I can watch the nuances of the other person with curiosity and delight, and I can respond in the moment with intuition and wisdom.

3. There's no substitute for focused time. You have only so much time to give your pet, I understand. But when you give it, give it fully. Don't give half your attention to your dog and the other half to a phone call. Respect the relationship, and know that your dog is aware of how much love you're giving in any one moment. If you're not attending to them, they won't stop loving you, but they'll be sadder for it. Practicing this has made me a better listener. I give more of my attention to everyone, and I watch for subtle signs that my mind has wandered, because I want you to know that I'm with you 100%. This is especially important when dealing with people who are wounded. Who are broken. Who are marginalized. Who are used to being ignored. When I was isolated in my misery, what would have saved me was being heard, cherished, and appreciated. That's what Grandma Flo gave me. And that's what Woody has taught me to give everyone.

4. Jealousy is a disease of the mind. Your dog is not your dog. He is his own being. When Woody and I go to the dog park, others come meet him and give him love. And he gives it back. And I delight in that. It's the same for him. I can attend to another dog and he's not jealous, because he has no question about the love I have for him... we have what Joseph Chilton Pearce calls an unthreatenable matrix. Since we don't create drama, I've become averse to it in other areas of life. I've learned to look for the small minded tendencies, jealousy, envy, petulance, and say that none of them are from the highest place. They represent lack and scarcity mentality, and when I fill myself with appreciation, they have no place in my life whatsoever.
5. Love is a two way street. If you give love to your dog, you'll not just get more from them, but you'll find yourself giving more to yourself and to others. It's self generated. And your willingness to delight in your dog's antics and every move will make you a more appreciative person in general, which not only produces an effect on others (we like appreciative people) but is its own reward.

6. Being here now has power... When I watch Woody sniffing and listening his way through a walk, I know that he's doing what animals are meant to do. He uses his senses so well because he doesn't get caught up in thought like we do. The thinking mind separates us from reality. So, I've learned to model that sensory acuity, to come to my senses in the very literal sense, to get out of my head and into my body, and so I'm better prepared to meet the challenges of my day. I strive to be like a predatory animal, completely attentive and in tune with nature rather than caught up in my head, to leave my mind behind. When I make my walks an exercise in absolute presence, I'm rewarded in untold ways. It's about developing reverence for the moment, reminding myself that here and now is always better than then and there.
7. And finally, silence is golden... when I walk without distraction, my mind grows quieter. Partly because I model Woody's silence and partly because the act of riveting my attention on him quiets my restless mind. I start to experience something I've never found comes easy and that is a stillness.

Now of course, all these discoveries can come from other sources. Meditation, yoga, conscious parenting, and more. But I'm suggesting that dogs are a cosmic gift designed to bring about this very state, to elevate you to a higher level of consciousness, and to live from a place of love and attention. But only if you receive them as such, not just as an accessory to your life.

Give presence so that you might learn presence. Watch your dog so you might know what it is to watch. Understand that this dog is a gift from God, a cherished and remarkable being that can transform your life, but only if you're willing to transform its life.

And here's what I'll promise you. Be the kind of dog owner who practices being more attentive, who avoids resentment of any kind for the imposition of the dog's needs, who celebrates the dog's unique way of being in the world, and who is open to developing an awe inspiring relationship with that dog, and your life will change.

Your heart will open and melt. You'll peel away layers of armor and feel free. You'll be more attentive to others. You'll see beauty where you only used to see aggravation. You'll find humor and delight in places you never

saw it before. You'll influence others through curiosity rather than control, and you'll feel the isolation of your life dissolve into thin air. And you'll let go of exhaustion and defeat because focused attention centers and calms you. So, if your job is overwhelming you, the Zen of dog can release you.

So, I pose a question to you. What if you became a conscious doggie daddy or mommy? What if you gave more and got more back. If you own a dog now, what if you applied these principles tonight? If you don't, what if you went to the Humane Society and started this journey tomorrow. Or, if dog ownership just isn't your thing, what if you took these principles and found a way to make them central to your life, maybe by how you treat your neighbor's dog, or your neighbor, or your kids, or yourself.

Whether you grew up as I did in a dysfunctional family and have ever felt broken and alone or you grew up as a high achiever but never slowed down enough to see if what you were achieving was what you really wanted, my experience is that conscious dog parenting is transformative. Through every glance, every smile, every effortless communication, and especially every puppy kiss, you'll smile more... and become better at everything.



Swami Tirtha

HOW THE ANGELS TAUGHT ME TO SMILE WITH JOY

BY SWAMI TIRTHA

WHO

I was born to bring heaven's light and joy into to the world where it is needed and help usher in the new Age of Joy or Ange of Celebration. However spirit had its own way of preparing me for this life. Around age 10 I began having dreams at night of being separated from my parents, with numerous other adult couples telling me they were my parents. Needless to say this was quite disturbing. Over the next decade the dreams morphed with the times, but the message of my parents leaving me without telling me ,was the same. One day around age 17, my family was out driving and at a red light. I was staring at a funeral

“When a smile is given to you, be grateful and return it as often as possible.”

home when suddenly everything started to swirl black and the next thing I knew, I was crying and telling my parents, “I don’t want you to die”. When I could see again, my parents were staring at me wide-eyed, saying “we are not going to die”. In around a year later, while on vacation, they were in a car accident and they died. And multiple adult couples took on the role of parents.

After the initial grieving, thoughts came to me, ‘How did I know this was going to happen?’ and, ‘Who was telling me this?’ And in 1972, an era where the United States population knew virtually nothing about meditation and yoga, I found myself attending a meditation lecture on my college campus. That’s when lightning struck — I was hearing all the mystical information I was seeking, and I was a sponge. Meditation and yoga brought me back to life and so in my last year of college I transferred to a meditation college and devoted my life to teaching meditation and the spiritual arts and sciences ever since; if it could help me with such a huge tragedy, it can help so many others too.

•••••

WHY

Spiritual and wellness practices are the only thing that helped me deal with my life tragedy and bring some joy back into my life; meditation, yoga, Ayurvedic wellness lifestyle, energy healing, brain-training methods, shamanism, psychic-mediumship and more. Experiencing the complete loss of joy, and then finding it through gentle, nurturing practices made me so grateful for the experience of joy that I focused 100% on developing wellness & joy in my life, and teaching it to others so they could move from their own challenges to a joyful life as well.

Doing things that bring me joy excites me because I have full control of how well my day and life go. Slowly over the decades I learned that when I heard God suggesting I do something it always turned out better than when I did what I thought would be satisfying; God’s suggestions always brought me effortless joy. That’s when I began to let go of my personal wishes and say, ‘funny thing, God, your suggestion is exactly what I want too.’ And so my life mission became more clear, to bring light and joy to the world by listening to God’s guidance.

And having such a purpose immunized me - superhero-sized me.

However I must admit that it is a slippery slope because in the earlier years the ego quickly crept in and made me feel I was someone more special than others because God was talking to me. Ugh, LOL. It was as if I couldn't make any mistakes since I heard 'The Word', and so I listened less, thinking, 'Ok God, I hear you - I'll take it from here'. Nooooo. Those early stages of life purpose awakening developed my humility filter that I need to keep on even to this day.

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HOW

The more I listen to God and my angels the more God and my angels do the heavy lifting and I just show up and witness the miracles. For example, one day I had a vision of a house on a lake, and somehow I knew it was upstate NY. I felt God was suggesting I get a place upstate, and so I started looking. While I couldn't find a lake house, I expanded the idea to any body of water on the property. The realtor asked me what I wanted in a property and I listed half-dozen things; water, open and wooded, fruit trees, beautiful views, etc. After I got off the phone, God asked me for the one priority I wanted. I said, 'paradise'. A few

days later the realtor emailed me a beautiful property that said, 'Your own piece of paradise'. And with very little effort, I had my new home. So each time I follow their suggestions, miracles happen.

This alignment of my wishes with God's suggestion and subsequent miracles is how I define abundance; listen to what spirit gently and lovingly suggest for you and they bring everything to you. Abundance for me also includes living healthy lifestyles and food, mind-body exercises, and meaningful relationships, along with a purposeful life.

These days, even the questions in my mind I realize as God saying, 'Ask me this question.' And when I ask, God says, 'Funny you should ask, I have the answer'. So for me abundance means getting out of my way and seeing that abundance was already waiting for me. This is the opposite of what some people say to work hard at attracting abundance. This approach involves letting things go and live more simply, instead of doing and achieving more. Then every thought, word, feeling, action is done in joy, done in alignment with highest source itself. This is abundance for me, so as I train my brain muscle in this mindset, every moment grows more fully in abundance.

Another way of saying this is, love yourself just for being — you are enough — you are not for what you do or accomplish. You are good enough as you are. Self-worth is the abundance magnet; self-love clears the mist that hangs between myself and my abundance. There is a saying, we are human beings, not human doings.

Sometimes the answers don't come from spirit right away, and I have learned to do other things in my life until I get the download (cosmic email?). Sometimes it's time to relax, other times it's an opportunity to study. Once the answer does come, everything is done in the blink of an eye — yet another miracle. In the past when I tried to push and 'crush' my way through things, only becoming angry, stressed, and burnt out. And even if a thing succeeded, I was less happy inside. Eventually I realized that being joyful inside attracts external wishes. And those external goals are visions — the ones God and my angels advise - so now I have fewer and fewer personal desires and I am supercharged with all the God-given desires.

Living in joy, people naturally smile at me and I smile back. If I see someone looking a bit sad, even on days I feel a bit off, I say something nice to them, like, 'lovely sweater' (something that I truly like about

them). They smile and light up instantly. And that makes me light up too. Other times while driving or waiting in line at a store I send blessings to everyone I see. That makes me feel great. Perhaps the biggest way I inspire smiles is when I started wearing orange clothes.

In the 1980's I began seeing orange color in my mind and it brought me so much joy. One day I was at the Gap and I saw an orange t shirt and I got so excited and bought it. A few months later they were selling an orange hoodie — woohoo. Before I knew it they had outfitted me with orange sweat pants, and socks. Now while I was over-joyed with all these orange clothes, I was also a bit self-conscious to be wearing only orange. Then I realized that a few years back while visiting my guru in India, he had recognized me as a monk (swami), and swamis wear orange (saffron) colored-clothes. While he never said to me anything about what to wear, I felt that I could honor both my eastern and western traditions wearing orange western clothes.

This long story is to tell you that people light up wherever I go wearing orange from my sneakers all the way up to my cowboy hat. In airports, health food stores, etc. people say orange is their favorite color and ask to take a selfie with me. Once around 2am changing planes, the

stewardess ran up to me in the hall and asked for a selfie. One guy stopped me on the street in NY city and said, 'thank you for bringing color into my life.' I have the most unique conversations with folks. The only downside is when I shop at Home Depot people sometimes ask me what aisle they can find an item (yes this happened several times) LOL; so much fun.

This view of abundance and effortless living is a more unique view because there is no routine, no externally imposed way to live each day. Of course for those naturally doing the same routine daily to achieve success (in all areas of life) that is fine. But to say here is my wellness and spiritual schedule for each day - wake up, gratitude journal, walk, tea, cold shower, breakfast after 12 hour fast, etc. — it just isn't natural. Each day nature is different — it is not mechanical. And I find each day my body and emotions feel different. So why should I do the same thing each day when my body and spirit ask for something different.

We are just starting to hear researchers talking about easing up the routine; eg, 10 min exercise is as good or better than an hour workout. Pro athletes find they do better and have less injuries when they take days off from training. Researchers have found that a control group of

subjects, just thinking about a gym routine got the same results as the group of subjects actually going to the gym. Ironically there is still a call to create a routine for our 'natural methods.' Still the idea that massive effort is needed, and needed all the time is a myth that is starting to be debunked by research.

A simple way to experience a more effortless life is to imagine a larger life purpose for us than we currently believe. I used to say, if I could just fit in, or just make enough. I couldn't believe it was possible to get or deserve or even think so far beyond my limited expectations. When I realized I was not making headway, and that the only option I never tried was to think bigger, eg, I could just help the world in this way or that way, I began to see life and opportunities opening for me, and opening effortlessly and organically, without a mechanical, strenuous life.

This idea of structured routine is more like the robotized mentality of the antiquated Industrial Revolution. It was helpful when industry began in the late 1700's- early 1800's as it helped out-of-work farmers get jobs. But its cycle has come to an end — actually astronomically it ends Dec 12 2020 when Jupiter and Saturn reach a certain position in the sky relative to one another. The last time these planets were in this

position was the end of the Farming Era — the start of the Industrial Era. So we are moving from seeing ourselves as robots for effectiveness to being more joy/spirit-based. And our abundance is also coming from a more virtual life online, virtual reality and augmented reality glasses for example.

We are in an age where people are realizing that material things, as necessary as they can be, do not bring lasting joy. Only nurturing ourselves and others brings joy and joy is the wellspring of abundance.

There is a great quote from the poet Tagore. “I slept and dreamed life was joy. I awoke and saw life was service. I served, and lo, service was joy.”

Throughout the world, indigenous peoples have a prophecy for these times. In the Amazon rainforest they call it the Eagle - Condor prophecy. The eagle represents western countries, science, reason, northern hemisphere countries. The condor represents the heart, emotions, and spirit southern hemisphere countries. In each age, one bird would rule the other. But in this age, for the first time, they fly side by side. Science & Spirit. And we see this happening already; science is proving all the

things spiritual traditions have been saying. We need both — spirit and matter and one supports the other.

And so in addition to the astronomical position of Jupiter and Saturn, Shamans the world over have been proclaiming that we are now entering an age of joy and celebration. In 2012 I was in Guatemala for the Summer solstice. A Mayan shaman was leading the celebration and said that a lot of ‘white people’ were writing books and making movies about how the end of the Mayan calendar in December 2012 meant the end of the world. This shaman said that is nonsense, and if you want to know what the end of the calendar meant, ask a Mayan. And he said it meant it was the start of a new calendar in a new era of celebration.

So what does that mean for us in practical terms? How do we take advantage of this insight? Or simply stated, how does one live a life of joy? We have mostly known work, work hard, and crush it. Now the work of the day...is to play.

Sounds silly, but I heard a public radio show citing research that people feel guilty being happy, and that women felt even more guilty than men when it comes to playfulness. As I mentioned, even our abundance

teachings involve a whole lot of running after abundance instead of just playing and feeling the abundance that already exists and is there to experience.

In short, there is too much logic and left brain thinking trying to explain, and lead what needs to come from the right brain and heart. Together, in a balanced way, honoring our scientific and our creative selves, playing and dancing our way into a better world, do I see the next decades unfolding.

Einstein said the solutions to our problems must come from outside of our current thinking and experience. Some smirk at the idea of being happy in the face of all the troubles in the world. Again research shows that globally we are better off than ever before - less wars, and technologies, even in developing countries, that kings of old never had. Yes there are many challenges to address in terms of food, economics, wellness, education, and government. But the answer must include right-brained, playful solutions.

Another quote from Tagore, "God respects me when I work; but loves me when I sing." Why not take even a little step, in the direction of joy;

try it out and see if it helps us. Imagine if every country's government had cabinet members with job descriptions, Secretary of Peace and a Secretary of Play — along with all the other cabinet positions. Let's just test something outside of our current level of thinking. Actually its already happening naturally, organically. Candidates for president are already speaking about a position for a Secretary of Peace.

What am I specifically doing, I mean playing, to help share this vision with the world? About a decade ago I had a vision of me standing on the stage in an amphitheater facing throngs of people. I felt God was telling me to reach the global masses. I agreed to do this but a decade later I still had no idea how to achieve this. So I asked God, how can one person touch so many lives effortlessly and in joy? It was then I was connected to Hollywood producers and was given my own TV show about how Angels helps up find our joy. And I realized that entertainment is the best way to share such messages of joy. Music, dance, and TV/movies can say so much more than words can ever say, and give us the experiences that words can never give. And so I find myself at the start of a new life as a monk in the entertainment industry aiming to share messages of joy and light with our global family. My ultimate goal is world peace, though that has many different definitions. So I

say my goal is to see health in every body, food in every belly, money in every pocket, love in every heart, peace in every mind, a smile on every face, and joy in every soul.

In summary, I realized we all have the ability to be healthy and joyful despite what's going on in the world around us. And that behavior touches and inspires others. Further, that we can live a purpose-driven life sharing these visions with others and make our lives even more miraculous. And when enough people are living more playfully, it creates a sea change and everyone will shift into more joyful societies. And by letting go of a rote/logic-only paradigm and letting spirit in to help lead the way, it happens effortlessly, joyfully, and organically. It is already happening. It will succeed.

And this vision makes me smile. :)

Joy Joy Joy!

ABOUT SWAMI TIRTHA

Swami Tirtha, affectionately dubbed the Orange Cowboy, is the host/producer of the TV show, “**Talking with Our Angels**” and the co-owner of several TV networks helping veterans, youth, and the general population with inspired messages of light, hope, joy; and solutions for wellness, wealth, relationships, equality, and global peace.

He is a #1 bestselling author of the Ayurveda Encyclopedia (30,000 copies in print). Speaking clients include the White House alternative medicine commission and Johns Hopkins U. Swami has more than 46 years teaching wellness & consciousness.

At the age of 10 he began having spiritual experiences that altered his life in divine ways. Swami survived a devastating tragedy at the age of 17 by seeking spiritual pathways and becoming a monk, which led him to discover his mission of spreading the light of joy that will help the masses and help bring world peace and an age of celebration.



Lea Tran

“A simple smile can break the ice in the room”

YOUR SMILE IS YOUR BEST ACCESSORY

BY LEA TRAN

I watched my dad smile and admired it when I was young, but his smile was mostly reserved for others. Every so often, when he was happy, he would smile at us too, but I wished there could be more smiles and fewer frowns. Nevertheless, I saw how people were impacted by his cheerful personality. His eyes twinkled, his teeth glistened, and he had that aura of genuine happiness. When he passed away, that's all I wanted to remember—a big, bright smile on his face.

To say I had a complicated relationship with my father is an understatement. However, our relationship continues to blossom with time, even well after his death over three decades ago.

Being the oldest of six children, I grew up with many expectations from my parents and responsibilities towards my younger siblings.

Outside the family, dad was a friendly, outgoing individual. At home, he was stern and rigid; less approachable. He held an authoritarian rule of his domain with military discipline, especially toward me and the second oldest, and I was incredibly fearful of him. I was afraid to ask him questions and look into his eyes when we talked--a side effect produced from seeing how he punished my rebellious younger brother. I never wanted to make Dad upset.

In Eastern culture, we were taught that making eye contact with elders and superiors was considered disrespectful. I was accustomed to looking down on the floor during conversations with authority figures like parents and teachers. It made me feel subservient and resentful on many occasions. Eventually, the fear of my dad turned into a fear of middle-aged men in general. I carried that fear into school classrooms, to society, and into my adulthood. I was always nervous around serious-looking men, especially people who don't exude a friendly, smiley face.

My name is Lea Tran and my family was the ethnic Chinese minority in Vietnam.

We suffered a great deal during the civil war and endured the oppression of the communist regime from the north post-1975.

During that time, we witnessed how the government terrorized its citizens. They took our possessions, our rights, and our freedom. We lived in a chaotic society filled with fear and uncertainty. People worried more and smiled less.

This hazardous environment made my dad worried and had many short-fused moments. When his temperament cranked up, the smile on his face disappeared as we escaped Vietnam communism as "boat people" refugees in 1979.

The most incredible legacy he left for us was our prosperous life of freedom. After working in secret for a year, our family and 495 other people set sail on a boat that he and others worked on. It was a massive project he orchestrated, and most people had failed, but he led us out of the bondage of Vietnam's tyranny oppression in just one try and succeeded.

Besides his distinctive smile, my dad also taught me how to be resilient, deal with crises, and always look out for opportunities in adversity. Dad showed us that anything is possible in life when you decide to do something about it. Dad was illiterate. He was in third grade when his

father was killed in an accident. He learned how to use his friendly smile to get a job at the age of ten. He became a successful partner of a fabric dye company at the age of twenty-three. He led life by example. I loved everything about Dad except his ill-temper.

When I married my husband, who does not have an ill temper, he would smile when we argued. Not a crazy smile, but a smile to soften the situation. It would break the tension in the room, and I learned that smiles are not only to be given in cheerful cases but also can be a peace offering.

Regrettably, my dad's strict disciplinary methods created a wall that prevented the affection and closeness with his adolescent children. And we, my siblings, and I have worked hard all our lives looking for his smile and his approval. It was something I noticed much later in life.

One of the most significant decisions I made was to leave the corporate world to take the risk of being a solo entrepreneur, where I had worked as a research chemist for almost two decades. My interactions with humans had been minimal since I primarily worked with formulas and chemical reactions, and group meetings were held only once a month.

I was terrified of the thought of building a custom drapery business without a marketing background or any business experience. How would I get clients if I was afraid to talk to strangers?

I knew I needed to meet more people and began going out to networking events. I used Dad's radiant smile to eradicate the awkward moments of silence before striking a conversation. Breaking the ice is easy when you approach people with a genuine, warm smile. It was an initial but crucial step to build trust.

But smiling alone was not getting me far. I needed to know how to ask interesting questions and be able to communicate effectively in a group or in one-on-one conversations. So, I went online to search for public speaking help.

Through my local Toastmaster clubs, I learned to use my voice by connecting with people through their stories. For the first few speeches, I broke a few nervous smiles which soon turned into an anxious cry when I told some of the heavier stories of my family's journey, but in the audience, I could always see a few people who were friendly and I felt calmer. I scanned the room for smiley faces and made eye

connections with them. That was how I began to walk out of my comfort zone to start building a public speaking skillset.

Gradually, I learned how to calm my anxiety by giving a bright smile at the beginning of each speech. I noticed I was able to grab the audience's attention from the get-go. It instantly created a friendly atmosphere in the room. I made sure when I smiled, I also made direct eye contact with my audience, not looking down on the floor or out in the empty space as I often did when I was young.

That simple smile helped me build confidence and gave me the courage to speak in front of hundreds of people. It opened doors for me to connect with leaders in the industry. It helped me sustain my business for ten years.

On the tenth anniversary of my business, I had a fundraiser event to give back to the community where I was the host and spoke on a big stage before switching careers again for the third time.

In 2015, my husband and I did something that neither one of us thought could be possible for at least another decade. We walked out

of a high-paying salary, a prosperous business, uprooted from the big city of Philadelphia of thirty-five years, leaving behind families of both sides to move to Florida. The fact was we both were burnt out. We knew we had to slow down if we want a healthier lifestyle and have more genuine smiles moving forward.

For me, I wanted to take some time off to reflect on my personal journey from the past forty years. So many unanswered questions and so many unorganized thoughts about my own family history. I was desperate to pursue my calling, to make my imprint for the finite time I have on earth.

It was an abrupt but exciting move. We realized we were bold but not reckless. Financially, we had prepared for the rainy days before we took action. Within ninety days, we had fulfilled the dream of moving to a warmer place, engaging in a smaller community, and living a life of making more impact.

I continue to use Dad's smile to make new friends, build new network circles online and in person. COVID 19 gave me lots of time to revamp myself. I launched my memoir "I Did Not Miss the Boat" in the fall of

2020, became a virtual speaker via Zoom, and had my coaching certification by the spring of 2021.

I realized a smile is the greatest asset we have as humans. Our natural behavior is to mirror and repeat what we receive. When you smile at someone, almost 95% of the time you will get a smile back.

I believe that the universe works amazingly well when you intend to attract what you want to give. Best of all, smiles are free. They don't cost anything, and you have plenty to spread around.

It was my dad's genuine smile that gave me the courage to pursue my speaking career. My vulnerability is nothing compared to his bravery of taking five hundred people on a wooden boat to cross the ocean seeking freedom. I want to offer the world a glimpse of what refugee parents have to go through to secure a free life for their children's futures.

I thank Dad for letting me see his bright smile in every step of my journey. His smile still warms my heart each time I think of him. I intend to spread that smile across the globe with my speaking tours and book

tours when we can gather more events in person. And each time I have a chance to share my dad's story, I feel a little closer to him. It makes me happy when I can give a smile as bright as my dad's.

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My background has given me a life of many dimensions, from a comfortable life in pre-communist Vietnam to a harrowing, dangerous refugee journey landing in Indonesia. I then had to learn everything from scratch in a brand new country to assimilate to mainstream America. All those were just a small part of the jigsaw puzzle.

My biggest ah-ha moment was when I figured out who I am as a mixed culture survivor. I was no longer ashamed of who I was. The inherited trauma that passed on from the previous generations can be examined and stopped. I am glad I was able to crack the trauma code to prevent it from passing forward.

I offer my voice to help people who are still in pain to break their silence. I hope my message of resilience will give them the strength to face theirs. We might come from a different background, but the

universal theme of pain is similar. What I learned from my family's dynamic post-Vietnam war can be applied to save other families.

At the end of the day, we all want to leave a piece of who we are behind. I feel obligated to honor my dad's sacrifices to give what I have today. My purpose is to bring hope and encourage people not to miss the opportunity to speak their voice and live their truth.



I learned that happiness and abundance start from being content with who you are and what you have. Coming from eastern society, I have witnessed so many people who settle for what they don't want just to please their parents, their families and live a life full of resentments and bitterness.

Instead of taking action to change the course, they live in sorrow and pass down the trauma to the next generation. My mission is to inspire them to be brave to live their truth. To proactively take action to transform their mindset.

To have a happy life, a life that puts a smile on your face for no reason is to be able to see your worth. We all have a choice to accept what life gives us or fight for what we deserve. When we have the courage to reclaim and explore our potentials, we ultimately create and attract opportunities to further fulfill our careers, both personally and professionally.

ABOUT LEA TRAN

Lea Tran is a former “boat people” refugee from Vietnam. A female scientist turned successful business owner.

A Keynote Speaker, TEDx Speaker, and Author of the memoir “I Did Not Miss the Boat,” She has broken more than one glass ceiling and continues to do so by embracing change to create a life of intention and purpose.

Extracting from her multifaceted cultural and life experiences, Lea strives to bring her message of courage and resilience to empower organizations and individuals to find potential in their obstacles to thrive in uncertain times.

Books that changed your life:

The Alchemist
The Four Agreements

Movies that inspires you:

Forrest Gump
My Fair Lady

Song that inspires you:

Don't Worry, Be Happy

Your Heroes:

My dad
St. Mother Theresa

Quote you live by:

“Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself” – Chinese Proverb



Angel Tuccy

“Smile and be kind, for we are here in this world just for a while.”

WHAT YOU SEE IS MY SMILE

BY ANGEL TUCCY

From the outside, it would appear that I've had a fairy tale life. It would appear that I have a perfect marriage, wonderful children who've grown into contributing adults, and a career that was automatically successful. This would especially look to be true if you were to review 2018 & 2019 on my social media accounts. I have been married for 26 years and, currently, all 3 of my children work in Orlando, Florida at Disney World. I own a Media & Marketing Company, teaching entrepreneurs how to leverage the power of media and marketing to make an impact. I travel as a professional speaker, and in the last 18 months, I've spoken on 100 stages, in 5 countries.

After a 10-year career in radio broadcasting, the radio station I was working at “made a change”. At the time, I was the host of two daily radio

programs. I was the co-host of a 2-hour business talk show, and also a 2-hour Christian lifestyle show. The business talk show was nationally syndicated across the country, and the Christian show was the longest running show on that station. I was living a dream job, interviewing celebrities, authors and influencers. I was invited to all the charity galas and banquets. I was often the emcee of events. The show was voted Best Morning Radio Show, we were awarded Best Talk Show Team, and I was awarded Most Influential Woman of the Year. My entire life was scheduled and predictable, down to the second. I loved almost every minute of it.

Despite all the accolades and achievements, for the previous year or two, I had been feeling an internal tug to move into a new direction, but I couldn't define it. I was unhappy. I was going through the motions because I didn't know what else to do. Friends and colleagues were encouraging me to move up, but at the time, I couldn't envision myself doing anything else. To be honest, I was scared that I couldn't do anything else. I was in a box, or a rut. Even though I was uncomfortable, my life was familiar, and I knew what to expect.

