

# **YOU CAN OVERCOME ANYTHING!**

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VOL.1

DESPITE THE BARRIERS IN LIFE

**CESAR R. ESPINO WITH CONTRIBUTING  
AUTHORS**



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## **DEDICATION**

This book is dedicated to those who are looking to get inspired, motivated, and empowered to face life barriers. My faith is that you will find stories within these authors to help you on your own journey. In these stories you will find ideas and real-life lessons to show you how you too can truly Overcome Anything!



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Thank you so much for your wealth of knowledge and for sharing the obstacles you had to overcome despite the barriers in your life. You are truly an encouragement and inspiration to the readers.







**Lisa Manzo**

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **DELUSIONS OF THE MIND**

*“...you’re going to find many of the truths we cling to  
depend greatly on our own point of view.”*

*~Obi-Wan Kenobi*

**A** year ago (in 2019), I moved to Las Vegas. I moved here after visiting and walking out of the airport and realizing this is where I should be living. Here’s how I can explain it: It was an overwhelming desire to move. A wave of emotion washed over me, and my head was screaming, “you have to move here.” I have had this feeling before, and I knew exactly what it was. I was about

ten years old when I heard of White Plains, NY. I got the same feeling and knew I would live there one day. I lived there for 25 years. When this feeling came over me, I knew it was the place for me. At the same time, I always wanted to just put my things in my car with a general idea of where I was going without a specific place to be when I got there. I wanted to see where the journey would lead to and what changes would be brought to my life with this adventure.

At the time of the move, I was sober a little for over a year. After being sober (some may call this dry) for a year, I realized I was just as unhappy as I had been before I stopped drinking. Quitting drinking really had no effect on how I was feeling. It was on my "one-year anniversary" I realized being sober was not enough, and that I needed help. Wow, there it is, I need help. I was actually going to have to ask for help. This brought so many challenges in my delusional mind. I used to think to ask for help is a sign of weakness. I resisted asking with every ounce of my being. I decided to try a 12-step program. I figured I had nothing to lose and everything to gain. I worked my steps, and it was not easy. It was painful sometimes, and at other times, rewarding. Eventually, I came out on the other side of the 12 steps with calmness and peace I had never known before.

While working on my steps, it was pointed out to me that I said, "I know" a lot. In retrospect, I now understand this was a defense mechanism. I didn't want to hear what anyone had to say because, in my mind, no one was listening to me. I did not want to know what he/she had to say. My sponsor, Colette, pointed out kindly since I asked her to be my sponsor and she has traveled this road before. I may want to consider listening to her and stop saying "I

know.” She also explained to me that she felt like I was dismissive of her, which was not my intention. I wanted her to stop talking about the subject at hand. I gave this some thought and decided instead of saying “I know,” I would say, “Let me think about it.” This worked for both of us. For me, it had the same effect “I know” was having. The conversation about the current topic stopped. It worked for my sponsor because she felt I was no longer dismissive. The bonus was that I actually did think about what she was saying, and I was able to see the connections she was trying to make to my life. Seeing the connections helped me to make changes to my thinking and my life. In hindsight, I was so out of control. I had become a control freak in my own life. If my food wasn’t prepared exactly how I wanted, I wouldn’t eat it. Through the steps, it was revealed to me that the more I let go of control, the happier my life had become. Surrendering to the journey and living in the moment was amazing. I was able to see the joys in life and be grateful for all the wonderful things I already possessed and didn’t see.

I realized I had so much emotional baggage to work through, and drinking was my way of covering or numbing out the pain. I had this feeling of worthlessness, not good enough, and unimportant. These are the delusions in my mind and yet so real. I didn’t understand why I felt this way. I was not abused physically or sexually, and I wanted to know what was wrong with me. I started reading self-help books and figuring out, how I could apply what I learned to my life. I learned so much about self-development and myself during this period. I came to understand that there is no one right solution. I was going to have to sift through the material to figure out what was going to work for me. I

now pick the resources that work for me. I write them down and add them to my toolbox. When I am struggling, I go to my toolbox and pick a tool that will help me.

The game-changer came for me when I listened to Dr. Brene Brown's book, *Men, Women and Worthlessness*. For the first time, I had insight into my feelings and how I came to feel worthlessness, not good enough, and unimportant. Wow, there was someone in the world who understood how I felt; I wasn't alone. What a wonderful feeling to have someone understand what is going on in my head. Understanding and awareness are the keys to change.

In my interpretation, Dr. Brown explains how feelings of shame make a person feel worthless because our minds interpret shame as "I am ..." and guilt we interpret as "I did something bad." Wow, these are two very different avenues of self-worth. Dr. Brown gives strategies to help overcome the "I am" feelings. I used some of her strategies and realized she was right, and I needed to change my thinking. I am not worthless, bad, insignificant, etc. I may do things that cause me guilt, and I am not bad.

Next, I met a life coach, who has since become my friend and set me on a self-love journey. I was challenged to keep a journal for 30 days on how I showed myself love and kindness. I really didn't understand the point, and I was so unhappy at the time. Pain makes people take action, and I figured I would try it. At the end of the day, I would write three ways I showed myself love and kindness. This was not an easy task, as I had never shown myself love and kindness. I didn't really know how or what to do. I wasn't taught this skill, and I needed her to explain to me. Some examples are as follows; I took a nap. When I spilled something, I cleaned it up and laughed about it instead of

berating myself. I bought myself a smoothie with veggies in it to nourish my body.

One of the other things I did was to decide to take my own advice. I would ask myself if this happened to my friend, what would I tell him/her? I would answer and then take my own advice. I used to show others much more kindness than I ever showed myself.

Then I read, *"The Body Keeps the Score,"* by Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D. While reading his book, I came to understand why it was so difficult for me to change. In Kolk's book, he writes about a presentation he listened to by Steven Maier of the University of Colorado in 1984. His topic was "learned helplessness" in animals. Maier and Martin Seligman (Maier's research partner) had repeatedly administered painful electric shocks to dogs who were trapped in locked cages. They called this condition "inescapable shock." The book explains further, after administering several courses of electric shock, the researchers opened the doors of the cages and then shocked the dogs again. A group of control dogs who had never been shocked before ran away immediately, but the dogs who had earlier been subjected to inescapable shock did not attempt to flee.

Even when the door was wide open, they just lay there, whimpering and defecating. The mere opportunity to escape does not necessarily make traumatized animals, or people to take the road to freedom.

Like Maier and Seligman's dogs, many traumatized people simply give up rather than taking risks and experimenting with new options. They stay stuck in the fear they know. The book goes on to explain that the dogs had to be dragged out of their cages repeatedly until they

understood they could get away. I was so stuck in my misery; I didn't know how to change. The change came for me, only when the pain of staying in my fictitious cage, created in my mind became more painful than trying something different. I have discovered I need to keep dragging myself out of my self-induced cage until my unconscious comes to the realization I need to change and then allow the change to happen. I find myself repeatedly dragging my body into new situations and waiting for my mind to catch up and understand this change is empowering.

During this past year, I have also figured out I need to lean into things that bother me. For example, I met a person who talked so slow and asked so many questions; it drove me crazy. I need to figure out why this bothered me so much. I did a lot of thinking and writing about this. I figured out the slow talking made me angry because I never allowed the opportunity to take my time. Granting myself the thinking time was something I needed to do for myself. This is interesting because when I initially made this change, I got some push back from friends. I set a boundary and decided I needed time, and this was different for my friends and I. In some cases, my friends honored my wishes and gave me time. In other instances, an answer was demanded instantly. I would explain I needed time to think as my brain always thinks about three or four things simultaneously. By giving me the time to think, there would be a better solution. Then still wanting an answer, I would stand my ground. Some people were okay with this, and some were not.

Another key lesson I learned was your friends and family have to come with you and support you on the

journey. As I grow and watch others grow, I have noticed that people sometimes want to be left behind, and ultimately, it is their choice. I honor their choices as I want them to honor my choices. Not everyone will make the transition with you, and you will find new friends along the way, who have the same mindset as you do. These new friends are vital as you grow and are open to other people's ideas.

I have also discovered our minds take in information based on our experiences. The mind either deletes, distorts, or generalizes information. With this in mind, let me take you back to when I was four years old and my memory or maybe my delusion. My family was moving to a new house. This could be very exciting or scary depending on how it is explained to a child or based on the changes after the move. Before the move, my parents had what I remember as an "L" shaped room. When you enter, you will see my brother's bed, and then mine. Around the corner of the room was my parent's bed. I don't remember if there was a door between the rooms or if they were separate rooms. I do remember I liked being in the middle because I felt safe. In the new apartment, I remember sharing a room with my brother. I'm not sure if this memory was real because it was a 3-bedroom apartment, and why would I need to share a room. Is this a deletion or distortion? Then I was going to have my room with a door that was closed. I remember being afraid, and I have no idea why. I remember waking up and screaming from nightmares regularly. This eventually passes, and I adjust.

Another big change with the move was there were other kids to play with. Most of the kids were older than both my older brother and I. My brother made friends, and

I didn't. The other kids didn't want his little sister around, and I didn't understand this. I remember being angry at my brother all the time. What proceeded after was, if he says, "Yes" I say, "No." This went on for years. I had no clue why I felt this way. My parents were unable to help me, and I stayed angry at my brother for a very long time. Then in my early 20's, my brother almost died, and I had my wake-up call. I started reflecting back and figured out I was angry because he had friends, and I didn't. Too bad an adult didn't explain to me that I needed to make my own friends as my brother did.

I tell this story because with the changes I have made to my mindset and opening my mind to new thoughts and ideas, I have concluded I need to bridge the gap, which was created so many years ago. The healing has been going on for some time, and in the last few months when I speak to my brother, I ask him questions about our childhood. This brings me back to the Obi Wan Kenobi's quote; "..., you're going to find many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view." My brother and I grew up in the same house with the same parents and have some similar memories and others are so different. You would have thought we didn't live in the same household. Our points of view are completely different. Because I am healing and working towards what I see as a gap, I'm finding his interpretation of our childhood interesting and informative.

What can you lean into to expand your mind? Are you open? Are you ready for change? Have you ever tried living in someone else's perspective for a few minutes? I hear you asking "how do I live in someone else's perspective." The way I do this is by going to a memory we both have. Then I



ask the other person to describe his/her memory. I analyze the differences and similarities. Ultimately, the difference invokes great conversations on how each of you got to your interpretation of the memory. Sometimes, I choose to live in the other person's memory, perspective or point of view because it is a happier place to be. Sometimes I need a little help seeing joy in life.

This journey I am on is an ever-growing and evolving of the mind. My mind expands daily. I get out of my comfort zone, and each time I do this, my comfort zone expands. The journey has not been easy. At times it has been brutally painful. I will tell you that you have to feel all your good and bad feelings in order to let them go. My past was wreaking havoc with my present life. This had to change; I needed to accept my past as it has shaped me into who I am today. I need to celebrate the struggles I have overcome. I live in the moment, focusing on where I am, and I have learned to enjoy my journey.

*"It's okay to ask for Help"*

*~Lisa Manzo*

*"Give yourself the permission to be human and then  
forgive yourself"*

*~Lisa Manzo*

*"Progress instead of perfection"*

*~Lisa Manzo*

### **About the Author**

Rising from depression and addictions to now living a life on her terms. Lisa Manzo is an author, speaker, mindset coach, teacher, and nurse. Lisa has extensive life experience working with clients and a lifetime experience working on herself. People looking to transform their lives, hire Lisa to help them overcome limiting beliefs, and gain life-changing confidence to live life on their terms.

What sets her apart from others is Lisa's natural and intuitive understanding of her clients, which enables her to lead her clients through the process. Lisa is fiercely committed to empowering people to change their mindset, thus transforming their lives.

Do you have questions to ask? Lisa is available for a 15-minute call.

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**Daisy Y. Espino**

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **MY LIFE OBSTACLES Mental and Emotional Strength**

**W**elcome to my chapter, enjoy, and I hope inspiration flows from within. For those that know me, thank you for taking the time, supporting me, and hopefully, you will get to know me at a deeper level. If you do not know me, I am Daisy Espino. This chapter is to discuss the lessons, support systems, and ways I've overcome challenging life obstacles.

I was born and raised in Los Angeles City, raised by two wonderful individuals who have loved me and continue to love me unconditionally regardless of my crazy journeys. Both of my parents came to the states when they were children with family as illegal immigrants (they are both

citizens now). My parents had me at the age of sixteen on September 12, 1996. My parent's relationship as a couple did not last long, but their relationship as parents continues to grow. To this day, many would say my parents are close childhood friends raising a child together. They have always put my wellbeing in front of their differences, and for that, I am grateful.

My character as a person reflects that of my parents in various ways. I am my individual self, I have my personal opinions and perspectives, I have my ways of approaching life, but the deep roots of who I am and the way I do things comes from the teachings of my parents. Since I was little, my parents have always ensured to instill basic yet imperative life lessons. Understanding the value of family, wants versus needs, the importance of economic establishment, fulfillment from accomplishments, being happy with my current state, and so much more. My parents have never not taken advantage of life scenarios to create a teaching moment that will last a lifetime.

Growing up, I was always told I was intelligent, organized, mature, and would have a prosperous future. My family always said I would be successful in whatever I desired to become. I truly believed these sayings, and they provided me with much confidence growing up. During my timeframe of middle school moving onto high school, all these lessons and sayings became a huge part of me. I reminded myself I could dream as high as I wanted and could make it all come true if I believe and work hard enough. My dad and I would always talk about dreams and goals. We would always say something around the lines of; Dream of goals that seem unreachable and unrealistic because the higher your goals and dreams are, the further

you will get in life. To this day, I carry this with me in every aspect of my life.

With everything my parents and family did to create a confident, self-loved, caring, and compassionate individual, things were not always optimistic. At one point in my life, many doubted if I would be able to accomplish the smallest of things in life. If accomplishments such as completing high school, submitting a college application, or fulfilling any goal of my own would ever happen in my lifetime. Unfortunately, many of my family, friends, and strangers were quick to judge what my future would be past the age of fifteen.

It was then I became pregnant with my son Kovax, at the age of fifteen. I still remember the day I found out I was pregnant. I was at school, and it was homeroom when I asked to go to the restroom. I was with my friend "A" who was waiting outside the restroom stall as I took a pregnancy test. I cried as the test showed positive. We had to return to our homeroom class, where my other friend "M" noticed I was not okay. I told her the news and began to cry once more.

My parents were not aware of my pregnancy until I was about 4-5 months pregnant. My son's father "J" was the one that broke the news to my mother. The following day my mom took me to the clinic to confirm the pregnancy. That same night after my mom, "J", and myself left the clinic, we met with my dad at my mom's house. I saw my father's face through the front window. I knew he was aware of what was about to be said. He was so disappointed and disapproved of the pregnancy. Emotions from my parents, "J", and I were flying around the room. So

much was being said and questioned. "Options" were being placed on the table to see what my future could be.

At that moment, I knew my life was going to be different and that the future was unsteady. I knew the backlash I would receive, the stereotypes that would arise about my life, the negativity of individuals towards me, and the many loss that would occur in my life. However, I did not know to what extent, nor was I prepared for how it would settle with me. I had acknowledged what was about to happen but was not prepared to deal with it.

I always believed I was a strong-willed person that could keep her head up high and not be subjected to the comments of others. However, a person can only take on so much until you hit a breaking point. I was fifteen years old and in the 10th grade when I got pregnant. I could no longer play my favorite sport, volleyball. I could no longer participate in my favorite hobby, dance. I became enclosed, timid, and felt the world was watching me. I felt everyone knew I was pregnant and became paranoid. I lost friends, I lost family members, and I felt unwanted as the news broke, and as my belly started to show. It was a sense of displacement wherever I went; a sense of full judgment of my existence before knowing who I am.

My belly showing was the biggest statement of who I was at the moment; a soon to be teen-mom. The sole existence of the phrase "teen-mom" has such a negative and disgraceful connotation. I had to deal with rumors floating around school about my pregnancy. At school, I had to deal with no longer being "Daisy" but instead, "The pregnant girl." I had to deal with questions such as: "Why are you not aborting?" "Didn't you use protection?" "Do you know who the dad is?" Or comments such as: "I feel so

bad for you; life is going to be hard" "You won't get to finish high school" "You are a slut". The questions, comments, and rumors were non-stop.

At times, I did not think I could move forward because I was not strong enough to show my face and make the best of my situation. The negativity was starting to sink in deeply. It was affecting me as a person and everything I did. At times, I felt so overwhelmed that I would randomly cry myself to sleep or wake up crying. The cycle of emotions was non-stop. I just felt horrible and bad as if having a baby was going to be the worst decision ever. Things felt as if they were crashing down on me. I was not sure what would be next or how I will make it out of this strong.

Imagine having to simply deal with being in high school as a teenager that is getting to learn more about themselves and dealing with all the high school crap/drama. Now imagine being pregnant on top of dealing with all that high school crap naturally. It sounds crazy, right? Some individuals would say high school alone was hard because you are getting to learn more about yourself every day. Not only are you possibly preparing for college or whatever future endeavor you plan on taking, but you are learning new things about yourself. You are figuring out what you want and where you fit in.

To say that high school was a new challenging experience is an understatement for me. Unfortunately, I did not just have to deal with the negativity from home and school but also from strangers. I used to take the metro to school and home almost every day unless I was picked up by a family member (usually my mom). We all know of a general rule - if no seat is available when a pregnant woman gets into the bus, get up, and give your seat up. It

is common courtesy. Well, because of how society reacts to teen pregnancies and the negativity that comes along with it is different, I can say there were probably only six times during my pregnancy that a seat was given up to me

To make matters worse, the individuals that would give me a seat were people I knew or commonly saw on the bus. I would stand on the bus until a seat became available or until it was my stop. The ride could take anywhere from 20 minutes to 45 minutes depending on LA traffic. To give a better idea, I was commuting from West Hollywood to Mid-City/West Adams District Area.

I would hear negative comments from strangers on the bus or while I walked down the street. It was almost as if people felt they had the right to judge me and question me. As if they knew what my life was about and will become. I honestly have hundreds of stories to tell of all the unfortunate judgment and negativity I received while being pregnant. It could be a whole book on its own. However, things were not always bad, and I thankfully had different support systems.

At home, I had my parents and their partners to lean on. I had my son's father and his family. I had my best friend from middle school, who is like a sister to me. I had my family members that were always rooting for me and made themselves available for me. Even if these individuals did not agree or always see eye to eye with me, they were all there for me emotionally and mentally. They were always uplifting and reminding me of how I can do it. No matter what their thoughts were and how hard my pregnancy was for them, there was one specific person who was there for me at every step of the way.



That person was my mom. She was the biggest emotional/mental support system I had. She always reminded me of who I was, where I came from, reiterated my dreams and goals, and always ensured to say repeatedly to me how I will not give up and make it all happen one way or another. As my mom would say, you are going to prove all those f\*\*\*ers that doubted you, and you are going to rub it in their faces when you do what they said you could not do! My mom has always been the best person ever to me. She is not just my mom but my best friend as well. I can always lean on her and rely on her for honesty and advice.

I also had an amazing support group at school. I had a handful of close friends that made me feel like I belonged, and they were always there for me in so many ways. They were there to have lunch with me, sit in class with me, walk to the bus with me, take the bus with me, talk to me, lend me a dollar, and so much more. These individuals sincerely helped ease all the negative noise and helped me focus on the moment. I was able to live as if the rest was not happening. I would laugh because of them. I would continue to move forward and hold my head up high in school because of them. They were my mental/emotional support at school.

You may be wondering, what about the teachers and administration at school? Well, believe it or not, they were all amazing to me. They supported me and did not treat me any different from any other student. Of course, if I had doctors' appointments and was going to miss class, I would be provided with the course material to review and was able to make up the work. I was not a "bad" student; I was an average 3.5 GPA student. I was always involved in class,

and I love to learn. My teachers and the administration knew this about me. It was kind of insane how much they rooted for me to make it through and be among that small percentage of teen moms that did not fall into the general statistics. On the last day of 10th grade, all my teachers and administration said, "see you next school year." It is as if they knew I was not giving up, no matter what.

My childhood background, my personal confidence and strength, the different support systems, and all the positivity surrounding me, gave me the mental and emotional strength to continue moving in life physically. It was the foundation I needed not to stop or give up. I have always said it; I was lucky enough not to be shunned by everyone and be accepted by some. I was lucky enough to have these support groups that each had a purpose for my self-growth and personal development. To provide me with lessons to change my mindset and not become subject to the negative noise. To be receptive to the teachings, aid, and constructive feedback. To know that by being willful, you can accomplish what you desire. That patience, strength, stability, and constant work will pay off when the right time comes.

I am proud, happy, fulfilled, and accomplished to say that from 2011 till today, I have done what most thought was impossible. I graduated from High School with my friends and classmates at the age of seventeen with Honors. I went straight to college to study Business. I graduated from a private university at the age of twenty-one and received my Bachelors in Business Administration with a double concentration in Management and International Business. After college, I started a part-time job and have had the opportunity to move up in the

company a couple of times. I now have an amazing well-paying job, and I am at the start of my career. I have an amazing son that has changed my life for the better and has been the reason for me pushing and challenging myself to my limits.

My journey has been a rollercoaster, but it has been the biggest thrill of my life. I would not change it for anything as it has taught me what I could never learn had I not been a teen mom. So many life lessons, support systems, and obstacles to conquer. You only grow through your experiences, whether good or bad. It is important to push forward in life and move with it because it will not stop for you. You must grow along with society, or else it will leave you behind.

Always remember your mental and emotional stability are a great indicator of how strong you are. The more stable and the bigger your foundation, the more places you will go, and the more open doors will appear for you because of your humbleness. It is through hard work, dedication, and constant improvement that will allow you to move up in your life. Stay true to who you are, and do not give up on your dreams or goals.

Always remember to get or achieve something, there are various paths to get there. Sometimes you will have to take a detour from an obstacle or barrier that has arisen during your journey. This new challenge of finding a new way should not stop you but rather make you think strategically about another path that can be taken. Yes, it may take longer or may be harder, but that should not be a motive to stop and quit. It should be a motive to continue because you know of a solution.

Remember the core values, morals, and ethics you were raised upon and continue to follow them. Always keep close to what you believe in and look up too. This is where your strength, characteristics, ways of life, and content derive from. Do not hesitate to fall back on your various support systems as they are there to help and uplift you. Have mentors to help guide you through rough times and provide you with valuable advice.

Nothing or no one in this world should yield you from what you most desire. The only thing or person that could possibly ever stop you is YOU. Believe in yourself and push through the harsh times. Do not forget how worthy you are of achieving the things in this world you desire. The negativity is a simple noise meant to distract you from what truly matters. Learn to release that negativity and hold on to the optimism and positivity in your life.

Envision the end and make it happen. Show the world what an inspiration you can be to others. Show everyone that you are capable of unrealistic goals and dreams. Once you set your mind to something, you do not stop until it has been fulfilled. Express how you are your biggest advocate. Reach your mental and emotional strength at its fullest potential. Never give up and always remember tomorrow will come with a fresh start. Move forward in life with great determination, and things will fall into place.

## **About the Author**

Daisy Y. Espino is an Angelino and the daughter of two immigrant parents. Growing up, Daisy has taken the principles and teachings from her parents, which has allowed her to navigate her way through life's obstacles and challenges.

Daisy is a proud daughter and most importantly a proud mom. Her drive, motivation, is to leave a legacy behind for her son. Daisy obtained her Bachelor's Degree at the age 21 from Mount Saint Mary's University (a private So Cal University), is excelling in her career, and her life is just beginning.

She has passion for others and her objective is to make a difference in this world and give her family and others that space and ability to succeed.

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**Carmen Ventrucchi**

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE SISU WITHIN**

**J**ust like that, I was a grown woman curled up in a ball, in the fetal position, crying on the kitchen floor.

It was two days after I left my corporate job to start my own business. I came out of my room and walked into the kitchen... and then I saw it. My two-year-old daughter had colored my brand-new white kitchen cabinets with a permanent black Sharpie marker. She sat on the floor looking up at me, smiling as she proudly displayed her artwork that covered my kitchen cabinets and her legs, her blond hair tousled in her face.



