

RIPPLE EFFECT OF IMPACT



SHIFTING THE WORLD THROUGH
PASSION AND PURPOSE

Curated by
CATHY DERKSEN
Inspired by
EWA KREMPA

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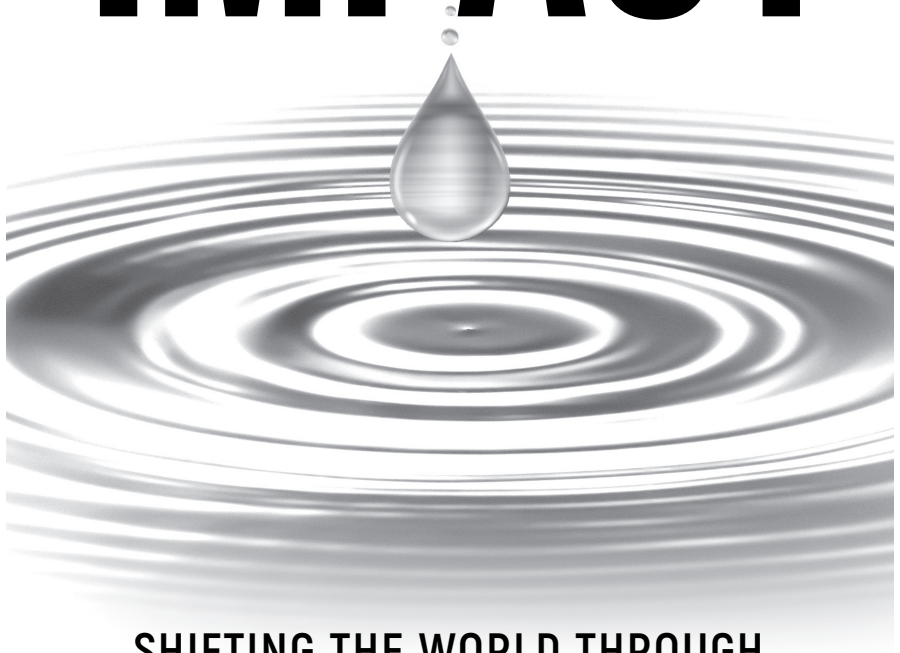


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RIPPLE EFFECT OF IMPACT



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PASSION AND PURPOSE**

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How Women Lead receives the Amazon sales proceeds from this book.

How Women Lead is a national nonprofit connecting 20,000 top executive women to activate their individual and collective power to achieve equity for women. Founded in 2012, the organization fights for change at all levels by affecting systems reform, mobilizing movements, education, research and access to opportunities like board seats and investing. How Women Lead's philanthropic arm, How Women Give, provides grants and invaluable connections to women's and girls' organizations on the frontlines of today's most critical issues. And its sister organization, How Women Invest, invites women to play big and powerfully in venture capital, making meaningful investments and propelling high-potential, women-led companies forward at scale.

For more information, visit www.howwomenlead.com.

Introduction

The intention of this book is to inspire you to imagine the ripple effect of impact that you can create in the world. Think bigger than the immediate consequences of your actions. Even something as simple as smiling at a stranger as you walk by can have an impact that stretches far beyond that interaction. Imagine the impact you can create with intentional action!

The members of this international team of authors have all created impact in their own way and have felt compelled to share their journey here with you. I know you will find inspiration in their stories, strategies, and words of wisdom.

I would like to thank each author in this book for taking on this challenge. Sharing your stories with the world can create its own ripple effect of impact.

I am honored to have been entrusted with their work and I am proud to be part of each one's individual journey into growing as an author.

Cathy Derksen

CHAPTER 1

Create a Ripple Effect of Impact Around the World

Cathy Derksen

*I dedicate this chapter to all of the women around the world who
are stepping into the next chapter of their life with
courage and tenacity.*

*“When women rise, they lift everyone else up around them.
This is the power of focusing on empowering women—it
creates exponential results, ripples, and impact, shaping
the future of our world” ~Dr. Claire Zammit*

What is at the core that drives most heart-centered entrepreneurs?
What is that central driving point that keeps us focused on our
mission?

For so many of us it's the need to create impact in the world. The need to know that we have made a positive difference that stretches far beyond ourselves.

I love the quote above by Dr. Claire Zammit. It reminds us about the massive shift we can create by collaboration and lifting each other on this journey. The impact we create can be amplified in amazing ways as we generate the ripple effect for each other.

In my younger years, I was always focused on doing positive things, but my vision was very limited. I only saw as far as working hard, raising happy kids, helping around the community, etc. It wasn't until I was in my 40s that I started feeling a calling to step into a bigger vision for myself.

I hit a time in life when I realized I was feeling stuck and numb. I was in an abusive marriage and worked in a toxic work environment and I felt trapped. There was a voice inside my head that kept telling me to break out of the cage my life had become. It was coaxing me to think bigger and create a life that would fill my heart and soul. My heart was telling me that I needed to find a way to help women around the world that would create true impact in their lives. I had no idea how I was going to do it, but I accepted the challenge.

The past decade of my life has been a whirlwind of massive change, personal growth, and constant learning. I have faced the challenge of leaving a 20-year marriage, becoming a single mom with two teenagers, and completely reinventing my life. I left behind a well-established career, twice, in this quest to discover my gifts for creating impact!

In 2011, I left a 25-year career in medical genetics that involved working in hospital labs and public education. I will always love the field of biology and genetics, but my work environment was toxic to the point of impacting my physical and mental health. I needed to

make some big changes. That was my first step toward discovering my unique gifts for creating true impact in the lives of women all around the world.

At that time in my life, I was under the misunderstanding that I needed to fit my career path into one of the boxes that had been presented to me as an option. I chose to become a financial planner, thinking it could be my path for helping women improve their lives. After ten years of working with big banks and investment companies, I came to the conclusion that I was too limited in the restrictions of that industry to truly address the issues that created challenges in women's lives. By that point in my journey, I had come to see that the options in my life were limitless. I did not need to fit my vision into a box that someone else had created.

In 2020, I made the decision to take on the journey as an entrepreneur and rebuilding my life based on my passion of supporting women around the world. It has not been easy, but I don't regret a minute of it. I have trusted my intuition to lead me in the direction of my calling.

The life I am living today was not one I would have imagined even five years ago. I have built a business focused on supporting women to embrace the next chapter of their life. I help them see we are surrounded by endless possibilities and opportunities. We are not too old to start something new. We are not obsolete after years of experience. This is the time to bring together our life experience and follow our passion. It has become a normal part of my day to have meetings with women in Europe and the UK in the morning, the Aussies in the afternoon, and the rest of the day filled with everyone in between. My global community has blossomed, and my books are all international projects.

One of the main ways I am helping women step into new possibilities is through books like this one you're reading right now. Make sure to

read all of the chapters. You will glean something from every woman inside of this book.

Many of the women contributing their story in these books are new authors who thought becoming a published author was just a far-off dream. Now they are embracing their new successes and taking on new challenges. The experience of working as a team with an international group of women to create these books opens opportunities that were not available to them before. Many of the authors in these books have used this platform to catapult their business and their personal growth.

Participating in these books has expanded the authors' international community and increased visibility for the entrepreneurs in the group. Some of the women have taken their books on book tours to new places. The books have even been the catalyst that took one of our authors from hiding her gifts and vision, to becoming a 3x bestselling author in one year, including her own solo book. Massive shifts are possible when we step into something new.

Women learn enormous life lessons through each other's stories. By learning how other women have taken on challenges in life, we find a new strength to overcome our own obstacles. By seeing examples of other women embracing the courage to step into new possibilities, we find new levels of courage to create change in our own life.

The ripple effect of impact that is created through these books goes beyond the individual authors. It impacts their families, their communities, and the clients they serve. It impacts the extended circle of every woman who reads the stories and shifts her own actions in response to them.

As you look for ways to create impact in the world, it is important to reflect on the people and events in your life that have had an impact on you.

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I think back to teachers who took me under their wing to nurture my skills and confidence. I think of people in my workplaces that supported me in taking on new roles and challenges. I also think of my friends and family who have believed in my vision and supported me through the tough time. There have been many friends and mentors on my journey as an entrepreneur that have had a deep impact on my success.

Even small acts of kindness like a simple smile as you pass a stranger on the street, greeting the cashier at the grocery store as you approach, can have a massive impact on the recipient. These small acts of kindness can change the trajectory of that person's day and that, dear reader, is the power of the ripple effect. It starts with you.

Whether your passion is focused on the environment, social change, your community, or protecting children around the world, each one of us has a role to play in creating positive change that extends far beyond our perception. You might be supporting entrepreneurs, artists, or your local sports team. We are all creating a ripple effect of impact in the lives that we touch. I encourage you to think big and act intentionally to bring positive change into the world.

If you feel a calling to create a ripple effect of impact, I encourage you to follow your heart. What excites and inspires you? What makes you feel energized? Follow those interests and find your own way of creating awareness and change. You can be the one who creates a movement that impacts lives on a global scale.

Cathy Derksen



Cathy Derksen is the founder of Inspired Tenacity. She is dedicated to improving the lives of the women in her community and around the world. Cathy is an international speaker and a 14x #1 bestselling author with stories that inspire readers to take a leap of faith into reaching for their big goals.

Cathy has created a platform supporting women to share their own inspiring stories in books such as this one. With her all-in-one program, Cathy takes you from chapter concept to published bestselling author in a simple, exciting process.

Cathy has two children (29 and 31 years) and 2 fur-babies. She lives near Vancouver, Canada.

She enjoys spending time in nature, travelling, meeting new people, and connecting with her community around the world.

Learn more about her upcoming book projects and other programs on her website at <https://inspiredtenacity.com>.

CHAPTER 2

You Are a Walking Manifestator

Alexa Pena

Dedicated to those aspiring to transcend their limits and break free from old patterns. May this chapter be a beacon to your higher self, guiding you towards the best version of you. And to my two boys who inspire me to become my highest self.

Ever pondered the origins of your self-identity? Most of us have been raised in vastly diverse environments compared to those in our immediate surroundings. Whether it's our culinary preferences, childhood TV shows, fashion sense, or a blend of other influences we've come to associate with our identities, these external factors have been shaped by the perspectives shared with us, either consciously or subconsciously, by people in our surroundings.

“Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it faith.” - Carl Jung

The undeniable truth is that each one of us harbors an inherent power, an ability to craft the life of our wildest dreams. What’s truly intriguing is as we journey through life, our paradigm is shaped not just by our personal experiences but also by the influences of those around us. Gradually, we allow the perspectives of others to mold our reality and self-image.

Have you ever paused to question the origin of your thoughts? Do you frequently find yourself closely entwined with your thoughts, believing them to be the essence of your being? I’ll candidly admit that throughout my entire childhood and adolescence, even up to the age of around 22, I identified so strongly with my thoughts that they became my very identity. If someone expressed a viewpoint I disagreed with, I felt compelled to ensure they grasped just how “wrong” they were for thinking differently. When confronted with alternative philosophies about life’s purpose or the path to genuine success, I instinctively questioned the motivations behind these differing perspectives.

Most of us, however, remain blissfully unaware until it’s too late, ensnared in the autopilot of our minds. Whether it’s the ceaseless thoughts that accompany our daily commute to work - “Why is the person in front of me driving so slowly?” or “Why is the person tailgating me from behind?” Thoughts follow along the lines of the ego, “Well, I’ll just slow down even more to make a point.” Or how about the moments when our children test our patience by squabbling with their siblings, and we perpetually struggle to maintain peace, our thoughts betray us with phrases like, “This is why I can’t expand my business, this is why I’m always falling behind.” Perhaps they revolve around our boss, failing to recognize our hard work and

leadership qualities, as we think, “They don’t value me here; they always favor someone else for recognition or promotion.” Or maybe it’s our significant other, provoking thoughts that make us question if we could find happiness elsewhere: “If I had married another person, everything would have turned out so much better,” or perhaps, “I’m always the one making plans, and he/she never takes the time to appreciate my efforts.”

The list is seemingly endless, our thoughts persistently racing through our minds. Yet, it’s vital to realize that all these thoughts conspire to keep us from achieving a higher level of awareness. A recent study conducted by healthybrain.org highlights the profound impact of our thoughts: “Your brain determines every aspect of your life, and without your brain, there is no self and no awareness of the world. Your brain is a three-pound universe that processes 70,000 thoughts each day using 100 billion neurons that connect at more than 500 trillion points through synapses that travel at a staggering 300 miles per hour.” Most of us are on autopilot and we don’t even recognize this.

Today, I am compelled to share a fragment of my personal narrative, for I wholeheartedly believe that this particular chapter was the catalyst for an irrevocable transformation in my life. As I sit here, penning these words, I find myself inundated with a whirlwind of emotions, serving as a poignant testament to the profound evolution I have undergone. This remarkable journey commenced as I became increasingly aware that I am not my thoughts, rather I am the consciousness that transcends them.

Growing up I was originally living with my grandparents and mother in El Paso, Texas, a town situated along the border with Juarez, Mexico. I perceived my life as rather ordinary, single mom raising me, grandparents, and normal home life. Although my father had decided to start a new family and seldom made time for me, I was, for the most

part, happy with my home life. That was all until the trajectory of my existence was forever altered.

One fateful night, my life took an unexpected turn, a turn that would shape the person I am today. It's a story etched in my memory like a classic Mozart composition. That night, everything I had known faded into the rearview mirror, leaving me bewildered and uncertain about the path ahead.

We were bound for an undisclosed location in Mexico, a journey born out of necessity rather than choice. The stark reality was that my mother could no longer remain in the United States. I was just a eight years old then, struggling to grasp the gravity of the situation. Our possessions, once cherished, were left behind, replaced by a hastily packed carry-on bag. Our world had been reduced to that single bag. As we arrived in Mexico, we were greeted by unfamiliar faces, people I had never met before. With that transition, my entire reality was upended. Overnight, I transformed from a carefree child into a young adult. The complex terrain of fear and uncertainty became my new reality, and I learned to conceal my emotions to shield my pregnant mother from worry.

During those tumultuous days, we faced moments of hunger and desperation. I recall one incident vividly—a piece of glass pierced my foot as I walked in threadbare sandals. The pain was excruciating, but a visit to the doctor was a luxury beyond our reach. I silently endured, determined not to burden my mother further.

There were days when sustenance was a distant dream. I remember one occasion when my mother managed to produce 20 pesos, barely a dollar, to buy a roadside burrito. It was scarcely enough to feed one person, yet we shared it among us, me, my mother, and my unborn brother. Moments like these made me feel as if life was happening to me, as if I had no control over my circumstances. We struggled to

afford nutritious meals, and I began to gain weight from eating cheap, unhealthy food. This led to bullying from those around us. Witnessing my suffering, my mother made the painful decision to send me to live with my grandmother in the United States. I intensely remember the car ride back, crossing over into El Paso, Texas, thinking that everything would return to normal, but I was mistaken. My grandparents, too, had faced adversity, losing their home and residing in a storage room, which became my new home. The bullying persisted, and I felt utterly lost. Fast forward to seventh grade, I decided to change my approach to life. I sought protection and belonging, distancing myself from bullies by seeking solace in those who could shield me. Our life experiences often shape our paradigms, and I was no exception. My actions began to spiral out of control. I acted out against my grandparents, ran away from home, and turned to substances to escape my pain. As I dwelled in my thoughts, I became more deeply entangled in the stories I told myself—I was unworthy, unlovable, and life was happening to me.

Yet, deep down, I knew I wanted more from life. I secured a job at the age of 15, driven by a desire for financial independence, to relieve the burden on my grandparents. It was during that time that I realized the power of manifestation, whether conscious or unconscious.

*“It’s better to conquer yourself than to win
a thousand battles.”*

-Siddrath Guatama Buddha

Fast forward, I secured a position at a call center, all the while pursuing my studies at a community college with dreams of becoming a botanist. However, when my 18th birthday arrived, my life changed. The revelation of my pregnancy felt like a profound turning point. It was as if I was on the cusp of the family I had yearned for. This was a new

challenge, juggling the demands of work, and impending motherhood, and my educational aspirations soon became overwhelming. Consequently, I made the decision to place my focus on my job at that juncture. My income was extremely low, making around \$16,000 dollars. Although life was hard, I wanted better. Subconsciously, I began to manifest new possibilities. Life, in its capricious manner, then presented me with what I can only describe as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I can still distinctly recall how fervently I had wished for a chance to grow and evolve. Then, one day, an unexpected message arrived on Facebook—an invitation to an event that would introduce me to a potential business opportunity.

For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. -Matthew 7:8

I've arrived at a profound realization that our minds stand as one of the most potent tools bestowed upon us. However, this intrinsic gift, which we receive as standard operating equipment, is oftentimes overseen and underappreciated. We place more value on things that cost us money versus things that we have been gifted.

Throughout the entirety of my life, I had been ensnared in a mindset of scarcity, a mentality of barely scraping by, and a pervasive sense of unworthiness. I harbored the belief that true happiness was a privilege reserved for those born into stable families, that success was attainable only through formal education, and that material wealth was the exclusive domain of the already wealthy.

Then came the event that would forever change my trajectory. If you've ever had encounters with multi-level marketing (MLM), your views might be positive or negative. For me, it turned out to be an

amazing opportunity because it opened doors to an entirely new world, one I had previously known nothing about.

When you're constantly surrounded by what you perceive as failures, it's easy to confine yourself within the limited boundaries of your present reality, neglecting the boundless possibilities inherent within the quantum field. It's an undeniable truth that everything is energy, and where you choose to direct your focus is precisely where life tends to flow. Attending that event was the turning point that shattered my preconceived limitations and expanded my understanding of what was truly possible.

Until that moment, I had never witnessed someone in their twenties purchasing a home for their parents, or encountered people who casually referred to their wealth as "generational." That seminar opened the doors of my perception to an entirely new realm of understanding. Inspired by this newfound perspective, I decided to move full force with this new opportunity. Simultaneously, I delved deeper into the recesses of my consciousness, harnessing the power of manifestation. As I allowed myself to remain receptive to the infinite opportunities the quantum field had to offer, another remarkable prospect presented itself. At the young age of 21, I ventured into the realm of Real Estate. Throughout my tenure in the Real Estate industry, I was in an abusive relationship. While still entangled in that relationship, I encountered numerous challenges. I didn't close a single deal, and my then-husband persistently urged me to quit. However, an inner voice whispered for me to persist. I finally decided to leave him and as I embarked on a new chapter as a single mother once more, that feeling, that unwavering knowing and an unshakeable belief in myself kept me moving forward. In that very year, I surpassed my records, closing 20 transactions. The subsequent year witnessed even greater achievements, with over 40 successfully closed transactions. The year following that, I shattered

my previous records once more, closing over 60 homes, all achieved independently. This propelled my business into the realm of over six figures. The moment I comprehended the magnitude of my earnings, tears welled up in my eyes. I was overwhelmed by the realization that in every credit card application I had ever submitted before, I would always state my income was \$100,000 (when I was nowhere near this), yet recognizing I had surpassed this, was a testament to the power of knowing and believing in something intangible yet undeniably real—a true manifestation.

As I share these words and my journey, I'm filled with an overwhelming sense of purpose. You see, I'm currently in the process of preparing for my very first TEDx Talk, and I'm in the midst of writing another book. I am a Peak Performance coach, teaching others how to break free from their limiting beliefs and design the life they truly desire. Why do I share all of this? Because I believe we all have a story; however, that doesn't have to define who we want to be. I want you to understand that there's a profound reason why you're here, right now, reading these words. In the deepest recesses of your being, you've been manifesting a brighter day, an opportunity for transformation, a chance to break free from the chains that may have bound you. Whether you attribute it to the universe, God, source energy, or whatever resonates most deeply with your soul, know this: the forces of the universe are here to support you on your journey. All that's required of you is that very first step, and the unwavering commitment to continue moving forward.

Understand this fundamental truth: no external person, possession, or place can ever bestow upon you true happiness, genuine freedom, inner serenity, or profound bliss until you embark on the profound journey of internal transformation.

Each one of us carries within us a story, a narrative that serves as the vessel for a message, a message capable of touching hearts, illuminating paths, and lifting others out of the darkness they may find themselves in. Remember, it is through our encounters with adversity and hardship that we learn to truly appreciate the beauty of the good. You, my dear reader, are a living, breathing manifestation of the limitless potential that resides within each of us.

It's time to embrace your true calling, step into your power, and begin crafting the life you were undeniably destined to lead. The journey ahead may not always be easy, but with every step you take, with every ounce of belief you invest in yourself, and with every act of courage you muster, you move closer to the life you've envisioned. You are the architect of your destiny, the author of your story, and the master of your own transformation. Remember, a dream is simply a thought; energy brings it to life. You are a walking manifestation. Stop being the extra in your own movie; be the star you are meant to be.

*Visualize, Embody, Transform – Be the Walking
Manifestator. -Alexa Pena*

Alexa Pena



Alexa Pena, renowned as the ‘Walking Manifestator,’ is a visionary coach and author dedicated to guiding individuals towards an abundant life. With a unique blend of universal laws and psychological insights, Alexa empowers her clients to transcend limiting beliefs and embrace their true potential. Specializing in abundance, wealth creation, and manifestation, her approach is deeply rooted in the conviction that visualization and embodiment of one’s best self are crucial for achieving one’s highest aspirations.

Through her transformative coaching, Alexa helps individuals cultivate an abundance mindset, essential for personal expansion and fulfillment. Her services include abundance coaching, wealth creation strategies, manifestation workshops, and purpose discovery sessions, all designed to foster a healthy, prosperous lifestyle.

Alexa’s teachings draw from the wisdom of thought leaders like Dr. Joe Dispenza and Neville Goddard, combined with ancient yogic philosophies. She offers actionable steps for personal growth, emphasizing the importance of aligning thoughts, emotions, and actions with one’s goals. Alexa Pena invites you to embark on a transformative journey with her, to become the creator of your destiny and live a life of abundance, happiness, and purpose.

Connect with Alexa at <https://linktr.ee/investwithalexa>.

CHAPTER 3

The Melody of Transformation: Finding Your Brilliant Voice

Amy Louise Blake

I dedicate this chapter to the many amazing teachers I have in my life. Many thanks to Jennifer Paty, M.Div; Hedy Schleifer, MA; Roger Love; Paul Scheele, PhD; Shirley Jean Schmidt, MA; Claire Zammit, PhD; Maya Kollman, PhD; Ellyn Bader, PhD, and many others whose ripples have deeply influenced me.

In contemplating the ripple effect, an image of my mother comes to my mind. There she is in a bright pink two-piece bathing suit with a c-section scar, purple and red, that goes from here to there looking angry and painful. My coming into the world (and if we can look back to the 1960s honestly, not the greatest surgical techniques) caused that massive scar. On the one hand, a stunning look and on the other, I felt

responsible for her pain and wondered how my existence could do that to someone I dearly loved.

That I had to be extracted from the womb is no real surprise. Initially, I was excited to come into the world, to learn the lessons of my soul's journey, to get a family that would help me with the necessary experiences so that my inner light could be a beacon for others. From the spirit world, you think you are ready for anything. Then, on the way down, I remember screaming "Noooo!" and trying to claw my way back up. Once I hit the point of no return, I imagine in my gestational distress, I decided I was just not going to come out. But that was not to be and unintentionally I created the first big ripple that resulted in what looked like the earth's upset after an archeological dig gone horribly wrong.

It's not that anyone blamed me...but me. However, in those thoughts of "*I shouldn't be here. I don't belong. I'm too much. My very existence causes pain,*" unconscious decisions were made then they were reinforced by the dance of family dysfunction that was well underway by the time I arrived.

I tried to be good and not make waves. I was mildly successful, but the most profound impact was how my belief in the value of not making waves supported and reinforced my nervous system's go-to survival adaptation: the superpower of going invisible. I would go invisible, and people would literally not see me. My survival system was forged by living in untenable circumstances – as a child who was being abused inside of her own family, being able to move through my life unnoticed meant I stood a better chance at avoiding being a target.

I also went unnoticed because I didn't use my voice. I didn't trust the people inside my family and trusting people on the outside was an even harder sell. My family had secrets and as a child I feared that if I spoke, something would slip out and I would betray them. When the

teacher called on me in high school, the part of me more dedicated to survival than success would make it to my voice first and out of my mouth would come the words, “I don’t know.” It wasn’t until much later that I learned sound waves can shake loose what the body is trying to hold outside of conscious awareness. When I was growing up, it was all in lock-down.

My skill at disappearing myself was epic. This worked beautifully for me until, of course, it didn’t. I had a sense of purpose that my coming into the world was to help uplevel humanity. Once I was here for a while, I realized that was going to have to happen through transforming the pain I was experiencing, breaking through my own limiting beliefs, and bringing myself into that circle of love and light that I held for humanity. I had to stop seeing myself as separate from humanity, grow the skills and capacity for true connection and be willing to risk having an impact.

Armed with my bachelor’s in psychology and my master’s in social work, I was on my way to saving the world, or so I thought. I call it my teenage Miss America moment when I concluded that if I could help even one child not experience what I did in childhood then my life would be worthwhile. When you have a plan, there is often a path that emerges which you really need to take. As I took the path of healing my own wounds, I began reconnecting with parts of myself that I had long lost hope could ever be recovered. As I did, the impact of my work with others grew. Eventually I attained a level of depth and breadth in both trauma and relationship therapy. I was having an impact and helping people build lives that inspired them to be the best version of themselves. This was the transformation that I had hoped to guide - healing the world one person and one relationship at a time.

When clients I helped tell me how the work we did together has healed their past and is transforming their relationship with their

children and future generations, that is a wave of success I could ride into retirement. That would have been a good plan, but there was a more compelling path that emerged. I was ready to be more visible and have greater impact professionally. And that would require me to be seen and heard and connect with larger groups of people.

I had a few decades of very intense life altering healing work under my belt; I had professional success; and still the strength of my survival pattern met the depth of my desire to risk and grow to be more visible. Survival has a way of winning over desire. As my teacher and mentor, Hedy Schleifer, used to say: “You cannot be in survival and connection at the same time.” As I made attempts to step out of my comfort zone and be more visible, it became painfully apparent that I had frozen places inside. It is hard to create ripples of change when you are frozen. Technically speaking, my nervous system was patterned in what Stephen Porges describes in his Polyvagal Theory as dorsal vagal shutdown. This is a state when your nervous system is activated into fight/flight, but you are too young and powerless to do either successfully, so you freeze. As an adult, when I was visible, whether that was through the eye of the camera or in front of larger groups, my early survival pattern was being reactivated.

As I kept challenging myself to bring my gifts to the world in a bigger way, I repeatedly experienced losing connection to the thinking part of my brain and my words skittering away. My voice was no help either; it was very soft and monotone. My nervousness was often painfully visible and, to top it off, I would swallow my words at the most impactful part of what I was saying. I was living an internal battle of wanting to have impact and wanting to remain under the radar. This was not the kind of presence or voice that would create a vibration capable of igniting a world changing ripple.

I thought I was just born with a soft, quiet voice so I purchased sound equipment, but it quickly became apparent that amplifying a monotone voice was not the answer to inspiring people. This was highly distressing. My disappointment in myself ran a course of, “Why can’t you just be satisfied with the success you’ve had?,” “Who do you think you are anyway to want something more?” These internal messages served to pull me back down every time I tried and struggled to bring my gifts to the world in a bigger way.

But the yearning inside of me just wouldn’t stop. I believe it couldn’t stop because it is part of the evolutionary force to carry forward a greater vision for the world, of helping and inspiring people, as well as stepping into a greater vision of who I could be.

In my pursuit of more knowledge about how to launch my bigger ideas, I met renown voice coach, Roger Love, who soon became a teacher and mentor for the next biggest transformation that would happen in my life. Working with Roger was challenging for me. I felt awful that he had to listen to my voice – and with headphones on. He gave me great gems: “Amy, you can’t sound more depressed than the patients you work with.” “Your voice is not for you; it is for your listener.” He told me he was challenging me because he knew I could do it. He held a bigger vision for me and my voice than I could see for myself and that was something I had never experienced before. The connection and support I had with Roger inspired me to keep working on my voice no matter what I thought about how I sounded.

To put it nicely, I would say that I was a remedial voice student, and it took a while to break through all the frozenness holding my voice back. But over time, it happened. I don’t know the exact moment, but I felt lighter, my voice felt freer, I could see people responding to me, being influenced by me, and listening to me in ways that had not happened in the past. And when I noticed people noticing me, I didn’t

go invisible. It wasn't just the frozenness on the inside that changed, my body and facial expressions also became freer and more congruent. I had never anticipated that embodying my voice would shred some of the painful lingering effects of early trauma. It is exciting and completely surprising to be on this path of growth and transformation with my voice leading the way.

When the opportunity came about to learn the vocal coaching methods that Roger Love used with me, I jumped at the chance. Helping people make transformational change in their lives is what gets me up in the morning and keeps me going. I wanted to help people have the kind of powerful vocal transformation I experienced where the change didn't just happen at the level of my voice, it happened at the level of my identity. I didn't know exactly how I would integrate voice coaching into my work, but I knew I had to figure it out. Trauma gets caught in the throat for so many people. I knew there was a place for my skillset especially for people who also wanted to step into visibility, grow their confidence, and have a voice that would support them bringing their gifts into the world.

I am now a Roger Love Method Certified Master Coach for Speaking Voice and I get to work with people who do amazing life affirming things in the world. When they learn to embody their voice and understand how to use it to emotionally connect with and inspire others, the positive ripples expand exponentially. This was not my plan, but I am so glad I took the path that emerged because finding my voice has helped me to help more people experience transformational change.

Some people experience a vocal transformation very quickly with a suggestion to adjust their breathing or mouth position. For other people, it's a bigger journey that must address the way the full expression of their voice and their being was discouraged or prohibited. Learning to embody your voice while also addressing any inner barriers of negative

beliefs, connecting with the deeper truth of who you are, and being supported in staying on your path of transformation is a powerful way to become yourself. Voice coaching combined with transformational coaching is a phenomenal approach to this greater level of self-actualization.

Claire Zammit, PhD, the founder of The Institute for Woman-Centered Coaching, Training and Leadership has a great saying: “A butterfly is not a healed caterpillar.” Healing is of course enormously valuable. Growth, however, is absolutely essential for the survival of our planet. The world needs more adults who have both healed and grown up bringing their vision and message to the world with voices that are powerful and can move people to take inspired action.

I love having a focus on healing, growth and transformation. I tell my clients that I like to go for the mountaintop, and they of course can get off the journey at any point along the way. For some, being able to have coping skills to deal with a difficult past and a difficult present life is enough. There are others who desire and are capable of deep healing where old wounds and the buttons that used to get pushed are just no longer there. It is enormously freeing to not have to be mindful of triggers and remember the cognitive workarounds to keep from being reactive. Then, there is the mountaintop of growth that leads to transformational change and becoming the person we were meant to be. This is where our old survival suit can at least be hung up in the closet and we can spend more time connected to our deeper essence and aliveness. These are the changemakers I love to support in their journey because the world benefits when our lives, our relationships, our families, our communities and beyond are influenced and led by people who are connected to their essence and aliveness.

It has been a fascinating journey to roll together my skills as a psychotherapist, a vocal coach for speakers and a transformational

coach. I feel enormously blessed to be able to use these skills and tools to help people heal, grow and develop their authentic voice so they can positively influence the world. I love thinking about how the ripples that come from healing, growth and vocal transformation have the power to not only go back in time to address the trauma of our ancestors but move powerfully into the future to forge a path toward post-traumatic growth and world peace.

What about the ripples in your life? Are you following a plan and noticing a path trying to emerge. Do you feel stuck, like you have hit a wall? Perhaps you want to bring your unique gifts to the world and have more influence. It is great to have a plan but even more valuable to know how to follow the path that emerges. Getting support for staying on the path can be essential because it is in deviating from the plan that the limiting beliefs start holding us back. My plan was to continue to learn more in order to do more. Allowing the inspiration to encourage me to take new paths to develop my voice and to transform at the level of identity have been life changing. It was not in learning more but in growing into a more authentic version of myself that allows me to have the impact I desire.

Oftentimes you can create more ripples when you follow the path that inspires you rather than staying with your plan. And if that takes you out of your comfort zone... Welcome, you are coming home to yourself, and the world needs to hear what you have to say. I am cheering you on!

Amy Louise Blake



Amy Louise Blake specializes in helping professional women and changemakers break through barriers to achieve deeper connections and have greater influence. Amy guides her clients to tap into their inner resources, find their voice, build healthy relationships, and transform experiences of shame, isolation and trauma into sources of healing, joy and wholeness.

Amy firmly believes that the world needs healthy individuals who show up authentically and with power, compassion and empathy. She is committed to sharing the pathways that support the healing, growth, and transformation necessary for humanity to thrive.

Certified as a Woman-Centered Transformational Coach and a Roger Love Method Master Voice Coach for speaking voice, Amy brings a unique skillset to her coaching practice. With over 35 years of experience as a psychotherapist specializing in couples and trauma work, Amy combines her areas of training and expertise to provide comprehensive support to her clients.

Amy holds a master's degree in Social Work and a bachelor's degree in Psychology from The University of Michigan, solidifying her foundation in understanding systems and human behavior.

Through her work, Amy is dedicated to helping individuals break free from limitations, find their voice, and bring their unique gifts and talents to the world from a place of vitality, generativity, and a desire to create a positive impact.

