



HIGH FUNCTIONING HABITS

By Shelley R. Shearer

High Functioning Habits

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Common Sense, Uncommon Results

Shelley R. Shearer

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Dedication

*To my son Ryan who has taught me that nothing we
face can't be overcome with good habits, focus and
love for yourself.*

Acknowledgements

There are a few people I'd like to thank for supporting me and making this book happen. But firstly, none of this would be possible without the love and support of my husband Keith.

No matter how much I change, move forward, want to learn new things or want to try another path, he is always right there with unconditional support and love. Through the good times and the bad, we are the best team.

Close to 8 years ago a close friend took me to a Mark Your Mark event that started a whole new journey of self-development, something I had neglected for many years. This was where I met my Coach, Sam, who ensured I never bought into my own excuses and pushed me to meet an amazing editor, Bridget that made this book into what it is today.

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I have the most amazing group of friends and have the blessing of living in a neighborhood full of likeminded people that put health, learning and raising an amazing 'next' generation via the Village mentality to the test every single day.

Lastly, my eternal gratitude to the strong woman in my life that I have accumulated over a lifetime and have become my own personal Girl Gang, you all know who you are! Thanks for the feedback, advice and support that is always given and shared in love.

May God richly bless you in your life as you find your own High Functioning Habits.

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INTRODUCTION

For years, I wondered what made some people better at managing their time, their resources, and their issues than others? After a year of Podcasting, where I discuss not living in regret and creating high functioning habits, it occurred to me that I had habits that seemed to waylay many of the issues in my life and allowed me to adapt to my circumstances more quickly.

Living a successful and happy life at a high level is an inherent desire in everyone. With this intent, patterns of daily living – which must be consistently practiced to become habits – are put in place. To achieve our goals, it is essential that we keep up with certain high-functioning habits that define and determine our success in life. Often, we try but fail at keeping up with these habits. This is because we have neglected the essentials of *managing these* habits. This eBook will bring to your awareness the processes that are

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responsible for these high functioning habits and upon which they are dependent.

Had I recognized in my own life what in fact was working—and how I was addressing situations that, at the time I thought I was attacking with sheer will—I would have found the pattern sooner and realized I was often naturally implementing a new habit whenever something was put in my way.

A habit is a hard thing to break, so you might as well have good habits to carry you thru because once a habit is in place it's a lifestyle and you never think about what it took to get you there. You don't really remember the pain, just the results.

It is important to note that this is not the same as books like *7 Habits for Highly Effective People* or *High Performing Habits*. Habits for being High Functioning I believe are not to be generalized because they are specific to individuals. What this book aims at (which will be the core of my explanation) is realizing the behaviors, and the triggers that will spur you to

discover the habits you need to implement to (make and/or) keep you highly functioning as a human. Quite a number of these high functioning habits are generic to everyone, and are, therefore, attainable, e.g., healthy feeding. The issue here, however, is not the feeding in itself but the habits you need to introduce and implement in your daily life and activities to ensure you are feeding more healthily. In that regard, they may not be the same thing for everyone.

There are a few pointers you will come across in this eBook that may be considered habitual in themselves. Nonetheless, a few of them are disciplines that you have to incorporate into your life to find the habits you need to develop that leads you to the end of high functionality.

I hope you understand the difference between these two afore-explained points of view. So, if you got this book hoping to find a list you could print out and attach to your bathroom mirror, I apologize because that is not how this works. Having high functioning

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habits is a road of discovery, it is essential to learn what triggers you, how you must manage them, and discard those that are to be avoided. For instance, I have a son who is Bi-polar, although we were not clear on what was going on with him for a long time until his mid-20s. By the time he was 30, he had a big melt down, had to leave work, started counseling and medications. During the counseling sessions, he discovered how to cope with the triggers, how to make better decisions and how to function in certain situations.

Learning to react rightly and take specific actions to put in place certain things that prevent meltdowns; all of these lessons are high functioning habits. Sometimes, the most practical way is to shorten the meltdown episodes such that, if unavoidable, they last for shorter periods of time. For instance, it was a HUGE win for me when my Fibromyalgia had a flare up that didn't last the week but only kept me in bed for a day. Sometimes, all that may be required is to take a nap; accept that you need it. Hence, I can engage in

productive work for 6 hours daily rather than staying off work altogether for three years. These types of paradigms shift in my mentality and therefore, developing new habits, has allowed me to be at my best in spite of what life has thrown at me; and this is the modus vivendi of high functioning personalities.

In a nutshell, we can, optimistically, guarantee ourselves sufficient energy to keep us functioning optimally and productively in every avenue of our daily lives by exercising the disciplines (and habits, if you like) that are contained in this book. High functioning people are deliberate about these habits, and we find them around us with lots of energy, confidence, intelligence, competence. They are not easily influenced negatively, have a direction and are usually good time managers. It's about recognizing fully what needs to change in your life, choosing the change, learning what you need to learn and then implementing those changes.

CHAPTER ONE

Inclination

It is public knowledge that personality differs among people; it describes the totality of the physical, mental and emotional traits of a person. All these characteristics, consequently, define our dispositions. It (personality) explains why you are slouchy, why you are easily frustrated and ultimately, how high functioning you are. To this effect, it is understandable that our differing personalities cause us to be inclined to individual attitudes and usual ways of behaviors which differ from person to person. In other words, the traits that describe our personalities are fundamental to the habits we keep because they define our inclinations. A person with Type A personality, for instance, is hard-driving and impatient. An example of habit such a person is inclined to include rapid eating,

a factor that may eventually lead to coronary heart disease in the long run. This is because rapid eating does not give your hormones enough time to signal "full stomach," hence, you eat more resulting in increased calorie consumption and incomplete digestion – this can lead to serious health problems. It is safe to say that healthy feeding includes slow eating. Bearing this in mind, you must now pay attention to habits that would cause a change to your inclination to rapid eating. The intention of this book is not to modify your personality traits but to help you attain a high level of functionality with them.