*My daughter, Sloane, proudly trying to clean her kitchen cabinet artwork.*

That shattered me. I fell to the floor, crying in a ball in the fetal position because the Jackson Pollock-like cabinet makeover sent me over the edge. It wasn't the cabinets that were upsetting me. It was all the emotion I was feeling about leaving my job to pursue my dream.

I was scared, and this was new to me. I knew that I was doing the right thing for my family and for myself; I just wanted to be sure it would work. I am the breadwinner of my family of six children, a husband, and a dog. I was feeling insecure and yearning to know I was doing the right thing. I wasn't crying for my cabinets, I was crying because I had so many obstacles in front of me to overcome. I was doubting myself about whether I could make it work. I thought if I can't keep my daughter from coloring the cabinets, how am I supposed to run a business? I was experiencing impostor



syndrome (fear of being a fraud), a deep doubt of myself, and a lot of it.

Overcoming obstacles, barriers or roadblocks is a part of the human experience. Our journey is designed for us, and our journey will present unique roadblocks and obstacles that we have to overcome. We will have obstacles personally, professionally, and in our relationships.

Obstacles can be simple, like learning to walk when you're an infant. Or they can be more complex, like overcoming a major medical challenge or losing someone dear to you. No matter the size or shape or flavor of your obstacle, I want you to activate the SISU within you.

SISU - Its grit, determination, and tenacity, no matter the obstacle, no matter the odds. It is the way I live my life. It is the brand of my family and my personality, and I am proud of the origin of the word. SISU is a Finnish word, with no direct translation into English. It's a spirit that the Finnish culture embodies, a spirit of overcoming, excellence, and authenticity. SISU is the courage of the heart. It allows you to be you. It allows your inner voice to shine through when it seems like society only wants to mask you to conformity. It allows you to take the road less traveled, push yourself past your comfort zone, and to take action to overcome physical and emotional roadblocks.

My family is of Finnish descent on my mother's side, and I grew up knowing what this word meant. Only recently did I feel and accept the true inspiration of this word and started at embodying it fully.

I have experienced and overcome obstacles much more severe and life-altering than kitchen cabinets and permanent Sharpie markers. The past two years have been a bit of a roller coaster. I've experienced a lot. We welcomed two

nieces into our family and became their legal guardians. This meant going from four kids to six kids overnight, leading to changes in emotions, norms, and logistics for the entire family. Another family member was diagnosed with cancer and is undergoing treatment. My husband identified and recovered from two medical issues. A beloved family member suffered a massive hemorrhagic stroke and underwent life-saving emergency brain surgery in the middle of the night and survived against the odds. I submitted my resignation to a company I was with for over ten years to start my own business which triggered the struggle, growing pains, and mindset shift that go with entrepreneurship.

And that was only the past two years.

I've seen a lot. I've been through a lot. I've experienced a rainbow of emotions. I've overcome, and because of my SISU, my grit, determination, and tenacity, I am not only surviving, I am thriving. We all have SISU within us; you have SISU within you. It's not about being Finnish, it's about going deep and finding that inner human desire to succeed, move forward, and to overcome, no matter what.

Through all these obstacles and more, I recognize behavioral patterns, a way I get myself over, around, or through that obstacle. Here is what I discovered.

Feel your emotions-Any obstacle comes with a plethora of emotions; anger, sadness, grief, fear, you name, it you might feel it. I give myself permission to feel these emotions. Emotions are feedback. They tell us what our unconscious mind is truly thinking and truly feeling. When you're in the moment, and you're about to climb a mountain or overcome a roadblock, honor those emotions. They are some of the

most valuable information you will receive. They are a gift from your unconscious mind. Go ahead and cry, yell into a pillow, talk it out, hit a punching bag, do what you must do to express those emotions, and thoroughly process them.

Take action - I will not overcome an obstacle by sitting on my ass, and neither will you. I've found it's good to do the best next thing, instead of the next best thing. I ask myself, "what is the best thing to do," and then I do it.

Remember, taking action means you might have to try a few different things. Your first action might not be the right one or the perfect one. Be okay with that. The point is you're doing something instead of nothing. Taking action starts forward momentum. It starts progress, and the correct action or answer will present itself. Action can take many forms and can range from physically going somewhere to asking yourself tough questions and challenging your inner monologue.

Sometimes action takes the form of a decision. There is power in decision. Something magical happens when you decide that you're going to do something. It's like you stake your claim to the universe that yes, you will accomplish this, or that will happen, or you will overcome. I have personally seen the power of decision in my life and the lives of close family and friends.

One powerful example of decision was when my Grandpa decided he wasn't going to die. He was hospitalized in late 2014 with several complications. Hospice care was recommended for him. He decided that no, it wasn't his time yet, and he lived another two years and spent time with family. We had many great conversations during that time, and I am forever grateful we were able to bond further. He was able to meet and hold all my children. My kids have fond

memories of him. He passed away peacefully in 2017. His power of decision provided those two years, loving memories, and our strengthened relationship.

Use your available resources-Those who overcome are extremely resourceful. Your resource could be a networking connection, the internet, Google, a friend, or a complete stranger. Be brave enough to ask a question, call on your resources to help you overcome the obstacle. I give myself permission to ask for help; there is no guilt or shame in admitting you don't know something or need help. Everything can be figured out. You are unique, your situation is specific to you, and chances that someone has already figured out the solution to your challenge. Find that resource, discover what they did, and apply it to yourself.

So, back to me lying in a ball on the kitchen floor, a full-grown adult, crying over my kitchen cabinets. How did I overcome?

First, I gave myself permission to feel those emotions. I let them out, I honored them, and I allowed myself to experience them. It was one of those times I needed a good cry, and that lasted at least five minutes. Again, it wasn't only about the cabinets and marker; it was all the other emotions, fear mostly, I was feeling. I had a lot on my plate, I was stressed, and the marker was the tipping point that sent me over the edge.

It is unusual for me to cry on the floor, so I reassured my husband and kids that everything would be alright. Then I picked myself off the floor and took a deep breath. I said, out loud, "Well, something has to take that marker off." Even though the marker label says is permanent, I knew there had to be a way to remove it. I knew someone must have done this before and already knew the answer. I decided my

kitchen cabinets would look new again. This can be figured out.

I took action and tried several solutions to remove the permanent marker. Rubbing alcohol... didn't work. Baking soda... nope. Regular household cleaner.... no again.

My knowledge of household cleaners was not robust enough, it was time to call on my resources.

I'm a member of a moms of multiples group (moms with twins, triples, etc.) because I have twin boys. I jumped on our Facebook group and posted a plea for help. Guess what, others had experienced this before too. I was not alone. I was able to gain from their experience and apply it to myself. Within minutes, I had the answer... dry erase marker. I drew over the permanent Sharpie marker with a dry erase marker and everything wiped off and looked as good as new. It was like magic. Obstacle officially overcome!

Yes, this is an oversimplified example, yet I followed the pattern. I allowed myself to feel and honor emotions. I decided that I would get through this situation. I took action and tried different solutions. And I called upon my resources to help identify the solution. I followed the formula. I exhibited SISU.

### About the Author

Carmen Ventrucchi, the Mindset Ninja and International Business Ignitor, knows you have the power to design the life you want. Her clients excel personally, professionally, and financially by creating the right mindset to achieve their goals. Her clients become limitless leaders. Carmen is a self-described “badass mom” to six kids and will be testing for her Taekwondo black belt in 2020. Carmen is available for private consultations.

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For my favorite peer review journal article on the concept of SISU, please visit <https://sisulab.com/2019/04/03/embodied-fortitude-an-introduction-to-the-finnish-construct-of-sisu/>

Lahti, E. (2019). Embodied fortitude: An introduction to the Finnish construct of sisu. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 9(1), 61-82. doi:10.5502/ijw.v9i1.672



**Khodi Rayne**

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **QUANTUM STRATEGIST**

**H**ave you ever wondered how much pain someone must be in to drink themselves to death slowly with alcohol? More importantly, have you ever underestimated someone's ability to find success with all odds stacked against them?

We only have one liver and when it fails, it fails hard. All our decisions impact our body in one way or another so having a coping mechanism that dramatically affects your liver ultimately leads to death. Alcohol is not your friend.

I'm no exception to the truth and my journey to success began as my liver started to fail.

I never imagined that I'd be dying slowly from stage four cirrhosis at thirty-two years old while being passed

between four hospitals as they looked for a solution and discussed where I should die.

When your body begins to give out, and you know beyond any reasonable doubt that you're slowly transcending into the afterlife, there's a moment of clarity that I can only describe as serene and peaceful. It's a complete acceptance of the inevitable and is casually shadowed by curiosity.

Let's go back a bit. I come from a poor family and survival was a primary aim in our ability to thrive. Crime, pollution, miscommunication, and a general fear of our environment forced to make many desperate decisions that ultimately led to casually drinking alcohol every day.

The problem with drug abuse is that you won't know you have a problem until it's too late. For me, it didn't become a problem until I started living my dream as an international DJ. Although I was living what I believed to be a dream life, I was slowly masking the pain of loneliness in the absence of human connection.

Alcohol became a staple in my everyday life, and it is always on my grocery list. As my anxiety rose, my depression got worse, and I desperately searched for a feeling I didn't know existed.

Eventually I was so dependent on alcohol to the extent that I was unable to function without having 1/5 of vodka at breakfast. I am unable to sleep, eat, feel, care about anything other than my alcoholic drink.

I was an alcoholic.

Just like any alcoholic, I was afraid and unable to admit I had a problem. Eventually, I lost my dream job, my two-story condo, a brand-new car, all of my friends, and my life



was reduced to rubble with nothing more than a negative balance in my bank account.

One early morning I walked my fiancé to the front door and was saying goodbye to her as she was heading to work. She stopped with those beautiful green eyes of hers, lightly grabbed my face and said, "You're looking a little yellow."

I brushed it off because that didn't make any sense to me. The sun was really bright, and I felt my skin heating up, so I blamed it on the morning sun and said it was just the lighting.

Little did we know; this was the beginning of my liver failure.

Days later, I realized I just wasn't as interested in things that I normally would. I was eating less, sleeping more and I became irritable. One evening, I was resting in bed, still feeling defeated and weak, and started feeling nauseous, dizzy, disoriented and extremely tired.

It turns out my stomach had been slowly filling with blood until it made me sicker than I've ever been in my entire life. Not long after that I began vomiting blood into the bathroom sink from two veins that had opened up in my throat.

My fiancé immediately called 911 as I stood there shaking profusely in the hallway at the top of the stairs while she was holding me up as my legs were slowly giving out. The kids are fearing the worst and hiding in their room, and they can hear the concern in their mother's voice as she tried to keep me standing.

Paramedics arrived within minutes and walked me down the stairs while I was lethargic and my heart was racing faster and faster.

They helped me into the cold ambulance that smelled like old leather and cleaning supplies. They took me straight to the hospital, then immediately into a 1.5-hour

surgery on my esophagus. I had no idea what was happening. All I could remember is an older man asking me if I'm ready, someone putting a mask on me, and then I woke up.

It turns out that I went into cardiac arrest while in surgery, and I ended up in ICU. This is where they expected me to die. Honestly, I was more embarrassed than anything else.

I was confused, afraid, and surrounded by people I don't even know. I am being controlled by people I have never met, in a city I have only been living in for a few months, and the only person by my side is the woman I never thought I'd meet.

My soulmate, best friend, and now, my life saver.

Suddenly, a doctor pulls back the curtain, and without checking my vitals or running any tests, he blurts out:

"This is what death looks like; he is going to die here, and I can't treat him." He then walks away.

Even though I went through surgery and I am stable now, I'm still dying slowly!

My fiancé walks out and collapses on the floor, crying her eyes out with nurses surrounding her. She is now accepting the bitter truth that the person she is about to marry is going to die right before her eyes.

Without any warning, the hospital started the process all over again. They put me in another ambulance, on the way to another hospital, more nurses, more uncertainty, and that same hospital smell of cleaning supplies smothered in the sounds of squeaking shoes down the hall.

I'm being passed around between hospitals with no promise that I'll survive.

It wasn't until I was moved to the third hospital that a doctor was willing to take a good look at me. The room got

quiet, quiet enough for the ringing in my ears to begin screaming from tinnitus. He said in his foreign accent, "Mr. Rayne, you are dying; do you understand?" I responded with a simple "yes."

He said, "At this rate, you aren't going to make it through the week." He continues, "I don't know If I'll be able to save your life, but I do have a bed that opened up an hour ago in a research facility in another hospital".

He paused for what seemed like a lifetime. As the walls began to wobble and my hands still shaking, he looked straight into my eyes and said, "Do you want, to live?"

I looked at my fiancé, with her eyes glazed over as she's holding my hand at the foot of the bed. Then I replied, "Yes."

Immediately, a nurse comes in with paperwork and starts asking me questions I couldn't understand.

Honestly, I was dying, and I had no idea what she was saying. By this time my two stepdaughters had made it to the hospital and were sitting in the visitors' chairs next to me, hunched over, and afraid to look at me.

With them on my left and my fiancé holding my hand at the foot of my bed, she looked at me and wants to know if you are ready to fight and If you are ready to commit to saving your own life."

At this point I had already accepted I was going to die soon, I did my best, and that it's ok to give up now because the pain won't last for much longer.

My oldest stepdaughter pulled her mask just below her chin and her eyes glazed over. She grabs my hand, and musters the courage to look up at me while I am about to answer the most important question I've been asked and says, "you have to try..."

This was the exact moment I realized that I have to take a leap of faith, and believe that I have the strength and I

didn't struggle my whole life just to die in front of people who truly love me.

I knew I'd have to be willing to commit to doing what needs to be done for something greater than myself.

I'll have to fight harder than I ever had to, just for the opportunity to live the life I truly want.

Still basking in uncertainty with both of my hands being held gently, I stalled for a moment, and with my voice cracking, tears building and my heart pounding, I replied "Yes...I want to live."

With no hesitation I put my future in the hands of another doctor and off we go to the fourth hospital to begin treatment.

Now I'll save you the details of the gruesome 11-day hospital stay, where I lost over 50 pounds.

After suffering for over 250 hours, I was finally showing signs of life and my health began to improve speedily. Eventually, I was discharged from the hospital with a regimen that seemed impossible to commit to.

It wasn't easy! It was a long, strategic, and methodical process where I felt many times that "I'm going to die here; I can't do this; I would rather be dead."

With that said, this was just the beginning of my journey to financial freedom and what I refer to as "successful."

After I got home and things became settled, I thought "what am I going to do now"?

I spent six months getting back to normal. Learning how to walk again, think straight, and perform basic tasks was a battle I never thought I'd fight. I was fighting with mental health and physical strength every day but that wasn't making me any money.

There were so many times I tried to find an excuse to give up or justify my failures due to my liver failure.

Sometimes I started falling back into my old thought process and just accept that I'm a failure.

For the sake of the girls and the pressure I put on myself I was in the gym every morning and became healthier, stronger, and smarter than ever but I still couldn't make money.

This all seemed backwards to me because I felt like a superhero but even superheroes have jobs. Then, something clicked.

I thought, "I should start a channel on YouTube and do what all these kids are doing to make millions with valuable information."

I decided to use my liver failure as a backstory to my episodes to help people grow their photoshop skills. I thought, "I can take everything I make from YouTube and finally support my family and I'll never even have to leave the house, and I can film when I want. This makes sense because of the medications I was still taking.

I wouldn't need to do interviews and update my resumes because I was going to be a success on YouTube. All of my troubles will be over when I accomplish this.

I kept thinking, "I'll be able to get my bank account back since I owed thousands when I lost my career. I'll be able to buy back everything I was forced to sell and even more. I'll be able to afford my medications and have better health insurance. This will be my new career and I'll be set for life."

All I had to do was research how to start a channel, learn the fundamentals of creating traffic and I'll include my family in my episodes to make it more appealing as a marketing strategy. I only needed to break it down and understand the ins and outs of organic traffic and social media marketing.

Once I master this, I'll get monetized and pay off my debts and buy even better equipment so I can produce faster with the latest software. I can inspire and motivate others to do the same and use YouTube to make an income as well while showing people how they can use their art and ideas to make people work from home as well.

I spent every minute I had on getting my channel monetized and because of my obsessive approach to learning I was able to monetize and make money in only three months which normally takes people around five years.

Because of the quality of my episodes, I landed in the top 100 on YouTube for graphic design. I was beyond excited and really looking forward to the future!

I woke up one day and checked my account. I noticed something that just brought back all those feelings of uncertainty. I realized I'm not making any real money. One day it was three bucks, the next day \$0.50. With all this knowledge and understanding I gained by ruthlessly studying, it's beginning to feel like it's all for nothing!

Now, I bonded with my kid but I'm not making any money from it anymore. Traffic really started to slow down and now it's even harder with algorithms changing. Basically, I was wasting time making videos for people who aren't even watching them.

Twelve hours per day was spent on every episode and thirty-six hours promoting, and I was getting even fewer views. If I put my time into a dollar amount, I was spending around \$700.00 to make \$12.00 on a good day.

At this point, I was slowly going back into debt from buying the tools I thought I needed to get ahead in the YouTube game. The garnishment letters started to come back and my anxiety started to build.

Once again, not being able to afford little things, I started to become unmotivated and started looking for other avenues which lead me right back to submitting resumes and offering photography and graphic design. I felt more desperate than before.

All my time was spent trying to figure out what happened and what I did wrong. I desperately wanted to find the moment I failed.

Because I was so focused on making my career work, I didn't realize I was ignoring the family I fought so hard to stay alive for.

One humid day I was watching a movie to lift my spirits while wallowing in self-pity, I received a message from someone I had never met.

They asked me how I got monetized on YouTube and offered to buy my secrets on how to make money so fast on the platform.

He offered an amount that I would never think to ask for. I told him that the only way I would be willing to help him is if I teach him step-by-step how to do it properly. Otherwise, he would be wasting his money so, that's exactly what I did.

With the money I made from helping him get monetized, I invested it in learning how to build an online business to teach. There I was, starting from scratch only this time with a valuable skillset.

Thinking I had it all worked out, I started to build my company, a social media marketing agency dedicated to helping others do what I did for myself. I didn't realize it was going to change the course of my future.

One mid-week, I was at the gym and having a rough time emotionally. My financial struggle was on my mind, much heavier than normal. I just wasn't feeling much like the "man" I believed I should be. I was starring myself in

the mirror while I was curling a 60lb bar, and I felt myself doubting my abilities.

All of a sudden an older woman much smaller than me lightly touched my arm and said "Hey, I see you in here every day and you're always working on your arms. Have you ever tried a super set?."

I had no idea what she was talking about. Mildly embarrassed and dripping with sweat, I told her I had never heard of it.

She encouraged me to drop my 60lb bar and trade it for a 20lb bar. I gave her "the look" with a grin and grabbed the 20lb bar just to accept the idea.

I thought, "This woman is crazy." Then she says, "The reason you aren't getting the results you want is that you're focusing on the wrong part of your biceps."

Even though this made absolutely no sense to me, I was interested in listening. She continued and said, "I'm going to make that 20lb bar feel like 100lbs."

"Widen your stance, take your time, now only go half the distance before returning the bar to the first position. I want you to focus on the muscles surrounding your biceps."

At first it was easy and I felt duped into something silly. Then she says, "Take your time; the longer it takes, the better."

It was this moment when the twenty-pound bar started to feel like sixty pounds. Seven of those and I was done. Looking obviously exhausted, veins popping out, face all read, she screams out "Wait! Hold it at your chin, now do seven regular curls."

It was impossible to continue because the bar became too heavy, and I had to put it down. Technically, I was doing more work with less energy, and this was a new feeling for me.



Standing there completely floored at what I had just learned, feeling like my blood was getting thicker, she walked away and that's the moment I started to understand my beliefs and personal habits are being reflected in my business.

This is why I was struggling to make money.

I was hoping that what I was practicing would yield positive results, but I was doing it wrong entirely!

I realized my focus needed to be on the core aspects of my business and not on money. Without a strong foundation, there's no way I'd be able to take a flight with my new company.

From that moment on I spent my time understanding value and reaching out to people in my network that can help me strengthen my foundation.

I started investing the little income I had into numerous coaching programs and listening to mentors as I worked. I learned how to spend my time wisely, fall in love with the process and take charge of my future.

"Excel in all aspects of your life" was a key phrase that helped me develop better habits. My workouts got better, my eating was cleaner, my attitude was uplifting, and I eventually had the epiphany that would change my life for the better.

"To find success, you must define what success means to you."

Until that moment, "Do you want to live?" was the most difficult question I had ever answered and this very simple question about success felt impossible. I had never asked myself what the word 'success' meant or what it entails.

After pondering the question for many days, I had concluded that success meant that I was happy.

If I'm happy then I must be successful. Knowing this brought an interesting perspective to my life after liver failure.

I was no longer surrounded by people that wanted to see me fail. I was showered with love every day and didn't worry about my future. As minimal as my life was, I was finally happy for the first time in my life.

This is the moment I became magnetic to success, and success was magnetic to me. I constantly felt successful, and I began attracting success from every direction. Every time I turned around, there was a new opportunity for my business.

People began to reach out and seek my knowledge, and my business took off faster than I was prepared for.

Six months had gone by, I was inspiring myself, attracting abundance and feeling unstoppable. In only two years, I went from a less-than-nothing entrepreneur to a six-figure business owner with numerous programs that help other people succeed.

If there's anything I leave with my friends, clients, and family it is this: Define what "success" smells like and you'll find your purpose in life.

## **About the Author**

Kohdi Rayne is a syndicated course designer, photoshop expert and liver failure survivor. Since recover he's built numerous successful online programs that focus on product and service development in the entrepreneurial space. His time as an international DJ has provided him with twenty years of design, eighteen years of sales and marketing experience and is recognized as a marketing strategist helping businesses remove quantum entanglements to connect more deeply with their core audience. His organization Aphid ID and his Mantis Program have rewarded him appearances on numerous talk shows like Jackie Simmons and countless podcasts in multiple genres.

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**Stacey Shields**

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **TRANSFORMING PAIN TO POWER**

**H**ave you experienced physical, mental, or emotional abuse or been “given away” by a parent that’s supposed to raise, protect and love you? Have you felt rejected most of your life and afraid to make decisions because you feel you’re not “smart enough” to make the right choices? Have you ended up in a situation you never thought you’d be in, such as being a single parent to several young children with special needs or losing a parent at an early age? Have you ever felt attacked or persecuted? Have you been hit with crippling, and incurable diseases due to stress? Have you experienced anxiety or depression; or both at the same time or considered ending your life? Do you wonder what your

future holds or what your purpose is? If this sounds familiar, you are not alone. These are some things I have overcome during my life, and I want to encourage you that there is life and light, even through difficult times! I am an overcomer, and you can be as well!

I grew up in upstate New York, and I was the oldest of three girls. My parents divorced when we were ages six years old, two years old, and seven months old respectively. At the time of the divorce, my father was an active alcoholic and used drugs. Now my father has been clean and sober for 35 years. Mom struggled a lot, and my father continued to provide for us financially.

When I was seven, my mother married a narcissist who caused me the life-long trauma that I am still working on overcoming. The man, Gary, that still gives me nightmares even after 40 years. After Gary entered our lives, everything changed. The atmosphere in the house was very rigid. Mom became another person that pleased him, and she didn't defend us. She acted like she didn't care when the abuse happened. I was beaten by Gary on my bare butt with a leather belt frequently, sometimes on the front porch of our house, with the neighbors outside or while camping, in front of anyone who happened to be nearby. That seemed to be his favorite thing, whipping us on the bare butt with the leather belt.

It was near impossible to predict what would set Gary off and how bad the punishment would be. He enjoyed having control over us. The beatings became so regular, and it didn't hurt anymore. I became emotionless and tuned out to what was happening to my body in order to survive it. The mind is a masterpiece; it can block things that are traumatizing from your conscious mind. What I've

learned now is that traumatizing events are still etched in your unconscious mind and to recover fully, you must address what lies underneath. This is a process that takes time and mental work. Each person has their own process and finding the right process that works for you is a gift.

Gary would often sit next to me at night or lay on the stairs outside of my bedroom door and watch me until I fell asleep. He frequently would put me on his lap and ask for a hug and a kiss when I asked for something, such as being driven to a church activity. When I was eleven, I was in the shower singing, I opened my eyes and he was watching me, while smiling. In church, he would put his arm around my mother and grab the back of my neck and squeeze whenever I moved the slightest bit. Even when I immediately stopped moving, the grip remained. This is a sample of the abuse.

