

Embrace Your Confidence

Women's Empowerment Workbook With Real-Life Examples,
Action Steps, and Interactive Elements

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INTRODUCTION

Build Your Confidence Journey is a transformative workbook specially designed to empower women to build up their self-confidence step by step while celebrating each achievement along the way. This empowering guide celebrates the strength and diversity of women, providing practical tools and exercises to cultivate inner strength, self-assurance, self-love, self-discovery, and self-improvement. Through a unique blend of interactive activities and inspiring narratives, my wish is to encourage women to embrace their authentic selves and unlock their true potential.

If you are passionate about personal development and want to take active steps in cultivating your self-confidence, then this book is for you. I will be taking a unique approach of focusing more on what makes you unique and diving deeper into the aspects of you that would otherwise remain hidden. We will uncover how you already have all it takes to achieve your personal aspirations. This approach will give you the confidence to take charge of your life and live it to the fullest.

We will consider the science of confidence and how you can reprogram your mind to see yourself in the best light. Celebrating your achievements and unique contributions to society is a key aspect of that process. You may feel like your role is insignificant or unimportant, but just like any machine, each part has its own role to play. Without it, everything would fall apart. With this in mind, we will delve into understanding purpose, and why it is important to define this concept for yourself in order to reach new heights of self-confidence.

I have strived to ensure that all the information and interactive exercises I provide are rooted in science and extensive research so that you can confidently know that the solutions presented here work. You will also find anecdotes and inspiring examples to help drive a point forward or simply enlighten you on how these techniques can be applied beyond this book.

My desire is to empower you to empower yourself by cultivating who you already are, recognizing what you have already done, and forging into the future with a refined self-perception. The famous saying is that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” In the case of confidence, beauty lies in how you see yourself.

PART 1:

Cultivating Self-Confidence and Self-Compassion

The culture of today is one where we are constantly seeking ways to fit in and avoid sticking out or being too different. But as we will explore in the first part of this book, getting to know yourself and being true to who you are in all you do is a key step in the journey to becoming the most confident version of yourself. You will also learn how self-compassion and acceptance are critical to rewiring how you think of yourself. Get your pens and highlighters ready as we dive right in.

Chapter 1:

Embrace Your Unique Journey

Embracing Authenticity

The word “authenticity” is often thrown around in reference to it being something we need to adopt in order to live life to the fullest. But what does it really mean? And how does it look in application? Is it just purposefully doing things differently so that people say you are authentic or edgy? Or is there a more concrete, psychology-based explanation? If you guessed the latter, you’re right on the money.

Let’s start with a dictionary definition of the word.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, “authenticity,” as it relates to a person, is expressing and aligning yourself to your own personality, character, and opinions, and being original.

Off the top of your head, write down five things that you think display your authenticity. Don’t think too hard on this one.

 Reflect:

Are the answers you gave honest to who you are, or are they a reflection of who society says you should be?

Now let’s do another exercise to evaluate where we really are on the authenticity scale.

Tick the applicable box:

Scenario	Yes	Neutral	No
When you are in a diverse group of people, do you feel like you can be distinguished in a way that makes you special?			
Do you rely on yourself to make your lifestyle choices?			
Would you say you have a strong sense of self-awareness?			

Do you think of what people are going to say when you dress up in the morning?			
Do you give your opinion freely in any circumstance?			

If you answered any of those questions with “No” or “Maybe,” then we have some work to do regarding living authentically.

If you answered “Yes” to all questions, then congratulations! You have laid down the foundation for building your self-confidence.

These questions are important to ask because being able to express yourself and live authentically can be directly linked to your quality of life and happiness. A study done by Selda Koydemir et al. (2018) validates this outcome. The positive feelings and emotions that stem from authentic living were also found to be the foundational elements for you as an individual to have the confidence to make choices that are a true expression of who you are.

Something that definitely hinders this process is self-doubt and fear. Fear-based decision-making is responsible for much of our burnout and unhappiness. This outcome occurs when we make decisions because we are anxious about what will happen if we don’t do something, or we may be anxious about what will happen if we do something. This fear often impedes our authentic self-expression and decision-making abilities (Pierre, 2020).

Consider each fear below. Can you think of a decision you have made based on it?

Fear of missing out on money:

Fear of missing out on a connection:

Fear of not being liked (also known as people pleasing):

Fear of conflict:

Fear of judgment:

It may be difficult to narrow each fear down to just a single decision because I'm sure you may be able to list several. Resist the urge. Instead, I would like you to learn how to overcome these fears and make authentic decisions.

With this instruction in mind, think about and list the top five things you would do or be if you did not let fear control your decision-making.

Embracing and celebrating your authenticity contributes to your self-confidence and self-empowerment. You are not a copy, but an individual who has a unique perspective and approach to life. Don't deprive yourself of the unique light that only you can shine!

Embracing Diversity

The topic of diversity in society has become more prevalent in recent years, and for good reason. Luckily, this prevalence has also led to an increase in studies being conducted so that reliable information can be harnessed on the benefits of embracing diversity on different levels—from organizations to schools and everything in between.

I'm sure it would make you proud to know that in study done by Cristian Deszö of the University of Maryland and David Ross of Columbia University revealed that firms that had female representation in top management saw a \$42 million increase in firm value.