For more information about Amy Blake and her programs, visit <http://www.unlockyourbrilliance.org>.

CHAPTER 4

Shipwrecked to Lighthouse Beacon

Christine Jaya Williamson

To my best friend and husband, Chad, and to my amazing daughters, Jennah and Mikayla. Everything I do is to make the world a better place for you. I love you!

Have you ever watched a storm roll in, not knowing what it would bring, how fast it would arrive, or how long it would last? I remember visiting my cousin's ranch and seeing a storm off in the distance, the farmers working to get the crops in before it hit. Other times I remember watching storms form over the water, mesmerized by the dark sea churning in response to its power.

I've always been fascinated with storms. Perhaps because the metaphor between storms in nature were a reflection of the storms within me: trauma, abuse, sexual assault, an eating disorder, the death of close family and friends, and multiple bouts with severe mental

health challenges. The storm that would eventually take me down sat brewing off the coastline of my life for years before it finally hit.

My childhood was one of abuse and emotional neglect. I never felt accepted or understood by my family and suffered from debilitating anxiety. That led to depression, psychosis, and eating disorders that landed me in the hospital. I was put on medications that left me numb. The suffering I pushed below the surface was reflected in my outer world: I struggled with severe postpartum depression, job losses, multiple surgeries, illnesses, and daily dramas.

The catalyst that brought everything to the surface was learning I was the mother of a child with multiple disabilities. Anyone with a child knows that their pain supersedes your own. You will move mountains to ease their pain. For 13 years, I searched desperately for answers as my daughter got harder to handle.

It wasn't until about 11 years into the search that I started to crack under the pressure. What I was feeling had started to feel normal. I didn't think I needed help to deal with my emotions, convinced that no real damage was being done. I gravitated toward friends who drank because I wanted to escape the heavy responsibilities of home, not realizing how this was slowly taking me further away from where I needed to go. The pressure was mounting. Wine became my closest companion as my social drinking turned to drinking alone. It felt like the only way to escape the reality of a life I didn't choose and couldn't accept. I wanted what I thought the life I'd been handed was taking from me. The deeper truth was that I was unwilling to grow into the person life was asking me to become. The more time passed without hope of help, the more I drank to numb the pain, and the more isolated I felt.

Although I was attempting to numb myself from reality, I never gave up the search for answers. As my daughter got worse, my determination

grew stronger. It eventually paid off, yet, while it was validating to get answers, I wasn't prepared for the magnitude of what we were facing. We received multiple diagnoses, and sitting in the doctor's office, I could feel myself leaving my body. I tried to focus on what she was saying, "You've done such a good job with your daughter that she was hard to diagnose." Then I began to take in her words: Autism, Intellectual disabilities, Sensory processing disorder, Auditory processing disorder, Chronic general anxiety disorder, Dyslexia, Major depressive episodes, OCD tendencies, Irlen Syndrome... The dam broke.

I heard her talking, while I was freefalling into a dark abyss. The storm had hit, tsunami sirens blaring, people screaming. From beneath the waves I heard the doctor say to my husband Chad, "I'm more concerned about her." Who? Our daughter? No. She was talking about me. It took every ounce of strength to hold on and try to understand what she was saying. I wanted to scream, but I was sucked beneath the waves again.

Have you ever experienced a moment where you felt so detached from your body that time stood still? It feels like a lifetime has passed, but when you're slammed back into reality, the only thing that stopped was you. That's what happened to me. The world and everyone in it continued, unaware that I'd checked out. I remained in this haze for a long time.

I was brought back to the present when Chad planned a getaway and arranged for my mom to take care of our girls. I was moved and grateful for this attempt to give me rest. We got away, but there was no rest or escape from my role as caregiver. My daughter continued to call because I was her lifeline, the one to soothe everything that threatened her sense of peace. But how could I locate my own peace so I could offer an ever-flowing supply to her? The calls kept coming, and I was desperate for more time alone. "Does that make me a bad mom?," I

asked myself. I needed more time to connect to what she needed, and to figure out where to start.

Soon after our daughter's diagnosis, we decided to move. The prospect of a fresh start excited me, but it was physically and emotionally demanding. There was still so much to do, learn, feel and accept. It would be another year from the diagnosis before I experienced a true shift.

There is no preparation for a breakdown. Even if there are warnings, you don't know when, how strong, or how long you'll be taken down. It started when we were packing up our house. Storm clouds gathered, but I needed to get the house packed up, and my child needed my attention, so I ignored them.

When I closed the door to the old house, I believed I was also closing the door on the storm clouds. Then, while lying in bed at my in-laws' cottage, listening to the fire crackle outside, I could feel the clouds descending. My kids were calling for me to come outside to the fire, yet I felt deeply alone. I knew then that the storm was coming from deep inside me and I couldn't escape it by moving to a new place. I pushed it away and went out to join my family.

That night I told Chad there was something really wrong with me. My pee was a weird color, my nails were brittle, my hair was falling out, I was always exhausted and everything I ate went right through me. Chad promised to take me for a check-up when we got to our new home. I got significantly worse over the next two weeks and could not get out of bed, keep food in, or stop crying. I had never been so terrified.

At the hospital, they ran tests and the doctor said that several organs weren't working correctly, but that my issues couldn't be treated medically. He said, "I should not be telling you this, but I have seen this a lot. What you are experiencing is a mental, emotional, and physical

breakdown: burnout. And while I don't have a psychology degree, there is something called C-PTSD, Complex post-traumatic stress disorder. We cannot treat it medically, but if you don't get help, you will not survive to talk about it." I didn't know where to start, I just knew I had to.

Although I couldn't get out of bed, I wasn't sleeping. I lay awake at 2:00 a.m. Googling things like, "How do you heal burnout?," "What do you do when your heart is beating too fast?," and, "What is C-PTSD and how do you begin to heal it"? There's a lot of scary stuff online. According to some sources, there was no cure for what I was experiencing. Fortunately, I found a doctor who lived 600 meters from my home who specialized in complex women's health issues. He couldn't believe I was still walking. My hormones were depleted, so after a number of tests, he gave me bioidentical hormones, anti-anxiety medication and supplements. We also came up with a food and sleep plan, and I started therapy.

Our family therapist had mainly been helping our daughter and I hoped she could decipher what the doctor said in a way I could understand. I learned that I needed to help myself and that no one else could do this work for me. I was angry and terrified that I would die if I didn't figure it out in time. I felt abandoned, alone, useless, and ignored.

What I learned is that the body can only follow the mind. And so that's where I needed to start. I sat in my therapist's office sobbing and absolutely shattered. "My heart is completely broken. I am in ruins, and my life is no longer working. How do I even begin to come back from this?"

As I sat there feeling small and alone, she asked, "Christine, do you love yourself?" I wanted to scream, "*What's to love? Don't you see me?*," I managed a feeble "No" amid desperate tears.

“Are you willing to learn to love yourself?”

This was pointless, I thought. Inwardly, I rolled my eyes. I was too emotionally drained to utter more than a whisper, “I don’t know how.”

Are you willing, to be willing, to learn to love yourself?”

“Maybe,” I said “What do I have to do?”

The instructions seemed simple and also challenging. Ten seconds, three times a day, look in the mirror, hand over my shattered heart, look into my tired eyes, and say, “Christine, I am willing to be willing to learn to love you.”

As I did this, something miraculous started to happen. First, so many tears. Then, it was like a little girl was peeking out from under the bed, and she wanted to hear more. After 60 days, I shifted to “I am willing to learn to love you, plus, I think you’re cool.” Finally, I found more nice things to say every day, things like, “You’re special to me, talented, valuable, sweet, kind, and even kind of a genius.” I started writing things that I wanted and needed to hear: “I am a solution creator; creative ideas always come to me.” Finally, I was able to say and mean, “Christine, I love you. I chose you. You are a precious gift, and you make me smile.”

A seismic shift changes everything. And once it happens, you can’t go back. Self-healing is a journey of self-compassion and acceptance on a deeper level.

One night I had a dream that really shook me. I was sitting under a tree, watching the waves, feeling the warm breeze as each wave began feeling lighter, more peaceful, and more whole. Then there was a noise. It startled me, snapping me out of the moment. From the depths of the water came a dark, ugly creature who snarled at me, “You missed me during your clearing and healing. I’m still here, and you can’t get rid of me.” I wanted to run and hide. But then I stopped; I knew this monster: I feared God / the Universe wants to hurt me and make me suffer. I feared being helpless.

During my healing journey, I learned that that's not true. God loves me. I only need to believe and trust it. Forgiveness opens the door to self-love. It would just take time to learn what I needed to forgive, how to trust the process of life, and surrender to God's plan. It didn't happen overnight, but I was changing for the better. Things that triggered me before had lost their power over me.

Celebrating myself for small successes was new, and initially uncomfortable. Over time, I created healthy habits. I was gentle with myself, offering myself grace. I didn't judge my feelings or my process. Instead, I cultivated love, compassion, and understanding. Today my mantra is, "I love, accept, and approve of myself. I give myself permission to feel, be and do me."

As my mind, body, and emotions healed, and my health improved, something was still missing. I listened to the wisdom my soul was trying to share. "What do I need to focus on?" The answer came: "My spiritual healing." I knew that this was the deepest root, where everything else comes from.

I looked in the mirror, my hand over my heart, made eye contact with my traumatized spirit, and said, "I love you, I see you; let's figure out how to heal you." I started to acknowledge all the pain, abuse, and neglect. I felt into each emotion, integrating love, kindness, empathy, and forgiveness. I released everything I thought I knew and was left with a burning question, "Why am I here?"

I learned different ways to open up to spiritual growth and healing. I did a year-long Shamanic journey, learning tools and spiritual habits, going deeper within to connect. I discovered that I am deeply connected to all creation.

In March 2020, on a boat in Florida, a woman approached me, asking if she could share something with me. "Of course!," I answered.

She said, “I see you as a bridge of hope, healing, and transformation for humanity. I don’t know you, yet my spirit guides show me this.” A picture of why I am here emerged like a picture from a polaroid camera. My spirit stood at attention like a soldier on roll call.

My passion ignited, I looked into courses and certifications. A birth chart astrology reading became a breakthrough for my soul’s clarity and healing. Everything in my life was there among the stars from birth. I *was* made to be here. And from there a bigger question rose from within: “What is my role in helping the Universe/God/Spirit fulfill its purpose? It’s not just about me. How do I rise to live my potential to assist the healing of humanity?”

The storms in life will always come and go. Even while writing this, our special needs daughter has received further serious, life altering diagnoses. Covid happened, causing people to come and go from our lives. But no matter what life brings, I know that I can navigate it. I’ve learned that it’s possible to go from being shipwrecked to being your own lighthouse beacon. Each of us has that in us.

I’m here to create a space for women who have lost all sense of hope and direction, who are exhausted and burnt out. I am here to support them to connect to their deepest yearning, transform their trauma, and become the lighthouse beacon in their own lives.

I survived a destructive storm and learned to trust that I create solutions and value. The world needs my medicine. I know, source, cultivate, and trust that the universe is guiding and supporting me.

My new story is that I deeply care about other people. I am here to contribute to humanity’s transformation, evolution, and advancement and create openings for the flow of life to emerge in new and powerful ways for all. I serve with empathy, compassion, and love. I am the beacon of hope I was born to be.

Christine Jaya Williamson



Christine Jaya Williamson is a proud mother of two girls (one with multiple-diagnosed special needs), wife to a wonderful man, and an emotional trauma survivor who lives in Surrey, British Columbia, Canada. She is also a coach and mentor who is passionate about supporting women to recover their inner power and resilience. Christine knows firsthand how it is to feel like you're drowning in overwhelm and anxiety and what it's like to need support when the seas get rough.

Coming from a place of curiosity and exploration of possibility, Christine is committed to staying on a journey of self-awareness, self-compassion and empathy, and learning to embrace new skills and habits that allow her to release self-judgment and be a calm, harmony-filled mom.

Christine offers a fun, safe space for moms who are ready to embrace this journey of discovery so that they too may experience release from those feelings of overwhelm, self-doubt, fear, shame, anxiety and constant comparison to other moms. She also loves working with women who aren't moms that also feel the yearning

within for something more in their lives and want to explore and connect to it.

Christine is here to help YOU to connect to YOUR deepest yearning, turn towards yourself, and still be the amazing woman that you already are!

Connect with Christine at <https://mybeaconofhopecoach.com>.

CHAPTER 5

My Grandmother's Legacy: Lessons in Excellence, Service, and Perseverance

Dauwn (Parker) Houston

To my grandmother, Viola Thomas, whose unwavering love, guidance, and belief in me shaped the woman I am today. Your legacy of excellence, service, and perseverance lives on through the ripples you created. This chapter is a testament to the power of your influence and the strength of our bond.

Growing up on the west side of Chicago with my grandmother, Viola Thomas, wasn't your typical white picket fence childhood. But you know what? It shaped me into the person I am today. My grandmother was my rock, my guiding light. She molded me, and that's what I

call a ripple effect – when someone comes into your life and changes everything. This chapter is dedicated to her.

Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way.

~Booker T. Washington

You see, my grandmother was an educator, so in our house, academic excellence wasn't just expected, it was a given. I am a product of Chicago Public Schools, but going to my neighborhood school was not an option. The routine of attending schools that were carefully selected by my grandmother across the city of Chicago started in kindergarten, and let me tell you, the commute was no joke. But it was worth it. Gifted programs, summer camp at the University of Chicago, even an internship at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory – that was my life. And when I brought home straight A's, well, that was just meeting my grandmother's expectations.

But it wasn't all about academics. My grandmother believed in a well-rounded education and that's why I had to learn an instrument. Every Saturday we'd trek to the Chicago southside for my piano lessons with Sydonia Brooks, a legend in the black music scene of Chicago. And sports? My grandmother saw my participation as a way to build character, practice discipline, and stay healthy. I loved running track, but she pushed me to play tennis. It was tough at first, but by junior year I was the number one singles player. It's funny how something you're forced to learn can become a lifelong passion. I still compete in recreational tennis leagues today!

Service is the rent we pay for being. It is the very purpose of life, and not something you do in your spare time.

~Marian Wright Edelman

Church wasn't just a Sunday routine; it was a place I wanted to be. It kept me grounded and focused on spreading love and kindness. The church became my village, a place where adults looked out for me and cheered me on.

At just 10 years old, I started giving back. Every year, I hosted a piano concert to raise money for a scholarship fund that my grandmother set up in honor of my late grandfather. The scholarships helped students offset the cost of books, travel home, and other living expenses that weren't always fully covered by financial aid. It was a cause close to my heart, and I knew how much of a difference it could make in someone's life.

Preparing for those concerts was intense. I practiced for hours on end, perfecting each piece. When the day of the concert arrived, and I saw the faces of the people in the audience, I knew it was all worth it. There's nothing quite like the feeling of using my talent to make a difference in someone's life, to help them pursue their dreams.

As I grew older, I started teaching vacation bible school. Many of the kids came from tough backgrounds, like the Henry Horner Public Housing. They'd come to vacation bible school just to have a safe place to go and a meal to eat.

There was this one boy, a five-year-old, who really stood out to me. He struggled with his ABCs and couldn't sit still. I noticed he had scratch marks on his arms and dirt on his body. So, I took him to the bathroom and helped him clean up. It made a world of difference. He stopped fidgeting and started engaging in the lessons. I gave him a paper to practice his ABCs, and just two days later, he knew them all. From then on, we'd always wash up before learning. By the end of that summer, he was an emerging reader.

Later, in 2016, I helped develop Launch Academy, a summer camp program that focused on STEM. Each summer we'd serve 100 students

from kindergarten through 8th grade. It was hands-on, engaging, and I continued to support it as a board member and Chief Technology Officer through 2019.

My commitment to service, however, didn't stop there. I'm passionate about empowering women and people of color who are looking to start their own consulting businesses. I often get contacted on LinkedIn for informational interviews, and I'm always happy to give my time to offer advice or share strategies. I know how challenging it can be to navigate the business world as a minority, and I want to do my part to help others succeed.

Whether it's sharing my experiences, offering guidance on business plans, or just being a sounding board for ideas, I believe in paying it forward. I've been fortunate to have mentors and advocates throughout my life, and I feel it's my duty to do the same for others.

You know, it all started with those piano concerts. They taught me the power of using my skills and talents to serve others. They showed me that even a 10-year-old can make a difference in someone's life. And that's a lesson I've carried with me ever since. Whether it's through music, teaching, mentoring, or consulting, I'm committed to using my abilities to uplift and empower others. Because at the end of the day, that's what gives my life meaning and purpose.

Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another's uniqueness. ~Ola Joseph

Now, don't get me wrong, my grandmother was my unwavering supporter, and she always wanted to see me succeed. But not everyone was in my corner. There were plenty of people who underestimated me or weren't supportive at all. Growing up, I didn't fit the stereotype of a black student from the west side of Chicago. So when I excelled academically, people were surprised.

I remember in 5th grade, when my school instituted end-of-year academic honors like Magna Cum Laude and Summa Cum Laude. I was one of only three students in the entire school to achieve Magna Cum Laude, which required straight A's. You'd think people would have been congratulating me, but instead, I kept hearing how surprised they were. It was strange to me because I had been getting mostly A's my entire elementary school career.

Even when I was applying to the University of Illinois, my high school guidance counselor doubted me, despite my high GPA. But you know what? Those experiences, they shaped me. They made me stronger. They taught me to take the time to get to know people for who they are, not just what they look like or where they come from. It made me understand the power of diversity and the importance of empowering women.

I realized that I could be a bridge, offering opportunities to those who are often overlooked or underestimated, just like my grandmother did for me. When my guidance counselor doubted me, my grandmother found me a mentor through the Society of Women Engineers. That mentor reviewed my academics and encouraged me to pursue engineering. Her support meant everything. It showed me the power of representation.

And you know what? I carried that lesson with me. Even later in my career, as a consultant, I've had people assume I'm part of the cleaning staff just because I'm a black woman. Even though I am wearing a business suit and heels, they'd ask me to refill the soap dispenser in the bathroom or clean the dishes in the break room. It's a reminder that prejudice is still alive and well. But instead of letting it get me down, I use it as motivation. I strive to create opportunities for others, to build bridges, and to empower those who are often overlooked.

Because when all is said and done, diversity isn't about how we differ. It's about embracing each other's uniqueness. It's about recognizing the strength and potential in everyone, no matter what they look like or where they come from. That's something I learned from my grandmother, and it's a lesson I carry with me every single day.

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you. ~Maya Angelou

Let me tell you, I've had my share of untold stories. Like in college, when I decided to change my major. It wasn't just a simple switch; I was giving up a full scholarship and a guaranteed job from 3M. In a lot of black families, taking the safe route is drilled into us from a young age. It's not just about playing it safe; it's about survival. Given our history, our parents and grandparents often discourage us from taking risks or exploring the unknown. They want to protect us from the additional stress and hardship that comes with being black in America.

So when I decided to pursue applied mathematics instead of engineering, my family was horrified. They couldn't understand why I would give up a secure path for an uncertain future. But I knew engineering wasn't my calling. Applied mathematics allowed me to graduate on time, even though I had no idea what kind of career it would lead to. My first job out of college was with IBM, supporting their new mobile sales force. It was a leap of faith, and it paid off. I found that in the growing field of Information Technology I could directly impact people and solve puzzles. I knew I had found my thing.

Fast forward 15 years. I was comfortable in a senior management position, and life was predictable. But I wanted to shake things up. So, I started my own business, Precision Partners, in 2013. It was

intimidating, but my husband, Mario, was my biggest cheerleader. He had 20 years of experience as an independent contractor and encouraged me to try consulting on my terms.

Now, I could talk about revenue and personal growth, but that's not what's most important to me. What matters is the company culture I've created. At Precision Partners, doing the right thing is critical. We provide value to our clients with integrity. Even if the news is bad, we give it to them straight.

I haven't done everything perfectly. I've had hard lessons in business accounting and tax codes. I've learned that delivering great services isn't enough; you need to allocate time for sales and marketing strategies. But my biggest lesson was to be clear on my strengths and weaknesses and ask for help when I need it.

Precision Partners isn't about me; it's about our small group of senior consultants providing value through excellence, personal integrity, and service to the Advancement industry. We're not focused on fast-paced growth. Our staff is carefully hand-picked, creating an environment where people are happy. And happy consultants produce better work.

But you know, none of this would have been possible if I had listened to those voices telling me to play it safe. If I had stayed on that secure path, I never would have found my true calling. And that's the thing about taking risks – it's scary, but it's also necessary. Especially for those of us who come from communities where playing it safe is the norm. Sometimes, you have to step out of your comfort zone and forge your own path, even when everyone around you is telling you not to.

The greatest gift anyone can give another person: believing in them. ~Oprah Winfrey

You might be wondering why I decided to write this chapter, to share my story with you. It's not because I'm looking for praise or recognition. It's because I believe in the power of stories to inspire, to encourage, and to empower.

I wrote this chapter because I know there are countless women out there, especially women of color, who are facing the same challenges I did; women who are being underestimated, overlooked, and discouraged from pursuing their dreams; women who are being told to play it safe, to not take risks, to settle for less than they deserve.

To those women, I want to say: Your story matters. Your dreams matter. Your voice matters. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

I wrote this chapter to show you that it's possible to defy expectations, to break barriers, and to forge your own path to success. I wrote it to show you that taking risks, while scary, is necessary to find your true calling. I wrote it to show you that your background, your upbringing, and your challenges don't define your potential.

But more than that, I wrote this chapter to encourage you to use your own talents and skills to make a difference in the world. Whether it's through your career, your community involvement, or your personal interactions, you have the power to create ripples of change.

That's what my grandmother taught me, and it's a lesson I've tried to embody throughout my life. From the piano concerts to the vacation bible school, from Launch Academy to Precision Partners, I've sought to use my abilities to serve and empower others.

And that's what I hope you'll take away from my story, not just the challenges I faced or the successes I have achieved, but the importance of using your own unique gifts to make a positive impact.

RIPPLE EFFECT OF IMPACT

So to every woman reading this, especially those who come from communities where playing it safe is the norm, I encourage you to embrace your story, to take risks, and to use your voice for good. Because when we do that, when we step into our power and our purpose, we create ripples that can change the world.

I wrote this chapter to empower you to write your own, to create your own ripples of resilience, courage, and change. Because that, my friend, is the true power of the ripple effect.

Dawn (Parker) Houston



Dawn (Parker) Houston is the visionary founder of Precision Partners, dedicated to elevating the impact of Higher Education and Healthcare Advancement organizations through innovative CRM strategies and integrated operations. Her firm competes with consulting practices 10 times their size by providing high-touch service and creating bespoke solutions. With past experience at IBM and AT&T, as well as in higher education, healthcare, and non-profits, she has gained over two decades of experience in her field — becoming a trusted advisor to esteemed institutions such as City of Hope, Caltech, MD Anderson, and Rice University.

Dawn's expertise spans enterprise system implementations, change management, and business process improvement, making her a pivotal force in driving impactful transformations. Armed with a deep arsenal of technical knowledge, Dawn coaches, educates, and empowers clients, helping leaders visualize the real business impact of recommended strategies and how they can succeed in a highly competitive fundraising environment. To date, her work has supported high-profile hospital and university CRM updates, large-scale program growth, and billion-dollar fundraising campaigns.

Connect with Dawn at <https://precisionpartners.org>.

CHAPTER 6

Finding Balance Within: The Ripple Effect of Having Courage to Make Three Medical Professional Shifts

Beatriz R. Olson MD, FACP

*To my colleagues in the medicine field: Let's bring humanity
and wisdom back to healthcare.*

Can you relate to this? You find yourself in a situation or a system that you thought you wanted to be part of, a career that would help others and transform their lives for the better, and years later it feels like it's constraining you and is most definitely taking life and joy away from you?

After years of training as an endocrinologist, I found myself in a medical system that felt deeply limited. While the focus of my initial career was on identifying symptoms and diseases and to use medicine as the primary tool to treat them, I found that often my patients' perceived needs were not fully met despite my great knowledge and efforts. Yet, I was intent on helping patients truly come back to health through addressing the whole person as a unique being and looking for ways, beyond using pills, to make lasting and sustainable changes in their health and well-being.

Now, looking back and having had the honor of caring for my family and thousands of patients, I realize that it took self-belief, commitment to integrity, sacrifice, grit, resilience, and courage to achieve a high level of self-mastery and embody with satisfaction the professional and personal life I've created and love to live.

As an integrative endocrinologist and holistic healer, I look at people in their wholeness, not just at the disease that they may or may not have. I know that we exist as entire beings and that our mind, body, and spirit interact as a combined unit to create our health in multiple domains of our lives.

Over time, I've moved away from a disease-centric approach that focuses on addressing the symptoms, which is what conventional medicine is about and what I was trained in. Instead, I look for the origin of the problem that is occurring and how this manifests within the larger context of a person. I use multiple techniques to allow people to access their innate healing capacities and return to their sense of wholeness and well-being. I empower them to use food as medicine, move their bodies to reawaken muscle energy, and activate inner drive to be healthy and vibrant. My work is about how the mind influences the body and how the body affects the mind. For example, stress screws up your hormones and tuning that system up with stress

reduction techniques really brings us to balance. Recognizing that it is a common human condition to fall out of balance, especially in our current environment, and learning how to bring ourselves back to equilibrium or steady state is a very powerful skill to have and act upon.

What does it take to make bold, brave decisions that shift our life's path? When does it come a point in our lives that we realize we have to say, "I cannot do this anymore"?

We all journey toward different horizons that have inspired in us actions to get us there. My first alert that something had to change came after I had trained as an endocrinologist. At that time, I was conducting research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). I was proud to be there in such an elite environment. I had published multiple papers and I saw a bright professional future ahead of me in the academic medicine world. It was then that our little family had a life-changing event that shifted my positioning from staying within the academic world to moving into owning a private medical practice that was more supportive to our young family.

My husband was serving in the Army as an orthopedic surgeon and he was taken away from us within two days' notice to serve the nation outside of our country. I was left with a will, power of attorney, my two little girls and myself running a clinical research unit at the NIH, for six months. My husband and I were unable to communicate for two months at that time. Six months later, our lives were changed. My young daughters had really suffered the acute disappearance of their dad. Being a single parent had humbled me. My daughters' plight and mine made me resolute that they were my true focus and true north. I had a stark realization of what mattered, and it was no longer what I did or who I was in my career. What matters is being deeply connected to those we love and having a life that honors that. This big shift made

academics a smaller focus and allowed me to create my own medical practice where I could work and nurture my children.

The second big shocker was that working at an academic center, where all the patients that arrive there have already been screened and have a (conventional medicine) diagnosable disease, is very different from a private practice where patients want help, but they don't have manifested illness. It was then that I realized conventional medicine addresses symptoms of diseases but has no method to assess or reverse lack of wellness and suffering before disease is manifested, or solutions for reversing or preventing disease.

I asked myself, "How can I keep sending people out and saying 'you don't have disease,' but having them leave with the same distress they came to me to help fix?" I felt so dissatisfied in my heart that I could not help solve their suffering.

The universe usually provides us with answers to our desires, and that is when I met Dr. Deepak Chopra and learned about Mind Body Medicine. This branch of medicine is informed by ancient Eastern medical systems like Ayurveda from India and Chinese medicine. The key transformative learning for me was that well-being and disease are opposite parts of a spectrum of states of degree of well-being. Starting from very healthy to various stages along the way, wellness is progressively lost to allow onset of disease that western medicine recognized.

Another concept is that the mind, body and spirit were considered as an integral unit. Thus, the whole person was cared for, not just an ill part. This changed the way that I thought about medicine. I realized that wellness restoration and prevention had to be the other side of the coin of treating manifested disease. I learned that self-care practices, the right foods, and honoring our body's needs could bring us back to health and even reverse illness.

With this new perspective and these tools, I began to combine my new skills with my conventional medicine training. If there was a medical problem, I would address it; but if there wasn't manifested illness, I would address the Mind-Body-Spirit distresses that took away well-being and caused suffering.

Amazingly, people responded and healed! At that time, my colleagues criticized me and felt that I was practicing on the fringes of medicine, providing unproven therapies to my patients. Conventional medicine in the United States is America-centric and requires "evidence-based therapies" to treat symptomatology of the "average" patient. This is not individual or patient-centric, nor does it address the source of the illness, and is far from the integrative medicine approach that I proudly use as a physician.

The third professionally transformative event came shortly thereafter, now 16 years ago. A large medical insurance company said that they would not pay me for taking the time to explain new and complex diagnoses to patients, for example, if they had just been diagnosed with diabetes or thyroid cancer. The medical insurance system required that I address only one medical problem per visit and do so in a 15-minute period. I felt constricted again. I left Cuba to get away from communism. My family suffered terribly for years to finally be able to leave as political refugees. We came to this country to have freedom to be and to serve to the highest level.

Suddenly, I was feeling the same experience that I had as a child when my parents were being followed by communist party operatives and my father was forcefully separated from the family for not upholding communist ideals. We had no control or rights then.

I got inner spiritual sickness that day, particularly when they said that if I didn't change my ways of practicing and billing, they were going to "find fault" with me. The bullying and the threat created such

soul distress that led me to say “no more” to accepting payments from insurance to care for my patients. My colleagues thought that it was heresy that I would charge patients directly. They stopped referring patients to me. (You have to understand that I’m a specialist and at that point in time I fully depended on referrals from primary care doctors for my income.) Despite this financial hit and professional rejection, I believed in the integrity of my being and the value and dignity of my work.

My private medical practice recovered over time and now, 16 years later, continues to thrive. I was and have been the only doctor in my state that offers the unique skills of integrative endocrinology medicine. Like any other business, my office receives a payment from my patient at the end of each patient’s visit. Patients are grateful for my care and happy to pay me because they receive value and solutions when working with me. It takes a lot of courage and grit to go against the grain of established medical culture, get rejected, and lose the approval of my own medical colleagues.

Years before, after learning about Mind Body Medicine, I founded “Lotus, The Educational Center for Integrative Wellness and Healing,” a Connecticut-based community of health professionals which included complementary medicine practitioners, energy workers, massage therapists, chiropractors and naturopathic physicians. We met every month for 16 years learning from each other’s fields what each of us could do, and how we did it, to help our patients. Leading and participating in this learning community catapulted the depth of knowledge of integrative medicine that I continue to share with conviction to patients and physicians now.

I believe that doctors, like me, who each must jump through multiple hoops to get into medical school, get their medical degree, get accepted into residency, complete their specialty training and pass board

certification examinations, have to give up a lot, and often acquiesce to the status quo. Women are particularly affected as we must fit in and do so by hiding our fullness as humans and feminine power.

We physicians don't want to shake the system as we are afraid of the negative repercussions from our medical colleagues and the medical system. We are trained to care for others and over time less for our own needs. This also is part of why we conventional medicine physicians often suffer in silence, experience mental illness, anxiety, depression, and some of us commit suicide. Physicians often feel that asking for help is a sign of weakness. We don't share our vulnerability to avoid negative professional outcomes, rejections and stigma.

Women physicians have the added injuries of gender discrimination, sexual harassment, lower salaries, and less opportunities for professional advancement. Forty percent of women physicians leave medicine or go part time within six years of completing their training. Further, this unquestioned acceptance of our antiquated American medical system has progressively disconnected doctors and patients from the actual purpose of healing. The focus has been on the profit and inordinate documentation. This has led to physicians' loss of agency and satisfaction in their work.

When we physicians cannot spend time with patients, they lack confidence and trust to follow through with treatments we recommend. When we cannot give our patients the best medicine for their unique problem, because insurance does not cover their treatment, the patients and we suffer. When we cannot create clear work-personal life boundaries or quality time at home with our families, because of documentation requirements, we and our families suffer. These painful moral injuries lead to soul distress.

The Covid 19 pandemic made every aspect of this suffering worse. The medical system up to now has not cared for the well-being of

the physicians and physicians forgot how to claim it for themselves. Consequently, there is a high burnout rate and early exit from the medical profession for many of us. Many physicians discourage their children from pursuing a medical career. Physician well-being matters and tending to this as a priority is necessary for the current medical system to evolve to a better and more human-centered place.

Now that I am older and a bit wiser, I want to help and empower my colleagues, particularly women like me, to hold on to their truth, their values and their dignity. I want them to know that we all have the grit and strength it takes to live a life we love, which includes work-life balance and having agency and satisfaction in our work. I have created courses to empower women physicians, and I collaborate with larger medical societies to create programs to heal our healers with compassion for our humanity and needs as physicians.

In each of my three professional shifts, I had no choice but to leave old mindsets and even security to live with myself and nurture my family. I had an inner “why?” I had to move from my place of comfort. Now, 16 years later, I feel the positive ripple effect of my early decisions. For the first time, I see doctors who were critical of my choice and would not refer their patients to me, now beginning to think about how they can change their own practices, like I did, to more personally supportive models of medical practices.

Everything we do with conviction and integrity has a ripple effect in time. Resilience is needed to challenge established norms, courage to prioritize personal values, and inner trust for steadfast adherence to one’s principles.

In retrospect, I remain grateful for these three challenging times in life that forced huge shifts in my professional being. I never let go of my inner guide and honored my spiritual and mindful needs. As I listened to my inner spirit, I had the strength to go through difficult transitions.