I spent most of my time in my room crying, imagining a life without the constant fear. Life with Gary was incredibly stressful, scary, and confusing. Mom didn't act like she had a voice and her voice was stressed and angry when he wasn't around. I became numb, felt trapped and didn't know how to cope with this as a child. I had a feeling of helplessness. I had difficulty making friends and was very awkward, insecure, depressed, and angry; I didn't know how to connect with others.

I told my fourth-grade teacher about what was happening at home, and she reported it to social services. The social workers came to the school and talked to my sisters and me. The day the social workers came to talk to mom and Gary, I came out of my room to go to the bathroom and saw my mother on her bed, sitting cross-legged, crying and looking out the window at the street

below. I stood near her doorway, not sure what to say. What she said to me will always be etched in my mind. She said to me “They’re going to come and take you all away, and it’s YOUR fault.” I didn’t know what to think; I didn’t want to leave or be taken away; I just wanted the abuse to stop. This has affected me because now if anything goes wrong in my circle of influence, I blame myself. I internalize what happened, question if I could have done something different, and I had crippling anxiety from guilt. I often beat myself up for saying awkward or unintentionally inappropriate things. While you cannot change the past, it is possible to mentally “cut the cord” from things that fill you with negative energy.

I never saw the social workers after the day they came to my house. Nothing happened from the investigation that I am aware of. Gary pulled us out of the public school and sent us to a private Baptist school. Whenever he abused me, he would continuously ask me what I was going to do and where are the social workers and taunted me that no one would stop him. He verbally, mentally, and emotionally abused my middle sister and I the most as the youngest was spared from direct hits, thank God! I wanted to know what mom and Gary said to make the social services leave. He was very conniving and fooled everyone around him that he wanted to impress. This experience made me very untrusting of men and taught me that people can be different in public than the way they are in private.

The first time I thought of ending my own life was in 6th grade. I was 11 or 12 years old. At lunch, I would swing on the playground and think of ways I had heard of to end your life. I decided an overdose of Tylenol would be my



method. I then began thinking of ways to obtain enough Tylenol, wondering how much it would take. I began to plan on when and where I would do it, how long it would take, and I questioned if God would bring me to Heaven if I did that. The thought of going to Hell was a huge deterrent. I was severely depressed. I wrote a letter to an aunt and uncle of mine, asking them if I could live with them. I never heard back from them and didn't know if they told my dad about it. That's the second time I reached out for help and didn't get it. I felt helpless to have any control in my life, useless and unloved. What was the point of my existence? I was abused, angry, hurt, and depressed. I prayed a lot and asked God to send me a sign that He was with me. I didn't get an answer I could understand.

When I was 13, mom and Gary got divorced. She became even more depressed, anxious, and angry. I became an even easier target for mom's anger. She had always used a spoon or a yard stick to spank us, and I remember she was mostly always enraged about something and I would get hit a couple of times a day. I remember staying upstairs in my room, waiting for her to come home and begin yelling at me. I began going to counseling that my father sent me to and developed confidence. I began to receive validation that what I was experiencing wasn't right, and my feelings were normal for the situation. I exuded a "no one can hurt me anymore" attitude and began to get a lot of attention from older boys. I quickly latched onto the attention I got.

The last physical fight with my mother was when I turned 14. After work, she began to scream at me and physically abuse me, as usual. I was very numb and tired of it; I didn't understand what I could do to make her happy

with me. She was in my bedroom and had me laying on my bed as she grabbed both of my upper arms, digging her nails into me as she was yelling. For the first time, I fought back by grabbing her arms the same way she had mine. She then pulled my hair and slammed my head on the bed a few times. She let go, went into her bedroom and called my dad and told him he had to take me. I left her house with some of my clothes. I wasn't allowed to take much else.

At this time, my father had been clean and sober for four years. He lived in a 1-bedroom apartment that was attached to a house. He could rent one of the rooms in the main house for me to stay in. I had to begin another school, the third school in 2 years. At this time, I was able to form friendships with a couple of girls in my grade. I was invited to a party soon after beginning 8th grade, and that's the first time I got drunk. I began to smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol frequently. I pierced my ear and became sexually active. I got suspended from school for five days for distributing caffeine tabs to other students – all in the 8th grade. When my father found out I was sexually active and began smoking, he put me into additional counseling and grounded me for the summer. At the beginning of 9th grade, I entered a relationship with a 22-year-old man. Now that I have children at that age, I cannot imagine that! Of course, my father didn't know about this; he wouldn't allow it if he did. He didn't know about many of my boyfriends after that time; I became very secretive.

I didn't do well with my academics in high school because summer school was a fun place for me to meet people from other schools. I didn't have a vision for my future at all. I did everything I could to "fit in" and have fun

since I didn't have that in my earlier years. I was the first girl in my grade to physically fight with another girl. I skipped school 1-2 times a week during my junior and senior year and graduated with a low grade in my class. I had worked since I was 15 and got a job at a night club when I was 18. I went to college for one semester and paid for it out of my own money. I didn't have enough money to take more college classes, so I decided to join the military.

I served 20 years, 2 months, and 22 days in the Air Force. It was one of the best decisions I made in my life. When I joined, I didn't know what a military base looked like or what to expect. I knew I had to leave upstate NY and everything that hurt me there. My job was medical administration, and I excelled at it. I won many awards and made rank quickly and easily. I was conditioned to obeying orders and greatly enjoyed the freedom of being on my own, away from where I grew up. I was given so many fantastic experiences in life that I would never get anywhere else. I have a huge family of choice from the Air Force as well. I learned how to be a leader and a follower, and I earned my college education.

As an adult, I was still very hurt, angry, and could be reactive towards things that reminded me of the abuse I had endured as a child. I felt it as it was imprinted on me, and I didn't know how to get it off; what happened to me changed who I was. I would still get very depressed and have suicidal thoughts, even though my world was great. That was very confusing to me – how could I still be sad, depressed, and anxious? I now understand that we experience imprints on every cell in our body, and my

instinct was correct. I learned a process to clear trauma, and I am now free!

When you're young, you don't understand the why of how you feel. Because I hadn't resolved the negative feelings of what happened to me, my mind was stuck at the first time I experienced feelings like pain, hurt, anger, rage, rejection, sadness, loneliness, betrayal, being harmed, excluded, or mistreated. If someone said or do something that remotely resembled any of these emotions, I would take it very personally and overreact. This would push some people away from me. When they backed up or left, I would then feel justified that I wasn't loved, worthy, or accepted, and the negative victim cycle continued.

When I was 22, I married a man who I had known casually for a while but had only dated for two months. I had orders to transfer to another location and could only request he join me if we were married. This is common in the military. I ignored the red flags I saw and didn't ask the questions I needed to before getting married. He lied to me about his past, present, and future goals. Had I known the truth, I would have known we weren't compatible. He wasn't willing or able to give me the love I needed. The lies continued, and he put his job first and foremost. My response to this was in anger like that of a wounded person, which made things worse.

We stayed married for ten years and had three beautiful children. The children were very close in age; only three and a half years separated the oldest from the youngest. We got divorced when they were one, two and four years old. My goal in life was not to be like my mother, and this was similar to something negative that happened to her that also happened to me. I had so many fears of

how I would raise the children alone with no family support nearby.

The next seven years were terrible for me. I felt like I was drowning, and just my lips were above the water. I was active duty in the military with three young children. Two of them had special needs and required a lot of appointments and special attention. My ex didn't support me the way I needed; my mother, whom I had developed a great relationship with after I got married, had died of cancer and the rest of my family were hundreds of miles away. I was diagnosed with a heart condition and had a defibrillator implanted and then an auto-immune disease two years after that. My health and my spirit were drowning. I had no hope for the future; I was in survival mode.

I clinched unto God, my sisters, and my friends. My soul searched and learned how to forgive myself for the bad choices I had made. I forgave my mother; I forgave Gary, and I forgave my ex-husband. I assured myself that I was not my mother, and although things are rocky with the children at times, I now understand I have done everything within my ability to raise them healthier than I was raised. They know they are loved unconditionally.

I have gone through different types of therapy and have learned how to re-wire my brain and look at things from the perspective of a healthy person. I have learned not to live my life trying to please everyone else because that's not possible. I fully trust in God, and as a coach, I have learned how to help others change their minds to heal their trauma as well. I can relate to a lot of different experiences that people have gone through and believe that connection to humans is essential for our survival.

Meeting people where they are instead of expecting them to meet you is important. We are here at this time and place for a purpose, and we all have our own experiences, talents and abilities that are unique only to us, and we all play an important part of where we are at and to the people around us.

I transformed from pain to power. This is because I have broken the emotional chains that restrained me for so many years. I have changed the narrative of our family's generational curses. This is not an overnight process. I had to learn to stop blaming myself for negative things that happened, learn how to love myself and gain my power back, while respecting both myself and those around me. I lift those around me to a higher place by guiding them through a process for them to discover their passion, purpose, and clarity of what beautiful inspiration they have on their circle of influence. We are all a beautiful masterpiece that is continuously being worked on.

I am a certified mindset coach and successful in helping others find their purpose and breaking through the chains that bind them. I also spend time volunteering at various local charities and working at a non-profit organization that helps widows and children in Tharaka, Kenya. I am using the gifts given to me for good, and this gives me purpose. I mostly enjoy seeing others change from victims to victors in their own lives!

## **About the Author**

Stacey Shields' focus is on empowering her clients to trust their intuition, embrace their power, and to pursue their passions. She is a certified mindset coach, an author, speaker, and mother of three teenagers. Stacey specializes with helping single mothers; supporting and guiding them on their journey to obtain personal fulfillment while going through the journey of motherhood. She has had the opportunity to work as a leader in the US Air Force, where she served 20 years as a medical administrator, as well as in school systems, churches, and she serves in a critical position in a non-profit organization. Stacey has found her passion helping others break free from the emotional chains that bind them from fulfilling their purpose in life. She is inspired by her children, enjoys crocheting afghans, reading, traveling, and making new memories in her spare time!

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**Roksana Zaya**

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## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **HOW I SURVIVED WAR AND CLEARED A PATH TO PERSONAL FREEDOM**

**A** bomb had just exploded!

Broken glass was everywhere!

Rioting filled the streets!

Businesses were forced to close, even banks and financial institutions. People stood on rooftops yelling and screaming. Airports were closed, and no one was allowed to leave the country. We were prisoners in our own land.

I remember holding the hand of my grandfather, as we ran through a building while it shook from an explosion. I was three years old when the country I was born in was going through a revolution. Religious extremists fought with the peaceful people and were taking over the country.

My grandfather held a high position for the king and was very well known throughout the country. He continued to be very popular in America after he arrived here. The extremists then exiled the king and tried to kill anyone who worked for him. It is said that my grandfather was not able to escape the country, so he went into hiding. Life immediately became dangerous for my family, so my parents packed up what they could in a single crate that was shipped to America by boat and left everything else behind. Slowly, airports began to open, and since my grandfather had his high-level connections, we were able to escape on the very first plane allowed out of the country and into the protective arms of America.

When we arrived in America, I began to learn about a new kind of war that occurred behind the closed doors of my family home. Violence was the language my parents spoke. I became even more consciously aware of its existence since I was born. A child between the ages of zero and seven is not old enough to develop logical reasoning, and they cannot understand that negative experiences are not their fault. The experiences I was exposed to as a child set the mold for my view of the world. For the next few decades of my life, the decisions I made were based on that child's point of view.

Children form ninety-five percent of their belief systems between birth and seven years old. The child's mind cannot form any rational knowledge, and consequently, they use the concept of self-reference to

form conclusions about what is happening around them. Self-reference means the child begins to believe that the events that occur are somehow their fault. It's when something happens, and you make it mean something about yourself, thus creating a limiting belief. Some limiting beliefs are: "I'm not good enough", "I don't know how", "I always mess up", "I can't do it", and so on.

When I was a little girl, I did not speak English, and my American grandparents didn't understand my native language. One day, they laughed when I was talking to them, which made me very upset, so I ran out of the room in tears and shame. My grandparents were not really laughing at me; they were simply giggling in response to a small child speaking a different language. It's easy to look back and imagine how cute that must have been to observe. Nonetheless, in that exact moment, I was upset, and a new limiting belief was formed; the belief that "I don't make sense" and "no one understands me."

My parents were survivors of abusive childhoods, so all they knew was pain and violence. From the time they first met, throughout their marriage, and to the time I was seven years old, they hashed out their brokenness on each other. Innocently, I mimicked words I heard like "mom is a bitch" and then had my mouth smacked for saying it. One time, my father was so enraged that he hurled my tiny gum ball machine at my mother, and it smashed against the wall. Feverishly, I scrambled around the floor, trying to rescue my poor little gum balls. I thought, if only I could rescue them, then everything would be okay. During my formative years, my life was filled with fear, anger, and insecurity. When I was six years old, I said to my mother, "why don't you just do what daddy tells you to do?" It was at that moment my mother knew it was time to leave.

The decision to divorce my father was very hard for my mother because she had no job, no place to live, no child support, no money for food or clothes. My father even took back the jewelry that he had given her. But after having been beaten physically and emotionally, leaving was the only option. My mother had zero job experience and struggled to learn bookkeeping from her sister so that she could get a job. It wasn't very long until my father arrived at our front door, brandishing a giant butcher knife in his hand. He demanded I should be in his custody. My father threatened to kill me, then my mother, before committing suicide if she didn't hand me over. So, off I went to live with my father. Eventually, my mother got enough courage to stand up to my father and demanded me back. My mother and I lived in rundown places while she worked three jobs to survive. Many times, she took me to work with her, where I was given a task to do. I was helping my mother work at the tender age of eight. I continued to work and started making money by the time I was ten. By the time I was twelve, I was operating a food cart all by myself on the street corner.

In those beginning years, my view of the world carved out a path in which every choice I made was derived from limiting beliefs. In school, I was picked on for being a foreigner, even though I was half American. I was angry as a child, and few kids wanted to be my friends, so isolation became my companion. More limiting beliefs began to form, beliefs that I was invisible and not important. I decided that I would be safer if I just stay small. Fast forward to my teen years, where I continued collecting evidence to prove that my limiting beliefs were real. When I wasn't chosen for that part in the school play, it was evident that I wasn't good enough. When I failed the PSAT,

and the teacher said I would never get into college, it was evident that I can't do anything right.

For years I believed I wasn't good enough, invisible, and not important. In fact, I would create situations where I would unconsciously fail at something to collect more evidence of my beliefs. Eventually, I came to find myself living in yet another war. I am referring to the war inside my mind, the breeding ground of anger, fear, sadness, guilt, and shame. It had me playing small and selling out on my potential. When I entered into my young adult life, I was adept at creating situations to prove my limiting beliefs, which landed me into abusive romantic relationships. I dated people who cheated on me, tormented me, emotionally and psychologically, and who were even physically violent. My limiting beliefs had me believe it was all my fault.

Limiting beliefs further impacted my life as I struggled with my weight for years. I filed bankruptcy and every time I made money I would inevitably lose it again. I lost friends, jobs, and my health. I had nothing left, and I was fed up with my life. Thoughts in my mind would repeat like a broken record player kept saying "I'm not good enough". Being broke, overweight, with failed relationships and no direction in life, I found myself full of rage and anger during the day and crying myself to sleep every night. This led me to overspending and overeating. I was numbing myself out on food and shopping, which only added to the condition of being overweight and broke. I saw no way out and began to question my existence. When the idea of living another day hurt so bad, contemplating suicide was the next best option.

Throughout my life, I had spent years and thousands of dollars on therapy and counseling, but to this day, I only

remember a few coping strategies. Spinning around in my limiting beliefs, I wanted a drastic shift. Therapy and counseling helped but didn't give me the rapid change I was seeking. Later, I found a company that offered transformational development in all areas of life. That company gave me a broader awareness, taught me valuable tools, and allowed me to raise my head above the water line so I could breathe. However, it still wasn't enough. I had the tools, but I didn't know how to apply them. My journey continued until I met the coach that changed my life forever.

There is a theory that everything happens for a reason and that people are brought into your life exactly when you are supposed to meet them. I can attest to this theory by recalling events in my own life. If I had not endured the conditions of my childhood, then I wouldn't have sought out support. If I had not kept looking for the right kind of support, I would not have met the coach and mentor that I have today. She is truly a gift, a natural-born healer, and when I met her, I had no idea how incredible my life was about to become. I had no idea how she was going to change my life, but I was thirsty for relief, and she had the water.

Proudly, I can say that the results my coach said were possible, actually came true, and the possibilities that lay before me are endless. In working with my coach, I was able to identify my limiting beliefs, and we eliminated them one by one. That does not mean that negative feelings don't show up from time to time. They always show up, but they no longer have a death grip on me. Now I can simply acknowledge the negative thought, take action in a different direction, and move right past them.

In the past, when my feelings were hurt my brain would immediately think of a limiting belief such as, I'm not good enough or I'm not important. I would be angry, confused and cry. I mistreated myself by overeating, overspending, and wallowing in self-pity. I complained to as many people as I could to gain validation. Today, after having eliminated my limiting beliefs, I can remind myself that I am not my feelings and that I am valuable. I remind myself of all the things I have accomplished, the things that I do well, and the people who love and support me. When I bring myself into the present moment, I can get away from the limiting beliefs that keep me stuck.

After having cleared out my limiting beliefs, I now recognize the lies I used to tell myself. Currently, when I feel frustrated, upset, or any other negative emotion, I am able to handle it with the powerful tools that I have been taught. Today, I realize that negative events have nothing to do with my worth or abilities, and I easily can move past my upset. When I discovered these miraculous techniques, I was finally able to make the profound shift in my life that I had always been searching for.

When you find ways to improve humanity, I believe that we have a moral and ethical obligation to share that with the world. In sharing my story with the world, I can act as the catalyst to bring about transformation to others, who have determined that their life is as good as it will get, leading people out of mediocrity and into the life of possibility. I help people identify their own limiting beliefs and ways of self-sabotage. I support them in eliminating them, ultimately giving people space to create the life they desire so they can make their dreams come true. I help people achieve lifelong lasting transformation.

As the founder of Freedom Star Institute, I help people break through the absurdity of being stuck, selling out, and staying small. I know how to do this because I put myself through the same journey to overcome my own limiting beliefs. I overcame every obstacle in my life using these very same techniques, and it will work for you too. As a result, I have peace of mind and freedom, I am calm, happy and more energetic, I have healthier relationships, and I found my passion and purpose in life, where every day I help people achieve their own goals and dreams.

So, what is standing between you and your dreams? First, we get to be honest about where you are right now in your life. Do you force yourself out of bed every morning? How many times do you hit the snooze button? Do you medicate with coffee all day long because you just don't have the energy and passion for making it through another day? Do you find yourself yelling at traffic while you're driving? Do you numb out on food or booze and binge TV? Do you go to bed and worry about having to get up and live your life yet another day? Have you traded in your dreams for the mediocre life you have now? Do you feel like this is as good as it's going to get, and you are destined to live like this until your dying day? Do you wonder where your life went and how you ended up here? Do you say anything like this to yourself?

Here is what I know: like many other people, I had big dreams and aspirations. I declared something that I wanted and then set out to achieve it. Only, I found myself running in circles, banging my head against the wall, trying over and over again, never really seeing direct results of my hard work and efforts. Then I gave up and settled, I played small because at least my experiences would be predictable and safe, and I wouldn't be disappointed so much anymore. Do



you want to know why people give up on themselves and their dreams? It is because of limiting beliefs. Limiting beliefs always get in between where you are now and where you are trying to go.

At some point, I became sick and tired of trying to achieve my goals and coming up short. I knew it didn't have to be like that anymore. What I came to find out in my journey is that it's very easy to get immediate and lasting results. "Maybe", "someday", "one day" are all words designed to keep us from taking real action in life. They give us a way out, so we don't have to take action. Is it possible to break through that elusive "someday" barrier? So how do we get rid of your limiting beliefs?

First, acknowledge that there is a limiting belief. This is not always easy, especially since some people never realize they have a limiting belief. Here is a quick way to identify if you have a limiting belief. Think back to a time when you lost your keys or your wallet, what did you say to yourself in the madness of trying to find them? Did you say something like, "I'm so stupid," or "Why is this so hard?" and so on.

Second, name the limiting belief and identify its source. In the example of the keys above, I can identify my limiting belief as "I always mess up". Then I focused on remembering the source or the first time I said that to myself. When I think of my childhood, I can recall many times when I falsely believed I messed up.

Third, reframe the way you see the event. Regarding the keys example, I remind myself how many times I don't lose my keys. I tell myself there are many times where I don't mess up. Then I recall specific times in which I did something very well or solved a problem, like cooking a

delicious new recipe or assembling a difficult shelf. I focus on what I do well, and I suddenly found my keys.

Another way to reframe a belief is to ask yourself questions. For instance, you might believe that people who have money are jerks. To reframe that, ask yourself, “Do I know people who have money and are not jerks?” Most likely, yes. Then ask yourself, “Do I know people who do not have money that are jerks?” Most likely, yes, as well. This small example illustrates how a belief system can be altered simply by reframing the way you see things.

I overcame the obstacles in my life by getting rid of my limiting beliefs and self-sabotage. With my clients, we go into a much deeper level and discover what might be keeping you stuck in life. We uncover the limiting beliefs that have been holding you back, and then we eliminate them. We find your passion and purpose in life, and together, we bring that dangling unreachable carrot, right into the palm of your hands. When limiting beliefs are removed, you are left with a blank canvas in which anything you want can be created. Once those old ineffective belief systems are gone, a new way of perceiving events becomes available. You gain more passion, abundance, peace of mind, freedom, and confidence. You can now become a master of making your dreams come true, and anything you want for your life truly becomes possible. It’s not just a cliché, it’s also a fact. My life is very much a reflection that this stuff works, and it will work for you too.

## **About the Author**

Roksana Zaya is the founder of the “Freedom Star Institute.” She helps people break through the absurdity of being stuck, playing small, and selling out on their dreams. Having been in many of the same places other people have been in, she has overcome abuse, violence, self-loathing, depression, anxiety, anger, and financial devastation. Roksana holds a bachelor’s degree in psychology and has been trained and certified in several techniques to help countless others get out of their way. By using the same techniques she coaches with on her own barriers, she was able to eliminate her limiting beliefs and self-sabotage to go on to become an entrepreneur, speaker, author, and a personal mindset coach.

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**Milana Istakhorova**

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## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **THE MAKING OF AN ENTREPRENEUR**

**I**n June 2017, I started working as a personal trainer in corporate fitness so that I could help women change the way they approach fitness and weight loss. I had just undergone my own fitness process and found that it left me feeling strong, confident, and empowered. I wanted to give that gift of empowerment and confidence to every woman I came across. The typical fitness industry message to women is one that is rooted in diet culture: make your body as small as possible so that you can live happily. It was and still is entirely too common to see trainers give their female clients 1000 calorie (or less) diets and overly intense workouts and call that “helping.” While

it is important to honor the rule of calories in versus calories out during a weight loss process, it's also important to honor the person themselves. What's missing in this rule is the joy of moving one's body, the pleasure that comes with eating, and the ability to accept and love oneself and one's body even while working to transform it.

This rule promotes exercise programs and fad diets that are unsustainable and dangerous, laxative-based detoxes, and dichotomous thinking. Diet culture preys on the very insecurities it has helped develop by convincing consumers they must desire weight loss because a smaller, thinner body is the ideal. Diet culture promotes the message: if one eats a cookie or has a binge eating episode, it will stall all progress, and the individual has failed. This extreme all or nothing way of thinking has no place in a sustainable weight loss journey.

For someone to succeed on their fitness journey, they must learn to take things slowly, connect with themselves, and listen to the cues their body gives them as they go. Furthermore, counting calories doesn't help anyone address the emotional and psychological needs of a fitness process. Knowing all of that, in June 2017, I took my education in clinical psychology and my certification in personal training to the gym floor. I set out on a mission to create a rebellion of people who love themselves, and I was quite successful.

It was in this corporate gym setting that I began to develop my intrapreneurship. While it was a corporate-owned gym, I built my business within it. I booked my consultations, made my sales, and grew my base of clients. Certainly, I received some help and guidance from my teams and management. However, the corporate gym setting didn't care much for my overall mission of helping

people fall in love with themselves through fitness. For this, as well as many other reasons, in April 2019, I listened to the entrepreneurial whispers in my heart and mind and ventured to start my own business. Therein lies one of the greatest struggles I've experienced thus far.