Diversity has also been proven to drive innovation and challenge individuals to see the world differently, in addition to encouraging people to question their existing thought patterns in order to solve problems more effectively (Phillips, 2017).

From these results, you can gain an appreciation for why it is important to also show up with the fullness of your own diversity, and how it contributes to the thriving of our society. Oftentimes, especially throughout high school, the markers that set us apart are often a cause for feeling ashamed or embarrassed. But we need to rewrite this narrative and view diversity as the positive thing that it is.

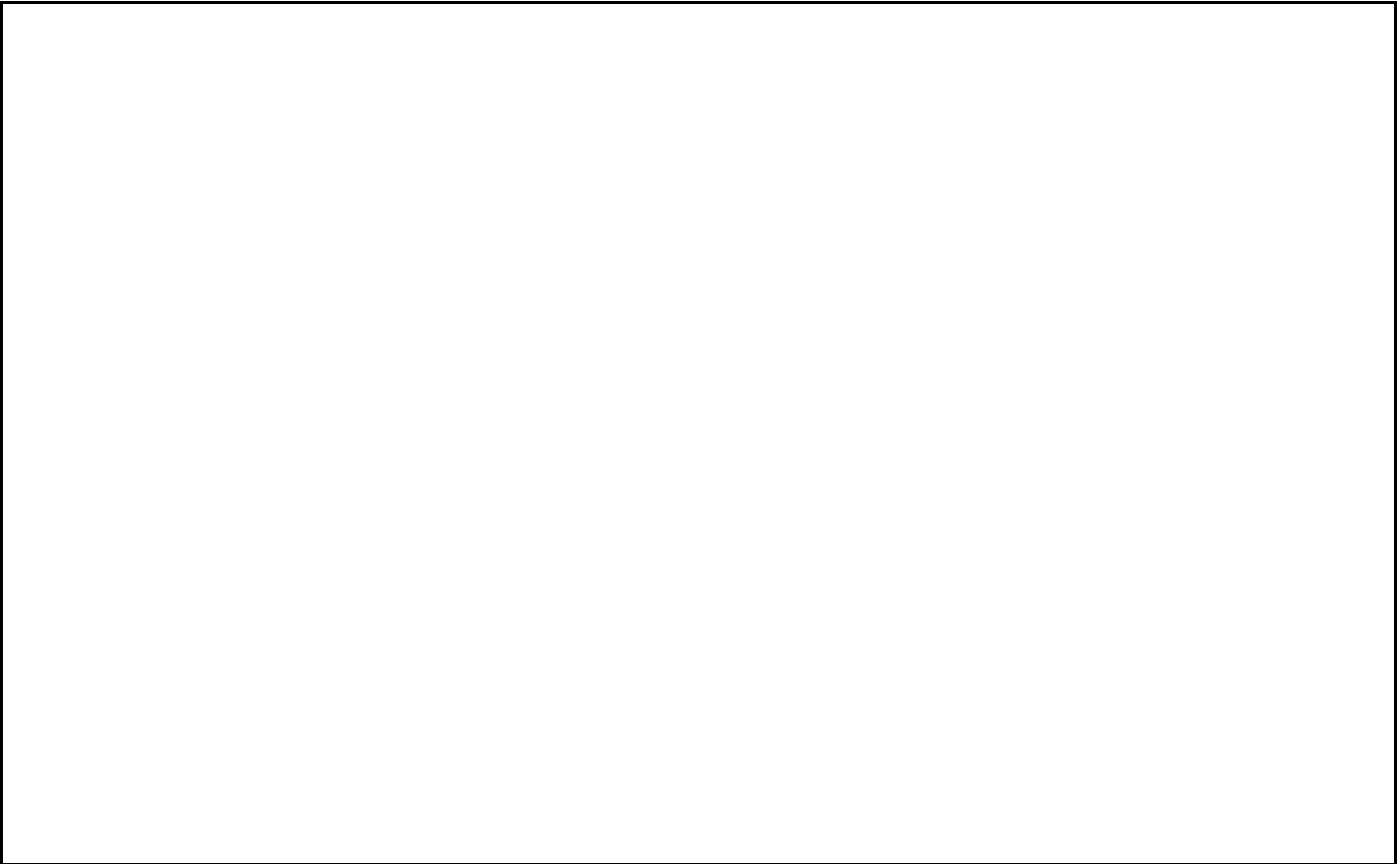
This next exercise is meant to be a fun way to pay homage to your cultural and personal heritage.

Heritage Exercise

Name one thing that is unique to your culture that you are proud of.

What is your favorite from your local cuisine, and what happy memories do you have attached to it? Maybe from childhood or any other time in your life?

Find a recent picture and one from your childhood. Add them side by side in the space below to appreciate how far you've come.



How can you be more intentional about embracing your heritage and sharing it with others in your everyday life?