I believe that my radio career had to close permanently, so I could see what else was on the horizon. With the support of a few close friends,

I chose to re-brand. I chose to step out of my comfort zone to become a professional speaker. I know; it seems like it wouldn't be that much of a stretch for a radio host to become a professional speaker. But I promise you, talking from inside a radio studio is very, very, different than standing on a stage in front of an audience. I realized that if I was going to accelerate, I needed to work with a speaker coach. Even still, I often get so nervous every time I step onto the stage, but I feel a magnetic pull inside of me telling me that this is where I'm supposed to make my impact.

So when you see me smiling, it's because I have a reason to do so.

From the outside, the world sees me smiling on stage, speaking, and sharing my marketing tips. What you don't see is the scared little girl who grew up with a lot of fears, nervousness and anxiety. You don't see that my mom was only 15 years old when I was born. One of my earliest childhood memories is of her crying on the lawn with her suitcase after her leaving her husband. You don't see that my brother and I were adopted when I was six. My mom had 2 children and 2 marriages before she was 21. You don't see that we moved so often that I didn't make friends easily. You don't see that I can't recall any of my childhood

friends. I smile because I've learned to value friendship and to provide my family a stable home. I smile because we haven't moved in 20 years. I smile because I get to make friends everywhere I go. I smile because I get to make the new person in the crowd feel welcomed.

From the outside, you see me smiling in tons of pictures with my family. What you don't see was my twin daughters being born 12 weeks early and living in the neonatal intensive care unit for over a month. You don't see my son's emergency crash C-section. You don't see the panic and fear of almost losing all of them. You don't see the years of bullying they all endured. You don't see how much I wanted to protect them from the stuff that happens in middle school. You don't see the tough career choice I made when I gave up the prime broadcast time for my radio show so I could be there when they came home from school. I smile because prayer works. I smile because I through all of it, I learned that when I follow my heart, it's never a mistake.

From the outside, you see me smiling, traveling with my husband all around the globe. I've spoken on 100 stages this year, even internationally. What you don't see are the years we fought incessantly, and that we almost called it quits because we weren't "in love" with each other

anymore. What you don't see are the years we were bankrupt but chose to buckle down and pay off the six figure medical bills by living in my parent's basement for 3 ½ years. I smile because Jay has been able to start a new career that allows us to travel together. I smile because I've always found what I go looking for. When I started looking for all the good things in my marriage, in my relationships, and in myself, I find that I want, has been here all along. I smile because even when I get off track, it's not permanent.

From the outside, you see me smiling, being the extrovert and talking easily to anyone. What you don't see are the childhood years when I wished I were invisible because the kind of attention I received was inappropriate and full of shame. I smile because my past doesn't get to define who I am today. I smile because my background helps get through many of the tough decisions I make. I smile because my past has taught me to be compassionate, patient and tender towards others. I smile because I often find the positive side to every story. I smile because I made it through and found happiness.

From the outside, you see me smiling, going on dream vacations. What you don't see are the financial sacrifices, garage sales, and

budget meals we lived on to make it happen. What you don't see were the daily free trips to the library that taught my children the love of reading and watching movies. From the outside, you see all my children living their fantasy of working for Disney. What you don't see are the countless applications, the willingness to work in the parking lot during a hot humid summer. What you don't see are the nights of flashlight hide-n-seek, and countless ways to save money on entertainment. I smile because I have a close-knit family that loves to spend time together, being creative, laughing together and loving each other.

From the outside, you see me smiling, re-branding and growing a brand new business in just 18 months. What you don't see are the tears and anxiety of giving up a dream career. You don't see the worry and the financial sacrifice to step into an unknown industry. You don't see the hours and hours of learning something new. You don't see the trembling pages of my first presentation. You don't see the butterflies that still show up before I step on stage. I smile because I know that when I have faith and I take action, God shows up to support me, guide me, and create miracles.

You see me smiling on stage, sharing my passion of media and marketing. What you don't see are the countless attempts that I've made to conquer my nerves. I smile because even though I shake and quiver when I speak on stage, the message that God wants to share still gets across.

What you see is my smile. I smile because I know that I am living out God's plan and purpose for my life. I smile because I know that I may have to climb the mountain so I can show others it can be climbed. I smile because I know that the greater the challenge, the greater the triumph.

I smile because I have a reason to do so.

ABOUT ANGEL TUCCY

Angel Tuccy is an award winning national radio host, professional speaker, and a multiple time best-selling author. For 10 years, she hosted over 2,000 broadcasts and interviewed almost 4,000 guests – including big names in business such as Michael Gerber, Seth Godin, Laura Ingraham, Bill Walsh and Jackie Collins. Angel is the author of 11 books, including Lists That Saved My Life and ABC's of Exposure. Angel Tuccy is one of the leading authorities on media and marketing in the country today. Reaching the top 1% of media hosts, she is leading the way for women in media. Her mission is to impact 100,000,000 people to share their story with the world.

You can download your complimentary guide on transforming your media exposure at www.makeyourbigimpact.com



Catherine Gail Turner

“When a smile is given to you, be grateful and return it as often as possible.”

MAMA'S SMILE

BY CATHERINE GAIL TURNER

I am a woman of integrity and positive influence. Yet, my beginning was as rocky as the majestic Rocky Mountains which lace the landscape of Colorado Springs, Colorado. I was the sixth child born to a young woman who had moved from New Orleans to this small mid-western city with hopes of a better life, as promised by her husband. But the promises soon became nightmares as she was forced to give up her baby girl to an older woman who had longed for a child of her own. I was that child, and my life story is complicated, to say the least. It was filled with words a child should never have to hear, yet I was the child who made Mama smile.

You see, Mama was the older woman who raised me. She was born in the early 1900s and to say that her life was not easy is quite an understatement. She had learned at an early age to toughen up and never let anybody else rob her the way her mother had by not affording her the

opportunity to learn how to read and write. As she grew up into an adult, she was known by the scowl on her face and the tongue-lashing strikes of her words, and it was all because of the shame of being illiterate coupled with the added pain of being barren.

Mama was simply a hurting woman, and sometimes hurting people really do hurt others. As I reflect back on Mama's life, I realize how difficult it was because she never learned to let go of her pain through surrendering to God. I truly believe that doing "God's best" is when we fully surrender to God's love and will for our lives. Moreover, I am persuaded that it is only by God's grace in allowing me to surrender my pain, that I am able to bring joy to others today.

Over time, I learned to operate in the power of love and forgiveness when a person does "their best" rather than doing "the best". I learned to forgive her for taking me from my birth mother, and I learned that loving is a much better choice than tolerating those who hurt you.

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My why is my ability to bring joy to the lives of others. In fact, I was

born to touch lives in a positive way. Even my name speaks of my purpose because Catherine mean "pure" and Gail means "joy"! I always tell people that I have to live up to my name, so how could I radiate anything else but Pure Joy? Based upon the negative things I was told as a child, and even as an adult, the cards were stacked against me so that I was supposed to be a bitter, mean-spirited, vengeful person who was angry at the world and especially angry at God. But along the way I became saturated with the love of God, who allowed me to emphatically see that I was and am so loved by Him! I realized that I could not fix or change the cards that Mama was dealt, nor could I re-deal mine. Yet God's love opened my eyes to dismiss the blurred vision that rejection had painted so that I could finally accept his everlasting love for me. With that knowledge, I am lifted to lift others. My purpose is to build confidence in one's ability to overcome the wounds of the past knowing that each of us has a gift to share with the world. I have chosen to spend my T.I.M.E – Teaching, Inspiring, Motivating, and Encouraging. My life mantra is simply that we should intentionally live to be a blessing! That gets me excited just thinking about it! When I think of how I am able to smile and bring about a smile on someone's heart, it gives me joy in return and builds a legacy more valuable than silver or gold.



I so vividly remember when I had the opportunity to leave home by escaping to the University of Denver. Once I left for college, I never had to go back home to live because my accounting degree afforded me a great paying career. Yet I was inspired to become an accountant because of Mama. Although she was unable to read and write, she was really good with money as a babysitter. In fact, she babysat for this one teacher who was married to a CPA, and voila – I was positively influenced by both of them. My career progressed as I worked as an External Auditor for one of the Big 8 accounting firms in Denver, and then later in the roles of an Internal Auditor and Financial Analyst.

By the time I reached my late twenties, all I wanted to do was get married and have children so that I could give them all of the positive love and affection that I missed out on. Those desires came true and I was blessed with a good husband and two amazing, now adult, babies. I sacrificed my career and poured into the lives of my children with the consistency of a beautiful mountain waterfall. Everyday before they went to school, I prayed with them and told them that they were leaders and not followers. They never had to wake up with expletives being

fired through the airwaves or be told that they were a mistake. They believed my words and carried themselves as the leaders they were born to be. I believed that giving God's best to my children allowed me to "live large". Not in the sense of material wealth, but priceless wealth. Then as they became young adults, I worked hard as an entrepreneur in the financial services field so that my husband and I could provide them a college education, just as Mama and Daddy had provided for me. And yes, they both successfully graduated from college.

I started living abundantly by creating an abundance of love in my home so that abundance could spread to others. At first it spread to my children's friends. I was the Mom that told the corny jokes, encouraged the kids to keep on trying, and then try some more. I then unexpectedly became known as a Mom to many. Young people in my church from five to thirty-five began to refer to me as Mama Turner. I had become the change I wanted to see. The change I wanted to be. Then it spread to my co-workers who I would encourage especially during the many challenging times we faced in our financial services sales career. Even when I faced 2016, the most difficult year I had ever experienced, God gave me grace to keep on pushing. I pushed through the personal and career lows and was rewarded with encouragement in many unexpected

places. During that year, the new managing partner at the company where I worked had asked the president of that fortune 100 company to visit our region. I was the first to arrive at the conference center as a way of forcing myself not to show up late and reflect the way I really felt inside. The president yielded an outstanding message to us all, and when an opportunity came to ask him a question, a powerful one came to my mind. However, due to my sad countenance, I actually didn't want to ask him anything. I just wanted to be able to say that I came on time, I listened, and I planned to apply some of his great tips. But, that thought-provoking question kept pulling at my heartstrings so that I couldn't help but get in line to ask it. At first I had hesitated to get up, but a second thought came to mind. It was stronger than the first and crystal clear. It warned me that if I didn't get up, then I would lose the opportunity to ever ask. That made me get up with some urgency, and when my turn came, the president politely asked the person behind me to be seated since my question would be the last one he would entertain. I had almost missed my opportunity just as I was warned. I briefly introduced myself, feeling like I was a nobody, but standing strong and poised so that I could articulate the question well. I asked, "As President of the company, what was the greatest challenge you've ever faced and what lessons did you learn from it that propelled you into victory?" He

looked at me and acknowledged that it was a great question and politely asked for a moment to think. By then I had returned to my seat, where his silence pierced the air. There wasn't a sound in the room for thirty to forty seconds, yet it felt more like 30 to forty minutes. He remained on stage moving his head back and forth with his finger on his chin due to the deep thought. When he finally opened his mouth to speak, he began to expound upon his heartfelt answer to my question. He had absolutely no idea what I had been going through, but his answer was divine. In a nutshell, he shared a story about how he was comforted by leaders who let him know that they knew his character. In the most difficult time he faced, it was his integrity that allowed others to stand with him and support him through that season. What a priceless moment it was. Of course, I sat there with tears rolling down my face and text messages from colleagues all around the room who were so encouraged by the question that sparked such a genuine well-thought answer. His words made the entire room smile. His message touched my life and made me smile deep inside. So it is with that level of transparency that I too utilize when I have the opportunity to teach, inspire, motivate, or encourage someone else. The challenges of my humble beginnings were only meant to propel me into being the leader I am today. I realize that I am a leader, not so much by the title I hold, but by the integrity I possess.

I realize that every time I reconcile an account, explain a financial literacy concept, or train a service member who is separating from the military, I have a priceless opportunity to touch a life in a positive way. I have an opportunity to share and to lead.

It was about eleven years ago, at the age of eighty-nine, that Mama passed away. Just the week before she died, my husband and two children visited with her at the nursing home and although she was bedridden, when I walked in the room, she smiled. My husband, who is a retired Army nurse explained to me the effort it took for her frail body to smile in that manner. In fact, her smile was so wide that it remains unforgettable even today. I was that child that made her smile from the beginning, and I was that child that made Mama smile in the end. This year, on August 4th she would have turned 100 years old. Yet it is this year, 2019, that I decided to tell my story like never before. I just completed writing my life story in my long-awaited novel entitled, "Mama Mae". It reveals the details of what it was like being raised by Willie Mae as an "adopted" child in Colorado Springs and the secrets that seeped through the lies like fissures in rocks. I firmly believe it will touch lives by bringing forth intentional glimpses of the joy that I was created to share. Today, I encourage you to live to be a blessing!



Tony Valenzuela

“Personal freedom can be measure by the depth of a smile, Deeper your smile, the bigger your freedom.”

SMILE DEEP, SMILE BIG, SMILE TO LIVE THE LIVE YOU DESERVE

BY TONY VALENZUELA JR.

My 30 years of life came crashing down like a tidal wave gushing through that hotel conference room back in El Segundo California. The voices that besieged me were deafening, screaming, “Get me the “F” out of here!!!” The noise was absolutely unbearable. It was difficult to distinguish what was just in my head from what was real. In the noise, I identified very familiar words that I recognized all too well and they drove daggers through my heart. “You’re not enough. No one can trust you. No one believes in you. You’re stupid. You’re a failure. You’re a cheat. You are A LIAR—a FAKE.” But the one, the one that cut the deepest and hurt the most? “You’re not loveable.”

I was done. I was done with this nonsense! I was a grown a man who didn't deserve to be going through this. I looked to the back of the hotel conference room and saw my way out. Two double doors that represented freedom, a way out of this suffering and pain. I fixated on these doors that would put an end to this agonizing experience.

As I took one step after the other toward the gates to my freedom, the painful memories, the events, the thoughts and feeling of 30 years of anguish were flooding my mind like a massive tsunami of destruction. All my self-doubt and personal criticism were confronting me without mercy, and I was drowning. Thirty years of stuffed up emotions and pain burst into my present as streams of tears flowing down my face. I was hurting and hurting bad. Breathing was hard and I had to get out...my feet were not going to fail me. I focused on the doors to my freedom dead ahead of me.

See, I was in it, big time. My past was my now, it was present. All my beliefs, all my judgements and insecurities were confronting my awareness all at the same frickin' time. This was harder than anything I had ever dealt with. Years of pain were strangling who I thought I was. I started having doubts about who I was and what was my reality, and

things started getting quiet. I had finally reached the doors. I reached out with my right hand, then my left grabbing both handles of the double doors. This was it. I could leave this room of emotional horrors, the origin of all this current pain and suffering, and not look back. I could get in my car and forget this ever happened.

The noise slowed down, and in that moment, there was a calm, a peace that was unfamiliar to me. I heard a voice that I hadn't heard in a very long time. "You don't quit" it said.

See, quitting was automatic for me. Half of my adult life was littered with quitting. It was my go-to when things got tough. Many times, I would quit before things even got started. I would quit on people. I would quit on myself. I had mastered keeping people distant and far from my heart. I was a champion of walking away, a veteran of exiting stage left.

The voice continued, "You quit now, you will NEVER end your suffering." The funny thing was, I had no idea I had been suffering until that very day.

By this time my hands were trembling. Breathing was hard. I was a sobbing mess. I was scared and I was desperate. In this very moment, I was done. I was done running, I was done quitting on myself and my future. This moment defined the rest of my life. I chose to live; I chose to challenge all the crap I made up about the moments and events of my life that provided me with evidence that I was an unlovable loser.

My life's freedom came from the very doors that I kept closed!

That day was the day I STOPPED giving up on myself. I stopped running from my problems and quitting on my dreams. That very moment defined the rest of my life decisions. That day, I was on my way to freedom, freedom from the chains of my past and the emotional and mental debilitating beliefs I carried as baggage. Those closed doors were the beginning of many doors to stay closed and the beginning of many that would open.

As a child born in 1974, I was the youngest of 4 siblings of a blended family. My closest sibling was my sister who was 8 years older. From birth to 3 years old, we lived in Baldwin Park, California. Memories of being fearful of our neighbors' mean goat and catching the site of

neighbor Dottie in her usual Mumu for oversized women were weirdly comforting. At that time, it was typical childhood, where waiting for the donut wagon was my biggest concern. I remember, as I guess most kids do, smiling was easy, and smiles came often. It was a fun first three years from what I recall.

Somewhere between 3-4 years old, we moved to Temple City, California. It was a Mayberry type of town, mainly white, which we stood out to me because we were Mexican. This is when I realized I was bit different. I had red hair, white skin and freckles...resembling no one in my family. Being the extreme youngest, I didn't have the comfort of playing with my older siblings. Most of my time was spent exploring our yard and creating adventures of army men in the dirt.

Between the ages of 3-8, moments of fear and distrust started to build and my childhood happiness started to take a turn. Mom was strict and many times used tough love and severe spanking to keep me straight. Fear and intimidation were the accepted parenting style of my parents. Each year, my mom would give permission to my teachers to spank me if ever needed...It never was.

I was starting to get heavy and this began the journey of me being made fun of. "Fat man of the 80's" and "Chub Rock" were a couple of mean nicknames often used. I slid into a shadow of darkness, more separated, distant and disconnected. I was sexually abused by an older boy that my next-door neighbor used to babysit at the same time as me. Police would often raid our house for my brother who had accumulated warrants for his arrests. Having the police officers tear down our door with guns drawn can mess with a child's peaceful mind. One day I even woke up to a shotgun pointed at me while sleeping in bed. Feeling safe was a becoming hard thing to find.

Bullying got tougher. It was hard to go through a day at school where a fat comments were not directed at me. I was a very quiet boy who battled a speech impediment that made pronouncing words extremely difficult and added to the target on my back. First grade was tough. I was held back due to my inability to identify and formulate simple words. Once again, I lost connection with the feeling comfort and safety.

Time passed and I wanted to get out of my yard and play sports. I joined football but learned that I could not leave the fat kid ridicule behind. I didn't fit in there either. I was, again, the fat kid who couldn't

stand up for himself. What made it worse was that I had tendinitis in my Achilles heel that gave me more of a waddle motion than a run. More ammo for those who were criticizing. There was one time that I did have a win. As a joke, one of my coaches put me against the strongest kid on the team, a running back. To their surprise, I stopped the kid dead in his tracks...I finally had a win!

I went to a local Catholic private school where our neighboring school was the public school. I would watch the "cool kids" stand at the gate talking to the pretty girls. I was far from that cool kid. I was fat and had a speech impediment. I was a simple observer for years.

I had very simple routine growing up, I'd take a bath, and while bathing and playing with my planes and my battleships, I would indulge in a bag of wheat thins. On the weekends, I would walk 2 blocks to the corner store, grab a bag of Hostess donuts, come home and pour a glass of milk and go to town while watching my favorite weekend shows, The Three Stooges and The Little Rascals.

The pressure was building on my heart. The constant name calling, the constant reminder how heavy I was, even my parents reminded me of

my weight. I was wearing Husky size for boys. As it would turn out, the pressure was what launched my next win. Frustrated and angry at myself for being fat, I sat on the edge of my bathtub and looked down and saw the rolls of fat that I had been carrying around for many years. With both hands, I grabbed my fat rolls and cried. Years of emotional pain and suffering were in my hands. I wept by myself for some time. Then a decision was made. This was the end and a start. I decided that I was done with this feeling, the alone feeling, the feeling of being less than everyone else. That day was my declaration of ending my agony. The next afternoon, before dinner, I started to run. I sprinted up and down my front yard. This went on until I couldn't run any more. This was a battle for my freedom, for my happiness. That night, instead of eating what my mom had made, I ate a salad. This was my daily routine for the next three months.

I convinced my mom and dad to allow me to go to public school for my 8th grade year. I was ready. I had lost the weight and I had an opportunity to create a new experience. I was the new popular guy at a new school. I became great at sports and I had a voice that was no longer riddled with a speech impediment.

Life was great. I made friends very easily and played football and baseball. Dating in high school was fun and also easy. I was out of control with girls. I was not aware of it at the time, but I was still looking for ways to be validated. I was completely clueless that this was my issue.

Although things looked great from the outside, my experience of joy and happiness was shallow. It was always temporary, in the moment and then often fleeting once my head hit my pillow. I was living a meaningless, lost and afraid existence.

Then when one day, I came home from high school and I was given the news by my distressed-looking mom that dad was not coming home. I remember asking for confirmation, and I heard the same response. I went to my refrigerator and grabbed myself a bowl of ice cream and went to my room and put on the TV. There was no "goodbye son", no "see you soon boy," no sorry. I didn't see my father until 3 years later, when we had to sell my childhood home.

Life had a different meaning that day. Life was again ugly and hurtful. Life was unfair and untrusting. What could I possibly depend on?

The next four years were messy. Mom was falling apart, eradicated by emotions that were mostly sad and angry. Paying the bills was rough on my mom and I. We had no support from my siblings. They were going through their own personal challenges. Focusing on my college plans was hard. We weren't even able to afford my senior pictures.

Eventually, we were losing the house due to our inability to make payments, so we had to sell. I moved in with my girlfriend at the time and called it my temporary home until my mom was able to find a two-bedroom apartment for the both of us.

Despite the challenges, I still had a dream. I loved sports and wanted to be around athletes as a career. I had a plan to follow my dream. I wanted to be a physical therapist. I received some money from the sale of the house and used it to become a massage therapist. As soon as I got certified to be a therapy aide, I had a job working as a massage therapist and therapy aide. Everything was going according to plan until I started noticing numbness and tingling in my fingers. I learned that this was created by severe head impacts while playing high school football. The doctor said this condition would make my dream of being a therapist a short and uncomfortable career.

What NEXT? Life had this cruel way of challenging me for the next 20 plus years. The one thing I was sure of was that I did like making money and I enjoyed speaking with people. Sales became the career I would focus on.

I had a few sales jobs, but nothing really stuck. Not sure what the issue was, I just couldn't get the ball rolling in the right direction. My below average career wasn't the only challenge I faced, I was in constant dysfunctional relationships. This was frustrating! I had little to be proud of. I knew I had more to give. I just didn't know how to get to it. I constantly prayed for help.

Drinking heavily became my escape. I often spent Thursday through Sunday, and the occasional Monday blowing money on booze and wasting time. One unique drunken night out, ironically, my life changed. After a long day of drinking with my friend Jen at a USC football game, we came home, and I happened to leave her door open which allowed her little Pomeranian Sadie out. Sierra Madre is in the foothills and a Pomeranian wondering the streets is simply a meal for most of the predators lurking at night. While searching for this dog in an alley, I came across this pretty strawberry blonde woman driving

in her brand-new Audi, which obviously caught my eye. I of course struck up a conversation. One business card and a few dates later, I found myself committing to a life altering training that saved me and my unknown dwindling future. I have not spoken to this angel for many years. Danielle Lindgren, thank you.

By not pulling those hotel conference room doors open 17 years ago, I gave myself the opportunity and gift to confront the insecurities and the pain that I carried. I had no idea that all the events in my life had made an imprint that affected my decisions. I had interpreted and gave meaning to my experiences in a way that took my power away. I was a walking victim that allowed my past to control my future.

After keeping those doors shut, I spent the next 5 years of my life dedicated to learning about myself and helping others learn about themselves. I grew passionate about personal education. I saw deeper into myself and into others. I learned about the many personal conflicts people have. No matter their career, age or gender...we all have personal conflicts. My work has touched 100's of people searching for personal education and growth. For me, working with people and supporting them through their personal journey of discovery was more rewarding

than anything I had done before. I decided to start using all that I had learned to create my dream life, which started with a family of my own.

In the years to come, I met an amazingly beautiful and strong woman and soon after became a "girl dad" of two brilliant daughters. With my family intact, it was time to continue my journey of impacting others through self-discovery.

Today, I have a private practice of Transformational Personal and Professional Performance coaching. I also team up with other Trainers to collaborate on building impactful experiential group trainings that are designed to identify personal beliefs and habits that get in the way of massive success in all areas of life.

Looking back, I realized I was an example of an identity crisis. My past experiences dictated my thoughts, beliefs and actions. Once I became clear and gave all my past moments proper meaning, I was able to get my back life.

In the past 17 years, I was able to smile again. And not just any smile. I got back that young joyful smile that radiates deep from the inside. I

have been blessed to have found a way to share this with others, without judgement and without fear. I now find joy in watching others smile after getting the power of their true identity back. The journey of life can be lonely, and when we can see clearly, we can create friends, families, communities and alliances of unconditional love, support and wisdom.

The deep smile of a person who is living as their true authentic self is rich, deep and priceless. Once you witness it, you realize that this smile feeds life, feeds greatness...feeds true possibility.

Smile deep, smile big, smile to live the life you deserve☺

Books that changed your life:

The Four Agreements, The Magic of Believing,
The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership,
Unstoppable, Start with Why

Song that inspires you:

Titanium by David Guetta

Your Hero:

Dr. Ray Blanchard (International Transformation
Trainer, Mentor and Friend)

Quote you live by:

"Your past holds lesson that
does not define you."



**Tam I am Veilleux, Author, Artist, Coach and Creator of
The Energy Almanac**

“Your smile is your key to magic.”

MAKE MAGIC WITH YOUR SMILE

BY TAM I AM VEILLEUX

I was born very vanilla. The memory of standing in my parents dining room saying, “Nothing special will ever happen to me,” is a vivid recall I still have, should I choose. Blonde haired, blue eyes with freckles a plenty, there wasn’t much special to me. I was raised by hard working entrepreneurs in the middle of Maine and I had what most would call a good but average life.

My parents offered me almost anything I could want, and everything I would need to stay happy as a child. I had art lessons because using a pen and color was easy and enjoyable for me. I played all the sports I chose because keeping up with my two brothers was important to me and I was actually exceptional at it. Grades came easy, family vacations and camping made us some nice memories, homes came and went, and all in all life was pleasant.

But underneath the mundane bubbled this feeling of being nothing special. I couldn't blame my parents, brothers, extended family or friends. Everyone was doing the best they could with what they had and nobody knew what was going on in my mind. I was plain. Point blank, plain.

At 15 I fell in love. At 17 I was engaged, at 18 I married, by 19 was pregnant, and at 20 delivered a bouncing baby boy. At 21 I was pregnant again and by 22 had a daughter. This meant two babies, a husband, and the perfect white picket fence storybook life.

I was average and okay. Life was good enough and nearly 20 years blew by in a flash.

Until...

The day I found myself divorced and alone, living in a town some 100 miles from everyone and everything I knew.

With one paycheck in my bank account and three jobs to tend to, my everyday boring existence was what I now craved. But truly, there

would be no going back. Instead, I sunk deep into learning who I was, and who I wanted to be.

Books became my best friend as I started the journey of understanding that we make our own realities. I studied, took notes, journaled, attended classes that would broaden my mind and fuel my spirit. It was then that I reconnected with the child-artist inside of me.

Pens, paper, paint and my passion grew and the next thing I knew I was writing a children's story to express the law of attraction to four year olds. Stories unfolded in my imagination and I made vision boards of my book cover on a movie screen. The book consumed me and became my reason for rushing to get home after work.

It was this book that pushed me to make my first journey to the entrepreneurial event called CEO Space in Las Vegas where I met people who would become friends for years to come. It was there that I first used my smile to make magic.

This event, CEO Space, had pushed me beyond my comfort zone. I'd always had small hobby businesses, but bringing my little law of

attraction book to professionals in publishing and licensing and calling it a business was outside of anything I knew. The trip to Las Vegas to meet thousands of people I didn't know scared the pants out of me. In my hotel room, alone, overlooking the vast desert I'd cry before heading into the gilded ballroom for the next workshop.

Who was I but a small town Maine girl with a big dream. And to top it off my big dream was a photocopied version of the outline of a children's book and there was a heavy duty staple holding the whole thing together. I lugged that prized possession around day and night.

On day two of this one week CEO training event I realized I was not walking the law of attraction talk. Something clicked and I realized I needed to create my own reality by feeling into a result I wanted. It was then that I chose to smile.