What I found was that the journey of entrepreneurship was a crazy roller coaster ride. Nobody told me that becoming an entrepreneur would elicit every fear and self-doubt; I was not prepared at all. I had very little business acumen, no practical marketing knowledge, and there was no one to help me get started with tips and tricks. That was the first huge barrier I came across. Within that barrier was learning about the marketing strategy of being visible. Getting myself in front of people out in the world as well as online was terrifying to me. Additionally, my savings ran out before the income started rolling in, and there was an intense financial struggle for about 6-7 months. The cherry on top of it all was that I spiraled off into a depressive episode. It was like being on a roller coaster while the entire thing caught fire and began consuming me.

I'll admit a part of me felt defeated before I even started because, although there is a lot of information on the internet, I had no idea where to start. However, what I did have was passion, vision, and drive. I am endowed with the gift of adaptability, which allowed me to be very resourceful. I began following coaches and fitness professionals gathering data on how they did their marketing. I found some business coaches whose message I aligned with, began making use of the free content they provided, and I applied that to my business as best as I could; which leads me to the next challenge of getting visible. For people to know that they can do business with someone, they need to know that the business exists, what

the business stands for, and how they'll approach working with someone. All of that made complete sense to me; however, I was ridden with anxiety and fear of criticism. After being in the fitness industry for several years, I was suddenly concerned that I didn't have enough knowledge. Actually, I feared that I had no knowledge and that the world would simply laugh at my expense and move right along. I felt a constant heaviness in my chest when thinking about my business. I knew I wasn't going to be successful in business or earn financial freedom unless I was willing to be seen. However, I was so terrified of being seen that I was afraid I'd never earn an income.

What's so scary about being seen and heard? When one is in the public eye, they are vulnerable and open to judgement and criticism. I was constantly concerned about what people would think of me, my marketing content, knowledge, coaching skills, etc. Additionally, I learned that my energy is relayed through my marketing. If I am lacking confidence or sitting in fear, my audience will feel that; that was anxiety inducing for me as well.

As a woman, there has been a level of social conditioning to stay quiet and play it small. I was indirectly taught to take up as little space as possible in this world. I was taught to speak quietly and politely, apologize for speaking, and never stir the pot with my opinions. Thus, when it came time to get loud, bold, and market myself, I had to unlearn and break free from all of that prior social conditioning. Otherwise, fear and anxiety breed more fear and anxiety. For example, I attached myself to the outcome of having no interest in my marketing and began to believe that I was the reason my business wasn't growing. I started to have thoughts such as: "I must not be a competent coach" or "everyone hates me, and no one wants to do



business with me.” But the simple truth is, if I’m not being seen and heard, the people don’t know that I offer a service. It’s been a continuous process of getting uncomfortable and opening myself up to take a deeper look into the fears that held me back from doing what I knew I needed to do.

As one can imagine, between sitting in my fears and self-doubts, working through those fears and doubts, and trying to figure out how to become a successful entrepreneur all by myself, I was feeling like this struggle was never going to end. Also, I was not yet earning an income in my business. I sat there telling myself the story that I needed to have money to make money because I had no resources or access to help. I became quite depressed, which in turn made it feel more difficult to get any work done.

Reflecting back, the only true obstacle standing in the way of my success as an entrepreneur was me. I had to remember that, although I was struggling, I had a passion, vision, and drive. I stepped into entrepreneurship, knowing that it was going to be challenging, although I didn’t know how challenging it would be. I knew that I had to be ready for what would come during the early stages, and it was important to remember that I was here for the long haul. I knew that I was going to be low on funds for a while, and I was certain that it was going to be uncomfortable. I knew all of this going in and had decided that it was all going to be worth it before embarking on this venture. I held one belief from the start and throughout: I’ve got this. I believed that I was capable of making it as an entrepreneur. Moreover, I’m not afraid to be uncomfortable, and I strongly believe those two values helped me persevere.

Since I couldn't help myself, I had to ask for help. I asked a local business coach to trade services with me because I didn't have any means to pay her with. She agreed to trade mindset & business coaching for fitness coaching. I began to dive into the inner work to make a shift in the mindset that was holding me back. One of the most powerful tools for me has been journaling. Getting all of my thoughts, feelings, fears, and desires out of my head and onto paper so that I could reflect on them differently. In addition to my fear of being visible, I started uncovering the fears and stories I had around money, failure, success, female entrepreneurship, desires, being in the coaching industry, and more.

Journaling can be an extraordinarily powerful tool because it allows one to take a step back and evaluate the situations they find or put themselves in. Furthermore, journaling gives one the space to explore solutions and reframe their experiences. This leads me directly into narrative reframe, which is simply a retelling of the story of an experience in a way that serves one better. For instance, I held the fear that I would not be a successful entrepreneur. The anchor to that fear was the belief that I was incapable of learning how to manage all of the various parts of being a business owner: servicing clients and managing their records, marketing, bookkeeping, etc. However, the truth is that, while working in corporate fitness, I was required to do all of those things for myself, as I was running a business within a business. Although intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship are different, I had the skills and abilities I needed to start with. I was completely inaccurate in my belief that I was incapable, and I had the evidence to prove it.

Narrative reframe can be as simple as that sometimes. Other times, they need some repetition, which is where affirmations come in. Affirmations and gratitude were two practices I implemented when I began journaling. A gratitude practice wasn't new to me, but it had been quite some time since I'd been consistent with it. Both gratitude and an affirmation practice can help build resilience, confidence, adaptability, self-awareness, self-esteem, and are phenomenal coping methods when you're feeling down.

I began a daily gratitude practice by seeing a friend share a "21 Days of Gratitude" challenge many years ago. I was curious, so I gave it a try, particularly because I was in a season of struggle at the time. What I found by day 21 was that although I was experiencing this dark season, I was still able to feel energetically light, mentally strong and focused, and emotionally secure. This gratitude practice had strongly reinforced my already fairly positive outlook on life. It taught me to search for the lessons I could learn from my obstacles rather than focus on the barriers themselves. At the time, I did not continue this practice daily but utilized it as a tool whenever I encountered a particularly rough time in my life.

As I mentioned earlier, becoming an entrepreneur has been one of the greatest struggles I've experienced thus far. Consequently, I restarted my 21 days of gratitude at this time. The 21 days turned into 42, which turned into 63 and so on until today almost one full year later. Certainly, there were some lapses throughout; however, I always came back to my practice. To help me hold myself accountable to a daily practice, I began sharing my practice on my social media stories – it worked. A daily gratitude practice is as simple as identifying 3-5 things one is grateful

for every single day. The more I practiced, the more positive and optimistic the lens through which I viewed my life became.

My gratitude practice was extremely impactful, as were the affirmations. Affirmations are the positive and empowered reframes of one's negative self-talk. I could choose to repeat the story: "my email marketing isn't working," sulk about it, get demotivated, and eventually stop marketing, thus reinforcing the story in my mind, or I could change the story instead. I could choose to repeat a new story: "of course, my marketing is working for me; I already have two clients," which is exactly what I did, but every time I sent an email and received crickets instead of responses, the old story resurfaced leading me to feel defeated all over again. I had to keep working at it.

Affirmations work best when they come from a place of intention and are crafted by the individual. When a narrative reframe becomes an affirmation, one has essentially decided to be extremely conscious and intentional about the change they are creating for themselves. Affirmations are meant to be written, read, spoken, seen, and/or performed in the mirror daily and ritualistically. So, I began a ritualistic process of reading and writing my affirmations, and after some time, this new story left me open to getting curious and learning how to improve my marketing and copywriting skills. This led me to become a much better copywriter and marketer, which reinforced my new story. It almost feels like magic!

Despite how magical it sounds, affirmations do not work on their own, and we mustn't get lost in believing or hoping that they will. The reframes and the affirmations didn't work without taking action. And this is likely the most valuable information that I could share with anyone.

For a short while, I tried so hard to wish my affirmations into existence while panicking, wondering why I still wasn't receiving replies to my emails. Until my coach asked me when the last time I sent an email was, it was at that moment I'd realized it'd been a couple of weeks. I practiced the affirmations daily and ritualistically; however, I hadn't been doing anything differently. This was when I made a commitment to myself that I was going to keep taking action. It didn't have to be perfect; I simply wanted it to be better than before. So, I sent several emails, the sales copy got better continuously and responses started rolling in.

I increased my sales by 710% in four months. I went from not having enough income to getting all of my bills paid. It wasn't magic; it was passion, vision, and drive. Eventually, I realized that the only real obstacle I had to overcome was my mind. Working with my coach, I began to distinguish which fears stemmed from various self-doubts and which fears were instilled in me from being a woman in a patriarchal society and addressing them appropriately. As the sales increased, the income increased, and depression started dwindling.

In summary, I fully accepted that I was going to be uncomfortable and took on an "I've got this!" attitude. I got resourceful and asked for help despite how difficult and awkward it felt to request a barter. I received said help and implemented what I was learning, starting with journaling. I worked with every fear that came up for me, reframing my narrative, creating and practicing affirmations ritualistically, as well as adhering to my daily gratitude practice. Also, I educated myself where I was lacking knowledge and wove the new information together with my coaching and growing experience to become a successful entrepreneur.

I became an entrepreneur to follow my dreams and fulfill my purpose of creating change in this world through individual lives. While my struggle was one rooted in business, moving through it resulted in tremendous personal growth, development, and transformation as well. My sales weren't the only thing that increased by 710%. By asking for help, receiving support and following through with the commitments I made to myself, I was able to: increase my confidence, build a deeper connection with my partner, experience more joy, take more time for myself and prioritize rest, increase my emotional health and overall psychological well-being by 710%. Although one might believe business coaching is full of only strategy and implementation, the truth is: it was full of working on my mindset to address my mental and emotional health, which allowed me to step into leadership and run a successful business.

Finally, it is with extreme gratitude that I can say that even during a global pandemic, which has had everyone sheltered-in-placed for months, I have been able to continue growing my business. While my business was fitness-focused, and I did most of my work out of a private personal training studio, I was able to implement the suddenly required shift of taking my business online. I've since developed two new coaching programs, one focused on fitness and mindset and the other a group life coaching program. While, like many others, my small business has suffered, I have been able to slowly begin rebuilding, growing, and scaling it. Furthermore, I have been able to hold on to all of the additional benefits to my mental and emotional health previously mentioned and have continued to make breakthroughs within my personal development process. Most importantly, I have been able

to support my clients throughout this time of global and national crises.

### **About the Author**

Milana Istakhorova began her pursuit of a fulfilling career by attending a doctoral program in clinical psychology. That was when the entrepreneurial whispers started and she realized she was meant for more. She embarked on a new journey to become a personal trainer and still her dreams were bigger than the corporate world she was in. She pursued her vision of becoming an entrepreneur in the coaching industry and was faced with many barriers. Despite the challenges, she has been able to launch a successful coaching practice and is now living her entrepreneurial dream.

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**James Lott Jr.**

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## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **STARTING OVER AT 40**

**T**here we were, hugging and saying goodbye. It was an emotional moment when my best friend Michelle was heading back to San Francisco, where she lived (and I did for 16 years). She drove with me and all of my stuff to Los Angeles. We had a long hug, and then she got in the car and drove away. Immediately she left, this became my new reality. I turned around and walked into my new home, which was my old home 22 years earlier. I walked into the house and closed the door. That's when it hit me.

**WHAT THE HELL DID I JUST DO!**

Let's go back a month earlier to December 2008, when I was living in San Francisco, CA. I was working as an Education Coordinator/ Event Management Director mainly working in Agriculture and Farm Insurance. Yes, Farm and Agriculture! It was my sixth year of working at the company. I was overworked and undervalued.

I was making great money, had good benefits, worked directly with my best friend at the time, and I was able to live in one of the most expensive places in the country. But there were a few problems.

I didn't enjoy the work anymore.

It wasn't my passion.

I could never get all the work done (and I worked 80 hours a week).

It wasn't my passion.

I was not being treated fairly.

I would get up at 5 am, take a shower, get ready for work, and walk over to the BART subway station and take it to Montgomery Street Station. I would get off and then walk about seven blocks to my office building. My stomach hurt every morning for about six months. It was a dull pain that was uncomfortable, and it seems to worsen when I got closer to the building. I had gastroenteritis a few years earlier, so I wrote it off to something from that.

I'd get to work and see a large stack of papers and files that I had to work on. It was like someone was playing a prank on me. I would work on that pile all day long, and it never seemed to go down.

I was a salaried employee, meaning I was paid a set amount every two weeks, no matter how many hours I worked. I had an "assistant" at first, but then she was pulled

to do work for the bosses. I asked for help and did not get it. I chose to stay because I had a false sense of loyalty. If I left, the department would fall apart, and I would feel bad. I didn't want to leave on bad terms. I came up with excuses and reasons not to quit. But I believe that you can't ignore things for too long before it shows up in your way, and yes, it did!

I used to keep a log of my hours every day. My colleague suggested I do that (he did it too), so I did. Well, it came in handy. The bosses questioned how many hours I worked, and I had to send them a report, it was then I realized how much I was working. It stunned me! Seeing it all in print in front of me! I had a tendency to put my all into jobs. My identity was heavily tied to my work performance. This was the first jolt to my system that started to wake me up.

Then the day that I will live in infamy happened. I am telling this part of the story not just to spill tea on my former bosses or company (the company is out of business now), but to share an example of deciding for change.

It was Mid-December, and there were a couple of incidents that involved me and my said "assistant" that called for a staff meeting. Most of our staff were in one office, and my colleague and I were at another office. We were all on a phone conference call. Each of the bosses brought up issues to address (not all about me), and people were discussing. There were some resolutions. I was never one to rock the boat, but I was no pushover either, and I was ready for the "James" portion of the meeting.

Before I get into that, let me tell you where my mind was at the time. I had no plan for my future in place. I knew that it was expensive to live in San Francisco, and if I lost my job, it would be a hardship for me. I would probably get

another corporate job just to replace that one. I was afraid to think about any dreams I might have. I was driven by making money. This is all to say that I had to overcome all of that thinking to make any real change. In essence, I had to overcome the obstacles and limitations I set for myself.

I grew up without monetary advantages. I came from hardworking parents and grandparents. I was taught to get a job and work until you can retire. While at work, you keep your head down and do what is asked. Don't cause any problems. Always strive to do and be your best. Because I am black, I was told, "You have to work twice as hard to get noticed." All those things were burned in my brain.

Working as an adult in the 1980's and 1990's, I encountered some of the situations I was told I would encounter. I had to overcome each situation that arose.

Bosses that wouldn't give me a promotion because it would change the image of the store. It would make it more "urban."

Being hired because they needed diversity in the company and then didn't really give me any real work or chance for advancement.

Co-workers having an opinion of me based on my color when I first come into a company.

Not being called on in meetings.

Being shunned by the only other black person in the group because they see me as a threat to their position OR they liked being the "only" there.

It's hard when you just want to come in, do a good job, get recognized for your work, get promotions, and appreciated by co-workers for a job well done. When you don't get those things, it can really hit your self-confidence,

your drive, and your soul. I always want to be judged on the merits of my work and my personality. I want to be treated like everyone else.

Luckily in some cases, I did overcome those obstacles. I still showed up to work every day with a smile on my face and worked hard. I had bosses along the way that saw beyond my color and let me advance in my jobs. I had some jobs I ended up leaving. I couldn't take it anymore, and I sought for better places of employment. In the end, all those experiences led to this moment in the staff meeting in Mid December 2008.

The bosses let me have "the floor." It was my turn to speak. My co-worker sat across from me did not know what I was going to say, but he knew some of the points I was going to make. Also, we decided that I would speak for the both of us in a way. He had been with the company longer and liked his job for the most part, but he had some issues too. So we decided that I would speak on those issues and they would come from me.

Calmly and with as many facts I could present, I stated my case. I needed help with all the work. I couldn't continue the way things were going. I expressed how I didn't appreciate getting an "assistant" and then having her taken away to help them. It put me back at square one. I also let them know that I didn't like the way I was being talked to, and I have given six years of my life there. How can we work this out? There was a moment of silence.

I couldn't believe that I said everything I said. It felt like a weight off my shoulders and a knot in my stomach at the same time. I overcame my fear of speaking up! But I thought they might understand my sincerity. I knew delivery was key in conversations, and I didn't want to have

a harsh tone or anger in my voice. People will go on the defense or tune out when you come at them a certain way.

My colleague later said that he was shocked that they stayed so quiet the whole time I was talking. They did not interrupt me. He really felt they heard everything I said. I talked for 28 minutes straight! It didn't even seem it was that long. (My colleague said he timed it.) Their silence after I spoke seemed like a long time. It was like 30 seconds to a minute long, but it seemed like an eternity. Meanwhile, I did feel better getting everything off my chest. Hindsight is great, of course, but now I recommend opening a dialogue from the very beginning of a working relationship with your boss(es). When things arise, you talk to them as they happen. Allowing things to fester is not good for anyone.

What happened next changed everything.

They proceeded to tell me that I am lucky to have a job in this economy (we were in the middle of a recession), and "we" are all busy. They have a right to pull whomever they need to help "them," and I need just to handle it. Their response to the way they talk to me: "we" are not here to baby "you." If "we" are a little short, you don't need to be so sensitive.

I couldn't believe the response! Did I need Q-Tips to clean my ears? I was surprised by what I was hearing. (Why was I surprised?) The tone was so cold and dismissive. I really hoped it would work out.

Here is where you are saying, "earlier in this story, your stomach hurt, and the job wasn't fun anymore?"

Yes, that is true. But remember, I had no plan, and I, like many people, stay at bad jobs too long. It's the better the devil you know situation, right? I hadn't overcome my fear of quitting a job yet.

I took a deep breath and looked at my colleague; a shift in my brain happened. I couldn't imagine myself there anymore. I was 39 years old, and they were talking to me like I was a child. They didn't value me or my work. It sounds like things aren't going to change anytime soon, so it's up to me to decide if this is what I want to continue.

I said, "Slavery was over years ago, and I have choices." Then I got up and left the office. I left the building and went for a walk. I don't know what happened with the rest of the staff meeting. While walking around, I was thinking a million things.

I'm almost 40.

What am I going to do?

Can I stay in SF?

I own a house in Pittsburgh; maybe I should go there

What if I never make this kind of money again?

I won't be able to use them as a reference.

I did want to move back to LA 6 years earlier.

What is my colleague going to do without me? He will be all alone.

Can I start over?

Will I succeed?

Will I fail and have to come back to SF, and can I come back to SF?

As I walked around, there was one thing that was clear to me...I needed to quit. It would be for my sanity and my

dignity. They are showing me who they truly are. I need to believe them. The blinders are off. If I stay, it's a shame on me! So I need to go back to the office and overcome my fear of quitting and disappointing people who don't care.

After about 10 minutes, I returned to the office. My colleague and I talked about the meeting. I told him. I'm quitting. I'm giving a months' notice. That would give me time to help train someone and get some things in order for him. (See, I'm still being nice to a fault.) He said he understood. He would hate to see me go, but he heard the way they talked to me. He was upset too, but he was not quitting.

I sat at my desk and wrote a very professional resignation letter in an email. I addressed it to all the bosses who needed to know (plus HR). I was very strategic. It was a Friday, and the offices close at 5 pm. So I was waiting to push send. I was nervous as can be! I had to overcome the fear of the unknown.

Fear of not knowing the next step.

Fear of not knowing their reaction.

Fear of starting over again.... At age 39/40.

Fear of looking for a new career.

Fear of failure.

Time passed, and I made sure I looked at the clock because I was waiting for a specific time to send the email. I had a plan with the message I was sending, or shall I say that I had a message in my plan.

4:55pm



I sent the email, shut down my computer, and left the office. My last day will be in Mid-January, which coincided with a full pay period. I was going to leave with some money to start over with. I am outside walking to the BART station, and my cell phone starts ringing off the hook. I see the names popping up on the Caller ID. It's my bosses; I didn't answer. It's now my weekend, and I have things to think about. I must tell you that my stomach stopped hurting! After months of dull pain, it suddenly went away.

Trust your gut...literally!

Some of you may not like the way I handled that. Now I would have handled it differently. I'm much more confident in who I am NOW

Sometimes you do things a certain way to help you overcome a particular issue. Decisions are made at certain ages and times in your life, and there are chances that you change how you handle things as you gain knowledge, live life, and grow older. Even though I decided to quit, I was still scared. I chose to drop the bomb and go in hiding route. I will admit, I wanted to hurt them a little. I felt they hurt me. Now, with the help of living life and some therapy, I view all situations very differently.

I used to feel that everything was done to me. I took the victim role. The crazy thing is that I also viewed myself as a survivor too. Huh? How can I be a victim and a survivor? I can explain.

Things kept "happening to me," but I would overcome those things. That is not a healthy way to look at life. It was in my 40s (after this work incident) that I started therapy and high education (I became a Certified Life Coach in 2014)

and learned how life works. I realized my identity was being a victim.

That was my story for everyone and everybody, I used it as a weapon to keep walls up or trick people into doing what I wanted. But I also wanted to be seen as a survivor! I survive whatever is always thrown at me. Haha! Either way, it got me to overcome the situation of my life at that time.

I overcame and conquered! I didn't let the fear overtake me and keep me at that job that wasn't serving a good place in my life anymore. I was grateful for that job and what it brought me and brought me to, but it was over. It was time for me to find my passion!

Over the weekend, I decided to move back to Los Angeles, my hometown, after 22 years away. That was a new fear I had to overcome. Will I find what I am looking for? Will I get along with my family? Will I like living in LA? (The answer is YES to all three!)

Oh, and just to give you a little extra information. When I returned to work Monday morning, I walked in with newfound confidence. But I was ready to do a great job till the day I walk out. My brain was still saying to me, "James. You won't give them anymore bad to say about you." Like I had any control over that!

The phone rang about an hour after we opened the office. It was one of the bosses. I imagined they all talked over the weekend. I was a big position causing a hole in the company. So the boss was very cold and chose her words deliberately, as she should and had a right to feel.

I worked with my head held high until the day I left.

On the 16th of January 2009, I arrived in LA, and over the next 11 years, I've had many more obstacles to

overcome. I'm telling you this story because I know many people who have been through or are still in this kind of situation. I encourage you; I see you; I feel and have compassion for you. You have to start somewhere, and I wanted to share the story behind my start of many changes! I overcame the obstacles of a job and a life where I was not happy and thriving.

These days I am both!

### **About the Author**

James Lott, Jr. AFIS CTACC CNA CHOC PMO OA DD, Certified Professional Organizer, is the Founder/CEO of The Super Organizer, LLC and of the Online Network/Entertainment Company JLJ Media. He is a National Speaker/Teacher, and Certified Life Coach. He produced his own content with Maria Menounos 'Afterbuzz Media Network (Producer/Creator/Director/Showrunner/Host for over 1,000 hours of TV.)

5 years running, James has the only weekly Organizing radio show called THE SOS SHOW with James Lott Jr. He has 7 other weekly podcasts and 3 Web series. James is also the author of over 20 books and has 6 albums out! You can follow him at [www.alottofhelp.com](http://www.alottofhelp.com). He can also be found everywhere @jameslottjr (all social media and streaming platforms).

James holds many certifications from different fields and a Doctorate in Divinity





**Andrea Yudin**

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## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **SHIFTING ENERGY INTO PROSPERITY**

**I** know this might be uncomfortable, but I challenge you to think back to the time in your life that you felt the most down and out. It doesn't matter who you are – rich or poor, black or white, silly or serious. *Anyone* can relate to that feeling of sadness or grief in a difficult time. As a young adult, I was struggling to find a place for myself in my life - physically to look the way I wanted, mentally being challenged in my career, and emotionally with myself and my relationships. Overcoming that discomfort of not

seeing satisfied with your life is something that I'm sure we all can share. From the outside, it probably looked like I had it somewhat together; I wasn't homeless and I could pay my bills. But it was hard to get up in the morning - I wasn't sure of my purpose and generally wasn't happy at the moment. It was so hard not to know what I was supposed to be doing with my life. I felt lost in this huge sea of opportunity that I knew was there, but I couldn't get a grasp of it. I was swimming with my fingers opened, desperately trying to move, but not actually going anywhere.