Be Inspired

Viola Davis

Viola is an award-winning American actress who has openly challenged industry norms and has become very successful. She has opened up about her struggles related to her race in the entertainment industry, including a lack of diversity in roles, limited representation in entertainment in general, and often being typecast for roles that only played into an often misinformed stereotype of black people. She has cited that embracing who she is has been critical to her success, in addition to support from fellow actors who faced similar challenges early on in their careers, particularly Denzel Washington who directed the movie *Fences*, which got her an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress (Pallardy, 2023).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Chimamanda is a Nigerian author who has faced her fair share of challenges throughout her career because of her heritage and authentic views and opinions. She has spoken openly against the trend to box in female writers by categorizing their work as “women’s fiction.” She has also fought the tendency for people to stereotype her as a token of African literature or expect certain types of projects from her because she is African. Her feminist views have also caused ripples in the industry, garnering much support as well as criticism. She cites her family as being her core supporters. She also acknowledges the educational advantage she had by attending an Ivy League university which thrust her career forward. Her TED Talk titled “We Should All Be Feminists” gained global fame and was even featured in a popular pop song “Flawless” by Beyoncé. She has challenged all people to be front and center of conversations around women’s empowerment (Luebering, 2019).

Jhumpa Lahiri

Jhumpa is an Indian-American author who has been very vocal about her challenges pertaining to identity and knowing who she is. As an immigrant, she grew up faced with the challenge of being stuck between two very different cultures—her Bengali heritage and the American culture where she was being raised. It is common knowledge that being an immigrant is challenging especially because the traditions almost always clash, but to assimilate and feel a sense of belonging, one sometimes can feel they cannot embrace their heritage (The Editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019). However, Jhumpa came up with a solution through her writing, where she explored themes of identity across two cultures, which allowed her to reflect on and embrace her own identity. Her work not only helped her but also helped society as a whole to understand the nuances of cross-cultural influence on the human condition (Macwan, 2015). Her work also earned her a Pulitzer prize for her short stories collection titled, *Interpreter of Maladies* (The Editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019).

Chapter 2:

Nurturing Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is one of the main drivers of a healthy relationship with self, and a healthy relationship with self is a foundational aspect in establishing self-confidence and harnessing your inner strength to be able to accomplish anything you set your mind to. Being self-compassionate also leads to a greater sense of self-worth, and therefore self-love.

In this chapter, I will provide practical activities and examples to help you reflect on how self-compassion can change your life.

Understanding Self-Compassion

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, “compassion” is a conscious awareness of other people’s suffering coupled with a desire to play a role in diminishing it. It is important to realize that compassion goes beyond identifying with a problem in an empathic way, but also extends to a desire to solve the problem with the goal of alleviating suffering.

So, the term “self-compassion” is essentially feeling empathy towards oneself and being intentional about relieving suffering.

This intention takes many forms and includes actions like forgiving oneself for past mistakes, not giving in to regret and shame, or the rumination that comes with them. We can take this concept a few steps further by considering Kristin D. Neff’s research, where she breaks self-compassion into three main sections:

1. Kindness versus judgment
2. Common Humanity versus isolation
3. Mindfulness versus over-identification with self

I will expand further on each point, and you will complete some exercises to deepen your understanding.

Self-Kindness Versus Judgement

In each scenario, indicate with a tick whether the action taken is associated with self-compassion or self-esteem:

Scenario	Self-kindness	Self-judgement
A: After failing an important test, you repeat words of affirmation to remind yourself that your intelligence is not determined by this one test.		

B: After failing an important test, you feel incompetent and like a failure in life.		
C: While scrolling social media and seeing other people's posts, you start to feel like your life is not exciting and you are not that beautiful.		
D: While scrolling social media and seeing other people's posts, you feel content with your own life and happy to see others succeeding.		
E: After receiving an award, you graciously acknowledge the compliments and the hard work you put in to receive it.		
F: After receiving an award, you downplay your talent and work ethic, stating that anyone could have received the award.		

The answers:

A and E are examples of showing yourself self-kindness.

B, C, D, and F are examples of reactions associated with self-judgment. Note that this judgment can be positive or negative. So, it is important to ensure that even when we make judgments of ourselves, they are not driven by an egotistical or narcissistic view of ourselves, but rather, informed by a compassionate perspective.

Self-compassion has been proven to improve one's overall quality of life, state of happiness, and physical health. This improvement is because it regulates the threat reaction that is elicited in the body as a result of self-criticism, which essentially triggers a stress response (Germer, 2019). This stress response has far-reaching effects on other aspects of our health. When the stress hormone cortisol is in high amounts due to stress, it dysregulates other hormones that are critical to the optimal functioning of our bodies (Cleveland Clinic, 2021).

Challenging your inner critic is an important step in establishing a self-compassionate mindset.

Killing the Critic Exercise

List five self-critical statements you say to yourself often and then re-write them as if writing to a friend who faces the same struggle. Feel free to extend this exercise beyond the workbook.

Critical thought	New belief

We will now consider re-framing further in the following section, and how we can apply this idea to what you perceive as flaws, as well as achievements that you may take for granted.

Common Humanity Versus Isolation

The guiding principle here is honoring the fact that no one is perfect and everyone makes mistakes. A simple way to drive this point home is to draw inspiration from a real-life example of someone who did not give up after making several mistakes before they became successful.