I left my hotel room dressed my best and smiling as I walked to the ballroom for the next workshop. I lifted my chin and pulled back my shoulders and stood near the closed double doors until they opened and when they did I walked with strength and wore a big smile. To the front of the room I went where I took a seat in the front row. Thousands

of people poured in behind me to fill the space. I sat in that front with my heart pounding out of my chest and a big smile on my face.

I was elbowed gently from the side. I looked as a hand extended toward me. I was tapped on from behind as someone whispered a kindness about my shirt. I was approached again and again because somehow I was radiating differently.

It was on day five when I was walking into the room and making my way to the front with a big smile and bright eyes when one of the staff members quite purposefully made his way to me. I saw him coming and wondered if he would ask me to please allow someone else to be in front. Inside I shrank a little.

"If you don't mind me saying," he smiled at me, "Your smile lights up this entire space. Each time we open the doors I see you walk in smiling and it just lights up this room. I look for you each time we open the doors."

Wow.

I was floored. I thanked him with my big smile and moved to the front of the room.

That moment stayed with me to this day. I knew from then on that an authentic smile could change a room's light. It could change a person's outlook, not just mine, but someone else's. I knew then that a smile could make magic.

My life progressed from that CEO Space event to a published book called "Molly Kite's Big Dream." More books followed and I moved into coaching other people how to develop confidence and make peace with past hurts.

Over the years social media became front and center for many people's lives and I found myself having to market myself. I decided to smile on social media. This isn't done through photos of myself, but instead through language that smiles and an energy that precedes me. Soon I developed the nickname Sparkles by a few of my online friends. Again, magic with the smile.

As years ticked by and I smile online either through a photograph or language I believe I've become someone special after all. Very Vanilla

really doesn't describe who I am or who I was. As a child I was simply undefined. As an adult I am vibrant and alive and choosing to spread magic wherever I go.

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I'm different and it's good. Long ago, during the time of my pending divorce, I realized I was different from my family of origin, my neighbors, my coworkers. I was making unusual choices compared to them. To them I was weird. To me, I was still weird, but willing to be so.

I'm alive on this grand planet to create change. The ding I want to leave in the Universe is to help people connect the dots between their past pains and their future potentials because inside of old hurts are lessons we need to overcome if only you'll work to overcome those hurts. Once you do overcome, the world is your oyster.

I live to add color to the world through helping people experience joy either for the first time or after a long while of being sad. I add color through language, illustration, coaching, and stories and it's a powerful way to create change in the world.

My goals are small. I only want to reach a few million people, and truthfully, I now know that I can. I'll start the process with a smile.

HOW

One of my best traits comes in the form of innovation. I am never afraid to shake things up and start over. Re-inventing myself and others comes naturally for me and I work closely with clients who desire change.

In my coaching practice I've developed the ABC's of Change protocol that walks my clients through the process of aligning with a vision for themselves, breaking through the old stories and believing something new, and then cultivating a mindset that keeps the momentum up.

Clients have told me that they've done years of psychotherapy but have not had the same fast results as they get when they work with me. It's a joy to witness clients physiology change as we work together. They arrive at a first session pale and with slumped shoulders. There is a sadness in their eyes. By the third session a light is coming from within them and their eyes are gaining sparkle. The language changes and

they catch themselves before speaking of their woes. The magic of their own smile is upon them.

It seems at times there is a fine line between fear and stupidity. I tend to not be afraid of risk and I work to help others do the same. The most dangerous thing between yourself and success is comfort and I can confidently say I rarely stay comfortable.

My latest endeavor as the creator and co-author of the Energy Almanac has got me sharing the mystical world of astrology with the world. The Energy Almanac boasts 52 weekly projections about the energy of the upcoming days and does it in a way that is clear and concise. Readers of this book don't need to be an astrologer to read it; I made this book for the layman who understands innately that the planets are energy and there is something to their force that we, as humans on this planet, are dealing with. Readers of this publication gush that they never go a week without reading and then rereading the content because its accuracy is incredible.

ABOUT TAM I AM VEILLEUX

Tam Veilleux is a personal quantum coach and the lead visionary of the Energy Almanac. A cosmic chocolate covered pretzel (read: sweet and kind of crunchy, always leaving you with something to chew on) acting as a transformational coach by day, astrologer by night, stay close for more visual chatter on the alchemy and strategy of creating change. www.choosebigchange.com

Book(s) that changed your life:

Both books that changed me were the ones that I wrote. One is called *Begin At The End* and for now is an unpublished novel about adults applying the law of attraction. The second book is called *Scripting A New Life* and it's a conversation I had with myself about how our brains are like a movie projector and if we'll just write a better script the plot twists and turns won't be so dramatic.

Movie(s) that inspire you

The Wizard of Oz is a movie for me, not for it's messaging but for the color and music that made my little heart dance.

Song that inspires you:

I love to dance and sing, even if it isn't my strong suit but what inspires me to be a better person is the classic our national anthem "God Bless America".

Your Hero:

My husband is my hero. He reminds me of my greatness when I've forgotten and holds space for me when I don't feel so great. He makes me laugh out loud every day and I smile because of him.

Quote you live by:

"All will be well and all will be well and all, in time, will be well."



Dr. Hattie N. Washington; Educator, Motivational Speaker, Consultant, Founder of Aunt Hattie's Place, Author, Publisher

"Smiling is an act or a behavior that causes no money but reaps numerous dividends; And a Smile is contagious. It's like when you see a person yawn; it is hard not to yawn in return. A smile is like that. Thus, GO, Spread your Smile afar!" — Hattie N. Washington (2020)

SMILE AND BE DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

BY DR. HATTIE N. WASHINGTON

Smiling is a voluntary act or behavior that causes no money but reaps numerous dividends. It is like the reaction when you see a person yawns; it is hard not to yawn in return. Why is that? A smile is like that. It is highly contagious, in a good way, of course.

It is exceedingly difficult to be in the presence of someone who is smiling and talking to you without you smiling back. It is a somewhat unconscious response that causes a feeling of happiness and contentment; all is right with the world, at least for that moment.

Honoree for the National Smile Day 2020 on May 31, 2020:

I am honored and humbled to have been named the Honoree for the

National Smile Day 2020 on May 31, 2020, for the National SMILE Movement under the coordination of Ken Rochon, Jr., Creator of The Keep Smiling Movement. Ken posted the following statement of recognition on Facebook and other social media on that special National Smile Day, May 31, 2020:

“Dr. Washington Selected As Honoree For National SMILE Day 2020:

Dr. Hattie Washington is honored for all the SMILES she inspires through her philanthropy, her authorship, her fantastic cooking, and of course, her big heart. Dr. Washington is a leader who inspires others to believe Hope is possible, and her SMILE is infectious. When there is chaos, confusion, and COVID, I choose her, her causes, and her inspirational books to remind us there is Hope. We are also excited that she will be doing a ‘Keep Smiling’ edition to remind people to choose Faith first in all life’s endeavors: Congratulations, Dr. Washington”

“Visit: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TheKeepSmilingAmbassadors> to see the photos and acknowledgment she received for being a Leader who leads with her heart,” expressed by Ken Rochon, Jr., Co-Founder

I try to live my life each day smiling and make others smile with my positive words of encouragement, my sense of humor, or my giving spirit, without expecting any reward. Therefore, I was surprised to recognize what I consider a part of my intentional, conscious well-being. In life, many jobs are lost, and many promotions are awarded because of a person’s positive attitude or their affective domain. This domain has to do with their personality and how they get along with other co-workers.

Much of that camaraderie has been cultivated with a smile, not only on the outside of your face but what shines through from the inside. A smile can be made without showing any teeth. That type of smile is more potent and reflects the inner shine and glistens in a person’s eyes that is more mesmerizing and gives a sense of security and confidence to be around.

I’ve heard this saying that if a person has that type a smile on their face when they’re working alone and when no one is around them, the person observing them will wonder what they are thinking about and what are they going to be doing next.

That inner smile causes a person to have an intriguing sense of mystery and wonder about them.

I am appreciative of The Keep Smiling Movement coordinated by Ken Rochon, Jr., which emphasizes the conscious effort to smile more often as we count our blessings and think about how good God has been in our lives. This way, we cannot help but smile more if we just pause, think of His goodness, and give Him some Praise.

Smiling did not always come easy for me when I was growing up as a teenager. After my two-room country schoolhouse closed in Prince Edward County, Virginia, in 1959, due to its massive resistance to Brown vs. The Board of Education landmark case, my family had to split up for education's sake. I was twelve years old and in the 5th grade. Some of the siblings were sent to Baltimore to stay with relatives, and my brother and two sisters were sent to Norfolk, Virginia, to stay with a biological aunt to finish school.

My father's foresight was that our schools are not going to open back up for several years, and he was correct. The schools in Prince Edward County, VA, were closed for five years. They reopened again in 1964 after the civil rights movement, the marches, the riots, the brutality of blacks. I was then in the 11th grade at Booker T. Washington High School in Norfolk, VA.

Therefore, my smiles disappeared through my teenage years while in Norfolk staying with a stranger—though some kin, I had never met this aunt, who was my deceased mother's sister.

Ironically, I thought my stepmother was my biological mother; she was the only mother I had known since my birth mother died when I was three years old. My father married my stepmother when I was still a young child, with my older sister, one year older than me, my younger sister, a year younger than me, and my baby brother, apparently a newborn.

My stepmother had six children of her own from two previous marriages when my father married her. Since she treated us all the same and showed no difference between her children, and my brother, two sisters, and me that I did not know she was my stepmother. That cozy, close family changed when my father decided to send my siblings and me to Norfolk. My stepmother's children were sent to Baltimore to stay with her relatives to continue our schooling. I was so devastated and in shock of all the revelations that came to me at one time: moving to a new city, staying with an unknown relative, going to a new school system.

I became withdrawn, went into a shell, and did not have any desire to smile. I did not feel I had any reason or inclination to laugh or smile about anything that I encountered and that others thought was humorous. This time was a very dark and sad time for me; as I indicated, leaving this small, close-knit community and my two-room schoolhouse, with one teacher teaching all subjects in grades 1st to 4th, to venture into the unknown.

At that time, I did not understand all the discrimination, racism, Jim Crow, and other acts of brutality across the south that precipitated the reaction to the mandated integration case of 1954, Brown vs. The Board of Education Supreme Court case. This landmark case was argued by Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first Black on the Supreme Court.

I write about my feelings of discrimination in retrospect in my book, "DRIVEN TO SUCCEED: An Inspirational Memoir of Lessons Learned through Faith, Family, and Favor." I share many of those experiences of my journey throughout my childhood, teenage years, young adult, my adulthood to the present. I write about the lessons learned and God's rationale for the events that occurred in retrospect.

Say, "Cheese"

I also share a unique "smile" story in my book under the chapter, "Mentor Mothers and Mentor Fathers," about one photographer of my class photos from my junior high school through my high school. He was the go-to photographer for all the class pictures for this middle school and high school that I subsequently attended.

His main aim of all the pictures taken during my middle school years was to take beautiful photos with ALL the students smiling. After the first couple of years and seeing all the other students smile when he instructed, "Say, 'cheese,'" "big smile," and I did none of it. I just look at him. Also, because I had never had a class picture taken before in my country two-room schoolhouse, how do you sit on a stool and smile on demand when some stranger instructs, "say, 'cheese,' "smile." I didn't feel like smiling and would just look at him and wonder why he doesn't just take the picture without insisting that I smile.

I would think to myself, "Doesn't he know I have nothing to smile about?"; "Doesn't he know I've been snatched away from my hometown in Meherrin, Virginia?"; "Doesn't he know I'm not here via my

own will?"; "Doesn't he know my two-room schoolhouse was closed, and all my friends were split up?"; "Doesn't he know I'm staying with a mean relative who screams and yells for no apparent reason?"

These questions ran through my mind like a flash movie as he is insisting on me, smiling for the camera. Why should I smile? I have nothing to smile about, as my young adolescent brain told me. After the first two years of trying to get me to smile, and I didn't, the photographer (Mr. Bass) took it upon himself to try to figure out why this little girl wouldn't smile like all of the other students when he took their class pictures.

Subsequently, and to my great surprise, his social club, The Bachelor Benedict Social Club, selected me to sponsor for their noted annual formal Debutante Ball. Because my aunt never came out to any PTA meetings, any of the school functions, and did not show any interest in my school achievements, I would not have ventured to apply to the debutante event anyway. I had nobody to support me or sponsor me in this expensive upscale experience.

To my surprise and sheer delight, Mr. Bass, the photographer, and his wife, took full responsibility for sponsorship and arranged ballroom

dance lessons for me and took me and helped pick out my formal gown. They recommended my dance partner (escort) to the Ball, which happened to be my pastor's older son and even arranged to get my hair done. It was such an indescribable feeling and experience that I felt like Cinderella at the Ball—whom I had read about in books but never expected to live out her storybook realization.

Night of the Ball--My First Smile.

The night of the Ball, I felt just like a princess, and for the first time, since I had been in Norfolk, I had a feeling and a desire to smile when Mr. Bass had all of the debutantes to be photographed. His approving smile and that of his wife made me blush first and made me respond to their smiles with a smile of my own. I also remember their comment, "Isn't she lovely!" which made me smile even more, as I did feel beautiful as I smiled.

I discovered that a Smile not only makes a person feel better, and those around you feel better and happy, but a Smile also makes a person look better—inner beauty shines through.

My Smile Effect

My smile at the Debutante Ball was not only in response to Mr. Bass' directive to "smile" as the event's photographer, but it was also in response to the way I was feeling. My smile was a smile of appreciation, gratitude, and gratefulness to him for caring enough about me to ascertain why this little country girl was not smiling on command or any other times, as all the other students did. My smile at the Ball represented my delight and gratitude for being made to feel special, and for being sponsored by his entire prestigious organization of successful professional men and their wives.

It's incredible how my refusal to smile for this professional photographer would have such an effect on him and be so significant that he was determined to find out why I was not smiling. As a result, he devised an experience that would eventually make me smile. It worked!

The Power of a Smile

I look back on those days and realize the power of a smile. A smile can be inspirational and a game-changer in life, and the wonderment

of why a person is not smiling when everybody else around them is smiling or laughing. Many times, persons will try to figure out what is with a person and why they did not smile at something. Or, why didn't they smile when they were asked to smile for pictures, as in my case. You can tell a fake smile in pictures of people instructed to smile on demand, and they do. You can also discern a genuine smile that is from within with ease. There is a distinct difference. But when you do not smile on demand to give even a fake smile, people want to know what is with that person. Why aren't they smiling?

This Smile effect was the case with my photographer in Norfolk, Virginia. He made such a profound impact on me by not giving up on trying to make me smile that he became one of my mentors, and I felt inspired to write about Mr. Southall Bass, the photographer, in my book.

Impressed with Ken Rochon's Smile Movement

That experience with Mr. Bass was one reason I was impressed with and honored to participate in one of Ken Rochon's Smile Movement books. For the rest of my adult life after that event of the debutante ball

experience, I have had more of a consciousness of the impact of a smile on Mr. Bass. Thus, I make a conscious and intentional effort to smile often with mindfulness.

REFLECTIONS

Just thinking about from whence I've come, the obstacles and challenges I have been blessed to overcome, I cannot help but smile and keep smiling. Smiling is not only an inspiration to others; it is an inspiration to me and my well-being. I often think about how important an intentional and mindful smile is. Some people will say to their kids or their students, let me see your smile. Whether or not they are taking a picture, they just want to see people smile because smiling is a sign of their security and a source of their inspiration.

Later in life, the Lord put on my heart to open a foster boys' home, call Aunt Hattie's Place (AHP). This home was my mission and ministry, and my way of "giving back" to the community. AHP reared foster boys between the age of 8 to 14 displaced from their homes and placed in foster care. Many of these foster boys had been abused, neglected,

and abandoned. They supposedly had behavior, emotional, and special educational needs.

They touch my heart; I could relate to them because of how I felt when I separated from my comfortable small community to stay with strangers. Therefore, not intending to open a group home initially, I would take them home overnight until Social Services found them a permanent home. But, that one night became one week, and one week became one month. Some 22 years later, well over 100 foster young men were reared at AHP. They have gone from special education, on medication, to honor graduates of various high schools, community colleges, and Coppin State University.

When the young foster boys first came to AHP, I would hear my staff say to the young men, "Smile," "Why don't you smile?"; "Let me see you smile." In observing the "smile-less" expressions on the boys' faces as they remained stoic and displayed no smile, I reflected on my adolescent years with the photographer and could relate to them not wanting to smile. I felt that they did not have any reason to smile being placed in a foster home with strange people and not knowing what to expect. Therefore, I gave a directive to my staff not to ask the young

men to smile anymore. Do not tell them to smile or ask why they are not smiling. When they feel like smiling, they will smile. When they have something to smile about, they will smile on their own without you having to prod and prompt them to smile.

Sure enough, after several months, some years, the foster young men began to relax as they experienced various acts of kindness from the staff, the dedicated board members, and the committed volunteers. Subsequently, they began to smile as they felt loved and secure and had experienced pleasant and enjoyable events that evoked a smile. I mean, how could they eat my succulent homemade bread pudding and my scrumptious homemade Chili without smiling; or go on a field trip to one of my Leadership Maryland classmate's water parks and 5-Star restaurant without smiling. As the pleasant memories expanded and the supportive and caring mentors increased, their smiles increased more often.



As a fundraiser at Coppin State University as the VP of Institutional Advancement and as the Founder of Aunt Hattie's Place, I had to cultivate and establish relationships with numerous persons, organizations,

businesses, agencies, and others. That is BEFORE I ask them to donate funds. Once that relationship and trust are established—using one's pleasant personality—they can make "The Ask."

Fundraising is supposed to be a science where the staff analyze the prospective donor, their trends & patterns of giving, etc. and make a list of these anticipated donors. However, I think fundraising is an art where personality is better served and more responsive relative to a more considerable dollar amount. In other words, people give to people, not to a cause, as much as people would like to believe.

If the donor likes the person who asks for a donation, respects them, and is intrigued by their personality and genuine passion for the mission, they will donate to your organization and your cause because of YOU, your smiling persona, and charisma. In other words, if you can make a prospective donor smile during your cultivation phase, you will have their support and commitment donating either their Time, Talent, and Treasure (donation); I call "The Three T's."

I am reminded of a popular song by Dionne Warwick, entitled, "That's What Friends Are For." The lyrics reflect my impetus for successful

fundraising using the “Friendship” and the “Smiling” emphases in the song, as follows:

“Keep smiling, keep shining
Knowing you can always count on me, for sure
That’s what friends are for
For good times and bad times
I’ll be on your side forever more
That’s what friends are for...”

An intentional and mindfulness Smile

An intentional and mindfulness Smile was directly related to my fundraising Success at Coppin State University and Aunt Hattie’s Place. Instead of the given goal of raising \$3 million, my hand-picked team and I raised Over \$8 million, \$5 million over the original set goal.

Because of my positive relationship, as the first female Vice President, with EVERYONE on campus, from the groundskeepers, and parking attendances to the secretaries, professors, and executive administrators,

when asked to donate to the campus fundraising goal, I had nearly 100 % participation. I used the same friendly and pleasant personality to endear like-minded and like-hearted people to buy into the mission and ministry of rearing abused foster boys with special educational needs.

Many supporters became Board members, regular volunteers, and frequent donors. Discovering that many of my foster young men would be going to Coppin State University after graduating from high school or a community college, many supporters donated to both AHP and the Aunt Hattie Scholarship Fund (AHSF) at Coppin. This AHSF was established to help with the college expenses of my former foster young men as they had to live on campus once they age out of the foster-care system at age 18.

A smile reflects a person’s soul and well-being and serves to inspire all with whom they come in contact. A smile is an inspiration to the world.

This Poem below, “Recipe For A Happy Life”, is one I wrote for my award-winning and academic award-nominated cookbook

Recipe For A Happy Life

A Pinch of Prayer for a Purpose;
A Dash of Dedication To A Cause;
A Handful of Hugs for the Heart;
A Spoonful of SMILES by the Soul;
And A Forkful Faith for God's Favor.

Marinate them all together with Patience and Persistence;
Bake Until Golden; and
Serve with TLC - Tender Loving Care.

--By Aunt Hattie (Dr. Hattie N. Washington)

(Source: AUNT HATTIE'S COOKBOOK: Southern Comfort Food Favorites)

In Summary

In summary, my Recipe for a Happy Life is WHY we smile; HOW we smile, and WHAT a Smile does. The diagram of the "The SMILE

Golden Circle," mentioned earlier in this article, also summarizes the essence and the impact of a Smile; the smile also directly influences all other aspects of our lives.

The Debutante Ball First Smile experience, during my junior year in high school, was instigated when I could not be made to smile during class photos. That "non-smiling" little girls became a mission of a concerned and kind person to make a "Smile difference" in my life's experiences. I consider this level of caring was God's intervention by sending His angels to demonstrate His faithful love and favor in my life. The glow of a smile was missing, and I believe that God wanted me to feel the sunshine glow of His goodness by sending His angels to intervene to my great amazement.

The Debutante Ball First Smile

Hattie's Big SMILE At The Debutante Ball at Booker T. Washington High School—1964, Age 17.

Hattie Has been SMILING ever since at other pivotal milestones in

Her Life, Thanks to God's Favor & Her Mentor, Mr. Southhall Bass of the Bachelor Benedict Social Club, and his wife.

Page Created By Bruce Smallwood of Mt. Vernon Marketing For My Picture book Prelude Souvenir Magazine given out to Attendees at my Retirement Celebration from Coppin State University –October 7, 2017

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This SMILE song (below) by Kirk Franklin (two versions) makes me Smile, especially nowadays when it seems like there is little about which to smile--with the COVID-19 Pandemic deaths, police brutality, politics, school closings, fires, floods, etc. Because God is with us through all the devastations and unpredictable happening, we must keep the Faith and stay hopeful. Then, your smile of blessings, gratitude, and optimism will shine through.

I am sharing the link to Kirk's inspiring song in this book I am publishing in this Keep Smiling Movement series, coordinated by Ken Rochon. (Click on the links below and enjoy just the lyrics to display the essence

of the word meaning relative to the word "Smile" and another version of a performance production with various diverse persons.

I SMILE By Kirk Franklin

[Kirk dedicates this timely song to Recession, Depression and Unemployment]

This song Links (below) are for You & Me to Make Us SMILE!

I Smile By Kirk Franklin (Just Lyrics)



"I Smile" by Kirk Franklin (Official Video—Various Diverse Persons Singing)



NOTE I Wrote To Kirk Franklin in the "COMMENTS" section of the link for his songs:

“Hi Kirk,

I LOVE This Song and the diversity of the Singers. Your song makes me Smile, especially nowadays when it seems there is little about which to smile- with the COVID-19 Pandemic deaths, police brutality, politics, school closings, fires, floods, etc.

Thus, I am sharing the link to your inspiring song in a book I am writing entitled, “KEEP SMILING and SUCCEED” published by The Keep Smiling Movement founder Dr. Ken Rochon.

Keep making beautiful music that makes people SMILE.

Thanks & Blessings to you and your awesome group of talented singers,

Dr. Hattie N. Washington
(www.drhnwashington.com)”

ABOUT DR. HATTIE N. WASHINGTON

Dr. Washington is nationally recognized for her work in education, foster care, and non-profit arenas. For over 22 years, she served as a Professor (tenured) of Education and Special Education at Coppin State University (CSU) in Baltimore, MD. Dr. Washington was the first female Vice-President of Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of the CSU Development Foundation.

She founded Aunt Hattie’s Place, Inc. (AHP), a non-profit residential facility for males with special educational needs, and for 22 years, she simultaneously reared numerous abused foster boys. She is affectionately known as “Aunt Hattie” by her foster boys, AHP’s staff, and volunteers.

Dr. Washington’s education includes a BS Degree from Norfolk State University in Elementary Education with a Minor in Special Education; a Master’s Degree from Ball State University (Athens, Greece Overseas Program) in Counseling Psychology; and a Ph. D. from the Univ. of

MD, College Park in Curriculum and Instruction. Her postgraduate study at Glasgow Univ. in Glasgow, Scotland, UK (Rotary International Fellowship) in Multiculturalism & Special Education Administration; Harvard Univ. in Boston, MA, in Executive Management; and Oxford Univ. in London, UK, in Higher Education Accountability.

She has been a teacher for over 35 years (in the United States and abroad—Scotland & Greece), a local and state administrator, university professor, TV hostess, a civic & community leader, a national & international consultant and trainer, an active civic and community leader, and was the PTA President of her two daughters' middle & high schools throughout their years in those grades. Today, her two daughters are a physician and an attorney, respectively.

Dr. Washington is the author of "DRIVEN TO SUCCEED: An Inspirational Memoir of Lessons Learned Through Faith, Family, and Favor"; "AUNT HATTIE'S COOKBOOK: Southern Comfort Food Favorite"; and DETERMINADA A TRIUNFAR:...(“DRIVEN...” in Spanish). For more information about Dr. Washington, please visit her website at www.driven2succeed.com. To reach her directly, contact her at info@driven2succeed.com.

Book(s) that changed your life:

"The Audacity of Hope" By Barack Obama;
"Becoming" By Michelle Obama; "The Truths We Hold" By Kamala Harris; "It Takes A whole Village" By Hillary Clinton; "The Black Presidency: Barack Obama and the Politics of Race in America" By Michael Eric Dyson

Movies that Inspire Me:

"Imitation of Life" (1934); "Beloved" By Oprah;
"Black Panther" with Chadwick Boseman

Songs that Inspires Me:

"The Greatest Love of All" By Whitney Houston;
"Take Me Back" By Andrae Crouch; "A Change Is Gonna Come" By Sam Cooke; "I'm Blessed" by Charlie Wilson

My Hero:

My Father, the late Samuel Neal, Jr.--He was in the Navy and fought in World War II; Came back home and encountered racism & the closing of his children's schools for five years due to Virginia's resistance to the Brown vs. Board of Education landmark case that mandated integration.

Quote I Live By:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Phillippians 4:13; "A 'Faith Lift' is what we all need to face the world and all of its challenges and devastations and Believe that even though we have a president, that God is the King!"



Henry Washington Jr., Author, Entrepreneur, & Real Estate Investor.
As seen on FOX Business Morning Show FBN:AM, Yahoo Finance, Business Insider, & BiggerPockets.com. His mission is to help people achieve financial freedom through real estate!

FROM FRAILTY TO FREEDOM

BY HENRY WASHINGTON JR.

In 2010 I was working for a healthcare provider in Virginia Beach. I had a decent job, but it wasn't the one that I loved, nor was it in my field of study (Computer Information Systems). One day a recruiter from Walmart sent me an email asking me if I would consider coming to work for them in Arkansas. My initial response was to say NO WAY! I mean, who wants to leave a beautiful beach town to live in Arkansas!? But I have a policy about job interviews, and that is, always take an interview, even if you don't want the job. Interviewing is a skill, and there is no better way to hone that skill than in an actual interview! A couple of days later, I did a phone interview. After that, I was asked if I would fly to Arkansas for a face-to-face interview. Again, my gut response was "NO WAY" and this time, that's exactly what I said! I'll never forget what happened next. The recruiter completely broke

character and dropped all professionalism. He said, “BRO... I get it... no one wants to live in Arkansas, but Walmart is out here paying people very well. The cost of living in Arkansas is substantially less than what you have in Virginia Beach. You could move to Arkansas and live like a KING! Just try it... Stack your money for a year and if you don't like it, move back!” After I picked my chin up off the floor, I realized how right he was. It would be a great opportunity to work in my field of study and get paid more than I was currently making and live in a market where it costs substantially less to live. That's like getting two raises! Needless to say, I said yes, and one week later, I was in Arkansas interviewing in person. One week after that, I had an official offer to work for Walmart. By that point, I was sold, and I was preparing to move to Arkansas.