Growth and development stem from (and are associated with) our inclinations. A fundamental feature of high functioning people is their ever-driving disposition of mind or character. They had and still have the feeling of wanting to be high functioning. Someone may argue that there is a difference between wanting to do something and actually doing it (we will come to this later). Be that as it may, an underlying factor of *actually doing anything* is *the desire to do it*.

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We all can relate to the fact that we may never get things that require our deliberate efforts done if we don't truly want them done because our lack of desire subsequently short circuits the needed steps in accomplishing them. Therefore, you must never downplay your inclinations; you must feed them consistently so with the right information which ranges from learning and open-mindedness to the WHY of your choice of habits.

Peitersma, S. and Dijkstra, A. of the University of Groningen, the Netherlands published a research on Cognitive Self-Affirmation Inclination: An Individual Difference in Dealing with Self-Threats in the British Journal of Social psychology, 2012. The abstract partly stated, "that people differ in their inclination to use positive self-images when their self is threatened (i.e., cognitive self-affirmation inclination, CSAI). Just as self-affirmation manipulations do, the use of positive self-images induces open-mindedness towards threatening messages." People have a fundamental need to maintain a high functioning life; they want to

feel stable and competent in themselves. However, when these selves are threatened, people react differently. According to the research, there were six different study cases, all of which were based on self-affirmation inclinations.

These threats are either real or perceived inadequacies. For example, reading information concerning your unhealthy feeding, how do you handle this threat and maintain a high functioning lifestyle? Sherman and Cohen suggest that "people have a persuasive inclination to display defensive adaptations such as denying, dismissing or avoiding the threat in some way." A defensive approach is never going to lead to a high functioning lifestyle because the denial of the threatening information prevents you from learning. What we do in our weekly meetings is to help you realize how you can confront these inadequacies and inculcate habits to manage them. You must culture your inclinations to address these habits; this would, in turn, induce open-mindedness.

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An essential tool in maintaining high functioning habits beginning with the use of our inclinations is self-esteem. It is reported that with the active use of positive images in our minds, we are more open-minded to certain things. By creating positive images, we will be more susceptible to habits that will bring them to fruition. For instance, a person would be open-minded to habits that would ensure productivity if such a person who stays late in bed, is lazy and has trouble making ends meet could create a self-esteemed image of himself paying his bills, providing for the family and still has sufficient funds to reach the next payday. If he could imagine a positive image where he's more proactive with issues during the day, there would be that self-satisfaction in getting up early without being groggy. He gets to discover this means more time to get things done which means more money, more time to spend with family etcetera – these are things that are common to high functioning people.

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Inclinations are cheap, yet they form the foundation upon which we build our habits and how high functioning we could be in our daily lives.

CHAPTER TWO

Contemplation

I have copiously explained how we can positively make use of our inclinations. They are impressively helpful in building high functioning habits; but you must know how to use them. It is, however, noteworthy that the sole goal of inclination is to induce open-mindedness; it is not going to take you further than that. But contemplation will. It is a crucial process you cannot afford to skip on your journey to becoming high functioning. Your success rate at maintaining high functioning habits is dependent on how dear you hold this process vis-à-vis how successful you are at practicing it. Nobody that I have ever studied, emulated or listened to in my personal development will tell you anything different. If you do not spend time in contemplation, (or meditation, prayer, showing

gratitude –whatever you prefer to call it), you cannot be high functioning. And if you are, it is going to be short-lived. I will tell you why in a bit.

Several psychologists and researchers have defined meditation in several ways. Of these, there are mainly two definitions I find appropriate. Walsh and Shapiro (2006) stated that “meditation refers to a family of self-regulation practices that focus on training attention and awareness to bring mental processes under greater voluntary control and thereby foster general mental well-being and development and for specific capacities such as calm, clarity, and concentration.” You need to have a quiet time when you can carry out this activity. Some people do this weekly with a significant portion of time accorded to its practice. For me, it’s a daily practice. To be raised in a Christian home means I grew up to learn to pray, but as I got older and encountered the concept of contemplation and the Law of Attraction, where I realized I needed to quiet my mind and let the universe speak to me, some aspects of it were pretty easy for me. It was similar to

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prayer, and in fact, there's a large part of me that thinks they are all just the same thing.

Jevning *et al.* (1992) defined meditation “as a stylized mental technique repetitively practiced to attain a subjective experience that is frequently described as very restful, silent, and of heightened alertness, often characterized as blissful.”

Meditation is a term that is quite difficult for some people to grasp because it connotes sects of Eastern cults and Christian monks who spend most of their time in monasteries. To restrict this practice to these folks cannot be further away from the truth. The upside to it is that you don't have to be of a particular religion to enjoy the beauty and the benefits of meditation. You don't have to sit in a room with the whale music, incense burning, and the candles all lit to have a time of contemplation. 'Secular meditation' is a form of reflection where the emphasis is on stress-reduction, relaxation and self-improvement rather than on spiritual growth. All you need to do is to be

present in, and conscious of, the process. The purpose of this principle is not to launch into a space of mind and spirituality to uncover unknown facts of divinity but to achieve a mentally, emotionally clear and calm state.

From the definitions afore-mentioned, you could easily deduce that meditation aims to reduce stress, depression, and anxiety, and to increase peace, perception, and well-being. Your mind, body, and spirit need that time. I am an A-type personality, and that has served me well a lot in my life, but it has also caused me some severe health issues because I pushed myself all the time. And now that I'm dealing with compromised health, meditation has become very important for me to keep being high functioning and productive.

You will find it in the writings of sutras of the Pali Canon that “basic fourfold formulae of salvation are in the observance of the rules of morality, contemplative concentration, knowledge and liberation.” Salvation, in

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this case, is akin to high functionality, and the Pali Canon placed meditation (contemplative concentration) as a process along the journey. You must train yourself to engage in this practice consistently. It must become a habit itself. Meditation is the bridge between inclination and keeping high functioning habits.

There is a story of a disciple who asked his master, “Master, why do we pray after meditation?”

“We do so to give thanks that the meditation is over,” his master quipped.