RIPPLE EFFECT OF IMPACT

I held onto my values and need to have sovereignty in my own life. I embraced authenticity, balance, and fulfillment in my professional life while advocating for a more compassionate and supportive medical work environment for me, my patients, and colleagues.

This allows me to serve at the highest levels of my being and to be a guide for others like me.

Dr. Beatriz Olson



Dr. Beatriz Olson is a transformational thought leader in the healthcare arena. She is a physician, author, and speaker. She has three decades of experience combining evidence-based science with mind-body, functional, and age-management medicine to help her clients achieve wellbeing, long health-span, and hormone health to women.

As an integrative endocrinologist, she brings wisdom and comprehensive approaches to solving the major health challenges we now face as individuals and as a society. As a Cuban immigrant and woman physician, she has triumphed over many life challenges. These life experiences and professional expertise now guide her mission to overcome that which limits our potential and makes us sick.

She is the author of the #1 bestseller *Mind Body Secrets: A Medical Doctor's Spiritual and Scientific Guide to Wellness*. Her passions are to 1) reconnect individuals with their innate healing abilities, 2) return dignity, agency and well-being to physicians, and 3) restore humanity to the field of medicine as new science and technology develops.

Dr. Olson is board-certified in Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes and Internal Medicine from ABIM. She also holds certifications

in Age Management Medicine and Feminine Power Transformational Leadership. Dr. Olson graduated from Barnard College, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, and did her residency in internal medicine and research-clinical fellowship in Endocrinology at the University of Pittsburgh. She served as an educator and clinician-scientist at the National Institutes of Health and later as teaching-faculty at Yale University School of Medicine. Her office is located in Connecticut and virtually worldwide.

Connect with Dr. Beatriz Olson at www.Beatrizolson.com.

CHAPTER 7

Echoes of Impact: Tracing the Endless Ripples of Influence

Ewa Krempa

*To my daughter, Natalia. You are my guiding light, my inspiration, and my greatest blessing. This chapter is dedicated to you, whose love and spirit have filled my life with purpose and joy. Your presence is my motivation on this journey, and I am endlessly grateful for you.
With all my love.*

Every day, as we navigate through the intricate tapestry of human interactions, we are presented with a profound opportunity - the chance to ignite waves of positivity that reverberate far beyond the confines of our immediate presence. In these seemingly ordinary moments lies the extraordinary potential to sow seeds of kindness, compassion, and inspiration that can ripple outward, touching lives in ways we may never fully comprehend.

Consider for a moment the gentle ripple effect created by the simple act of offering a genuine smile to a passing stranger. In that brief exchange, we may unknowingly uplift their spirits, instill a sense of warmth and connection, and set into motion a chain reaction of goodwill that extends far beyond the initial encounter. What began as a fleeting gesture of kindness has the power to cascade through countless lives, spreading waves of joy and positivity to all who are touched by its gentle embrace.

Yet, the ripple effect is not solely reserved for moments of overt kindness; it is equally present in the subtle nuances of our everyday interactions. A word of encouragement offered to a struggling colleague, a listening ear extended to a friend in need, or even a silent nod of solidarity shared with a stranger - all have the potential to catalyze transformative shifts in the lives of those around us.

Conversely, we must also acknowledge the potency of negative ripples - the insidious tendrils of cynicism, indifference, and hostility that can poison the well of human connection. A harsh word spoken in haste, a gesture of apathy towards another's plight, or a veil of negativity cast over our interactions - all have the power to sow seeds of discord and discontent, perpetuating a cycle of negativity that diminishes the vibrancy of the world around us.

As stewards of this extraordinary power, we must remain vigilant in our commitment to channeling positivity and compassion into the world. Let us recognize the immense impact of our daily actions and attitudes, and strive to infuse each moment with the transformative power of kindness and empathy. In doing so, we not only enrich the lives of those we encounter but also contribute to the collective tapestry of human experience, weaving a narrative of connection, understanding, and boundless possibility.

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” ~ Mother Teresa

When Passion and Purpose Meet

In early 2005, I was deeply inspired by the transformative work of World Vision Canada, witnessing the profound impact they had on communities worldwide. Seeing their commitment to enhancing the lives of children, adolescents, and youth, I felt compelled to join their efforts and contribute in my own way.

By March of that year, I seized the opportunity to participate in an unparalleled experience: the Destination Life Change Team’s trip to El Salvador. Meeting the project manager and fellow volunteers from across the globe proved to be an enriching experience, particularly for someone like me who was naturally reserved and timid.

Throughout our visit to the Tacuba Region, we had the opportunity to engage directly with the local communities. From cooking and playing with the children to visiting local schools and witnessing their educational facilities, the trip was truly immersive. Our primary goal was to construct homes for deserving families, a task that was both fulfilling and eye-opening.

The experience was life-changing in many ways. Not only did it provide a firsthand understanding of the challenges faced by these communities, but it also instilled a deep sense of accomplishment knowing that our efforts were making a tangible difference in people’s lives.

One particular interaction during our stay left a lasting impact on me. Meeting a young girl named Edith and her family, I felt an instant connection. Moved by her story, I became her sponsor, providing support for her education and well-being for several years.

That encounter sparked a ripple effect within me. Inspired by Edith's resilience and determination, I became increasingly passionate about making a difference in the lives of individuals worldwide. Over the years, I sponsored another child in Bangladesh, fostering a sense of responsibility and compassion that continues to drive my commitment to global philanthropy.

Reflecting on this journey, I am reminded of the power of volunteering and the ripple effect of kindness. Each small act of generosity has the potential to create a lasting impact, not only on the individuals directly involved but on their families and communities as well. This experience has shaped my perspective, reinforcing my belief in the transformative power of compassion and the importance of making a positive difference wherever we can.

Going the Extra Mile

Engaging in overseas volunteer work goes beyond just gaining practical experience; it offers a profound opportunity to immerse oneself in diverse cultures and communities, fostering invaluable connections along the way. While the work may be challenging, it is also incredibly rewarding, opening doors to new experiences, friendships, and personal growth.

Every act of volunteering, regardless of its scale, has the potential to spark a ripple effect of positive change. Whether it's lending a helping hand to build homes, teach children, or provide medical care, each contribution contributes to a larger, transformative impact on the world. Moreover, volunteering provides a sense of fulfillment that nourishes the soul and cultivates a deeper appreciation for life's blessings.

My own journey into overseas volunteering led me to El Salvador, where I experienced profound personal transformation. Not only did

I discover newfound confidence and purpose, but I also uncovered a deeper understanding of the human desire to make a difference in the world. Through that experience, I realized the profound impact that each individual can have when they commit themselves to a cause greater than themselves.

Volunteering abroad is not just about giving; it's also about receiving. It's an opportunity to acquire new skills, gain valuable work experience, and broaden one's perspective by immersing oneself in different cultures and traditions. Beyond the tangible benefits, the bonds formed with fellow volunteers and members of the community are often the most meaningful and enduring aspects of the experience.

Ultimately, the fulfillment derived from helping others and contributing to positive change is unmatched. It's a reminder of the interconnectedness of humanity and the profound impact that each of us can have when we choose to extend a hand of kindness and compassion.

Attracting Abundance Through Inspired Service

As you're likely aware, attracting abundance and recognition often hinges on the principle of giving inspired service. The adage, "The more wisely we give, the more we receive" underscores the importance of generosity in our daily lives.

At its core, contribution springs from the innate human need for growth. When we stagnate and fail to progress, we often experience a sense of unfulfillment. True living, it seems, is synonymous with continual growth and expansion. However, growth isn't an end in itself; rather, it serves as a pathway toward giving back to others. Whether our contributions are directed toward our loved ones, our local communities, society at large, or even on a global scale, true fulfillment is found in looking beyond our individual needs.

While personal achievements may bring temporary happiness, genuine joy arises from goals that serve a greater purpose. When our aspirations are aligned with benefiting others, we discover a profound sense of fulfillment. We begin to recognize that external praise is fleeting, but the impact we make on the lives of others endures. Indeed, our positive actions create a ripple effect, spreading positivity and enriching not only our own lives but also those around us.

Embarking on the journey of giving back can help alleviate feelings of emotional scarcity. While challenges may still arise, the shift in mindset that accompanies a commitment to serving others fosters a greater sense of groundedness and resilience. Importantly, one need not achieve monumental success to begin contributing; even the smallest acts of kindness hold significance and contribute to the collective well-being of humanity.

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

~Mahatma Gandhi

Inspire Change: Discover the Power of Giving Back

Whether you provide a hot meal or a few dollars to someone on the street or contribute on a larger scale, giving back to society brings a sense of fulfillment that can't be found elsewhere.

Here's an inspirational message from World Vision Canada that encapsulates this sentiment:

“Where others see a mountain, you see a summit. What they call the daily grind, you call the chance to prove

yourself. When they say it can't be done, you ask when you can start. You are going big and you are not going home. They see a child in poverty, you see dignity, beauty, and hope; they say it's a lost cause, but you can't hear them over the sound of pushing all your chips in. The thing is, you're never a world-changer... Until you are."

As Tony Robbins put it, "The secret to living is giving." Despite being just one person among 8 billion others, a single individual can make a significant impact, especially by influencing those around them. Consider the metaphor of tossing a stone into a body of water. Though the stone may disappear upon entry, it creates ripples that extend much farther than the initial splash – proof that small actions can lead to significant changes, even if the full extent isn't immediately apparent. Therefore, go on, make positive ripples, as they may reach farther than you realize.

Here are several effective strategies to initiate a Ripple Effect:

1. Clarify Your Values and Passions: Take the time to identify what truly matters to you and where you envision making a positive impact. Understanding your values and passions provides a clear direction for your efforts.
2. Share Your Message: Begin by sharing your passion with others. Whether through writing, speaking, or engaging in conversations, communicate your enthusiasm for the cause. You don't need to be an expert; genuine care and commitment are what resonate with people.

3. Seek Support and Guidance: Surround yourself with positive and supportive individuals who can offer encouragement and valuable insights. Discussing your mission with others can help crystallize your ideas and inspire collaborative efforts.
4. Offer Assistance: Extend a helping hand to organizations or individuals aligned with your values. Whether through volunteering your time, providing resources, or offering expertise, your contribution can make a meaningful difference.
5. Seek Inspiration: Draw inspiration from individuals and initiatives that align with your aspirations. Witnessing the impact of others can ignite your own sense of possibility and motivation. Explore various sources of inspiration, such as books, documentaries, mentors, or role models, to fuel your passion and drive action.

By implementing these steps, you can catalyze a Ripple Effect that creates positive change and inspires others to join in your mission. Remember, even small actions taken with sincerity and dedication can have a significant impact on the world around you.

“Life is a gift and it offers us the privilege, opportunity and responsibility to give something back by becoming more.”

~Tony Robbins

Embrace Your Power: Unleash Your Inner Strength

Our power lies deep within our souls, so do not let anyone dim that light; it is reflected in each action, movement and decision; it radiates love, compassion and understanding; it illuminates our surroundings and our world. Being powerful means overcoming our self-doubts and fears,

exploring new challenges and fulfilling our duties and responsibilities while we are here.

You have got to understand that each one of us is blessed with innumerable talents, faculties and potentials, the true challenge is to dig deep into our souls to explore these faculties and make the most out of them while we are here living this gift called life. You will not be truly happy unless you improve your sense of self-worth; by doing that, you unlock your potential and free your creative powers to not only help yourself but others around you.

The reason so many people don't succeed in what they dream of doing is that they don't allow themselves the time and space to get absolute clarity in their desires! You can imagine that you want something, but if you don't spend time really feeling into what that looks like for you, chances are there won't be any clarity to it. Imagine how you will feel once you start working on the things you truly care about.

Once you start being busy with your impact, your contribution, your ripple effect, I guarantee that you will feel grateful, powerful and strong, inspired, meaningful, motivated and more.

“Only those who have learned the power of sincere and selfless contribution experience life’s deepest joy: true fulfillment.” ~Tony Robbins

The Ripple Effects You Create as an Individual

Every interaction we have with others sends out ripples that can shape their experiences and the world around us. It's essential to consider what kind of ripples we want to transmit through the networks we engage in because, whether consciously or not, we are constantly creating them.

Creating a positive ripple effect doesn't have to be complicated or costly.

Here are a few simple yet impactful ways to do so in your daily interactions:

1. Acknowledge Someone: A small gesture like a smile, nod, or wave can convey acknowledgment and appreciation, brightening someone's day and fostering a sense of connection.
2. Appreciate Someone: Take the time to express genuine appreciation for others and the contributions they make to your life or the world around them. Simple words of gratitude can have a profound impact on someone's outlook and well-being.
3. Admire Someone: Show genuine admiration for others by recognizing their strengths, qualities, and contributions. Demonstrating admiration can uplift individuals, bolster their sense of worth, and inspire them to continue making positive contributions.
4. Advise Someone: Offer support, guidance, or advice to help others navigate challenges, improve themselves, or plan for the future. Sharing knowledge and insights not only benefits the recipient but also brings a sense of fulfillment and purpose to the giver.

Imagine if every person approached interactions with the intention of creating positive ripples. While changing the world may seem daunting, collectively embracing these simple yet powerful actions has the potential to create a ripple effect of kindness, appreciation, and support that reverberates far and wide.

“If you’re not reaching back to help anyone, then you’re not building a legacy.” ~Germany Kent

As you navigate this beautiful journey called life, every experience and insight you gain becomes a treasure trove of wisdom that shapes your values and future choices. Your legacy will not only be defined by the love, hope, and engagement you share with the world, but also by your self-awareness and openness to embrace new approaches and evolve.

I am immensely proud to host the Book Club, Reading Embodiment, and to coach and mentor people from around the globe. I’ve developed my own programs to share my knowledge and stories, and I find the act of serving and focusing on others to be incredibly rewarding.

We all have a unique story to tell, each one equally important to the universe. As an inspirational and mindset coach, I am here to guide individuals and groups towards realizing their full potential. I foster a positive and growth-oriented mindset, helping people identify their goals, confront limiting beliefs, develop self-awareness, and cultivate strategies for personal and professional success. My role is to inspire and motivate, encouraging individuals to overcome obstacles, seize opportunities, and navigate challenges with resilience and determination.

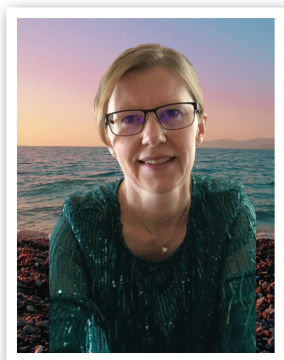
Through a combination of active listening, powerful questioning, and tailored techniques, my goal as an inspirational coach is to empower my clients to take ownership of their lives, leverage their strengths, and achieve their dreams.

Remember, your life is a canvas waiting for your masterpiece. Let’s embark on this transformative journey together and create a legacy that

shines brightly, inspiring others to embrace their greatness. It's time to unlock your potential, and I'm here to guide you every step of the way.

Love & gratitude

Ewa Krempa



Ewa Krempa is a dynamic entrepreneur, mentor, and transformational coach based in Alberta, Canada. With passion for travel, Ewa has journeyed to over 50 countries, gathering colorful experiences, memories, and personal growth along the way.

In her free time, Ewa seeks solace by the ocean, where she enjoys reading and reflecting. Juggling motherhood and entrepreneurship, she finds inspiration in spiritual teachings, particularly from luminaries like Dr. Wayne Dyer. His mantra, “Change your perspective, change your reality,” deeply influences Ewa’s approach to life.

Ewa is a dedicated student of personal development, drawing insights from renowned thought leaders like Bob Proctor, Tony Robbins and more. Through her studies and experiences, Ewa has unlocked her own hidden talents and abilities, propelling her towards a new mindset of growth and abundance.

As the founder and CEO of Dynamic Mindset Coaching, Ewa empowers individuals to achieve holistic transformation in their lives. She is also a contributing author to “Midlife Awakening,” and “Never Give Up,” a compilation of inspiring stories of personal transformation.

Through her weekly Book Study Club and other events and programs, Ewa shares her expertise and guides others on their journey to becoming better versions of themselves - mentally, physically, spiritually, financially, and emotionally.

For those seeking to embark on their own journey of personal growth and fulfillment, Ewa provides invaluable mentorship and support.

Connect with Ewa Krempa to begin your transformative journey today: <https://linktr.ee/EwaKrempa>.

CHAPTER 8

Breaking Growth Barriers

Golddy Kaur

This chapter is dedicated to working women who are between 25 to 45, juggling between careers, raising kids, family, aging parents, and serving many other societal needs, and keeping themselves at the bottom of the “caring” list, but having a desire to transform themselves. It is possible to cultivate peace ‘within’ while serving other’s needs.

My parents migrated from India to Canada in the late 1980s. Even though it was a drastic lifestyle change and a tough start, the country provided opportunities to work while continuing my education.

I started my career with an entry-level position in a medical device company, not realizing what it would lead to. I progressed into a career in Quality Assurance and Regulatory Affairs, continued my education, and climbed the career ladder at a steady pace. My career growth was filled with challenges which continued as my constant companion.

I learned to work without fear, maintained my true voice, created a presence in boardrooms, excelled in business acumen, and created success on my own terms. Despite the success I had over three decades in that career path, I decided to resign from an executive position and exited the corporate world in 2022. I started my solopreneur journey to share my experience. Now, I help professionals navigate their career challenges, feel uplifted, and learn how to live their truth without suppressing their true voice.

As career women, we require several skills. We need to be prepared to deal with people who can make us feel imperfect, weak, and vulnerable. We need to be resilient to grow personally and professionally while making significant contributions to the things we care about.

Sometimes others may focus on our weaknesses and try to dim our light, but we have seen many incredible women throughout history who have overcome societal challenges to shatter the glass ceiling in every field imaginable. Our work may not be significant enough to be listed in history, but our contributions at the micro level still hold significance in the lives around us daily.

Reflecting on my journey, I have dealt with many challenges. How did I overcome challenges and achieve an executive position in the medical device industry? How did I learn to survive and thrive? How did I walk with confidence and optimism? As I reflect on these questions, I see resilience and grit were prominent factors throughout my journey.

When we know that we are working to make this world a better place, resilience and grit give us strength and hope that our contributions will make a difference in the lives around us. We are essentially nurturing, mothering, caring, and kind, and in the pursuit of serving others, we women tend to ignore ourselves.

As you may imagine, growing up in India as a girl had its challenges. The challenges were similar to other parts of the world where millions of girls face cultural challenges and discrimination. I had to prove myself over and over as I was given the feeling that my voice didn't matter. No one was interested in knowing what I wanted to be when I grew up. It was almost decided for me that I would get married, have kids, and take care of my family. However, that was not my wish or goal. I was on a mission to prove myself. I wanted to be recognized for my skills and my unique thinking.

When I joined a medical device company in Toronto, Canada, I was the only South Asian woman on the team. I was criticized for my long-braided hair, my culture, my food, and my way of communicating ... everything indicating that I didn't belong and I didn't fit in. A feeling of not being good enough was crushing my soul. However, I had the inner knowing of my worthiness. I was a science undergrad and knew that my basic education, culture, and values were my strengths and not my weaknesses. Every time my colleagues undermined me, I had to remind myself of my strengths and to be strong.

I wanted to stand alongside the decision-makers (mostly men) in the company. I had great ideas that I wanted to table. I wanted to have my voice heard. I was allowed to do the work but not to speak up about my contributions even though my projects saved the company significant amounts of money. I did not have a voice or a seat at the table. The gender gap was obvious, and the message was clear: you can do the work but don't try to start any conversations without permission. When permission was given, I was not allowed to say "I"; it had to be "we." I kept trying to make myself visible for the work I initiated and led. I kept trying to join the conversations, where people could see my value. I kept trying to seek support. I was told that I should be grateful to have a job and stop asking for a promotion.

Culturally, being grateful was a daily ritual, so I knew that I was grateful for having a job. I thought if my ideas were so valuable why was my voice not valuable? Why is it difficult to receive credit for my work? Why did I always feel that I was not treated fairly? I was grateful but still struggled with how exactly to communicate my worth to the decision-makers.

Even though I had so-called job security and comfort in knowing my job well, there was something within me that was making me uncomfortable. I gave up a decade of my life to realize that I needed to change my environment to fulfill my growth desires. I must find something different, new, and more challenging that may serve my growth desires. I was having a casual conversation with a friend about my goals and, voilà, she handed me a contact, and that led me to my next career stop.

When you start to seek, the universe starts to respond.

Our environment can condition us to a global belief system. For example, in most cultures, men are programmed for power, and women are programmed for goodness. We wear our goodness like a shield. We carry this goodness unconsciously because it's a cultural norm. The cultural norm can be used as a global belief. If we experience negative emotions in our environment, we start to make statements like, "men are ...," "women are ...," "people are ..." etc., generalizing others based on our own limited experiences.

So, I was no exception! Based on my negative experiences, I started to draw strong boundaries between "good" and "bad" and created my "global beliefs." Negative emotions that made me uncomfortable went into what I called a "bad" category. Creating a global belief and labeling people based on their visible behavior was not a conscious decision of

mine; it was so subtle that I was not able to see it developing. I wanted to be a “good” person and I didn’t think I would do the things that others had done to me. Little did I know at the time, my definition of “good” was a snapshot of a handful of people. I put significant meaning to it feeding my beliefs. Nevertheless, it made an impact on my behavior, instilling a sense of superiority (being good and better than others), which surfaced many years later as a negative behavior.

*The universe was setting the stage for me to learn my true
nature, my true voice!*

Even though I had a desire to grow, I never considered myself a corporate climber. The gleaming boardrooms and executive suites always seemed distant, the domain of a different breed. My domain was Quality and Regulatory affairs of medical technologies. It was meticulous work, the intricate dance of science and compliance that allowed a medical device to transition from an idea to a life-altering reality for patients and doctors. I thrived on the logic, precision, and sheer force of will required to steer an innovation through the complex obstacle course of development.

The fact that I, a scientist by my temperament, happy with solving problems based on theories of science, found myself navigating those lofty boardrooms wasn’t part of some grand strategic plan. Like most career trajectories, it was a strange alchemy of skill, relentless drive, and being in the right place when opportunity took an unexpected detour.

“Grit” is perhaps the best way to describe that underlying drive. It’s a popular buzzword these days, but I wore it like an old, comfortable shoe long before it made its way into self-help books. The daughter

of immigrant parents who came to this country with little more than hope and a work ethic bordering on the superhuman, I understood that success came down to how much you poured into it. There were no shortcuts, no favors to bank on.

That grit saw me through endless late nights working, meticulously preparing regulatory dossiers, and navigating nuances of the regulatory framework and associated bureaucracy that ultimately brought much success and visibility to the company executives.

Yet, grit alone would have only gotten me so far. True success demands resilience – the ability to bounce back from setbacks and, perhaps even more critically, to learn from them. In the world of medical device development, setbacks are not merely inevitable, they are the norm. Regulatory bodies rejecting product approvals. Clinical data yielding disappointing results. Regulatory hurdles materialize seemingly out of thin air.

It was not only the product and regulatory problems that impacted my reality. Dealing with internal and external stakeholders took a toll on me as well. Given my driven, confident, and uncompromising personality, I unintentionally offended people.

I needed to solve the problems with the regulators and the executive management. I took for granted that people would have the same sense of urgency as me. My direct demeanor and bluntness to call out problems, which I thought was necessary at times, came across as harsh or insensitive to colleagues who prefer a more collaborative or tactful approach. My sense of urgency and my ability to anticipate risks made slower-paced or more methodical team members feel pressured or disregarded. For example, my regulatory knowledge and subject matter expertise were not aligned with the team of engineers, and I unintentionally made them feel inadequate and unsupported in our mutual goals. Working with a large team and different subject matter

expertise made it extremely difficult to match our pace of work and attention to detail from a regulatory perspective.

My global belief kicked in, and I felt undermined by others who were not willing to work together for the ultimate success. At that time, I had the authority and title that was empowering and gave me a “take charge” attitude. It served the purpose but made my colleagues feel excluded from the decision-making process and an impression that I don’t value their input.

It is ironic that the feelings I felt early in my career of being discounted and ignored were the feelings I was then giving to others unconsciously. I failed to understand their emotional needs.

It’s worth remembering that even the most well-intentioned actions can be misunderstood or misconstrued if we are not mindful of others’ working styles and emotional needs. It taught me that true resilience isn’t about brute-forcing your way through every obstacle, but about adapting, pivoting, and finding a new angle for solving problems together as a team. You may look like a winner to the executive team but not to your colleagues and subordinates.

It’s this blend of grit and resilience that allowed me to thrive in the often-turbulent situations of corporate business. Having earned respect through the unassailable power of results, I continued to call things as I saw them. When a production schedule threatened to derail a clinical study, I didn’t mince words in the team meetings or boardroom, even if it rankled high-level executives. When a marketing campaign tiptoed around certain risks associated with the device, I insisted on blunt transparency.

I was, some might say, unapologetic. But there was accountability behind my audacity. My pronouncements had weight because my team consistently delivered the results. If anyone was waiting for me to slip, to prove that this woman was out of her depth in the corporate arena, they waited in vain.

This combination—the mastery of the science and the relentless results, paired with a willingness to take risks and call out problems—created a potent mixture. While I didn’t particularly crave the spotlight, the confidence I projected was, to my surprise, magnetic. I found I had something many leaders lacked: a lack of ego about my role. I wanted the products approved under my supervision to succeed. If that meant taking charge, making difficult decisions, and ruffling some feathers, so be it.

The irony, of course, is that I was perpetuating the very behaviors I despised. My carefully constructed moral code had led me to judge others harshly, unaware that in my quest for “goodness” I was losing sight of compassion, humility, and the infinite potential to find common ground even with those who tested the limits of my understanding.

The universe put me on a path to dismantling this fortress which was not an easy road for me. It required the courage to turn a critical eye inward, to acknowledge that the “goodness” I clung to was, in truth, warped by my own unhealed wounds. Slowly, painstakingly, I began to dismantle the rigid walls of my beliefs, replacing judgment with curiosity and striving to see the world, and those in it, through a lens of possibility rather than condemnation.

The quest for self-awareness is never truly finished, yet with each brick removed, I felt the weight of my own superiority lessen, replaced by a profound lightness borne from a deeper understanding of myself and the boundless complexities of the human experience.

My three decades of corporate experience serving Med Tech companies taught me how to build valuable and rare skills. I transformed myself to work without fear while maintaining my true voice!

Breaking all growth barriers is possible. Now it’s time to teach and share the wisdom of WHAT, WHY, and HOW of climbing the corporate ladder.

Perhaps surviving at a job is a necessity; however, developing valuable skills is a CHOICE. Building certain skills allows you to have control over your work and Break Growth Barriers. You need to be so good at what you do that others can't ignore you.

Here are a few tips to consider when thinking about developing skills and growing:

- Find meaning in your work;
- Focus on learning new skills (rather than saying, "I can't," say, "I will");
- Develop valuable skills while serving the business needs;
- Be part of the projects that bring positive value to others;
- Be part of the projects that give you the visibility;
- Be creative in solving problems while collaborating with all stakeholders;
- Develop a sense of urgency by knowing what matters;
- Deliver your commitment;
- Seek feedback on your work quality;
- Learn to enjoy the people you work with, even if it means changing jobs.

Yes, you need to be so good that others can't ignore you but remember, there are always trade-offs or compromises that we are willing to make. There should never be a compromise to shut your deep inner voice.

Your inner knowing is who you are! When you know it, YOU KNOW IT...

Golddy Kaur



Golddy Kaur has more than three decades of corporate experience and held many positions including executive leadership roles. Her career growth was filled with challenges; however, she climbed the career ladder at a steady pace.

Given all the challenges she faced, Golddy transformed herself by learning to work without fear, maintained her true voice, created a presence in boardrooms, excelled in business acumen, and created success for herself, others, and businesses.

As part of her leadership roles in Med Tech companies, she hired many fresh graduates from diverse backgrounds and mentored them to grow into leadership roles. She coached a diverse group of subject matter experts and personalities, and taught them business acumen.

In early 2022, Golddy resigned from an executive position and exited the corporate world. She started her solopreneur journey to share her experience with those willing to grow and are up for learning from others' successes and failures.

Connect with Golddy at www.wisdomwaves.ca.

CHAPTER 9

A Shift in Mindset

Iris M. Williams

This chapter is dedicated to all who haven't come to understand that their story matters.

Introduction: How It All Began (Emotional Neglect and Sexual Abuse)

When I think of a ripple, my mind instantly conjures up the image of a pebble being thrown into an ocean. It is fascinating how such a small thing can have any impact on something so large. I think it's the perfect metaphor for how I now view my life.

When my dad died, I was six. Although I didn't fully understand what was happening or how to put what I was feeling into words, I do remember how I felt: left out, alone, and inconsequential. I felt invisible. The one person who talked to me and listened to me was gone – without explanation or notice.

I grew up hearing the phrase, “Children are to be seen and not heard.” And in my case, this was truly applicable. I felt unseen and unheard. In my household you didn’t ask questions, complain, or interrupt. As a matter of fact, one of the stipulations I was given prior to the news of my father’s death was that I had to promise not to cry.

“Be a big girl for Mr. Jack,” my mother said.

Since I was a ‘daddy’s girl’ and making my father proud was important to me, I agreed. Obviously, I had no idea what this agreement would cost me. I didn’t know what ‘dead’ meant, but after the news, the atmosphere of the room told me it was not something good. And since I’d already promised not to cry, I didn’t.

Looking back, I believe this was the first of many times I would suppress feelings, thoughts, and even words. I went through the motions of life (going to school, playing with other children, and being present when expected) but for all intents and purposes I became a deaf mute. I didn’t say much unless I was spoken to and when unsettling things were said (or done) to me I reacted as if they hadn’t.

Years later a therapist told me that the ‘emotional box’ where I’d been storing my hurt and pain was over capacity.

I blended into the background of life - going, doing, being, and saying what was expected. Eventually, even mental, verbal, and sexual abuse didn’t create a ‘noticeable’ rise in my spirit. Instead, the opposite was true. With each offense, I felt a piece of me die or become numb. I had no one to talk to and even if I had, I didn’t have the words to express what I needed to say. I held it all in and kept waking up each day going through the motions.

My father’s death was a pebble thrown into my life’s ocean, the effects of which would wreak havoc in my life for nearly 40 years.

Faith in Self: Limiting Beliefs/Views (Manifestation of Trauma)

I'm the youngest of 13. When my siblings and I gather for events and I hear them recount stories of their youth, it is as if I'm a distant relative. I have no recollections of many of the things they speak about. I feel like they are aunts and uncles instead of sisters and brothers. Part of this is because of the age gap between us, but a larger part is because I only have a few memories prior to the age of six and those center around my father.

I remember being in the bathroom with my father, sitting on the closed toilet seat watching him shave. I talked incessantly (who knows what about) while he listened and responded as if what I was saying was important. I remember my father carrying me around on his shoulders as he walked around our yard explaining things to me. My father seemed to be the only person who wanted me around. His abrupt absence from my life created a silence so loud that I wonder if part of me didn't die with him.

When I was about ten, my mother took me to the doctor, and he told her that my hymen had been broken. I didn't know what a hymen was but once again the atmosphere in the room told me it wasn't something good. The doctor went on to say that I'd been having sex!

I think I knew what sex was, but I didn't recall having it! How was *that* possible?

We left that appointment and nothing further was said to me (but I received plenty of disapproving looks). I was left to ponder on what it all meant and why I couldn't remember. There was no internet back then. Information was hard to come by and my mother was not the kind for discussion, so a lot of things went unsaid and unknown.

Not only was information not given but expression was frowned upon (unless it was pleasant). My feelings showed and it seemed they were never ones she wanted to see.

“Fix your face,” my mother said to me frequently.

For example, when my aunt Carrie (her sister) wanted to plant juicy, tobacco-stained kisses on my cheeks I would frown. My face showed disdain and out of nowhere I’d get slapped and directed into submission.

“Fix your face!”

I quickly learned that the only acceptable expression was a pleasant one. And so even when a pleasant disposition wasn’t how I felt, it was what I showed.

Who I was wasn’t wanted so I learned to be someone else – compliant and pleasant. But even cooperating and working hard to acquiesce to my mother’s wishes didn’t exclude me from her harsh words. I was frequently told I was ignorant, dumb, and in general – not good enough.

Although I earned all A’s in school, received awards and high accolades from teachers, none of that changed my mother’s perception of me. Or mine. I became who she said I was and began making choices that were ignorant, dumb, and reflected the fact that I didn’t feel good enough. If you hear negativity enough, it becomes your reality. I was all alone in the world and therefore I knew that the only one I could have faith in was me.

My mother’s attitude towards me became a pebble thrown into my life’s ocean causing more ripples than I’ll ever be able to count.

Faith in No One: Lost Hope (One Bad Choice After Another)

Initially the trauma I experienced was at the hands of others through no fault of mine. However, by the time I was able to make choices for myself, that’s exactly what I did. And since I had no real value or sense of worth for myself, the choices I made were like a self-fulfilling prophecy of defeat. If there was a bad choice to be made, I made it.

When I was 15, I became pregnant with my first child.

When I was 17, I gave birth to my second child. Due to fear and shame, I hid that pregnancy from everyone and placed that child for adoption.