About one month before I was set to start working, Walmart flew me out to Arkansas to look for a place to live. After a week of searching, I had it narrowed down to 2 apartments. Both apartments were equal in size, amenities, and cost. The only difference was the location. Apartment 1 was a lot closer to work than apartment 2. It was the last day of my trip, and I had to decide ASAP, or I wouldn't have a place to live when I started work. I was having a difficult time because choosing

where to live is a big decision that could drastically impact my new life. As I was standing in apartment 2, contemplating if it was suitable for me, I was looking around. The apartment was spotless, and you could tell it had been thoroughly cleaned. It smelled like bleach, and there was NOTHING in the house, not even a speck of dust. Out of the corner of my eye, I spotted something they missed. It belonged to the previous tenant, no doubt that had gone unnoticed. It was a small basketball about the size of a grapefruit just sitting in the corner of the living room. Why is this significant? My entire life, my identity was tied to that of a basketball player. I played at every level, high school, college, semi-professional. Basketball is not just a sport to me; it's a massive part of who I am. It shaped me into the person I am today. So, to stand in an empty apartment trying to decide if it's the place I'm supposed to move my entire life to and see this clear symbol representing me so well just lying there when there is literally nothing else in the apartment. I knew at that moment it was God telling me that this is the place he wanted me to live. So, the second I saw that ball, I turned to the leasing agent and said, “I'll take it” I signed the lease on the spot.

Why is that significant? Well, fast forward two years, I was still living in that apartment, and I was enjoying life in Arkansas... A little too much,

you could say. I was a single man, and I found myself being too promiscuous with multiple women, and when you live life like that, you tend to find yourself in troublesome situations. Well, that's precisely what happened. At one point, I had a pregnancy scare with a woman that I barely knew. That terrified me, and I needed help! My relationship with God until this point in my life had been, let's call it, "casual".

I believed in God, but I struggled with organized religion, so I didn't attend church or act like a Christian in any manner. BUT when I had that pregnancy scare, the first thing I did was turn to God and start praying that it just be a scare. And low and behold, once I said my prayer, I found out that she was not pregnant. I couldn't believe it! Apparently, I didn't learn my lesson because it didn't stop me from continuing to hang with that crowd and continuing down a path of promiscuity. Then, not one month later, I had another scare. And what did I do? You guessed it, turned to prayer, and just like that; I found out she was not pregnant. Except for this time, I wasn't happy. I was overcome with guilt. I just kept thinking, why do I treat God like this? I don't treat other people like this. I don't just call on my friends only when I need something from them, then ignore them after getting it. It was at that moment I realized I needed to make a change in my life

to start holding up my end of the bargain. But I had no idea what that meant. I didn't know how to build a relationship with God, so I decided to go to a church and see where that leads me. The problem with that was that there were literally hundreds of churches to choose from, and they are all so different. I was intimidated at the idea of having to walk into a church blind. Then it hit me; there is literally a church across the street from my apartment! Why don't I start there! So I came up with a plan! I took a piece of paper, and I wrote down three things that I knew I needed help with within my life. They were

- 1.) Please help me dig myself out of the financial debt hole I created.
- 2.) Please help me improve my relationship and communication with my family.
- 3.) zPlease guide me down a path that leads to me building a better relationship with you!

These were three things I knew I could not fix on my own. I knew in my heart that if I were going to tackle these issues, I would need God's help. The plan was to walk to the church across the street, say a prayer

over the three things I wrote down, and then sneak out and walk home if it was weird there.

When I got to the Church, everyone was super welcoming and friendly! I immediately felt comfortable, and I was glad I went. When the pastor started his sermon, he said, "Today we are starting a new series on Miracles and how we can help God work Miracles in our lives! So here's what we are going to do as a church; my staff is handing everyone a piece of paper and a pen. I want everyone in the room to write down three things you need God's help with to overcome in your life, then we are going to pin each piece of paper to the cross in the back of the room, and we are going to pray over them as a church". I couldn't believe it... I remember my hands started shaking, and I just started crying. I was so overcome with emotion. It was at that moment I knew that I didn't move to Arkansas to work for Walmart. God used Walmart to get me to Arkansas so I could grow closer to him! It all made sense. Why the job opportunity seemingly came out of nowhere. Why the recruiter broke character to convince me to take the job. Why I saw the basketball in the apartment right across the street from the church. Why God answered my prayers immediately when I got into trouble, all of it was to get me in this Church on this day to bring me closer to him!

My life has not been the same since. Every item on that list is now better! I'm closer to God than I have ever been, and I can leverage my influence with Real Estate to help bring others closer to him.

My real estate journey started with me waking up in a cold sweat, having a mini panic attack in the middle of the night back in 2016. My stomach was hurting so bad that it woke me up with a jolt. I was terrified. Why? To give you some context, my wife and I got married exactly 365 days after we met. That means I went from bachelor life to married life quickly! As a bachelor, I never cared much about my financial future. I had a great job that paid great money, but I was really good at spending most of it. I often spent more than I made but seeing as I was the only person impacted by those financial decisions, I didn't put much thought into changing. These poor spending habits led to my poor 550 credit score and very little savings (only about \$1000).

Fast forward to the night of my panic attack. My wife Jessica and I had been up late discussing our future together. We discussed what our dream home would look like, how many kids we wanted, where we would vacation together. It was an exciting conversation, but there was a little voice in the back of my head saying, "you can't afford that,

or that, or that”. After our chat, we fell asleep, and then around 3 am it hit me like a ton of bricks. PANIC! That pain in my stomach was me realizing that if I wanted to give my wife and future children the life they deserve, I would have to make some changes and figure out how to make more money. So I did what any normal human being does when they have a panic attack and need to plan together to change their lives. I grabbed my phone and started Google-ing! I searched for things like “how to make extra money?” or “What are some good side hustles” and “How to make passive income.” As I browsed through the search results, I kept seeing articles and videos about real estate and rental properties. As I started reading through them, I found myself getting excited and wanting to learn more. Then I stumbled on a TEDx Talk titled “Design Your Dream Life Through Passive Income by Alex Szepietowski. In this talk, Alex, a seemingly normal guy in his 20’s described how he owns 24 houses and was financially free because his passive income exceeded his cost of living. My immediate thought after watching the video was, “well, if he can do it, why can’t I?” So I decided at that moment that I was going to be a successful rental property investor! Mind you; I had poor credit and no money. But never the less, I was not going to let that stop me.

The next day I spoke to a friend of mine who was a real estate broker and told her my grand plan! She was super excited for me and brought me a box of books and said, “Pick One”. From that pile of books, I grabbed “Rich Dad Poor Dad” by Robert Kiyosaki. I couldn’t read it fast enough. From there, I read “The Richest Man in Babylon, Then The Millionaire Real Estate Investor. It’s like I couldn’t get the information in my brain fast enough. So I started listening to audiobooks and real estate podcasts in the car on my way to and from work. My goal was to learn as much as I possibly could, as fast as possible, so I could start taking action. I am a firm believer in the law of attraction and that we get what we give in this world. So the very first step I took in my investment journey was telling everyone that I was a real estate investor even though I had never bought a property! I wanted to put that energy out in the universe. When people saw me, I wanted them to see an investor. This shift in mindset is what brought me my first deal.

Eric, a good friend of mine, heard I was buying rental property. He reached out to me because he was in a difficult situation with his house. Eric moved out of his home two years prior and rented it out to a member of his church family. His intention was to sell the house

to his tenant at the end of that 2-year span. Unfortunately, when the time came to sell the house, his tenant was not able to buy. Eric had to sell within 30 days because he needed the cash from the sale to purchase his next property, which he was already “under contract” on! Eric explained the situation to me and offered to sell us his house for \$30,000 below its market value, with the contingency that we could close escrow within 30 days. I had no doubt, this was my moment to get in the game and I jumped at the opportunity!

And just like that, I was officially under contract for my first rental property, and I had no idea how I would close on it with only \$1000! I started networking with other investors to learn how they were generating their down payments. That is how I met Dustin. Dustin is now a business partner of mine, but at that point, he was just another associate that I was working with. I told him about the deal and the numbers. I was starting to get discouraged because everything I think about as far as coming up with a down payment wasn't going to be enough. At one point, I just called him and said, “Hey man, I can't buy this property. I can't come up with the down payment. My buddy Eric is really in a tough spot. He needs somebody to buy it. So why don't you go ahead and purchase it because I know it's a good deal, and

that will help him out tremendously?” That's when Dustin gave me my first lesson in entrepreneurship. He said, “Henry, I would love to buy this house. It's a great deal, but if you're going to be successful in this business, you need to figure it out. You need to find a way to buy this property”.

Until this point in my life, I'd never approached problems like that. My thought process was always; I'll try to do something. If I run into roadblocks and can't remove those roadblocks, then I just won't be able to do it. But an entrepreneurial mindset is different. An entrepreneurial mindset says, “how can I?” instead of “I can't.”

Thinking like this opened my mind up to more possibilities. As Dustin and I started talking more and going through different ideas, we came across the idea of using 401k. Until that point, I thought the only way to use a 401k was to take money out of the 401k and then pay all kinds of penalties and fees for early withdrawal. But that's not the only way you can use one. You can borrow money out of your 401k and make monthly payments back to that 401k with interest. The benefit to that is it's your money. The interest that you're paying, you're paying it to yourself, and most employers automatically deduct the payment for

the 401k loan directly from your paycheck. It's not even something you have to think about paying back. And that's when the light bulb went off. I thought, well, I don't have a 401k, but my wife does. I took the idea to my wife, and she was immediately on board. We called her employer the next day, and we had access to the money within a week. Within a few days, I went from only having a thousand dollars and not knowing how I would buy Eric's house to now having access to everything I needed for the down payment. So we purchased the property.

We raised the rent on the tenant because he was barely paying enough to cover the mortgage. That allowed the property to cash flow. The rent each month from that property not only paid for the mortgage and all the expenses associated with that house, but it also paid the payment for the 401k loan.

The other cool thing we were able to do as a result of buying that property with so much equity built into it. We were able to go to a small bank and take out a line of credit against the equity in the house. The bank essentially gave us access to 80% of the equity in the home, which translated to about \$19,000. I now had access to \$19,000 that I didn't have before. I was able to leverage that \$19,000 to purchase more property.

We could use that money to buy a property, renovate it and sell it, or renovate it and rent it out. And when you renovate it and rent it out, you can then refinance that property and pull your down payment back out, which allowed me to pay back the line of credit, or when I sold it for a profit, the profits would pay back the line of credit. That allowed us to rinse and repeat the same \$25,000 to buy multiple properties.

Think about that! Just a few months prior to purchasing this first property, I discovered real estate investing while having a panic attack in the middle of the night, and now I've now turned that epiphany into reality. I took nothing. I essentially took what some people would call "monopoly money" and turned it into a real cash flowing asset. That's when I knew how powerful real estate was. That's when I knew my life had changed forever. That's when I knew my dream of providing my family with the life they deserve was within reach!

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If you fast-forward to now, we own a 6 million dollar real estate portfolio consisting of 65 rental properties. I'm financially free. I'm able to provide my family with the life that they deserve. As I was going through

this process of buying rental properties and changing my life through real estate, I started to feel like calling to share this information with as many people as possible. It took me from a place where I couldn't afford to provide my family with a home. I couldn't afford to provide my family with the lifestyle they deserved and put me in a position to be able to do that within a matter of three and a half years. I've felt this calling to share this message because financial education isn't taught in schools.

A lot of people don't learn this until their adult lives. Many people of color like myself don't have anybody in their family who has built generational wealth or has financial education. I felt a responsibility to try to share this information with as many people as possible. And so I started to leverage my social media to share free information with people about the power of real estate, how it can be used to change their lives. I want people to see that I'm just a guy, I'm just a normal guy who got tired of being broke, found a way to leverage the assets that I had to begin to build wealth, and that anyone can do this.

I think that calling really came from my move towards Christianity, and how God brought me to Arkansas, to be closer to him, to be in that church, on that day, to start building a better relationship with

him. All these were steppingstones on the path to where I am today and sharing the message of how God brought me closer to him, how to share financial independence with other people. I firmly believe that that is the reason why I'm here in this seat today. What I want people to get from this message is that my life didn't start to change until I began to get right with God. Once I got right with God, he started to provide me with access to more resources, and opportunities to change my life.

I believe he provided me access to these things not just to change my life, not just to provide my family with wealth, but to provide me with the information so that I can share it with people. I firmly believe that none of this is for us, the gifts that God has given us, the finances that he blesses us with, the knowledge that we are provided, it's not for us; it's for us to share with others. The more we're good stewards of these gifts and these resources, the more abundant they will be in our lives. The more we give and share with others the more you create this network of positivity, wealth, happiness, and greatness. I would encourage everyone. Don't be afraid to share your story. You never know whom it's going to inspire. Get right with God and open your mind to what your gifts are, and your message are. Begin to share that with people. You will see how much your life will change.

ABOUT HENRY WASHINGTON JR.

Henry Washington is an author, entrepreneur, and real estate investor with more than 65 rental units and dozens of house flips under his belt. Henry has been featured in numerous online and television publications like FOX Business Morning Show FBN:AM, Yahoo Finance, Business Insider, NBC, CBS, CourseMethod.com & BiggerPockets.com - where he enjoys showing others the power of real estate investing and financial freedom. Henry, his wife Jessica and their two daughters live and invest in Northwest Arkansas.

Books that changed your life:

Rich Dad Poor Dad by Robert T. Kiyosaki.
The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho

Movies that inspire you

Remember The Titans. Scent of A Woman,
The Pursuit of Happiness

Your Hero:

My Father who taught me how to be a man,
an entrepreneur, & a teacher. My mother who
accomplished everything she was not supposed
to as a black woman in corporate America.

Quote you live by:

“Who you choose to be around you lets
you know who you are.”



Taylor Williams

“Smile, for the better days are coming!”

BORN FOR GREATNESS

BY TAYLOR WILLIAMS

Growing up as a child, there wasn't any activity that I hadn't been involved in. From dance to Girl Scouts, Karate to cheerleading, track to playing piano, violin and guitar. I even tried soccer, but I kept picking up the ball, catapulting my career as a basketball player. My mother believed that “If I put this girl in every activity, I can think of then eventually she will find something that she loves and run with it.” I didn't see it then but that is what shaped me into being who I am today and allowing me to accomplish all that I have in my life thus far. In middle school, basketball and track became my main focuses; that is until I started competing in pageantry. I enjoyed basketball, I was the fastest one on the court and my jump shot wasn't too bad either. Track on the other hand was different, I never had to think about it, I just ran. No guards stopping me from getting to the end, no basketball to handle while simultaneously running; just simply running. I had run as a child, but I was only seven at the time, so I wasn't too serious

about it. One day I entered my first meet, running unattached, meaning I wasn't a part of a team, and I beat one of the fastest girls in the area at the time. As a result, her coach reached out to me to be a part of the team and told me that I was the missing link for their 4x4 relay team. Over the next 3 years I ran for that team; realizing that this one the most invested-in, most loving, family-oriented environment that I would ever experience in my career as a track athlete.

Now, remember I mentioned that I also started competing in pageantry during this time. I competed for Miss Teen Maryland International for three years and finally won my freshman year of high school in 2013. When I got to high school the track coaches and many of the athletes already knew who I was, knew my times, but were excited and supportive to welcome me to the team. From one family to another is what I always felt was my experience, going from a recreational AAU team to a high school team. Again, my coach believed in me, my team supported me, and I felt a sense of family being a part of it. My summer coach used to have conversations with me and my other female teammates about if we saw ourselves running in college. At the time I hadn't thought about it because basketball was the main sport I played growing up, but I soon would find out that even if I hadn't thought about it, somebody was. As a

freshman and sophomore in college, I was receiving interest letters from colleges that were aware of my times and believed that I had the potential to be great. As amazing as that was, not everything was going well for me that second year of high school. The friends I made outside of track felt the need to push me out of the group because I wasn't willing to be a follower, so at the beginning of my sophomore year, I had gone into a dark place. I wasn't eating much, lost motivation for track, and it would even begin to affect my confidence as a titleholder. During this time, I would skip lunch and go into the dance studio and just practice pieces that my class was soon to perform as well as choreograph my own dances. This would be a habit that I had for months, which ultimately became like a form of therapy for me. Eventually, I became so confident in dance and it was such a therapeutic tool, that I decided that I wanted to become a dance therapist. As a result of this, life started looking so much brighter for me, but my parents believed that I needed a change.

I took a visit to a boarding school in Pennsylvania one day with my parents and I absolutely loved it. The facilities were amazing, the girls seemed to be enjoying themselves, and they had such a beautiful dance studio so I could not wait. I went back to school and told all my friends that I wasn't going to be there next year because I just knew

that boarding school was the best move. Oddly enough, things really started to pick up for me socially, dance was going well, I was thriving on the track, and I had just won my first state title, Miss Teen Maryland International 2013. As a titleholder, I created my own platform called "Living a healthy and active lifestyle," encouraging all age groups especially the youth to make healthier nutritional choices and exercise as a part of their daily routine. With my platform I would attend wellness events, volunteer with organizations such as the American Heart Association-years later to become an intern of theirs and do speaking engagements sharing the importance of healthy living in schools. My parents and I hadn't discussed the boarding school much after that, so I was content with where I was because life, truly, was going well! By the end of the school year I was the fastest sprinter in my county and my region in the 100, 200, 400 and 4x4 and third in my state in the 100 and 200. My dance teacher saw my progress to be so enlightening that she placed me in our senior dance company for that following year, although I was only going to be a junior. That next year the senior dance company was to compete in Hawaii, so I could not wait! The next thing I knew, I'm told to pack my bags to head to boarding school. This was the hardest news to hear because I was feeling on top of the world, but my parents had other plans.

My heart broke knowing that I had no choice in the matter. I would be losing the opportunity to be a senior dance company member, colleges would no longer be able to scout me because the boarding school did not have a track team, I was still Miss Teen Maryland, and I'd be leaving all the friends I had gotten so close to. It didn't take long to realize why I wanted to come to the boarding school in the first place, but those reasons still lingered in my heart the entire year I was there. I enjoyed the coach-like atmosphere, small class size, somewhat independence, and the food was pretty good too (specifically sushi day)! It was tough driving three hours back home on a Friday for an appearance as Miss Teen Maryland on a Saturday, rarely seeing my friends, just to drive back to school the very next day. By the end of the year I had to decide where I wanted to complete my senior year, boarding school or back at my original high school. In my mind the only way that I was going to receive a scholarship for college was to go back home to run track so that's what I decided to do. Then one day I come home for a weekend and see a "For Sale" sign in the yard. When I say my heart sunk, I was heartbroken because this changes everything yet again. The house I had grown up in, the area I had to be in to attend my original high school, the place I couldn't wait to come back to when I had breaks from boarding school, was now being taken away from me

permanently. After finding out where we would be moving to, I tried so hard to find a way to still attend my original high school but none of those worked. Now, here I am, a senior in high school attending, yet another new school.

To make matters worse, I had pulled my hamstring, which would affect my performance on the track, potentially affecting my times which colleges look at in order to recruit the best for their team. To add to my stress I tried communicating the dance teacher at this new school about my offer to be in the senior company at my first high school, and my experience being trained by professional dancers in boarding school, but she was adamant that the senior company was full to capacity and I could be in the junior company and serve as a dance intern. It wasn't what I wanted but I made the best of it. Every day I could not wait to walk into my first period because that was where I was in charge, I could choreograph my own pieces for students, I could share skills that I have learned. I was so passionate about choreography, oftentimes I would forget to get homework done because I would be working for hours on the formations, the counts, and the transitions. And each morning I would show up to a group of girls that didn't have the same level of passion that I had for dance. They scoffed

and rolled their eyes in my direction than one but I didn't allow that to stop me from being the best instructor I could be because it was my name being put at the end of their performance and I intended for it to be clean and creative. After school I would go to practice with a group of girls who wouldn't speak to me, I was still injured, and the coach didn't know me like the coaches I had in the past. It was tough being in this new environment, surrounded by people with a different mindset, not to mention staff that had no understanding of who I was and little intention on finding out. I remember one day I gave my guidance counselor a list of colleges that I was interested in and she told me to look into school that were "within my means." I had always been a great student, in advanced placement classes, I had been a prominent athlete in the state for years, had extracurricular activities, and was a titleholder. Based on that response from her, the fact that I was injured so I couldn't present my best at track meets, and because I was no longer hearing from those previously interested colleges, I genuinely felt that I wasn't going to college or at least get a scholarship.

One day we had an indoor track meet and my previous high school coach had reached out to a college coach that she had worked with years back and he expressed interest in me. According to the coach I

didn't express my interest in the school in the way that he would have liked so I had to seek out other schools. My current coach expressed that he ran in college and was able to set up an official visit with the coaches at this particular university. The visit was anything but enlightening and I could not wait to attend this school. The coaches made me feel like I was one of their children, similar to the love I felt from my coach back in middle school and the coach at my first high school, the team welcomed me immediately just as my summer and first high school team did, and lastly I loved the environment and the psychology program so I knew this was for me. Then came the stress train yet again! I was watching other athletes signing their letters of intent to attend their college of choice and a month after my visit in February, I still hadn't signed mine or received a confirmation from the coach that he was willing to bring me on to the team. There came the doubt again that I wasn't going to college and as irrelevant as it may seem to some people, it was a huge deal for me because I knew back in middle school that my talents on the track, my passion and hard work were going to get me into college and now that wasn't as easy to see.

April 15, 2015, I signed my letter of intent. I couldn't wait for this new chapter in my life. The guy I was dating for the past two years and had

been my best friend for four, was more concerned about the lack of attention I was getting than the fact that I had been stressing for almost a year or more about getting into college based on the fact that nothing was going as planned for me so we decided to break up. During that summer before my freshman year, the coach that recruited me calls to say he and his wife (assistant coach) had chosen to go to another school and we would have a new coach when we got there. I was disappointed because I really felt at home in their presence but it's something, I couldn't control so I couldn't wait to meet the new coach. When I got to college, I couldn't wait to start classes, make new friends, and start practice. Only thing is when I got to practice, I couldn't keep up. My coach in middle ran professionally and coached college athletes and so did the coach from my first high school so I had always been training on a college level, so I knew I could handle the workouts. I told myself, maybe it'll just take time and to remember that I was still injured, and just to be patient. I had gone a few months, struggling on the track, not sure what was going on and to make matters worse, my teammates were talking behind my back saying I didn't deserve to be there, I didn't deserve to be on scholarship, and one teammate specifically would yell at me during practice because he was so sure that I didn't want to be there. It hurt so bad because I was there best back home so this wasn't

like me and I would assume that even though I was struggling that my teammates would support me. The people that couldn't wait for me to attend the school, treated me like I was worthless. I knew then that I just wasn't cut out for this after all and went to my coach crying, sure that I wasn't meant to be on the team and that I should probably quit. He told me that I shouldn't and that it was going to take time to recover from my injury because that's what we thought the main issue was at the time. I told him I'd stay and just tried to tune out the way the team made me feel on a daily basis. I tried to continue to enjoy college and one day I asked a teammate if she could do my hair for this event I was participating in on campus. After she washed my hair, she dried it and chunks and chunks of my hair were coming out. She asked me if that always happened because she was very concerned as to how much hair had come out and I said no but I didn't think much of it and it was never a conversation again until months later.

One day I came back to school from being home for the weekend and I could see my heart beating out of my chest, I felt extremely dizzy while laying down and something just wasn't right so I went to the doctor's office on campus. Not too long after I was hooked up to an EKG machine and was told I had an irregular heartbeat. After finding

out this information, I visited a cardiologist because my mom was sure that this couldn't be right, I had been healthy my entire life, so a second opinion was needed. We then talk to an endocrinologist that informs me that no you don't just have an irregular heartbeat, but you have hyperthyroidism and as a result you have an irregular heartbeat. My main question was how and based on my medical history they the doctors had no clue. The scary part was that my only options were to take medication until my condition possibly went into remission or to take an iodine supplement to dissolve my entire thyroid and to take medication every single day for the rest of my life to replace what the thyroid would have served as if it had been healthy. I had been telling my family that I had been struggling to fall asleep for months, oftentimes not being able to fall asleep until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning and being late to my 7:30 am class quite often or wouldn't even make it because I was just so exhausted. On several occasions the head coach of the team threatened to kick me off the team because I wasn't upholding my responsibilities as a student athlete. I tried my best to make him aware that my behavior was not who I was but all a result of my medical condition that I had only been aware of for about two months. This was shocking news and a new experience for me and my family and they suggested that I transfer schools, one closer to home,

based on everything I was experiencing at the school. However, I felt that if I left the school that I would be quitting and almost felt like I had something to prove to myself and to all the people on that team, so I decided to stay.

Once I was officially diagnosed, I relayed that information to my coach and he thought it best that I redshirt my entire freshman year, this included both indoor and outdoor seasons. Redshirting meant that I would still have four years of eligibility, which is given to all student athletes under NCAA regulations. This was another hardship that I wasn't prepared for because this was one of the main reasons why I came to this school and now I can't be a part of it because of some random autoimmune disease that I have no idea how I got. Months go by and I start losing large amounts of weight in a very short time. My doctors went back and forth looking for the best medication for me because my levels were so extremely high that my body wasn't responding to it. I was always extremely hot, my hair was still coming out, I was still experiencing insomnia, I had anxiety because I didn't understand what I was going through, then on top of that it was affecting my grades. Classes that I thrived in were now classes I was receiving C's and lower in. I was advised to withdraw from the courses for medical reasons but

when I looked at how far I was into the semester I declined that offer because I had still worked as hard as I could. My heart was still beating out of control most days and my resting heart rate was often in the hundreds, which is a rate that someone would be experiencing if they were working out intensely. I would be so scared to take naps that one male teammate, who soon became my best friend, would monitor me while I was napping to make sure that my heart was still beating while I slept. Out of the 60 or more teammates, only one person was willing to stand by me while I was going through the hardest part of my life.

Since I couldn't run, my goal was to focus on my grades and try to improve them as much as possible. By my sophomore year, I had taken on every extra credit opportunity, communicated with my peers on assignments, asked every question I could to my instructors just to get my GPA to a respectable point. My confidence was still struggling because I had lost so much hair, my weight was just now coming back, and I just simply wasn't myself. During winter break I went to a therapist and shared what I had experienced throughout high school to this point and he was able to tell me that my hyperthyroidism was a result of the extreme stress that I had experienced throughout high school. The symptoms however didn't present themselves until I

started getting into a new routine, thus my observation of it when I got to college. That year I chose to become a dance minor because I remembered how therapeutic it was for me when I was having a rough experience in high school. I was soon able to slowly get back on the track and my condition was beginning to regulate. Soon I was surprising myself, running faster than many teammates. They would ask “where did that come from or when did you get fast?” I was always fast, but I wasn’t physically healthy enough to prove that. I started earning several recognitions within the A10 conference and things were looking up. By my junior year my confidence had come back like a title wave, I was earning medals, I had made the Dean’s List and I felt that after four years of not competing in a pageant, winning Miss Black Teen Maryland US Ambassador 2014, I was ready! In 2018 I became USA National Miss Maryland, the day after my birthday, April 29. All I kept praying for was “God I need this win. I’ve been having the worst couple years, feeling the worst about myself because of this condition. Please Lord, show me who YOU are!” And the first thing I did when I was crowned was throw my hands up and thank God!

By my senior year, God had showed up time and time again in my life and my faith had become stronger. I became the president of the Alpha

Chapter of a women empowerment organization called ‘Brains then Beauty,’ and student athlete mentor, a peer mentor for a freshman student with Autism for the Mason Autism Support Initiative program, as well as USA National Miss Chesapeake Bay 2019. I became the Top short sprinter in the A10 conference in the 60 meter-dash and 4x4 relay indoors and the 100 meter-dash, 200 meter-dash, 4x1 and 4x4 relays, outdoors. I graduated with my bachelor’s degree in psychology with a minor in dance appreciation, all because a girl with hyperthyroidism, faith and determination refused to give up on herself even when everyone else did.