The master was joking; nonetheless, that is how meditation can feel sometimes. The act, for disciplined meditators, could be energy zapping. But you don’t have to start out with long hours of meditation; you may find that very difficult. It may be as simple as that 15 to 20 minutes in bed where you’ve woken up in the morning before your alarm trips off. Do you feel like “I want another half of sleep?” or “My body has had

enough rest, and now I'm going to lie here and have my half an hour of contemplation?" You may even be half asleep. What is being taken advantage of in this early hour is the state of your body. There is a saying that "A relaxed body is a relaxed mind." My best ideas come to me in those morning times (and eventually I had to learn to scribe to catch some of them!). Don't you love that morning dream and you think if only you had a mind recorder to catch all that stuff? Great ideas come at those times of rest and re-awakening. That is what meditation does; it results in awakening and enlightenment.

It could be as you are falling asleep at night and trying to clear your mind, meditation is an excellent practice at those moments. Thoughts are always flowing through our minds just like waves are formed continuously in the ocean. Too much thinking often impedes focus. It induces anxiety, stress and is associated with high blood pressure. Meditation is a great way to increase your resilience to these things; it will help reduce your tendency (inclination, if you like)

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towards physiological *excitement* concerning dealing with stress and anxiety. People who are prone to unwanted overthinking can also find meditation very helpful. Meditation is so beneficial because it clears the mind and brings about the complete cessation of thoughts and then perhaps the universe may have something important to say to you. After all, how can you hear if you are doing all the talking?

There are certain things you must avoid during this moment: avoid thoughts of the past and the present, neither should you try to analyze them, avoid envisaging things, don't try to experience something, don't deviate but stay in the moment. A great book is Eckart Tolle's *The Power of Now*. This really opened up my awareness about staying present in every area of my life, but especially while meditating. This nighttime meditation is also a time your ego will want to get in the way. You would ask it, literally and physically in your mind, to step aside and that you'll come back to it in the morning. Your ego is very

egocentric and wants to be the center of attention and in control at all times, but you mustn't let it.

If you are a beginner at meditation, you should know before you start out with this practice that the goal of meditation is not to come to a point where you can focus without becoming distracted. The basis of a successful contemplation is becoming aware of what you're thinking. Because to restructure your thoughts, an ability that handles stress and anxiety, you must have first been able to identify your thoughts. You must also know how to redirect your focus back to the initial point when you are distracted without criticizing yourself. When meditating at night, don't fight sleep, let your mind roll. Don't look out for something to hear or see or feel, allow whatever rises into your recognition be naturally replaced by something else. This specific art of meditation is what open awareness means, what I earlier described as "universe having something important to say to you."

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There is a great diagram by Greg Montana and taught by one of my personal Coaches Monique MacDonald (Creator of *Discover Your Sacred Gifts*) called the Chaos Cycle. So many of us live too much in Action, which is quickly followed by Chaos because we never take time to Rest and let Creativity come.

Meditation is a practice, one of calming the mind and letting the peace flow through; you must work at it. This act when practiced with persistence and discipline transforms into a peaceful state of mind rather than just another practice you have to engage in, and that's an ultimate goal to keep you high functioning.

CHAPTER THREE

High Functioning Habits

Take two high functioning persons, study their lifestyle and you will conclude that their habits are not the same even though their rationale may be. I mean, if we all could keep the same habits, we would be no different from zombies. Habits are general to everyone, however specific to individuals. It is without controversy that everyone has a usual way of behavior, something they do regularly and repeatedly. In simple words, you have habits. Your friends do. I do. Whether they are habits we form intentionally or they are those we grew up with is another issue in itself. The baseline is that we all have habits. Pay attention here; I want to reiterate that whether they are habits we formed willfully or those we were taught from childhood, these habits will do one of two things: either they leave you

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worse off or improve your functionality, and hence productivity.

In this chapter, I will show you how that on the journey of being high functioning, to leave yourself at the mercy of random actions and inactions that you get stuck up with are never going to get you there. The center point of this chapter focuses on this simple message: You must be deliberate about forming your habits, *habits* that will get you to be high functioning. These habits are going to be personal to you. This action of building your habits is not something you are going to be flimsy about or display indifference. To develop these high functioning habits, you have to be deliberate. You have to be consistent. You have to be disciplined. That is why coaching is also relevant and helpful, sometimes in a group or one on one. Both have significant benefits.

I have earlier noted in the introduction that this eBook differs from books that give you a list of habits to keep; to say we all could have the same habits would defy

social science, the theory of differing personalities. To a certain extent, we would have to keep the same jobs and earn equally, have the same problems, have the same kind of spouses, the same number of children etcetera. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that someone that needs to function higher with a physical disorder is going to be very different from someone that deals with a mental or emotional disorder or someone with an addiction. What you will see here, however, are habits that everyone should keep, and deliberately so, to figure out what high functioning habits (which differ individually) you must follow.

STEMS OF HABITS

High functioning habits are not just birthed out of the blue; there are specific processes that are responsible to that end. These processes, which are habits in themselves, are like the roots from which high functioning habits stem. What these processes do is bring to your cognizance the habits that are specific to you and that will keep you high functioning or get you there if you have not started.

Choice

With a critical observance, you'd eventually notice that the one thing you can exercise control over is your perspective. The situation may be beyond you, but you have a choice on the angle from which you view it. You can choose to either be miserable or to motivate yourself. Whatever decision you make, it was your choice all along. It's no different from choosing a path or having a set-goal, you have to choose to want a high

functioning life. You have to choose to wish for more highly effective habits. With a wholesome review of books like *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, *7 Habits of Highly Effective Habits*, *High-Performance Habits*, *Think and Grow Rich*, they all have a general standpoint – MINDSET. It's your mindset that is so important right out of the gate. I noticed it with my higher functioning friends that as we aged, they became more responsible by choice. There are some who still drink and party like they are 21, there's no change that can be accorded to them and I realized they are never going to grow past that mindset.