Sophia Amoruso

Sophia is the founder of Nasty Gal, an American online fashion retailer that started off on eBay. Before starting her business, Sophia made mistakes that landed her in legal trouble. However, she did not let this deter her from going after her dreams. Even after starting her business, she made many missteps that could have cost her everything she built, such as overlooking some critical legal aspects such as trademarks and

copyrights. She also overstretched her company’s resources by making wrong decisions and assumptions about her market. But through all the challenges and failures, she persevered and built her legacy brand and is renowned for her ability to turn challenges into opportunities.

You too can have a success story in spite of mistakes and failure. Successful people seldom have a straightforward path.

You can find more examples of inspiring stories in the “Be Inspired” section of this chapter.

Mindfulness Versus Over-Identification With Self

Approaching life in a mindful manner allows you to show yourself more grace for failures and perceived flaws. Over-identification with self, on the other hand, will leave you feeling dejected and overwhelmed with life’s mishaps (Neff, 2009).

Failure in any form is a good thing when considered through a lens of self-compassion. A simple strategy you can adopt to accept and re-frame failures is as follows (Henley, 2022):

1. Accept it
2. Don’t Blame (yourself or others)
3. Learn (make the intentional choice to learn from it)

Think of a recent failure in your own life, no matter how big or small. By applying this mindset, what can you learn from it?

As the saying goes, what doesn’t kill you does indeed make you stronger. When you look at the big-picture impact of all your failures, you realize that when you choose to learn from them and have a greater appreciation of how they contribute to your achievements.

The next exercise is one that will help you combine failure with identifying your strengths before learning how this combination contributes to your overall achievements. You can especially apply it to the significant failures you have faced that threaten to take you back on your path of living out your purpose.

The Mindful Reframing Technique

What is the scenario you would like to re-frame?

Reflect on aspects of it that you are grateful for:

Acknowledge your imperfections/ flaws/ mis-steps associated with the incident:

Now write about your strengths, talents, and qualities you can identify from the incident:

Practice self-compassion by writing a kind note to yourself, of forgiveness and understanding, as you would to a friend in the same scenario:

Write a commitment note, promising yourself to continue showing yourself kindness in future when faced with challenges:

Hopefully, by doing this exercise repeatedly, you will be able to have a compassionate mindset as your default approach when faced with failure.

Be Inspired

Vera Wang

Vera is an American fashion designer whose bridal wear label has become synonymous with elegance and class. She started off as a figure skater but did not reach the heights she hoped to, failing to make the US Olympic team of 1988. She did not give up on herself but went into fashion, working for *Vogue* for many years. Unfortunately, she was passed up for the editor-in-chief promotion—she gained knowledge and experience in fashion but still lacked the technical skills that would be necessary as she was not formally trained as a designer. She then struck out on her own and built her business. It was challenging to break through the already competitive fashion scene, even more so for her as it was male-dominated at the time. Through many failures and pitfalls, she persevered to build the brand we know today. She has also cited how her experience at Ralph Lauren after *Vogue* also gave her a boost of confidence and more skills to apply to her own fashion brand. Her father also invested in her dreams by financing it, and her husband was also by her side helping her to build. Vera shows us the importance of believing in yourself in order to accomplish your goals and the power of perseverance (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023).

J.K. Rowling

J.K. Rowling is a British author, renowned for the globally best-selling book series Harry Potter. The series has also inspired film adaptations, theme parks, merchandise, and much love across the world. She had a rocky start to her career before she got a publishing deal in 1996 with Bloomsbury. She faced rejections from literary agents who did not see the vision or potential of her stories. She was also struggling financially at the time and living off of government assistance with her daughter. She also lost her mother, which was a devastating loss for her that caused a stint of depression. However, she continued to believe in her gift of storytelling and confidently approached more agents until she met Christopher Little, who took a chance on her and managed to secure the publishing deal with Bloomsbury that changed her life (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018).

Chapter 3:

Breaking Free From Limiting Beliefs

One hindrance that plagues many women from progressing forward and realizing their full potential is limiting beliefs. Limiting beliefs can come from social biases such as believing that because you are a woman, there are certain jobs you can't do. They can also be a result of past experiences that led to discrimination because of race or age. Sometimes it can even come from familial relationships, or where you grew up resulting in a strong belief that people from "x" country or "y" community cannot amount to anything past a specific stereotype. I am hoping to help you uproot such beliefs in this chapter, but first, we need to understand the root cause.

Understanding Limiting Beliefs

By definition, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a limiting belief is a deep conviction that your abilities to accomplish certain goals are compromised by factors that are often out of your own control.

With this definition in mind, is there anything you can think of that you have hesitated to do, or not done, because of a limiting belief?

It may sometimes be difficult to name and shame, but it is important if you are going to get anywhere closer to solving the problem. It is also important to realize that limiting beliefs begets self-doubt which has a crippling effect on your ability to believe in yourself or harness any motivation to get things done.

Let's go even deeper, by considering limiting beliefs in some critical areas of life that would be stagnant if we held on to falsehoods.

Identifying Limiting Beliefs

In most cases, limiting beliefs are so ingrained into your daily life and how you see the world, it may actually be difficult to identify them off the top of your head.

Below, write down some common limiting beliefs associated with money. This topic is usually simple for most people, but I have included a couple to start you off. This exercise is meant to help you identify what limiting beliefs are. Leave the second column blank.