However, my story doesn’t stop there. Ever since high school I was determined to become a dance therapist once I graduated from college, but upon more research I realized that it didn’t incorporate me creating choreography and that’s what I really loved to do. Over the summer I contemplated what my next move would be. Four months go by and I decide I would use my last year of eligibility to come back to the team and get my master’s in Special Education. I didn’t tell my teammates because I wanted it to be a surprise, but when I got to the school, I was the one that was in for a surprise. The friends I was so close to in undergrad didn’t even show excitement when I arrived,

they stopped wanting to hangout and several people would purposefully antagonize me at practice. I started a part time job working as a therapist for children with developmental disabilities, while going to practice and graduate school classes. Things were going well, then I got back to school from winter break, and I got injured. I was struggling with a strange injury behind my knee that didn't allow me to straighten my left leg for months. Teammates would attack me for complaining to myself about my injury so often that I started to hate being there. I would rush my practice so I could get out to be alone. After a while I was taking on more clients so I would participate in a two hour practice in the morning, have 30 minutes to change and get to my therapy sessions, oftentimes not eating lunch, then going to my classes at night. This was overtaking me, so much so that it was making me sick. After about 4 months of this routine and not being able to compete because of the severity of my injury, I was able to run in a meet. I thought that I would be strong enough to compete at our two day meet the next weekend and I could hardly walk after the first meet day. The following meet was our conference meet and even after all I had been through, I was able to place second in the 60 meter-dash and our 4x4 relay placed third. Due to Covid-19 I was forced to end my athletic career at my indoor season but my academic goals were still to be completed. In

December of 2020, I graduated with my master's degree in Special Education with a certification in Applied Behavior Analysis.

My story may not be the most tragic or the most relatable, but it's an experience that could change a life. There were 100 occasions where I was ready to give up, times when I was too sick to get out of bed, moments I felt so ugly I would cry when I looked in the mirror. And here comes the but...But I looked at my Why. My reason for pushing through was to have a greater story behind my platform. Exercise and eating healthy have been a part of my entire life because I was always involved in one thing or another, but how could I encourage the next person to "Live a healthy and active lifestyle," if I allowed my mental and physical health to deter me from following my dreams. When I share my story, I encourage those listening to allow their 'Why' to keep them driven, allow their passion to be therapy, and to allow God to carry you through to greatness. I am grateful for the hard times that I experienced because it has made me the strong young woman I am today, and I can say that my condition is very close to remission. And that alone brings a smile to my face!

BY TAYLOR WILLIAMS

Taylor Williams has always lived her life to use her passion of health and fitness to impact those around her. As a teen she was inspired by First Lady Michelle Obama's 'Let's Move' Initiative that raises awareness of the childhood obesity epidemic. During this time, Taylor was crowned Miss Teen Maryland International 2013, and resulted in her creating her own platform called "Living a Healthy and Active Lifestyle." Taylor is a 10-year volunteer with the American Heart Association and seeks to serve as an advocate for heart-healthy living habits. In 2015 she received a Track and Field scholarship to George Mason University. Unfortunately, she was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease called Hyperthyroidism her freshman year of college, impacting her mental, physical, and emotional health. As she worked hard to regulate her health condition, she experienced bullying, extreme hair loss, weight loss, and a decline in her confidence. She accounts her ability to press through this hard time in her life to prayer, patience, and perseverance. She won USA National Miss Maryland 2018. In 2019, she became the top short sprinter in the A10 conference in 6 events. She accomplished these goals all while serving as the president of a women empowerment organization called 'Brains Then Beauty,' a student athlete mentor, as well as

a peer mentor for the Mason Autism Support Initiative program. In Spring of 2019, Taylor received her bachelor's degree in Psychology with a minor in Dance Appreciation. In 2020 she received her master's degree in Special Education with a certification in Applied Behavior Analysis. She is in the process of publishing two children's books, highlighting the importance of healthy eating and exercise habits at a young age. Taylor's goal is to become a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst and to continue to share her passion of fitness through her own fitness program "The Fit T Lifestyle Program," as a soon-to-be-certified group fitness instructor.

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Adam Wilber, Corporate Magician & Mentalist

“Find creative ways to make others smile and watch as your world brightens around you.”

CREATIVITY & INNOVATION ARE CERTAINLY WORTH SMILING ABOUT

BY ADAM WILBER

My name is Adam Wilber and I'm a master magician, author, inventor and speaker. I was raised in Hanover NH by my father who is the hardest working man I've ever met. A true model of what it means to be a stand up guy! I was not wealthy growing up although the town I lived in was one of the richest towns in NH thanks to it housing Dartmouth College. I always thought I was the poor kid who didn't fit in but my father taught me through his actions that your worth has nothing to do with your bank account but rather all to do with what you stand for and what good you personally bring to this world by helping as many people as you can! I went through my schooling years very much as a drifter getting into lots of trouble while trying to find a way for

myself and my true identity. I thought that if I couldn't be rich I could at least be the cool kid who did lots of drugs and got arrested a lot to prove I was a Bad Ass and not to be messed with. The reality was I was just hiding from my insecurities and uncertainties. Fast forward to my early 30's I finally got the break and direction I needed when I accidentally stumbled onto my creativity as an inventor. Submitting one of my own creations to the worlds largest Magic magazine they accepted it and wrote back how much they appreciated my creative take on the trick. That spraked a fire in me to keep creating which I did for the next 9 years. To date I have created over two dozen magic tricks and toys that have grossed millions of dollars in sales.

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I've currently written 4 books on creativity and continue to work at inspiring others to find their creative calling. I do this because creativity is what saved my life and allowed me the freedom to do what I love in life every single day. I get excited by helping people realize they ARE creative and if they don't share that creativity with the world it will be lost for good as nobody can do it, share it or be it besides them.

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I'm currently finishing my 5th book on creativity and this one is for the business world to help others solve the problem of how to stay innovative and creative so they can continue to grow their companies and product line. I'm also posting to videos every week on my YouTube channel with the could intention of helping people become inspired to live their most creative and passion driven life. I wake up every day and ask myself how I can be an inspiration to others and their creative pursuits.

ABOUT ADAM WILBER

Adam is an author, entrepreneurial wizard, relevant creative thinking expert and 3-time TEDx speaker. Adam knows that every single person can learn how to be creative, grow their innovation quotient, and flip the script to see the world with a different perspective. Through energy, humor, and a magnetic spark, Adam commands the stage and awakens your creative power to harness the innovative thoughts that you and your team may have yet to recognize. Adam has been pushing boundaries since the age of six and rejecting the norms that limited so many other artists. He faced many creative challenges, but devised a systematic approach to creative problem solving that is truly limitless. His mindset for innovation has led to the creation of award-winning inventions and never-before-seen illusions that stunned huge audiences and famous figures on national television. A whopping 80% of US and UK residents report they feel pressure to be productive rather than solving problems using creative thinking. As a keynote speaker and creativity expert, Adam engages, challenges, and inspires audiences with the promise that everyone can learn how to become an innovative problem solver which will lead to personal fulfillment and happiness.

Books that changed my life:

The Power Of Now by Eckhart Tolle
Steal Like An Artist by Austin Kleon

Movies that inspire me:

The Prestige
Forest Gump

Songs that inspires me:

One Love by Bob Marley
Outnumbered by Dermot Kennedy

My hero:

My Dad

Quote to live by:

Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are. –John Wooden



Taylor Williams

“Smile, for the better days are coming!”

BORN FOR GREATNESS

BY TAYLOR WILLIAMS

Growing up as a child, there wasn't any activity that I hadn't been involved in. From dance to Girl Scouts, Karate to cheerleading, track to playing piano, violin and guitar. I even tried soccer, but I kept picking up the ball, catapulting my career as a basketball player. My mother believed that “If I put this girl in every activity, I can think of then eventually she will find something that she loves and run with it.” I didn't see it then but that is what shaped me into being who I am today and allowing me to accomplish all that I have in my life thus far. In middle school, basketball and track became my main focuses; that is until I started competing in pageantry. I enjoyed basketball, I was the fastest one on the court and my jump shot wasn't too bad either. Track on the other hand was different, I never had to think about it, I just ran. No guards stopping me from getting to the end, no basketball to handle while simultaneously running; just simply running. I had run as a child, but I was only seven at the time, so I wasn't too serious

about it. One day I entered my first meet, running unattached, meaning I wasn't a part of a team, and I beat one of the fastest girls in the area at the time. As a result, her coach reached out to me to be a part of the team and told me that I was the missing link for their 4x4 relay team. Over the next 3 years I ran for that team; realizing that this one the most invested-in, most loving, family-oriented environment that I would ever experience in my career as a track athlete.

Now, remember I mentioned that I also started competing in pageantry during this time. I competed for Miss Teen Maryland International for three years and finally won my freshman year of high school in 2013. When I got to high school the track coaches and many of the athletes already knew who I was, knew my times, but were excited and supportive to welcome me to the team. From one family to another is what I always felt was my experience, going from a recreational AAU team to a high school team. Again, my coach believed in me, my team supported me, and I felt a sense of family being a part of it. My summer coach used to have conversations with me and my other female teammates about if we saw ourselves running in college. At the time I hadn't thought about it because basketball was the main sport I played growing up, but I soon would find out that even if I hadn't thought about it, somebody was. As a

freshman and sophomore in college, I was receiving interest letters from colleges that were aware of my times and believed that I had the potential to be great. As amazing as that was, not everything was going well for me that second year of high school. The friends I made outside of track felt the need to push me out of the group because I wasn't willing to be a follower, so at the beginning of my sophomore year, I had gone into a dark place. I wasn't eating much, lost motivation for track, and it would even begin to affect my confidence as a titleholder. During this time, I would skip lunch and go into the dance studio and just practice pieces that my class was soon to perform as well as choreograph my own dances. This would be a habit that I had for months, which ultimately became like a form of therapy for me. Eventually, I became so confident in dance and it was such a therapeutic tool, that I decided that I wanted to become a dance therapist. As a result of this, life started looking so much brighter for me, but my parents believed that I needed a change.

I took a visit to a boarding school in Pennsylvania one day with my parents and I absolutely loved it. The facilities were amazing, the girls seemed to be enjoying themselves, and they had such a beautiful dance studio so I could not wait. I went back to school and told all my friends that I wasn't going to be there next year because I just knew

that boarding school was the best move. Oddly enough, things really started to pick up for me socially, dance was going well, I was thriving on the track, and I had just won my first state title, Miss Teen Maryland International 2013. As a titleholder, I created my own platform called “Living a healthy and active lifestyle,” encouraging all age groups especially the youth to make healthier nutritional choices and exercise as a part of their daily routine. With my platform I would attend wellness events, volunteer with organizations such as the American Heart Association-years later to become an intern of theirs and do speaking engagements sharing the importance of healthy living in schools. My parents and I hadn't discussed the boarding school much after that, so I was content with where I was because life, truly, was going well! By the end of the school year I was the fastest sprinter in my county and my region in the 100, 200, 400 and 4x4 and third in my state in the 100 and 200. My dance teacher saw my progress to be so enlightening that she placed me in our senior dance company for that following year, although I was only going to be a junior. That next year the senior dance company was to compete in Hawaii, so I could not wait! The next thing I knew, I'm told to pack my bags to head to boarding school. This was the hardest news to hear because I was feeling on top of the world, but my parents had other plans.

My heart broke knowing that I had no choice in the matter. I would be losing the opportunity to be a senior dance company member, colleges would no longer be able to scout me because the boarding school did not have a track team, I was still Miss Teen Maryland, and I'd be leaving all the friends I had gotten so close to. It didn't take long to realize why I wanted to come to the boarding school in the first place, but those reasons still lingered in my heart the entire year I was there. I enjoyed the coach-like atmosphere, small class size, somewhat independence, and the food was pretty good too (specifically sushi day)! It was tough driving three hours back home on a Friday for an appearance as Miss Teen Maryland on a Saturday, rarely seeing my friends, just to drive back to school the very next day. By the end of the year I had to decide where I wanted to complete my senior year, boarding school or back at my original high school. In my mind the only way that I was going to receive a scholarship for college was to go back home to run track so that's what I decided to do. Then one day I come home for a weekend and see a “For Sale” sign in the yard. When I say my heart sunk, I was heartbroken because this changes everything yet again. The house I had grown up in, the area I had to be in to attend my original high school, the place I couldn't wait to come back to when I had breaks from boarding school, was now being taken away from me

permanently. After finding out where we would be moving to, I tried so hard to find a way to still attend my original high school but none of those worked. Now, here I am, a senior in high school attending, yet another new school.

To make matters worse, I had pulled my hamstring, which would affect my performance on the track, potentially affecting my times which colleges look at in order to recruit the best for their team. To add to my stress I tried communicating the dance teacher at this new school about my offer to be in the senior company at my first high school, and my experience being trained by professional dancers in boarding school, but she was adamant that the senior company was full to capacity and I could be in the junior company and serve as a dance intern. It wasn't what I wanted but I made the best of it. Every day I could not wait to walk into my first period because that was where I was in charge, I could choreograph my own pieces for students, I could share skills that I have learned. I was so passionate about choreography, oftentimes I would forget to get homework done because I would be working for hours on the formations, the counts, and the transitions. And each morning I would show up to a group of girls that didn't have the same level of passion that I had for dance. They scoffed

and rolled their eyes in my direction than one but I didn't allow that to stop me from being the best instructor I could be because it was my name being put at the end of their performance and I intended for it to be clean and creative. After school I would go to practice with a group of girls who wouldn't speak to me, I was still injured, and the coach didn't know me like the coaches I had in the past. It was tough being in this new environment, surrounded by people with a different mindset, not to mention staff that had no understanding of who I was and little intention on finding out. I remember one day I gave my guidance counselor a list of colleges that I was interested in and she told me to look into school that were "within my means." I had always been a great student, in advanced placement classes, I had been a prominent athlete in the state for years, had extracurricular activities, and was a titleholder. Based on that response from her, the fact that I was injured so I couldn't present my best at track meets, and because I was no longer hearing from those previously interested colleges, I genuinely felt that I wasn't going to college or at least get a scholarship.

One day we had an indoor track meet and my previous high school coach had reached out to a college coach that she had worked with years back and he expressed interest in me. According to the coach I

didn't express my interest in the school in the way that he would have liked so I had to seek out other schools. My current coach expressed that he ran in college and was able to set up an official visit with the coaches at this particular university. The visit was anything but enlightening and I could not wait to attend this school. The coaches made me feel like I was one of their children, similar to the love I felt from my coach back in middle school and the coach at my first high school, the team welcomed me immediately just as my summer and first high school team did, and lastly I loved the environment and the psychology program so I knew this was for me. Then came the stress train yet again! I was watching other athletes signing their letters of intent to attend their college of choice and a month after my visit in February, I still hadn't signed mine or received a confirmation from the coach that he was willing to bring me on to the team. There came the doubt again that I wasn't going to college and as irrelevant as it may seem to some people, it was a huge deal for me because I knew back in middle school that my talents on the track, my passion and hard work were going to get me into college and now that wasn't as easy to see.

April 15, 2015, I signed my letter of intent. I couldn't wait for this new chapter in my life. The guy I was dating for the past two years and had

been my best friend for four, was more concerned about the lack of attention I was getting than the fact that I had been stressing for almost a year or more about getting into college based on the fact that nothing was going as planned for me so we decided to break up. During that summer before my freshman year, the coach that recruited me calls to say he and his wife (assistant coach) had chosen to go to another school and we would have a new coach when we got there. I was disappointed because I really felt at home in their presence but it's something, I couldn't control so I couldn't wait to meet the new coach. When I got to college, I couldn't wait to start classes, make new friends, and start practice. Only thing is when I got to practice, I couldn't keep up. My coach in middle ran professionally and coached college athletes and so did the coach from my first high school so I had always been training on a college level, so I knew I could handle the workouts. I told myself, maybe it'll just take time and to remember that I was still injured, and just to be patient. I had gone a few months, struggling on the track, not sure what was going on and to make matters worse, my teammates were talking behind my back saying I didn't deserve to be there, I didn't deserve to be on scholarship, and one teammate specifically would yell at me during practice because he was so sure that I didn't want to be there. It hurt so bad because I was there best back home so this wasn't

like me and I would assume that even though I was struggling that my teammates would support me. The people that couldn't wait for me to attend the school, treated me like I was worthless. I knew then that I just wasn't cut out for this after all and went to my coach crying, sure that I wasn't meant to be on the team and that I should probably quit. He told me that I shouldn't and that it was going to take time to recover from my injury because that's what we thought the main issue was at the time. I told him I'd stay and just tried to tune out the way the team made me feel on a daily basis. I tried to continue to enjoy college and one day I asked a teammate if she could do my hair for this event I was participating in on campus. After she washed my hair, she dried it and chunks and chunks of my hair were coming out. She asked me if that always happened because she was very concerned as to how much hair had come out and I said no but I didn't think much of it and it was never a conversation again until months later.

One day I came back to school from being home for the weekend and I could see my heart beating out of my chest, I felt extremely dizzy while laying down and something just wasn't right so I went to the doctor's office on campus. Not too long after I was hooked up to an EKG machine and was told I had an irregular heartbeat. After finding

out this information, I visited a cardiologist because my mom was sure that this couldn't be right, I had been healthy my entire life, so a second opinion was needed. We then talk to an endocrinologist that informs me that no you don't just have an irregular heartbeat, but you have hyperthyroidism and as a result you have an irregular heartbeat. My main question was how and based on my medical history they the doctors had no clue. The scary part was that my only options were to take medication until my condition possibly went into remission or to take an iodine supplement to dissolve my entire thyroid and to take medication every single day for the rest of my life to replace what the thyroid would have served as if it had been healthy. I had been telling my family that I had been struggling to fall asleep for months, oftentimes not being able to fall asleep until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning and being late to my 7:30 am class quite often or wouldn't even make it because I was just so exhausted. On several occasions the head coach of the team threatened to kick me off the team because I wasn't upholding my responsibilities as a student athlete. I tried my best to make him aware that my behavior was not who I was but all a result of my medical condition that I had only been aware of for about two months. This was shocking news and a new experience for me and my family and they suggested that I transfer schools, one closer to home,

based on everything I was experiencing at the school. However, I felt that if I left the school that I would be quitting and almost felt like I had something to prove to myself and to all the people on that team, so I decided to stay.

Once I was officially diagnosed, I relayed that information to my coach and he thought it best that I redshirt my entire freshman year, this included both indoor and outdoor seasons. Redshirting meant that I would still have four years of eligibility, which is given to all student athletes under NCAA regulations. This was another hardship that I wasn't prepared for because this was one of the main reasons why I came to this school and now I can't be a part of it because of some random autoimmune disease that I have no idea how I got. Months go by and I start losing large amounts of weight in a very short time. My doctors went back and forth looking for the best medication for me because my levels were so extremely high that my body wasn't responding to it. I was always extremely hot, my hair was still coming out, I was still experiencing insomnia, I had anxiety because I didn't understand what I was going through, then on top of that it was affecting my grades. Classes that I thrived in were now classes I was receiving C's and lower in. I was advised to withdraw from the courses for medical reasons but

when I looked at how far I was into the semester I declined that offer because I had still worked as hard as I could. My heart was still beating out of control most days and my resting heart rate was often in the hundreds, which is a rate that someone would be experiencing if they were working out intensely. I would be so scared to take naps that one male teammate, who soon became my best friend, would monitor me while I was napping to make sure that my heart was still beating while I slept. Out of the 60 or more teammates, only one person was willing to stand by me while I was going through the hardest part of my life.

Since I couldn't run, my goal was to focus on my grades and try to improve them as much as possible. By my sophomore year, I had taken on every extra credit opportunity, communicated with my peers on assignments, asked every question I could to my instructors just to get my GPA to a respectable point. My confidence was still struggling because I had lost so much hair, my weight was just now coming back, and I just simply wasn't myself. During winter break I went to a therapist and shared what I had experienced throughout high school to this point and he was able to tell me that my hyperthyroidism was a result of the extreme stress that I had experienced throughout high school. The symptoms however didn't present themselves until I

started getting into a new routine, thus my observation of it when I got to college. That year I chose to become a dance minor because I remembered how therapeutic it was for me when I was having a rough experience in high school. I was soon able to slowly get back on the track and my condition was beginning to regulate. Soon I was surprising myself, running faster than many teammates. They would ask “where did that come from or when did you get fast?” I was always fast, but I wasn’t physically healthy enough to prove that. I started earning several recognitions within the A10 conference and things were looking up. By my junior year my confidence had come back like a title wave, I was earning medals, I had made the Dean’s List and I felt that after four years of not competing in a pageant, winning Miss Black Teen Maryland US Ambassador 2014, I was ready! In 2018 I became USA National Miss Maryland, the day after my birthday, April 29. All I kept praying for was “God I need this win. I’ve been having the worst couple years, feeling the worst about myself because of this condition. Please Lord, show me who YOU are!” And the first thing I did when I was crowned was throw my hands up and thank God!

By my senior year, God had showed up time and time again in my life and my faith had become stronger. I became the president of the Alpha

Chapter of a women empowerment organization called ‘Brains then Beauty,’ and student athlete mentor, a peer mentor for a freshman student with Autism for the Mason Autism Support Initiative program, as well as USA National Miss Chesapeake Bay 2019. I became the Top short sprinter in the A10 conference in the 60 meter-dash and 4x4 relay indoors and the 100 meter-dash, 200 meter-dash, 4x1 and 4x4 relays, outdoors. I graduated with my bachelor’s degree in psychology with a minor in dance appreciation, all because a girl with hyperthyroidism, faith and determination refused to give up on herself even when everyone else did.

However, my story doesn’t stop there. Ever since high school I was determined to become a dance therapist once I graduated from college, but upon more research I realized that it didn’t incorporate me creating choreography and that’s what I really loved to do. Over the summer I contemplated what my next move would be. Four months go by and I decide I would use my last year of eligibility to come back to the team and get my master’s in Special Education. I didn’t tell my teammates because I wanted it to be a surprise, but when I got to the school, I was the one that was in for a surprise. The friends I was so close to in undergrad didn’t even show excitement when I arrived,

they stopped wanting to hangout and several people would purposefully antagonize me at practice. I started a part time job working as a therapist for children with developmental disabilities, while going to practice and graduate school classes. Things were going well, then I got back to school from winter break, and I got injured. I was struggling with a strange injury behind my knee that didn't allow me to straighten my left leg for months. Teammates would attack me for complaining to myself about my injury so often that I started to hate being there. I would rush my practice so I could get out to be alone. After a while I was taking on more clients so I would participate in a two hour practice in the morning, have 30 minutes to change and get to my therapy sessions, oftentimes not eating lunch, then going to my classes at night. This was overtaking me, so much so that it was making me sick. After about 4 months of this routine and not being able to compete because of the severity of my injury, I was able to run in a meet. I thought that I would be strong enough to compete at our two day meet the next weekend and I could hardly walk after the first meet day. The following meet was our conference meet and even after all I had been through, I was able to place second in the 60 meter-dash and our 4x4 relay placed third. Due to Covid-19 I was forced to end my athletic career at my indoor season but my academic goals were still to be completed. In

December of 2020, I graduated with my master's degree in Special Education with a certification in Applied Behavior Analysis.

My story may not be the most tragic or the most relatable, but it's an experience that could change a life. There were 100 occasions where I was ready to give up, times when I was too sick to get out of bed, moments I felt so ugly I would cry when I looked in the mirror. And here comes the but...But I looked at my Why. My reason for pushing through was to have a greater story behind my platform. Exercise and eating healthy have been a part of my entire life because I was always involved in one thing or another, but how could I encourage the next person to "Live a healthy and active lifestyle," if I allowed my mental and physical health to deter me from following my dreams. When I share my story, I encourage those listening to allow their 'Why' to keep them driven, allow their passion to be therapy, and to allow God to carry you through to greatness. I am grateful for the hard times that I experienced because it has made me the strong young woman I am today, and I can say that my condition is very close to remission. And that alone brings a smile to my face!

BY TAYLOR WILLIAMS

Taylor Williams has always lived her life to use her passion of health and fitness to impact those around her. As a teen she was inspired by First Lady Michelle Obama's 'Let's Move' Initiative that raises awareness of the childhood obesity epidemic. During this time, Taylor was crowned Miss Teen Maryland International 2013, and resulted in her creating her own platform called "Living a Healthy and Active Lifestyle," to motivate the youth in her community and state to make healthy nutritional choices and exercise apart of their daily routine. Taylor is a 10-year volunteer with the American Heart Association and seeks to serve as an advocate for heart-healthy living habits. In 2015 she received a Track and Field scholarship to George Mason University. Unfortunately, she was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease called Hyperthyroidism her freshman year of college, impacting her mental, physical, and emotional health. As she worked hard to regulate her health condition, she experienced bullying, extreme hair loss, weight loss, and a decline in her confidence. She accounts her ability to press through this hard time in her life to prayer, patience, and perseverance. By 2018, Taylor decided that her condition was not going to stop her

from achieving her goals; she then competed and won USA National Miss Maryland 2018. In 2019, she became the top short sprinter in the A10 conference in 6 events. She accomplished these goals all while serving as the president of a women empowerment organization called 'Brains Then Beauty,' a student athlete mentor, as well as a peer mentor for the Mason Autism Support Initiative program. In Spring of 2019, Taylor received her bachelor's degree in Psychology with a minor in Dance Appreciation. In December of 2020 she received her master's degree in Special Education with a certification in Applied Behavior Analysis. In her efforts to further her platform she is in the process of publishing two children's books, highlighting the importance of healthy eating and exercise habits at a young age. Taylor's goal is to become a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst and to continue to share her passion of fitness through her own fitness program "The Fit T Lifestyle Program," as a soon-to-be-certified group fitness instructor.

Book that changed your life:

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Movies that inspire you

Cinderella (starring Brandy and Whitney Houston)

Legally Blonde

Songs that inspires you:

Unstoppable-Sia

Rise up- Andra Day

Your Hero:

Michelle Obama

Quote you live by:

“Life is not measured by how long you live,
but by how many lives you change”



Peter Wolfing

“A smile shows the reflection of your mindset and spirit.”

KEEP SMILING BY PETER WOLFING

I'm referring to my life. My sister had asked me, “Don't you remember when this happened or when that happened?” Honestly, I couldn't or maybe I didn't want to remember. At first, I thought it was funny, that the vast majority of my childhood was in a huge fog and I was unable to remember 99% of it. Of course, I could remember basic events but critical ones... nothing.

But I regress. Let me back up and describe a little about myself and I'll dive deeper into how I started to chip away at why my childhood was a blank and how I started to heal my heart.

This all flows into the “Keep Smiling” theme so read on...

I suppose starting with my mother, who was the most instrumental in my life, because she gave me the example of what it meant to be an

entrepreneur. An immigrant from Europe, she came to America as a young teenager just after WWII. I saw pictures of the “shack” we lived in for the first few years of my life with my two sisters. Yeah, literally a shack. I went to see it a few years back and it’s still the same other than some siding that was put on it. What a shocker. It gave me a respect for what my mother did for us. She did odd jobs and would often tell me that she would say, “Yes, I can do that”, when she had no clue how to do it and then proceed to learn it so she could get paid. One such trade was interior design, drapes, slip-covers and fabrics. She eventually, moved us to our own home where I lived my younger years. She would work from home in a converted room in the garage as she took care of us. She didn’t hover over us as many parents do today but gave us space to grow, make mistakes and learn. We all became very self-sufficient because of the hands-off way she parented.

But as life went on year after year, I could vaguely remember alcoholism with my dad which didn’t end too well. It would haunt him his whole life. They divorced in an ugly night of police and drama. I remember being very confused because before I knew it my mother was married again with another man. Both would ask me, “Who’s your father?”, wanting an answer that it was him. Only later in life did I realize that in

order to cope with the alcoholism, my mom had an affair with my “real father”. Confusion turned into anger and avoidance. How I dealt with it all was to not cope. I would get blank emotionally for any stressful event. The best way I can describe it is that any emotional event, it’s like rain washing over me, rinsing away all feeling.

I did well in school and sports because my pain tuned into an advantage. While chaos was unfolding around me at a game I was playing, I could calmly look around and see everything while others would let their emotions get the better of them.

This skill was to be very handy as I joined the United States Marines. I originally did it as a goof to see how well I would do on the selective tests but one test led to another and before I knew it, I was swearing in and off to boot camp. What the hell did I just do!

My father was a Marine so I guess it was trying to have something in common between both of us because there was basically no feeling between us.