If you want to be high functioning in any area of your life, you must choose it. That has to be the first thing you do; the habits are things that come after. Without choice, you're going nowhere. Remember that your habits are going to be personal to you. This point is where the relevance of Group coaching is introduced. Group coaching is a choice you will have to make too. Be humble enough to realize that you need help before you make a mess of everything. You also need to

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realize that time is of the essence when making your choices. A bunch of our important choices have timelines, sometimes, our fears and doubts impede us from making choices that include changes. Hence, we miss out in the long run. Coaching allows people to discover what needs to be changed in their lives and walk them through discovering their own personal high functioning habits. The reason I like group sessions is exposure enlightens you on certain things you had no idea needed changing or improvement. Sometimes, until you hear someone else's story or talk, you might be missing something really important that requires your attention; something about which you were completely oblivious. You must be open to the fact that you are ignorant about some things. That is probably my first lesson when I was younger, one that has kept me moving forward and asking questions. What got me out of my ego and arrogance of my 20's was accepting the fact that people around me may know what I do not know. After all, you don't know what you don't know! The irony, however, is that the

second you admit that fact, God and the Universe will bring to your life the right people, they will bring along with them the right circumstances and unfortunately lessons that you will find a little uncomfortable.

Whatever the need is, we will walk you through the pain, the discipline that will get you high functioning. Once you've chosen, there is no place for excuses. We will help you work through the layers of the onion to get to the core where we find out what is really at the root so that you can build up the habits from there and subsequently change the results around you. A core evaluation is critical because that's always the cause. The reason Northern America's medical system is so appalling right now is that everything is about a band-aid. No one wants to find out what's wrong; they want to fix the symptom but to what end? In cases of addiction, the dog is only going to return to its vomit. In other cases, the symptoms are certain to raise their ugly heads again. Many people are caught in this loop. Well, that sort of mentality needs a paradigm shift in thinking. There has to be a change in our thinking and

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belief structures. There is no place in high functioning habits for fixing symptoms; you must always aim at the cause. Be that as it may, there are things that you may need to work on that are simply symptoms, you will need to make a few adjustments, and that usually is the first step. So, don't get me wrong. We are always going to work on those sorts of things because they are always going to lead us backward. That sounds counter-intuitive, but we do want to work backward to the root of the problem so that we change the habit around that problem to create a different lifestyle, a different way of being conscious and a different way of reacting to things around you.

Where does *choice* come in here? Simple: When you know you can't be perfect in every situation and that there are times you'll encounter tough ones, you have to stand up to your feet because now you know that it's not just about the situation but how you deal with it and that's a choice you always have to make.

Decisiveness

Having chosen high functionality, to settle and not go further is akin to buying an iron because you saw an ad on how that appliance can make you look smart, approachable and respected but if you never use the iron, and you still go out in rumpled clothes. You're never going to get the results for which you bought the iron; you'll grumble and may even call the ad a big fat lie. Or imagine the effort and time wasted doing your laundry manually when you had a laundry machine at your disposal. You hear some folks say things like, "I wish I could be doing this or that," "I wish I were as high functioning as that young lady," but ask them what they have decided on based on their *wishing*, they've got no plan, no insight concerning what to do. You need to decide on the habits you want to keep. Unfortunately, there's no easy pill. I cannot give you a narcotic or over the counter antibiotic because you are back for more in no time –we didn't solve the problem that was causing the infection or the pain. Deciding

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the habit is in understanding, and that comes with knowledge, awareness and working through stuff.

When it comes down to the roles your mind has to play on your way to increased functionality; decisiveness is more or less the conclusive nature of the issue that you have made a choice to settle but just like your choice, your decisiveness has to be timely. Decisiveness is a habit you have to inculcate in your life. You can begin by practicing with small matters and gradually use the new skill on more salient matters. Many times, what impedes us from being decisive is the risk attached to it, and the fear of regret. Regret is a painful emotion because you feel it was once within your purview to make a different decision which could have resulted in a different outcome. But you must be able to forgive yourself and direct your energy to the level of importance your decision has to your life. You must be able to realize that your decisions may not always be spot on and that you shouldn't hesitate to make adjustments where modifications are needed, especially when you realize

your original decision is not going to work out as you earlier thought. We help you to assess what decision is important and which isn't, so you don't waste time dithering about what decision to make. I am yet to find a strong-result oriented individual who's not decisive.

When you are decisive, you can make decisions even in urgent situations; you can take a course of action even when you don't have all the information; you also understand that indecisiveness has its consequences. Indecisiveness uses a tremendous amount of (emotional) energy that could have been channeled to getting you better. It is also important to note that decisiveness is different from impulsiveness; the major factor that differentiates the two is that you engage in careful thinking in being decisive and it's not spontaneous.

Learning

You might have read my number three and exclaimed "Whaaaat!" I know it's a tough one but hey, people that

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succeed are people that learn. They study; they read or listen to eBooks. Although I titled this point *Reading*, lots of folks aren't geared that way anymore, and since we live in an age where audio books and online courses are abundant, you must take advantage and invest in yourself. Jim Rohn, one of my favorite mentors since I was in my 20's states: *A person that works hard at their job will earn a living; a person that works hard on themselves could earn a fortune.*" He truly believed that the more you invest in yourself, the more you will accomplish in life, the more harmony you will have in your life, the happier you'll be in your life, the more you'll be able to give back to the world at large through charity or works.

I listen to audio books (everyone should) and started working on myself. Permit me to come out straight with you on this point; there's no shortcut or substitute for learning than to learn. You have to come to terms with the fact that you have to read or listen or watch to become more functioning and productive.

You have to find a way around the difficulty, hardship, and boredom even, which comes with studying.