Limiting belief	Counter belief
Money doesn't grow on trees	

Money is evil	

Now, I'd like you to go back to the list, and in the second column, write a statement that challenges the limiting belief. For example:

Money doesn't grow on trees	Money is a paper tool that is available to anyone and everyone
Money is evil	Money is not inherently good or bad

Do this exercise for each of the beliefs you listed above, even ones that you are not governed by.

And just like that, you have completed a simplified and proven method of replacing limiting beliefs with ones that propel your mindset into fertile soil for your success (Pearce, 2021). For more practice, you can complete the below table with more limiting beliefs that are personal to you in the different sectors of your life, and then write a counterattack to that belief as you have done above.

Relationships

Limiting belief	Counterattack

Health

Limiting belief	Counterattack

Career/ Purpose

Limiting belief	Counterattack

Society (e.g., race, gender, differently abled related beliefs)

Limiting belief	Counterattack

However, studies also show that you should go a step further to really ensure that limiting beliefs no longer prevent you from presenting as your confident, authentic self. Recognizing and replacing limiting beliefs are two separate steps, although we have started the process already.

Replacing Limiting Beliefs

When it comes to replacing these beliefs, you can liken it to learning a new skill or developing a good habit. The process takes a lot of repetition and an investment of time. You have to incorporate physical activity daily in order to see the full success and effect of changing limiting beliefs. A positive change is best and most easily achieved through repeating daily affirmations.

Affirmations are simple and have been proven to contribute to an overall better mental state. Additionally, they improve one's ability to overcome fears of incompetence, replacing them with a positive mindset. (Cascio et al., 2015).

In the next exercise, you will sift through your lists of new beliefs and pick a few to package into daily affirmations. I will start with an example for reference.

Money doesn't grow on trees	Money is a paper tool that is available to anyone and everyone
-----------------------------	--

Using the counterattack belief, I will now rewrite it in first person, as if telling myself what I now believe:

Money is a paper tool that is readily and easily available to me
--

Note the additions I have made to the statement. These additions are meant to directly challenge the underlying belief behind the first statement, "money doesn't grow on trees," which would be that money *is not* readily available or easily accessible.

Mind Tools, a psychology research-based blog, suggests keeping these tips in mind when writing affirmations:

- Make sure they are positive and affirmative (they are called affirmations for a reason!).
- Avoid stating the thing you want to replace/negate a sentence. (For example, replace the false belief "I am ugly" with "I am beautiful" instead of "I am not ugly.")
- Keep your statements short and easy to read and memorize.
- Keep your affirmation list short. Try to narrow it down to five if possible.

Now, use the space below to craft your "**Top Five Daily Affirmations**":

--

--

Now, all you need to do is ensure you recite these affirmations daily.

Pro tip: Say your affirmations in front of a mirror first thing in the morning (or do it among the first things you do in the morning) or just before bed.

Now we can move on to the next step. What happens after we have identified the limiting beliefs, changed them to new ones, and worked towards establishing them as the default? It certainly doesn't happen overnight—another critical step needs to happen.

Cultivating a Growth Mindset

The author Carol Dweck popularized the principle of the growth mindset in her book, *Mindset: How You Can Fulfill Your Potential*, where she makes the distinction between a growth mindset and a fixed mindset. Both mindsets have to deal with how we respond to challenges.

Below are simple definitions of each mindset. There is also space for you to reflect on how you personally identify with each one. It's your workbook! Feel free to get personal.

The concept of a fixed mindset pertains to a system of thinking where one remains stuck in a rut when faced with failure and challenges. When limiting beliefs arise, one does little to nothing to challenge them. Instead, they might throw a pity party for why things will never change.

Where, in your own life, can you identify with this type of mindset?

The concept of a growth mindset pertains to a system of thinking where one sees an opportunity for growth and learning in setbacks and failures that occur. Limiting beliefs are simply mountains to be conquered on the journey of life.

Where can you identify this pattern of thinking in your own life?

Because our successes, no matter how big or small, deserve more airtime, why don't you list more of those examples of when you have exercised a growth mindset? These examples might be from when you were resilient in giving birth to your first child, persevering through a marathon, or simply getting through a semester without dropping out!

Celebrating success through a growth mindset

Doesn't it feel great to realize that you *do* have what it takes? The journey to self-confidence is paved by thwarting self-doubt along the way. You can do this!

If you have struggled to come up with ideas, worry not! Below is an evidence-based exercise, designed to help you to fully adopt this way of thinking intentionally.

As is custom, let's consider some real-life examples of women who had to overcome limiting beliefs in order to harness the resilience needed for them to achieve their dreams.

Be Inspired

Mindy Kaling

Mindy is an American actress of Indian descent. She has spoken openly about her challenges in Hollywood where she felt limited to only taking up certain roles that were stereotypical of her heritage and portrayed women of color in a one-dimensional manner. She struggled to land roles solely based on her talent and not her heritage in a white-dominated industry. However, she did not quit, and her tenacity served her well. She finally landed a role on the hit TV show *The Office*, where she was also hired as a writer. As a result, she had the platform to showcase her acting talent as well as her creativity and humor in the scripts. Greg Daniels, the creator of *The Office*, was instrumental in her journey to success as he gave her the opportunity for the role. She did not let the limiting belief that women of color can only portray roles that have something to do with that heritage.