I made the best of it and came in 3rd out of 75 in my class and made

Sergeant in 2 years. I think my calmness was what allowed me to excel. We were taught how to handle stress and make decisions in chaotic situations.

Controlling chaos is a handy skill to have in the business world. A blessing of course, and what I would discover later, can be a curse as well. It would take me another 30 years to begin to find a way to heal the emotional wounds. More on that later.

My second career was the restaurant business and culinary.

Everyone thinks their mother is a great cook and I found out a few weeks away from re-enlisting after my 4-year tour in the USMC that she was re-mortgaging the house to open a restaurant. I was weeks away from re-enlisting but as fate would have it, mom makes the call and sons listen.

I got off the plane on a Sunday after being released and I was immediately washing dishes at the restaurant. "You have to start at the bottom" my father would say. I knew zero about cooking or the "business" so that's what I did.

I started learning. I think one of my strengths is that I like to know why things work the way they do. As I learned every aspect of the restaurant, I wanted to formally learn so I entered the culinary and got my degree.

The restaurant was a booming success! People loved the food but they also wanted to meet my mother. She was bubbly in the front and knew all their names. But all good things have their life span. As fate would have it, my mother got into a car accident and wasn't able to be there as much. It was a spiral downward from there. It made incredible financial stress between my parents. It wasn't long before they lost everything. The home they worked their whole life to pay off and their marriage were gone. It was a very painful time in my life.

I remember swearing to myself that if I could discover or make a business model that could have limited downside risk, yet upside potential and one that could be for anyone, I was on a mission to find it.

Shortly after the closure of the restaurant, I found what I was looking for. It came in the form of direct selling. Over the next 30 years I've risen through every conceivable position and started my own company which

at the time of this writing is just about 23 years old. I've been able to help over 2 million people.

But let me get back to why I'm writing this piece in "Keep Smiling".

I met my wife the day I moved into Manhattan and we've been together ever since. She is so wonderful and believed in me when no one else would. She gave me the space to grow just as my mom had. We have two beautiful children together. They are the best things to ever happen to me.

After spinning my wheels for eight years trying to do it on my own, and eating lots of expensive humble pie in the cafeteria of life, I wasn't anywhere near where I wanted to be. In fact, I was \$125,000 in debt. There had to be a better way.

Indeed, there was. Why not learn from those that were already successful? What a great idea. If only I thought of it earlier. But it's never too late.

I started to learn from mentors, both living and dead. I learned from John Maxwell, Darren Hardy, Paul Martinelli, Les Brown, Jim Rohn,

Wallace Wattles, Napoleon Hill and the list goes on and on. I became insatiable to grow.

The best way to grow is to teach because it pushes you to really know the information on a deeper level. Eventually I started teaching, doing stage presentations, thousands of conference calls, webinars and more. I've written all or contributed to many books, two of which were collaborations with Sir Richard Branson and Brian Tracy.

So, to end this portion of my "Keep Smiling", I began to realize through my studies that everything is energy. This paper with typed letters in this book is a form of energy. The conceptual energy I'm passing on to you through my story is energy. Just different forms and wavelengths that we can tap into. My past "blankness" regarding my memories as a child and adolescent were deep rooted anger issues of negative energy. This negative energy is hampering the positive. Uplifting energy of gratitude and happiness is positive energy. So, as I progress, I'll discuss more in depth on how I was able to come-to-grips with what was holding me back. I still have a long way to go with my memory issues but I've made significant progress. As with anything, it's a journey and one that I'm sure I will be taking for years to come. Maybe it will help you as it has me.



“FORGIVENESS RELEASES INNER HAPPINESS WHICH SHINES THROUGH SMILES”

The one thing I used to break-free and you can do it too...

The “Keep Smiling” movement for me, means that it’s a transference of inner happiness energy from one person to another. In order to have the “happiness glow”, you must “let-go” of old resentments and anger issues. In other words, you need to forgive.

Forgiveness unlocks your happiness which is your inner smile.

Forgiveness is letting go of the need for revenge and releasing negative thoughts of bitterness and resentment. Forgiveness, to be put another way, cleans your happiness spark plug.

For some people, the beginning stage of forgiveness is anger.

They feel angry at someone who did or said something to them in a

way that brought about harm or pain or sadness or disappointment.

We feel stung and pained. Sometimes surprised. Burned. Crushed. Upset. Stunned. The anger we hold exists as a response to pain that has been inflicted or that we feel has been inflicted on us.

We can stay stuck in this angry place for a long time.

In fact, some people stay there forever.

I don’t have to tell you that being stuck in anger is not fun. In fact, it can suck the life out of a person. It can be all consuming in the most negative way. I blocked my childhood memories so I didn’t have to deal with them. That’s the way I dealt with it all.

Most people hold in these feelings, the pain, the anger, keeping the negativity and the poison inside, allowing it to grow and fester and expand.

The strength of the anger is in direct proportion to the amount of pain, of anger, that we hold inside.

Don't get me wrong, anger is always not a bad thing. We need to feel it in order to eventually let it go.

Trying to hide the anger or stuff it way down or dismiss it is not going to make it go away. In fact, it is going to make it worse. Because it's only once we allow ourselves to feel the anger and acknowledge what it feels like, and that we feel it in the first place, we can set the stage for letting it go.

And only through letting it go can we truly forgive. And once we forgive, we can allow the happiness to shine through smiles.

The opposite of letting it go is holding it tight and allowing it to eat us alive. The opposite of letting it go is withholding love. I did that to my father.

It is holding on too little complaints and little grievances one at a time. Maybe slowly but certainly surely, we start to become toxic around this issue. And this issue can and often does spawn off additional other issues.

The more this cycle continues, the more your growth is stunted. Your dreams are thwarted. Your energy is sapped and sucked out until you

have little left for yourself or anyone else.

“Keep Smiling” cannot thrive in toxic soil.

The soil of anger and resentment does not nurture and replenish itself. It, in effect, suffocates and starves itself over time.

What I would suggest to you is start to be aware of your thoughts around anger, even with the little things.

Start with some easier or smaller things.

If someone you don't know and have no personal history with says a not-so-nice comment to you in the grocery store checkout line or if a rude driver cuts you off on the road, instead of taking it in or taking it personally or even being annoyed, be aware of your thoughts and reaction so that you can stop yourself and take another path.

The instant you start to feel resentment, instead tell yourself something like this:

“This is not very important. I am not going to let this get to me. I am letting it go.”

And then, do just that. Let it go. Or pray for a healing in their circumstance or for a new awareness that they can be more.

Start to exercise your letting go muscle, that forgiveness muscle, on occurrences that are relatively simple for you to let go of.

As you do this, and as you become more conscious of feeling this come on or begin, as you start to “nip it in the bud,” remind yourself that living the life you want to live and being the person you want to be will be within your reach when you do the work to forgive, when you truly begin to let go of the old hurts, and the anger, and the resentment.

I had to acknowledge my own inner pain and express those emotions in non- hurtful ways without yelling or attacking. Also, I tried to understand the point of view and motivations of the person to be forgiven; replace anger with compassion. In the case of my father, my older sister would tell me how physically and emotionally brutal his

father was to him which allowed me to see another perspective and understand why he acted as he did.

In order to forgive, we need to try and stop identifying ourselves with the suffering that was caused.

Forgiveness can be a gift that we give to ourselves. No one else will give it to us. No one. We don't give it to others, this is always a you and you deal.

When someone has hurt us, consciously or unconsciously, one of the most difficult things we have to face in resolving the situation is the act of forgiveness.

Sometimes it feels like it's easier not to forgive and that the answer is to simply cut the person in question out of our lives emotionally or physically.

Ending a relationship may be the right thing to do, but even then, we will only be free if we have truly forgiven.

If we harbor bitterness in our hearts against anyone, we only hurt ourselves because we are the ones harboring the bitterness. How can anyone “Keep Smiling” when they harbor bitterness?

Choosing to forgive is NOT about letting someone else off the hook.

Choosing to forgive is about choosing ourselves, our peace of mind, our happiness over everything else. It is about relieving ourselves of that burden, choosing to be free of the past, and choosing not to perceive ourselves as victims.

To forgive, we simply need to get to a place where we are ready to stop identifying ourselves with the suffering that was caused us. Only suffering comes from suffering and to forgive, we must see this, accept this and change course.

Getting to this point begins with fully accepting what has happened. Through this acceptance, we allow ourselves to feel and process our emotions.

What Forgiveness Is Not...

- It is not forgetting
- It is not pretending something didn't happen
- It is not excusing someone who did something wrong
- It is not saying it is “OK” to act the way the person acted toward us
- It is not “making up” or “kissing and making nice”

Here are some symbolic rituals to let go and forgive:

Write letter to the person in question. You don't need to mail it. Write it all down and get it on paper. Cast into a lake or sea or maybe burn it.

The power of forgiveness can be broken down into four stages.

Not everyone passes through the stages in the same order, though generally for forgiveness to take place, all four must be experienced.

In the First Stage, you are angry. And you justify that anger to yourself meaning that you believe you have been wounded or wronged or hurt by someone.

You blame that person. You look to their action rather than to your reaction to them. You lose sight, in your anger, to your complete power of reaction. To the control you have over your reactions.

In the First Stage, there is anger and there is pain. In the First Stage, we are unable to separate the being from the behavior.

In the Second Stage, you realize that the hurt and anger are not serving you positively.

Those feelings don't feel good. They are likely affecting other areas of your emotional and day-to-day life negatively.

In the Second Stage, you may even want to take steps to repair the damage that has been done. You take steps to forgive. Maybe you start to see the other side of the story. Or you decide it is time to just let it go. At the end of this stage, you are no longer pained or upset, and you feel you have forgiven the person (even if it is yourself) for the action(s).

In the Third Stage, you are someone who has seen how forgiveness works and you have experienced the positive results of letting go.

You become better able to let new grievances go quickly and more consciously. You make the decision to forgive quicker because you see how well that serves you in your life.

You know that to be the person you want to be and to live the dreams you want to live that forgiveness must be a part of your life. You may even consciously vow to not let anger or pain consume you ever again so your smile can genuinely beam from ear-to-ear!

In the Third Stage, you are keenly aware that the duration of your anger and pain is entirely up to you. You are in control and you know it. You may practice letting go and forgiving in situations that are still around in your life from before you made it to this stage.

In the Third Stage, you find it easier to forgive, regardless of what the pain or harm has been.

In the Fourth Stage, you are able to choose to not take offense or be angered or pained in the first place.

You are, in effect, ready to forgive even before you feel the feelings that

you would have in the past needed to let go of. You are not reactive when it comes to triggers, whether they are significant or minor.

The Fourth Stage comes when you have had at least some of these thoughts:

- I don't want to waste time or energy on the discomfort caused by anger or hurt so I will decide to feel differently.
- I am able to forgive myself, forgive others, forgive life, and forgive God.
- I know how it hurts when people don't forgive me.
- Unless I let go and forgive, I am stuck. If I am stuck in anger and pain, I am unable to fully appreciate the beauty and goodness of life.
- Sometimes taking something personally isn't really an accurate reaction. We all operate out of our own self-interest, and sometimes someone else's self-interest does not necessarily fit with mine.

As I said earlier, these four stages are not always followed in one-to-four order by all people in all situations.

Sometimes, we feel such strong positive feelings for some people that we go directly to Stage Four for those instances. Also, there are times that our feelings and hurts are so deep and raw that we stay in Stage One for months or years.

We have talked a lot about forgiving others for their actions and words. But what about forgiving ourselves?

As I forgave my father, I also had to forgive myself to keep the energy flowing to a happy place. Forgiving ourselves is the essential art because it's what we have most control over.

Once done, the energy of happiness begins to replace the darker energy of anger and our lives begin to have a whole different perspective on most things. Wayne

Dyer said, "If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."

Your empowered happiness energy flows through the external mechanism that the world can see which is your smile. It can be super

DR. KEN 'DR. SMILEY' ROCHON, JR.

infectious. Ever notice how a happy, smiling person can change the energy in the room? Sometimes, you can feel it even before they enter the room.

This is why the “Keep Smiling” movement is so important. It can and has had such a huge impact on the world just one person at a time.



**Jamie R. Wright, Speaker, Speaker, Advocate, Activist, Author & Coach
~ Eradicating Domestic Violence**

“Smiles help make the world a happier place!”

BRINGING SMILES BACK TO HURTING COMMUNITIES!

BY JAMIE R. WRIGHT

Hi there! My name is Jamie Rae Wright! I am a small-town girl born and bred in the rural parts of Northeast Oklahoma. I came up from very humble beginnings. I have one beautiful, strong, tenacious, out-spoken, no-nonsense Iraq War Veteran sibling. She is my first protector and best friend, she's my older Sister and only sibling. I call her 'Sister' and have our entire lives...lol!

I will forever be grateful for my Sister's protection and friendship, it's because of her that I don't have many more scares from our childhood. You see, the beginning of our lives, or I'll use my "I" statements now; was super tough. My childhood was plagued with trauma and what I

now know to be molestation and emotional neglect and abuse. As a little girl and much into my adult hood, I thought everyone's mothers cried out for help as she was getting beat, I thought everyone's private parts were touched and sometimes there was no food to eat, no hot water to take a bath or heat to keep them warm. I mean, everyone lived like that; right? Well, I reckon it goes to show just how grateful I am for the protection for my big Sissy as I always knew I was safe as long as she was near me.

Well, as luck, the odds, and statics would have it, around 12 years old I began to make decisions consistent with those of a broken, traumatized, and misguided little girl. I stopped going to school around the sixth grade and by the seventh grade I completely dropped out meanwhile discovering I was about three or so months pregnant. I gave birth to my oldest daughter in the summer of 1994; I was 14 by that time. Spending the majority of the rest of my life battling depression, surviving suicide attempts, I somehow managed to triumph and overcome! (what do you mean somehow managed?)

Refusing to succumb to teen pregnancy, poverty statistics, and being okay with accepting \$238 a month in welfare and \$387 a month in food

stamps, I made the decision to go back to school. I made another decision to push, to keep going and I worked my butt off to get a Master's in Business Administration. I made the decision to push, I made the decision to not give up, to not give in, all while working full-time and giving birth to one more beautiful baby girl!

Pushing on through life's ebbs and flows, my two daughters and I moved from Oklahoma to Texas in 2007 in pursuit of my career with the federal government. I have served nearly two decades with the federal government in finance and auditing, spending nearly two years in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. I've received a Joint Civilian Service Commendation, a NATO Medal of Service Award, and an Expeditionary Medal for Global War on Terrorism. I have also managed to achieve certifications in my career field, to include, Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE), Certified Government Auditing Professional (CGAP), and Certified Internal Control Auditor (CICA).

All the good and not-so good things I've experienced in my life has taught me how strong I am. It has taught me that adversity and opposition has only made me stronger. The ups and downs helped to grow me as a person and strengthen my resiliency. The good and not-so

good has taught me to appreciate life in the now, it's taught me to be present in the moment. It's taught me that all that I ever needed was already inside of me, I just needed to align myself, with myself. The ups and downs taught me to find purpose through my pain. It has taught me to never give up, and this I now know for certain, that if I didn't give up, the sun will appear and I will smile again!

•••••

I do what I do, which is keep pushing, keep smiling, refusing to give-up on life because of my Grandmother. My Grandmother is my 'why'. To build-on to her legacy, to live my life in a way that demonstrates my sincere gratitude for her love and support, is what keeps me going.

Through it all, my Grandmother has all been my biggest cheerleader, she has always cheered for me the loudest. So, the least I can do is to live my life in a way that makes her proud and enhances the incredibly strong legacy she'll eventually leave behind.

My Grandmother is the most self-less, strongest, spiritually grounded little lady I have the honor of personally knowing. She's endured lost

and pain pretty much her entire life. However, to this day at 89 years young, she is still pushing! She refuses to give-up on life despite the heartaches and disappointments of life. For that, I am proud she's my Granny and will forever be eternally grateful to and for her.

•••••

How I am, how I create abundance, solve problems, and inspire smiles are these powerful principles and tools I've gained along my journey.

“The true definition of mental illness is when the majority of your time is spent in the past or future, but rarely living in the realism of NOW”

~ Shannon L. Alder

1. Practice Mindfulness – You'll find when you're Present in the moment, elevate your Prospective (i.e., look at life as a glass half-full; not half-empty, choose to see adversity and opposition as an opportunity to grow, staying away from negative people to ensure you maintain a positive outlook on life), you'll experience Peace, no matter what may be happening around you. You'll experience a sense of acceptance

and resolve that is hard to articulate to others, the peace will begin to come through your energy and how you show-up in the world! It's truly a beautiful feeling, truly beautiful.

- Be Present in the Moment
- Elevate Your Prospective
- Experience Peace

“The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

2. Invest in Yourself – It has been my experience that investing in yourself provides the greatest return on investment (in the accounting world we refer to it as the “ROI”). What I mean by investing in yourself is practicing Self-Care, in that you find something that YOU like, something that takes the stress away in that moment. For example, I meditate, I have a Therapist (to ensure my mental health is just as ‘healthy’ as my physical health), and I get massages pretty regularly! As for Self-Development, please know, we as humans are much like plants, in that, if we're not growing, we're dying. So, consider developing yourself through

attending workshops, reading self-help books or even taking that photography class you always dreamed of! When you make prioritize your self-care, continue growing by developing yourself, this is what I know to be certain, you'll experience Success. You'll experience the kind of success YOU designed for your life, YOU, not the ‘success’ of the world or that others have designed for you. It's a beautiful thing! Truly beautiful!

- Prioritize Your Self-Care
- Continue Self-Development
- Obtain Success

“Feel the fear. Do it anyway!”

~ Jillian Michaels

3. Develop Courage – The quote by Jillian Michaels, ‘feel the fear and do it anyway’ resonates 100 percent with me. Often times people ask me how did I accomplish the level of education I have despite becoming mother at 14, how (and why) did I go to Afghanistan to support the brave Men and Women of our Nation, not once, but twice? How, why, how, how, how? It's because I felt the fear; however, I did not let the fear stop me. I Pushed. I made up in my mind that I was not going

to let the feeling of fear paralyze me and I did what I made up in my mind to do in the very FACE OF FEAR. I also Persevered. There were times I got tired, I wanted to give-up, I thought to myself 'Jamie, girl, you done did it now'; but I persevered. I kept (and continue to keep) going. I kept (and continue to) go, I just simply go. Ya'll this is so important I must mention it again, please STAY away from Pessimistic People, please. Pessimistic (or negative people) are simply detrimental to us, and more importantly, or SMILE. So, please consider always to love and regard pessimistic people but just from a distance!

- You Have to Push
- You Have to Persevere
- You MUST Stay Away from Pessimistic People

“Be like the flower that gives fragrance even to the hand that crushes it”
~ Ali Ibn Abi Talib

4. Practice Recovery – As I mentioned early in the book, my childhood was ravaged with trauma. For a very long time, as a result of it, I made decisions and choices consistent with the trauma and unhealed wounds I had. Along my journey to healing because I was just tired

of being tired, I discovered a tool that has radically transformed my life! I learned this simple and practical, but powerful, exercise from my Therapist that I hope will help you in a radical way too! The fundamental goal of the exercise is the ability to control our thoughts. The ability to shift negative self-talk that many of us have, however, we don't even realize/recognize we have it. It's simply Catching, Checking, and Changing negative and disempowering thinking and self-talk. Practicing this powerful exercise has personally helped me recover my thoughts in ways that's allowed me to forgive the people who have abused and hurt me the most in my life. So, for example, I use to often think that I wasn't smart enough to do 'this' or 'that' right. Now, when I think those thoughts, I have the ability/tools to catch them, check them (in that I quickly check to see where the thought is came from, is it from my childhood, etc.). I then change the thought by thinking of something positive, thinking of the things and evidence I have to disprove that thought, such as my education or the awards and accolades I've achieved. It's a beautiful and powerful feeling; absolutely beautiful!

- Catch It
- Check It
- Change It

I want you to put a big smile on your face. I want you to think about anything that makes you smile, seeing someone you love dearly for the first time in months (or even years), or maybe it's you setting by the beach or looking out of the window at the snow-capped mounts. I want you to think about anything (or anyone) that will put a big-fat-bright smile on your face. Okay, you got your smile?!? Good! Now, I want you to keep smiling but think about something unhappy or negative, but make sure you keep holding that big-fat-bright smile. Okay, stop! Did you find it a bit hard to hold that unhappy or negative thought? I hope it helped to put a smile on your face and remember, "Smiles help make the world a happier place"!

ABOUT JAMIE R. WRIGHT

Jamie R. Wright is a Domestic Violence Survivor, a powerful Speaker, Activist, Advocate, Coach & Author of two upcoming books, "Finding Purpose Through Pain" and "The Power of Overcoming Shame and Learning to Love Yourself Again". As an advocate and activist for the domestic violence community, she motivates, encourages, and empowers others to overcome and transform their shame and trauma into hope, healing, and happiness that leads to self-love!

Jamie has appeared on 60 Minutes Quibi, BBC News, and most recently on The Doctors TV Show with Dr. Ian Smith. Through her humility she has inspired the hearts and minds of thousands to create a new lens and conversation about domestic violence and the emotional, mental, and often times, physical impact(s) of it. Jamie currently resides in Texas and enjoys her new found freedom in life!

Favorite Movies

"The Help" directed by Tate Taylor

Song that inspires you:

"Survivor" by Destiny's Child

Your Hero:

My Grandmother, Lemmer Lee Harris

Quote you live by:

"It's not that I've always known who I would be,
it was just clear to me from an early age who I
wouldn't be" ~ Oprah Winfrey



Sally Wurr

“Always wear a smile, because your smile is a reason for many others to smile.”

KEEP SMILING

BY SALLY WURR

I am a lifelong entrepreneur who likes to be around other entrepreneurs. The energy that we generate keeps us all striving to be better.

I grew up in a military family that included my dad, mom, my sister, and myself. My father was in the US Air Force which took us to many places in the United States. Nothing outside the borders though. The advantage of that is my sister and I got to live in many parts of our great country!

My father had a 30-day vacation every year which allowed us to travel by car every summer to see family in Ohio and sometimes Massachusetts. Before our vacation my dad would have us help him choose the route we would take and visit all the National Parks along that route.

The challenge of moving all the time was adjusting to developing friendships quickly. Since we were all military kids one of our families

would eventually move to another base. For extroverted personalities like myself, I found it to be an easy transition. For many other children it was difficult, and they felt they had no “roots” anywhere.

Children can also be very cruel. I learned at a very young age how to read and understand body language. It has helped me well over the years. I can almost instinctively know when someone is happy, sad, or troubled. If I can help, I do, but if they clearly do not want help I leave them be. People will always let you know their thoughts; you just have to listen and believe them.

I was the new kid in class in Idaho, Texas, Kansas, North Dakota and California. Each time taught me a new lesson.

The first time I had the opportunity to be on stage was as a first grader in Pauline, Kansas. Our school performed the musical, H.M.S. Pinafore. To this day I remember the fun we had! To be up on the stage and the audience totally enjoying the show and cheering us on. I was one of the youngest, so obviously did not get a starring role.

When we lived in Minot, North Dakota I had an opportunity as a 4th grader to help run a game night for younger children. Some would say

I was a young child; I would have argued that point. I was given total control over two games that the children could come by and play and hope to win a prize. One of them was the “fishing game”. They cast their fishing line over a blanket on sticks. Someone was sitting behind the blanket out of sight and hooked their line with a toy. It was during this time that I learned when adults put you in charge of something they expect you to do it to the best of your ability and to stay with it until the evening is done. It was also one of my earliest chances to act like a mentor to the younger children and make sure their day was filled with fun. Again, I stepped out of my comfort zone and took direction from others and followed through with the mission they gave me. I am sure as a 4th grader I did not do everything to their satisfaction and certainly not perfect. But they didn't expect perfection. They knew if they gave me this experience, I would be even better next time if we were still at that base.

It was also during this time that I took tap lessons and baton twirling. I enjoyed both immensely and went on to twirl for many years.

By the time high school came around we were living in California. My sophomore year I was a member of the majorette squad with my high

schools marching band. In addition to that I also competitively twirled all over California as a solo twirler and as part of a duet.

These experiences taught me that there will always be someone that is judged to be “better” than me. I should take it in stride and understand that sometimes I was at my best and somedays not.

My high school marching band traveled all over the state performing in parades. We also marched down Main Street during Thanksgiving at Disneyland each year. My parents gave me a specific amount of cash for food and extra items on each trip. This was in the 1970's so credit cards were not available. It was up to me to make sure I didn't spend it all in one day. There were no adults that were minding my dollars. It was totally on me. I am thankful to say I never starved, but certainly shared meals with those who didn't have that skill set. It taught me to mind my cash and always have some left over. Every trip I have ever taken I have come home with money still in my pocket. I twirled for my school for 2 years as a squad member and then my junior year I was majorette captain and the featured solo twirler. Quite a lot of responsibility for a teenager. However, it taught me how to be a team member and work with others to put twirling routines together for parades and half time shows.

Between my junior and senior year of high school I already knew I wanted to be a hairdresser. I was able to begin “Beauty School” that summer. My senior year of high school I went half days. The second half of my day was at beauty college. I was not able to twirl for my high school that senior year, but I was able to graduate from high school and beauty college within weeks of each other.

I remember the first day I was supposed to cut someone's hair. I was terrified! The owner of the school and a very good mentor for me overheard me say I was terrified. He stayed by my side and guided me every single step of the way. I will always be grateful to him for showing me to do the work needed to learn a new skill, then to believe in myself and go for it.

I went on to win awards for being a Master Haircutter and make-up artist. I was originally licensed in California and worked in 3 different cities and salons. It was during this time I married my husband, Paul.

My husband and I moved four times. All those skills I learned as a youngster moving from place to place helped me be the new person in the neighborhood time and time again.

While we were living in Eugene, Oregon we had our daughter, Meredith. She was a Neonatal Intensive Care baby. She was 3 pounds 8 ounces when she was born. She didn't come home until she was two weeks old. Some of the most profound lessons were learned during this time. I had to learn patience and how to not let my imagination run amok with all the "what ifs" in life. Thankfully, she is a smart and beautiful lady with no issues from her early days of life.

After Eugene, Oregon we moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico. My biggest accomplishment was learning how to correctly spell Albuquerque! While in New Mexico I changed careers. I wanted something that I didn't have to start over every time we moved. My husband worked for a large insurance company, and I always thought if I could learn to be an insurance agent it would give me what I wanted. I was fortunate again to eventually land with one of the top agencies in the state and the owner was an excellent mentor. I always like to remember the saying that "when the student is ready the teacher will appear". It was my time to shine!

After 4 years in New Mexico, we moved to Colorado.

I have lived in this state since 1993. The longest I have ever lived anywhere. Back in 2010 I was fortunate to be a part of a business book club where I met two incredible people. Authors and business coaches who shared everything they knew. It is because of them that I am now a published author. I found a new calling in life that did not interfere with my other career.

I published my first book, Succeed With Purpose, in April of 2019. Again, checking off another milestone in my life. Writing taught me that nothing done in life is easy. It all takes time and asking for help from those who have already traveled the road I am on.

Shortly after arriving in Colorado my husband developed asthma. It became progressively worse as time went on. He has been on life support 3 times because of it. Nothing is scarier than seeing a loved one with a machine breathing for them. It creates its own kind of stress. I became an expert in knowing when he was having breathing issues and calling 911. I also mentally had to prepare myself in case he did not survive each and every time. It was simply something I learned to live with. But it took its toll in many ways.

This past year, 2020-2021 has probably been the most lessons learned over all my years. It will be its own book one day. We saw Covid 19 bring our country to a standstill. Everything we ever experienced changed.

I didn't have much time to be concerned about it though. For you see, my husband of 45 years was diagnosed with Stage 4 Cancer. We fought it with everything we had. But sadly, he passed away 4 months and 1 week after being diagnosed.

My first reaction was sadness and then I spent the next year simply being angry. I had been the catalyst to save his life three times, and he was supposed to win this one as well. But unfortunately, that was not what happened.

Now, a year later I am figuring out who I am. You see, I started life as a "Me", then when we married, I became a "We" and now I need to find "Me" once again. This journey called life continues.