You have wide access to myriads of materials with which you can invest in yourself. Investing in yourself is going to cost a bit of money, but as the phrase goes, the investment is in *you*. The first thing I'll suggest is for you to buy yourself a 12.95 membership to Audible, either US or CDN so when you're in your car (synchronize your phone with your car if you can), when you're commuting or in transit (get a good headset) you can be learning and not wasting precious time. Commuting and getting from one place to the other now has a whole new meaning to me. That time is learning time! I used to hate it, especially during the first couple of years I was sick and struggling with anxiety. I didn't want to leave the house and to get in the car was yucky. But now I look forward to listening to one of my audiobooks in the car, which is my number one place for learning and uplifting. When traveling on planes, I read, but in commuting, I listen. To be honest, I'm one of those people that sometimes

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buy a book twice. I tend to buy the audiobook first and after that buy the hard copy if I want to study and make notes. Books can also go places my electronics cannot, like beaches and the sun. Books never run out of power and don't offer 'other' distractions like Candy Crush. A significant amount of study has shown that non-electronic reading and writing make more lasting impressions on the mind. Synapses in our brains are designed to react to certain impulses, and the written word is a huge part of that. So, if you are reading, highlighting and taking notes, you're interacting with the learning and your brain stores the information better and recollects faster.

Knowledge is a beautiful cycle, and we've broken this in our world today. It's so broken, and one of my goals is to facilitate people to bring back the culture of learning into our world. We are not going to facilitate change anywhere or around the world if we do not invest in ourselves and share with others. Otherwise, we are just going to continue to have 12 years old with guns, people that hold hatred and distaste in their

hearts and for other people. This cruelty needs to change on this planet as far as I'm concerned.

Learning exposes and acquaints you to perspectives of great minds, past and present, sometimes taking you out of your comfort zone. It sharpens your mindset and increases your power of reasoning and judgment. So, learning is an absolute necessity for people that want to be high functioning, it is no different from executing a new habit, and I'm here to call bullshit on excuses and procrastination.

Recovery

I have physical and mental disabilities with my fibromyalgia and I have had to manage depression for the better part of my adult life; I must periodically take physical and mental rests. When I am not careful and don't rest, it is my mental faculties that shut down first because I have an overload and have exhausted my resources internally. After taking the rest, however, I'm able to return to a normal state. Recovery is important

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for everybody: introverts, extroverts, people with anxiety, physical or mental limitations. Recovery is vital; it helps you manage conditions successfully. So, find out what you need for recovery and make sure it's happening.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) working definition of recovery defines recovery "as a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential. Recovery is built on access to evidence-based clinical treatment and recovery support services for all populations." The basis of recovery, you see, is the belief system that challenges and conditions can be overcome. The process is highly personal and has many pathways, that is, everyone has their way of doing it. Recovery has to do with continual growth and improvement in spite of the periodic setback. *Setbacks* are natural; it's not a time to get beat down, I'll tell you why –resilience is a major component of recovery. SAMHSA also described

resilience (in recovery) as “an individual’s ability to cope with adversity and adapt to challenges or change. Resilience develops over time and gives an individual the capacity not only to cope with life’s challenges but also to be better prepared for the next stressful situation.” Is there a better way to convey the power of recovery at all? These descriptions have done enough justice.

Permit me to point out quickly here that you may have figured that you need rest, healthy feeding, limiting alcohol consumption and probably cleansing your system. To allow yourself to get conned into going to Vegas, say four times a year for vacation is not recovery. Don’t confuse these things. The engaging activities carried out on those journeys is the basic issue here and in fact, you don’t need many of those travels, they only compound the problem. Recovery often involves physical modalities (and not just meditation and supplementation). Sometimes, your recovery is to accept that there are going to be some major changes, perhaps a paradigm shift in how you

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view things, how you react to the world at large, how you make decisions about your life and what you want in and out of it. I have earlier noted that recovery has many pathways and is unique to the individual.

According to the article *Recovery Principles* published on American Psychological Association, the National Consensus Conference on Mental Health Recovery and Mental Health Systems Transformation convened by SAMHSA, patients, health-care professionals, researchers and others in 2004 reached a consensus on the tenets (principles, if you like) of a recovery orientation:

- **Self-direction** This implies that you are to determine your path to recovery.
- **Individualized and person-centered** Pathways to recovery are so different due to individual's unique strengths, preferences, needs, experiences and even cultural background.

- **Empowerment** This means in our sessions, you can choose to participate among the options of or all of the decisions that affect you.
- **Holistic** Your entire life: body, mind, spirit, and community are the focus of recovery.
- **Nonlinear** Recovery is based on continual growth, occasional setbacks and learning from experiences. This point is very important in this practice.
- **Respect** This states that acceptance and appreciation displayed by the society are crucial to recovery. Note that this point is one of ten others that depend on you. What I'm getting at is even if you find yourself in a society that's not supportive, don't become weary of your progress, keep at it. Although, I will also advise that you change such an environment.
- **Responsibility** In spite of all the needed help we can render, you are still responsible for your

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journey of recovery. You must be disciplined enough to stick to instructions and corrections.

- **Hope** Recovery's central message is that you can overcome challenges and obstacles.

HEALTH MODALITIES

I'm a bit of a health nut, and it was a choice and decision I put in place quite young, despite other issues I was dealing with at the time. Fact is, if you are healthy, you are more alert; you are more functioning than when you're not. If you are controlling pain, getting enough sleep and getting great nutrition you are less tired, more physical, and everything in your life works better so that you are more productive. When you are more productive, you can potentially earn more money, and you are going to feel a greater sense of accomplishment in your life. You need to make this decision on your own and not submit to peer pressure or let those around you influence your choice negatively. Living with a person who is unhealthy can be very difficult as often we fall to their level instead of sticking to the level we want to function at, it would be easier if they were like-minded as often over the years I have found myself sliding down to a level that is so not healthy for me and then I have to work to get back on

track. But in the end, the choice is yours. Now, let's discuss a bit on these health modalities:

Therapeutics

Therapeutics is the branch of medicine that is concerned with the treatment of disease. Health challenges can affect our mentality, our lifestyle and how we prioritize life decisions but a mistake we often make is while we may be dealing with a health challenge, we neglect the whole of the body, mind, and spirit; this is where a holistic approach to healing is important. Many of these holistic practices impact your overall wellbeing coupled with helping you deal with the health issue.