I attended college on a full scholarship flunked out after the second semester. The stress of my life was too much to allow me to concentrate. And who was I to think that I was even smart enough to attend college. (I believed the academic scholarship I received was in error and it was only a matter of time before they figured out their mistake.)

When I was 19, I married my first husband. He had seizures and his sister told us we needed to get married so he could have insurance (I had a really good job at the time). I did what I was told. That marriage resulted in me giving birth to my third child and not much longer after the birth of my son, we got divorced.

Five years later, I married husband number two. He also had medical issues and needed insurance. So to make his life easier, it was suggested that we get married. He was verbally abusive and cheated on me and after a few years, we got divorced.

Another five years later and I married husband number three. His sister had just gotten married and his mom told us we needed to get married so the things she made for her daughter's wedding wouldn't go to waste. We did. That relationship lasted nearly 15 years but ended in divorce as well.

Although I married three times, I was never proposed to. My marriages were not my idea. I've learned that not making a choice is a choice.

I've since wondered if I unconsciously sought unhealthy relationships just so I'd have an opportunity to grieve the one that

started my life of heartbreak – the passing of my dad. I never cried for my dad, but I did shed an ocean of tears over every breakup after that.

Years went by and finally I realized that the common denominator in my life of chaos was me. Turns out not only could I not depend on others, but it appeared I also couldn't depend on me.

Yes, people treated me badly, but I was the one who invited them in and I was the one who stayed in situations that were unhealthy.

Why?

Because I'd been told that I wasn't good enough, that my voice didn't matter, and I had nothing of value to give. And based on the choices I made, it was clear that those assertions of me were true.

I'd lost faith in others as well as myself. My self-worth and subsequent choices became pebbles that sent major ripples in my ocean of life leaving me floundering and threatening to drown me.

Faith in God: The Woman at the Well (A Change in Perspective)

After my last divorce, I found myself in a relationship with a man who was married to someone else (they were separated but not divorced). He promised to get a divorce and marry me so when he was reassigned to North Carolina and asked me to go with him, I agreed. My children were grown, and I was divorced, so it felt like a good time to pursue one more chance at real happiness.

I left my family, my job, and all I knew to follow his promise. It didn't take long for me to realize the huge mistake I'd made. He was never home, and I wasn't working. For the first time since I was 15, I had no one to focus on but me. It was a strange feeling. For months I had no idea what to do with myself. The silence was too loud.

Eventually, I got quiet and allowed my feelings to come to the surface. I realized this relationship (and all the others, if I'm being

honest) was a recreation of my childhood. I was always left feeling alone and inconsequential. It was as if all alone the universe was trying to get me to deal with the root of my problem – feelings of abandonment!

It was clear to me that this relationship was doomed. The realization of another failed relationship and heartbreak sent me into a tailspin of depression.

One day I found myself in a church service where the pastor was speaking about the woman at the well. (John 4) Apparently, Jesus was at a well waiting on His disciples to return from an errand. A woman shows up and He asks her to get Him some water. She was surprised at His request because society frowned on such an association. Jesus told her who He was, that He knew who she was, and that He could quench her thirst (metaphorically speaking) and that she would never thirst again! The news was so good she ran back to her village and told everyone she knew.

That message dropped a pebble so deep into my life's ocean and caused a ripple so vast and profound that a lifetime of tears was released from my soul.

I was the woman at the well!

And now, I knew that if God could use her (a woman who had been married multiple times and was in fact living with a man who was not her husband), He could use me!

A seed had been planted and I wanted to know more.

As I dove deeper into the Word, I found self-esteem, confidence, and purpose.

That pebble helped rid me of a need for faith in others or even myself and replaced it with a newfound faith in God.

Conclusion: The Butterfly's Emergence (A Change in Mindset)

For most of my life I relied on others to value who I am. Although my childhood was at the mercy of others, my adult life was mine to navigate. I chose to view life from the lens of what others thought about me. I lived life based on the direction of others. I didn't realize that I could change my life, even how I feel.

I wish I'd known this before my mother passed because maybe I could have taken the initiative to change our relationship into one that was beneficial for the both of us. I missed that opportunity, but I still have a chance to help others by sharing what I've learned.

- **FORGIVENESS**

- Accept who you are and who others are too. All we can give is what we have. If you want to give more, be more.

- **SELF AWARENESS**

- I choose to believe in God. With that knowledge came the acceptance of a royal inheritance. Royalty equates to standards.

- **PURPOSE**

- Surrendering to my faith led me to my purpose. Now that I am doing what I'm supposed to be doing, I feel so worthwhile.

- **GIVE BACK**

- We shouldn't be the center of our lives. Yes, put your mask on first, but then assist others who need your help.

- **ACCEPT LOVE**

- What we want/need doesn't have to come from the place we'd prefer. Companionship, love, hugs, and kisses don't have to come from a romantic interest. There is nothing

RIPPLE EFFECT OF IMPACT

sweeter than when my grandchildren hug me, kiss my cheek, and tell me they love me.

Our ocean of life is vast and there will be many pebbles thrown in it pushing us in different directions. But like the ocean, we have power and strength. The pebble may cause a wake, but eventually it will sink to the bottom allowing the ocean to continue flowing. Since my emergence into life and living, I've committed to helping others understand the importance and impact of their life and story.

Iris M. Williams



Iris M. Williams is an author, writing coach, and independent publisher. She has been crafting (and publishing) heart-warming and inspirational stories since 2014, including poetry, children’s fiction, and memoirs.

Her memoir, “An Abundant Life,” is a trilogy chronicling the author’s journey from childhood trauma and abuse, multiple dysfunctional marriages, to a victorious emergence as a woman of faith and purpose. Penning her memoir was a life-altering experience that changed this multi-published author’s views and helped her gain perspective, confidence, and self-worth.

The books Iris writes and publishes point to the author’s passion for helping others find the words to match their feelings. Iris knows from firsthand experience that you can’t change a situation until you are able to acknowledge it.

Connect with Iris at www.authorirismwilliams.com.

CHAPTER 10

From Forcing to Being – A Life-Love Story

Jasmina Egelnor

This chapter is dedicated to my lovely kids as a reminder that all they ever need is within themselves, and to tell them that they are my greatest love, inspiration and life itself.

We are all here for such a short period of time, at least in this body and living the life experience we are having now. So many of us go through life feeling unhappy and uninspired. I did, for many years. But I also knew that there was more to life, that we are supposed to feel joy, abundance, and inspiration. For a long time, I just didn't know how to achieve that, or if it was even possible for me. That was when faith stepped in. I had doubts and fears but deep down I knew I wanted more out of life. I knew I could give more, be more. So, I couldn't give up my

desire and search for more. That search drove me into a deep and dark abyss before I found my light.

I was born in Bosnia and fled the country when I was 12 years old, together with my parents, to escape the domestic war. We ended up in Sweden, a beautiful and peaceful country with amazing nature and landscape.

Before the war, I had a somewhat turbulent childhood. My parents loved me and provided for me, but there was a lot of fighting between them. And even though I knew they loved me, they never really expressed love in words nor paid me much attention. My father worked a lot and never had a lot of time for me. He was very strict on what behavior was good for his little girl and what was not. I respected my father a lot, and still do. He has always had a huge heart and I can feel his big love for me. His strictness was meant to protect me while holding me back and telling me to settle for good enough. I believe he didn't want me to work as much as he had, but he made me suppress myself and hold back my potential. I know it wasn't his intention, though.

My mother was very controlling. I believe she wanted the best for me but nothing I did was ever good enough, even when I had the best grades and did what she said. She thought that tough love and pushing me was the best way to raise a successful child. She never expressed much love for me or told me encouraging things about myself. She mostly talked about what I should accomplish, what jobs, titles, and status in life I should go for.

Don't get me wrong. I love my parents and always have. They did what they thought was best for me; they didn't know any better. I am telling you this to put my story into perspective. Because, after all, our past forms who we are, affects and shapes our beliefs. It took me a long time to understand myself and to work through many limiting beliefs

and replace them with unlimiting beliefs. It took years to finally find myself, my true self.

Being in a war for several years and experiencing so much devastation made me mature faster than many of my peers. When I came to Sweden, I knew I was given a second chance in life and I embraced it fully, in school and society. I was given new possibilities for education, a home, a future. I was grateful and did what I could to make the best out of it. It wasn't always easy. I was an ambitious female refugee in a new country, an immigrant. I had to fight through a lot of biases, doubts, unfairness, and rejections.

It wasn't easy with friends either. My dreams, vision and ambitions have always kind of been in the way and I always felt that I needed to suppress myself.

For many years I wasn't aware of my internal weight of limiting beliefs. I just followed the path I was expected to follow with tremendous force. I studied in three different countries and had my master's degree in business. I had many barriers to force my way through, many people that didn't see me as a typical corporate leader. I had an amazing corporate career for 17 years and most of those as a leader. It wasn't what I ever wanted and it came at a price, a price that was sad and full of life lessons. I'm grateful for those years because they are part of who I am and have taught me a lot.

At age 26 I married my best friend. He is an amazing man and a father (we have two beautiful boys). We are divorced now, since a few years back, but he is still my best friend. I was only 19 when I met him, and we had many wonderful years together. The last years in our marriage weren't happy. We didn't fight, but there was not much more than teamwork and friendship. I was feeling like I was falling deeper and deeper, drowning and losing myself. We are very different in many ways and I never felt I could be myself or that he could understand

me. Going through the divorce was a dark time in my life. My boys were only seven and nine at the time and I felt like I had destroyed their family, like I was in a black hole of not really knowing who I was anymore. That led to some bad decisions, destructive feelings, sadness, feeling hopeless and lonely.

That was the biggest turning point of my growth, the black hole with a shred of light that slowly turned into bright light and clarity.

I never lost faith. Even when I was feeling down, I knew that I was going to get up again and build myself up. I knew I wanted to change. I knew there was something more out there for me. I knew I could be more, a better version of myself and live a more fulfilling life. I knew I could find my purpose. And that's what I desired, deep down.

I had done a lot of personal growth, leadership and other courses and programs during the many years of my corporate career. And I think most of those were quite tactical and strategic. During my divorce, though, I was on a deep inner journey, so I wanted something more spiritual, deeper, and enlightening.

I found those programs and teachers and coaches that helped me do the deep work, heal, understand who I am and what I want. It's been a beautiful journey and is ongoing because growth is infinite. I will always be learning and growing. Like Tony Robbins says, "If you are not growing, you are dying."

I have had great coaches and have met so many beautiful like-minded people in the world. There are so many people who are not satisfied, who want more, who know that they can become more. But sometimes they don't know how to find the way, how to find their purpose.

During the years of my own intense personal growth, I realized that I wanted to support others on their growth journey, too. I coached many

people before through my corporate career, but I wanted to teach on a deeper level. I didn't want anyone to fall as deep into the darkness as I had. I wanted to help them realize that they could change themselves and their reality, without a burnout or a fall. I wanted to help people feel joy, abundance, love and to know that they could create their own path.

I use my combined almost two decades of corporate experience, at a top management level, with my own life experiences, my own growth journey, and tremendous knowledge from various courses and programs in mindset, life coaching and manifestation, and all the books I have read and am still reading to help people by sharing the wisdoms of the universe. I have so many gifts to give and a burning desire that keeps me going. To see people grow, become happy and abundant, and keep going and never look back, is the greatest gift I could ever receive.

There is no better feeling than contributing to raising the common consciousness and creating a ripple effect; thereby creating a legacy for generations to come. They don't need to make the same mistakes as we did. They can be and live and create on their own terms.

The people I work with are generally successful in their career or business, but they feel unhappy in their relationships or with their health. They typically don't feel fulfillment or joy and they know that they are supposed to be more and live a joyful life.

That journey of growth, success, fulfillment, love, and happiness looks different for everybody. There is no magic pill or one strategy that fits all. We all are unique and need to be highly aware of who we are and what we want, and then understand how to get there. This is what brings me the greatest joy in my life, helping my clients create their unique path that is uniquely theirs to walk.

When people grow and become more joyful and more fulfilled, they spread the joy further. Gratitude, love, and growth don't stay inside of

them only, but those feelings and knowledge find their way to their loved ones, too.

Change starts with one person. When we can help one person change in a positive direction, we contribute to spreading that change worldwide.

In recent years, there has been a big difference in the atmosphere in my home. While my ex-husband and I have done a beautiful job creating two safe, loving homes for our kids and we even kept our deep friendship with each other, there has been a big change.

The biggest change is me.

Now my kids see a much more peaceful, joyful, and happy mom. They also can't help but learn about the mind, heart, and growth, by witnessing it through me. They are developing into their best versions of themselves and will have my full support to understand who they truly are, to love themselves deeply and to create the lives they want to live.

I didn't have that growing up, or even as an adult, but I can give it to my kids. And that's how a legacy continues. We can all do our own growth journey because we owe it to ourselves. We have only this one life experience and can use it to live the best life we possibly can and to become the higher version of ourselves.

On that path we will then be able to help our kids to live their best life without the same limiting beliefs that we had. They can become free and create their own happiness. We can teach this to them.

This is the greatest way we impact the world, how we create a legacy that goes beyond our homes. My mission is to create a legacy here and now, for my kids, and for so many more kids in the world.

How and I going to do this? Through my own infinite growth, and through helping as many others as I possibly can.

This goes far beyond knowledge and experience, even if those are a very important aspect of it. The deep, genuine, essential part of change is energy and love. As Dr Joe Dispenza says; “Change your energy; change your life.” That is 100% true. It’s also true that our own energy affects other people and can help somebody else change their life. Through energy and love, with support of knowledge and experience, I will keep helping people to flourish into those higher selves I know they are here to be. Will you join me?

With gratitude & love—Jasmina

Jasmina Egelnor



Jasmina Egelnor is a coach, author, and an entrepreneur. Jasmina is dedicated to raising universal awareness and making a positive impact in the world. She loves inspiring and coaching people from around the world to overcome their fears, find their purpose, and step into a higher version of themselves to create and live the life they truly desire.

Jasmina had a 17-year career as a corporate leader before she became an entrepreneur. Despite an amazing career, she was never passionate about her previous work, except for one area, leadership and coaching. Her experiences and knowledge in business and life, in combination with a deep passion to help people, led her to another path.

Today Jasmina runs two businesses. She helps companies with financial and corporate management and she coaches individuals and groups to reach their highest potential.

Jasmina has two sons, 12 and 14 years old, and lives in Sweden. Besides personal growth and coaching, she is passionate about health, nutrition, and fitness. Jasmina loves being in nature and experiencing new places and people and also enjoys the simple moments in everyday life, cooking and eating beautiful food, mindfulness and reading.

RIPPLE EFFECT OF IMPACT

Jasmina's guiding light is love and growth and that is what she is forwarding further, through her energy and teachings.

Connect with Jasmina at

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CHAPTER 11

Embrace the Power of Creativity for a Richer Life

Karen Mayer

For Haley and Sophie.

I craved the sensation of moving paint around with a brush, a passion forged by thousands of practice hours making art in my youth. By mid-career with family responsibilities, I yearned for it. I had a full-time job with a daily commute and managed two active daughters while my husband travelled for work. I loved watching them excel, but when the sports, dance, and school seasons overlapped, my stress levels climbed. When the feelings intensified, I set up my paint and brushes in a spare bedroom, only to abandon the effort as time ran out.

The tension of work-life demands began to take a toll on my health. My energy dropped; I was moody, running on pure will, having drained

all my body's resources, disillusioned with my career. When my sister and then parents got sick and passed away from cancer, it hit me that if I wanted to live long enough to see my daughters fulfill their dreams, I had to change my lifestyle.

These thoughts were in my head, but I just kept on the same path, because that's what you do when you're in it.

Work-Life Balance

My version of work-life balance was when work and home were equally upset with me.

Often, I recall "waking up" in the work parking lot without remembering the drive. That scared me. There were frequent panic calls to my husband at 5:00 pm, unable to leave work due to a client, causing him to rush home for pick-up. Then understandable conflict. Extra stress was piled on when he was away. The intensity of work and life demands grew.

A Trigger

During lunch one day, I heard a captivating story on the radio about Herbert and Dorothy Vogel, a New York couple who for over 46 years amassed a priceless art collection of 3,900 pieces. What made their story remarkable was that they were not wealthy.

That story triggered my brain in a way that hadn't happened in years. I could see myself helping people buy art to bring them joy. I started to reflect on how I was wasting my artistic gifts. For weeks I envisioned myself in the art world, but change is scary.

And then, the Universe gave me a gift, a rude awakening. Right outside my office door, the finance manager and owner staged a chat about reducing my compensation so I would quit. The notion of working

hard and balancing home life for less money was inconceivable. Revolted by the idea, I pushed away from my desk and declared, “I’m done!” (That’s the nice version.)

Activation

I quit my job in 2010 and created SavvyArt Market, a boutique art gallery. The relief for my whole family was palpable. But I had to get healthy again. I had become a shell of myself, lost connection to my vitality and artistic gift.

Discovery

Emptied the Creativity Well

What I didn’t realize was that your creativity is like a well. For over 30 years, I continually drew from that source and did not replenish it. Not acknowledging the value of my skills, I used my creativity like a bank withdrawal. That was partly due to my focus and time spent on what I thought were more important things. But I didn’t realize I was draining my well of creativity. I didn’t realize I was emptying out my soul. Even if you don’t identify as a creative, you can lose connection with your creativity in four additional ways.

1. The Creativity Myth
2. Undervalued Play
3. Fear
4. Noise

The Creativity Myth

The Creativity Myth is that you believe you are not creative. At some point in your life, probably between formative years of ages 5 to 20, someone put in your mind by negative comment or a bad grade in

art class that you are not creative, and you believed it. Creativity is a very broad term relating to more than just the fine arts. Entrepreneurs, athletes, parents, and teachers are using their creativity to be successful, pursuing opportunities, communicating effectively, and making strategic decisions. But if you still believe this myth, you will continue to miss out on the benefits.

Undervalued Play

When is the last time you played for the joy of it? When I was raising a family, busy with life, every waking hour was about productivity. If I did something creative, it was for something or someone else. While family outings and inspiring social media provided some stress relief, they didn't replenish my creativity source. To replenish your creativity, it is crucial to engage in activities that originate from your core and are expressed outwardly. That involves using your imagination to generate an idea and then acting on it, having fun with it.

Think about how children from the 1970s used to play. Magnificent adventures were created with a bunch of randomly assembled neighbourhood kids and objects. New games were invented daily. That kind of creativity involves using what you have on hand, innovation, and imagination for no other reason than to have fun. Activities that are invented on the inside and activated outwardly is playing at its best, flexing creativity muscles without much effort - not for productivity, just for fun, unknowingly refilling wells of creativity.

Fear

Fear of exposure and vulnerability play a major role in suppressing your creativity. Throughout my entrepreneurial journey I experienced fear regularly, activated when I created something to be viewed, or critiqued by (potential) customers and peers. Creating something new, sticking your neck out, can make you feel vulnerable.

Artists are brave, exposing their soul to criticism and judgment. Starting my business, I questioned my ability to succeed without formal art education. I attacked my fears with resolute audacity, the ‘do it anyways, even if I look stupid’ kind. I have had a lot of practice feeling awkward, so I got used to that uncomfortable feeling (I still hate it). I found a way through those moments from practicing creative expression, the support of experts, training, and modeling successful people, like Dean Graziosi and Mel Robbins.

Noise

I have spent days of my life enjoying the dopamine rush of swiping down rabbit holes of funny dog videos, fitness tips, and people doing exceptional and really stupid things. These quick hits of euphoria are like dessert. Excess leads to negative consequences. Social media alone has created a desire for instant gratification, short attention spans, and interruptions. We are constantly inundated with visual and audible *noise*. Our brain doesn’t get a chance to latch on to anything of substance when we are continually scrolling or being interrupted.

When your brain is so filled up with outside news, events, stresses and social media, there is no room or inclination to think on your own. Your own thoughts are pushed deeper and deeper inside you to the point where you probably don’t form any original thoughts. You have forgotten that system. How could you fabricate a thought with no brain capacity left? Not only is a relaxed mind a creative mind, but an open mind cultivates imagination.

Why care about innate creativity?

Innate creativity is the same as your imagination. A solid connection with your creativity is akin to being solidly connected with your soul and spirit. It’s part of your humanity.

Without an imagination, you will always be dependent on other people to solve your problems, make decisions for you, and struggle with career advancements and business success, finding your purpose.

Stress and tension happen when you are not in control of decisions that directly affect you. Disconnection with your innate creativity causes lowered resilience. In turn, that causes even more stress in life with unplanned events, be it close to you or worldwide, because you don't have confidence you will be able to cope when you can't imagine a way forward.

Since I reconnected with my creativity, I am now physically healthier than I was when I first quit my job. For example, I improved my gut health with the help of experts and a trial and pivot methodology. I am sleeping better, slowed down aging, and became more resilient and optimistic about the future despite a lot of challenges.

My journey has not been a straight onramp to success with major challenges in the form of loss, grief, unsuccessful decisions, and the COVID pandemic shutdown. Everyone experiences adversity, which is a major cause of stress and anxiety. Without confidence in your creativity, it is more difficult to rebound from it.

The Start

When you know you must fix a situation, how do you know where to start? You don't know what you don't know, right? Well, I discovered you actually do know. The answer is always inside you. I went inward and reactivated my inner artist. My innate creativity gave me the courage to start.

I didn't know how to get healthy or start building an art business, but I trusted my instincts. People connected with their creativity have the capacity and interest to learn new things about themselves and the

world around them, satisfying their curiosity. I read all types of books, consulted the advice of experts, experimented, enrolled in training courses. I asked questions. I even worked for a manufacturer of art prints for free so I could learn that business. I became an expert at trial and pivot, where failures were a part of learning and not a mistake.

One book, *Wisdom of Sundays*, by Oprah Winfrey changed my life. I read it four times and still refer to it. The insights changed how I think about my life; the importance of intention and how life doesn't happen to you, but for you. There I discovered the work of Eckhart Tolle on the importance of living in the Present. He also helped me better understand the people in my life.

Strategy

I tested what inspired and activated my creativity, confident that I needed to express my creativity to be refreshed. I was not only learning but observing people near me. I couldn't help but notice a growing number of disgruntled, limited, unhappy, drained, and overworked people. I began asking a lot of why questions, realizing that disconnection from creativity could be the reason.

I realized that struggling people overlook the impact of being disconnected from their creativity. I dug deep researching journals, books, articles, podcasts, and videos by experts and scientists, because I was on a mission to understand more about creativity and the role it plays in well-being.

I learned that viewing great art, and watching someone else create, offer the same lifestyle health benefits as making art; benefits such as improved resilience, more confidence, better decision-making, and problem-solving skills. You need your imagination to manufacture options in your brain, whether for brainstorming in a team or trying to

decide what to eat for dinner. I felt called to help people embrace the power of their innate creativity.

I felt the desire to share what I learned to help people get reconnected with their creativity. In the fall of 2019 and during the 2020 COVID pandemic shutdown, I created a workshop-based program named ArtSpa. I use artistic skills to help people reconnect with their creativity.

Your Creativity is Not a Destination

Reconnecting to your inner creativity is a life-long journey, not a destination. I must maintain a focus on filling up my creativity well, so I never fall into deficit; which is not sustainable as I found out the hard way.

I am sharing my story to save you from falling further into creativity deficit or make you aware that you may be in deficit now. Although the work to refill your creativity tank is easy, it requires dedication to yourself. Once I acknowledged I was disconnected from my creativity source, I knew some things needed to change. I made lifestyle changes, not the ‘one and done’ type. Here are a few things I did to reactivate my imagination. These are good places to start.

1. Protect your brain by taking breaks from reading other written words (newspapers and magazines, blogs, etc.) for two weeks at a time. Limit social media scrolling to 30 mins a day. I use the time governor on my phone. I stopped watching the news (TV, feeds) in 2015. Stay informed on your terms.
2. Feed your spirit and soul by expressing your imagination with intention of having fun 1-2 times per week.
3. Do new activities once per week to practice ‘change.’ Explore a new street or trail or change your morning routine.

4. Consume (view, discuss, share) original art and art books about original art. Visit museums, galleries, artist studios and art fairs.
5. Practice skills that are traits of an artist: observation, communication, curiosity, and focus.

I figured out how to do these activities without greatly impacting my weekly schedule. I saved a ton of time protecting my brain. I still don't watch the news, but that doesn't mean I am not informed.

Sharing Widely

I share creativity with my daughters and husband, who are skilled problem-solvers. SavvyArt Market supports over 40 Canadian artists, clients, employees, vendors, designers, followers on social media, subscribers and more. Through our products, newsletter, social media, workshops, and events, the beauty of original art and creativity reaches beyond our community. The ripple effect of our work continues to touch the lives of many as we gear up for more.

Reconnecting with your creativity can lead to unexpected blessings and limitless possibilities. Humanity is facing a world of stress, anxiety, infinite possibilities, fake news, social pressures, multiple truths, global and climate horrors; so now more than ever the world needs more creativity to solve big problems.

Your creativity is your superpower. What you have to offer matters. Through SavvyArt Market, I use my artistic gifts to bring joy and enhance well-being. By prioritizing my own well-being, I help others with the activation of ideas from my imagination. These benefits extend to children and friends of my connections with their imaginations triggered by the colour and the wonder of creativity. As I gain momentum, I created and now deliver ArtSpa workshops to emphasize the importance of innate creativity in healthy living.

I believe ignoring a connection with your creativity may result in signing up for more years of longing, confusion, and dissatisfaction with life, not reaching your true potential. Not to mention what your wider community misses out on. It is about knowing yourself intimately and using the imagination skills you were born with to navigate your life and relationships successfully and then sharing them.

Be the Expanding Wave

Be courageous to consider your innate creativity and how it shows up in your life to bring you support, comfort, joy, innovation, and solutions. Your innate creativity may not be the answer to solve all your problems; however, it is exactly the place to discover your soul and how formidable you are. Reconnecting with your innate creativity opens up your superpower to activate your spirit for the benefit of you and your community. Who knows where that could lead.

Karen Mayer



Karen Mayer is a knowledgeable, passionate creative artist who continuously strives to meet higher goals. In 2010, she abruptly left a sales and marketing career to found SavvyArt Market, an online gallery and boutique art studio, serving the design trade and art buyers. She is a respected art expert and intuitive communicator who appreciates the unique subtleties of acquiring the right artwork for each situation.

In 2020, her curiosity for innate creativity intensified so she began researching the topic extensively. During the COVID pandemic, perceiving the high level of distress of people around her, she focused on helping people rediscover their creativity, sharing how it profoundly benefitted her. ArtSpa emerged as an offering of art-based workshops designed to help people establish and maintain connection to their creativity, which scientific research highlights the positive impact on mental and physical well-being. The dynamic workshops cater to individuals, groups, organizations, and especially corporations interested in team building opportunities. The content features joy, innate creativity, self-care, and a physical experience and is presented in a fun and flexible (self-paced for individuals) Ready, Learn, Play

KAREN MAYER

format to accommodate the amount of time people (companies) have to spend on their creativity journey.

Karen enjoys an active life with family and friends, travel adventures, making art, hiking in nature, and skiing. She resides with her family in Oakville, Ontario Canada.

Connect with Karen at <https://www.artspa.ca>.

CHAPTER 12

Breaking Barriers: 365 Fears, One Life-Changing Year

Lynda Sunshine West

This chapter is dedicated to everyone who experiences debilitating fear, the kind of fear that stops you from “living.” May your fear subside, and you take action to live the life you truly want to live. Remember: Nothing Happens Without Action.

The Genesis of a Fearless Year

The sun was just beginning to paint the sky with hints of orange and pink on the morning I decided that this year would be different. It was January 1, 2015, and I wanted to fill my year not with New Year’s Resolutions, but with New Year’s Revelations. This was not merely about changing habits, but about transforming an entire life perspective—one fear at a time.

From as early as I can remember, fear had been a constant companion. At five years old, I ran away from home, disappearing into a world as large and scary as it was thrilling. For a week, I navigated through my tiny slice of the universe, a fugitive from my fears, only to return home more entangled in them. This childhood adventure left me with a suitcase of fears I quietly carried into adulthood, where it dictated terms and shaped decisions and became heavier and heavier with each year. I turned into an amazing people-pleaser due to my tremendously debilitating fear of judgment. While I walked around with a mask that was all smiles and compliance, I was actually hiding the tremors of my true self.

But on that pivotal morning, as the first light of dawn crept through my window, I was struck by a thought as clear as the burgeoning day and made a declaration: “I have so many fears that are stopping me from living my life. I’m going to break through one fear every day this year.” I didn’t really know what I was saying or what it meant, but I knew I needed to stop letting fear control me like it had the first 51 years of my life.

I made a commitment right then, a vow, to break through one fear every day for the next 365 days. It wasn’t just about overcoming fears; it was about living deliberately in a way that I had never allowed myself to before.

The first day, I confronted something seemingly trivial—I wrote a Facebook post without proofreading it 10 times before hitting “post.” As a “perfectionist” with a paralyzing fear of judgment, this simple task proved to be much harder than I imagined. But I survived. Each subsequent day, I tackled more fears, each varying in intensity and depth. From initiating difficult conversations to challenging old, self-imposed limitations in my professional life, each fear faced was a step towards the person I truly wanted to become, a brave woman who

shared her thoughts and opinions and didn't worry about what others thought of her.

My Year of Fears was engulfed with many moments of trepidation. There were days when the old anxieties tried to claw their way back, whispering doubts and crafting nightmares. But alongside those moments were triumphs that tasted all the sweeter for the courage it took to reach them. I spoke at a conference, my voice steady even as my hands shook. I learned to say 'no,' to set boundaries that respected my time and energy.

The journey did more than just change me; it transformed my entire worldview. It opened doors to paths I had never imagined walking, one of which led me to the world of publishing. Recognizing the power of personal narrative to inspire and motivate, I founded Action Takers Publishing. Here, I could empower others to share their stories, to embrace their fears and turn them into powerful testimonies of strength and resilience.

The decision to face a fear every day for a year set into motion a ripple effect that extended far beyond my own life. It was the genesis of a fearless year that redefined my existence and allowed me to create a platform for others to do the same. This was not just a year of living; it was a year of coming alive.

A Daily Dose of Bravery

As the year unfolded, each day brought its own challenge, its own fear to be faced and conquered. Some fears were ingrained, their roots tangled deep within my psyche. One such fear was my aversion to sharing my opinion. The challenge came one afternoon during a marketing training session when the presenter asked a question. Normally, I would have remained silent, stewing in frustration at my lack of confidence to share

my thoughts. But on that day, I chose to speak up. I was extremely uncomfortable, but I did it anyway. I stood up and shared my thoughts, then sat down. As I sat down trembling from head to toe, two women sitting next to me said, “That was brilliant. Will you repeat it? I want to write it down” (as if in stereo). It was that very moment that I made a proclamation to myself that I would share my voice every opportunity I get because someone needs to hear what I have to say.

One of the most transformative challenges was learning to accept and even seek feedback aka feedforward. Previously, I had viewed criticism as a spotlight on my failures. Learning to sift through comments, absorbing the useful and discarding the irrelevant, I began to see feedforward as a valuable tool for growth rather than a weapon against my self-esteem.

As the year progressed, the accumulation of these daily acts of bravery began to weave a strong fabric of courage within me. It was not just about the individual fears anymore; it was about the pattern of empowerment that emerged from consistently facing them. I began to notice a shift in my approach to life’s unexpected challenges. Where once I might have hesitated or avoided, now I engaged and explored.

A new mantra emerged through all of the fears...

Do It BECAUSE You’re Scared.

I came to realize that 97% of the fears I broke through created amazing results on the other side of the fear. I was either proud of myself, I met someone I wouldn’t have met, or a door of opportunity was opened that I didn’t even know was closed. Walking through those doors led to what I’m doing today, publishing people’s stories and helping them get their message into the world to make a greater impact

on the planet, thereby creating a journey of a massive ripple effect of change that I never intended to embark on.

From Fear to Freedom

As my fearless year drew to a close, it was clear that the transformation within me was profound. Not only had I reconstructed my own sense of self, but I had also unwittingly gathered a treasure trove of experiences that seemed to resonate deeply with others. Every shared story, every public speech, had ignited sparks of inspiration in listeners and readers alike. It was this connection, this shared resonance, that sowed the seeds of what would soon turn into Action Takers Publishing.

With a mission crystallizing in my mind, I founded Action Takers Publishing in September 2021, during the great Covid pandemic. The vision was clear: empower individuals to share their stories, not just to heal or reflect, but to inspire and drive change in others. As with most entrepreneurial endeavors, realizing this vision was anything but straightforward.

The early days were filled with both excitement and daunting challenges. My experience was very limited. I had no idea what I was doing. Each step was a learning curve, steep and sometimes slippery, but my year of facing fears had prepared me well for stepping out of my comfort zone.

One of the first victories was the publication of our first collaboration book, *Momentum: 13 Lessons from Action Takers Who Changed the World*. I lost a lot of money from putting together that book, but that didn't deter me from continuing. Had I not broken through those fears, I would have put my tail between my legs and run away. But with this new sense of purpose, passion, and drive, I took my lumps and lessons and continued down the publishing path.

The satisfaction of seeing that first book published was indescribable. It affirmed the core belief of Action Takers Publishing: stories have power. They can challenge perceptions, inspire actions, and initiate healing for the authors and the readers as well.