My life has always circled around leadership. Beginning at the age of 9 I could list many accomplishments in leadership where I stepped out

of my comfort zone and jumped in to help facilitate activities of all kinds.

Simply put, I like to help solve problems of all kinds. As the President and Founder of SW Insurance Corp, I assist owners of companies to design, prioritize and simplify their employee benefits. Always listening to find where their problems are and finding the right solution. I have worked in this field for over three decades. Every single day I get up excited to get to my office and see what will unfold during the day!

If I can relieve stress for someone else because of an expertise I have then it gives me great joy to do so. I know how it feels when someone does it for me.

Someone once told me that those of us who can, must be the ones that do. There are many people in our world that do not want to or do not have the ability to step up and lead. Or to do what is uncomfortable or possibly dangerous. I do not do the dangerous stuff, but I do step up or step in when things go awry.

I create abundance, solve problems, and inspire smiles.

In my life I meet many different people. I love to know what their goals are and how they have gotten where they are. We all learn by following each other's footsteps and perhaps even being mentored by someone or being a mentor. We create a feeling of abundance and share with anyone willing to step up and play.

Speaking on stage and making a difference in people's lives has been on my bucket list since I was 18 years old. The only thing left on my original bucket list is singing lessons! Now that is a problem that will eventually be resolved by making time to be taught by an expert who has lots of patience.

In life we must be happy. Many show happiness with a smile on their face. Whenever I see someone without a smile I try to figure out why. Sometimes they are simply not "smilers". Life has trod on them so many times that they simply don't have the energy. I have a high energy level and usually my exuberance trickles over to them if they spend enough time around myself and others like me. Sometimes you must simply let them be. But by sharing a smile and happy energy it usually uplifts them for even a short while. This makes me happy.

I have been blessed to love everything that my life has embraced. I am excited to see what the next years will bring. Has my life been easy? Far from it. But each lesson I have learned has helped me be the person I am today. As my good friend, Michelle Mras states, living a life unapologetic!

ABOUT SALLY WURR

Sally Wurr is a lifelong entrepreneur. She is known as the “storm whisperer” and has an uncanny way of sharing what she has learned in life. Sally is the President and Founder of SW Insurance Corp, Speaker and Author.

Her first book, “Succeed With Purpose” was written with the intention of giving step by step guidance. How to transform yourself from who you have been told to be, to who you know you can be.

Each of us was born with a set of “tools” to navigate life. Other tools we learned along the way through trial and error and from watching and listening to those around us.

Her second book, “Hold My Crown” was a collaboration with Michelle Mras and 10 other women. It is a compilation of stories from women as they share their resilience through life.

Books that changed my life:

Success Principles by Jack Canfield; Guiding Lights by Eric Liu; Who Moved My Cheese by Spencer Johnson, MD; The Little Book of Connections by Jeffrey Gitomer

Movie that inspires me:

The Holiday,

Song that inspires me:

Walking on Sunshine, Katrina and the Waves;
Looking for Space, John Denver

Quote you live by:

I truly believe that “do unto others as they do unto you”.

“You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. Please remember that your difficulties do not define you. They simply strengthen your ability to overcome.” – Maya Angelou



Bryan Young

“Smiling will charge up your day because it is electrifying!”

SMILE...IF YOU ARE READING THIS, GOD IS NOT DONE WITH YOU YET!

BY BRYAN YOUNG

For 35 Years, I have been helping people “Design their Dream Lives and then Fund it Through Real Estate”. I have been quite successful and have enjoyed building millionaire lives for countless clients and their families. Much of my journey with people involves people **DECIDING** to change their mindset. For example, poverty is a mentality (not a condition) that is 100% curable, and poverty is not just about money. I have watched people transform their own lives by shifting their mindset from lack to abundance, from depression to fulfillment, from mundane to amazing. These are people who chose a different path than they were on, and by doing so, changed their own trajectory and that of the people around them. This is cool stuff! It

goes well beyond just building wealth or financial security (an obvious benefit nonetheless), but it is more about legacy building and changing lives. Getting people to slow down in order to speed up. Helping people understand their “BIG WHY” and leveraging that into exponential growth in quality of life has been part of my legacy, and of that I am proud and greatly honored. I could coach you to your own journey toward personal great life and financial prosperity, but that is not what I am sharing here today.

I am here to share a small piece of my own story. You see, I am a just an ordinary guy. I grew up in the country (rural Southern Illinois) to a working class family. My dad was a jack of all trades who wanted to be a farmer but instead did everything else so that he could provide for his family. My mom was a new immigrant to the US who worked hard and studied harder to realize a beautiful life that was totally foreign to her. Life was good. We had a modest home. We had what we needed, and some of what we wanted. Food was plentiful and a pleasure. The clean plate club meant success. Exercise was something that you did at work, and certainly not “for fun” or to get in shape. You see, in my mind, those muscled/fit guys and gals you see running around were “vane and self centered”, but in truth that was a limiting belief that I thought

served me well until one fateful day about a decade ago when I woke up with “the flu”. After a 2nd day in bed, I asked a friend to take me to the doctor. Short story, after a battery of bloodwork and CAT scans, I was given an unplanned “3 Day Vacay” in a local hospital. My triglycerides, cholesterol and blood sugars were hugely out of whack. According to the docs, I should not have been walking, but I should have been in a coma. The Diagnosis...PANCREATITIS and TYPE 2 DIABETES!! WTF?!?! I had been healthy as a horse except for “the flu”!

All of the doctors and nurses and specialists declared boldly that I would forever be on pills and need insulin shots! Oh no way! You see, I hate pills/meds (really hate them) and I am a serious NEEDLE PHOBE! (It took me about 3 hours to stab myself with that needle the 1st time, and that was only because a 4 year little girl with Type 1 Diabetes shamed me into it!).

I told the Docs that **“the pills and needles would not work for me, so there had to be a Plan B, there had to be another option, there had to be another Path.”** They said, you can't/won't do it...to me, that was a “throw down”, and now I was going to prove them wrong! So, I **DECIDED** to spend the next weeks measuring everything I ate, eating

6 meals a day, and even exercising. I read everything I could on diabetes and getting healthy. I changed my life around because I was strongly motivated by wanting off of the meds and needles. And in just a few short weeks, I met with again with my docs and insisted that re-test me and if my A1C had dropped to a certain level, that they would take me off the meds and needles. Universally, they were shocked. My numbers had “adjusted” enough that the needles (insulin) were no longer needed, but they told me that my “candy” (the pills) would be a permanent fixture in my life...for the rest of my life! “But the pills are generally safe, mostly safe, for most people.” Most people...

So I had a victory if sorts, but also a great disappointment that I could not rid my life of both. But life goes on, and I settled into “a new normal” for the next few years. One of the side effects for me of the pills was weight gain, but I gained it slowly as life went along. I had slowly become a linebacker on a pro football team. A brick wall. Big but not fat. I was still healthy and alive, right?

Then one day, right before the pandemic, I learned that my Aunt Norma (my dad's only sister) was in the hospital (and later hospice). I spent as much time as I could with her (and family) until she faded,

and then passed away. It was a long and painful departure. That time was special and precious, but also enlightening. My aunt's liver had “cirrrosed” and her kidneys shutdown because of her medicines. Her medicines? The answer sent chills down my back. Her meds were the same “mostly safe” meds that I had been taking for my diabetes, cholesterol and triglycerides!!

My reaction was strong: “**No way! I am NOT going that way! There had to be a Plan B, there had to be another option, there had to be another Path.**” Once again I was shocked into action. So I **DECIDED** to set off to redesign my life...again! I **DECIDED** to manage my diet and get back into the gym. I **DECIDED** to get fit and get off of the “candy” (the pills). So, I went back to measuring and managing and working out. I was seeing results, but not the strong results I had hoped for. I dropped 10 pounds over the next few months (not shabby by most people's standards), but that wasn't enough to “move the needle” (pardon the pun). But I knew that I was more motivated and stubborn than this Diabetes thing, so I kept working.

Then the unthinkable happened...COVID-19 shut everything down. In 6 days, I watched my business collapse. With every phone call,

another cancellation or termination or whatever. I watched a great year meltdown...3...2...1...ZERO. I am out of business, and the phone stopped ringing. Everything shut down, including the gyms and the parks and everything. OMG, what am I gonna do now? I spent the next two weeks pondering a now uncertain future. I was cut off from family and friends. This was devastating and deflating! I was in a tail-spin! But there is always an option.

“No way! I am NOT going that way! There had to be a Plan B, there had to be another option, there had to be another Path.”

In business, there is always someone buying and selling, so **I DECIDED** that I “just needed to find those people.” Change is scary and it takes work and effort. This was not an easy pivot, but then anything worth having or doing does require “work” and “effort”. So I dug in and turned around my business during the pandemic.

Personally, **I DECIDED** that I had not done anything wrong, and I was not going to submit to “house arrest” because of the pandemic. I remember thinking, “if you get COVID from hanging around people, then I am going to go where there aren't any people!”

So I started hiking and biking and kayaking...away from people. When I heard music, I would dance. When it rained, I would lift weights (or heavy things) at home. And then it started happening...I started losing weight. Over the next 2 months, I lost the 10 pounds again, you now, that same 10 pounds I had previously lost but gained back when COVID shut everything down. Not shabby, but not enough! Not enough for my physical or mental health. So **I DECIDED** to keep going and going and going!

Soon I developed **my 5 DIAMONDS**. What's that you ask? The name was chosen strategically. Diamonds because they are valuable. Diamonds because they are hard, but harder than almost anything else. So I knew it would be work, and hard at times, but worth it! I simply chose 5 Things that I love to get me moving. For me, these were Hiking + Biking + Kayaking + Dancing + Going to the Gym (working out). I committed to doing at least one of these per day (sometimes more than one). I would give myself one “off day” per week, because of schedule or “I need to recover” or “I just don't feel like it” or whatever! I chose things that I like doing. You know the old saying, “If you do what you love, you'll never work a day in your life!” It is true. So **I DECIDED** if I do things I love, I will never “work out” a day of my life!

To keep it fun, I made a game of it. If I can hike this far, what happens if I walk a little faster or a little further? What happens if I hike some and bike some? What happens if I eat better or eat less? What happens if I do more and eat less? So the **5 DIAMONDS GAME (AKA the 5 DIAMONDS)** was created!!

And then I started tracking it using Samsung Health (free app on my phone) and my Garmin Connect watch (which has built in fitness trackers). So, I just started moving more. At first, they were short and slow hikes, but they became faster and longer and more challenging over time. Same with the other **5 DIAMONDS**.

As I did that, it became “natural” to eat less and eat healthier. I stopped “stuffing” myself, and just ate when and if I was hungry, and stopped as soon as I reached “satisfied”. No more “clean plate club”. I didn't eat out because the restaurants were closed. And I cooked and prepped better portions of healthier food.

The results are unmistakable: 10 pounds in the first 2 months or so PLUS 75 pounds more in the next 10 months. I am now 85 pounds less (that is equivalent of two cat litter pales). In just 9 months, I have

documented enough walking/hiking miles to go from New York to Denver, and I expect to get at least enough miles in a year to go from New York to LA!! I have already documented enough bicycle miles to travel New York to LA and back! I have kayaked many local lakes, rivers and streams (but never enough for a kayaker). I have danced countless hours. And well, the gym is there too!

As I did this, I started seeing people who said, “look at you! What are you doing? I need to do that!” Even my doctors are amazed, and encouraging me to share my story with others. I have people asking me to help them, and so I am. And I can help you (anyone you know) get results too! I can help you set up your own **5 DIAMONDS** and see results. It will be work, but I guarantee you will have fun doing it along the way.

Today, much of my social life revolves around these activities, and the friends I have made along the way. Good friends. One very special friend. And Life is Truly Awesomely Good! Being out in nature in the fresh air and surrounded by good people have been the best possible medicine for mental health and well being through the pandemic, and being active has been the best possible medicine for my fitness. Now,

I am on no meds for diabetes, cholesterol or triglycerides. I am fit, healthy, happy and I am never ever going back to the old me and the old way. Life is way too good!

(And in another time and place, I can share other things **I DECIDED** on my journey to Living My Own Dream Life with friends, family and one very special friend)

If all you wanted to read about was a weight loss and fitness success story, then you have it!! You can stop reading, but I hope you don't because there is more to Smile About...

ON JANUARY 25, 2021, my 5 **DIAMONDS** literally saved my life. You see, that morning I was supposed to go on my daily hike with a group of friends, but it was raining and cold, so I went to the gym instead. I have a fairly aggressive workout routine that I built up over the 9 months that took me from zero sit ups months ago to over 300 sit-ups that day. I returned home, and got ready for work. I was on the phone with friends when I got a huge “jab” pain in the gut! Ouch! WTF! That hurt! Then a 2nd one! OMG! WOW! Then the 3rd one, and that one did not let go. I told my friends I would call back. I stood up, took about

10 steps and then collapsed! I woke up on the floor drenched in sweat. I managed to get up, thinking I would lay down on my bed, but said to myself, if I do that, someone will find me dead. Just a few minutes later, I collapsed a 2nd time. I awoke on the floor when my friends called back to check on me. “Are you alright?” “No, I am having severe pain and I am drenched in sweat and passing out!” “You have to call 911, or we will.” I did. They called back and stayed with me as I crawled to the front door where I waited until the ambulance arrived.

It was definitely not a heart attack, but it was the most excruciating pain I have ever experienced. OMG, ever movement made me want to hurl or pass out. Finally, I was out of the house and on the way to the hospital. As the ambulance pulled away, I hear the EMT say “we are losing him...he is dropping out!” They pulled over within sight of my house to stabilize me. I was in bad shape. I was totally incoherent. I was in real trouble!

At the ER, there were no beds for a while, because of COVID, so I lay on bed in the hallway of the ER for about an hour, EMT's by my side (thanks guys for staying with me). Finally, they found a ER bed for me, then a battery of tests, pain meds, delirium, and eventually emergency

appendectomy! In the process, I was COVID tested, and told “congratulations, you have COVID” plus pending appendectomy!! Lucky me!

I arrived in the ER around 10:30 AM or so, and by 8 PM I am finally being prepped for surgery. My “2 hour max in and out easy surgery” turned into a “6 hour” ordeal. My appendix had not burst but it was “oozing”. When the docs came in for the post opp consult, they said that they had to “abuse me” much more than normal to get through my stomach wall (because of the sit ups I guess), but then inside my abdomen they had plenty of space to work on me. They said point blank “had you not been fit and strong, you would be dead!” DEAD sounds kind of final. I was blown away that because **I DECIDED** months ago to get active with the 5 DIAMONDS, I am alive!!

So, if you want a “victory over adversity” story, and that is all you want, you can stop reading. But I hope you don’t, because here is the real lesson...

Each of us has but one body to carry our being (our soul or spirit or essence...the “who we are”). Most people worry about their work or their finances or their retirement or what they are doing Friday night

or their cause or their family BUT most people ignore their health and fitness. Without your physical (and mental) health, you have nothing! You wouldn’t drive your car without gas (food) or maintenance (exercise and repairs), would you? You have to take care of your one and only body! It is not vanity...it is sanity!

If you are reading this story, you are still alive. You have been handed an opportunity to make a difference in this world. When you are dead, it is done here on earth. No do-over. No reset. No coming back.

Everyone has a story. You have a story and you have gifts. Your story and your gifts are not for you. They were given to you to share with others, to enrich the lives of those who cross your path everyday. If you do not share your story and your gifts, you literally cheat the world of your knowledge, experience, faith, healing and wisdom.

Your story and gifts are not for everyone, but they are for someone(s), and for those someone’s, these things essential, timely and important. You are the person who is appointed to be there and share. If you don’t who will?

Guess what, God is not done with me yet! I am here to help you and people you know Design Your Dream Life, and fund it. I could spend a whole book sharing with you how I am living my dream life by helping others, but that is for another time and place.

If you are reading this, you have the opportunity to share your story at least one more time, and help at least one more person. Speak up... show up...and share because God is not Done with You Yet!

Please please please don't take your story and your gifts to the grave! Share and make a difference. Do and make a difference. Live healthy and strong, so you have the time to make a difference! **DECIDE today...DO IT TODAY!**

If you want to learn how to set up your **5 DIAMONDS** and own your future, as part of Designing (and Living) Your Dream Life, and funding it, please message me at 314-496-3867 or find me on Facebook or social media! Bryan Young

ABOUT BRYAN YOUNG

For 35 Years, Bryan Young has been helping people Design their Dream Lives and then Fund it Through Real Estate. Raised in Southern Illinois to a working class family, Bryan has always appreciated that hard work is not the only element of success. It takes a solid plan with measurable strategies backed by an inspiring mission (a BIG WHY). But even that is not enough, because every individual needs the right people and resources at the right time. As a national speaker, syndicated columnist, published author, hands on trainer, proven coach/mentor, active investor and real world real estate entrepreneur, Bryan has helped hundreds of people, families, entrepreneurs and investors design extraordinary “millionaire mindsets” to Design their Dream Lives and reach financial freedom. “I have enjoyed watching people CATCH FIRE (financial independence through real estate) and build a better legacy for themselves and the people around them.”, says Bryan.

Today, in this chapter, Bryan will share a snippet of his own story – his own health and fitness transformation – inspiring others to take control of their health through a simple, fun and sustainable game that

he created, and how he, at 52 and during the COVID-19 pandemic, melted 85 pounds and got super fit, all through his 5 DIAMONDS. His 5 DIAMONDS included daily hiking, biking, kayaking, dancing or going to the gym. And now he has documented enough miles on foot in 9 month to walk from New York to Denver, and bike New York to Los Angeles and back! He is proof that a NON-ATHLETE ordinary middle age guy can become fit and healthy and have fun doing it! And he can show you how to build and maintain your own fitness challenge as part of building Your Dream Life!

“Our gifts are not for ourselves. They are to be given away to others. Let me help you stay healthy and strong so you have the time to build Your Dream Life and share your gifts with others in the world.” – Bryan Young

To reach Bryan, call or text 314-486-3867 or bryan@youngrealtygroup.com.

Favorite Movies

I have so many, but anything SciFi, historical dramas, action adventure and even RomCom's! They are tell stories and stories make life more interesting.

Books that Changed My Life

“Think and Grow Rich” – Napoleon Hill
“The Bible” – the Owner's Manual by the Maker

Favorite Things

I am an avid outdoorsman, so hiking, biking, kayaking, camping and the like inspire and energize me.

Favorite Quotes

“Whether You think you can or you think you can't, either way, you are right!” – Henry Ford

“If you are reading this, SMILE, because you are alive and breathing and still have a chance to make a difference.

SMILE, because God's not through with you yet!”

– Bryan Young

“Your story and gifts are not for everyone, but they are for someone(s), and for those someone's, these things essential, timely and important. You are the person who is appointed to be there and share. If you don't who will?”

– Unknown



Wm. Paul Young

“A smile a day keeps the opportunities in play.”

A SMILE SHOULD MEAN “YOU ARE SAFE”

BY WM. PAUL YOUNG

He smiled, just before he hit me. I was the seventeen-year-old life-guard at a hot spring Resort, and he was the thirty something bartender. I was walking back to my cabin after shutting down the pools for the night and he was drunk. Behind him were the two guys that I had kicked out of the pools. They had snuck over the fence, both intoxicated, and I escorted them out. Turns out they were all friends and now had come to...apologize? He smiled, just before he hit me.

I'd been hit before, but usually no one was smiling. There are cultures on this planet where smiling is suspect, where too much betrayal and violence have created an environment where even a smile cannot be trusted. So, people stopped, and a smile became too intimate an

exposure to be risked. And the cultures became sad and the colors left as the world turned into muted shades of grey.

A smile that covers deceit or evil intent is a violation of what it means to be child-like, a desecration of the first order. Children know. There is no greater sadness than a child who has lost their smile. A physician once said, "The best medicine for humans is love." Someone asked, "What if it doesn't work?" The Doctor smiled and said, "Increase the dose." An authentic smile is the clothes that love puts on.

I lost my smile as a child, or more accurately, I kept it mostly hidden and sometimes brought it out when I was alone. Too much loss. Sexual abuse has a way of tearing apart the fabric of the human soul and with it, the ability to smile. I was born in 1955 in northern Canada but spent most of my first decade in the highlands of Netherlands New Guinea, now West Papua. Sexual abuse began in the tribal culture but then continued in boarding school. I have a photo taken of me during those years; child's body and dead man eyes.

I was almost ten when I came back to Canada. Then thirteen schools before graduating high school, every hello a goodbye waiting to

happen. I grew up in a rigid modern Evangelical holiness tradition, caught between the questions I had about my tradition and a deep, if not desperate longing for God. I went to Bible School and after than some Seminary. Worked for a church in Oregon, met Kim, we married and began a family. Six children later, I broke the world. I had never dealt with my losses or with the addictions that resulted, and I acted out of the broken places that blinded me to the good that surrounded me. Kim caught me in an adulterous affair with one of her best friends. My life was over. I was completely and utterly exposed and had to make a decision; face myself and Kim or run away one last time (suicide). Instead of running I chose to hit the ground. I gave up all my secrets, I pulled the Yellow Pages off the shelf and found a therapist, I faced the fury of family, extended family, disappointed friends, and the community. No secrets.

It took Kim and I eleven years to heal, eleven years before there was no question in her mind about whether she could trust me. Eleven years of incremental change, hard work, one step at a time, staying only inside the safety of one day's grace at a time. Eleven years for my smile to fully return.

So, at the request of Kim, I wrote about it in story form as a gift for our children for Christmas. Most of it I wrote on the train to one of my three jobs but got it done in time and at Christmas went down to Office Depot and printed fifteen copies on their photocopier. Six went to the kids, Kim and I each kept a copy and I gave the rest to my friends. It was called, *The Shack*. In this parable, I told my story, the journey that took years squeezed into the main character's weekend with God in the Oregon Wilderness, in a shack.

I never meant to be a published author. My intention was simply to write a story for my children that would basically communicate, "Let me tell you about the God who actually showed up and healed my broken heart and soul (my shack), not the God who I grew up with." But my friends kept giving it away and then others came along and encouraged getting it in mass print, and it eventually became something no one saw coming at all; an international phenomenon. In my mother's last words to me before she graduated from this world not long ago, "Who would have thought?" That made me smile. Exactly, who would have thought?!

There is a simplicity and a clarity to cleaning toilets, which was a part of one of my three jobs when I wrote *The Shack* on the train. Now we were

thrust into an entirely different world, with a steep learning curve. But over those eleven years, I had learned some essential lessons and done the hard work of tearing down the lies embedded in my soul in order to build something that was true and right and good. Everything that mattered to me was in place before I wrote *The Shack*. This included my identity, my worth, my value, significance, meaning, security, purpose, destiny, community and love...all in place. The book didn't give me any of this. What it did give us was an open invitation to walk on the holy ground of other people's stories, all around the world. It became the number two book in the history of Brazil. Croatia informally adopted it as their book of the decade.

And the book was not religious, it was relational. It was human and authentic and asked relevant question, especially for so many of us who have experience loss. Even as many wept tears throughout the story, smiles emerged, and we were invited to watch it happen. And in the midst of all the complexity of this life, mine is simple. I live inside the grace of only one day, today. I respond to what is in front of me, today. I stop (mostly), future-tripping, that is, allowing fear to craft imagination of future disasters and failures and choose instead to trust. To trust life, and love, the Divine, the presence of a God who is always Good, and friends and smiles.

There is a wind that would take away your very breath, but Another will wrap you in the Embrace of Relentless Affection and sing you back to healing, allowing your smile to emerge from a place that is true and good and right. This smile will always mean, “You are safe with me.”

ABOUT WM. PAUL YOUNG

Wm Paul Young, author of the novels, *The Shack*, *Cross Roads*, and *Eve*, and recently released non-fiction *Lies We Believe about God*, was born a Canadian and raised among a stone-age tribe by his missionary parents in the highlands of what was Netherlands New Guinea (now West Papua). He suffered great loss as a child and young adult, and now enjoys the “wastefulness of grace” with his growing family in the Pacific Northwest.

Facts never tell real stories. The journey has been both incredible and unbearable, a desperate grasping after grace and wholeness, the pain of trying to adjust to different cultures, of life losses that seemed too staggering to bear, of living with an underlying volume of shame so deep that it constantly threatened any sense of sanity, of dreams not only destroyed but obliterated by personal failure, of hope so tenuous that only the trigger seemed to offer a solution. A few facts also do not speak to the potency of love and forgiveness, the arduous road of reconciliation, the surprises of grace and community, of transformational healing and the unexpected emergence of joy.



Mark Yuzuik

“A smile is a strategic way of causing a positive moment and movement.”

KEEP SMILING

BY MARK YUZUIK

From the day I was born and until today I feel life has a journey for all of us. Sometimes the lessons in life are there to make us a better human for ourselves and others. I wasn't born until the day my mother gave birth to me and that started my journey called life. LOL. I would love to say I was a straight "A" student and got a scholarship to Harvard or Yale but that was not the journey that got me where I am today. I think that people have to go through things in life to have what I would call A Perfect Life. That includes some lessons along the way. If you get the lessons than the pain will go away and inspire and influence others as well. You are an angel and it's our job to serve others. Sometimes we need to learn lessons through experiences that we may not understand or want. I when to a school that was not who they said they were. It was a school that said they were Catholic and yet the Bishop was Gay and molesting...well you know the story. Using that fact that God was disappointed in us if we didn't follow the RULES and obey. I did not

get great grades, in fact I did get steady grades, only an "F" and was told I would not make it out of High School or even in the real world. I was a loser in school and would be the same in real life. They were right as far as not graduating, however I did find where they had the diplomas and I took one before I left. YUP I DID, I have a high school diploma. LOL. From that experience I was determined to succeed just to prove them wrong, see lessons really can be for the good! Everyone has a story just what do you make of YOUR story. Got into Real Estate in 1984 and as an investor made some great money. What was the real turning point in my life is when I saw a hypnotist do a show (Terry Stokes, the best of the best) and was so blown away that I wanted to learn how to do that hypnosis stuff.

I got Terry Stokes to take me on and train me on how to become an entertainer. I remember my first time in Hawaii when Terry and his partner (Paul Simon) in the merchandise business had this great idea that as the entertainer should be just that, the entertainer, so as soon as the show was over have Mark come up on stage and sell your product, Lose weight, stop smoking, getting rid of stress stop bed wetting,, 32 titles in all (CD'S, Videos) and that way Terry would sell more. That was absolutely not at all the case or what happened. I have NEVER been on

stage before in front of anyone, let alone 2,000 people. So here's how it went ,Terry introduces me and says "Ladies and gentlemen please stay here for the next 2 minutes and Mark will explain what we have in the back table, Please give it up for my good friend Mark Yuzuik. I grab the mic and say (I really did say this exact thing, I will never forget this moment) How out here is ready to lose a couple hundred pounds, Terry has a cd for you for that, it was about 10 to 15 seconds in that about 1900 of the people all stood up and left. As I saw what was happening I look over at Terry and all he did was smile and shake his head. What a day this was going to be, because I still had one more show to go do the same thing again. All I remember is that I wish I smoked, I could have used a cigarette at the moment and I thought I was going to wet my pants. After what seemed like me being on stage for a life time as I got off stage and went over to Terry and said, Terry that didn't work as well as we thought it would. He just started laughing and then I started laughing and we both agreed that we needed a different approach. After we stop laughing we looked at me and said you still have to try it one more time but this time don't ask them if they want to lose a couple hundred pounds. I laughed again and said ok, I will do it. He looked at me and said no you don't, I just wanted to see if you would do it again. Now I know you will be a great entertainer. If you could go through that and

are still willing to get back up that you have what it takes. That was the best thing anyone said to me. I finally had someone that believed in ME. I always believed in me and now so did someone I looked up to. Now we really bonded. I wanted to make it so bad that I only saw me going for it and one day I would be almost as good as Terry was. Terry was and is the best. Next stop on the tour was Stockton California. The fair was not in the best area, to say the least. I still remember the crew and Terry saying that after the fair closes stay in your motor home and don't wonder around, it's not safe. We stayed right on the fairgrounds and we all had our motor homes (4 of us). About the 2nd day after the fair closes I remember about midnight we hear some noise; it could have been a firecracker or something like that. LOL. I remember people yelling and so I thought it would be a good time to get Terry back from making me think I had to go back up on stage in Hawaii the second time. So as we hear these "firecrackers" Terry says "see I told you to stay inside your motor home" I said I understand why now, then I proceeded to let Terry know that I know how to handle this. He looked at me like what do you mean? So I just yelled "HEY KEEP THE NOISE DOWN, Terry looked at me like are you crazy, you going to get them made at you and then what, so I said not to worry, I went back and said I will make sure I am safe. He said HOW? I said like this "IF YOU HAVE A

PROBLEM WITH ME I AM IN THE BIG WHITE MOTOR HOME" see, I had the black motor home and Terry had the White motor home. LOL. There are so many memories and great times to share. What a life and lifestyle. Traveling all over the world doing shows getting standing ovations and changing lives one smile at a time. Over 10k shows and 8 million people and still going. Yippee. Then I decided that if we, (my wife and I) can use hypnosis to make people smile can we help them create a new and empowering story so they can keep that smile both inside and outside. The answer was and is YES. So I really took it to the next level and studied people and their patterns and behaviors. If I can change my story and make it powerful so can others if they only knew how and had a chance. We can't change events from the past but we can and do have the choice to decide what it means to us. Can I take the experience I had from high school and make it positive. The answer is YES and so can you. Remember that my mind was influenced and taken from me, everything I did was wrong and a disappointment to God. Well if I know that everything happens for a purpose than what was this supposed to mean to me. I know that if I was to serve others and not think that life was all about me and my pain I can get rid of this pain and help others. Isn't life interesting, my mind was taken from me and now I am in the business of giving people their minds back. WOW.