For example, yoga, an example of holistic practices. It is beneficial on many levels. It increases strength and flexibility; it improves sleeping habits. It also helps to master your internal sense and to develop a higher functionality approach to life. It leads to reflection and understanding that guides our life choices. I do full

spectrum yoga, and it's not just a physical practice for me. There is meditation in my yoga; there is mind-body-spirit work that I engage in the exercise. I try to get to yoga 2-3 times per week. I get amazing ideas during that session. I get great vibes when I'm in yoga just like in any other sort of meditation where I'm supposed to keep my mind calm and be present in the process.

Another example is Ionic footbaths. I'm a big proponent of this device for a couple of reasons. First, it's what I call a manual modality instead of a supplement or medication. Secondly, it's affordable to the average person. You can purchase one for USD \$550 or CDN \$700 or find a treatment room for approx. \$40 per session.

An Ionic footbath session combines water, sea salt, oxygen and hydrogen. This combination of basic elements has a cleansing effect on your entire body by creating a Negative Ionic energy field that enters your body through the 2000+ pores of your feet. The ionic

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energy enters your Lymphatic System to gently release toxic elements that have accumulated in it. When your body cannot drain these toxins, your immune system will be weakened to the point you become susceptible to constant illness because T-cell production has been impaired or even compromised.

Your immune system requires T-Cells to work properly. The Lymphatic system is where they are produced. The more toxins in your Lymph System, the fewer T-Cells can be produced. It's that simple!

When you place your feet into the bath, a gentle negative current will draw toxins and inflammation from joints or injury sites in your body. This current will break the positive electrical bond that toxins and free radicals use to attach themselves to tissues. It's simply helping the body do what it's supposed to do in the first place. A point to know is that only about 10% of what is detoxing in your body ends up in the actual footbath most will be drawn into your Lymph System and will exit your body through its natural excretory

pathways. I always describe it as being similar to putting a dryer sheet in with your laundry to get rid of static cling – same thing in your body, it's helping to “unstick” all the toxins from your cells. Detoxing is great for mental clarity, for sore joints, to lose weight, for asthma, arthritis, fibromyalgia, candida, parasites etcetera. And long term so much cheaper and safer than drugs for pain and inflammation taken every day. As a bonus the Ionic Body Balancer brand is analog, not digital, so most people find they have more energy after a few sessions as the body is able to re-charge as well as Detox.

There are many other examples, but I believe you get the general idea. I want you to have a mindset about stopping the band aides and getting to the source, get yourself cleaned out, get your day to day lifestyle cleaner; then, the next high functioning habit is to clean up your eating.

Healthy Feeding

You're probably not 16 years of age and in the prime of your health where you can literally eat twinkles and still function. Upon reading the heading, you might be thinking, "Oh Good Lord! She wants to talk about eating salads." Nope. I want to back things way up. You can't keep up that style of feeding and still expect to function at 50, I can attest to that, neither can you keeping feeding that way for 30 years and expect to be healthy and active at 50. There are, indeed, very rare exceptions to this but not many. Don't risk being one of the one in a hundred thousand people who smoked and drank all their lives and lived to be 99. Genetically, they had something the rest of us probably don't have. Get this fact straight; you cannot function to the best of your ability without (premium) fuel in your car. By premium, I mean it's not just okay to eat, you must eat healthily. This means food, NOT products. If you don't know the difference, it's time to put that learning section into effect.

Take Stephen Hawking, for example, a man with a full physical disability from the womb, and a brilliant mind worked his entire life to make sure he could share that mind with others. That didn't happen by accident folks. *"However difficult life may seem, there I always something you can do and succeed at."* Stephen Hawking

You see people have debilitating accidents and they come back to compete in the Olympics or create brilliant things, all of these happen because their body is functioning to the best of its ability and with clarity. Their cells are clean, and they aren't inviting disease; they aren't sluggish nor weighed down by sodium, bad fat, poor meats and genetically modified food. I'm also a big believer in eating for your Blood type; that means you have to get your blood type tested. The book, *Eating for Your Blood Type*, was introduced to me in my late 20's by my actual MD as we were searching for pieces to the puzzle of some health issues I was having. Of course, later we discovered I was a Celiac, but all

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this knowledge helps me every day to be higher functioning.

Yes, you need to eat more vegetables and fruits, and less processed foods. You need to accept this fact of life and find things you like. I never coach people to eat things they actually don't like, not when nature offers so many options. I had a good friend who was a marathon runner; he would call unpackaged food, live food. Products are not food, and you need to say goodbye to them. Observe how we have turned the production of eggs, chicken, pork, and beef into a manufacturing facility, I won't even go near how we treat our animals –we treat nature as a commodity, and that's morally wrong. You eat those animals and they don't give your body what it needs because they haven't been raised out in the sunshine, eating natural grass and bugs, and all the things that made them good to eat about 100 years ago.

If you are a poor eater, there is a good chance that inflammation runs rampant in your body and that

makes your joint sore, gives you headaches and creates mental fuzziness –that mental fatigue at about 2PM every day that causes you to look for a caffeine hit which antagonizes your Adrenals and creates more acidity which causes degeneration of joints and cartilages. Eating is a serious high functioning habit.

Now, some people want to start healthy feeding but don't know where to begin. Start with something simple. Change your water. At this point, I believe you find that comical but take a breather and remain open-minded. I have spent 25 to 30 years preaching the message about eating well, taking supplements, antioxidants, etcetera. I have spent hundreds of dollars per month to stay healthy, but by simply changing the water I drink, I'm now getting so many of the same results. Ionized Alkaline water detoxes your body, unglues the buildup in your bowels making your elimination system regular, gets your body back into a health pH level and delivers molecular hydrogen directly to your cells for better hydration and health. Get an Ionized Alkaline Water machine (but don't buy

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anything that isn't manufactured in Korea or Japan). My husband finally agreed to let me purchase one as they are a significant investment running anywhere from \$3500-5K. However, we can't expect our Government to supply *healthy* water; they can only ensure it's disease and germ-free. To do more would be costly on mass. So, we need to take personal responsibility for what we do inside our homes and what we put inside our bodies.