I had to ask myself how I got to that point. We are all born with a natural desire for love, nurture, care, attention, and interaction. However, in some cases, the source of such things—notably the caregiver, may be absent or unavailable. Perhaps not all of the time, but enough for the child to experience the lack, and to become terrified of never getting enough of what he or she needs. Because of this constant fear, the individual will obsessively crave the “needed” thing. They will also tend to envy those who have that thing. From such experiences of deprivation and lack, the child comes to perceive life as being unreliable and limited, containing the missing ingredient for happiness. Those scars, and subconscious memories, are the thoughts that we all still carry around with us that we don't even know are there, and yet shape our lives as we know it. That is unless you choose to heal from those scars. After many years, I came to realize that my ‘inner child’ received the impression that love didn't have affection. I didn't feel loved, and it hurt. That is why I realized that I've always had

relationships that hurt emotionally. I inherently lived in failed intimate relationships, including with myself. Believe it or not, this hurt is what led to me overcome my hardships.

We have all been in a bad relationship; there is no denying, whether abusive or maybe just incompatible. Yet, for me, it was so incredibly hard to tear myself away from this person; like they are your road map, and you are completely lost without them. We were set up by a mutual friend and connected almost immediately, I would say by the second date. He was physically the type I pictured myself with - tall, dark, and handsome. Although our childhoods were very different, we had our future in common and the same goals in mind. It all moved very fast, and he told me everything I wanted to hear – how much he loved me and that he wanted to spend his life with me; until I realized that he was still married. I was in deep when he gathered that he was depressed about his failed marriage and confused about which direction to go in. He started to devote himself to restart his career, and all of a sudden, he just disappeared. He tore me apart; broken promises, hard words, disappointment, misunderstanding, and uncertainty. I'm sure anyone else looking in could have told me he was unavailable. But I didn't want to admit it, and with my childhood scars, in a way, I expected to be treated this way. I called it a 'delayed divorce time.' I was confused, and a character of negativity. It was a dance and a part of my mental breakdown. I found myself not contacting him because I didn't know when he was busy or not because of his schedule. Then I questioned myself for not having contacted him because maybe he was waiting for me to reach out to make plans. Does he like not talking or seeing each other for that long? Or maybe he is just

trying to take five steps back instead of three because of how fast we started in the beginning. I can't tell what he is thinking, if he really is that busy or he doesn't want to make time? Is he that focused on his career that he forgets to invite me over or give me a call? Or do I need to be invited over at this point? I mentioned hanging out one night a week, and he thought it was a good idea but hasn't really let me know. I haven't said anything on purpose because I figured if he wants that to happen, then he would mention it. So now I'm trying to read his mind like he doesn't want to see me once a week. Is it just me that likes to spend the evening after a hard day with someone who I enjoy being with? I just wish he would let me know what I must do to be the support he needs. After all, I find myself not contacting him because I don't know if that's what he wants. Does he want me to be the type of girl that's not always around? It was maddening.

Life was hard, and it was all just too much. I was working two jobs that I didn't like, seven days a week, paying my bills but barely enough to eat, and no friends close by. It was the combination of everything that led me to feel hopeless, but the scars from my childhood pushed me over the edge. Yes, I said it. Some people reach the point of almost breaking down, yet never really do it. They just carry the sadness around with them for their entire life, moping about, and thinking, 'well, this is it.' Not me - I felt numb. I could have guessed it was coming. My married man called me and told me that he didn't want to be with me anymore. I remember I was in the driver's seat of my car sitting in my damp workout clothes when he called. We both cried. After I hung up, my whole body was in pins and needles, like when your leg falls asleep. I called my sister, who lived out of state, in hysterics. That was the beginning



of the end of my life as I knew it then. I was ready to fix my loveless love life, bank account, and my broken thought patterns.

The next day, I found myself standing in a small studio storefront in Midtown Manhattan. I had recently been hired at a hotel in Tribeca as a "Lobby Ambassador," welcoming guests from all over the world. The last thing I wanted to do was work at that hotel, but I did everything I could to make myself not believe it enough to let it show. After three months of unemployment and all of my savings depleted, I needed the money with desperation. I must have lied pretty good to get that job; alleged I was outgoing and approachable, which inside of me was actually the opposite. I was stuck. I didn't know where to turn or what to do. I was completely beside myself with my job, my friends, my boyfriend, my bank account, and my life. I could not help but notice a big Buddha in the window, with beautiful, rich purple curtains and a plush red and white oriental rug. I felt like a moth drawn to the light. I had nothing to lose.

"How can I help you?" the browned haired lady questioned as I wandered in without even noticing her sitting in a chair by the door.

"Yes, uhm, what do you offer?"

She pointed to a product list. I chose the tarot card reading.

"Please, have a seat." She said with a warm smile as she waved her hand, indicating me to position myself in front of her.

Lauren had a strange accent and brown eyes. Towards the end of the reading, I was a mess. She finally handed me tissues and asked if I prayed or believed in God. I told her that I used to, but I have lost touch for the most part. Consequently, she recommended that I return to it. The first thing she suggested for me to do that night when I went home was to pray for patience, understanding, wisdom, courage, strength, and peace of mind. These are the main qualities of love.

Three days after I met Lauren, I received a phone call from a headhunter whom I had contacted two years ago after I graduated, and I moved to New York with my resume and hopes and dreams. I had missed the call but checked my voicemail waiting for the Metro-North for work that morning.

“Hi, Andrea. This is Alexis calling with Premier Marketing Group, and I think I have a really great opportunity for you. We have your resume from a few years back, and we can see that you studied international business. Please give me a call back, and we can talk.”

The message sounded something out of a dream. I got goose bumps, and I just could not believe what was happening. At last, I got a break. It only took one session with Luran to receive reinforcement that I was supposed to be happy, and that’s all it took. My energy had brought me to this point. Looking back, it makes sense that my thoughts brought me into my reality. Even though I was still light years away from achieving a lifetime’s worth of goals, this was a step in the right direction.

I started seeing Lauren frequently, not only because she was next door to my work five days a week, but because she sold me something that wasn't on her wooden offering board. Her energy work on me allowed more

things to fall into place naturally in my life and things were easier to achieve. I knew because my life was different. I was beginning to gear back into control; my relationships, money, work, and anxiety. Until this point, I was only taking shallow quick inhales, and inherently couldn't catch my breath. Like I was having mini anxiety attacks every day. The biggest difference I felt was that now I could actually breathe.

One day, Lauren had presented a small jewelry box with rose quartz in it. She instructed me to keep it with me at all times, and that it would bring me love. I left my horrible hotel job, and I had been hired at my dream job where I was positioned from the headhunter that called me back that day. I was sent to Ireland two weeks later for training! After I had finished dinner with my colleagues in Ireland that evening in the city center of Dublin, the waiter gave the ladies a gift for dining with them in their restaurant. The gift was rose quartz - and the description in the little gift package was as follows:

Rose Quartz

Physical

Strengthens the physical heart and circulatory system

Emotional

Aids in releasing unexpressed emotions and heartache, it makes us sensitive but firm to others and empathic

Attributes

Known as the stone of unconditional love, as is opens and purifies the Heart Chakra and heals hurt, sadness, loss, and remorse. It is also known as the stone of fertility

May this Crystal bring you Love!

I had a smile spread across my face and a lump in my throat. It is moments like these where you know you are in the right place. I was now in the right vibration with my desires.

I have come a long way since I met Lauren eight years ago. All I needed was a small energy shift to begin to understand the influence of how it can change your life onto a whole different level. Life is not just about overcoming hardships and surviving. It's about thriving. It's about truly living. We get so caught up in our day to day routine without realizing our true desires and taking steps to get there. I challenge you to think about what you truly desire your life to be, simply by proposing to take a different perspective and to think a different thought. It is a path of choosing to take control of what feels wrong in your life and make it right. This is the same stale and stagnant energy, that when broken free, brings movement, opportunity, and achievement.

To overcome the hardships in my life, I worked with spiritualists and connected with my subconsciousness to heal my past hurts. But I think the biggest change I made in my life are my thoughts. Our thoughts control our lives; thought is an energy form. Science has proven that a positive thought allows our energy to flow freely and unrestricted. At the same time, negative thoughts decrease energy within our body. The brilliant Albert Einstein quoted energy is never gained or lost; however, it can become slow or stale. This response can either energize you or decrease your life force.

In the past, I thought, no matter how hard I worked, I didn't have enough money. Generally, there was never enough of anything. I thought life was hard – and interestingly enough, it was. My thoughts proved

themselves to be true. Now, life and business are simple, easy, and fun. I feel the deepest sense of gratitude and abundance every day – and interestingly enough, my thoughts have also proven this to be true. “If one holds themselves in the thought of poverty, they will be poor, and the chances are that they will remain in poverty. If one holds themselves, whatever present conditions may be, continually in the thought of prosperity, they set into operation the forces that will sooner or later bring them into prosperous conditions (Ralph Waldo Trine).” “Thought is the connecting link between the spiritual energetic realm and the physical tangible realm. The currency of the Universe is thought itself (Scott Haug).”

You can use thought for anything that you desire. Maybe some of us would desire more love or more success. I’m willing to bet that most of us would go straight to desiring more money. After all, financial freedom allows us to be the most authentic version of ourselves. Money is vibrational energy, as is everything else in this world. Release your self-doubting beliefs, release your negative thought patterns around money. Maybe you may think you need to work harder to make more money, or that money is bad or some reason or another. But that, my friends, is the farthest from the truth. Rather, it is a matter of reaching the vibrational energy of money. A vibrational reality exists with everything you could ever desire. The infinite (God/Universe, etc.) has no limitation whatsoever, and that same energy is within you. So, we ‘tune into’ the frequency between you and the idea. How do you do this? You think thoughts that match the frequency of the idea. If you want to tune into love, think of loving ideas. If you want to tune into happiness, tune into happy ideas. Thoughts induce emotion. If you truly connect with that, then it will

produce circumstances with what you feel. Even if this isn't physically true in the present moment, if you think these thoughts and truly believe them, things will change. We have to think it true now, for it to become physically true. I know, because it has happened to me. And don't think for a second that I am special – we are all humans, cut from the same cloth.

One of my daily practices is to meditate on my truest desires. I close my eyes and feel what it would be like to live in that moment. For example, I desire to go on vacation. It doesn't matter where, it doesn't matter how much it costs. All you have to do is imagine what it would look like and feel like in your mind to be in that moment. I imagine being on Caribbean vacation without a care in the world. I slowly and methodically climb up the stairs of a huge white yacht. I'm wearing a red two-piece bikini, and I look great. I feel comfortable and confident in my own body. I settle down on the front of the boat after a kind man gives me a tall, cold, bubbly glass of champagne. I sip the champagne and look out over the endless deep blue sea and feel the sun on my face. With my eyes closed, I breathe in the salty sea air and feel my hair whipping behind me on my back. I feel at peace; I feel freedom. After I come back to reality, I know it is only a matter of time before this vacation becomes physically true. And the more I exercise my mind (meditate), the easier these thoughts come into reality. Spiritual manifestation holds that if you really want something and truly believe it's possible, it will happen.

In the end, I did not turn to God, or a doctor, or a therapist; I turned toward my spirituality to overcome my hardships. Religions usually have defined beliefs, rituals, and guidelines. Spirituality, on the other hand, is the

quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul – it is more individual; it is the essence of being human. We are all centers of our own universe. We live our lives through our own eyes. Understanding our self and our desires is what blossoms into the life of our dreams.

*“Watch your thoughts, they become your words;  
Watch your words, they become your actions;  
Watch your actions, they become your habits;  
Watch your habits, they become your character;  
Watch your character, it becomes your destiny.”*  
~Lao Tz

### **About the Author**

Andrea Yudin is a native Vermonter with a passion for spirituality and healing. At age seventeen, she pursued her finance career in the NY Metropolitan area and her experiences lead her to develop an enlightened mindset of helping others and herself reach what is truly desired. She loves to read and write, spend time with her family, and be near the ocean. She hopes to inspire others to pursue their passions and dreams by sharing her story and supporting others in their journey. This is her first published work and hopes there will be more to come.

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**Djemilah Birnie**

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## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **BECOMING THE BIG ME From 'Powerless' to 'Purposeful'**

**P**op! Crack! Whizz! My eyes peel open slowly in a drug-induced haze. *Wait! was that a real haze?* The room got filled with smoke as a spark burst above me. A jolt of pain shoots up my leg with the sizzle of burning flesh. It took me a moment to realize what was going on as my eyes darted to the door of death as it swung open to the woods below. (The door of death was the only “window” we had on the second floor of the makeshift shack that was currently my “home.”) There he was, standing outside, throwing fireworks through the door into our eight by ten living quarters. I glanced over to the bowl of gun power on the table right below the shelf, where one

of my roommates had just placed the stick of dynamite he acquired just a few hours earlier through his latest drop. ‘*He’s trying to blow us the hell up,*’ I thought, fire nipping at my exposed legs as I ran down the narrow stairwell.

My brain was still trying to untangle what had just occurred as my body carried me out the door and down the pathway. I took one last glance on that shack up on the hill that had changed my life forever—the place where my demons had caught up with me and heroin first pulsed through my veins. The place where the walls dripped, the sun never kissed, the toilet shook, and the world melted away.

Now how did I get myself here, a middle-class honors athlete into this soul-crushing environment? My dear friend, this is a question I still ask myself to this day.

I asked it when I woke up every morning unzipping my tent, which had become my residence and again as I stared down at those two pink little lines. I asked it as I stood in the social services office asking for help as I was only 17 and bearing a child. The question rang through my head every excruciating moment as I went through withdrawals. I asked it as I transferred buses with my ever-growing belly commuting to the alternative school to try and catch up with my diploma. I asked it as I sold that first little crocheted stuffed animal, as I jumped into teaching myself to sew on that Goodwill sewing machine, and as I learned how to draft patterns. I asked it as the bank signed my \$700 loan so that I could invest in a new sewing machine and quality fabrics. I continued to ask as my items got sold moments after listing. I asked it when my eyes fell upon my baby girl, and as I got to stay at home with her wrapped

upon my back as I worked. I asked it as that business crumbled before my eyes. I asked again when I received my first \$1,500 lump sum payment from a client. I continued to ask when I left everything I had ever known to live in a state I had never been to. I asked it the day I hired the first person onto the MidnightSun Media team. And I ask it today as I look out into the stars from my balcony and work by the pool at a beautiful place, I get to call home. Over the years, the question itself might have remained the same, but the meaning was nowhere near the same.

*Ahh, how did I get here?*

The answer to my all-time question was really quite simple; I found myself in these negative spaces because of the way I chose to deal with the world around me; the good, the bad, and the ugly.

I didn't have a perfect childhood, and I carried the trauma of my five-year-old self in the security blanket of victimhood for over a decade. Everyone was always "out to get me," my friends, my teachers, my parent, and the world! This became my identity. I always expected the worst in every area of life; with this mindset, situations consistently intensified, and the "bad things" that were surrounding me just continued to get worse. Even further affirming my identity as a victim and my fear of the world. Here is the thing with victimhood - you give away your power, and quite frankly, it is the easy way out of pain. When you are a victim, you are at the mercy of the world. You are not in the driver's seat and, therefore, cannot be blamed for not getting to your desired destination.

“It’s not my fault that I was expelled from school; the principal always hated me.”

“It’s not my fault that I hang out with the ‘bad kids.’ I switch schools so much, and no one else will accept me.”

“It’s not my fault that I drink; my parents tossed me around.”

“It’s not my fault that I have to take these meds; I am in too much pain.”

“It’s not my fault that I am addicted to heroin; I don’t even know how to cook it up for myself.”

My identity as a victim was both my safety blanket and the reason I always found myself in so much pain. As a victim, you are constantly on the lookout for a perpetrator, for without one, the identity of the victim melts away. So on a subconscious level, I was always seeking out my next perpetrator, for even though it continued to put me through a great deal of pain, I was able to keep hold of the identity that had become my home.

Now, I understand that this is a super strange concept: why would someone seek out people and situations that would hurt them? At the time, I had ZERO conscious awareness that this was going on. I didn’t realize that my subconscious mind was making me want to hang out with people that it knew would bring me pain and help me maintain my victim status, in my safety net of what was known. On a conscious level, I thought I wanted nothing more than to be surrounded by people who loved me and wanted to help me succeed in life. However, my internal

reality, my deep-rooted beliefs about who I was, and what I was worth was not aligned with that.

So let's talk about that for a moment - the fear of the unknown. Why is it that our subconscious minds will keep us in pain, misery, and unhappiness? How is this negative space a 'safe zone' if it causes so much grief?

It is a survival mechanism that dates back to the early human days and unknowingly equates to danger, death, and doubt. When you are constantly fighting for your life, anything unknown is dangerous and could lead to your demise. So in order to preserve life, your brain decides to keep you inside your little comfort zone of pain until you become conscious of it.

After my daughter was born and I was working from home, it was not all sunshine and roses. In fact, I struggled immensely with my mental health and self-image. I had no idea who I was because I had relied on some kind of substance for so long. To top things off, I was trying to find myself while keeping an infant alive and also learning how to manage a business.

My first business ultimately "failed," but as I look back on it now, it was nowhere near a failure; I grew SnugglyButz (my high-end cloth diaper company) completely from scratch. I had no idea how to build a business, run a business, or even how to sew when I first started. All that I had was \$50 and a cell phone.

I had to use what I had, which at the time was very little. I didn't have the money for the materials I desired, much less the skills to make the item, so I decided to improvise. *What was it that I could do?* Well, I knew how to crochet, and a skein of yarn was only a few dollars. So what did I decide to do? **I used what I had** (an important skill that has stuck with me today). I made crocheted stuffed animals

and little animal hats that I sold to the moms in the mom groups. From this, I was able to use the money made to reinvest and buy more yarn so I could make more items. I built up enough inventory to host a small Christmas show. From this show, I made enough money to invest in some fabric. Then with my Goodwill sewing machine and YouTube as my guide, I taught myself how to sew and draft patterns. Before I knew it, I had a business! My items were selling like hotcakes. Everyone wanted a custom SnugglyButz- from Australia, Canada, and the US, my items were traveling the world.

But then something happened. I could not keep up with the demand. My customs list was miles long. My now active toddler no longer happily stayed on my back. My eyes blurred as I stayed up all night to sew. I watched as my quality deteriorated, customers started to get antsy with the wait, and I caved. I couldn't do it anymore. I had reached the point of burnout and did not know the next step. So I did what was comfortable and what I had always done in the past; I slipped back into my comfort zone and shut down. Not only did I physically shut down the shop, but I emotionally shut down as well and faded into the darkness of depression (a familiar place that I learned to know quite well over my childhood). At that moment, I felt as if I had failed myself, failed my business, and above all, failed my daughter, whom I had promised to give the world.

The only thing that I truly failed at that time was to realize how far I had come, how much I had learned, and how much this initial bootstrapped business would help me years down the line. As the saying goes, hindsight is 20/20. SnugglyButz was a vessel to show me how powerful I truly was. With the desire, determination, and hard work, I had

the power to create something special, something unique, and something that belonged to me.

I look back on those times now and just laugh. I had NO IDEA what the universe was setting me up for. At that time, I had NO money, but I had a passion for perseverance; I had to be innovative, creative, and calculated to achieve the success I desired. The skills I learned during some of the darkest moments in life are now what set my business apart and often inspire the unique solutions I develop to cure my clients' pain points.

SnugglyButz was my first glimpse at the true power of the online marketing world. I learned how to grow a community and a brand that others felt proud to be a part of. I was improving my superpowers unknowingly.

If you're attempting to understand the purpose in all that I shared above, I will summarize in a few key thoughts. Before doing so, I want to emphasize the power of your "story." We all have one, and the amazing thing about the human experience is we each get our own. The common denominator is the impact and influence you can have on others by sharing your testimony, and that is the exact approach I took here. Although vulnerability can feel risky at times, I can promise you it is extremely powerful. For in those moments is when you can truly connect with people. So I will leave you with these two key principles.

The most important principle of life to become familiar with is our future. We need to go through difficult things today to prepare us for tomorrow. At the moment, it is hard to see the reason behind the pain of the present. That is okay; it is not necessary to know at the moment. It is only necessary to keep picking up your feet to finish climbing that mountain. Once you get there, you will be able to look down upon the valley with newfound clarity, while keeping

in mind there is always purpose in the time we spend in the trenches.

The second most important principle of life is this - every time you get to the top of one mountain, another mountain will appear for you to conquer. Life is full of peaks and valleys, and we have to remember to keep climbing one step at a time. If you truly desire to step into your potential, there will never be a point in which you have 'made it.' It simply just doesn't exist. As one goal is met, a new goal will be made. After you overcome one obstacle, another obstacle will be found. But here is the thing, just as a mountain climber's legs become stronger and stronger after each day of climbing, so do you. The more goals you hit, and the obstacles you overcome, the stronger your mind becomes. Imagine how many tools you will have in your tool belt from the lessons you learn along the way!

As a marketer and coach, my entire job is to help my clients overcome the new obstacles that inevitably land in their path. What some might call a roadblock, I prefer to call an opportunity. As luck would have it, I have been training for this my entire life!

Sometimes when I tell my story, I get the classic, "Oh my gosh, I am so sorry all of this happened to you." Don't get me wrong; I understand why people respond in such a manner. I have not led a normal life. I have seen and experienced things that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy. However, I wouldn't change it for the entire world. I am so incredibly grateful for all of my life's experiences; the good, the bad, and the ugly. And you know what? I think that might just be the key to success, learning to look back at your past without anger, grudges, or hurt- just pure gratitude for the person that you have become and the lessons you have learned.



I feel it is so important to share my internal response to the “classic” statement above, which I learned over the years as I shed my cloak of victimhood, ‘these things didn’t happen to me, they happened for me. The moment where I get to use my past personal struggles and success stories to help others overcome obstacles in their life and business. I have created a life beyond my wildest imagination, and every single experience I have had in my past has gotten me here. How amazing is that? Call me crazy, but I will choose to celebrate that every day of my life.

So, what is the secret? How was I able to go from addicted, homeless, and depressed to a successful business owner, speaker, and coach? I wish I were able to tell you that there is some magic pill to swallow where all your pain just melts away, and you are able to create everything you desire. But that would be a flat-out lie. The only secret to success is that you have got to keep going and keep pushing through the haze. When the world knocks you down, you must stand back up. When your heart feels it is being ripped into shreds, you have to figure out how to pick up the pieces and sew it back together. When one business fails, take time to reflect and look back on the lessons you learned and start all over.

I guess what I am saying is life isn’t always going to be easy. The human experience wasn’t designed to be easy, and that is the beautiful duality of life. When you have a passion and a purpose that burns hot enough inside you, your determination will power you through every difficult time. The good days will continue to get better and will multiply. The bad days will start to look more like your good days from the past (or like me, light years above the good days from my past).

At the end of the day, you have the power. You have always had the power, and you will always have the power. You can truly do, be, and have anything that you desire.

So, wherever you are, whatever you have been through, the time for you is NOW. What is one thing that you can do right now to move you closer to your dreams? All it takes is one step to start the momentum.

Take the step.

### **About the Author**

Hey you! Yes, you! I want to connect with you deeper. Find me on social media, Djemilah Birnie, and slide into the DMs to share your insights from this chapter. And since you made it this far, I want to give you a little something special. Attract your ideal clients and get the most bang for your advertising buck! Visit **[info.midnightsunma.com](http://info.midnightsunma.com)** to grab your free ads training!

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**Lisa Lewis**

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## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **HEARTFELT PANDEMIC**

**I**n many ways, 2020 has so far turned out to be a tad different than expected. Early in the crisis, I was fortunate to attend a concert by my most favourite; Celine Dion's Courage Tour. It was an exhilarating reprieve from things to come. As the head of my household, I was back to being a chauffeur, personal home chef, life coach, and mentor to my eleven-year-old son, Jack. As the days turned into nights, I dreamt of having more time to experience life at a much slower pace. Well, as the saying goes, be careful of what you wish for because you just might get it.

Obstacles have been a major part of my dynamic life and praying to get through them has helped me become

more resourceful, resilient, and more forgiving towards others. This year has presented me with many unexpected twists and turns, and the world as we knew it feels pretty unpredictable. However, amid chaos, I have learned to seek wise counsel, insight, and guidance from thought leaders who are paying it forward and paving the way toward a brighter future. Because at the end of the day, the most successful people are those who do not allow external conditions, no matter how severe, uproot their internal state.