Thank God I had that experience. Think of OPRAH and what she went through, she had a choice to allow her perpetrator to create a story in her head that what happened to her would keep her down or would save millions of others who had the same situation, being violated. She took a road that would be the most powerful and influential women in the world. I took the same path. Everyone has a choice and the ability to create whatever story you want...What's your new and empowering story?

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I know the whole reason for me being here is to inspire and influence others and live my life by example. Traveling around the world with my wife is an experience that I wish all people would do. My purpose and drive is to continue inspiring as many people as possible so they too can live purpose and fulfilled life.

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Abundance is not how much you have it's who can you help and rise up so they too can live a life full of abundance. Continuing my learning

on people and their patterns in life will only help me reach more people that I can help them find their new and true story. I will continue to travel and influence all over the world the message that we all can have freedom and a purpose.

ABOUT MARK YUZUIK

Since the early 90's Mark has been getting companies and people to be even more productive in business and personally. He unlocks the blocks and patterns in their minds that created fear, procrastination and stress. With over 10k shows and events all over the world in front of over 8 million people he will do one thing, not motivate you but get to take action automatically so you get the results you've always wanted and knew you deserved. He travels and influence people just like you so you will live an even more fulfilled life. He is one hypnotist that makes a difference.

Books That Changed My Life:

Money The game, Tony Robbins. Creating the life you want, Mark Yuzuik LOL. The richest man in Babylon. You can too, Errol Amramson. Trophy Effect Michel Nitti, Rings of truth and Authentic Power , Jim Britt

Movies That Inspired Me:

Rudy, Facing the giants, lie to me,
The greatest showman

Song That Inspire Me:

I like Rock from the 80s

Your Hero:

My Wife, Mother Teresa,
People with a mission to serve others.

Quote You Live By:

"Live everyday like it's your last and one day you will be right."



Andrea Adams-Miller

“A smile can hide so many feelings, fear, sadness, heartbreak, but it also shows one other thing, strength.”

A HEART OF GOLD, INSPIRES A RED CARPET OF SMILES

BY ANDREA ADAMS-MILLER

Born an only child, a lonely child, without neighborhood playmates, best friends revealed themselves as books. Eager to experience a life beyond my own, I read regularly. Voraciously, I absorbed multiple stories every week cover to cover from my early childhood such as the Bobbsey Twins series full of laughter and happiness to Shel Silverstein’s *The Giving Tree* and *Where the Sidewalk Ends*. Shel’s funny poem book included a few of the most serious and poignant life-changing rhymes that gave hope that life could be more. Also, I read stories of perseverance like *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, *Johnny Tremain*, and *A Candle in Her Room*. They mesmerized me through the early teens. Ultimately, books led to self-help and personal development in my late teens and early adulthood.

That passion for reading has followed throughout my entire adult life allowing the freedom that knowledge brings. Knowledge empowered a creation of the future to be who and what was want – ever evolving instead of who and what was previously felt – unheard and unloved. These were unwanted feelings that spurred the desire to counteract both for everyone experiencing them.

Starved for interaction, I enlisted in extracurricular activities such as Ben's Box, Girl Scouts, and Young Miss Softball as well as babysitting. Ben's Box was a 5th & 6th-grade school project selling needed school supplies like paper, pens, and erasers to K-6th-grade students. That project became the first entrepreneurial encounter at 11 years old as I acted as the principal investor fronting \$400 at 6% interest to fund the startup.

From there, Girl Scouts furthered the experience of leadership where I excelled. Fortunately, my mom, our leader in the Girl Scout ventures fostered independence and growth. She and my dad chaperoned our special interest troop of 14 girls under 16 years of age to organize a trip to Europe for a twenty-two-day adventure. "SWITZ '85," we proudly called ourselves. The acronym meaning "Scouts with Interest in Traveling to Zurich in 1985."

As we personally raised funds to go, the entrepreneurial spirit was spurred further as we produced group and individual fundraising projects as well as took on individual jobs to earn our fees. The overachiever drive and the quest for travel blossomed as did the ability to handle multiple tasks at once. By age sixteen, a life of numerous jobs increased fulfillment with the experiences of a busy schedule resulting in a life full of activity.

Softball showed how observation of the big picture and attention to detail could change the trajectory of the situation. First unskilled, I poorly played right field. Bored, during the mandatory two innings for each player, I watched from the field or the bench how the other players finessed their ability to catch, throw, and avoid a tag. Ever observant, my dad, our coach, could alter the way I, and my peers, hit the ball by having us position our feet differently combined with choosing a high, low, inside, or outside ball to hit 'in the hole.' Soon, I mimicked how he could watch our competitors at the plate, and based on their positioning, direct us before the ball was hit to be where the ball would land to make the out.

Finally achieving left field status, one day I volunteered to catch when a player balked that my dad fielded his favorites and didn't make them play

catcher. In that position, I excelled! Had it been known before the power of a catcher, I would have volunteered long before. Coordinating with the pitcher to pitch to the mitt, I memorized the opponents hitting patterns and shifting the mitt up, down, high, low, short, or deep based on their feet positioning. Giving the pitcher the spot for which to aim and signaling the desired arch of the ball which caused the batter to hit differently than they expected, the batters would pop-up or ground when they anticipated a home run hit, or they would strike out when they expected a base hit.

In that success, the power that each player could reckon if they believed in the value of their role on the team became apparent. As a catcher, they control the entire game from behind the plate. The umpire did not call for the pitch until the pitcher was ready. However, she did not throw the pitch until her catcher noted she was ready. Moreover, never ready until the field was scanned to make sure each team player was in place, the catcher dictates the start of each inning. From behind the plate, I observed that in life, individually, the power often lies more in the preparation behind the plate than at it or pitching to it.

These observations as a team leader and the value of each participant as the 'unsung hero' has been invaluable to my career. The pitcher may

have received all the accolades for the win, but we knew that without her catcher to set her up, she could not lob a no-hitter, and without the follow through of the fielders and base players, she could not pitch a low run game. Today, I appreciate the tremendous worth of each person such as those behind the scenes, the importance of a crew, the benefit of an editor, and the relevance of a publicist. Excitedly, following my dad's lead, my softball career ended as a Championship catcher.

Along those lines, unbeknownst of future job choices, my parents created the publicist drive as my parents were avid runner's. My mom coached a junior high team and later a college team. My dad coached my mom, an Olympic marathon runner, and a state championship teenage girl. So, weekends were filled with traveling from city to city to running events. Sometimes up to three cities a weekend, it was my 'job' to check everybody in, keep track of everybody's stuff, make sure I knew what time everybody raced and what time was the award ceremony. It involved putting everybody's numbers on them, keeping track of their times, and running things back-and-forth to the car as well as making sure to be at specific mile markers to mark their times and give them water, and determining from the locals the favorite place to eat.

Since most of my childhood was spent alone or in the company of adults, I never really knew how to intermingle with other people of the same age or how to be somebody's friend. Because the other kids were neighbors who played with each after school, some kids were always just outside of the group. Although everyone seemed to like me, I just didn't fit in. With maturity, the only way to belong with other people was to be involved in activities available like theater, civic organizations, and philanthropy projects. All of these endeavors regularly created placement with like-minded people who wanted more to achieve something more. They desired to fulfill their passion in their acting or civic responsibility or the purpose and mission attached to the cause.

To be blunt, I wanted to find placement in a group where I could be fit in, belong, be recognized, be noticed, and be heard. I sought the opposite of how I grew up. Growing up in a household where the TV was important, I felt shut down and shut up as if I had nothing of value to say. Moreover, I was tired of being alone. Therefore, compensating by becoming an overachiever in everything encountered, I pushed the limits. Seeking attention, I strived to get the best grades, learned my lines, volunteered for the most challenging jobs, and stepped up to

take on organizational responsibility in many organizations to earn trust and respect in order to belong.

In addition to the volunteer work, I entered into the field of law enforcement to fulfill a desire to encourage social justice which led me to go back to school to further my education — that first childhood desire to read wrapped into a voracious desire to learn more. I poured myself into higher education encouraged to get a doctorate starting with Psychology which morphed into Public Health Community Education and Health Promotion. This encouraged knowledge to know who and why we do what we do in the world.

That education led the start of a business, www.IgniteYourRelationships.com, to help couples in their relationships. In that business, I address the topic of intimacy, an area that so many consultants find uncomfortable or embarrassing — excelling in this business, I created opportunities for myself where I ended up on or quoted for television programs, websites, newspapers, and magazines like 20/20, TIME Magazine, CNN, ABC, CBS, PBS, FOX, NBC, Huffington Post, Forbes, Glamour, WebMD, and more.

Additionally, I was speaking all over the world at professional research conferences, sitting on boards of civic and professional organizations, taking on leadership roles, and teaching continuing education to psychologists, educators, psychiatrists, counselors, and more. That success and professionalism led high profile people and celebrities trust with their personal lives where they sought me to help them help themselves.

These actions lead to stronger leadership, taught independence, encouraged creativity, and instilled personal value to others. Eventually, I presented on stages to large audiences regularly keynoting, emceeing, conducting trainings, putting on workshops, teaching, performing, and acting. Of all of these, speaking from the stage and in the classroom was the most rewarding. At one point, I taught at two colleges in seven different departments from Psychology to Sociology to Sexually Violent Crime investigation to Communication to Creative Arts to Theater to Business classes. These multiple outlets to express my knowledge to others for their present and future success gave that voice an outlet that I was dying to have heard all of those years. Also, the audience and student appreciation gave me the love I sought.

From there, I started writing for columns, publishing several books, and expanding teaching, training, and consulting topics. My relationship clients began asking for help in their professional lives from business consulting to social media to publicity. They figured that I had made myself so successful, inevitably, I could help them. I did, and I loved it. The RED Carpet Connection, publishing, publicity, talent agency, business consulting, and sponsorship acquisition business was born!

Through the publicity business, I met Ken Rochon, celebrity event photographer on an Internet Marketers Cruise. His passion for the arts, publishing, speaking, and philanthropy, as well as his desire to continually stretch himself to do more and achieve more, attracted the business acumen. We ended up finding ourselves at multiple events where our interests overlapped continuously. Realizing the synergy was too present to overlook, we teamed up as strategic partners. The most exciting for both of us is The Keep Smiling Movement where I now act as Executive Director.

The Keep Smiling Movement on a basic level is meeting people who smile or create smiles and capturing their essence while they hold a

Keep Smiling card. However, The Keep Smiling Movement is so much more than catching someone with a smile. The movement is capturing the very people who Amplify Goodness. The movement is seizing the moment that someone smiles because they feel special, beautiful, valued or they create that feeling in others. The smile is the ultimate expression of love and acceptance at its core!

When you smile at someone you cause the feeling of inclusiveness, and you let someone know “I see you,” “You matter,” “You are loved,” and “You are accepted.” These feelings generate the positive biopsychosocial effects of a smile, scientifically referred to as an environmental factor. These factors, these smiles, both from the giver and receiver result in personal consideration of another human, however brief, that may have long term positive neurological effects. These effects may counteract years of pain and unworthiness that may make up for the lack of love and acceptance many people miss in their day to day lives. Where once they may have felt Invisible to the people around them, often unseen, unheard to even their peers, coworkers, family, & friends, a smile can change their outlook, inspire hope, resolve their faith, and even save their lives or the lives of others.

In capturing smiles, Ken and I have realized that catching a smile in a moment is valuable. However, creating communities of smilers, or those who create smiles, generates world positivity, collaborates like-minded people, 100x's social outreach, and generates legacy. Our belief and experience supported by research reflect that in creating and capturing smiles, as well as creating community, we change the trajectory of the future. Positively, we, together with the world that creates smiles, affects epigenetics of past and current traumas. That realization leads us to lead The Keep Smiling Movement internationally passionately. We desire to change the world we live in for the better. You have the gift to smile and create smiles. Are you ready to tell your story and lead a community to empower the world around you with your smile?

ABOUT ANDREA ADAMS-MILLER

Andrea Adams-Miller, Ph.D. candidate & CEO of The RED Carpet Connection PR Agency, is “LIVING R.E.D.” with Relevance, Enthusiasm, & Delivery showing YOU how to Reach Your Target Market for Scoring Gigs & Sponsorship Acquisition with International Corporations, Events, & Organizations. Also, she is the Executive Director of the International Non-profit “The Keep Smiling Movement” that honors people that Amplify Goodness.

This “Heart of Gold” Award-Winning, Contagiously Energetic Consultant, Keynote Speaker, Publicist, & Publisher presents how to quickly & easily use her Wealth & Legacy Consulting Program, Wealth & Legacy Publishing Program, Put the Sizzle in Your Business Relationships Program, or Secure the Sponsorship Acquisitions to Fund Your Events & Projects Program to solidify loyalty with clients, employees, partners, & vendors to achieve the business relationships you only Dare to Dream, Desire, & Deserve!

Acknowledged by LinkedIn as one of the Top 1% Most Connected People, Andrea has been on 20/20, TIME Magazine, E!, Gene Simmons Family Jewels, ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, PBS, Forbes, Inc, & hundreds of newspapers & radio programs. She shared international stages with celebrity speakers such as Jay Shetty (former Monk & Motivational Speaker); Les Brown (Motivational Speaker); Brian Tracy (Executive Business Trainer); Kevin Harrington (Original Shark Tank); Jack Canfield (Chicken Soup for the Soul); Stedman Graham (Executive & Oprah’s Boyfriend), Anthony Hopkins (Award-Winning Actor), and more...

For a FREE Guide on How to Put the Sizzle in Your Business Relationships text Andrea at 419-722-6931 with your name and email address or email her at AndreaAdamsMiller@TheREDCarpetConnection.com

DR. KEN 'DR. SMILEY' ROCHON, JR.



Dr. Ken 'Dr. Smiley' Rochon, Jr.

"A smile amplifies goodness."
– Ken Rochon

LIFE IS A JOURNEY OF CONNECTING SMILES.

BY
DR. KEN 'DR. SMILEY' ROCHON, JR.

Born in Warwick, Rhode Island, I was whisked away to Paris, France as an infant and future Army Brat. My family moved a lot; I thought moving was normal until we ended up back in the United States. In one city, we resided in Galesburg, for most of my middle and high school years.

Then, I learned at least subconsciously that there was a big difference between people who have seen the world and those that believe where they live in the world or a significant representation of the world reality. This realization impacted me greatly because I learned a new world, and unfortunately, a new reality. I learned that there was discrimination. It reminded me of a book I grew up on by Dr. Seuss (The

Sneetches) about exclusion mentality instead of acceptance & gratitude mindset.

My Mom was an eternal optimist and my ultimate hero for choosing to live my purpose-driven life through a (Keep Smiling) movement created as a tribute to her. When she passed in 2008 of Alzheimer's, I was humbled and lost. After a three-year journey with my father to be caregivers as her mind and smile deteriorated, I realized this was her final gift to me... a wake-up call to live a life that matters ... one she would be honored for creating.

Upon reflecting on the loss of my Mom, all my grandparents, and some uncles, it became clear that too many people leave this journey of life. They go without a documented download of their mind, stories, and thoughts. I decided the first order of business was to write my first book ("Becoming the Perfect Networker... Succeeding 1 Connection at a Time") within a year of my Mom's passing. It came out December 9th, 2009 (14 months after her passing), and I felt this was possibly my calling... to help others download their heads and hearts into 'tangible legacy' books. I opened Perfect Publishing with my good friend Al Granger and believed this would be a part of my purpose-driven life.

This first book was about turning a business card and first conversation into a fruitful relationship of possibility.

I learned a valuable lesson about publishing... that the delivery of the book to the world was not the finish line, but rather the starting line. Through marketing we created a system of having books positing the authors to impact the world. My Mom would be proud since she was a voracious reader.

My first task was to figure out what I would do with my 'new' life. I prayed so much and wondered if anyone was listening. "Please tell me what to do," I pleaded. A word seemed to become visible in my mind as if an Angel, my Mom, and/or God showed me a clue... 'Amplify.' It sort of made sense; I was a deejay.

My Mom had given me a gift of the first name I would use for a company... 'Absolute' meaning complete and pure. Perhaps 'Amplify' was her next gift some three decades later. But Amplify what? I decided it meant 'Amplify Your Message,' and I started a company TheUmbrellaSyndicate.com. We worked on marketing your message through social media with 'Amplification' strategies that resulted in

viral campaigns. It put us on the map but certainly was not an abundant idea.

I decided since my mother loved me unconditionally, that I would redefine how I would create partnerships moving forward. I would design them to be a complete agreement to see who could out give the other unconditionally. This I would learn would be the secret ingredient for a long lasting, sustainable partnership.

We quickly worked with the biggest companies, nonprofits, organizations, and veterans being honored at the White House. It looked like this was the solution without the money for understanding what my purpose was supposed to be.

Although we kept escalating on social media and with our in-kind trades jumping to almost \$500K, it was clear this was not scalable or sustainable. So back to the drawing board.

Fast forward to March of 2015, I was attending an event with CEO Space and came upon a gentle man or, as he would say, 'a gentleman' who presented me with a card. This card had two simple words on it,

“KEEP SMILING.” It was like I was whisked into the Blues Brothers movie when John Belushi is in the church and says, “I see the Light! YES! I SEE THE LIGHT!”.

I was stopped in my tracks and looked in this man's eyes for indications he was the messenger God sent. After a round of questions about his marketing, publishing, social media, social proof, and anything else I could think to ask him, I was convinced he was a (/the) messenger and possibly a prophet. I thought these words are from my Mom. She said similar statements with similar meanings.

“Always look for the Good in People, and you will Find It” ~ Linda Meeker Rochon

“Don't Quit!” “Make It Happen,” “You can do It!” and to me, “KEEP SMILING” was a translation of all the above. It was a universal, unconditional expression of Acceptance, Joy, & Love.

June 14th, 2013 (Flag Day), the biggest gift God would give me... a son. He would be named after my father and become Kenneth James Rochon, III. However, this gift was the biggest miracle I witnessed

because he came into this world blue (no vital signs). Writing this sentence, I still get emotional and tremble that I witnessed a boy who was silent for minutes and was whisked away. I dropped the camera I had poised for the miracle of life I was expectinig... and set it down to pray that this life was given even if mine was taken. Through what I believe was my biggest answered prayer... he came to life. I had my second awakening that life is so precious. I became even more committed to being not just a tribute for my Mom, but now also my son. I would nickname him 'K3 – Game Changer' and I would be the best example I could to show this a Power of One mentality yields a world that can be inspired by anyone who adopts and chooses this philosophy.

Gandhi 'Be the Change You Wish to See in The World' and 'My Life is My Message' were ingrained in my psyche as my mantra.

Within two years, I would meet an adopted Father / Grandfather to my son... I had met Barry Shore, The Ambassador or Joy! Little did I know that this encounter in March, 2015 would produce over 140 Keep Smiling books and counting. After an hour, in a bewildered state, after seven years of searching for what I was supposed to do with my life as a tribute to my Mom, I believed the answer was being delivered...finally.

Through patience, we are rewarded with many gifts. Barry and I agreed to speak when we returned from this event. I called him that Monday, and it was the most effortless conversation to request he allow me the opportunity to turn the card into a movement. He agreed to send me 100,000 KEEP SMILING cards (42 medium size boxes) that would have a NEW back message... 'We Amplify Goodness!' and a link to obtain your KEEP SMILING photo.

Yes, life made sense. God (and my Mom) wanted me to connect the world through Smiles. After seven years, I felt relieved, revived, and rejoiceful!

I was awaKened again on 2.13.2019 with a car accident... my car practically imploded with the impact from a driver unable to break hitting me at about 35 or more miles an hour. My camera, computer, phone, and almost everything in the car destroyed.

From this life changing experience, I again embraced how precious life is and decided to take on another challenge... 100 Keep Smiling books from 100 amazing leaders I met on this journey... and you are reading a collection that you will not find anywhere else... Because many of them are too humble to share what they do to make a difference in the world.

With a pandemic stopping the world a D.O.S.E. (Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin, Endorphins), of HOPE was conceived, because no matter what happens, HOPE is alive if we give it life.

Today, the Keep Smiling Movement, Inc, a 501(3)c is a global dental & mental health organization created to give people all over the world a DOSE of HOPE by 1) offering hypnosis & meditation sessions to alleviate stress; 2) refer clients for dental & mental for FREE or reduced assistance; 3) inspire smiles by handing out Keep Smiling cards; 4) provide access to published print & digital ebooks of Keep Smiling inspirational stories & smile photo books; 5) provide social support by maintaining a social media support group; & 6) provide advocacy & awareness for other nonprofits with positive programs.

If you want to be part of this beautiful movement, there is a template at the end of this book you can fill out. Be part of the Movement, Inspire and leave a Legacy... isn't that really the best way to make your life matter?

Keep Smiling!

Dr. Smiley

Movies That Inspired Me:

Being There, Big Fish, Blues Brothers, Braveheart, Gladiator, Good Will Hunting, The Greatest Showman, Green Mile, Hoosiers, I Can Only Imagine, It's a Wonderful Life, The King's Speech, Life is Beautiful, Lincoln , Natural, Power of One, Rudy, Saving Private Ryan, Seabiscuit, Zero Effect

Songs That Inspire Me:

Everybody Needs Somebody to Love – Blues Brothers, Dancing On My Own – Calum Scott, I Can Only Imagine – MercyMe, Smile – Nat King Cole, Smile – Uncle Kracker, Circles – Post Malone, Smile - Katy Perry, rockstar – Post Malone, ROCKSTAR - DaBaby

ABOUT DR. KEN 'DR. SMILEY' ROCHON, JR.

Your Hero:

My Dad (Kenneth James Rochon, Sr.), My Mom (Linda M. Rochon), Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Leonardo da Vinci, My son – Kenny (K3)

Quote You Live By:

“Look for the good in people and you will it. For all of humanity have good at the core of their heart” ~ Linda Meeker Rochon

Ken Rochon, Jr. is an internationally recognized dynamic speaker, author, social media expert and connector. He is a renaissance spiritual leader, who loves the arts, sciences and people.

After losing his mom to Alzheimer's disease in 2008, he searched for the ultimate meaning and purpose for his life. He prayed for a sign that would allow him to dedicate his life to service and utilize his skill sets to amplify leaders making a positive impact in the world.

Ken's ability to capture and captivate the human spirit at live events, on the radio, through speaking, photography and writing are highly recognized as evidenced in the multiple hundreds of reviews and recommendations. His love for his mom cause him to take more actions, which resulted in the sign he prayed for. His evidence was the avalanche multiple hundreds of 5-Star reviews and recommendations. Ken is creating a dynamic positive impact and building a legacy for himself and other leaders. He is Internationally recognized as an

influencer that uses his gifts and creates platforms and systems to amplify the messages of leaders that desire to change the world.

“Ken Rochon is a master at creating social proof. He and The Umbrella Syndicate team are fantastic with guests and really know how to connect everyone in the room. He consistently produces fantastic work and we are always so happy to have him speak and photograph at our You Will Change The World summits and masterminds” Peter Anthony Wynn, Founder of ‘You Will Change The World’

The Umbrella Syndicate (TUS) was created, by Ken, with six elements represented by each segment of the umbrella that strategically and synergistically move the vision of a leader beyond their own minds eye. He studied strategies of leveraging like-minded and like hearted audiences to create these epic social proof campaigns for the leaders he chose to serve. Ken has created a formula that captures and catapults the message that wakes the world up with a positive frequency that inspires people to learn more.

“Ken and the Umbrella Team are probably the most proactive, positive and professional media I have ever seen. If you want viral videos and photography, creative coverage and incredible insights into your event,

brand or persona, they are the top of the food chain.” Dave Crane

Ken is lifetime entrepreneur, starting in his teen years, founding and delivering excellence with the award winning company Absolute Entertainment. He continues as a visionary and leader with companies and movements such as; The Perfect Networker, Live Loco Love Studio, The Perfect Publishing Ken has authored 17 books on diverse topics; children, linguistics, marketing, networking, and travel. He has published over 50 solo and compilation books. His current book ‘Keep Smiling Shift Happens!’ has caused a movement of celebrities and leaders to join in helping remind the world positivity, with just a simple smile, attracts positive power.

“At the end of the day public relations, marketing are about communicating a story. The “HOW” is identical: Get customers. Move product. Drive revenue. Our WHY is what positions us to change the world.” I love to travel because I learn so much about myself and others. I recently accomplished becoming a Centurion Traveler by experiencing over 100 countries. My favorite place to travel is back home. My son Kenny is the light of his life and a moment by moment inspiration of my purpose in life.”
Ken Rochon, Jr.



<https://youtu.be/7IDowQB0FJ4>

KEEP SMILING MOVEMENT BOOK PROJECT

Scan here to access your ABC Keep Smiling Template:



This template will help you create a book in 1 to 3 hours.
Depending on how much of this information is being repurposed.
Please schedule this in your schedule and you will find you can
turn this around in a week. Think of this template as a guide to a
TED Talk.

Happy writing and call or write if you have any questions.

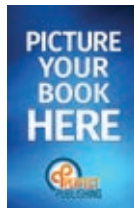
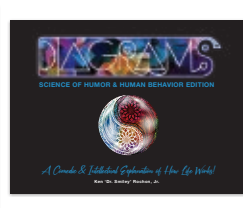
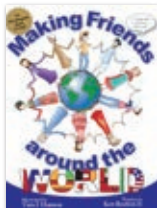
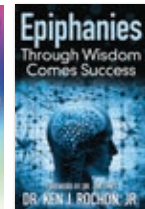
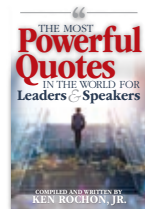


Founder, The Keep Smiling Movement

ART OF SERIES by Ken Rochon



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A “D.O.S.E. of HOPE” is what everyone needs. Fortunately, we have been given a gift, a natural D.O.S.E. (Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin, & Endorphins) of chemicals, neurotransmitters, within our brains that are induced by smiles. Smiles awaken our spirit to live a life of J.O.Y.

We carefully chose Heroes of HOPE, who exemplify living a life they created through faith, hope, patience, and persistence. No matter what page you open to in this mini cube of HOPE, you will find a leader with a big heart. You will see you are not alone. The authors may share similar challenges that only hope and action could resolve.

The bigger you play in life, the bigger the challenges, and the bigger the reward. This journey is not about money, work, and worry. Instead, it is about abundance, creation, happiness & joy. Shift your life with a D.O.S.E. of HOPE & Keep Smiling.

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