If you don't start with better water, everything you do after is less. Get yourself hydrated and clean out your cells. Start with that. Be aware of how you are feeling because I can tell you that when you start feeling better, you start looking at things in your cupboard in a very different light. It starts with "I'm not going to eat that today, I'm going to eat this". Then you stop buying those products altogether and then these new choices become normal and voila, you have a new High Functioning Habit.

Integrative Healthcare

Integrative healthcare is the combination of conventional Western medicine and holistic practices, also known as complementary therapies and healing practices. Massage, Biofeedback, herbal medicine (find a good ND), Yoga, Meditation, Acupuncture, Reiki, Homeopathy, Floating and other stress reduction techniques, Chiropractic and Kinesiology are all examples of these holistic practices. I included this form of healthcare as important to being high functioning because it is a wide approach to healing that focuses on the patient's whole being –the body, mind, and spirit.

Integrative healthcare reduces depression symptoms, enhances access to quality care, and somewhat lowers overall healthcare costs. Anyone can benefit from this integrated approach to healthcare. However, there are certain things concerning this approach that you need to be informed about:

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- For acute illness and trauma, quick surgical or pharmaceutical intervention is beneficial and life-saving. But you can apply for a thorough medical evaluation for cases that are non-urgent. Holistic procedures provide options that optimize your body's healing capacities, minimize unpleasant side effects, help avoid future and further complications and also help you cope with the challenge.
- Make sure all your providers are aware of the full scope of your health care practices because there are times when some holistic procedures may interact with prescription drugs. For example, vitamins ingested in high dose that work to block free radicals may interfere with radiation treatment. Another example is acupuncture which may interfere with homeopathy.
- Be sure to do your research on the kind of options you choose to explore. You must be aware of the side effects if there are any, the cost and how long you have to be committed to it because you don't want to start out on something you can't complete.

- It is important to inquire about the safety of any procedure you are offered. It won't hurt to find out what scientific evidence and clinical experience have to say about the safety of the procedure.
- Be selfish about choosing your care provider. It is important you choose someone with whom you are comfortable and can converse.
- Lastly, remember that better health over the long term is much more inexpensive than a lifetime of medical intervention.

CONCLUSION

I will wrap up with two factors that cap the information contained in the book thus far. If these two items are missing, all the explanations done have nothing that will produce or influence a result; hence, they are crucial to the ultimate goal of keeping high functioning habits

OPEN-MINDEDNESS

Open-mindedness is an important process in the whole package of high functionality. I'm sorry to disappoint any of you who upon taking up this eBook hoped I was going to state or list off ten habits with which you can start right out. I have emphasized in this book that habits are unique to you and that we are always trying to address the cause in our group sessions. So, you have to keep an open mind when you are learning, listening or interacting with the world

around you because if you don't, you may miss out (completely) on what you need and most of the population does miss out. The fact that you have taken up this eBook or any book puts you ahead by 80%, and that's liberal. Some statistics say it's 90% while some psychological testing has rated it even higher; the basic point, however, is that you are ahead of a large percentage of the populace. If you find it difficult to believe me on this, I'd love if you could talk to some family members, neighbors, the people you work with, church, a group or sports team you belong to and bring it up in conversation. Ask them, "Hey, I'm reading this new book, what's everyone else reading right now that's improving your life?" If you have ten out of twelve folks in a team look back at you and say, "What? Are you on some guru trip or something?" Your answer is right there, and you know you're in the 10-20%. When you realize this, don't judge, we don't want a judgment in any of this. The point is so that you can be aware of how far ahead of the curve you are right now.

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You, therefore, have to keep an open mind because if you don't, the contemplation, the choice, the decision made about the habits, the mindset, the learning and the execution won't get you as far as you'd like to get. Be that as it may, this is not something that's going to happen overnight. I've been doing this sort of work since my mid to late 20's. I was 27 when things turned drastically for me. My son was five years old, and my path started taking a whole new direction. Up until that point, I had been disowned by family, and I was alone. I had been married to a man; *a man* to whom I was a second family, the marriage didn't even last two years. I was then a single mom, and when Ryan turned 5 I became engaged and he ended up being physically abusive. I made poor choices. However that was the turning point, things began to happen, and everything changed for me in my life. Some were good, some were bad, but they were amazing lessons. I have just turned 53; so, since 27 years of age, the learning has been ongoing, and here I am now, hopefully helping and

facilitating changes in your life as we embark on this ever-progressive journey.

Ever-progressive because once you are on the path, it just seems endless; you are always looking forward to the next experience. I love vacations, not just because I get to relax but because one thing I'm thinking is *what am I going to experience this time?* That's why I love going to courses. Invest in yourself. It's beautiful to learn, experience, talk to new people; I know this is difficult for some people who suffer from anxiety or are chronic introverts. If you are one, you should know that the main difference between introverts and extroverts is the need for the introvert to be alone to recharge and recuperate. That doesn't mean you shouldn't be out in the world garnering experiences and connecting; it just means that when you've done that, you need to return to your safe place, your home or whatever that is for your rest and downtime whereas an extrovert will go straight from the learning to the after party. The latter is my husband. As for me, I go home from the learning experience to the couch or

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the hot tub or infra-red sauna where I head into a healing modality after such a big experience. Extroverts want to head straight into more social time because they feed off that. So, don't think that you're being an introvert means you fall short the bar, it means that your habits are going to be slightly different after you've had the experience. Our habits of recuperation differ.

Open-mindedness is to be receptive to new ideas; it deals with how people react to the knowledge and opinions of others. It helps you to learn and grow while being honest because there's an admittance that you're not omniscient. It brings you to realize that there are truths you'll encounter and in incorporating them, will get you better and ultimately, higher functioning.

Here is the conclusion of the whole matter: despite whatever life throws at you, don't get beat down. You can deal with the challenges and keep yourself productive. By paying attention to the content of this

book, you'll be amazed at how normal it becomes for you in being high functioning.