As more authors began to trust us with their stories, each book became a testament to the transformative power of sharing and vulnerability. We published narratives ranging from overcoming illness and adversity to achieving personal and professional milestones. Each success brought its own set of challenges, but also a deepening sense of purpose and achievement.

Through it all, the mission of Action Takers Publishing remained clear: to create a ripple effect of empowerment through storytelling. Each story published added to a growing wave of impact, reaching readers who saw parts of themselves reflected in the experiences of others, who found the courage to face their own fears, and perhaps, to share their own stories, too. This transition from fear to freedom was not just my own, but a journey I was now sharing with the world, one book at a time.

Amplifying Voices

As Action Takers Publishing grew from its foundational roots of empowering everyday heroes, it naturally evolved to embrace the narratives of those in the limelight—celebrities and changemakers whose stories had the potential to reach vast audiences. My personal journey of transformation had not only imbued me with a deeper understanding of the human spirit but had also equipped me with the unique ability to connect with individuals from all walks of life, including those whose lives played out under public scrutiny.

The first high-profile project came somewhat unexpectedly, through a connection made at an event focused on entrepreneurial

success. I met a gentleman, Gavin Keilly, the founder of GBK Events. Gavin hosts celebrity gifting suites where “gifters” invite celebrities to endorse their products. I decided to become a “gifter” and attend my first event, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Inductee Ceremony. Boy was that a scary AND GREAT move. I met so many celebrities who were interested in what we were doing. I had no idea when I saw “yes” to becoming a “gifter” what would transpire, but I felt called to do it. And I’m so glad I did. I offered Action Takers Publishing as a platform to share their full, unfiltered journey, told in their words. That event led to another and another and will continue to lead to meeting more and more celebrities and inviting them to work with us to tell their stories.

Working with celebrities has taught me the delicate art of balancing the public persona with the private struggles, ensuring that the authenticity of their voices is not lost in the narrative.

Each collaboration with celebrities and influencers brings unique challenges. Their lives are scrutinized by the public, making it crucial to strike the right tone—respectful yet raw, inspiring yet introspective. Moreover, working with high-profile clients often means navigating a complex web of public relations and legal considerations. Had I not broken through those fears, working with celebrities would be intimidating for me.

Empowering Millions to Share Their Stories

At the heart of Action Takers Publishing lies a bold and transformative mission: to empower 5 million women and men to share their stories with the world to make a greater impact on the planet. This goal is not about numbers; it’s about impact. It’s about understanding that every personal narrative has the potential to stir the waters of human consciousness, creating ripples that extend far beyond the initial telling.

From the outset, our mission was to create a platform that was more than just a publishing house—it was to be a movement. Each book we publish acts as a pebble, skillfully tossed into the vast ocean of cultural narratives. The impact of this pebble is not merely in the splash it makes upon entry but in the waves that emanate from that point of contact—waves that reach shores distant and near, touching lives in ways both seen and unseen.

For instance, when we published the story of a single mother who triumphed over adversity to raise a child with disabilities, her story resonated with other single parents battling their own hardships. Readers from different backgrounds saw a reflection of their struggles and triumphs in her narrative, drawing strength and inspiration to pursue their aspirations. Her story became a source of motivation for countless others, proving that one person's journey could indeed inspire a community.

Moreover, each author's journey of sharing their story is itself a testament to overcoming fear—the fear of vulnerability, of exposure, of judgment. This process of transformation through storytelling aligns perfectly with the ripple effect, as each author not only changes their own life by sharing their story but potentially alters the lives of readers.

The ripple effect is also evident in the way these stories foster community and connection. Readers often reach out to authors, sharing their experiences and how the book influenced their lives. These interactions underscore the profound impact of sharing one's story—not just in empowering the storyteller, but also in empowering the listener, the reader, the community.

As we move forward, our mission continues to evolve, driven by the stories we publish and the lives they touch. The goal of empowering 5 million storytellers is ambitious, but each story published, each life touched, and each community impacted brings us closer to realizing

this vision. It's a mission that transcends the act of publishing—it's about crafting a legacy of empowerment and transformation that will ripple across generations.

Invitation to Impact

As you turn these pages and journey through the myriad of voices and stories shared within this book, it's crucial to pause and reflect on your own narrative. Each story you've encountered here began as a single thread in the fabric of someone's life—each thread woven with the courage to share and the hope to inspire. Now, imagine the tapestry that your own story could create. Think about the ripples that could emanate from just one act of bravery: your decision to share.

What chapters would your life story fill? What obstacles have you overcome that once seemed insurmountable? Who might find hope in your journey, see themselves in your struggles, or find courage in your triumphs? Your life, with all its unique highs and lows, holds an untold power to impact others.

Consider these questions:

1. What moments in your life have defined who you are today?
2. How have your experiences shaped your view of the world?
3. Who would benefit most from hearing your story?
4. What would you want the main takeaway of your story to be for someone who feels alone in their struggles?

Your story does not have to be one of celebrity or groundbreaking achievements to be impactful. Every narrative of challenge and change, every moment of vulnerability shared, adds depth to the human experience and offers connection in a world that often feels isolating.

If you feel the stirrings of a story within you, wondering how you might begin this journey of sharing, here are some steps to consider:

- **Start Small** - Begin by journaling or recording voice notes about your experiences. Focus on moments that felt significant and explore why they hold such weight.
- **Seek Feedback** - Share these stories with trusted friends or family. Gauge their reactions and ask for honest feedback. Their responses can offer new perspectives and encouragement.
- **Find Your Medium** - Decide how you would like to share your story. Would you prefer writing a book, blogging, participating in speaking engagements, or perhaps creating videos or podcasts?
- **Connect with Others** - Join communities or groups where storytelling is encouraged. Networking with fellow storytellers can provide both inspiration and opportunities to share your narrative more widely.
- **Consider Professional Help** - If you decide to take your story public, consider partnering with professionals like publishers or media experts who can help refine and amplify your voice.

Your voice, your story, has the potential to be a sign for others, a spark that ignites courage and action. As you contemplate the threads of your own life, consider how sharing your experiences could add to this ever-widening circle. How might your challenges and triumphs encourage someone else to step forward, to share, to grow? How might your story join the chorus of voices that are currently shaping our world?

Now, I urge you to not just consider what action you will take next, but to act upon it. Let your story unfold, let your voice be heard, and let your impact be felt. The ripple effect begins with you.

Lynda Sunshine West



She ran away at 5 years old and was gone an entire week. She came home riddled with fears and, in turn, became a people-pleaser. At 51, she decided to face one fear every day for a year. In doing so, she gained an exorbitant amount of confidence and now uses what she learned to fulfill her mission to empower 5 million women and men to share their stories with the world to make a greater impact on the planet.

Lynda Sunshine West is the Founder and CEO of Action Takers Publishing, the Celebrity Bestseller Book Publishing Expert, a Speaker, 38 Times #1 International Bestselling and Award-Winning Author, Contributing Writer at Brainz Magazine, Executive Film Producer, and Red Carpet Interviewer.

Having grown up in a volatile, physically, mentally and verbally abusive alcoholic household and marrying someone just like her dad, Lynda's voice was stifled far too long. It left her feeling suppressed, ignored, and judged, which made her shut down.

At 51, she discovered she has value and it was time to share her voice and speak out. In doing so, she was met with praise, recognition, and acknowledgment.

Lynda Sunshine no longer sits in the back of the room, but now speaks on stages, interviews stars on the red carpet, makes tv and podcast appearances, publishes books, and creates positive and uplifting communities for her clients.

Connect with Lynda Sunshine at
www.ActionTakersPublishing.com.

CHAPTER 13

Through a Child's Eyes

Michaela El Hari

*I am dedicating this chapter to my sons Joseph and Michael. Never forget how much I love you and know that I believe in you.
I will always carry you in my heart.*

I was given this great chance at writing for the first time with all these wonderfully inspiring women. Now what? With so much to say, the big question is, “Where do I begin?”

I am not a psychologist, counsellor, or therapist. I am, however, a survivor of childhood trauma. Trauma can consist of physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological abuse. I am one of many children who are bringing awareness to child abuse while regaining my own strength. Have you ever wondered why we have so many problems in the world? I believe it's because many children have trauma that's been hidden for years. This may cause them to grow up and become an alcoholic, drug addict, abuser, all three or worse!

In every family there are consequences for your actions. For some, it's a good talking to, being grounded, having to do extra chores, or something similar. For other families, it may be more physical, like spankings, which could turn into beatings. There is also verbal or emotional abuse, which is telling kids they are worthless, they are nothing, or berating them.

Growing up, there were different ways that consequences for my actions were handled. For instance, my mom would use a wooden spoon on my butt. She would hit me hard enough that the spoon would break and that would make her madder. Then at some point my dad would use the belt, making sure the buckle connected with my butt.

Many people might justify their actions claiming that it was how they were punished. However, a good talking to might have been a better starting point. Back then, that was quietly accepted. Beyond physical discipline, consider the lasting harm of verbal abuse. For example, being called stupid, being told they are nothing, or hearing that nobody likes them.

One challenging year, I gained a lot of weight. My mom's response was to call me a St. Bernard (hardly a term of endearment from a parent). Words like that sting; it doesn't matter what age I was, it was an insult. A mother is supposed to support, encourage me and help her children. I am sure somewhere in her heart there was some love, but it's important to reflect on her experiences too. What kind of abuse did she receive that she would continue the cycle of hurt? We must recognize the patterns and break the cycle!

Through a child's eyes, we remember! When I was about five years old, I would not eat the sandwiches she made. I would hide the food in my cheeks and then go outside and spit it out. When my parents discovered this, they got mad and gave me a spanking. The spanking

was hard enough that I was scared, so I would eat. As I grew up, that incident became a family joke.

I understand that not every childhood moment is lovey dovey or picture perfect. Through a child's eyes you see and hear the world differently.

I know some people might think that what I experienced the first 10 years of my life was severe. Others might be wondering what kind of a kid was I. I was a quiet child with no outbursts. I was calm, but inquisitive.

I was born in a little town in Germany. When I was around four years old, my mom put a little white dress on me to go visiting. I asked my mom if I could go outside and wait there. She said, "Yes, of course." I went outside and must have gotten bored. I ran down to the church pond that had goldfish swimming around. I climbed in, sat down, and tried to catch some fish. That time, I deserved to be yelled at.

This is where the ripple effect gathers up all these experiences, emotions, anger, and sadness to shape your future. It's only when you decide it must stop and take control of your life that you can change your future.

My mom and dad {adoptive} brought me to Canada. We lived in a row house. One day I was outside playing with friends. A man went into the furnace room which was located under each row house unit. A few minutes later he came up the stairs and called to me asking me to come downstairs to show him something. I went and before I knew it, he was touching me and just as quickly as it happened, it stopped. He urged me not to say anything. I was numb with shock, unsure how to express what happened. My father was away and only my mother was home. I hesitated.

The next day I gathered the courage to tell my mom. She immediately called the police and they came to talk to me. After that, the incident

seemed to be brushed aside. There was no offer of counselling, no follow-up. My mom never mentioned it again or asked whether I was okay.

Life went on as if nothing happened. When my dad returned, we moved to a different part of the city and I was enrolled in a new school.

One day in school I was asked to stand up and say my multiplications. I stood up, very shyly. The teacher walked up behind me, grabbed my hair, and walked me up to her desk. She smashed my face on her desk. Then she walked me to the office where my parents were called. They told my parents I had an accident. No one believed me. A few years later I needed nose surgery because I had difficulty breathing. I don't recall any doctor or nurse asking me what happened; they only spoke to my mom. I grew up believing this is how it was. I had no voice and no input.

I had this vision of life. We grow up, attend school, find our paths, and follow it. As we grow older, we find a partner, get married, and have kids and keep our kids busy with school and sports and so forth.

Yes, for those of us who were abused we become resilient, strong individuals. This was true for me as well. I grew overprotective of my sons, overcompensating in a sense in some areas.

We all get to make choices in life. It's like we are all standing at the starting gate, the horn sounds, the gate opens, and we all go out running. Everyone chooses a different path. Some go where they need to go, while others get taken off track. We can choose to continue down the victim's path or decide that enough is enough!

The day you are born every action causes a ripple effect of every aspect of your life. Many people are content with how things are currently going. They are happy with their outcomes which makes

them feel comfortable and believe that there is no reason or need to push forward or break their bubble!

What I am talking about are hidden memories that can't be consciously accessed. Marla Paul writes in, *"The Friendship Crisis: Finding, Making, and Keeping Friends When You're Not a Kid Anymore,"* about these traumatic memories that hide in the brain and how to retrieve them. It's these hidden memories that at some point in your life get triggered by something or someone and give us the chance to right a wrong. However, the majority of people just chalk it up to "that's life," thinking that nothing will be done about it, so why bother! Herein lies the problem. It starts at a young age and continues into adulthood, and is accepted as normal. It isn't until you recognize it and decide that you are not going to accept it any longer that things change.

It's time to take your life back. Through a child's eyes, we saw and heard and remembered every moment. We may not have understood everything, but we felt the hurt and the pain of being pushed aside. No one protected us or told us that it was not our fault or that it should never have happened.

A friend of mine shared with me a YouTube video from a therapist named John Bradshaw discussing healing from childhood trauma. I cried so much, and it helped me quite a lot. It's so true that many of us feel as if no one has our back or there isn't anyone we can trust. For those who still feel something is not right, I recommend watching the video.

For me, the abuse was traumatic while others may have endured much more. It took me years to understand the full impact of what had happened. I believed that this is what happened, and it must be okay because why would adults let this happen to me, right?

WRONG!

That belief just flowed into the next chapters of my life. I was searching for some sort of peace. The effect on my life was negative, abusive behaviors which I allowed into my life because it was normal to me. It was acceptable because I understood it, but it totally messed me up. I lost who I was, what I liked, and what I liked to do, whether it was art, music, sports or anything else. I felt that the things I liked or wanted to do were non-existent. I had to do what “they” wanted and that was it.

As I grew older, I got married and had my kids. In 2018, I drove to work every morning wondering what the heck was happening. Why was I letting this happen? This isn’t the way it’s supposed to be. “RESCUE YOURSELF BECAUSE KNOW ONE ELSE WILL!” I was waiting for someone to say, “Oh my gosh, you poor thing, let me fix it.” I was wrong! A lot of us are waiting for that beautiful, wonderful part of life that is going to sweep us off our feet and give us a world and the life we always wanted.

It’s not that I’m stupid or gullible, but after having such a shitty life, all I wanted was something better. We all deserve it. A lot of people do find something better, but most do not.

So, it doesn’t matter how much crap we put up with, but you know what? We are stronger than we think. All we need to do is find that spark to wake us up!

There is one thing my mom always used to say and for some reason it keeps coming back to me. I remember as a kid, we’d be yelling at mom, “What’s for dinner?” or “What can I eat?” and she would say, “open your eyes”! I don’t know if you would call it an epiphany, but I finally got it. When you open your eyes, you find a whole new world. It’s like saying, “I’m not taking this shit anymore!”

Get up and look in the mirror. If you cry, cry your eyes out because it is a major breakthrough!!! Grab that bucket of ice cream, get your favourite snack. Eat, throw up. Then, get your life back.

Just because you missed all the beginning years being sad, scared or bullied, it doesn't mean you need to miss your future! This is a new chapter in your life.

I let things continue to happen in my life because I didn't have the courage or the realization that I deserved better. I was married and had kids at the time. My full story will be in my next book.

Go through the motions. Rescue yourself. Find a psychologist, someone you connect with and one who will listen to you without pushing medication on you. Please realize that you will find yourself if you are searching. By the way, nature and animals are the best therapy.

The first thing to remember is you get to take your life back; your mindset has to change for this to happen. You can change or redirect the ripple effect and start to change its direction, giving you more control. There's a saying that the more we think about what happened, the more control it has over us.

So, what did I do? I contacted the organization that the teacher was involved in and filed a complaint. I spoke up. Was I scared? Yes, of course, but I wanted someone to know. If I didn't stand up for myself, then how could I face myself? I am learning that I am a strong person, intelligent and I am proud of who I am. While no one else will understand what I have been through, just as I won't be able to understand what you have gone through, we can both come out stronger.

If we let those who hurt us continue to have a hold over us, they win. They have already taken a piece of our lives and done with it what they will.

Even taking back or speaking up or changing one thing is a step closer for you to take your life back. As children, we had no say. But as adults we have the right to speak out. We need to teach our kids that such experiences are not okay. No one should be abusing children.

It doesn't matter what country/culture we are in or what religion we practice. No one has the right to take a child's innocence!

The world we live in has changed. We need to stand up for one another. We need to help children. They need us to offer them protection, love, care, and compassion.

If anyone needs a listening ear, I am here. Remember, everyone's journey is different and the outcomes will be different as well. The story I have shared is what I have experienced. I pray for everyone to find some peace!

Thank you for your time to read my story!

Michaela El Hari



Michaela El Hari is a divorcee with two children. She has lived in Europe and across Canada. She decided to break free and find her path in life and is creating a ripple effect everywhere she goes by standing up and speaking out.

Connect with Michaela at <https://linktr.ee/elhari>.

CHAPTER 14

Laugh, Cry, Thrive: Join the Mumhood Party and Let's Sparkle Together!

Michelle Renee Richards

Dedicated to the resilient spirits of mothers worldwide—your strength, love, and unwavering commitment inspire us all. May these pages serve as a beacon of empowerment, reminding each mum that her journey is extraordinary, her challenges are seen, and her heart is celebrated. You are the heart of this narrative.

Becoming a mum coach has evolved into my life's mission, a purpose that emerged from the depths of my own traumas and experiences. In this narrative, I will delve into the significant events and challenges that have shaped my journey, leading me to the profound realization that

supporting mothers is not just a career choice but a calling. Through introspection and growth, I have come to understand the transformative power of self-love, confidence, and guidance, which I am eager to extend to fellow mothers navigating the complex journey of motherhood.

My story began on 15 July 1982, the day I was born. As a fragile baby, I was filled with love and joy. Nothing had influenced my pure heart. My mother, in her mid-30s, was so happy to hold me in her arms after suffering several miscarriages and being told she was unable to carry a child. I was her miracle. Unfortunately, my father, a raging alcoholic, was also in the hospital. However, he was not there for me and my mum. He was there as a patient after he had been in a fight at the local pub. He missed the birth of his first and only child.

My first memory was at the age of two when I was scalded with hot water from the kettle. I will never forget that moment. My mum had been sick in bed, so I attempted to make her a cup of tea to make her feel better. As the kettle poured all over my tiny body, I was engulfed in boiling water from neck to toes. The pain was unimaginable! My whole body was on fire; my skin wilting before my eyes. My mum came running at the sounds of my screams and threw me into a cold bath. This caused the pain to increase. The destruction of my skin was so profound that the usual colour, elasticity, and texture were replaced by a haunting, lifeless pallor. It was the beginning of the end for my relationship with my parents.

I had third degree burns to over 55% of my tiny body. Doctors advised my mum I might not make it through the night and the first three months would be touch and go. The risk of infection was very high and my tiny body struggled with the added stress, not to mention the countless surgeries I required, skin graft after skin graft.

Three years later and I was finally back to being a kid. I could finally go outside in the sunshine without pain. However, my joy was

short-lived. A man who was living with us, a friend of my mums, had decided that I, a five-year-old child, was his new sexual partner. I became a toy for nearly six months for a man who I had looked up to as a father figure. This is where my life imploded and I wished I was never born.

After six months, I finally told my best friend and asked she not tell anyone because I was so scared I would get in trouble. Well, that didn't go as planned. My friend told her parents, who confronted my mum. After a drawn-out process with police and doctors, I found myself in court at the tender age of six. That was when I learned that the man who had stolen my childhood decided not to face the music and took his own life. All I remember is the echo of "He got what he deserved." I was left without any answers and the insurmountable weight of his choices dragging me down. I was expected to carry on because, after all, I was just a child and I'd get over it.

Years later I finished school and became a mum at 19. I became a nurse so I could care for others, all the while my life was really going nowhere. I had spent 20 years in and out of the psychologist's office reliving my trauma as a way of dealing with it. At the age of 24, I had my first stroke. Yes, 24. I felt like I had been buried alive in a glass box. I was bilaterally paralysed, and I was not able to speak. I could hear everything people were saying, but I had no way to communicate back. While I was in the hospital, I noticed an eight-year-old girl in the bed opposite me. I knew I had no reason to complain. That was the day my life turned around and I learned the art of gratitude. I was so grateful that I had two beautiful children and a career I loved. I had nothing to complain about. I made the decision to embrace life for every moment that I was lucky enough to experience. After my long road to recovery, I threw myself into my work. I became a neuro specialist nurse, supporting patients and families who suffered strokes.

I was a living success story, and I was also able to relate with patients who were mentally struggling with their current situation.

Afterall, I had been in the exact same position...

As much as I loved my family and my job, I never felt truly fulfilled. Something was missing, and it seemed the harder I tried to figure it out the unhappier I became.

Fast forward to March 28, 2020, my life took another unexpected and deeply challenging turn. I found myself on the cold obstetrician's table with my hopes high and my dreams even higher. As the obstetrician searched for the heartbeat of our unborn child, the room grew heavy with silence. The deafening absence of the sound I longed to hear seemed to echo the void in my heart. And then, that dreadful moment arrived—the doctor's words, the unbearable truth. My world crumbled as he gently but painfully uttered the word "miscarriage." I felt a surge of emotions, an overwhelming tidal wave that threatened to drown me. Sadness, guilt, hurt, anger, and fear all swirled together, a tumultuous cascade of feelings that threatened to consume me.

It was a moment when my strength felt entirely insufficient to bear this unimaginable grief. In the aftermath of that heart-wrenching loss, my mind raced through a never-ending loop of questions and self-doubt. Why me? What had I done to deserve this pain?

In the depths of my despair, I feared that my husband would leave me, and I truly believed that I would never have another chance at motherhood. The darkness of the loss enveloped me, and I couldn't see a way out. My pain led me to retreat from reality, seeking refuge in the comfort of my bed in the hope that I would wake from this nightmare.

Returning to my job as a nurse a few weeks later was an even more daunting task. My once-beloved profession now felt like a painful

reminder of the life I had lost. Nursing requires you to be strong for others; but I was struggling to be strong for myself.

Amid my suffering, I made a decision that seemed to come from a place of despair. I told my husband that I couldn't bear the thought of trying for another baby, believing that my age was a barrier too high to overcome. But here's where my story takes a positive turn. In the face of this agonizing loss and my self-imposed exile from hope, I continued to wake up each day. I faced the pain, I faced the loss, and I faced the uncertainty of the future.

It wasn't easy, and it wasn't quick, but I gradually began to heal. I found solace in support groups, therapy, and the love of my husband. And as time passed, the clouds of despair began to part. While the scars remained, I discovered that my strength and resilience could help not only heal my own wounds but also those of others. I began to find purpose once more in supporting others through their darkest moments.

My story is one of resilience, transformation, and growth. It proves that even in the face of unimaginable pain, you have the power to rebuild your life and emerge stronger than before. In the wake of my profound journey through grief and healing, a new purpose began to emerge. I realized that the pain I had endured could serve as a well-spring of empathy and strength to support others in their struggles. I made the decision to become a transformational mum coach. This was not just a career choice; it was a calling, a way to transform my own suffering into a beacon of hope for women around the world. With an unwavering determination to empower and uplift, I embarked on the path of coaching. I sought education and training, delving into the intricacies of anxiety, stress, and burnout.

I'm not interested in merely finding temporary solutions to life's difficulties. I aim to instill a deep sense of resilience, self-empowerment,

and emotional well-being in my clients. My mission is to help them not only survive but thrive, even in the face of adversity.

As I started working with professional women from different corners of the world, I discovered that their stories were as diverse as their backgrounds. However, one common thread united them all—the desire to find joy, love, and happiness in both the good times and the bad. They, like me, had faced their own moments of despair, uncertainty, and struggle. And they, too, sought a path to resilience, fulfillment, and empowerment.

Through my online platform, I reached women around the world, breaking the barriers of distance and culture. I use my story as a source of inspiration, proving that even in the darkest of times, there is a path to a brighter future. As my journey continued, a remarkable twist of fate brought another unexpected chapter into my life.

Roughly 20 weeks after the pain of my miscarriage and my decision to become a coach, I received news that would challenge my sense of reality once more. I was 16 weeks pregnant, and it was a revelation that shook the very foundation of my world.

For the first trimester, I had unknowingly carried this new life within me. The idea of becoming pregnant again had been pushed so far from my mind that it had become a distant memory, overshadowed by the focus on my coaching career and the healing journey that my husband and I had embarked upon. The world had become so accustomed to the resiliency of my spirit and the strength of my purpose that it was almost as if the universe had decided to gift us a second chance.

Mixed emotions of disbelief, joy, and anxiety swirled within me. The scars of my previous loss still lingered, but they had now met with the unexpected joy of a new life growing inside of me. It was a reminder that life could bring both pain and joy in unpredictable ways,

and it was a testament to my enduring strength and capacity to embrace this new chapter.

This turn of events brought with it a sense of renewal and hope. My perspective on life had shifted, and I approached this pregnancy with a newfound appreciation for the fragility and preciousness of existence. My journey had taught me that, even in the darkest moments, there was room for light to seep through, for hope to emerge, and for life to blossom once more.

Now I'm humbled to share this experience with you, offering a living example of the ability to find hope and joy even after the darkest of storms. My journey is far from over, but it has already become a source of inspiration for many. My journey towards becoming a mum coach begins with the exploration of my own past traumas. The challenges I faced, from childhood through adulthood, have been instrumental in shaping my empathy and understanding towards the struggles of others. Unpacking these traumas has allowed me to develop a unique perspective on the emotional and psychological aspects of motherhood, fostering a deep sense of compassion that fuels my desire to support and uplift other mothers. I have come to recognize the need for a support system and the transformative impact of mentorship. I didn't find this kind of community until I was 40 years old. I don't want other mothers to have to wait like I did. I want them to know the resources are available now.

As I sought solace and guidance during my own struggles, I encountered mentors who played a pivotal role in my healing journey. These mentors provided not only practical advice but also emotional support and a safe space for vulnerability. Mentorship became a beacon of hope in my life, inspiring me to become a pillar of support for other mothers facing similar challenges. Recognizing the power of community in overcoming the isolating nature of motherhood, I am

driven to create a platform that fosters connection and empowerment among mothers. This is my vision for a supportive community where mothers can share their experiences, triumphs, and challenges without judgment.

When we embrace ourselves as mothers, it sets off a ripple effect that transforms not just our lives but extends its positive influence to our children, families, and future generations. Our children absorb our energy, emotions, and self-perception like sponges. Prioritizing self-care and self-growth equips us to meet their needs and teaches them the importance of pursuing dreams and prioritizing happiness. By modeling these behaviors, we empower our children, fostering a generation that values self-care and self-worth. Investing in ourselves creates a positive and nurturing environment, directly impacting our children's well-being. Let's break the cycle of self-neglect and, together, create a world where empowered mothers nurture thriving children, love and acceptance reign supreme.

As I reflect on my own journey, I have come to understand that our traumas need not define us; rather, they can become the catalyst for personal and collective triumph. Transforming pain into strength, my own experiences have shaped my resilience. By sharing my story, I aim to inspire other mothers to find strength in vulnerability and resilience in the face of adversity. My mission is to provide unwavering support, guidance, and empowerment to mothers, fostering a community where they can thrive despite life's adversities. As I embark on this journey, I am fueled by the belief that every mother deserves a compassionate ally in her corner, and I am committed to being that ally for those who need it most.

Michelle Renee Richards



Meet Michelle Renee Richards, the unstoppable force of positivity and playfulness! At 41 years young, she's not your average mum – she's a cool mum with four beautiful children and the proud title of grandma to one adorable little munchkin.

Michelle is a compassionate nurse, healing hearts and minds with her caring touch. Beyond her nursing role, she's a transformational mindset coach, specializing in empowering fellow mums to unlock their full potential. Her infectious enthusiasm and unwavering support make her a superhero for tired mums everywhere.

When not saving the world, Michelle finds solace in nature, hiking through lush forests or basking in the warm glow of the sun. Her love for music and sport makes her the ultimate cheerleader, both on and off the field.

Michelle, a self-proclaimed foodie, seeks new culinary experiences that tantalize her taste buds and transport her to different cultures. Eating out is a sensory adventure that ignites her curiosity and brings people together.

Beneath her responsible exterior, Michelle is a big kid at heart, embracing her cheeky side and spreading laughter wherever she goes. Her infectious energy and genuine love for people make her the life of the party.

If you're looking for a ray of sunshine, turn to Michelle. With her uplifting spirit, inspiring journey, and playful nature, she's a true beacon of joy and love. Get ready to be inspired because Michelle is here to remind you that life is meant to be lived to the fullest.

Connect with Michelle at <https://boss-mum.com>.

CHAPTER 15

Prevail Through Life's Obstacles

Morgan Crew

This chapter is dedicated to my children, Agatha and Wilson Mackey, as well as the helpers on my pathway to Prevail. I also dedicate this chapter to my valued clients from the past, present and future who I am honored to support on their journey in healing.

The word Prevail came to me in January 2012. I was alone at home. The kids were at their father's house for the week, and I was on my winter break from nursing school. I wrote it down and related to its message of rising above and carrying on. I didn't know then how a decade later that word would become my motto for life and my message in helping others as a psychotherapist and Mental Health Educator.

I am going to share my story of my pathway to prevail and hope that this will help you to reflect on your childhood and life experiences to better understand how you too can prevail and prove your power.

As humans, we are in a school of life with a steep curriculum to learn about ourselves and gain tools to navigate future obstacles. I call this ‘obstacles on our pathway/opportunity to prevail.’ To help us understand who we are, we must look back to when we were around three years old as our most accurate example of our ‘true essence.’ It is when we were our most natural, truest, unchanged selves. Age three is when developmentally we emerge from toddlerhood and recognize that we are people in the world, and we have an ability to impact others. The traits and characteristics we had then were a pure representation of who we really are, and we can see the traits by looking at photos of ourselves from that age. For example, some of my true essence traits are sensitive, emotional, cautious, and capable.

Humans naturally begin to shift away from knowing their true essence due to experiences in childhood that change their beliefs about themselves. These changes in beliefs are called private logic and each of us has our own personal private logic that makes sense to us as it was formed in childhood. Most of us will spend our childhood and teen years forming private logic away from our natural selves and then spend the rest of our lives trying to come back to our true essence.

Often, I use the analogy of a pathway to depict where a client is currently in their life. The pathway leads to a horizon that we cannot quite see as it is off in the distance. I share with clients that in life we have ‘obstacles on our pathway/opportunities to prevail’ and that our job is to learn skills to help us navigate our way on the pathway to the horizon. When we need help, there will be helpers on our pathway if we are willing to ask. This metaphor helps clients to consider their past obstacles on pathway/opportunities to prevail, as well as their helpers along the way. I will share some examples from my life and hope this helps you to consider what tools you have gained from obstacles, who

helped, and what true essence traits you have that are your superpowers making you the person you are today.

One of my earliest childhood memories is when I was three years old in junior kindergarten and when I got off the bus from school, I discovered the doors to my house were locked (obstacle on pathway/opportunity to prevail). It was raining and I began walking down the highway to my grandmother's house about a kilometer away. She happened to be driving towards our house and she screeched to a halt and popped me into her car and took me home. The babysitter had fallen asleep and accidentally locked me out, sleeping through my arrival home. This memory was recalled during an Adlerian therapy session in my 40s and was reflected to me as a metaphor for my life: I don't give up, when a door is locked on my pathway, I will relentlessly find one that will open. Despite this experience also leading to a private logic/personal belief of 'I am alone', it also taught me to seek solutions and connections which is a common theme throughout my life.

Experiences in public school can also deeply impact your ability to align with and know your true essence. I always had difficulty at school and the feedback I received was that "Morgan doesn't pay attention" (obstacle on pathway/opportunity to prevail). I remember being shocked to hear this at a parent-teacher interview as I felt I was always paying attention. Guess what happened the following year? I didn't pay attention. This experience in grade three led to a private logic/personal belief of 'inadequacy' and therefore 'I may as well give up' that lingered for a long time. I accepted and believed that I was a sub-par student and engaged the minimum to pass with Cs and Ds.

In grade four I was not accepted into the French Immersion program and all my friends were (obstacle on pathway/opportunity to prevail). I was devastated, ashamed and cloaked with a heavy blanket (private logic/personal belief) of 'failure.' My mom and I created a

plan to attend the same school that my friends were attending but in the English stream. That next year, I headed to the new school and instead of turning right into the French immersion class I carried on left to the English class. The new teacher (helper) was for the first time a champion for me, recognizing that I had some sparkle left, despite my failure belief, and he would give me special tasks to do that I was good at. This boost of confidence from a teacher led me to helping in the office at lunch and this sense of pride and importance stuck with me and led to valuing employment opportunities in the future.

Outside of school in my junior high years, I began riding horses and learned quickly that I preferred being at the barn than at school. I was not an athletic child and feedback from bullies at school (obstacle on pathway/opportunity to prevail) had led to beliefs that I was overweight and therefore ‘inadequate’ (private logic). I had the fortune of spending years at a riding stable where the owners’ (helpers) passion for teaching riding led to experiences of a lifetime. I learned that I am athletic, capable of learning, able to care for animals, can fall and get back up, and that I could get disqualified at horse shows and continue to respect the horse, teammates and spirit of competition. My first career was becoming a Certified English Riding Coach. Obtaining that credential was pivotal; this was the first time I had succeeded in meeting a major milestone and standard. I felt proud of myself, confident in hard work paying off, and at age 19 felt that I could meet goals that I had once believed impossible.