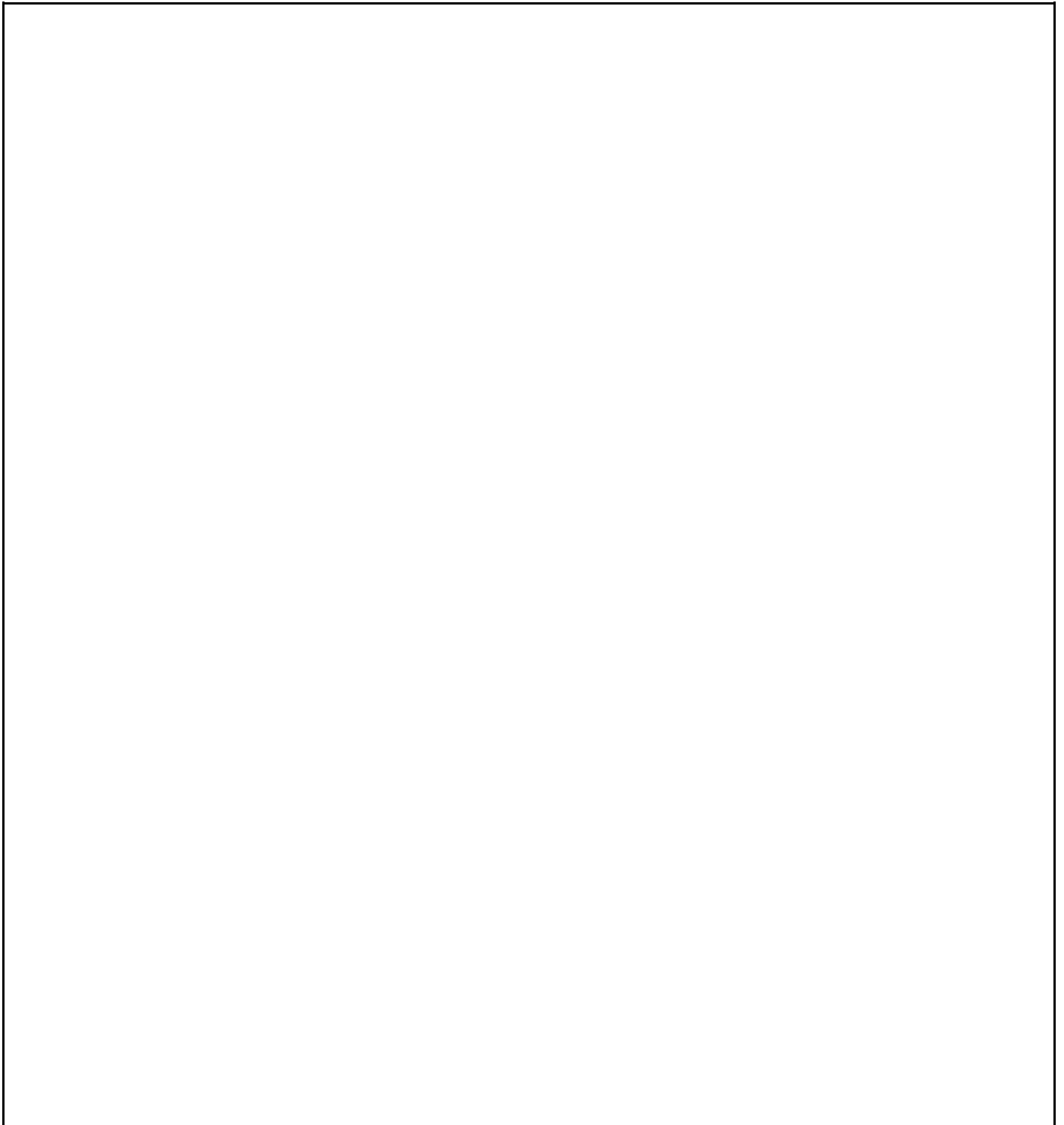
Oprah Winfrey

Oprah is no stranger to most people as she is one of the most successful talk show hosts and media moguls. Her road to success was not short of challenges. She grew up in poverty and was abused as a child. But with the support of her teachers and family, she overcame these challenges and went after her dreams. She has also described the challenges she faced as an African-American woman in an industry dominated by white men, but she did not let that deter her from her path. Oprah has also spent much of her career teaching and sharing about the importance of one's mindset and approach to their work in order to become successful, as well as hosting a slew of guests who teach on these topics on her show. Her story shows us that your childhood and where you come from do not have to determine or define what you are capable of achieving.

Chapter 4:

Self-discovery for Inner Peace

Imagine the ideal version of yourself. Describe her in as much detail as you can possibly fit in this space. Feel free to draw images or even stick some cut-outs from a magazine.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing or description of an ideal self.

Now, imagine a scenario where the woman above is exactly who you are when someone asks you that question. This concept is what this chapter is about!

The path of self-discovery and self-actualization is one that many traverse, but few have enough grit to see it through. It's not, by any means, excruciatingly difficult. Rather, it requires a lot of uncomfortable self-introspective work. Much more than we can cover in a chapter (or this entire book), but we will do our best to lay a firm foundation.