EXECUTION

Having chosen to be high functioning, deciding the habits, incorporating them into your life is the major part, however it's often not easy. It's like having bought a new vitamin, and you have the supplement lounging in your room or the refrigerator and kept away from the area where you down your first drink or food in the morning, the chances of you remembering are minimal, and that's not going to work. In the Self-Help world, there is an expression, SHELF HELP. You can buy all the books, courses and DVDs you want but if they sit on your shelf and you never open to study them, they cannot help you and that attitude is not going to help you at all. Execution in itself is no different from executing a new habit. You must analyze how your lifestyle works and that is where the group sessions come into play; as people describe their different routines, there may be something that you pick up on, something you need to change in your morning, afternoon or evening routine. In these

sessions, we need to know if you can exercise in the morning or evening and still sleep comfortably at night. We also need to know if there is a supplement that you should be taking, whether you should read at night or meditate in the morning to calm the mind. All of these things are about executing the habits. Common sense functionality plays a huge role in this process and two points, about the success of executing the habits, readily comes to mind: Repetition and Rationale.

“Repetition reduces resistance,” my coach always says. Do not underestimate the power of repetition. It takes time to create a new habit and repetition is the key, that’s because repeated behaviors imprint these patterns onto our neural pathways. According to Wood and Neal, (2007) in *A new look at habits and the habit-goal interface, Psychological review*, “As behaviors are repeated in a consistent context, there is an incremental increase in the link between the context and the action. This increases the automaticity of the behavior in that context.” Highly functioning people

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don't get where they are by accident, they are a product of learning to make a habit from the things they do. I have it on good authority according to a 2009 study on 'How long does it take to form a habit' by Phillippa Lally, a health psychology researcher at University College London (UCL) that it takes an average of 66 days for you to form a habit. She also found that the more tedious the habit was, the longer it took for the habit to become ingrained –with some taking as long as 254 days. The UCL study explained that habits “are behaviors which are performed automatically because they have frequently been performed in the past.” So, the basic key to forming a new habit is to keep at it. It is also important not to feel disheartened if or when you fall off the wagon. Lally also found that there was not so much a significant effect on the overall formation of the habit when you miss a day. It is better not to throw in the towel and pick up from where you left off. The strength that drives your repetition, however, is fueled by your rationale. There has to be a solid reason WHY you'd

rather walk past that bottle of wine even when you thirst for it to take a cup of water after downing your meal.

Repetition also helps with learning. There is a quote that goes thus, “Repetition is the mother of learning, the father of action, which makes it the architect of accomplishment.” Think back to when you first drove a car or ride a bicycle; you first needed to learn the basic skills, after which it was all about practice and more practice to gain confidence and to improve your skill. It is no gainsaying that repeated exposure to certain knowledge causes us to have better insight into the subject matter because you tend to pick up on details you had earlier missed on your first encounter. One major reason for repetition is learning, aiding quick and easy recall. Knowledge learned but unable to be recalled when needed is as good as being ignorant of it in the first place. I’ll be sincere with you here; you may have to read that book again, listen to that podcast again. I had noted earlier in this book that I sometimes go through a book twice, I listen to the audiobook and

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also get the hard copy –I have already noted so much on the benefits of listening to audiobooks on the go. Repeated reading (or listening) strengthens your ability to retain the information and make use of it so you will be able to communicate such knowledge to others more effectively.

The rationale is the reason(s) or principle(s) which explain a decision or course of action. It tells of the ‘WHY’ behind your action, and so that’s something you’ve always got to hang on. Let me cite an example of what your rationale cannot be, “I want to lose weight.” A rationale is “I need to lose weight so that I can...” The ultimate result is about what you can do when you reach the goal, which is what we call the first result: You are healthier, you have lowered blood pressure, and you’ve stopped your wheezing. Your headaches or migraines have subsided, same with your cholesterol; you can now reduce your medication and save more money which you can now use to travel or do something else other than being tied to a pill. You have improved your joint mobility; now you can play a

sport you love or play with your grandchildren or take up something you've always wanted to learn. You now have abated mental fogginess, you're sharper with better mental clarity, and it's now easier to learn something new, it's easier to read which makes it easier to learn. All these are first results. That you are slim and look amazing in your clothing are secondary results.

You will find that if you've lost weight and got healthier, you will be more productive in work and making more money; you can travel or do things you haven't been able to do or pay off your debts that have been causing you so much stress. Being skinny is not a WHY and not a result that will get you through life in a healthier manner. It's usually a short-term fix for an event; such a reason is usually short-lived. Your rationale is so important in getting you to the result that grants you your desires.

Common Sense, Uncommon Results. That is what we are looking to accomplish. Watch out for the next

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phase of this eBook coming soon. I hope to create an entire appendix on examples of High Functioning Habits in various scenarios of life to help you better understand what might need to change in your life.

Will Power will only get you so far, then you better have a plan!



Shelley Shearer

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Life is not usually a bed of roses. It's bright and beautiful this minute but repulsive the next. Life continually changes with experiences and upends expectations. Life is not fair! But who cares? Still, there's an endless demand for excellence and productivity from humans. The degree of success is rated against the challenges encountered on the pathway to success. Health, mental or emotional dysfunction should not serve as a hindrance to operate and live at a high functioning performance.

High functionality can be a feature of an individual in spite of their challenges. High functioning habits are so called because there are practices that must be engaged and consistently so, to ensure development, growth and productivity. Habits, however, differ from personalities; hence, people differ with the habits they keep. High functioning habits, therefore, may not be innate but they can be learned and inculcated into a person's lifestyle.

The rationale is that no life challenge is an excuse worthy enough for living below standard. These and so many more proactive points on living at your highest level of functionality are laid out by Shelley Shearer in this book.

The Owner of the Financial Firm, *Genesys Consulting*, is also a life enthusiast who believes that we can always have whatever we desire if we actually want it enough. And apart from this book, she is the presenter of the popular weekly Podcast, *CouldaWouldaShoulda*, where she shares tips on *Not Living in Regret* and *High Functioning Habits*.