At the end of high school, I did not get accepted into my desired programs: Registered Nurse or Veterinary Technician (obstacle on pathway/opportunity to prevail). Being in the horse industry and wanting to break into the veterinary or health care industry, I took a few certification courses and at age 24 obtained a dream job at a veterinary clinic due to my horse experience. The women I worked

with deeply inspired me. It was a no nonsense, highly professional and stressful at times work environment and I thrived in this setting seeking to master skills as a veterinary receptionist and veterinary assistant. I loved watching the vet and vet technician (helpers) run the clinic, complete surgeries and cure illnesses. Each day at work I wanted to have more responsibility and believed I could because of the successful and hardworking women around me. As the years went by, I felt capable because of powerful role models, and this was imperative for what was coming next in my life.

I married my high school boyfriend and in my 20s we had our children. Shortly after we moved into our second home, my husband had an affair and abruptly left the marriage. I was 30 years old with a 4-year-old daughter and a 1.5-year-old son. This painful, shocking and unprecedented incident presented me with an obstacle on my pathway/opportunity to prevail. The early years of separation and divorce were traumatic, but because of the obstacle combined with the confidence gained from helpers, I enrolled into a pre-nursing program in 2010. I attended school full time for the following five years to complete my Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree, becoming a Registered Nurse (RN), while raising my two young children. I remember seeing the mail arrive after writing the registration exam and feeling the deepest pride and accomplishment I had ever known when I read that I had passed. I was smiling ear to ear, floating home with my spirits lifted so high!

The process of returning to school was not for the faint of heart and presented many challenges. That was when my helpers were my vital lifeline. When I was close to giving up, a pivotal person (helper) would present themselves and walk with me along my pathway for a while and then trail off so I could resume the journey alone. These people were my mom, best friend, science teacher in pre-nursing, a handful of valued classmates and my cousin. Thanks to the science

teacher, I learned to connect with classmates and we banded together and supported each other through the programs towards our goals.

I officially became an RN in 2015 and my kids (13 and 10 at that time) attended my graduation. It was perfect timing for me to obtain a full-time job with benefits so that I could swoop in and pay for their orthodontics! I accepted a job in community mental health care on the crisis support team. That led me to working in emergency departments caring for clients with severe mental illness. That role was highly challenging due to the lack of resources in our public health care system, so I was filling all kinds of gaps in care for seriously ill clients. I experienced traumatic events in my early years of nursing (suicides/traumatic deaths) and combined with the experience of trauma of sharing custody when my kids were so young, I began to feel the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by 2019. Because the symptoms rose gradually, I was unaware of the connection between past trauma and the signs. Sadly, shame and guilt accompanied me when I left work for a medical leave in June 2019 as I was not able to manage the symptoms of anxiety, sleep disturbance, hypervigilance, mistrust, feeling emotionally detached, loss of confidence, loss of faith, intrusive memories as well as somatic symptoms such as wheezing, coughing and asthma attacks. I had a steep decline in my self-esteem and self-confidence having to leave work to engage in my own deep mental health care (obstacle in pathway/opportunity to prevail).

Entering my own healing was distressing and scary as I had little faith in the outcomes of the mental health care I had been providing. I fortunately found a pivotal mentor on my pathway in the form of a psychologist (helper) using Adlerian Psychology which was entirely new to me. I was shocked at how effective the shifts and changes were in my mental health, mindset, and outlook. I learned so much about Adlerian concepts and the ideas clicked quickly and deeply as I began to

understand myself on a deeper level. I learned about my true essence and private logic that led me to form beliefs in adulthood which contributed to my susceptibility to PTSD. I was inspired and intrigued with this form of psychology and began learning more about this psychodynamic method. Prior to my medical leave, I began a master's in counselling program which was motivated by the desire to learn more about how to help my clients as a nurse. During my recovery from PTSD, an idea arose for me to shift into helping clients in a long-term format as a psychotherapist using Adlerian methods which I believed were more impactful in helping others than how I could as a nurse. My recovery from PTSD fortunately took nine months and at that time I decided to resign from my nursing job and open my private practice the same week the pandemic was declared (obstacle in pathway/opportunity to prevail).

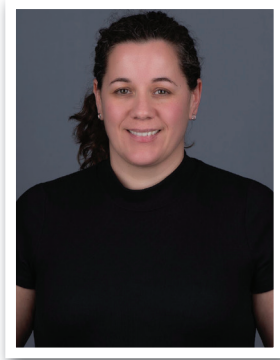
Despite the necessary transition to online sessions during the pandemic, my private practice thrived, rapidly acquiring a full roster of clients that has been maintained to this day. Throughout my four years of offering psychotherapy, I've observed commonalities in the challenges faced by my clients, as well as in the approaches that have been effective for them. It became apparent that there is a discernible pattern contributing to positive transformation and personal development. Concepts such as grounding foundations, true essence rediscovery and private logic were often difficult for clients to grasp, so I began hosting workshops to help with hands-on learning. Clients expressed value in connecting with others and engaging in the material as a group while strong relationships and friendships were being formed. The idea was born to put together a workbook of the concepts and begin to teach them as a mental health educational course in advance of clients experiencing a mental health challenge. This is called "upstream thinking" in the nursing realm.

The name Prevail re-emerged as a theme at that point as I began to reflect on how I wanted to support clients next on my pathway. Prevail had always reminded me to keep my eyes up, shoulders back, take deep breaths and take one step at a time moving forward to ultimately prevail. The definition of prevail is to “prove your power,” so naturally it beautifully formed the name for my program, “Prevail Prove Your Power.” From my own experiences and with years of supporting others on their pathways, I see the Prevail process as a beautiful guide to demonstrate how to see any obstacle as an opportunity to prevail as each challenge is necessary for personal growth.

My Prevail clients offer feedback messages such as: “inner peace became my new priority,” “my mindset shifted from victimhood about my circumstances to feeling a sense that peace is possible...,” “true essence rediscovery and tapping into the inner child in each of us was very impactful” and “understanding that I am not responsible for overcoming other people’s obstacles was paramount.”

Living a complete life has us experiencing it all: the good, the bad and the ugly, and having the confidence to approach each bend in the pathway with the spirit of prevail feels empowering and important. I now offer an online mental wellness educational program called “Prevail Prove Your Power,” which is my life’s work, my passion, and my pleasure. This is my way to offer a ripple effect of positive impact in the world. I hope that sharing my personal journey has helped you to reflect on your own power and get closer to your true essence.

Morgan Crew



Morgan Crew is a Registered Nurse, Registered Psychotherapist, and a Mental Health Educator. Morgan established her private practice Morgan Crew Counselling in 2020 and has a special interest in supporting individuals with anxiety, depression, relationship, and parenting challenges.

As a former mental health nurse working in emergency departments, Morgan has vast experience caring for clients with serious mental illness. Morgan's true passion is mental wellness and supporting people seeking empowerment to shift into living the life they desire. Morgan uses a variety of psychodynamic methodologies including Adlerian to help clients gain clarity on limiting beliefs holding them back and facilitate personal growth from the learned insights and shifts in perspective.

As a single mother since her two children were very young (now adults), Morgan is well versed in the common challenges of parenting and the struggles children and parents often face as a result.

Morgan is a graduate of Yorkville University's Master of Arts in Counselling and obtained her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from

Laurentian University. With her wealth of experience and education, Morgan has developed the “Prevail Prove Your Power” program, offering transformative concepts honed through years of clinical practice. These concepts have delivered impactful and meaningful change in her clients’ lives, prompting Morgan’s passion to share them with the public through the Prevail program. Morgan is dedicated to empowering individuals to unlock their fullest potential.

Connect with Morgan at www.morgancrewcounselling.com.

CHAPTER 16

Touched by the Supernatural

Nattolie Chilton

I dedicate this chapter to God, who preserved me and filled me with Love; now I have it to give! For my kids Taylor, Jeremy, Sentin, and amazing husband Jarret. April Tribe Giauque Angel editor, and Nico, my therapist extraordinaire.

Supernatural (definition): Things that cannot be explained by science.

Most mornings I'm awakened by an inner heat that lights me up like the sunrise. I tell the Creator; if you want me up, awaken me, and it always happens. Operating in the supernatural requires trust and faith. It's not me making it happen, but more like jumping into a river and going with the flow of Divine Destiny.

In the summer of 2023, I received a God download, wisdom beyond typical perception, and immediately questioned whether I'd heard it. The Voice said, "Stop second-guessing. YOU hear me!"

Ok!! That assurance gave me the confidence I needed and still need, especially as I write this.

What is my Ripple Effect? A major ripple is releasing my full life story, *Unsilenced*, which I've been distilling for ten years. The most profound moment happened in 2000—I saw the Hand of God break through my ceiling. For me, God is tangible.

In 2014, as I began chronicling my book, I heard Spirit say, "Your life story is about me, not you." Okay, I thought. I must reflect and examine my life as a set of miracles and hope to see line-upon-line learning. It's not as easy to find hope in light in all that darkness. I need a perspective shift. I'm still learning.

In this learning, I see in my mind's eye a shoebox full of images that spark deep memories. I must pull these emotional and spiritual files and images from my mind to examine and find answers. I feel my fingers thumb through the images in my mind.

Ok. Let's start again. I pull one from the box. It seems to stare at me—it shoots me back to my family of origin, whence my ripple emerges. It feels as though I grew up under a magnifying glass; I was born with a high degree of energetic sensitivity, combined with an intense Mom, which made interactions quite torturous—maybe for her, too.

As an empath, I rode the dragon of emotion in our home and the world. One question posed to me regularly drove me to take things personally, "What is wrong with you?" Questions drive everything—and what we focus on grows.

I paid attention to any wrongness within me, imagined I had a poisoning influence, and began to separate myself to protect people from me—not much light there. I drop the image and allow my fingers to slip past more. Hum, maybe if I go back to my research and college days, I'll find a psychologist somewhere who can help me.

I found something: Don Miguel Ruiz's book *The Four Agreements*. It instructs us to stop taking things personally since it can create needless suffering. I agree with stopping the habit of taking things personally—it's freeing.

In 1992, my first spirit-to-spirit lesson occurred in a restaurant. A waiter walked toward me, looking stressed and agitated. I naturally assumed, "He doesn't like me." At that moment, Spirit cut through my consciousness like a samurai: "Everything ISN'T about YOU!!" Ok, then! I thought. I heard and felt that, but it took much longer to really implement it. Ok, good.

I drop the faded memory and take a deep breath, reaching for another; I'm going deeper. There must be more. Supernatural Childhood Roots. Yes, let me look, ah, here is something. Growing up with a house ghost was part of home life. Once, Dad stretched in a darkened room when the dimmer switch went from off to full brightness. There was no explanation after taking the switch apart. Mom would report to us how she heard a baby crying in the middle of the night when we kids were big! There was no physical baby in the house. I never shuttered at that story. It seemed to feed me.

Let's look at Mom a little more. Mom reported once, while in the ICU, seeing a brilliant light at the foot of her bed and vehemently declared her vision was caused by being ill. (My guess was an Angel.) We are the opposite. She fears the spiritual, and it excites me more than anything!

Hum, what will I find if I look at this part of my childhood? Ah, yes, I'm a curly-haired girl who loves with conviction. The elements cause me to dash madly into sheets of rain and stabbing lightning. I stand, arms spread in a crucifix, to get soaked like a rat and feel energized—at one with the power of nature and the Supernatural. I enjoy affecting an effect!

So far, I see that my childhood connects this type of energy...but... there was another influence in the home. No—don't share that part; I feel myself squeak. That ripple became a tsunami that carried, crashed, and destroyed my innocent mind and confused gender identity, forcing me to respond to everything sexually and live broken, starving for touch and love.

"Nattolie," I heard my spirit say. "Visit Lisa's (my name at birth) past." I reached for an image that I really didn't want to see. I swallowed hard.

What happened when darkness was introduced to me? As I read sensual adult stories, child's play grew into adult play. They stoked a red-hot fire in me, and I felt pushback around my sexuality, which caused me to focus on it even more intently. What we resist persists. I feel my counselor voice needs to say something to you: Parents, be careful what you consistently highlight to your kids. There, you've been warned.

I take a deep, cleansing breath and return to the memories. I'm milling through the ancient snapshots of my life, and my fingers land on one that brings a feeling of numbness or death. Yes, our family feels dead. I need life, not this emptiness, so I pursue the keys to open Pandora's Box.

Pandora's Box definition: creates many problems you did not expect. How can I earn or get the love I'm aching for? My will versus

Divine will—how do I differentiate between them? I am exquisitely sensitive to people's emotions and do not understand that my feelings may not always be mine.

When harsh words were directed at me, I had no way to block the poison darts that splintered my identity. I become attuned to the broken parts inside and feel possessed by lusty, depressed, and anxious spirits. I struggle for equilibrium. The words, the sexual abuse, and the lack of physical connection have trampled any natural boundaries, and my no has disappeared.

I have an involuntary response to anticipate the needs of others as a defense, to make myself safe. Who could I possibly tell? It all felt too intense, so I started to drink alcohol at 12 years of age.

I surface from this spiraling memory, drop the image, and tell my brain to find science, a fact, something in my training to stop this feeling. I found it. A neuroscientist, Dr. Carolyn Leaf, said, "Our neurology is built for love, and when we live positively, pathways grow leafy structures; but in toxicity, we grow thorn-like structures that excrete poisons."

I feel my heart calming as I reflect on those words. Good News! I remember now. Neuroplasticity gives us the choice to reconfigure our brains—they can re-grow in a healthy way! I pick up the photos again and find one that reminds me that I started to look around for that healthiness. Since it had not been introduced into my circle, I didn't know where to find it.

I felt like I was starving for truth, light, and love. Where was the Path? In vacation Bible school, we sang, "Jesus loves me, this I know." Something about the Truth bringing Life? I doggedly seek Truth, and I start to pray, but then I forget again. I'm sure God has smacked his forehead at my lack of faith even after sending me sign after sign of His

presence and our connection. My self-centeredness and pain blind my eyes and heart from feeling it. I want love.

My hand puts down that image, and I pull back another memory to find one. At twenty-six, I had an accident that peeled back the layers of reality to reveal a web of Light. I saw it. Everything looked like sparklers. Trees and humans were and are condensed light. We are all connected energetically in a blanket of light. It was amazing and confirmed what I read.

We have free will to choose to believe we are separate. Aligning with that perspective of aloneness is devastating to our souls. It's my experience that feeling unloved is the most significant pain of all. Yet, Light has the final say. We are not in control, yet we have free will. Where Light is, darkness is pushed away—dissolved. Or is it that darkness is always there, but so too is light? What I focus on, I will become.

I believe purpose is always connected to an increasing mastery of love. Darkness is a built-in default. Functioning lovingly is the hard one—supernatural. In this spiritually awakened state, I try to function again. But I am an infant trying to consume steak. I look around. I am connected to relationships that are dark and demonic. God keeps reaching for me. I am awakened time and time again and desire what He is offering, but Oh yes, I still have to survive because I am with another deadbeat.

With my relationship, we were homeless for a while and now have a basement suite; I'm grateful. Being grateful in all things...is a ripple that has gone out from me—often. I look at this new image and memory of my life and know that This place is where the Hand of God entered my life viscerally. It came to me through the ceiling of that basement apartment, imprinting on me the knowledge that He was there.

The mattress on the floor is just thick enough. Life is lean, and our baby sleeps between us. His strawberry curls and green eyes ignite my love at a glance, and bam—I'm energized!! I'm in the second year of Solution-Focused Counseling at Erickson College, and my student loan only stretches part way.

My hand grasps another memory entitled. Spiritual Growth—I think this growth is in the darkest part of my life. But when I think about it. Seeds are buried in darkness so that they can grow. I accept this. Well, my Spiritual Growth is shaped by a new relationship. His initials are SG, and he was my new husband. He won't work. SG has Cherokee cheekbones with Dutch ancestry and glints through sardonic blue eyes; crow-like, opportunistic—selfish, and volatile. SG's humor and his beauty are what attracted me. I saw so much beauty in him, his soul potential, and when his character came through—the beauty melted. I married him and suck it up. SG always finds a way to get his daily marijuana, and I indulge after school to dull the pressure.

Our baby is the best thing about my life, and in periods of silence, when SG isn't around, my spirit reaches heavenward like a flame to oxygen. Where is joyfulness? God? Please help; life is crushing me.

One night, I was lying in bed when I ran my hands over my body. I was shocked by the sinewy leanness and noticed a small bump on my belly. I ignored it. I can't be. My body ached from the daily descent to college, a good 3km each way, and I felt joy carrying our two-year-old in my arms to daycare. After drop-off, I power walk and focus on the unseen; it's here that I access a vigorous sea of energy and swim naked with my Secret Love.

Our Supernatural relationship quickens my spirit with every breath. Pulling up and away from our 3-D world, I revel in our playful freedom and sing passionate songs to him, declaring a better life with an open, trusting heart. I feel safe. Nobody knows about us—it's where I feel

wholly accepted and loved. He accompanies me everywhere and is entirely emotionally available. Within our Divine connection, I feel like an apple growing on a tree, nourished and supported.

My earthly husband monologues and rarely allows me to express my voice. Strange, how I've chased men who mostly take from me? They are bankrupt. Why am I drawn to this type of treatment?

I put down that photo and looked at images strewn about me. In my original family, I kept my feelings to myself; nobody seemed interested. I went from relationship to relationship to darker and darker, until the pressure of it all seemed to make me burst. I was that seed stuck in the broken ground that felt stretched in a downward direction—those must be roots. Then, suddenly, I was shot upward, peeking through the surface.

In this new relationship with God, I just feel a presence and receive strength. His love and the way I feel supported is completely different. I'm allowed all the time and space I want, and I'm learning how to feel secure.

I'm learning to ask for help all the time. To be direct. The support I feel in our supernatural love affair provides me the confidence to become who I truly am. Some evenings after NLP School, I noticed I was getting more tired. Though I still motor up the rolling hills easily, there is a growing life inside me, and the moist West Coast air makes my skin dewy. Raindrops cling to my eyelashes, and the sidewalks glisten off Main, kaleidoscope color. Lush, mature shrubs abound around older homes, and I pause to drink in their blooming, intricate perfection.

During our walks, I recharge my spirit. I pour out gratitude to the Creator from my heart and tell him how much I love him, and I never want anything to come between us. His ripple effect in my life is hope and color.

I know that it will hurt as I continue to grow, but I am anchored to love. I fight to stay strong in the wind of hate from my relationships. I won't let the words of shame break me, and I ask for His protection. He helps me raise my child and stay in school. After finishing my two-year NLP certification and hypnotherapy degree, life changes—again.

I have light in my life rippling outwardly to help others. Prior to that, I swirled in a black vortex, mostly consuming destruction and emptiness.

The ripples were chaotic back then, but so much has changed—to be continued in my inspirational, true-story *Unsilenced*, September 25, 2024.

Nattolie Chilton



Meet Nattolie Chilton, a woman touched by the supernatural hand of God, undergoing a profound transformation that even led to a complete name change. She's emerged as a courageous storyteller from decades in darkness, urging others to be unshackled from secrets. Nattolie's journey is chronicled in her true story.

Unsilenced, the book, is a testament to her resilience. Having triumphed over abuse, domestic violence, and addiction that once brought her to the depths, Nattolie not only healed but also earned a degree in neurolinguistics during her transformative journey. As a Truth Coach and trauma-informed certified counselor, her greatest joy lies in being a safe confidante. Her core message echoes the power of truth and forgiveness, emphasizing we can live in complete liberation and wholeness! Nattolie, 13 years sober, stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration for those on their own paths to recovery.

Come away, to explore more on my Nattolie's website at www.breakupwithsecrets.com.

CHAPTER 17

You Were Meant for MORE

Niki Margot

*For all the beautiful human beings who are not living
the life of their dreams and want to be.*

I am laying wet and naked in my bed, pain pulsating in my lower back and down my leg. I barely made it from the shower, the pain was so intense...AGAIN. The new year is only a few days in, and I thought it was going to be different. I was feeling better. And now this. Who can I call to help me that will show up, during Covid? My phone is full of “friends,” yet I struggle to pick one to call. Finally, I reach a girlfriend who is able to help. Thank goodness... at least she can help me get the Depends on and get into clothes of some kind. Yes, you heard right... Depends Underwear. At this point, I don’t even care.

Help has come and gone and now I am lying in bed, dressed and “prepared” for the day. I’m patiently waiting for the drugs to kick in that

help dull the pain or at least let me get a few hours of sleep. “Be thankful for the little things,” I try to tell myself. Honestly, all I can feel is pain and the lingering thought of giving up. I have been dealing with herniated discs for the last four months and this means painful decompression treatments and chiropractic appointments. I have been searching for natural ways to heal them and doing internal self-development work, deep breathing classes, and whatever else I could find that did not involve surgery. I really thought I turned a corner; I could see the light of no more pain at the end of the tunnel!! And then THIS happens!

That’s it! I’m done! I can’t do another four months of pain all by myself, let alone another week or even a day. No one is coming. I pray for God to take me as tears run down my face. I start thinking of ways I could take my own life. I never thought I would think like this. I was a Badass... but in this moment I don’t feel like one at all, not even a little bit.

I start down that path, wondering if I took enough of my pain meds, could I drift off into sleep? It would be more fun to run my car off a bridge, though, movie style. Then, and this is the really f**ked up part... I think, “Well, I can’t die just yet because I have to help my landlady finish cleaning out the house I am staying in (rent free).” I promised I would help them and then I can’t really take the pills because they would find me and that’s traumatic and I don’t want to cause any pain or be a bother for anyone else. REALLY? I can’t even powerfully end my life because I am thinking of how it will affect other people!

As my human brain contemplates all these thoughts, something in my heart, my inner soul whispers to me, “You were meant for more.” The thought is quiet, yet it rises above all the other negativity swirling in my head. I realize that this is a moment in my life when I must choose. Which way to go? Would I succumb to the pain, get addicted to pills and use that as an excuse as to why my life didn’t turn out the way I wanted it to? Or would I choose my life? All of it; choose the

pain, the difficulty of getting out of bed, getting dressed, walking, all of it. Would I choose that this is how my life is at this moment? I will not let the pain stop me from being me and what I was meant to do in this world. In this moment, the answer arrives. I know deep in my soul that I have something to say. And that something will create a positive ripple in this world.

Well, crap-on-a-stick. I guess I am not giving up after all. What do I do? How do I start? Out of the blue, “Forgiveness” pops into my head. I start thinking of people I need to forgive. Guess what? I was #1 on that list. One by one, I begin to forgive them all, my mother, my sisters, my daughter, my ex-husband, old friends, etc., and most importantly, myself. Done. Now what? Action! Okay, what actions can I take? The first thing that comes to mind is what I can’t do; I can’t stand for more than 60 seconds without pain. Then that is my timeclock. I am going to accept it and do what I can do right in this moment.

I then begin to think of how I can ask for help. As an independent and stubborn woman, this is challenging. I quickly realize that it is a necessary step and something I need to learn how to do, because it will open up possibilities that are not available to me if I stay on my island alone. I have to give up that I can do it better on my own, because the truth is I can’t and I really need the help. Asking for help does not make me weak, unintelligent or incapable; it makes me human. Dare I say it makes me strong. I allow myself grace. It’s okay to ask for help. It’s okay to not be able to do it all.

When I lie my head on my tear-soaked pillow at the end of the night, I am filled with peace. My body is lighter somehow; it has released something I can’t put into words. I have created a rooted power inside me telling me that “I got this!” I know that I have the ability to do whatever I need to do and the ability to ask for help and create what I need to make my life work at this moment. And I am going to do it all WITH THE

PAIN. It is going on the ride with me. Buckle up! Tomorrow morning, we begin! Now it's time to sleep and put this day to bed.

The next morning, I slowly stir myself awake, wondering what time it is and hoping that I got at least five hours of sleep. I begin the daily process of getting my body out of bed as quickly, yet slowly, and with as little pain as possible. I count myself down, 3, 2, 1... I squeeze my abs and butt, push myself up and grab my cane for support. As I sit on my bed, I pause... there is no pain. Well, this can't be right. What time is it? Am I still high on pain meds? Maybe I took too many? I rack my brain for any explanation but can't come up with one. This is a fluke. Maybe it is the way I'm sitting. I have to get up... 3, 2, 1, and up I go, take the few steps to the bathroom, sit down and guess what? Still no pain! Am I dreaming? How can this be? "Don't get too excited," I tell myself. It will come back, because that is impossible for it to just disappear like that! Isn't it?

Impossible it is not. Miracle? I think so. Why? Why me? Why now? When I sit with this and ask God, The Universe and all the Angels, that little whisper comes again with another message, "You surrendered." And I had. I had stopped fighting what is so. I stopped fighting the part of me that said, "This isn't fair, and life shouldn't be like this. I deserve more. I am a good person. Why me?" You know, all that negative self-talk that we do when things don't go the way we want. It is a bratty, grown-up temper-tantrum, really. And it keeps us from stepping into our greatness and owning our own s**t.

I believe that my miracle and my ongoing life journey is a gift that was given to me. The lessons I learned from it are also a gift I share with those who seek it. If you are reading this, then you are likely one of those seekers. My wish is that you find at least one gem in the lessons that can help you navigate this constantly transforming world that we live in; help to spread love, joy, laughter and all the good feels. Pay it forward in your own unique way.

Lesson 1: Surrender

“The moment of surrender is not when life is over, it’s when it begins.” ~Marianne Williamson

When you surrender, and in that surrender, you accept what is so, what is right now, you can learn to love where you are, right in this moment of time. No need to search for something outside of you. YOU are perfect exactly as you are in this moment. The moment is perfect exactly how it is. No matter what.

Lesson 2: Have Faith

“Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.” ~Martin Luther King, Jr.

Have faith that God/The Universe has your back like no one has ever had your back before. God creates with Love as the grounding force, as the first ingredient, and always wants you to succeed and live in abundance. Have faith in yourself! You can do anything. I know this may seem like a cheesy slogan, but honestly, why can’t you? Yes, there will be actions to take and work to be done, but truthfully, you can design the life you want. You only have to believe you can.

Lesson 3: Power of Forgiveness

“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.” ~Mahatma Gandhi

When you forgive, you are letting go of the past. The past is the past and is not to be dwelled upon or to have a lot of time spent in it. You can't change it, right? What you can do is forgive. Forgive others. Forgive yourself. Why waste the time you have on this earth, in this life, being mad at someone? Or holding on to something that happened? Why would you do that TO YOURSELF, when you have the power to forgive and let it all go? It takes strength to forgive, and it's worth it.

Lesson 4: Boundaries

"Boundaries are, in simple terms, the recognition of personal space." ~Asa Don Brown

Boundaries. Set them. Use them. Don't apologize for them. Setting boundaries is an act of loving yourself. Your time and energy are just that, YOUR time and YOUR energy and YOU get to say how they are spent. When you set boundaries, you are teaching people how to treat you. When someone doesn't respect your boundaries, they are letting you know they don't respect you. Everyone deserves respect and to be treated well. Period.

Lesson 5: YOU get to Choose!

"Life is a matter of choices, and every choice you make, makes you." ~John C. Maxwell

You get to choose what path you want to take. At any time you can stop and choose to go down a different path. Choose to change the job/relationship/friendship that doesn't make you happy or choose

to travel the world or learn that language/instrument/skill you always have wanted to. You get to choose it all. Stop telling yourself the lie that your life is controlled by others. You get to say how it goes. And if you want to be a victim to your circumstances, then you get to choose that. It is all a choice. Your choice!

Lesson 6: Perspective is Everything

“Your perspective will either become your prison or your passport.” ~Steven Furtick

Life is hard. We have all heard this. We put our own perspective, view and power to the word “hard.” We get to choose what we see or say is “hard” for us. Can we not as easily choose to look at everything as “easy” or everything as a “gift” that God/The Universe has given us? Life is a gift. Have you heard this as well? What perspective will you choose? Why are you choosing it?

Lesson 7: Ask for Help

“Be strong enough to stand alone, smart enough to know when you need help and brave enough to ask for it.”
~Unknown

How do you feel when you help someone? Good, right? Don’t deny people that pleasure. Ask for help. People want to help. Allow people to be a contribution to you. You never know what magic will happen when you do.

Lesson 8: Self-Love

“Self-Love is the original superpower.” ~Niki Margot

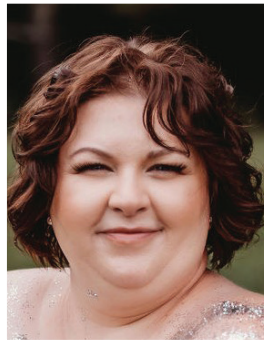
Self-Love. It is where it's at. It's the base, the roots of who we are. We need it in our lives so we can be our best selves. We need to cultivate it daily, notice where we have put others above ourselves, and start to put ourselves first. Self-love is not a dirty word, something to laugh off, or in any way mean/selfish. It is essential. When you lose your sense of self, you lose what makes you YOU. You are beautiful and rare and there is no one else like you in the universe! Do you know how MAGNANIMOUS you are? Do you know that you were created for a purpose? YOU have something to share with this world! What is the MORE you were meant for?

In all journeys there are times where you want to stay in bed, under the covers and hide from all of it. Everyone has those moments. What keeps me from giving up and hiding on my journey is surrounding myself with strong people who remind me of what a Badass I am, see me for the future self I am creating and not the “mistakes” I have made in my past, and allow me to be authentically 100% ME.

My MORE that I was meant for, is to step into being The Love Coach. I am here, as The Love Coach, to be a stand for all people to know what self-love is and for everyone to fall madly in love with themselves.

What is the MORE you were meant for?

Niki Margot



Hello Beautiful! My name is Niki Margot, and I am the Love Coach. My basic stats: 46-year-old plus size, divorced woman with a 23-year-old daughter who lives in Georgia.

Things that I think are fun: tennis, music, nature, organizing (geek to the core), self-development books and deep conversations with my Badass Bitches.

The most important thing to know about me: I embody what it means to be “ride or die” as a coach and friend. I would give a stranger the shirt off my back.

What lights my soul on fire is to be a space for people to experience their own self-love, for them to fall head over heels in love with themselves. That is what I am committed to in everything I create and do. I know from years of personal experience that self-love is the ultimate superpower. It can change your whole fucking world.

I hope you get at least one thing from what I have created and, if not, contact me and I’ll give you your money back. I am not everyone’s cup of tea and that is 100% okay with me. There are a lot of great

NIKI MARGOT

people out there with something to say. I hope you continue to seek what you are looking for. Never stop. Life is all about the journey.

Connect with Niki at linktr.ee/nikimargot143.

CHAPTER 18

Embracing Freedom: A Journey of Self-Discovery and Empowerment

Paula Wright

This chapter is dedicated to the resilient spirits of my mother and my female ancestors. Their unwavering strength and perseverance have paved the path for my dreams. May their legacy continue to inspire generations to come. With boundless gratitude and love.

Imagine the dawn, standing on the beach, the cool sand beneath your bare feet, and the rhythmic melody of the waves caressing the shore. In this tranquil moment, with only the sound of your own heartbeat echoing in your ears, you cast your gaze upon the horizon, where the sun begins to emerge, painting the sky with hues of pink and gold.

Before you lies the vast expanse of the ocean, its surface calm and serene, reflecting the beauty of the dawn. It is in this sacred space, amidst the symphony of nature, that you find clarity—a moment to pause, reflect, and envision the path ahead.

With resolve, you pick up a stone, its weight a tangible reminder of your own strength and determination. With a deep breath, you hurl it into the water, watching as it creates ripples that cascade outward, each one a testament to the power of your actions. These ripples, like the choices we make in life, have the potential to shape our reality and leave a lasting impact on the world around us.

For many years, I lived with the weight of chronic stress, anxiety, and a pervasive sense of being stuck in a cycle of obligations and expectations. As a single mother, and later as the sole caregiver to my ailing parents, I found myself overwhelmed by the demands of life, sacrificing my own well-being in service to others. Despite my efforts to juggle the responsibilities of work, family, and personal fulfillment, I felt a deep longing for something more—a life of purpose, passion, and freedom.

It was amidst the challenges of caregiving as I navigated the complexities of loss and transition that I embarked on a journey of self-discovery and transformation.

Through the practice of self-care, inner work, and spiritual exploration, I began to unravel the layers of conditioning and limiting beliefs that had held me captive for so long.

With each moment of introspection and healing, I reclaimed a sense of agency and empowerment, paving the way for the manifestation of my deepest desires.

One of the most profound realizations of my journey was the recognition that true freedom begins from within. It is not merely the absence of external constraints but a mental state rooted in self-awareness, authenticity, and alignment with one's inner truth. As I cultivated a deeper connection to myself and my purpose, I discovered the power to transcend the limitations of my circumstances and create a life of meaning and fulfillment on my own terms.