Let's face it, being called into parenthood is a force to be reckoned with. With a passion for children, I volunteer on the Board of Parent-Teacher Organizations. I have also joined forces with communities at risk in order to build platforms that are changing the way children and teens are learning about mindfulness tools that will serve them for the rest of their lives. I've often felt as if I have failed my children in different ways. However, there are practical solutions for parents like me, as well as tips for improving communication, building positive relationships, and other useful parenting skills. My daily goal for parenting is to teach my son how to develop self-discipline.

During this unprecedented time, Jack and I have set guidelines for our Parent-Child Relationship. Here are some examples that have worked well for my family and I. We do something fun regularly. Be consistent, that is, commend or rebuke any behaviour in the same manner as much as humanly possible. Agree on what behaviour is desirable and not desirable, agree on how to respond to undesirable behaviour.

Make it as clear as possible what the child is to expect if he or she does the undesirable behaviour. Make it very clear what the undesirable behaviour is. It is not enough to say, "Your room is messy." "Messy" should be specified in terms of exactly what is meant: "You've left dirty clothes on the floor, dirty plates on your desk, and your bed is unmade." Once I have stayed in my position with my son, I do not keep defending myself. I just restate the position once more and then stop responding. I do look for gradual changes in his behaviour.

I do not expect too much, and I commend the behaviour that is coming closer to the desired goal. Remember that your behaviour serves as a model for your children's behaviour. Hopefully, you will find these strategies beneficial. I see my role as that of a teacher and coach to my son; I have learned to demonstrate in detail how I expect him to behave.

Have them practice the behaviour. That is what I do with my son. Along with constructive criticism, I also give him words of encouragement. Use descriptive compliment when they do something well. For example: say, "I like how you finished your homework after our family dinner time." Be specific. Help your child express how he or she feels.

Say: "You seem frustrated." "How are you feeling?" "Are you upset?" "You look like you are angry about that." "It's OK to feel that way" – This is how I relay to Jack.

When children are the most difficult, it is often done to receive our attention as parents. Routine is crucial for children of all ages, and a large part of this is making sure our child has our undivided attention at some point. I intentionally set aside at least 30 minutes a day to play with

or talk to Jack without distractions. Now that we are homeschooling, I make time to sit with my son while he's online and participate in what he's watching, reading, and doing. My son knows that he can always talk with me about anything, including what he encounters online. Self-care is essential, and even basic things such as: eating healthy, staying hydrated with appropriate water intake, exercising on my Peloton, as well as getting the proper rest and sleep. All these things that I've mentioned are very helpful and gives me daily strength and energy for being a focused and ever-present Mum to my dear Jack.

Everyone will be affected by this global pandemic, including entrepreneurs like myself. The supply of goods and services are affected negatively daily. I have access to an instant media update daily about increased illnesses among all sectors of the population, increased absenteeism, and reduction in access to non-essential services.

Jack and I have been home quarantined since the beginning of March, and we are in a state of heavenly bliss. There are closed schools, including my son's, cinemas are now having to stream their movies, and churches like my beloved Community Bible Church are having online services despite their closures as well. All of which I get to do at home was as a result of my bold choice to begin my journey of entrepreneurship back on October 03, 2017. For most Americans, this global pandemic represents a completely unprecedented circumstance that is life-changing. No event in my recent memory bank has affected me as profoundly and pervasively as Covid-19. Not only does it remind me of our physical fragility, it undermines our nation's economic security, throws each of our daily

routines tipsy-turvy, it also wreaks havoc on our individual plans, and socially isolates us from family and friends.

I see that little by little, the stressful external factors that this pandemic unleashed on society are exerting a deeper internal effect. Little by little, it appears to be shaping who we are as entrepreneurs, essential employees, and those who are retired, in how we relate to people and this new norm. In my opinion, this pandemic affects our psyches in three ways: It influences how we think, how we relate to others, and what it is that we value. Who will be affected? Will my loved ones be affected? Will tests be readily accessible?

What about our work? Our income? It feeds an intense desire for certainty, better known to psychologists as the need for cognitive closure. Glued to my TV set, I became a BREAKING NEWS fanatic, hoping against hope that the next cycle will finally provide the enlightenment that keeps eluding us all. This is the time where I implement steady prayers to my Creator. Not just for my immediate family and I, but for President Donald John Trump and the leading nations that there would be a reassuring in leadership, along with an authoritative and confident direction.

Being an entrepreneur can be an emotional roller coaster. I often experience doubt, stress, and some anxiety. Sometimes I do fail. Let me forewarn you that there will be difficult times throughout every entrepreneurial journey. Here are five different ways that has challenged me to get through the lean times while remaining highly motivated.

1) Have a purpose.

I have a larger purpose, far beyond just my business. There is no right or wrong purpose. Whatever yours is, make sure you write it down and look at it daily. When you have something to work towards, it makes the unprecedented times and situations much easier to confront and address. I am forever grateful for my God-given purpose. It is to minister to zillions of women around the globe who are from all different economic and geographical backgrounds.

2) Surround yourself with a strong support system.

The biggest hurdle most entrepreneurs have to overcome is being able to ask for advice when it's needed. Positive energy is contagious. Constantly interacting with wise individuals that have your best interest in mind is quite healthy. My Spiritual Prayer Warrior and Mentor is one of my most favourite humans on the planet, and she is my Aunt; her name is Ms. Paulette Cynthia Pinckney. Trust me when I say, "You will want someone like her in your amen corner."

3) Press Pause.

Not only will pressing pause and getting away from your business allow you to recharge your batteries, but there is also a good chance you will come back with amazing ideas for your business. I recently took a trip in order to recharge, and it was on that very trip that my newest startup was conceived. My home-based cosmetics venture



marykay.com/LisaLewis was launched back in January. Please connect with me on Facebook over at Leading Ladies Of MaryKay.

- 4) Do not give up on your hobbies.  
A hobby away from work is a great way to break up the constant stress and anxieties an Entrepreneur can endure. For me, whether I am fishing, doing virtual MK Spa Parties, playing a weekly round of golf, or camping out with my Boy Scout, I make it a point not to give up these experiences that I hold dearly, just to spend all my time working. You must create boundaries that work best for you and your family.
- 5) Always make yourself priority number one.  
Get regular exercise, as I do on my Peloton and long walks. Eat healthily, drink plenty of water, and get quality rest every night. I found that when I feel healthy and full of energy, it makes being a high-achieving entrepreneur so worth it.

Speaking of being an entrepreneur, anyone with a smartphone can produce a radio show. The key to being on the radio is to have a successful syndicated show. And I am very thankful for the content that The Lisa Lewis Show produces every Thursday from 10am – 11am CST; search for the podcast over at Apple Podcasts and TogiNet.com. In fact, I'd like to share six steps that I really feel can help anyone who wants to have a successful radio syndicated show:

1) The first thing you need to do is to Create Your show. What will be the theme and concept of your show? I ask, how will your unique knowledge, talents, and abilities, work best on the air? First, what qualifies you to host a syndicated radio show? Are you an expert in something? Do friends say you've got the "gift of gab" as do many have expressed about me since I was just five years young. Is there a subject you feel passionate about? I am passionate about real talk, real events, and bringing real value to my global audience of over one million. Do you like discussing ideas and sharing opinions with other's? Do you enjoy entertaining people? If, you answered yes to one or more of these questions, you too can host a syndicated radio show. There are syndicated radio shows on diverse topics such as politics, small business, health and fitness, credit repair, education, and so on. I am a successful podcast host, who never was on radio before getting into syndication. My advice is to find a unique niche for your show. Be as original as you can. For example, if you want to do a business talk show, decide what might make your show different from my show.

2) Get On The Air, Anywhere.

I learned that you have to start somewhere. It's just like my eleven-year-old son who planted seeds in his vegetable garden. To grow his harvest, he had to start. Your show should be on at least ONE radio station or ONE high-quality internet site such as TogiNet Radio. So, do what you must do and get your show heard and then syndicate it nationally. Program directors who consider your syndicated

show will naturally want to know if it has a track record. Their first question will be, “Where is your show heard?” My show can be heard on Apple Podcasts and TogiNet.com. Another question may be, “Is it heard online?” My answer is yes.

3) Create a Marketing Kit and Demo.

You will want to be sure your marketing kit looks professional. You’ll also need a good-sounding demo show. I made a point to do this as well, in the beginning. Since you can’t travel to every station in the country, I feel that your sales kit should act as your ambassador. The research I’ve done has shown that people gather most of their information visually. Yes, this is even true of radio managers, perhaps more so because they deal with so much non-visual material. So, I have found that it’s important to make a good visual first impression with potential affiliates. Remember what our moms always told us; you never get a second chance to make a good first impression.

4) Market Your Show to Stations Nationwide.

As I’ve learned, you’ve got to tell the radio industry about your show. Stations need to know the show exists if you want them to put it on the air. Marketing is just another word for promotion, and few syndicated shows succeed without it. I have found, if radio stations have never heard of your show, they may be reluctant to add it. As I think about my own purchasing decisions, you should too. How often do you choose a product you’ve

never heard of? We are much more comfortable buying something that is familiar to us.

5) Sign Up Stations.

A syndicated radio show such as ‘The Lisa Lewis Show’ is only as good as our list of affiliates. As I’ve learned, syndication success is built by signing up stations to carry your show. If your marketing is effective, stations may be calling for your demo, as they are doing for my Apple Podcast. You then must follow up by phone as I am doing with these “warm leads.”

6) Take Care of Business.

Once your show is up and running like mine, there are still things to do. As I’ve learned, commercials need to be sold, clients need to be billed, your show has to be produced and distributed, and you must get paid. You want a system to handle the logistics, as this gives you the freedom to focus on having a great podcast and building more streams of consistent revenue.

I’d like to thank my phenomenal team over at TogiNet Radio for all of their love, support, and production of ‘The Lisa Lewis Show.’ They are truly part of my extended family. Special thanks to my Shows Producer, Ben Horlander. Much love and respect to our CEO, Scott Frazier. It indeed takes a village.

Speaking of a village, becoming a high-achieving professional in real estate is my next level of expertise as I’ve only dabbled in the industry. I remember when I

arrived in Texas through Florida, I would always attend open houses with my children in tow. It was then that I became inspired to learn everything I could. That propelled me to get going and learn faster than I would have done otherwise. As I am reflecting, I desire to rank amongst the most successful real estate professionals.

I am the Founder/Owner of the prominent 'Lisa Lewis Luxury Group' located in San Antonio, Texas. Even though I didn't start with a solid base of knowledge in helping people from all walks of life with their real estate needs, I received my professional training at the prestigious "Champions School Of Real Estate." At first, I found myself to be impatient, and then I soon discovered that getting started in this business required learning how to communicate with people, and the ability to build a trust factor. Of course, success in any endeavor involves an undeniable work ethic and likeability. Like many others who are finding their way to success, I believe I own much of my successes to certain priorities and strategies that have given me a cutting edge. This business is really hard, guys, it's not for the faint of hearts; It is a career. That means I have to show up mentally and physically, go all in, out in the hours, invest in myself, market with innovation, don't be afraid to fail, set goals and achieve them, and NEVER QUIT!

Being my first year in real estate during a pandemic, I found that the beauty of residential is everyone needs a place to live. For some that means leasing, and renters turn into buyers. So it's safe to say that real estate is here to stay. No doubt, there is room for all. Anyone prepared to work can fit into the real estate industry.

However, you must not sit around and wait for the business to come to you. You must go after it. I also learned

that it is essential for people to know that Lissette and I are in the real estate market as a team.

We are looking forward to expanding exponentially. Here I am letting the whole universe know that I am into real estate. We also write texts, emails, and postcards to all of our contacts in an attempt to broaden our awareness.

So, what exactly do we do? Essentially, we help people acquire new homes, new leases and sell their existing homes. Successful real estate professionals are nearly always those who work for a dedicated company such as 'Lisa Lewis Luxury Group.' We are an energetic, growing, and capable team. We are very intentional and blessed in this way. We have a brilliant team and wonderful game changers. We are prepared to represent our clients professionally, from the start to the finish of every real estate transaction.

As an aspiring Mum, Entrepreneur, Radio Host, Skincare Specialist, and Real Estate Professional; my gift to you during this heartfelt pandemic and beyond is to position yourself where you have a good chance to succeed by aligning yourself with capable individuals who can make the work you do much more effective and of value while you build your EMPIRE.

## **About the Author**

Lisa Lewis is a Mum, Executive Producer & Founder at Lisa Lewis Company (a Media & Business Coaching Firm), and a proud Skincare Specialist at Leading Ladies of MaryKay. She combines what she has learned from her decade-plus of experience and from some of the most iconic teachers on the planet; including Les Brown, Tony Robbins, Oscar Elliott, and even Sarah, Duchess of York; in an effort to build strategies that cultivate a culture of love, kindness, and success. She understands the importance of building a business, as well as making self-care a priority in order to have optimal success in business and in life. Lisa understands that business coaching is a great responsibility that can be achieved with one-to-one coaching or through group coaching via Zoom, Skype, Conference Calls, Live Events, and VIP Days; where she travels to your city and spends up to seven hours with one-to-one customized coaching.

Lisa's firm works globally to empower high-level entrepreneurs to transform their business and life by providing support, a sense of emotional awareness, steps to navigate challenges with confidence, and the foundation to build not only a business but a legacy. When she's not coaching high energy clients, she is hosting The Lisa Lewis Show on Apple Podcasts, engaging with dynamic people in The Game Changers Circle, volunteering in the community, and is always evolving and contributing as a Game Changer; all while raising her brilliant 11-year-old son, Jack Elliott Lewis

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**Trey Carmichael**

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## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

### **WE ARE ALL VIRTUALLY LIMITLESS**

**H**ello! I'm Trey Carmichael. I'm a crazy passionate life changer that gives everyone and anyone the space they need to grow. I'm a 22 years old business consultant and marketer. I've served hundreds, maybe even thousands of businesses, either directly or indirectly. I get to sit with millionaires regularly and help them grow companies. I am the CEO of Carmichael Business Solutions and LimitlessWare. I am also a co-founder of Virtually Limitless with Justine Mader, Andrea Adams-Miller, and Kohdi Rayne. I am also on the front lines of the largest anxiety movement in the world, Anxiety Hackers.

Most of my clients bring me on as their outsourced Chief Operating Officer. This means that it is my job to step into their company and figure out what tasks need to be completed under my six pillars of business. Next, I figure out how many of these tasks can be efficiently automated. Once that's complete, I help them to document the remaining tasks into their Standard Operating Procedures and organize them into roles. Lastly, we fill these roles. If you are wondering, my six pillars of business are Marketing, Sales, Fulfillment, Retention, Finance, Human Resources, and Company Culture. Now that they are systemized and could handle an influx of customers, we have a great impact on the marketing side with my team of experts.

Although things were definitely not always like this. At the time of writing this book chapter, it was just about three years ago when I was addicted to drugs. I was one of the biggest weed dealers in my area, I was depressed, scared, and honestly, I really didn't think I was going to live to see 21. When I was 18, I used to start my days by crushing up a big green bar and mix it with cocaine. The scariest part is, to this day, I still don't really know what those were. I believe that they were xanax.

I guess that if I'm going to tell my story, I should probably start from the beginning. I grew up in the middle of nowhere, in Wimberley, Texas. While growing up, I didn't really have friends until I started school, and I was friends with everybody. We have pictures one year where I had the majority of my grade there, and we had to use the ranch that my dad worked at for my party! It was insane!

When I was young, there was always something that I held deep inside and didn't share with anyone. I seemed happy during the day, but as soon as the lights went off, I was never alone. My mind has always liked to play tricks on

me, and for as long as I can remember, I saw shadows and just got sad and afraid every night. I was the kid that really believed in the monster in my closet, and sadly, it never really has gone away. It just gets easier to manage with selfcare, etc.

In the summers, I wouldn't really see anyone being that I lived in the middle of nowhere. It sucked, but it was fine the first couple of years. Until I came back to school after one summer, and all of a sudden, everyone was split up into cliques, and I didn't make it into a clique. Shortly after I started getting bullied, I only had a few friends left. They moved away one at a time and left me alone in a school that didn't accept me for some reason. From there on, I just had books. I used to be obsessed with the Magic Tree House series because it was an escape from my reality. I could go into these books on adventures and experience different time periods even. No one was there to call me weird or push me around. This was also when I started getting interested in the supernatural, magic, and cryptids like the big foot, and others like that. I wanted from a young age to live in a different world.

All throughout school, I would always make friends, and they would stick around for a bit, and then they wouldn't really talk to me, and I'd never understand why. I slowly created the subconscious belief that everyone is going to leave at some time or another. At some point, my grandparents came to live with us, and I was so happy because going to visit them was one of my favorite things to do as a kid. They lived out in a completely different kind of forest in Texas than I do. The trees looked more like giant Christmas trees. One day, I came home from school, and they were gone with neither a note nor goodbye.

That's when I subconsciously accepted that even family leaves. Now that I've grown and learned more about the situation, I understand that they left for us, and not to hurt us. That kind of thing is really hard to grasp as a kid. Especially the way I was as a child, I've always felt like I, in some way, caused everything. If someone picks on me, yeah, that was my fault; If someone pushed me down, yeah, that's probably my fault too. So when my grandparents left, yep, you guessed it; that was my fault too.

When I was in junior high, my mental health hadn't improved. It had only gotten worse because I was still hiding it. I eventually found weed in junior high and started sneaking around to deal with everything. I didn't know what else to do, and I was scared to open up about any of it.

About this time, I realized that if I smoke and drink, some of the other kids will think I'm cool, and they will want to hang out with me. I started smoking cigarettes, smoking weed, and drinking at every opportunity I got just because I wanted that tribe acceptance. I tried multiple other drugs through junior high as they were offered to me. In eighth grade, I had finally been accepted into a tribe again.

I didn't end up going to the Wimberley high school. I went to Katherine Anne Porter School or KAPS as we fondly referred to it. KAPS was like a sanctuary for kids like me that didn't quite fit in at the other schools. For a lot of people, KAPS is literally their second chance. The teachers actually care, they encourage creativity, and they allowed us some more freedom.

During my freshman year, I experienced what I had as a kid all over again—massive tribe acceptance. There were still cliques, but people sort of alternated between them

and mingled. A clique didn't really put you in a box, and even the seniors hung out with the freshman. I loved it! It's kind of strange how every year I was there was kind of squeezed out of it. Humans are strange; we all noticed and just accepted it. It was the same when I was a kid.

Still, during my freshman year, I actually started my first "business" venture when I discovered dubstep and something called gloving. It's where you put lights in the tips of white gloves and do light shows. I loved music, and I always really enjoyed dancing but never felt comfortable enough in my ability to get into it, so I LOVED gloving, and I got good at it. I used to attract the crowd at shows. I got sponsored and sold the gloves to people as well as doing shows at nighttime events in public and collecting tips!

I also met a girl that year. Though at that time, I didn't quite realize that she was going to end up being one of the biggest parts of my life. I had a feeling the first time I saw her, but I didn't really acknowledge it because I didn't understand it. We eventually connected and became friends. It took an entire year, and both of us going through some other relationships for us to realize that we wanted each other. We eventually did have that realization and for the longest time, this girl was the center of my universe. It was pretty much her and drugs.

Sadly, I set myself up for failure here. I told her that I quit doing the drugs. She eventually accepted I smoked weed, but I continued to hide everything else from her. I hid it from everyone. Even my best friends at the time didn't really know what I was doing. I had created this double life when I was living alone and another when I was with my people.

I started dealing off and on to support my habits, and then it eventually became a regular thing. The new normal

lifestyle was me and my buddy passing out gram bags in the parking lot after school every day just to support our habits, and still, I hid my habits from everyone. I was hiding something else from this girl that I loved. I can remember having people come over, dealing right under her nose, and telling her we were just smoking. It made me sick but somehow, I told myself I was protecting her and that she didn't need to know the truth.

I never really liked school right from the beginning, but the teachers at KAPS pushed me anyway. Most of the years, I was in honors classes even. The only thing I liked about school was the people. I actually walked into the office multiple times, saying I wanted to drop out because, at the time, I was working and dealing on the side, so I didn't feel like it was worth it. I hated sitting in the classes all day, and it didn't help by the end of the day I was withdrawing and angry. Towards the end of things, I really didn't think I was going to graduate as I barely even stayed in class. I know for a fact without one counselor in particular named Chris, I never would have graduated.

At one point in high school, a buddy and I started a non-profit organization called, "You Are Loved" and got my parents and other friends involved! This was amazing. We walked around town one day with anonymous masks and signs that read, "You are loved." We had free hugs, took pictures with people, and it became this big thing! We even made the paper! It's crazy what you will do when you feel alone and don't know what to do with that. It's easier trying to help others than facing yourself.

After graduation, I was dealing pretty consistently and running around with people I really shouldn't have been with, doing drugs, and other things I can't talk about. Still, my girl, friends, and family really had no idea what I was

going through. My mental health was getting worse, and my daily activities were not getting any better. On top of that, I had always been working almost full time even towards the end of high school, so I could say where the money was coming from when I had it. I was just taking uppers to get through the days and then getting fucked up at night to forget about it because I was basically living as three different persons. Who I was with my girl, who I was with my family and friends, and who I was with the people I was doing business with.

This is when I really messed up. Instead of asking for help and being honest, I started pushing people away and making them not feel welcome in my life, starting with the girl who had been trying so hard to be there for me the entire time. I once again convinced myself it would be better to protect her and leave. At this point, I hadn't been loyal, and I had already hurt her, so I didn't feel like I was worth it. I squeezed her out of my life, and I told her she was doing to me all the things I knew I was doing to her and would do to her if things kept going how they were.

After that, I was just alone and afraid. I couldn't keep a job. I was bouncing from job to job and lying to everyone around me about why. I was still dealing. Still staying up all night getting fucked up. I didn't even know who I was anymore, and I eventually gave up and quit trying to have a job. I had money anyways and lying was easier. That's when things around me started getting more violent. People who I was doing business with were getting hurt. People around me were overdosing. Some people were even disappearing straight up.

I knew something had to change, but I didn't know what that was going to be. It turns out something was everything. I started reading personal development books.

Well, mostly listening to them if I'm honest. I also started studying psychology, trying to take better care of my body, looking for a job, and trying to get off of the drugs. I eventually got a job at the Wimberley school district. The funny thing is that word got out at this point after I had completely stopped dealing, and while I was at work one day, I got a call from my mom to meet her at Ace. Apparently, ten federal officers had walked out of the woods and wanted to raid my house looking for a grow room. I wasn't shocked by this as I had helped build some grows in the area. Thankfully, I never did that at home, and they did not come with a warrant either.

At this point, I was still struggling with my mental health, and I still hadn't quite kicked the drugs. I also hated working at the school district. Towards the end of my stint at the school district, I connected with an old friend from high school Kyler Gifford, who had become a realtor. I was open and honest with him about where I was at and told him I wanted something better, but didn't know where to start. He accepted me where I was and started mentoring me, as well as letting me help with his real estate marketing. I became obsessed. I was riding around on the mower at the school district listening to content about how to rank on google, how to show up on Instagram and YouTube, and how to build websites!

About this time, a buddy brought me an opportunity. There was a new Vietnamese Pottery shop opening in Dripping Springs. "The pay is \$15 an hour, and they are going to pay commissions!" So, I went there, checked it out, and I loved the place. I put in two weeks notice the next day at the school district. I was still learning with Kyler and now getting a better job working with awesome people! I felt like I had made it!



Well, I hadn't quite made it. I worked there for a month and then the manager told me to expect about \$1000 in commission the next week. So, I got over-excited and bought software and some courses so that I could learn more about marketing on a credit card. A couple of days before payday, I went to ask the owner about it because I was curious if it would be the same check or if I needed to do anything different. I was informed that I didn't actually get a commission. So, I said okay, and I went to the back and angrily stacked pallets. You could tell I was angry, but I wasn't yelling. I didn't say anything disrespectful, nothing. I came back to work the next week, and I was told that I scared them and they are letting me go.