Understanding Self-Discovery

When the individual words are considered, it is quite a strange phenomenon to grapple with. *How does one discover themselves when they can simply look in the mirror*, you might wonder. But the key is to realize that this path is one where your inner self is the one looking in the mirror. And that mirror is not as direct as the physical ones we use every day.

Let's give it a shot, shall we?



Who Am I Really?

Write down some words or phrases that you think other people would use to describe the real you. Note that these terms should be completely separate from any physical attributes.

These terms are what you think you project towards other people.

Now, the next part of this exercise takes a bit of courage, but the results will be rewarding if you participate. Invite someone who knows you well to fill in the below section. **DO NOT** show them what you have on the previous page.



Well done for getting this far in the exercise! There will be some commonalities in your mirrors (hopefully), but also some differences. Let's shine a light on both. Fill the table below with 10 of each (if you have that many, or however many you have).

Present in both mirrors	What I think I reflect (on my mirror only)	What I did not know I reflect (on the second mirror only)

Hopefully, this exercise paints an interesting picture for you to consider. It may have gone one of several ways, but I will detail the three options I am most interested in:

Many common attributes on your mirrors—congratulations! You have a good sense of self-awareness and are well on your way (or have already arrived) to knowing who you are.

There are more attributes on mirror one. This result might mean that you are well-intentioned, but sometimes it does not translate to the people around you. You may often think you are misunderstood.

There are more attributes on mirror two. Chances are you downplay yourself heavily and undermine the contributions you make to society in general.

All these exercises are based on research which shows that a core part of a journey of self-discovery is knowing who you think you are and who people around you think you are (Neffi, 2017).

Now, granted, different people will have different perceptions of you depending on many factors, which includes their own biases. This concept is not the be-all and end-all method of self-discovery, but it certainly points us in a direction worth pursuing.

- Reflect and consider what you can do differently in order to unify your lists into one if they aren't already.

The next exercise will help you to introspect and make some decisions on what you need to do to get to the next phase.

The first column is where you write where you currently are, the third column is where you note your goal, and the middle column is where you will write what actions you need to take to bridge the gap between the current and future.

Prioritize five points to work on. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day. It is always best to choose a few things to work on and do them really well, instead of overwhelming yourself with 1,000 steps at once.

Current me	Action steps	Future me

--	--	--

Now that you have determined your action steps, you can proceed with setting up an action plan to ensure that you achieve those goals. Let's get specific. Add detail to your plans with dates, timelines, and measurable indices you can use to check on your progress.

Action step	Timeline	Measurable index

This method of goal setting is a proven method of ensuring success in your plans (Traugott, 2014). It's one thing to have intentions and be clear on them, but it's another thing to execute them successfully.

You will find that once you start to overcome things that were once a vague idea, you uncover hidden talents and empower yourself to live a life that is authentic and true to your purpose and what you are passionate about.

Now, the foundation of a journey of self-discovery is not complete without spending some time discussing your purpose. This question causes much anxiety for most people, because of the sheer overwhelm of not knowing where to start. Let's simplify it!

What Is My Purpose?

A most trusted method without much research backing it is the Ikigai method. It comes from Japanese culture and makes it easier for you to figure out what your purpose is (Gaines, 2020).

But perhaps we should first take a close look at what "purpose" means in relation to finding out what that is for your life. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary and considering the context in this case, it is your reason for being. We can go further and say your mission on earth. This definition may make it seem earth-shattering and difficult, but once you accept that every single person has a role, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem to you, you begin to appreciate the value of what you can contribute.

Say, for example, you feel that your purpose is to be a pioneer in the fashion world. However, you think almost immediately that it is a frivolous thing to dedicate your life to, so you decide it is not worth pursuing. You settle instead to be a chemist and feel miserable for the rest of your life.

However, one day you receive an enlightened view of life where you get a glimpse of the bigger picture. Then, you realize that had you pursued your fashion dream, you would have inspired millions of women through centuries of time to embrace their authenticity and live life to the fullest, in confidence and boldness. This purpose, in turn, would impact the rest of the world. Not so frivolous now, is it?

Or even if you realized that your fashion journey only impacted a handful of people but gave them a boost of joy that saved their lives from oblivion. It would still not be a frivolous thing!

My point with this story is that you should go after what your heart desires you to pursue as long as it is safe, good for your health, and good for the environment and community. There is a reason why you specifically have the ambitions, dreams, and desires you have. Pursue them and bring them to life! So many graveyards are full of bestselling authors, famous film directors, artistic geniuses, and more who never realized their dreams or shared their talents with the world for a lack of faith.

We had to spend some time on this concept as it is often a sore topic for many. People often feel they don't have a choice when it comes to living out their purpose, but I'm here to tell you that you get to choose! Now, let's get to the fun stuff and figure it all out.

Step 1: Find Your Ikigai

This step is simply finding the sweet spot between what your talents or skills are, what you love, what the world needs, and what you can get paid for doing.

Brainstorm some ideas below and then fill in the Ikigai Chart.

What are my talents/gifts? They don't have to be anything traditionally artistic. It can be public speaking, for example:

What am I good at?