This work led me to leave my corporate job to follow my true passions and calling and quickly manifest my dream life. So, what does freedom look like? I followed my passions and found my purpose. I have joy and peace that I didn't know was possible. My work feels like play. I work when I want from wherever I want — any city or country, from a cozy coffee shop to a patio overlooking the ocean. I moved to my *soul place*, the great city of Seattle, Washington. I'm surrounded by people with shared values, creatives, incredible nature, fantastic food, diverse cultures, coffee shops, music, arts, islands, all four seasons, and lots of dogs — the things that I love. I live in a place where there's something for everyone, where everyone shines (mine is a walkable city). I haven't driven a car since I've lived here. I walk, Uber, public transport and ride with friends. It's been liberating! My soul is at peace.

The Live Free Process

Central to my journey of liberation was the Live Free Process, a holistic methodology that I developed after doing the inner work. This transformative framework serves as a roadmap for those seeking to break free from the chains of fear, doubt, self-imposed limitations, and generational strongholds, to step into their fullest potential, and embrace freedom and abundance.

At its core, the Live Free Process is grounded in five fundamental principles:

1. **Follow Your Passions and Purpose:** Life is too precious to be spent merely surviving. By embracing our passions and aligning our actions with our purpose, we unlock the door to a life of fulfillment and contribution.
2. **Release Limiting Beliefs:** Often, our greatest obstacles reside within our own minds. By identifying and releasing the limiting beliefs that hold us back, we create space for abundance, joy, and success to flow effortlessly into our lives.
3. **Heal Your Energy:** Our thoughts, emotions, and beliefs are energetic vibrations that shape our reality. By cultivating a positive mindset and aligning our energy with our intentions, we become co-creators of our own destiny.
4. **Grow Spiritually:** Beyond the confines of the ego lies a vast and boundless realm of spiritual wisdom and interconnectedness. By deepening our connection to the divine and expanding our consciousness, we tap into a wellspring of guidance, inspiration, and inner peace. I define my guide as the Holy Spirit within.
5. **Don't Give Up:** In the face of adversity, resilience becomes our greatest asset. Every setback, every challenge, is an opportunity for growth and transformation. By embracing the journey with courage and determination, we move closer to our goals with each step we take.

The Ripple Effect

The ripple effect of my work extends far beyond the confines of my individual journey, reaching out to touch the lives of others in profound and meaningful ways. As I share the principles of the Live Free Process with individuals from diverse backgrounds and walks of life, I witness

the transformative power of these teachings as they cascade outward, creating a ripple effect of positive change and empowerment.

One of the most striking manifestations of this ripple effect is the profound sense of purpose and clarity that individuals discover as they engage with the Live Free Process. By aligning their actions with their passions and purpose, they unlock the door to a life of fulfillment and contribution, stepping into their fullest potential with courage and conviction. Whether it be pursuing a new career path, embarking on a passion project, or making changes to their lifestyle, they embrace the journey with a newfound sense of purpose and direction, inspiring others to do the same.

Another ripple effect of my work is releasing limiting beliefs that have held individuals back from reaching their full potential. As they confront and challenge these beliefs, they create space for abundance, joy, and success to flow effortlessly into their lives, breaking free from the chains of fear and self-doubt that have kept them stuck in patterns of negativity and limitation. This newfound sense of empowerment radiates outward, empowering others to overcome their own obstacles and pursue their dreams with confidence and resilience.

The healing of energy is yet another ripple effect of my work as individuals learn to cultivate practices that nourish and replenish their vitality and well-being. Through mindfulness, meditation, and self-care, they restore balance and harmony to their energy system, experiencing a profound sense of peace, joy, and interconnectedness with all of life. This renewed sense of vitality and presence has a ripple effect that extends to every aspect of their lives, enriching their relationships, enhancing their creativity, and deepening their connection to themselves and the world around them.

Spiritual growth is also catalyzed by the Live Free Process, as individuals deepen their connection to the divine and awaken to the deeper truths of existence. Through practices of mindfulness, meditation, and compassion, they experience a profound sense of oneness with all

of creation, recognizing their inherent worth and dignity as spiritual beings having a human experience.

This spiritual awakening has a ripple effect that extends far beyond the individual, fostering a sense of unity and interconnectedness that transcends the boundaries of time, space, and culture.

Finally, the ripple effect of my work is felt in the realm of motivation and inspiration as individuals tap into their innate drive to pursue their goals and dreams with passion and purpose. Through workshops, coaching sessions, and speaking engagements, they find the courage to take bold action toward their aspirations, overcoming obstacles and setbacks with resilience and determination. This ripple effect of motivation and inspiration spreads outward, igniting the spark of possibility in others and inspiring them to embark on their own journey of self-discovery and empowerment.

My work creates a wave of positive change that reverberates throughout the lives of individuals, communities, and beyond. As each person embraces the principles of the Live Free Process and incorporates them into their own journey, they become agents of transformation, spreading seeds of hope, healing, and empowerment wherever they go. In this way, the ripple effect of my work continues to ripple outward, creating a wave of change that has the power to transform the world.

A Time of Awakening

Amidst the backdrop of the current spiritual shift unfolding on Earth, individuals are awakening to higher levels of consciousness and interconnectedness than ever before. This profound awakening heralds

a time of unprecedented transformation as people around the globe are called to let go of old paradigms and embrace new ways of being. In this era of rapid change and evolution, we are presented with countless opportunities to grow, expand, and evolve—to shed the layers of conditioning and limitation that no longer serve us and step into our true essence.

Amidst this time of transformation, the Live Free Process finds resonance, offering a guiding light for those ready to embark on the journey of self-discovery and empowerment. In these unprecedented times of war, random violence, division, and hatred, it is more important than ever to live authentically, align our actions with our deepest values and aspirations, and remember that whatever we do, we should do it in love. This is not merely a moral directive but a spiritual imperative, as we are engaged in what can be seen as spiritual warfare—a battle between good and evil, light and dark. This battle takes place in the spiritual dimensions but manifests in our physical world in various ways, such as social unrest, random violence, racism, and division. It affects our families, finances, health, communities, nation, and world.

Too often, people, including those of faith, inadvertently spread darkness instead of light. They succumb to hatred, division, and deception, contrary to the essence of God, who embodies love, compassion, and empathy. Our collective traumas have reached a critical point, and without intentional healing and personal growth, the future of humanity looks bleak.

Living authentically means embracing our true selves and acting in ways that reflect our core values. It requires us to rise above the noise of societal pressures and external conflicts and to connect deeply with our inner truth. When we align our actions with our deepest values and aspirations, we contribute positively to the world around us. This

alignment fosters a sense of purpose and fulfillment, making our actions more impactful and our lives more meaningful.

In doing everything with love, we counteract the pervasive negativity that threatens to engulf us. Love is the most potent force for good, capable of bridging divides, healing wounds, and transforming darkness into light. By infusing love into our actions, we create ripples of positivity that can spread far beyond our immediate sphere of influence, inspiring others to do the same.

Ultimately, the stakes are high. The future of humanity hinges on our collective ability to choose love over hate, unity over division, and light over darkness. By living authentically, aligning our actions with our deepest values, and doing everything in love, we become beacons of hope and agents of change in a world desperately in need of both. This is why it is more important than ever to embody these principles and inspire others to follow suit.

In this perfect time of awakening, let us embrace the opportunity to rediscover who we truly are and reclaim our inherent power and potential. Let us honor the wisdom of our hearts and the guidance of our intuition (again, I refer to as the Holy Spirit within) as we chart a course toward a future that is aligned with our highest truth. And let us remember that we are not alone on this journey—that we are part of a vast and interconnected web of life, supported and guided by the loving embrace of God.

Let us trust in the wisdom of our inner guidance and the transformative power of our collective intentions. And let us take comfort in the knowledge that we are co-creators of our reality, capable of shaping a world filled with love, compassion, and abundance for all.

As you embark on your own journey of self-discovery and empowerment, I invite you to embrace the wisdom of the Live Free

RIPPLE EFFECT OF IMPACT

Process and allow its principles to guide you toward a life of purpose, passion, and fulfillment. May you find the courage to cast your stone into the waters of possibility and watch as the ripples of your actions echo across the vast expanse of your life, shaping a reality that is truly your own.

Paula Wright



Paula Wright is honored to serve as a guide on the journey of transformation. As an award-winning Spiritual Wellness and Transformation Coach and an ordained Christian minister, Paula is deeply committed to assisting individuals in achieving holistic well-being and personal growth.

After years of living with chronic stress and anxiety and often feeling “stuck” (despite feeling that she was doing everything right), she embarked on a journey of inner work that resulted in her quickly manifesting the life of her dreams. She now teaches others the strategies that transformed her life.

She is also a renowned author and speaker, recognized for her prophetic gift. Throughout her illustrious career, Paula has garnered several prestigious accolades, including the 2023 Female Voice Award and Spiritual Teacher of the Year Award from WomELLE Women’s Empowerment organization. Additionally, she has received the Editor’s Choice award for her contribution to the best-selling book, *The Keys to Authenticity*, authored alongside Jack Canfield.

Connect with Paula at www.paulawright.com.

CHAPTER 19

The Power of Saying Yes!

Sally Larkin Green

This chapter is dedicated to everyone who says “Yes” to their spiritual callings.

From the moment I first answered the call to teach Sunday school, a ripple of life-changing experiences began to unfold, each instance a testament to the power of saying yes. Through the highs and lows, the joys and challenges, I discovered a path that led me from nurturing young minds in a small church classroom to becoming the Vice President of a publishing company. As you read on, you’ll see how a single act of faith ignited a series of events that transformed not just my life, but the lives of countless others, illustrating the boundless possibilities that await when we say ‘yes’ to our spiritual callings.

When I was first married in my mid-20s, my husband and I made it a point to attend church each week. This was more than just a habit;

it was fueled by a spiritual connection that had been a part of my life since childhood. I remember vividly dialing the operator at five years old and asking to speak with God. I had a deep desire to understand my spirituality. Growing up in a family that only attended church on Christmas and Easter, my hunger for spiritual nourishment went unfulfilled. As soon as I could drive, I joined a church with a friend and attended Sunday services regularly.

One Sunday I witnessed a baby being baptized. There is a part of the service where the pastor asks the congregation to affirm that they will participate in the child's spiritual life. I was thinking about the baptism the following week when the pastor asked for volunteers to teach Sunday school. A voice inside my head urged me to step forward. That voice was not to be ignored. I embraced the role, unaware of the Ripple Effect it would have on the next three decades of my life.

I first began teaching Sunday school in 1986. My classroom was a mix of five or six students, all in the same grade. As the years went on, church attendance dwindled. My classroom transformed into a one-room schoolhouse with only three to six children ranging from toddlers to 12-year-olds. This presented a unique challenge: how to keep such a wide age gap engaged and excited about Jesus. Yet, I loved every moment of it. Teaching those children was a joy and a privilege.

One of the most rewarding aspects of teaching was witnessing the growth and development of my students. There were moments of joy when a child grasped a biblical concept for the first time or shared how a lesson impacted their lives outside the church.

A memorable event was our annual Christmas pageant. Every year, the children would perform a nativity play for the congregation with a new script I wrote specifically for them. One year, a boy asked if he could wear his Spiderman costume from Halloween. Determined to make it work, I came up with a creative solution. At the end of the

pageant, an angel walked to the microphone and announced, “And Jesus became a superhero just like Spiderman!” The boy proudly walked down the aisle in his Spiderman costume and sat next to baby Jesus in the manger. The pageants were often chaotic, with handmade costumes and forgotten lines, but it was always heartwarming and memorable for parents and children. Despite the mishaps, the pageant was the highlight of the year, bringing the community together and reminding us of the joy and wonder of the Christmas story.

My journey took another significant turn in 2006 when I formed a youth group with another Christian mom. We affectionately called it “Breaking Open the Bible” or BOB. We started with nine children in grades seven and eight—an impressionable age. Over the next four years, our group grew to 50 kids who attended the weekly Bible study. It was an incredible experience, watching God work in the lives of both the leaders and the students. The youth group became a beacon of spiritual growth and community.

Leading BOB was both challenging and rewarding. Pre-teens are at a critical stage in their lives, grappling with questions about identity, purpose, and faith. Our sessions were designed to address these questions through the lens of the Bible. We talked about topics like peer pressure, suicide, and divorce. It was important to create a safe space where the youth felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and struggles.

For 20 years, I taught Sunday school without ever attending a bible study myself. But once I attended my first Bible study, it was as if a faucet had been turned on. I couldn’t get enough. My passion for these studies led me to start leading them myself. Then in 2017, a friend invited me to a three-day spiritual retreat. The retreat was a transformative experience, filled with deep meditation and reflection. I felt a strong nudge to write a Bible study while at the retreat. Though I had no idea how to begin, I embarked on the journey. After three

years of research and dedication, I completed my first study in 2020 and based it on the Book of Ruth.

The process of writing a Bible study was both challenging and rewarding. I began by immersing myself in the text of Ruth, reading various translations and commentaries. I wanted to understand the historical and cultural context of the story as well as its theological implications. The more I studied, the more I felt connected to Ruth's story of loyalty, faith, and redemption.

Writing the Bible study required discipline and perseverance. I set aside time to write, often early in the morning or late at night when the house was quiet. There were moments of doubt when I questioned whether I was qualified to write such a study, but I was continually encouraged by my husband and fellow church members. Their support was invaluable.

The first time I taught it was online with my church group during the pandemic. One of the most rewarding aspects of writing the study was receiving feedback from those who participated. Hearing how the study impacted their understanding of the Bible and deepened their faith was incredibly fulfilling. It affirmed that all the hard work and effort were worth it.

Writing and preaching became integral parts of my spiritual journey. I still remember my first sermon vividly. I spoke about Jesus calming the storm, relating it to the challenges and stresses I had been facing. The response from the congregation was overwhelming—they gave me a standing ovation! It was one of the most powerful and proud moments of my life, affirming my path and purpose.

Preparing for my sermons was a spiritual practice in itself. I spent hours in prayer and meditation, seeking guidance on what message to deliver. I wanted my sermons to be authentic and relatable, drawing

from my own experiences and the teachings of the Bible. One of my favorite sermons was about God winks. I used it to speak about looking for signs that God is working and moving in your life. That sermon resonated deeply with many in the congregation.

Writing sermons taught me the power of storytelling. I learned that people connect with stories on a profound level. By sharing personal anecdotes and real-life examples, I was able to convey biblical truths in a way that was accessible and meaningful. It was a humbling experience to see how God could use my words to touch the hearts of others.

My passion for writing expanded significantly beyond Bible studies and sermons. In 2020, I was offered the opportunity to write a chapter for a collaboration book. I was so excited about being published. There were 150 other authors in the book with me and I reached out to connect with them. One of the authors was Lynda Sunshine West. She was publishing her collaboration books and hosting a weekly mastermind. Through this connection, I began attending her mastermind sessions and registered to contribute a chapter to two of her book projects. After assisting her behind the scenes, she invited me to join her in publishing books full time as Vice President. I agreed and joined her in September 2021. In less than three years, we published 36 books together.

Joining the publishing company was an unexpected but exciting turn in my journey. The process of collaborating with other authors and bringing their stories to life was incredibly fulfilling. I learned a great deal about the publishing industry, from storytelling and formatting to marketing and distribution. Each book we publish is a labor of love, a testament to the power of words and the importance of sharing our stories.

Reflecting on my journey from a Sunday school teacher to the Vice President of a publishing company, I am struck by three powerful lessons that have emerged. These takeaways have shaped my path and

offer valuable insights to anyone navigating their spiritual and personal growth. The power of saying ‘yes,’ the importance of community, and understanding of faith as a continuous journey are the cornerstone lessons that have guided and enriched my life.

The Power of Saying Yes

One of the most transformative lessons I’ve learned is the profound impact of saying ‘yes’ to opportunities, even when they seem daunting or unfamiliar. My journey began with a simple ‘yes’ to teaching Sunday school, a decision that set off a chain of events leading to countless blessings and opportunities. Each subsequent ‘yes’ opened new doors and created ripples that extended far beyond what I initially imagined.

Saying ‘yes’ to leading a youth group allowed me to witness the incredible growth and transformation of young lives. Embracing the challenge of writing and leading Bible studies deepened my faith and expanded my understanding of scripture. Preaching my first sermon, despite the fear and uncertainty, became a defining moment that affirmed my calling and purpose. Every act of faith, each step into the unknown, reinforced the importance of being open and responsive to God’s whispers. These experiences have taught me that even the smallest ‘yes’ can lead to extraordinary outcomes, demonstrating the power of trust and obedience in our spiritual journeys.

The Importance of Community

Another key takeaway from my journey is the immense value of community and support. From the beginning, my church family provided a strong foundation of encouragement and assistance. Whether I was teaching Sunday school, leading a youth group, or embarking on new writing projects, the support of those around me was crucial.

Their advice, encouragement, and shared resources helped me navigate challenges and celebrate successes.

The youth group, in particular, highlighted the strength that comes from working together towards a common goal. The camaraderie among the leaders and the bonds formed with the youth created a supportive and nurturing environment that fostered spiritual growth and development. Similarly, the Bible study groups I led and participated in offered a space for honest dialogue and mutual support, enriching my spiritual journey.

The support I received while writing my Bible study and delivering sermons further underscored the importance of community. The encouragement of my church family and my husband helped me overcome doubts and persevere in my efforts. Additionally, the collaborative spirit within the publishing company, where I connected with other authors and mentors, exemplified the power of working together towards a shared purpose. These experiences have shown me that we are never truly alone in our endeavors and that the strength of community can propel us forward in ways we cannot achieve on our own.

Faith is a Continuous Journey

The third lesson that has profoundly shaped my life is the understanding of faith as a continuous journey. Faith is not a destination to be reached but an ongoing process of seeking, growing, and responding to God's guidance. This journey has been marked by moments of clarity, challenges, and profound realizations, all contributing to my spiritual growth.

Teaching Sunday school required me to constantly expand my understanding of scripture and find new ways to engage my students.

Leading the youth group and participating in Bible studies further deepened my faith, as I navigated complex discussions and supported the spiritual growth of others. The spiritual retreat I attended in 2017 was a pivotal moment that emphasized the evolving nature of faith, prompting me to write my own Bible study.

Preaching and joining the publishing company were additional steps in this continuous journey, each bringing new insights and opportunities for growth. The process of writing, teaching, and sharing my faith has reinforced the idea that faith is dynamic and ever evolving. Trusting in God's plan, even when not fully revealed, has been a central theme in my life. This journey has shown me that faith requires openness, a willingness to embrace new challenges, and a commitment to lifelong learning and growth.

It is amazing how a single 'yes' to teaching Sunday School has led to a series of extraordinary events, each creating ripples that transformed my life in ways I never imagined. From guiding young minds in a small classroom to leading a thriving youth group, from writing Bible studies to preaching sermons that moved hearts, each step has been a testament to the power of faith and the impact of answering God's call. Today, as Vice President of Action Takers Publishing, the publisher of this book, I look back with gratitude and awe at the path that brought me here. Every challenge embraced and every opportunity seized has woven a tapestry of growth, service, and fulfillment. This journey is a powerful reminder that stepping out in faith, even in small ways, can create waves of change, touching lives and shaping futures beyond our wildest dreams. Here's to the power of saying 'yes,' to the adventures it brings, and to the boundless possibilities that lie ahead!

Sally Larkin Green



Sally Larkin Green is the Vice President of Author Development at Action Takers Publishing. With a background in business, Sally's passion for storytelling and empowering others has transformed her into a multiple times bestselling author, children's book author, book publisher, and inspirational speaker.

As Vice President of Author Development, Sally guides writers through the process of transforming their ideas into bestselling books. She provides invaluable feedback, accountability, and encouragement.

Beyond her publishing role, Sally is a sought-after inspirational speaker, sharing her experiences and insights. She motivates individuals to embrace self-care, pursue their passions, and unleash their inner author. She has written two bible studies.

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CHAPTER 20

Forgiving Yourself - Letting Go of Shame and Regret

Sanet Van Breda

Dedicated to my Grandsons Zander and Zayden Du Toit

*“Set yourself free by letting go of any shame and regret in
your beautiful life.” ~Sanet Van Breda*

Shame and regret are powerful emotions that can have a profound impact on our lives. It can haunt us, reminding us of our past failures and shortcomings. It whispers in our ears, replaying our mistakes over and over again, making it difficult to forgive ourselves and let go. Regret, on the other hand, often stems from a sense of missed potential. We look back at opportunities we didn't seize, choices we wish we had made differently, and wonder what could have been.

With an umbrella clutched as my feeble walking stick, a desperate attempt to catch up with my family unfolded. Ahead, my husband Petrus, my son Dawid, my daughter Estie, my son-in-law Petrus, and my cherished little grandson Zander were visible in the distance, drawing nearer to the enticing cave. The weight of my colossal body became an oppressive force, resisting every step and making each breath a laborious task. I pressed on, my feet sinking into the yielding sand with each staggering stride, a poignant metaphor for the weight I carried—not just in pounds but in the burden of my very existence. The heaviness of my own body mirrored the emotional weight, an unbearable load that seemed to intensify with every beat of my struggling heart.

When we carry a heavy burden, it permeates every aspect of our lives. We may find ourselves stuck in negative patterns of self-talk, constantly berating ourselves for past actions. Our self-esteem and self-worth suffer as we believe we are unworthy of forgiveness or happiness. We may even shy away from new experiences or opportunities, paralyzed by the fear of repeating past mistakes. In this state, we become prisoners of our own self-judgment, unable to fully embrace our true potential.

In that pivotal moment, doubts began to creep into my mind like insidious whispers, questioning why I had chosen this challenging path. The once alluring sand, now a hindrance, made every step feel like an arduous feat. A cascade of self-doubt and self-reproach flooded my thoughts. Why, oh why, did I not foresee the added difficulty this sandy terrain would impose on my already strained journey?

As the struggle persisted, I found myself kicking at my own spirit. Here I was, presented with the extraordinary opportunity to explore enchanting caves and witness nature's erosion masterpiece, yet I couldn't fully embrace it. Instead, my internal dialogue became a relentless critic, insisting that I could conquer this and urging myself to go just a

little farther. But with every step, the inner praise I sought was eclipsed by the growing realization that, perhaps, I wasn't physically equipped to reach the cave. The longing for normalcy echoed within me, a plea for relief from the relentless challenges that seemed insurmountable. When, I wondered, would this cease? When could I experience the simplicity of being just normal?

We may build walls to protect ourselves from vulnerability, fearing that if others truly knew our past, they would reject or judge us. This self-imposed isolation can lead to loneliness and a profound sense of disconnection, further intensifying the emotional weight we carry. Our inability to forgive ourselves can also result in a cycle of negative behaviour, as we unconsciously seek to punish ourselves for our past mistakes, inadvertently harming those around us in the process.

The physical strain exacted a toll beyond measure, pushing me perilously close to the precipice of what felt like an imminent heart attack. Each breath became a laboured gasp, accompanied by waves of excruciating pain that surged through my entire being. Amidst this torment, the haunting image of my precious grandson, Zander, innocently questioning, "Oumie (Afrikaans for Granny), why aren't you in the picture in the cave?," reverberated in my mind.

The anticipated response, "Zandertjie, your Oumie is too fat!," weighed heavily on my conscience. Each utterance of those words intensified the self-loathing that gripped me, my body becoming a vessel of despair. In that agonizing moment, I found myself questioning, "Why? Why? Why?" It's not for lack of trying, not for a shortage of diets embarked upon throughout my life. The earnest efforts persist, yet the stubborn fat clings to me tenaciously, refusing to relent. The mere contemplation of confessing that my weight had become an insurmountable barrier stirred a profound sense of nausea. Overwhelmed by despair, I crumbled to my knees, a desperate

supplication escaping my lips, “Please, God, help me. I can’t endure this any longer!”

Desperately staring at the ocean, my tears mingling with the salty breeze, I cried out louder than the roaring waves, my plea echoing against the vast expanse. “God, help me! Ek weet nie meer nie, ek is verlore, ek weet nie hoe om hieruit te kom nie. Red my asseblief!” (God, help me! I don’t know anymore, I’m lost, I don’t know how to get out of this. Save me, please!). With my tear-streaked face buried in the palms of my hands, I sobbed, feeling as if there might be no tomorrow. At that very moment, I recognized that it was my day of no return. At 54 years old, burdened with this overweight body since the tender age of 12, the weight of despair became too much to bear. “I can’t do this anymore.”

In that moment of desperate longing, a miracle unfolded and I found myself cradled in the warmth of God’s divine embrace. In that poignant moment, the sun emerged from behind the concealing clouds, casting its warm, golden glow upon the landscape. His intervention wasn’t just the gentle touch of the sun on my face; it was a profound experience where His love and grace enveloped and radiated through my entire being.

As I bathed in the glow of His divine light, I felt a whisper of reassurance—a tender acknowledgment that it was time to face me—Sanet—embracing every facet of me, flaws and all. Rising from my knees, a renewed determination blossomed within me. The path ahead might have seemed formidable, but a flicker of hope now danced brightly in my heart, propelling me forward. It was more than a journey; it was a divine pat on the back, a loving assurance that I was not alone. Every step I took was guided by the assurance that I was cherished and worthy, and that He would be my constant companion through it all. I was “Walking on Sunshine.”

I feel the heartwarming joy as I approach the cave, and my grandson Zander comes running towards me, his face beaming with happiness. “Oumie jy het gekom, Oumie ek soek jou” (“Granny, you came! Granny, I was looking for you!”) I scoop him up in my arms, twirling around with him. His laughter is a magical symphony to my ears, causing my heart to beat even more fervently. Little did I know, this precious moment captured in my mind would serve as a powerful anchor, motivating me to stay on course with my plan to reclaim my life.

Envision a life where we rewrite the narrative of our past, present, and future. You are on a journey of imagination, similar to the sentiments expressed in John Lennon’s timeless song “Imagine.” In this life, you have the power to truly let go and embrace the freedom that forgiveness brings. For me, this transformative journey commenced with the realization that my weight had become an overwhelming burden. It transcended the desire to fit into smaller clothes or adhere to society’s beauty standards; it was a quest to reclaim my health, confidence, and self-worth. Deep within, I recognized my deservingness of a life unburdened by the chains of guilt and shame that had imprisoned me far too long.

Later in the day, as I stood before the mirror, a revelation unfolded: I saw myself not as a prisoner of my weight but as Sanet, defined by an intrinsic worth beyond the physical. Tenderly, I reached out, tracing the contours of my eyes, nose, and lips. With gratitude, I whispered to God, “Thank you, my beautiful Savior, for caring for me, even in this substantial body.” Gazing into my own eyes and acknowledging my weight loss aspirations, I grasped the purpose of my journey.

The answer surfaced effortlessly, adorning my face with a smile. “I want to lose weight to be with my grandson Zander every day.” New Zealand’s regulations stipulated a working permit for a BMI of 35% or

less; shedding the weight became not just a health improvement but a means to savour invaluable moments with Zander. Closing the gap to the mirror, our reflections nearly merging, I posed the question once more, “Yes, Sanet, you want to lose weight to be with your grandson Zander. But why?” The response came swiftly and resolutely. “I want to swing on a swing next to him, run on the beach together, and play with my precious grandson,” I exclaimed with unbridled excitement.

With the mirror inches from my face, the third query hung in the air, anticipation building. “Yes, Sanet, you want to lose your weight for Zander to play with him. But why?” Shock echoed in my eyes and heart, tears streaming down my face. The answer struck with unwavering clarity, hitting between the eyes and piercing my chest: “I want to live. I WANT TO LIVE AND NOT DIE! I’ve discovered a potent motivation: to be with my grandson Zander and play with him.” This became my driving force, a daily reminder to stay focused and committed to my Oumie and Zander Plan, my journey, and my life.

I intimately understand the challenges of carrying excess weight, a lifelong companion since childhood. In a journey marked by teasing and self-doubt, adherence to any eating plan felt elusive, often tempting me to surrender. Trapped in a cycle of attempting myriad diets, aspiring to shed weight, only to oscillate like a yo-yo between starting, stopping, and restarting. The road ahead appeared daunting, and I understood that it would demand unwavering dedication and hard work. It was not a quick fix or an overnight solution; it required a complete shift in my lifestyle, eating habits, and mindset.

It was about rewriting my own narrative, envisioning a life where I could replace guilt with self-compassion and shame with pride. This journey was not just about shedding pounds; it was about gaining a profound sense of freedom and embracing a world of possibilities where success, healing, and self-love were not mere dreams but the

very essence of my existence. I discovered the transformative power of self-love, mindfulness, and forgiveness. These became the pillars upon which I built my new life. Self-love formed the foundation of my journey as I learned to treat myself with compassion, kindness, and acceptance. I realized that I deserved love, not only from others but from myself as well.

Mindfulness played a crucial role in my weight loss journey. By practicing present-moment awareness, I became attuned to my body's needs, recognized hunger and fullness cues, and made conscious choices about the food I consumed. Mindful eating became a way for me to nourish my body and soul, fostering a deeper connection to the food I ate and the impact it had on my well-being.

In the radiant glow of my newfound lifestyle, the Oumie and Zander Plan became more than a strategy; it was a dance with the notes of hope, resilience, and transformation. Anchored by the perpetual melody of "Walking on Sunshine" by Katrina and the Waves, and the empowering resonance of my chosen power word, "brave," this journey transcended the ordinary and delved into the extraordinary. Allow the melody to guide you toward a realm where hope reigns supreme and every step becomes a dance of resilience and grace.

But perhaps the most transformative aspect of my journey was the power of forgiveness. Its origins trace back to a pivotal moment during my second visit to the psychologist. His question echoed in the room: "Sanet, have you forgiven yourself?" In the silence of the car's parking lot, tears became the vessels for a cathartic release. Facing my reflection in the rearview mirror, I embarked on a poignant dialogue with myself—a conversation of forgiveness that spanned every mistake and every perceived failure.

The process was emotionally taxing—an hour oscillating between tears and words. Through this profound experience, I uncovered

the transformative power of self-compassion and the necessity of unburdening myself from the weight of past mistakes. It was a crucial step, an act of self-liberation that propelled me forward, aligning my journey with the trajectory of the Oumie and Zander Plan.

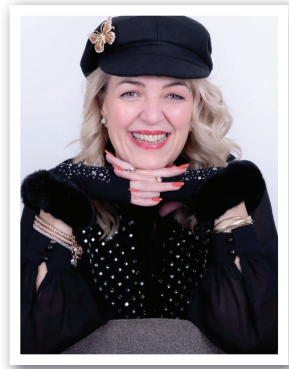
Later that week, I wrote forgiveness letters to all the people who had wronged me, but the most liberating letter I penned was the one addressed to myself. In that letter, I confronted a truth I had long suppressed—the shame and guilt that had held me captive for not speaking up. I had carried the weight of that dark secret for years, always feeling as though an invisible sign on my forehead declared, “You can touch me anywhere you want!”

Releasing the burden of my silence was the most significant act of self-compassion I’ve ever undertaken. As a child, I had the mind and knowledge of a child, and the fear of potential blackmail loomed large over me. The Secret that held me captive was broken, and I set myself free from the chains of that painful past. It was an act of immense courage, and it marked a profound turning point in my journey toward healing, self-acceptance, and personal growth.

Inspired by my own journey, I created the Monarch Butterfly Programs where I now share my knowledge and experiences to empower others who are desperately seeking change. Through these programs, I help individuals transform their mindsets and embark on their own journeys towards self-discovery and self-love. One of the powerful tools I utilize is my Facebook community, Diamond Beauties Forever, where an amazing tribe of women support and inspire one another. At the end of each day, I ask myself a simple yet profound question: “Sanet, did you leave your sparkle in someone’s heart and memory today?” It reminds me of the impact I can make and the importance of spreading positivity and inspiration wherever I go.

By embracing these principles, I was able to lose weight, regain my health, and live a happier, more fulfilling life. And yes, my dreams came true. After three and a half years of not being able to see my beautiful family due to Covid-19, I finally had the opportunity to visit them in November 2022. I found myself on a swing next to my grandchildren, Zander and his new brother Zayden, laughing and enjoying each other's company. I love my life. I love my grandsons to the moon and back.

Sanet Van Breda



Sanet Van Breda, from Johannesburg South Africa, is a TV Host, Producer, Publisher, Speaker, Author, Coach and Mentor.

Sanet is the founder of Self Love Ignites Me and Diamond Beauties Forever, Soul of a Diamond, as well as the newly launched Global Diamond Moments Magazine, currently spanning 37 countries. She is the driving force behind a heart-centred brand dedicated to promoting self-love, mindfulness, and personal transformation.

Sanet is also a certified Mindfulness Teacher, Master Certified - NLP Practitioner, Life & Executive Business Coach and Certified Hypnotherapist.

Connect with Sanet at www.selflove4me.com.

CHAPTER 21

Scar Tissue

Sharon Lee Williams

I dedicate this chapter to Mary and Marilyn. I am forever grateful to have had you in my life. Our scars were the bonds that bound us, but our love as sisters helped them to heal.

“Every life has a story to tell. We’re born to experience the pain, the joys, life’s gifts and the baggage we carry. Hope, fears and everything in between stuffed inside. At this stage of my life, my baggage is only a carry-on.”

~Sharon Lee Williams

I was born in 1949 to a young black woman named Betty from Bermuda who had arrived in Montreal to study bookkeeping. Betty met Dave, a young black man from Monserrat who had served in the Canadian army.