Thankfully, I had started getting Kyler ranked on google at this point, so I was able to transition easily and be fine, but come on, you'd be pretty mad too if you were promised \$1000. That's when I realized I didn't want anyone to be in charge of what I make ever again. After this, I rented an apartment in San Marcos for three months and completely detoxed. All the drugs stopped cold turkey. I ended up in the emergency room having a mental breakdown, going through withdrawals, and it took multiple police officers to get my blood drawn to make sure I was healthy.

From here, I started looking for a mentor to help me figure out what I really wanted and to help me start getting my mind right. So, I reconnected with Lisa McInanahan. Lisa helped me craft my core values and my defining statement, which you heard at the introduction of this chapter.

Shortly after this, I started the Virtually Limitless Entrepreneur Community and started connecting with amazing people like Justine Mader; my now COO, Richard Kahanek who taught me about sales and introduced me to Kohdi Rayne; my brand architect, and Tiffany Toombs who

helped me start identifying and breaking the limiting beliefs that I had created. When I met Tiffany, she invited me to her weekend event, and I almost left at lunch the first day because I didn't think I was ready to face the things that she wanted me to face.

After the weekend with Tiffany, she made us an offer that I couldn't refuse, but I couldn't afford it. So I went to her and told her where I was and what I've been learning. She introduced me to her fiancé, Sid Clevinger, and we became friends so fast, and I started selling for him, which quickly grew to be standing shoulder to shoulder with him and helping him scale his company as well as being accepted as family. Sid and Tiffany taught me an insane amount about humans, life, and business in the eight months that I was with them, and I will always be grateful.

While I was working with Sid and Tiffany, I made multiple lifelong connections, including multiple of the other authors in this book! The last event that I attended with Sid, I met a woman named Andrea Adams-Miller, who quickly became my best friend. She's an absolute superhero, and when I met her at the event, I followed her around for a bit and realized that she didn't move much, but that EVERYONE talks to her and that she didn't have to approach ANYONE. Needless to say, that was fascinating to me. Since then, she has become a partner in most of my ventures, and we support each other day to day as we both have complementary expertise, both personally and professionally!

Before Covid 19 really hit, I went back out on my own. It was terrifying, but I knew that business owners and humans, in general, needed what I have to offer. We started a group coaching program to support as many people as possible, and NOBODY WANTED IT! Everyone

wanted to hire us instead! I started appearing on TV and radio shows, talking about the systems I was building as well! I was actually inspiring people to do more! In the middle of Covid-19, we acquired our first software asset and have been hiring and scaling our company.

I'm a big believer in the ripple effect, which means that when you impact the people around you, they are going to spread that to the people around them. So I choose to affect the world positively. I know that every person that I help is likely to help someone else. It starts with me, and it starts with you.

What are you putting out into the world?

I'm not special; I wasn't some prodigy child. I didn't have all of this handed to me, but here I am. So why can't you do it? My brand is called Virtually Limitless because each one of us is Virtually Limitless. The only reason I am still on the planet is to show people that. My purpose in this world is to drive down the suicide rates and make mental health something that we talk about. That's why I am eternally grateful to have been accepted to fight on the front lines of anxiety with the Anxiety Hackers movement as of July 2020. Moving forward, Virtually Limitless and Anxiety Hackers will be fighting at the front lines to lower the suicide rates and help kids see a better option than drugs to address their mental health.

### **About the Author**

Trey Carmichael is a young Business consultant that has been doing business in some way shape or form since he was a child. From hustling kids in the hallway with candy, starting a non-profit organization and selling drugs in high school, and working with business owners since he was just 18 years old. He has been labeled as the 22-year-old system genius, the swami of systems, the connector, and the link by business owners and show hosts around the world. He is also the host of the Virtually Limitless Podcast, where he interviews impact-driven entrepreneurs and industry experts along with Andrea Adams-Miller CEO of the red-carpet connection and Justine Mader an unstoppable high performance and accountability coach for entrepreneurial leaders.

Website: [www.treycarmichael.us](http://www.treycarmichael.us)



**Lisa Kuntze**

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## **CHAPTER THIRTEEN**

### **TIES THAT BIND**

**I** no longer recall the woman's name. She said she was calling from a well-known bank and she got my phone number when she looked up my account. She saw a transfer I had made into my mom's account many years ago. I didn't remember doing that. She asked if Diane was my mom, and I confirmed that she was. I thought she was going to tell me that she had died. The bank lady wanted me to know that she thought my mom was in some kind of danger. She said that my mom came in every month to withdraw her social security money and brought a man named Al with her. She said that Al promptly took the money away from my mom and kept it for himself. She said that Al was mean and aggressive and controlled everything

my mom did. She wanted to know if I could come and help her. I told her that I hadn't seen my mom in years and that I had no desire to see her now. After a short discussion, she told me she understood and then gave me her cell phone number in case I changed my mind.

I couldn't sleep that night because all I could think about was my mom out in the streets. I knew she would turn seventy that December and I hated the idea of her being so vulnerable. I spent a large portion of my childhood homeless, living in the car with my mom and five siblings. After leaving my dad, my mom was homeless off and on for almost forty years. I spoke to my husband, Klas, and told him that I wanted to go and find my mom in California, but he didn't like the idea. He hated the way I grew up and the circumstances that I endured but managed to survive. He blamed my mom for not protecting us and allowing bad things to happen. Several days after the bank lady called, I was still obsessing about my mom and if she was okay. My husband and I discussed a childhood incident that he insisted was further proof that we should let her lay in the bed she made.

Larry was one of my mom's many boyfriends. I hated living with Larry because Larry was a bad guy. His drug dealer friends were at the house all the time and were always asking me how old I was and telling me that I was pretty. My mom kept trading our food stamps for weed so Larry could sell the weed and keep the cash. This really pissed me off because we didn't have enough food and my little brothers were always hungry. Sometimes the only food we got was the free lunch at school or what I was able to eat at a friend's house. My mom loved to eat Doritos, listen to her music, and drink Coke. There always seemed to be enough money for Doritos and Coke. One night I was

sleeping on the couch because I didn't have a bed and Larry came in to "talk" to me about my "smart mouth." He told me that he had had enough of my "lip" and I needed to learn to "keep my goddamned mouth shut." He took off all his clothes and told me to take off mine, but I refused.

We were recently taught, "sex education" in the cafeteria at school and I knew about "sex and stuff." I wasn't having it, but Larry was bigger and stronger than me, and I couldn't get away. He climbed on top of me and pinned me down with his legs. He said, "If you say a word, I will knock your fucking teeth down your throat." His fat stomach and disgusting private parts were lying on top of me. He took off my shirt and rubbed his thumb on my newly developing breasts. He then turned around, still straddling me. Now his butt was in my face, and he was yanking down my pajama bottoms. He pulled my pants down to my knees, making it hard to move my legs around. My hands were pinned at my sides by his legs. He buried his face in my crotch while trying to shove his penis in my mouth. I went ballistic and began to head -butt his hairy ass, penis, and balls.; I was like a wild animal. I started yelling for my mom, but she didn't come. I fought and I fought and refused to give in. I continued to scream and thrash around. Finally, Larry rolled onto the floor and quickly put his clothes on. He then retreated into the room he shared with my mom. I put my pajamas on as fast as I could and went to sleep in the room with my sisters. I fucking hated Larry.

The following weekend, my mom told us that we were moving out of that house. I can try and pretend that we were moving because my mom knew what Larry was doing to me, but I know that's probably not the reason. She probably didn't pay the rent, or The People found out that

Larry was living there so we had to leave or maybe she was just bored and wanted something new. Who knows? She said we had to clean up the yard before we left. There were a ton of weeds in the backyard, and my mom told us kids to go out there and pull them. There was a lot of trash to clean up too. My mom stayed inside with my little brothers, Steven and Gary. Larry came into the backyard to make sure we were working and not “fucking around.” I was dragging a green Hefty bag to the side yard, and Larry followed me there. There was a broken Coke bottle poking out of the bag, tearing it. Larry grabbed the broken bottle, threw me onto the ground and swiped it along my knee, cutting it wide open. He told me if I told anyone what happened on the couch, he would cut me all over. I said, “I won’t” and got up and walked away. It wasn’t until several minutes later did I realize that my knee was actually badly cut and bleeding into my shoe. My bell-bottomed, brown corduroy pants were also ruined, and that made me really mad. I only had two pairs of pants. I went to show my mom my knee and she took me to a doctor to get stitches. She asked me what happened and I told her I was cut by a broken coke bottle that was in the bag. When the doctor cut my pants open, I could see the two-inch -long cut, flayed open, and all these white things inside my knee that looked a bit like cottage cheese. I didn’t cry or say a word while they cleaned it, and then stitched it from the inside out. I literally lay there, not moving and saying nothing at all.

This was one of many incidents that I tried to forget. I understood my husband’s perspective, but I couldn’t suppress my desire to go and find her. Within a few days, my husband relented and told me it was ok and that I should do what I needed to do. He is always trying to



protect me and even volunteered to come along but I knew this was something I had to do alone. I booked a ticket to San Francisco and rented a car. It didn't take long to drive to Lake County, where I knew my mother could be found. Lake County is in the north-central part of California. There are several small towns surrounding a large lake called Clear Lake. I headed to a town there called Lakeport. I found the bank address and went there first. The teller that called me was there, so I said hello and let her know I was in town. She still didn't have a physical address for my mom, so I took off on foot to search for her. I decided the best place to start was where the homeless people hang out. I went to the park near the lake. I found two homeless guys sitting on a bench, so I approached them and asked if they knew who Diane was. They both said they knew her. I asked if they knew where I could find her. One shook his head, saying no, and the other said, "suck my dick, and I will tell you where she is." The first guy looked at his friend in shock and hung his head. I thanked the second guy for the offer but declined and moved on.

I made my way to what looked to be a street fair and found two police officers sitting on some church steps. I approached them and told them I was looking for my mom. At first, they didn't know who she was, but then I mentioned the names of my brothers who had a long history with the police in Lake County. One officer instantly knew who she was and told me that he thought she was staying in a pay-by-day hotel. He wasn't sure of the name but took my cell phone number and told me he would find it and let me know. Sure enough, within an hour, the officer called me and told me the name of the hotel. I drove there and looked around in disgust. I went in and asked the front desk guy for help, but he told me to beat it. I went back and

sat in my car, trying to come up with a plan. I saw a woman pull up and get out of her car. I jumped out and asked her if she knew my mom, and she said that she did. She pointed to the room my mom and Al were staying in and then told me that they were at the casino. She didn't know which casino and it turned out there were a lot of them. I decided to make my way around the lake and stop at each casino I came across. I didn't know what my mom looked like, so it took some time to walk through each casino and carefully study every face. At my final stop, I asked the woman at the front desk if she knew my mom and she did. She told me to follow her and led me to an area where there was a couch and a big screen T.V. We walked around the back of the couch and stood in front of the two people sitting on it. The woman called out my mom's name, and my mom jumped off the couch like an eager puppy and grinned a toothless smile. A fat guy lumbered toward us, it was Al. I ignored Al and said hello to my mom. She asked who I was, and I said, "It's your daughter, Lisa." She stood back and looked at me and said, "You're so pretty." I hugged her and she whispered in my ear, "help me." I took a picture of the two of us for prosperity. I informed Al that we were going out to dinner and that he was not invited. He pitched a big fit and told me she wasn't leaving with me. I told Al to "fuck off", and we left.

I arrived home the next day, which was Mother's Day, with my mother in tow. I introduced her to my husband and my kids. None of them knew what to think. I took her shopping for all new clothes and made her an appointment with a doctor to make sure she was healthy. She really liked the Dollar Store, so I took her there too. We went to the Social Security Office so I could update them on her new situation. I didn't really have a plan for her housing but

knew I had to figure something out after we found Dollar Store hamburger buns hidden in the couch cushion. She was hoarding and hiding food all over the house. She had a homeless person mentality and also liked to wander the neighborhood. I applied for low-income housing for her and food stamps. Her Social Security benefits were cut nearly in half. She was placed on a two-year wait list for housing and denied food stamps. Her income was \$422.00 a month.

My sister, whom I had no relationship with, also lived in Phoenix at the time. My mother requested that I reach out to her, and so I did. Over the next several weeks, we all got to know each other. In June, I was supposed to travel to Canada to compete in an Ironman. I could not take my mom with me, so I asked her if she wanted to stay with my sister. We all agreed that it was a good plan. I bought bedroom furniture for my mom, organized her medicine in a pill box, bought water, food, sunscreen, a water bottle, a wide-brimmed hat and told my mom to stay out of the Phoenix sun during the hottest parts of the day. I told my sister to make sure mom took her medicine and to remind her to drink lots of water and not too much Coke. My sister responded with, "I'm not her mother."

I finished Ironman Whistler with very little time to spare but in Ironman that still counts. The morning after the race, I awoke to a text from my sister that said, "I can't wake mom up." I did the math and realized it had been almost twenty-four hours since she had first tried to wake her. I quickly called her and asked what was happening, and she said our mom "would not wake up." I yelled at her to call 911. We drove to SeaTac Airport in Seattle and went directly to the hospital when we landed in Phoenix. My mom was on a ventilator. She went outside in the heat and

became dehydrated and went into organ failure. Over the next six weeks, she would come in and out of consciousness and be taken on and off the ventilator. One day she was off the ventilator long enough to ask me what happened and to ask for a Coke. Eventually, a decision had to be made about a long-term plan. She could not stay on the ventilator indefinitely and would need a tracheotomy. I was informed that it had to be a joint decision made by all her children. I tried to explain to the hospital social worker that this was a very bad idea, but she insisted it was what the law required. We held a conference call with four of her kids, and it got ugly fast. The doctors eventually abandoned the call, and the social worker sat there in stunned silence. When it was over, I wasn't even sure what we had voted for, so I rushed to the hospital to speak to the social worker. I walked into my mom's room in the ICU, and she was sitting up in bed watching Wheel of Fortune. My mom looked at me with glossy blue eyes and said, "hello." The room began to spin, and I felt an elephant sit on my chest. The social worker led me away as I suffered a panic attack. I did not understand how my mom was watching television because I thought we all agreed to "pull the plug." The social worker explained that this is what had been happening but that eventually she would again go into respiratory distress and need a ventilator. I was told to go and get my children so they could come and say goodbye. My mom was going to be moved down the street to hospice. They explained to me that she would be heavily sedated and not know what was happening.

I went home to get my two youngest kids, and we drove to the hospice facility. When we arrived, she was again sitting up in bed, but this time she was watching Jeopardy. I was again freaked out by this display of

normalcy. My kids, Jack and Dakota, stood frozen, behind me. I walked up to my mom and said, "hello." We talked for a while and watched a little bit of T.V. together as I stood next to her. Then it happened, she began to struggle for air and grabbed me by my shirt. She was falling out of the bed and pulling both of us to the floor as she gasped, "help me." I could hear Dakota screaming, "Someone help my Grandma" as she ran down the hall. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see fourteen-year-old Jack huddle in the corner with his eyes squeezed shut. I was finally able to get my mother off the floor and back into the bed and then ran down the hall, also screaming for help. I found the nurses in the nurses' station, and they informed me that the "medicine must have worn off." After she was stabilized, I gathered my traumatized children, and we left. My mom died later that night with my older daughter, Dallas, by her side.

It took months for the nightmares to stop and daily anxiety and panic attacks to subside. I second-guessed my motives and decisions. I was plagued with guilt. I asked myself why I would run toward the very thing I ran away from? As soon as I was able to escape, I left my mom and her craziness, chaos, and selfishness. Why didn't I leave well enough alone? In his book, *Unapologetically You: Reflections on Life and the Human Experience*, Steve Maraboli proclaims that "Holding a grudge and harboring anger/resentment is poison to the soul." As I reflect back after four years, I now understand why I chose to run back toward what I knew would be a chaotic and unpredictable situation. I had forgiven my mom. How could I resent a childhood that formed me into the kind of person who had the compassion to seek out and adopt a fourteen-year-old Kenyan orphan? How could I harbor anger toward a

woman whose lack of mothering taught me how important it is to love your children unconditionally? How was I able to persevere? I chose to, just like happiness, forgiveness is also a choice. I eventually realized that while I did not love my mom like a mother, I loved her because she was a fellow human being and I didn't want her to suffer, and ultimately, ties do bind.

### **About the Author**

Lisa Kuntze was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area but left California when she was 26. Fast forward a few years and a few kids and here she is now living in sunny Arizona. In her past life she was a high school math teacher and as exciting as that was, she is finding that real estate is even more exciting and SHE LOVE's her job. She is an eight-time Ironman finisher, when it comes to hard work, dedication, tenacity, and raw grit no one in the business hustles like she does.

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**Nick Fedderly**

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## **CHAPTER FOURTEEN**

### **FROM STRUGGLE TO SUCCESS**

**H**ello readers? It's about time you made it to my chapter. I am going to get personal with you. Some shit I have never told anyone, and how I have developed a lion mindset amid the challenges and chaos that's taken place in my life. Maybe not all of you, but I know someone is saying right now, "Shit man, that's my life", I've been there, and neither of us needs to be there! So let's start digging right into this mindset!

I grew up in a small town called Hastings, Minnesota. At the time, we were well known, my uncle was an ex-professional hockey player, along with head coach of the varsity hockey team. Hastings is a well-known community for hockey. I will always love that place and hate it at the

same time. We'll see if we make it to those stories. To cut a long story short, I was taught to skate at age two and by age three, I believe I was skating like Patrick Kane, and playing hockey like Ovechkin! The truth was, hockey was my life. I grew up playing hockey, of course, as my ultimate passion, and my life goal! Well, life had something else in store for me.

My biological father wasn't around much when I was younger, and in which still holds to this day! He was in and out of prison all through my entire life, and until recently as well. So I lacked a true father figure in my life, but I had a stepfather that I still call and think of as dad. He was always there for me and still is, we have a very tight relationship and talk daily. Roughly around the age of 14, he and my mom got a divorce, and this was when things started to go downhill for me! My mother and I never really have seen eye to eye, or should I say most of my family! I am completely different, they hate swearing, and every other word out of my mouth is a swear word! If that gives you an idea of what I am saying!

I was roughly 14 and started to steer away from the prep boy hockey players. Heading into high school, we thought of them as the kid's goodie goods. I started to steer away and got into BMX and skateboarding.

From there, I started smoking pot, which led to parties, hookers, and blows. This began around age 14, I still played hockey but eventually found out my buddy on the team was into meth. Perfect, we went to practices, games and then went and stayed up all night and repeat until of course, they caught on. ¡Hockey was over!

Do you know what was around the corner? The Juvenile detention center. I was into meth, skipped school,



and all sorts of bad habits. I went through this cycle until I was 17. I came out of the juvenile center and went to a behavior school in which the teachers were cops. Luckily, my PO would come to visit almost daily. It was great, but I ended up finishing high school on time after three years of barely going, and also did welding at a tech school. After graduation, I started smoking dope again.

I knew this was not the life I wanted. August that year, I was enlisted in the military and sent to Fort Benning, GA, for infantry training. I came home, worked as a recruiter, and then first thing 2007, I was deployed to Mexico border. I came home in March of that year and deployed in June of the same year to Kosovo for 12 months. Also, I had my girlfriend at the time knocked up. To cut a long story short, I came in July of 2008, and my son was 6 months old. I was a selfish fuck, I wanted to fish, drink beer, party, etc. I wanted to do all the things I missed out? So I would bring my son, to daycare and go fishing and then party at night after she came home to take care of him. One night, she was woken up at 5 am by county deputies, arresting me for a fight the night before, which she knew nothing about. I was arrested on a first-degree felony assault. I was scared shitless, thought I would go to prison, but beating the case! We were high school lovers, but within the first year, we got divorced. I had to file bankruptcy and take the loss, but I still didn't learn at this point!

I got out of the military and became a union carpenter. I loved it, and I traveled building Menards. At one point, I met a guy by the name of Mike Dose and Jay Bernard when I was roughly 23. Mike saw something in me and wanted me to be a foreman and run the show. I was told to grab the bull by the horns and just ride it. So I did! I ended up

having my ex-stepfather working under me, and we traveled nationwide building Menards, and I loved it, I got to boss people around all day, and be a hothead. Life was great. At this time in my life, that mindset fitted my personality. Also, the construction industry was for those with tough skin.

Until I meet a girl named Kayla, whom I fell in love with. Kayla was my everything at that point in my life. She was probably one of the most supportive girls I knew. When we first decided to start "seeing" each other, I remember she came with her daughter Mia to visit me for a weekend in Cincinnati. We had fun, did many things together in the town and she had to leave that Sunday. We stayed in contact and eventually dated. She supported my traveling, and she would travel with me at times. After a few years with her having a drug problem that I wasn't aware of, and me drinking more than I should have drunk, we had a quarrel that got me arrested for a domestic assault. I only blame myself for this and not her, but that was the end of us being together at that point. To this day, I have nothing but respect for her, and I am very proud of her as I believe she has been sober for 1½ years. We didn't talk for a few years. To cut a Long story short, we are good today, and besides, her new fiancé has jealousy problems, the reason why we can't talk.

It wasn't until my last relationship shit struck me that I felt in love with this girl. We got married and had many great memories until she became insane. She kept throwing things at me, breaking mason jars on my head, throwing bookshelves across rooms, and of course cheating. This bitch fucked another dude in my house, right in my kitchen, and got pregnant. The best part of the story,

she tried saying it was a tumor and needed surgery to remove it. She even went to the extent that her friend convinced her husband and me that she had cancer. I found out when she was at the abortion clinic, in which my friend's ex-wife gave her the ride. It's safe to say that the marriage ended as well. It was a very narcissistic situation and my first time dealing with an individual of such magnitude of craziness.

It has been two years now that I divorced her. It was the best decision of my life, but I still know something needed to change. I wasn't happy with being a carpenter; I was sick and tired of it. I was eventually a general superintendent before hanging the bags. I just knew something needed to change. Again, for the second time in my life, I knew I had to make a quick change, I could no longer live the lifestyle she was living. She was lying, cheating, manipulative, and narcissistic. She was everything I thought she wasn't. I fucked up yet again, and it cost me. I had to file another bankruptcy to protect myself from her backlashing against the divorce. Bankruptcy again for the second time. I burned this boat, sat on the dock, and proudly watched it burn. This was the true turning point in my life!

I knew though I am never satisfied. I always want more, I want the next level shit! As I refused to settle! I knew there was a way to create financial and time freedom like I wanted. I needed to make a CHOICE! Life and every aspect of it is a choice. I made that choice to live my next 30 years intentionally. I was released out of probation at 29, and I am now writing this at 32. I chose to be mentally strong, and dedicate my next 30 to business, my goals/dreams, and kids. I rise and grind daily. I left the construction job,

took a sales job, and my first year, I made \$1.5 million in sales!

This is a very short version of my life, but we only have one chapter, so we need to make it fit. So now, I want to focus more on where the mind-shift came, along with how I got to where I am currently. It must have been around 2017 when I started to hate my life. I even contemplated committing suicide at one point; I hated everything about Jessica (my ex) and my job. I felt stuck; though I didn't know what skill to learn or slide into that would allow me to live the life I wanted, and I felt compelled to try and bring the family back to a loving family! Unfortunately, I couldn't do that with someone with such a fucked up mindset!

I tell you guys this because my life up until a few years ago has been nothing but shitty sandwiches and curveballs. You do not need to live in a glass house as I have transitioned into, but you need to be honest with yourself if you are not going to tell your story to the public. I have experienced every emotion known to mankind, anxiety, anger, disbelief, grief, and heartbreak. I felt and went through it in my life. As of two years ago, though I chose as to what I was going to focus on, and that sure as fuck wasn't in the plan any longer.

I focused much more on self-development against my flaws. I knew that for me to be somebody different, I needed to focus on my strengths, not my weaknesses. No more the mentality bullshit of being a victim. I own everything I have done in my life, accepted it, and drove on. I don't feel bad about any of it because that shaped me into the person I am right now, writing this chapter which I will forever be grateful for.

Here is the thing, we get what we focus on. Based on my brief story, what do you think I got when I focused on the bad shit? More bad shit, and the wrong people in my life. That is very clear; if you want shit, focus on shit. That

was my life for many decades because I could not quit focusing on what was not relevant or important to my life. This is one big cycle, and it will continue to be a cycle until you do something about it. There is nothing magical about breaking this cycle. You won't wake up one day and just magically be out of the cycle. You must put in the work, have honest moments within yourself, and never be afraid to create a change in your life.