They fell in love, Betty became pregnant, and so my story begins. They talked about getting married but that didn't happen. To make a long story short, realizing that she would be on her own, Betty made the decision to give me up and into the foster care system where I landed.

At 19 months old, I was sent to live with my foster mother, Iris, her husband and Mary, a child that they had fostered five years earlier. Iris had immigrated to Canada from Barbados and lived with her brother before marrying. Her life as she knew it was packed into a blue trunk on a ship that brought her to a land of new possibilities.

I have no memory of our early days together, just what my foster sister Mary told me. My memories begin with Iris's second husband, Joe, and my second home. Iris was a widow and Joe a widower; their marriage seemed to be one of convenience. She kept the house and us clean. Joe, also from Barbados and a much older man, was a popular tailor who owned his own home with tenants upstairs, while we lived downstairs. Iris earned money from taking care of us.

Growing up with Iris wasn't the easiest. She could be verbally abusive as well as physically. She would sling stinging comments at me like, "Your mother should have drowned you." Or she would sometimes call me a "Bermudian bastard." They were hateful words. At 10 years old, I thought about killing myself. I didn't want to die, but I wanted Iris and my biological parents to feel the pain and all the hurt that they had caused me. Luckily, Mary came home early and my plans fortunately were foiled. I never tried again and I never told Iris or Mary.

Life wasn't all bad. I loved school and sports, piano lessons and girl guides. I won awards for my limited piano skills. They were tiny busts of Chopin and Beethoven. I practiced and practiced old songs from song sheets on the old player piano at home. That was my happy place. My piano teacher was Oscar Peterson's (a renowned Canadian jazz pianist and composer) sister. Suddenly, one devastating day, when I

was 11 years old, it was all gone. Iris broke my busts and sold the piano because I hadn't told her that Mary had run off to meet up with a boy. Friends tried to stop her from selling the piano, but to no avail. That was that. It wasn't until I was in my 20s that I took up playing again.

Before the demise of my piano lessons, Mary and I were introduced to our new foster sister, Marilyn. Marilyn was a shy, tiny five-year-old whose arrival was delayed by six months because she had been abused by her former foster parents. She had been pushed down the stairs, ending up with a broken leg and body cast. Marilyn remained in the hospital until she healed physically. She later shared how she had asked the nurses if she could stay in the hospital where she felt safe rather than come to live in another potentially dangerous home. I immediately took on the big sister role, her protector in a way. We were now a family of five for a little while until Iris became a widow again.

Transitioning to high school was hard. I was struggling with my feelings. My dreams of being loved and rescued by my biological parents were distant. It was clear they were not coming back for me. Iris and I fought a lot, so she sent me to live with another couple for a brief time. It got so bad, that Iris called the police because I wouldn't dry the dishes. Yes, you heard me right. Even though we fought, I wanted to live with her. So I promised to behave and she took me back.

Eighth grade was hard. I sang in the choir and musicals and was voted the best conductor in the school. But that wasn't enough. I felt like a failure, ashamed and embarrassed. I was popular, but always felt alone and damaged. I kept my brave face and no one knew how alone I felt. That year continued in a downward spiral. I shouldn't have, but I flunked. I was a messed up kid.

I came home from school one day and found Marilyn huddled in a fetal position crying. Iris had beat her. I don't know why and I didn't care, but I was done! That day I called our social worker and asked her

to find us a new home. I could handle Iris, but I couldn't allow her to hurt Marilyn. I wasn't going to leave without her and requested that we be placed together. Mary was no longer in the picture and was on her own in an apartment downtown.

Things came to a sudden and dramatic end. It wasn't long before we were removed from Iris' house. I acted like I was strong; protecting Marilyn was my main goal. But I was a scared little girl inside my teenage skin. What would happen to us? Where would they take us? Marilyn felt safe with me and I thought that I could keep her safe. As we left, Iris swore at me and told me that I would regret it. As it turned out, I did regret it.

We were moved to the suburbs, a big change from the city life. In the beginning, the home seemed perfect. Marilyn appeared to be thriving. We traveled in their trailer and swam in their in-ground swimming pool. The mother had her own business at home and her husband worked for a large corporation.

"Please let this work out for us," I thought. But as time went on, the cracks formed. They were emotionally cruel, not physically. During one of our many arguments, the foster mother yelled at me that I wouldn't amount to anything except for being a prostitute or a cleaning woman. I had grown used to belittling words, but my walls and armour were holding. I thought about those words that kids use on the playground. "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me." Quite the opposite, the words did hurt, but I didn't let it be known how badly they hurt me. This was not the family I had hoped for Marilyn and me.

I know it's not easy being around a teenager with a big chip on her shoulder. But why did they bother to foster children? Was it the money? Again, I made the decision to leave this home. I was 16 at that time. This time I left without Marilyn. I couldn't take it anymore. It was

time to go. I had grown to truly hate those people. I called my social worker and asked for help. I left with just the clothes I had and headed to Services.

I was too old to be placed and I sure as hell didn't want to be placed. I wanted my freedom! But I did as the social worker asked and went to work in a Children's Aid summer camp for kids who came from broken homes. That was the price for my emancipation. I don't think any of the kids were older than 12. I became the breakfast girl specializing in pancakes. So, the kids called me Aunt Jemima! I didn't like being called that, but these kids were messed up, angry, hurt and depressed. They were younger versions of me. I was 16. I left the summer camp early. Next stop ... Freedom!

With just a few dollars, I hitchhiked to downtown Montreal with a middle-aged bus driver on an empty tour bus. He was nice and polite and asked me questions about myself. The final stop of the "tour" was his motel. He asked if I wanted to come to his room. Even though I was still a virgin, I wasn't naive. I knew what he was suggesting. I went to his room. After all, I needed money and somewhere to sleep. I was anxious and scared to death, not to mention I felt cheap, useless and ashamed of myself. Would this be my life? Was that foster mother, right? Would I become a prostitute? No! Not me. I left with my virginity intact. At that moment, I knew that I wanted to be more than a statistic.

At 17 I came to the realization that freedom wasn't all that it was cracked up to be, so I decided to find a 9 to 5 job and moved back in with Iris, for only a short time.

I made many mistakes and each mistake was a lesson to be learned. I learned that if I didn't expect too much from people, they couldn't let me down. The big girl in me kept the little girl in me safe by building what I thought would be an impenetrable wall.

When I was alone, though, I would think about my biologicals and wondered if they ever thought about me.

My life changed again when I was 19. I auditioned to sing in the hit Broadway show *Hair* in Montreal and was selected. That was the beginning of everything. My life was starting to take off. After three months, when the show ended, I moved to Toronto and had a long career as a professional singer.

At age 30, I finally had the chance to meet my birth mother, Betty. Surprisingly, she lived in Toronto. I later found out that Iris had always known about Betty, but chose not to tell me. I'm not sure why, but Iris finally gave me the phone number of someone who knew Betty.

After a restless night before our formal introduction, I woke up feeling anxious, but excited. I didn't think about whether or not I would like her. I just wondered if she would like me.

That day I felt like a little girl all over again wearing my pigtails and a smock dress waiting for approval, wanting that warm hug and a feeling of belonging. There were no tears, but we had a quick, intense hug. It felt surreal and I was grateful for the moment. We talked and talked, not about anything deep or challenging, nothing that might trigger us. We played it safe. She wanted to know about my career and I wanted to know who my father was. But she didn't want to talk about him.

Eventually, she gave me his name and I met him months later in Montreal. I also discovered that I have a biological sister named Joy who is five years younger whom Betty kept. That knowledge brought out the little, hurt child in me again, but I was truly more resilient and able to quickly let go of my victim talk. This was my family of origin. Finally, I could begin to heal the wounds.

I have asked myself who would I have become without my earlier experiences. Who I am today is because of the struggles,

scars and choices I've made. When I became a mother, I knew that I had to find peace, learn forgiveness and Be Love. I didn't want my child to suffer the impact of my childhood. This was my chance to write a new story.

Betty and Iris were strong, complicated women, like me. What were their stories? How were they loved or not loved by their parents? What impact did their upbringing have on them?

After sharing my personal growth stories with friends, someone suggested that I write a book. Hmmm! A book, I thought. Who would be interested in my story? Several years passed between the thought and the actual stepping into writing the book. It began as a project and now, after distractions, like the pandemic and procrastination, it is on its final approach. *OutRaised: Finding My Voice Beyond Foster Care*, will be released in 2024.

It has been challenging and cathartic writing *OutRaised*, but more importantly, I hope that my story encourages and inspires those who have their stories and scars to see their own possibilities and how their journey can be their strength. How we choose to see ourselves, whether positively or negatively, can determine our future. We have a choice in the matter. I still wear my armour when necessary and I go through periods of feeling less than, but those feelings don't cripple me anymore. I know why I came here. I am resilient, optimistic, creative, successful and grateful.

The statistics show how the majority of youth, especially those of colour and indigenous who age out, end up homeless, in the criminal system and, in the case of young women, pregnant or worse. I think about how I could have become a statistic and what could have been my fate. I learned the importance of forgiveness for myself and others. Life can be messy and beautiful. Scars can fade until they're barely noticeable, but they will always be there. The years have taught me that

what we say and do can impact those in our circle and those we don't know.

This is why I am committed to helping make a difference for young women out of foster care who, like me when I aged out, struggle to fit in and find their voice. My commitment is to let them know there's more to who they are than what they've been told or what they've let themselves believe. Each one has the power to make choices that help them to move forward. They can make a difference or become leaders.

Learning how to let go of the old negative stories that were weighing me down and bringing on the new stories that lifted me up helped me to step into possibilities like I had never done before. Even though my choices weren't always the best, I moved on.

Choices are inevitable, both big and small, and we hope that we're doing our best to make the right ones. When we are supported and encouraged to take steps that we don't believe are possible, it can make all the difference. That's when we pay it forward.

Stories have a beginning, middle, and an end and I believe that the more love, forgiveness and joy we give to ourselves and others, the greater we can impact the world one to one or one to many.

We are worth it!

Sharon Lee Williams



Meet Sharon Lee Williams, a dynamic force in the worlds of empowerment and entertainment. As a Host / Executive Producer of OutRaised Voices TV Show, Author, Speaker, Performance / Transformational Coach and Certified Transformational Leader, Sharon draws inspiration from her diverse experiences and training under Dr. Claire Zammit.

Hailing from Montreal, Canada, Sharon Lee's journey began unconventionally as a foster child given up at birth, fueling her resilience and leading to success as a performer and property owner. As well as her other accomplishments, she is known for her fashion flair and boasts an extensive shoe collection that mirrors her unique style.

Beyond her roles, Sharon Lee is a skilled singer and songwriter, expressing her creativity through her music. As a devoted mother and partner, she finds joy in both her personal and professional lives.

Sharon Lee's innovative OutRaised Leadership program was created for youth aging out of care and has garnered attention, with plans for a documentary showcasing its impact. Simultaneously, she's

preparing for an inspiring Television Talk Show as well as releasing her memoir, *OutRaised* in 2024.

Thinking big, she envisions taking *OutRaised* to the stage, reaching more hearts with its powerful message. Sharon Lee's story is not only about her resilience, but a relatable, vulnerable narrative encouraging everyone to embrace their unique journey. Sharon Lee stands as a living testament to resilience, empowerment, and the extraordinary potential within each of us.

Connect with Sharon Lee at Info@outraisedvoices.com.

CHAPTER 22

The Ripple Impact of Sound

Sherry James, PMP

*This chapter is dedicated to my loving #tribe that helps
keep me in-flight.*

#HISVOICE

I don't remember my father's voice. I recall his stately, almost stoic behavior around strangers and also his adoring eyes through which I thought I could feel his love. My memories of my father are all anecdotes. Today, I choose to think that his voice was a calm and steady one, as that is how I remember feeling when he was near. When I was only seven years old, he (my father) died by suicide (or so I was told.)

My father was an Airforce veteran in Vietnam and served during a time when most Veteran soldiers came home "different." There were so many secrets about what happened in Vietnam, about the horrors that were witnessed and executed, the drug habits that so many soldiers came home with...there was not a lot said about the time spent after his

service and before his untimely death, so I kept my questions to myself. What I do remember about my father is that he loved me. Dearly. I yearned for that love and found myself looking for it in all the wrong places.

After my father died, I coped by pretending to have conversations with him—the only man who would ever love me completely. In those conversations, I created lies about who I was, and in my mind and heart it had to be my fault, right? There were lies I told myself about who I was that made my dad so terribly disappointed in the seven-year-old Sherrell, and unbeknownst to me those lies would go on to shape my formative years.

More than anything, I wanted to be like my dad, specifically like the glorious image of him in the photo I carried around with me tucked away within a secret pocket in my favorite stuffed animal, a ragged Tweety Bird. That was my nickname, “Tweety Bird.” In the picture, I was standing next to him with a bow and about three strands of hair on the top of my head and he was wearing a light-colored uniform. To be fair, I DID look like the adorable cartoon figure and my father’s family only knew me by Tweety Bird. What a shock it was when I found out (I was in my late 20s) that Tweety was a boy! Did he really want a boy instead of me? The absence of his answer turned slowly from fleeting joy to grief, from grief to anger, anger to fear, settling decades later into a myriad of issues dealing with the men in my life. Where was the impact of his voice and his words now that my memory no longer could hold them sacred? I wanted desperately to have a conversation with him to answer the questions that made me wonder if my mother was right after all.

I searched everywhere for the voice of my father and books were the place I found/heard his whisper. My love of books turned out to be my catharsis. It was so easy for me to lose myself in a book; to truly

be taken away by the words and the pages that carried them that I have read as much as I could for as long as I can remember. I'd found the voice of my father in many a character read. My father's voice still rings out to me as I work in my purpose to give others the words my father never had and to ensure that less people die the way he did.

#HERVOICE

Her voice still seems to be the loudest. My mother telling me that I would "...be nothing and likely end up dead somewhere because I would be a quitter like he was." That thought seemed to be etched into my psyche permanently. Thank God for my therapist, time, and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR).

The woman who birthed me told me that my big eyes made me ugly and that my lips were an embarrassment to the family. My memories of the words my mother spoke to me out of grief, guilt, a myriad of emotions one hopes to never have to endure, have likely had the biggest impact on my life. I was determined to make her words out to be untrue. I was to write my own story and develop my own identity.

To do so, I planned with almost terrifying precision to leave her house. As the years went on and the abuse moved from verbal to physical to her watching my sexual abuse to appease her drug habit, I planned my escape and began to craft my new story. Moving in silence and trusting no one, I read, researched, studied, interviewed, and finally emancipated myself from her care.

It is difficult to refer to a place as home that seemed like a recurring night terror, a nightmare that I relived for over 45 years before I would finally wake up and tell anyone about. Her voice still shows up for me in the form of imposter syndrome and self-sabotage. I use it to keep me motivated to help others to heal out loud. My mother was a beautiful

woman who was broken. I was, sadly, a shard of one of the broken pieces of her shattered image. But like a phoenix from the ashes, I have risen. Day by day I put each piece back together, forming a new image, a new picture, a new human, a healed woman.

My mother (now an ancestor) keeps me focused on showing people how to change the narrative. She implores me to make my dad proud of me. It's even sweeter that I have also proved her wrong on all fronts. (What could be sweeter?)

Understandably, the next stage of my healing includes letting go fully of the words that still appear from time to time in the shape of imposter syndrome/self-sabotage. I have learned to hear, reframe, and restate the truth about who I am, and who I have become now, even over 50 years young. I am currently working to make my own voice heard and to resonate for decades as a seeker of truth (my own is the only one that truly exists), for that is all I can deal with one second at a time. My wisdom, lived experiences, and newfound state of joy and peace through all of my diagnoses, bumps in the road, and the unparalleled elation when helping others to “heal out loud” make me a better mother, speaker, business owner and philanthropist.

What then is the impact of the ripple of sound? It is the ability to hear something, to then allow the feelings to resonate (ripple) into three rings at the very least:

1. Who is speaking?
2. Do I think the thought is true?
3. Don't judge the feeling as good or bad.

A feeling is an echo of experiences past; we can choose how to take that feeling and allow it to impact us only in the best way possible.

As a result of the life I have lived, the experiences I have gathered, and the sheer joy that fills my soul when I can make someone's life a little bit richer as a result of the coursework my team and I created, I am excited to see the ripples every day. Now that I notice the impact that I can have in the lives of others, I am doing justice to those that lost their lives to mental illness.

Is it a calling? Is it a purpose-driven life? I am not quite sure what to call it, but I know that I am on the path to make millions of ripples with not only the Creating Mental Wealth™ curriculum, but also via the mobile app and mobile game that will reach generations to come. The impact of the ripples of my life have already saved the lives of others, just via me losing the fear of telling my story. That will be my goal for the next 50 years or so. The organization that I built is being erected with a strong foundation of love, peace and "Created Mental Wealth™." Each level of this movement will take us further into our future unafraid yet cautious, trusting but verifying, and documenting each of the things that cause a ripple in our lives of impact. To paraphrase the words of the great Alan Watts, "A thing is not good or bad—it is whichever way you decide to look at it."

My life is great because I wake up every day knowing that some part of my story of trauma, healing—rinse and repeat—will impact the life of a person that I very well might not ever meet or who might not even have yet taken their first breath. The ripple of my mother's and father's voices will be amplified and passed on to break what I thought for so long was a generational curse. In actuality, it is a blessing that I am the one who received the gift of empathy, of loving almost anyone immediately, and also of caring more about others than they might care for themselves. These are all gifts if used the right way and in moderation.

The rest of my life will be spent teaching a concept that gives children from five years old to 105 years old the ability to understand

the impact their words can have on others, even if those were the words that impacted you the most to make the most of your own life. In my experience, nothing is an accident. Have you read Mitch Albom's, "*The Five People You Meet in Heaven*"? If you haven't, do it today. If you have, read it again today. Every interaction that we have with others will leave an impact.

Here is another quick tool I use when communicating with someone that may not understand my point of view; I give them SEVEN SECONDS OF SILENCE. In seven seconds, both the person speaking and the one who is receiving the message have just enough time to take a quick self-assessment and ask:

- ✓ Did I say that in the way that I meant it?
- ✓ Was it offensive?
- ✓ How can I reframe the question to be sure it lands correctly?

If you are the recipient of an uncomfortable statement/question/scenario, ask yourself,

- ✓ Why do I feel about _____?
- ✓ Does the person mean me harm? What would they gain from offending me?
- ✓ Should I ask for clarification prior to continuing this conversation?

#MYVOICE

Running from what I learned about my parents, our family perspective on "outsiders knowing our business," and toward a greater future for myself and my future family, I eventually started my life all over. I started to hear Sherrell's voice. Learning to love the sound of my own voice has been a rewarding discovery. This journey is one that is full of mystery

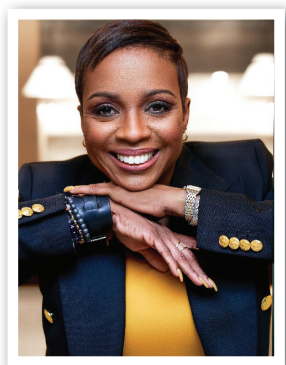
veiled as discovery, challenges veiled as lessons learned, and mountains ahead that cannot be faced alone and were never meant to be.

With what I can recall of what were my father's words—few, softly spoken and full of love—combined with the issues that I'm working through in therapy as a result of abuse endured in life and in the workplace, and with the work that we do to CreateMentalWealth™ for the generations to come, proves that the ripple of the impact of sound is one that can be used for goodwill and even better outcomes. The work that I am doing today will save the lives of many others who might find our curriculum just in time to make a choice to impact their lives and the lives of many others—life-giving AND life-affirming.

I am happy to stand in the middle of the Venn diagram of the ripple of each of my parents' lives. Each ripple was rhythmically and redemptively created to flow into the next. These three ripples are much like musical notes—more complex than any one alone, but when played full out and in harmony, are music to mine and so many others' ears. I have spent the last several years learning more about how to make the echoes of the voices of my parents a motivational force to keep me focused on creating and leaving a legacy of leadership. This work has exponentially greater benefit to the world than my original goal which was to break what I thought was a generational curse over my family.

The impact of the echo of the sound of MY voice will be one of encouragement, motivation, and hopefully life-changing and life-saving words to the next generation of leaders. From here forward, I will continue to utilize the drive and determination from the voices of both of my parents (and of the voices of those who are on this journey with me) to show that the ripple of the impact of sound can be not only important, life changing, but also downright redemptive and musical.

Sherry James, PMP



Sherry James, PMP, is a keynote speaker, corporate consultant and trainer, founder and Chief Experience Officer (CXO) of Phoenix Speaks and 2020 Lives Changed, Incorporated. Ms. James is the architect of the #CreatingMentalWealth Movement© and a decade's long veteran in the speaker circuit. She speaks and consults on next-generation development, corporate mental wealth, suicide prevention, and leadership development.

Sherry uses her 30 years of Corporate leadership, HR, IT and Project Management experience to assist her clients to hire, build, develop and retain exceptional and diverse teams. Sherry acts as a trusted business advisor and executive coach to leaders of organizations and companies ranging from Fortune 50 to entrepreneurs.

Sherry James, PMP, specializes in flipping the traditional business model on its head to revolutionize the way leaders lead and organizations thrive through teaching the Creating Mental Wealth© Philosophy!

Connect with Sherry at www.sherryjames.me.

CHAPTER 23

Creating Impact with Documentary Films

Sylvie Van Brabant

I would like to dedicate this chapter to all the documentary filmmakers trying to change the world with their films. I would like to honour the grassroot movements, NGOs and educational institutions who use these films to inform and transform our society.

1976, the heyday of feminism. I was 25 and living in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, with three feminists, two of which were filmmakers Anne Wheeler and Lorna Rasmussen. They had just directed a short documentary on me for Alberta television because I was the first French Canadian woman to direct a 16MM film for the National Film Board of Canada. Why me? Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau wanted to prove that there were French filmmakers outside of Quebec. There was

a hotbed of filmmakers from Quebec who were staunch nationalists, and the Prime Minister was against anything to do with Quebec independence. His mantra was “Canada is a bilingual country.”

It just so happened that, after years of traveling and university studies, I had returned to my hometown of St. Paul, Alberta, in 1974 wanting to take some time to reconnect to my roots. I had been hired by the local French Canadian association to do a survey with French Canadian families in all the neighboring villages around St. Paul. They wanted to investigate specific questions. Were people still speaking French? Was there still a “French Canadian” culture? The people who emigrated from Quebec back in the early 20th century considered themselves French Canadians. Through my research, I realized that the French language and culture were seriously at risk of disappearing especially because of mixed marriages and the huge influx of other immigrants. For instance, many Ukrainian immigrants had arrived in these communities, and they had enough challenge needing to learn English let alone needing to learn French as well. I ended up directing a half-hour video documentary inviting people to wake up to this new reality before the French Canadian communities lost their language and rich culture.

When I was a kid in primary school, everything was in French but had seriously changed when I hit secondary school. Through this short video project, I discovered the power of mixing images and sound. Creating an emotional story by juxtaposing just the right archive with the right song was a mind-blowing experience. The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) thought that I had done a pretty good job and offered me the opportunity to direct a one-hour documentary film in 16mm. WOW!

At first, I refused their invitation, given that I knew nothing about making films. I had studied psychology, not filmmaking. My editor,

who had been hired from Quebec to work with me on the short video project, encouraged me to accept. Did I realize the number of young filmmakers in Quebec dying for this kind of opportunity? A train was pulling into the station and I had an opportunity to get on board. I took the leap knowing that I was genuinely out of my comfort zone. Well, three months later, in August of 1976, a film crew from Quebec arrived to help me direct my first 16mm documentary. To make a long story short, I ended up falling in love with the cameraman and, lo and behold, three months later I was pregnant. OMG! That was a bit fast. I could not move to Quebec because in September I was already registered at university in Edmonton. I still remember feeling nauseous in my 8h00 philosophy class. People smoked in class back then! I just wanted to sleep and Serge, my cameraman boyfriend living in Quebec, was being influenced by his feminist friends to convince me to have an abortion. It was an intense period of my life, to say the least.

Luckily, my roommates Anne and Lorna were there to support me through it all. The day before a visit to the doctor to ask for an abortion, a very powerful dream made me see that I could not abort this child. I was already feeling her so intensely, convinced of a girl. I made the decision that I would go at it alone if Serge was not up to being a father. The 15th child of a 16-member family, as was often the case in rural Quebec from the '30s to the '50s, he had made the decision to not have any children.

So, I'm pregnant, now what? As a feminist, I had to educate myself. Lorna gave me a book entitled *Immaculate Deception* by Suzanne Arms. It had just been published and was a New York Times bestselling book of the year. What an eye-opener! When I finished her book, I was convinced that if I wanted to experience a natural birth my chances of that happening in a hospital's modern obstetric ward were limited.

Serge accepted his role as a father and I moved to Quebec on December 31, 1976. On June 23rd, I gave birth to our daughter, Katherine, at home with the help of a wonderful elderly country doctor who had accompanied hundreds of women at home throughout his medical practice. Dr. Curtis Lowry had even started training a young woman to assist him with the hope that one day midwives would come back to Quebec (they had been outlawed since the early '50s).

After a year of being a mom, I wanted to do a film that would examine the birthing conditions in Quebec. The National Film Board funded the research allowing me to explore the subject but, when I presented my plans for the film, they were not interested in financing the production. Was I being too radical for them by wanting to show a home birth in my film?

A well-known and experienced Quebecois documentary filmmaker was also doing a film on the subject. His proposal was to film his wife's birth in a hospital with a focus on having their nine-year-old son be present at the birth. They were convinced that through this experience he would become a sensitive, caring brother. No one wanted to fund my film. I had very little experience. I can still see myself crying tears of despair after certain funding refusals. But I was not going to give up because I was convinced that I was the one who was going to do THE film on the subject.

I eventually obtained some funding and started filming. While I was doing the film, there was a burgeoning midwifery movement taking place. They were self-taught and working illegally, but these women who were taking risks doing home births had agreed to be in my film. There was also a group of feminists working in public health within the Quebec government who had started questioning the medicalization of maternity, the high intervention rates in obstetrics and they were

creating quite an impact with their conferences entitled “Accoucher ou se faire accoucher” (Giving Birth or Being Delivered).

In 1980, the ASPQ (Association of public health in Quebec) along with the Department of Social Affairs organized a series of conferences in 11 regions of Quebec on the theme of birth. 10,000 people attended these conferences and it was the beginning of a whole new shift taking place with regards to birthing practices. My film, entitled ‘Depuis que le Monde est Monde’ (Since the beginning of time), was released in 1981. It was the perfect timing to create even more momentum.

I toured the province with the film speaking to thousands of parents. The film explored three different birth settings: the modern obstetric ward of a major hospital, a home birth where the couple was accompanied by two illegal midwives, and a new birthing room set up by a doctor in rural Quebec, where the couple was allowed to give birth in a simple room with no unnecessary interventions. Women who saw the film suddenly realized the amazing differences in experience between these three settings. The film had an incredible impact!

Couples started demanding the legalization of the practice of midwifery, the installation of birthing centers, as well as birthing rooms in hospitals. As a mother and filmmaker, I was very involved in this movement and was one of the founding members of a provincial entity entitled Naissance Renaissance (Birth Rebirth). This NGO was created to help parents prepare for a natural birth in the setting of their choice but also to gain momentum in pushing forth changes at the political level. We even edited a monthly journal entitled, ‘L’une à L’autre’ (One to the other).

Not only did the film have an impact to create change in birthing conditions in Quebec, it had a huge impact on me because it showed me the power of women coming together to demand change. We finally

obtained the legalization of midwives in 1999 and today there are 27 birthing centers in Quebec.

When I was conducting my early research, I wanted to include in my film an elderly midwife who would have practiced in the '30s, '40s and '50s when many births were still taking place at home. I needed to understand why midwifery had become illegal. My researcher found an elderly nurse and upon hearing her name, Aurore (which means dawn), I knew it was her. Aurore had studied to be a nurse but then went to work in the colonies of northern Quebec in 1932, the first white woman to arrive in a place called Rivière Solitaire (Solitary River). She ended up having to be more than a nurse. She was the postmaster, doctor, midwife, sometimes walking miles, running into bears, to assist women and their families.

I still remember how proud she was when she said, "*A midwife's best tools are her hands.*" Aurore had attended over 500 births, some of them breach, even twins. She was proud to say that she never lost a woman. She lost one child because she arrived too late to a breech birth that no one present had known how to assist and was dead upon Aurore's arrival.

When the colonies were well established, she moved to the mining town of Noranda and set up a birthing center she named The St. Therese Hospital. For her center to be legal, she needed to pass an exam at the College of Physicians after which she was granted an official certificate as a midwife. She operated a 15-bed clinic for two-and-a-half years. It even included a section for teenage mothers. She charged \$15 per delivery. Doctors charged \$65 at the time, and their clientele was dwindling. Unfortunately, doctors had to approve the clinic's activities, and eventually they withdrew their support. Aurore was forced to close her center. It was doctors, with the help of the Catholic Church, the

religious orders that ran the hospitals in this area, who had put an end to midwifery in Quebec.

Aurore eventually moved to Montreal where I met her in 1979. She was 79 years old at that time. At the premiere of my film, Aurore received a standing ovation. It was so touching to see this tiny, humble woman being recognized by hundreds of people for her courage and compassion.

Aurore, however, became more than a character in my film, she ended up having a huge impact on my personal life. I adopted her as a grandmother for my children and we visited her regularly for some 20 years until her death in 1998 at the age of 99. I was with her at the time of her death. I had been sitting by her bedside for hours when I suddenly thought, maybe Aurore wants to be alone. Even though she was unconscious I said to her, "*Aurore, maybe you want to be alone so I will leave at midnight.*" As I held her hand, I heard her last breath at ten minutes to midnight. I discovered with her the power of spiritual communication.

Seven years earlier, Aurore had asked me to be her legal executer, having no children and never having been married. In her will she stated that she did not want an epitaph, nor a tombstone. She wanted to be cremated, which was quite uncommon at the time, and that her ashes be dispersed to the four winds so that anyone who would breathe an atom of these ashes would breathe in love.

I organized a funeral where many midwives and friends attended, and my daughter had created 12 beautifully painted small urns that we distributed with Aurore's ashes to people who recognized the power of her last wishes. Her ashes have been dispersed on top of Mt. Cho Oyu, the sixth highest mountain of the Himalayas, known as the Turquoise Goddess. Her ashes were dropped in the Pacific Ocean, near Hawaii, as my son swam by a great sea turtle. Her ashes have also been scattered

in the Amazon River, in Paris, on the Alaska/Yukon border, and several other locations.

The day after her death, I set up a kind of altar in my home with her photographs, her midwifery tools, and a lantern that stayed on top of my piano for 40 days. At the end of this time accompanying her in her passage to the other world, I received an incredible gift. In the middle of the night an amazing white light filled the ceiling of the bedroom and like a magic lantern this light funneled into my womb. Aurore is still with me to this day, and I often ask her for guidance.

In 2020, the Cinemathèque Québécoise decided to invest in creating a digital copy of my 16mm film making it available for feminist research. National Board Films are often consulted for research purposes, but films produced by small, independent companies don't usually have the means to remaster their 16mm films. The film is now still being screened and was part of a cycle of films presented at the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

I was one of the first female filmmakers in Quebec to do, what we call today, an Impact Campaign. I have continued to create social impacts with many of my documentary productions since that first amazing impact experience back in 1981. In 2014, I released the feature documentary, *Anticosti: The Hunt for Extreme Oil*, directed by world famous Dominic Champagne who is renowned for his show, *The Beatles for Cirque du Soleil*. When Philippe Couillard, then Prime Minister of Quebec, screened the film, he decided to announce, at the Paris Climate talks in 2015, the end of all exploration for shale oil and gas on this beautiful island of the Gulf of St. Laurence. *Anticosti* was recognized in September 2023 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. One never knows the impact that a film can have, and it can span years.

Today, I can proudly say that the majority of my films have brought about personal and, in many cases, social transformation. As I develop

my future films, I am now aiming for planetary impact. The time has come to give birth to a new paradigm; we must transform our way of life, one where we will respect one another, protect and work with Gaia, this beautiful planet we call home.

Sylvie Van Brabant



Sylvie Van Brabant is recognized as a visionary in her field. In 1984, she co-founded Productions du Rapide-Blanc to share her unique view with the world. Since then, Van Brabant has produced, directed and distributed over 50 documentaries that are relevant, moving and cinematic, documentaries that reflect our cultural and social values and never shy away from the big issues. This daring attitude has won Van Brabant many accolades at home and abroad, but more importantly, many of her productions have helped bring about social and political change.

As a social activist, Van Brabant is closely associated with numerous community groups, creating an unprecedented level of trust to share their stories on screen. That's because she's a natural collaborator. She passionately supports young directors in realising their unique vision through film. On top of this, she's worked regularly with the NFB to produce and direct ground-breaking cinema. Over the past 40 years, her unmistakable perspective has also been employed by the boards of the Quebec Director's Association, the Hot Docs Board of Directors, the Documentary Network and the groundbreaking feminist organisation,

Réalisatrices Équitables, responsible for getting more women directors behind the camera.

Sylvie Van Brabant sees documentary as an art form that's essential to society. She strives to make films that reveal the truth behind the most crucial issues.

Connect with Sylvie on LinkedIn [@sylvie-van-brabant-092a2422](#).

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