For many years, I didn't know what exactly I was going to do to break the cycle. Many people reading this might be in the same boat. I needed to understand who I was, my why, reason, and my purpose in life. I went through a lot of soul-searching in the process. I would love to tell you its easy, but it not. It's just worth it! You will go through some tough things to deal with on a personal level in your journey to break the cycle; the key is not to give up! You will come out so much stronger, and a weight lifted off your shoulders. Many of you might be like me, always focusing on why things go wrong in your life, its because that is what you're focusing on!

When I broke this cycle, a huge weight was lifted off my chest. Have you ever bench pressed more weight than you can lift? You get the bar down to your chest, and then realize you have to much weight and need help getting the bar back up, how do you feel when the bar is placed back in the bench; a huge relief! That's how I felt when I broke this cycle, and I know you too will break out of the cycle. From that point, everything gets easier. I have found that as I keep focusing on the person I know I can be, and becoming the most elite version of myself, my life in its entirety is that much easier!

Life is and will always be full of distractions! Every 8 minutes on average, the typical person is distracted. It is very easy to be distracted, but you cannot fall victim to them, as soon as you do, you have lost all power and

control of the situation. It might not be the easiest pill to swallow, but that is the truth! When you lose power, guess what else you lose? Focus! What does focus do, it either creates a better life or continues to bring you bullshit. It all depends on what you choose to focus on. I focus on being the most elite version of myself possible, and so should you. Life will be much more fulfilling, and your goals and dreams will be within reach!

The choice is yours, and yes it's a choice! Man up, find courage and make it happen even if it's hard!

Now, let's dive into where I have gone since I decided to focus on being the elite version of myself, along with a few tricks that have worked for me!

After my first year in the storm restoration industry as a salesperson, I surpassed \$1.5 million in sales and obtained well over a six-figure annually. I made more money than I have ever made in my life. I am a published author, something I never even expected or had any desire to do, but it happened. Two other guys and I have now gone on our own, and we are building patriot homes, same industry, but the company we're building are all-self-made. I recently just joined Apex, which is a group of like-minded individuals that want to level up in life. This group has taken me two years to get into. I have invested more money this year into myself and personal development than I have ever had in my life if you minus all the drugs and alcohol I put into my system. In addition to that, I have also learned Facebook marketing, how to build sales funnels, and write ad copy! Again, nothing I had envisioned in my future, but guess what, it has paid for its self-tenfold.

The key to overcoming anything is to change your mindset. The first step in doing that is to recognize what you need to change and then focus on the steps to change

it. Just like sales, reverse engineer everything in your life. What I mean by that is to make your big goal, and then reverse engineer that goal into small attainable tasks that you must accomplish each day or week. Focus on those daily or weekly tasks that will eventually gain momentum for your arrival at your end goal. That has been something I do regularly, not only for sales but life as well. The more simplicity we can bring to our life's the easier life gets. Life doesn't need to be hard, but many choose to make it difficult because we focus on the wrong things.

The moment I realized that I was in control of changing my life was when my life changed. Everything started to fall in place in a place like puzzle pieces. A huge aspect of that transformation in my life was developing systems and routines. Yes, you heard that right. No matter how bad you hate systems or routines, they are one of your greatest assets in overcoming battles in your life. Every day, for the most part, I maintained a routine in all aspects of my life. Faith, fitness, finances, and family. Those are my four focus points each day, and then I structure my routine/systems around those aspects. Systems and routines are probably the next line of importance after focus. These keep you on track daily and moving in the direction you want to go.

Few more tricks before I wrap this up! I used to like sleeping-in, but in reality, I couldn't accomplish what I needed to accomplish in a day sleeping so late. Instead of setting my alarm at 6 am oppose to 9 am, I did it in 15-minute increments. So each day I would just get up 15 mins earlier than the previous. Slow and steady wins the race. I have also incorporated reading ten pages of a book each day as well. I will do this in the morning before looking at emails, Facebook, or texts. Why? Because I want my mind to be in a positive mind-state before seeing any negative shit in the morning or dealing with issues. This keeps me focused on the positive things versus negative distractions

in life. Lastly, I will write down what I am grateful for each day, my wins for the day, a lesson I learnt, etc. I do that for accountability purposes.

If you want to know other tricks that have helped me or a more definite answer on how to get focused, you are welcome to message me on Facebook at any time; I will respond. Probably you are going through some of these same things and need to talk to break the cycle; you can as well reach out to me.

### **About the Author**

Nick Fedderly is not a secret to challenges, setbacks, life, or death experiences etc. You name it he has been through it! From an early age of being in the drug game, to overcoming every obstacle in the process. Today he is doing more than 1.5 million in sales per year along with many more endeavors. This did not come easy and only until he came across the secret to developing a lion mindset along with learning how that mindset could serve him. Nick is a walking testimony of how bad decisions can lead to a unwanted lifestyle, but at the same time, you will see how he have ultimately overcame many challenges and obstacles, now heading in the direction of nothing more than success.

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**Arely Morones**

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## **CHAPTER FIFTEEN**

### **INSPIRATIONAL POEMS**

#### **Fight to Win**

Fight to win your dreams  
Fight to conquer your fears, the fears behind every  
challenge, it is bigger of a challenge, I thought  
Fight to love your own self, above and beyond than  
anyone else  
Fight for more, it is all in your hands  
Fight to smile, we only live once  
Fight to grow, as every minute counts  
Fight to be consistent, it is based upon actions  
Fight for a better tomorrow, today is worth a try  
Fight for peace, our children will be grateful  
Fight to succeed, our legacy begins now  
Fight, Fight until you no longer can

### **Our Journey & Our Legacy**

Accept the past  
Live the present  
Plan the future  
Conquer the ending  
Visualize the journey  
Create your legacy

### **Secret to Success**

The secret is you  
The secret is to believe who you are, and whom you will  
be  
The secret is found within your thoughts, believes,  
achievements, and desires  
The desire to be known  
The desire to have more  
The desire to live and rise today  
Rise above your fears  
The secret to a happy future, is based upon commitment  
The secret to paradise, is all within you!!!

### **We Fall get up and Keep Going**

We get to face the challenges in life despite the struggles  
behind it  
We are born to succeed; it is all in our hands  
We are born to love, care, and change the world in our  
unique way  
We are stronger than an army together, just believe you  
can  
We fall many times and many times get up and keep  
going  
And when we fall, we do not fail, we actually succeed

### **Past, Present, Future, and Ending**

The past will never come again,  
Seal it and learn from it  
Our past is to be forever gone,  
It is the beauty of it  
All the tears shed have finally make sense as to why  
creating the need to Achieve, the need to grow and the  
need to Wisdom is inevitable  
Create the empire you always dreamed off  
The Future will come, it is a blessing not anyone has  
As death will takes us, one by one without any warnings  
or signs  
The Future, has hope it is what we always prayed  
The Future, will reflect upon the decisions made today  
When The Ending comes, there is nothing more to say...

### **We Come Across People in our Life's for a Reason**

Some people leave unforgettable memories in our lives  
Some people leave remarkable wounds in our hearts  
Some people will be remembered for how much we  
laughed  
Some people will be remembered by that special touch  
he/she had  
Some people will never be forgotten, just because they  
meant so much  
Some people will always be in our hearts, and you should  
know whom you are  
Some people will always be thankful by how much they  
have done  
Some people will never be compared to anyone as he/she  
is one of a kind  
Some people are in paradise, leaving their legacy behind

### **Life is Unique**

Life is beautiful  
Life challenges you in many aspects  
Life can cause tears and sadness  
Life loves you in many ways  
Life is winning and accepting when to surrender, when to  
let go, and when to try again  
Life is imperfection  
Life is being persistent  
Life is overcoming any struggles  
Life is creating  
Life is to achieve your dreams  
Life has no pit stops  
Life is to live the moment  
Life is learning how to survive  
Life is an appreciation  
Life is to fight without a doubt  
Life is believing  
Life, takes place now

### **Inspirational Thoughts**

I woke up with the thought of how much I have held  
myself back  
The fear of never being enough  
Came to a stop,  
I woke up wishing, I could have done more for myself and  
family, and this is where it all began  
I woke up inspired, motivated to accomplish my goals  
I woke up thankful for this world  
I woke up ready to give it my best shot  
I woke up with the inspirational feeling of never being  
stopped no matter what

**Love You**

Love your smile  
Love your passion  
Love your Dedication  
Love your Strength  
Love your Personality  
Love the Struggles  
Love today above anything  
Love the sunset  
Love the Stars  
Love the fresh air we breathe every morning  
Love the Humanity within  
Love the Experiences  
Love the Journey ...

**You Taught me to, Mr. Cesar R. Espino**

You taught me words do matter  
You taught me time is valuable  
You taught me people come into your life for a reason, it  
could be a lesson learned, to memories built together  
You taught me to believe I can, no matter the challenges  
yet to come  
You taught me to see the struggles in my path and face  
them with all I got  
You taught me; I have the true power to change my  
destiny  
You taught me dedication, which is what I am all about  
You taught me to dream, do not create any limitations  
The only one thing left to do is Believe  
Thank you for Impacting my life  
The new me is all thanks to you!!!

*“Plan ahead, Always Focus, always believe, Never look Back, Be strong, Be creative, Love the world, Love you now and always”.*

*“Love whom you are, love the person that lives within yourself. We can create or we can destroy, take the initiative to conquer your desires, always believe in you even when no one else does”.*

### **About the Author**

Arely Morones Padilla was born in Guadalajara, Mexico. She is a single mom of 2 boys with autism, Christopher and Brandon Melgoza. She has struggled in life since her mom Maria de Los Angeles Padilla passed away of Cancer in June 2005, and six months later her brother Luis A. Morones involved in a fatal car accident losing his life in Dec 2020. She believed there was nothing more to life but tears and a broken heart. She made the decision to grow, leave the past alone, overcome her fears, and start with a smile. She is surrounded by many wonderful people in her life, one of these many is Mr. Cesar R. Espino. Her life coach, her influence on success, and the advice to believe there is always a new path. She loves poetry, her legacy in life is never to accept the today, always achieve for more, be present in the now, and know that the future is a fresh beginning.

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**Cesar R. Espino**

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## **CHAPTER SIXTEEN**

### **CHANGE IS INEVITABLE FOR GROWTH**

**H**ave you ever experienced that moment in life when you feel as if you are about to lose it all? That moment where your entire world is spinning inside your mind and at the same time, your outer world is also reflecting that, and you are losing control of the PRESENT moment in life? Where your mind is wondering if you are ever going to be able to overcome your past experiences and or be a better person than yesterday?

Well, this is exactly what happened to me on New Years of 2019, and that experience was beyond just a though, it was an entire physical experience. During this

moment in life, I thought I would not come out of it alive. I was out with a good friend of mine feeding the homeless, and while we were driving around, my world started spinning around and all of a sudden, I begun sweating, and felt this really ugly feeling inside of me (in my stomach), a huge headache, and lost complete energy. I immediately told my friend to pull over in the middle of the street, and all I was able to do as soon as the car door was open was to drop to the ground.

During that moment, I felt hopeless; I felt as if I was going to die as the pain was unbearable, I had no energy, I was vomiting only fluids, I was sweating so much, I was hopeless in the ground, and in the middle of two major intersections. Some will say I was having a panic attack (something that I had only experience a few times since I took my leap of faith into entrepreneurship), except this is one of those worse moments in my life. I was somehow able to call my dad, and luckily, he answered and came to pick me up. I was literally in the ground like a hopeless child, lost in this world crumbled in a ball, and during that moment I felt I was not worth anything, I felt I had nothing, I felt like I had no one, and I was wrong I had friends who care for me, my parents, and daughter who loves me.

When my dad arrived, he had to carry me along with my friend, as I had no energy or strength to walk and or do anything by myself (felt like a vegetable, just hopeless). My dad took me to my house, and as soon as I got home, I once again open the door and drop to the ground, vomiting air, crying, and screaming out loud inside of me. My mom came to help my dad to carry me into my house, this experience was ugly, and once they left, I had no one to look over me.



I definitely do not wish this upon anyone, and I am sharing this story with you because I want to tell you that taking a huge jump in your life, that leap of faith, comes with a price and you must be willing to pay that price to discover the new you. Life is full of obstacles, and for you to overcome those obstacles, you have to fail multiple times, and regardless of the number of times you think you fail, you must continue to push forward as it is part of that growth. It's part of stepping into your true potential, and regardless of those obstacles, make sure that you are not just going through it, and that you are **growing** through it.

*"Life is full of adventures and secrets...things you do not expect, yet at the end of the day it is how you react to those cases, and what you do about it...it may not be clear or shiny, don't let the circumstances take the best of you."*

*~Cesar R. Espino*

After this horrific experience, I had another bad experience, or panic attack, or anxiety attack (I do not even know what to call it), yet not as bad as the one for New Years. As I reflect on these experiences, I realized that this was a result of the choices and decisions I had taken when I decided to step into a new space, the space of becoming an entrepreneur. Although I was already on this journey, and I had already attended many self-development seminars, and have gone through experiences around the journey of entrepreneurship, this reminded me that I was and still going through the process.

What came out of this was a reminder of some life lessons of which to overcome the barriers in life we must experience. It will hit some of us harder than others, yet it

is inevitable to go through some sort of pain experience, which will eventually turn into purpose. Only when you do not give up and do not allow the fear of the unknown to take over the potential opportunity is when you can create and step into a new space of prosperity.

Some of the lessons and reminders are:

- The mind is so powerful, and how is used can make you or break you
- No matter the obstacles, you must keep pushing forward
- Change is uncomfortable and is needed to grow
- Not to compare one's journey or progress with others
- We do not have an endless amount of time, what we do have is an endless amount of opportunities

We sometimes forget that our choices and decisions are the ones that shape our future for good or bad, and unconsciously we do things without realizing that every move we do is impacting our tomorrow. For instance, I've decided to become a better person by leaving my six-figure job, by becoming a new version of me, by associating with a different type of people, by attending self-development seminars, by now living my highest intentions (to empower, inspire, aspire, and motivate others). You can find more about my journey and my decisions in my other book titled *You Can Overcome Anything! Even When The World Says "No"*, and also on my Podcast Show, called *You Can Overcome Anything! Podcast Show*.

So, what are some of the choices we unconsciously live with daily? One major choice is the associations with people, whether family or friends. I do believe that for you

to overcome barriers in life, you need to have the right "average five people" in your life. These are the people that will lift you or bring you down. Depending on your current journey or place in life, your average five might look different. I do encourage and suggest that when you choose your associations, it should be based on three different categories or groups of people.

1. People who are playing at a higher level than you, yet they are the type of people who want to help you and bring you to their level. Often, this can show up in the form of a mentor.
2. People who are playing in the same field as you, these are the people that might be in the same industry or area of interest as you or very similar and are looking to edify you, work with you, and create joint ventures with you.
3. People who are where you were before and have the drive to get up to your level, this is the opportunity for you to give back, reach down, and bring them up to your new level.

Now I know what you might be thinking. "But Cesar, I do not have a saying in choosing my blood family?" And rightfully so, you cannot choose your blood family, and you can love them and choose to separate yourself from them while you are going through your journey of mind transformation. You need to be strong in your mind and conquer your feelings so that when you are faced with a blood family, you can act according to your own beliefs and not allow their limiting beliefs to poison your own beliefs.

Another choice or decisions are the beliefs and thoughts that are going on in your mind. We have approximately 60,000 thoughts per day, and of those, 80% are negative, and 95% are repetitive thoughts from the previous days. The challenge here is that you must trust in the process, have faith, and be confident that you are more than capable of overcoming the barriers in life. I had a major challenge with this, and even now, I still have those negative thoughts telling me, who do you think you are to write a book, who do you think you are to become a millionaire, who do you think you are to make a difference in this world, and the list goes on. When I took my leap of faith, it took me seven months to actually take that jump, and from that point forward, all I had were negative thoughts that were overtaking the endless possibilities to the point of having multiple nervous breakdowns, and anxiety attacks as the one from the New Year's in 2019.

Working on my mind is a constant job, and the minute that I stop working on my mind is the minute that I will start dying. I believe that we will never stop growing, never stop learning, and never stop becoming a better version of our yesterday. The beliefs and thoughts come with the action of being uncomfortable because the minute we get comfortable is the moment we stop from reaching our true potential; this was the case for me. I have realized that to continue to rise, I must set high standards, and once those standards are reached, I need to set a new standard(s) to continue to grow.

*"What you believe to be true for you is true for you, So do not create any limitations, no matter how hard it can be."*

*~Cesar R. Espino*

When you work on your mind, you add the right programs, and you back it up by certainty and determination you can face your obstacles and see them as a challenge (which is an opportunity to grow) then you can overcome those barriers. The moment I saw how critical the mind is (which we all have, and it costs nothing to have), I knew I had to learn and work more on my mind. That is when I decided to learn more and became an NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) practitioner.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming is an approach that involves different techniques and strategies to tap into the unconscious mind and help other people reach their goals and plans. It combines the thoughts, languages, and patterns of behaviour to arrive at a more desirable outcome, removing and eliminating limiting beliefs, thoughts, and creating new neural pathways.

The same principles and techniques I've taken to continue to enhance and work on my mind are the same principles and techniques I practice with people who come to me for mind coaching, accountability, and or mentoring for investing in real estate investing.

Overcoming life barriers is much clearer now, given I have taken the time to reflect on the life lessons and work on my mind. If there is one thing you should take away from this chapter, it is to understand how critical it is for you to work harder on yourself than you do on anybody else.

What do I mean by this? It simply means that no matter where you are in your journey, or what challenges you are facing, or whether or not you choose to become an entrepreneur or work for someone else, recognize that at

the end of the day you must take care of yourself first, and must first invest on yourself.

*"If you are going through any challenges today, right now, this moment...know that this is just a test of faith, and how you combat and go through that challenge is the difference between winning or losing... choose and aim to win."*

*~Cesar R. Espino*

I have also had my fair share at life, and when I decided to step into my new space of working harder for myself than I did on other people, my world began to change. There is a quote I like from Jim Rohn that has a deep meaning in having the life you want, and he simply says, "for things to change, you have to change."

Even on those lonely nights, those moments of anxiety, those moments of uncertainty, those moments where it is not clear if I will be able to come out of this, I continue to do and act according to my new beliefs. I put in practice the things I've learned through my NLP, through my mentor, through my associations, and I want to share some of the things I do so that you can start putting in practice now to help impact your life.

- I have talked about the type of associations, and I cannot stress this enough as to how critical this is for your personal and professional growth
- Incorporate some sort of discipline into your daily routine. There are many things you can do that can start shaping your life differently. For me, I have

incorporated daily journaling, daily affirmations, daily exercising, and among other things

- Programming the mind - Now that I have study and is certified in NLP, I have a much better understanding of how the mind works. The mind is composed of the conscious and subconscious mind. The conscious mind is the logical side of the brain, and the subconscious mind is merely a computer; whatever programs you put will be the programs it puts out. If you put crap into your subconscious mind, it will return crap. Therefore, you must feed your mind with the right type of programs, such as removing negative news, music, toxic people talking to you, etc. I have incorporated daily motivational videos throughout the day and right before I go to sleep and right as soon as I wake up. The mind is most responsive the first 10 to 15 min of your morning when you wake up and 10 -15 min right before you go to sleep. What you feed your mind during these times will impact your day and sleep.
- Created a weekly task tracker - This has helped me stay accountable for my actions and things I want to accomplish for the week. This is the same exercise I give all my accountability students when they join my accountability program
- Created strategy target plans for actions I need to complete - In the past, I did not do such a great job in creating strategy plans, and for that same reason, I did not complete those tasks or did provide the type of result I was looking for. This is something I decided to change and incorporated

this from learning from my mentor and have since put it into practice for any target plan I have.

- This Strategy Target Plan is composed of the following actions.
- First, you want to begin with the end in mind. Do not worry so much as to how you are going to accomplish it; the "how" will come. What is important is to understand what you are looking to accomplish (the end in mind and work yourself backwards)
- Second, create a defined time to completion. Not having a target date will prolong and or create procrastination, and the task will never come to an end or not get done at all.
- Third, chunk it down and create specific or smaller task to support your one major task, and create specific dates of completion
- Fourth, make sure that all your task can be measure. The only way something can be improved upon is by measuring its performance, not being able to do so will only create a blind spot without having a target to aim at. In business, this is often referred to KPI's (Key Performance Indicators)
- Fifth and last, start on your plan immediately and act (take immediate action), no matter how big or how small



the task is, begin immediately. One step at a time wins the race.

- Educate yourself, I have included daily reading, and not just any type of reading. I am referring to books, articles, or other reading material that will inspire, motivate you, and further educate you in a particular field of interest. The average CEO reads 52 books a year, and some of the most wealthy and successful people in the world read for many hours a day

Another great lesson that has taken me a while to learn is the fact that I used to forget that sooner or later I will no longer be in this world. This is also a place where many people tend to forget and take for granted that we have all the time in the world. Where in fact we do not, yet what we do have is endless opportunities if we strategize, take actions, and make fast and sound decisions. I know for me that the thought of thinking I will die one day brought more fear of the future than opportunity, and recognizing that we will not be here forever and seeing it from a positive perspective actually opens up more doors.

Our life purpose is so important, and we must embrace it and understand that if we can read this and wake up one more day, we are so blessed and God, the universe, or that greater power is not done with us, and we still have so much more to offer in this world.

So I want to challenge you to look beyond what you can see, work on yourself, and do not allow the fear of anything to take away the opportunity of you becoming the great person you were born to be. Have faith, believe, be certain, and stay focus because today is just the beginning

of your new life, and you have the chance to rewrite your new chapter. There is no better time than TODAY!

One thing I want to leave you with is what my dad once told me while going through my own challenges, he said “there is only one thing that cannot be fix or solve, and that is death all the other things can be resolve.” ~*Leo Juarez*

### **About the Author**

Cesar R. Espino is the creator of You Can Overcome Anything! Podcast Show, a real estate investor, mind coach, business consultant, and multiple book author. His passion and highest intention are to empower, inspire, and motivate others to reach their full potential. Cesar offers a variety of tools and services to help people improve their current situation. Cesar is creating opportunities for people to have a chance at life regardless of people’s background, and or current situation.

Website: [www.CesarRespino.com](http://www.CesarRespino.com)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cesar R. Espino was born in Mexico City during a time where the country had one of the largest foreign debts and was going through a financial crisis. Not only was he born into a poor family, he was also born to just one parent (his Mom), and never have met his biological father. As a kid Cesar lived with his grandmother, mom, and older brother, living in a room or what he called his house that was just about 200 square feet. This place had no running water inside, no floor and lived and slept directly on top of dirt, no insulation, and was made up of sheet metal and plywood. He lived in this house holding four of them and until the age of just a few months of four years old. Around the time his mom took the leap of faith, where she decided to leave his family behind and migrated to the United States to chase the American Dream and support her family across boundaries. This became a pivotal moment in Cesar's life as this forced him to start working at an early age (at four) to just be able to survive and put some food in the table.

Throughout his life journey, he has overcome many different obstacles. Today Cesar R. Espino's passion is to empower, educate, inspire, and aspire many through his experience and life lessons. Cesar's has a Master's Degree in Business Administration, has worked for several worldwide companies, held positions in corporate America, is an Author of the Book ***You Can Overcome Anything! Even When the World Says "NO"***, is a Co-Author of the Book ***Dare to be Authentic Vol.5 Let Yourself***

**Prosper**, International Author of the Book ***Puedes Superar Cualquier Cosa! Incluso Cuando El Mundo Dice "NO"***, Co-Author of the Book ***How We Became Entrepreneurs, Follow Our Leads: Book 1***, and many other books, Real Estate Investor, Real Estate Mentor, Podcast Host of the Show **You Can Overcome Anything! Podcast Show** and most importantly a son, father, and grandfather.

Cesar offers a variety of programs to help people improve their current situation, educate, and provide a way to have their own business. Cesar's is creating opportunities for people to have a chance at life regardless of people's background, and or current situation. He is able to do this through his many different programs and experiences in multiple areas.

Such areas of:

- Real Estate Investing
- Best Selling Book
- NLP (Mind and Life Coach)
- Mentoring
- Business Consulting
- Self-Development Events
- Live Public Speaking, Podcast, and News



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