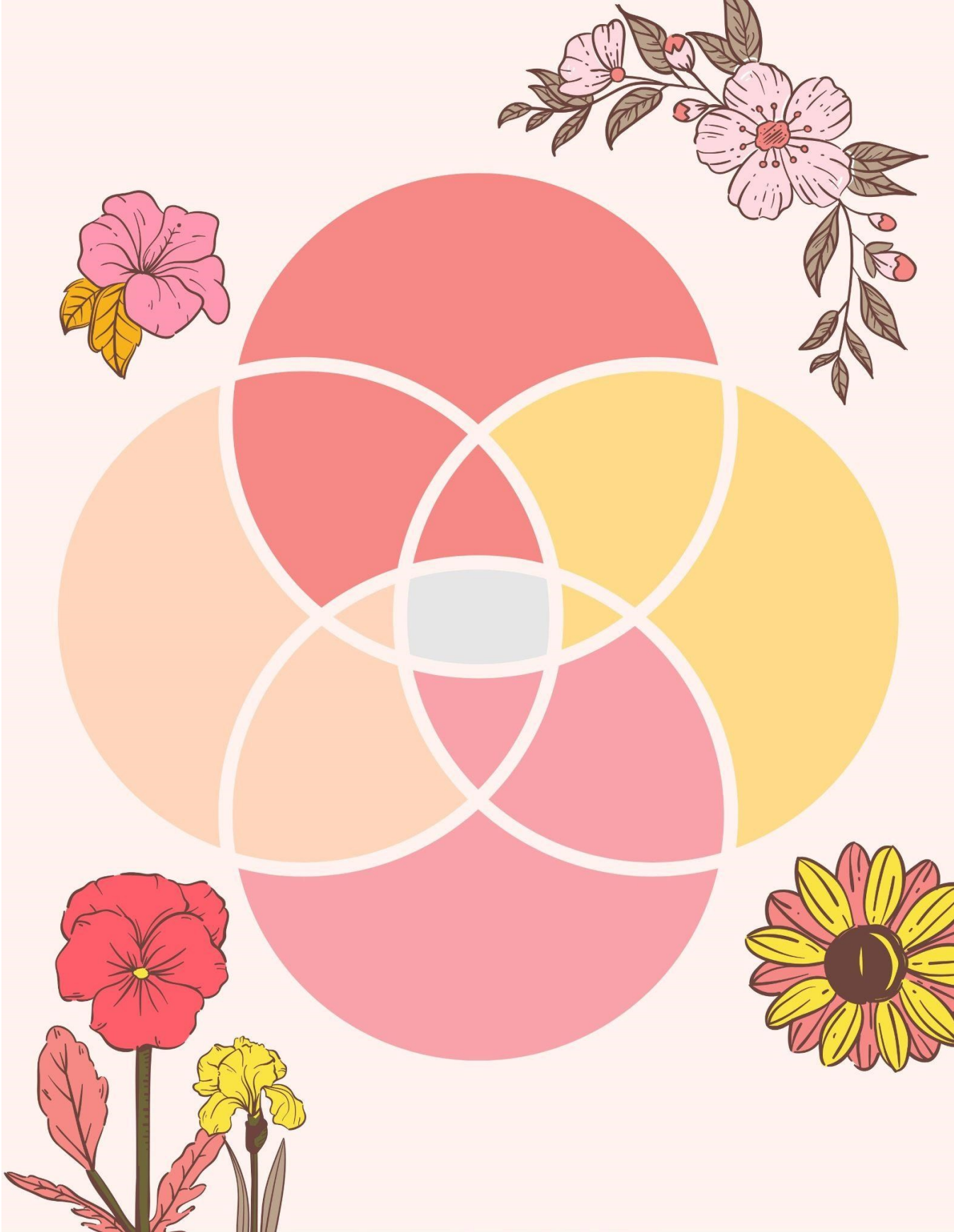
What do I genuinely love doing?

What does the world need? Identify gaps that are currently present in the world that you can relate to your talents. Or not! (As an example, you never know what can come up if you put public speaking and environmental rehabilitation together.)

What can I get paid for doing? Yes, pursuing your purpose is great, but you also need to eat! It is wise to find a way to get paid while doing something you love.

Now, we can determine how all of these ideas come together below:

Ikigai Chart



Step 2: Uprooting Blocks

Now that you have an idea of your purpose, let us consider how to overcome the blocks that would make you believe you should not pursue your purpose.

But first, answer this simple question.

Are you ready to celebrate the achievements that will come from embracing your purpose? Tick the only appropriate answer:

YES	NO
-----	----

My assumption is that if you have made it to this point in the book, you ticked “yes”! Let’s begin.

It is prudent for us to first consider how mental blockages hinder us from pursuing our dreams. These can come in the form of limiting beliefs (as discussed in the previous chapter), societal norms, and misinformed personal convictions, among other things. Mental blockages contribute to a sharp decline in our ability to think creatively and fully apply ourselves to tasks (Calvello, 2021). It can become dire to the extent that thoughts of our dreams cause a stress response in our bodies and so we are even less likely to have an interest in pursuing that path. So, the rewiring of the mind needs to continue!

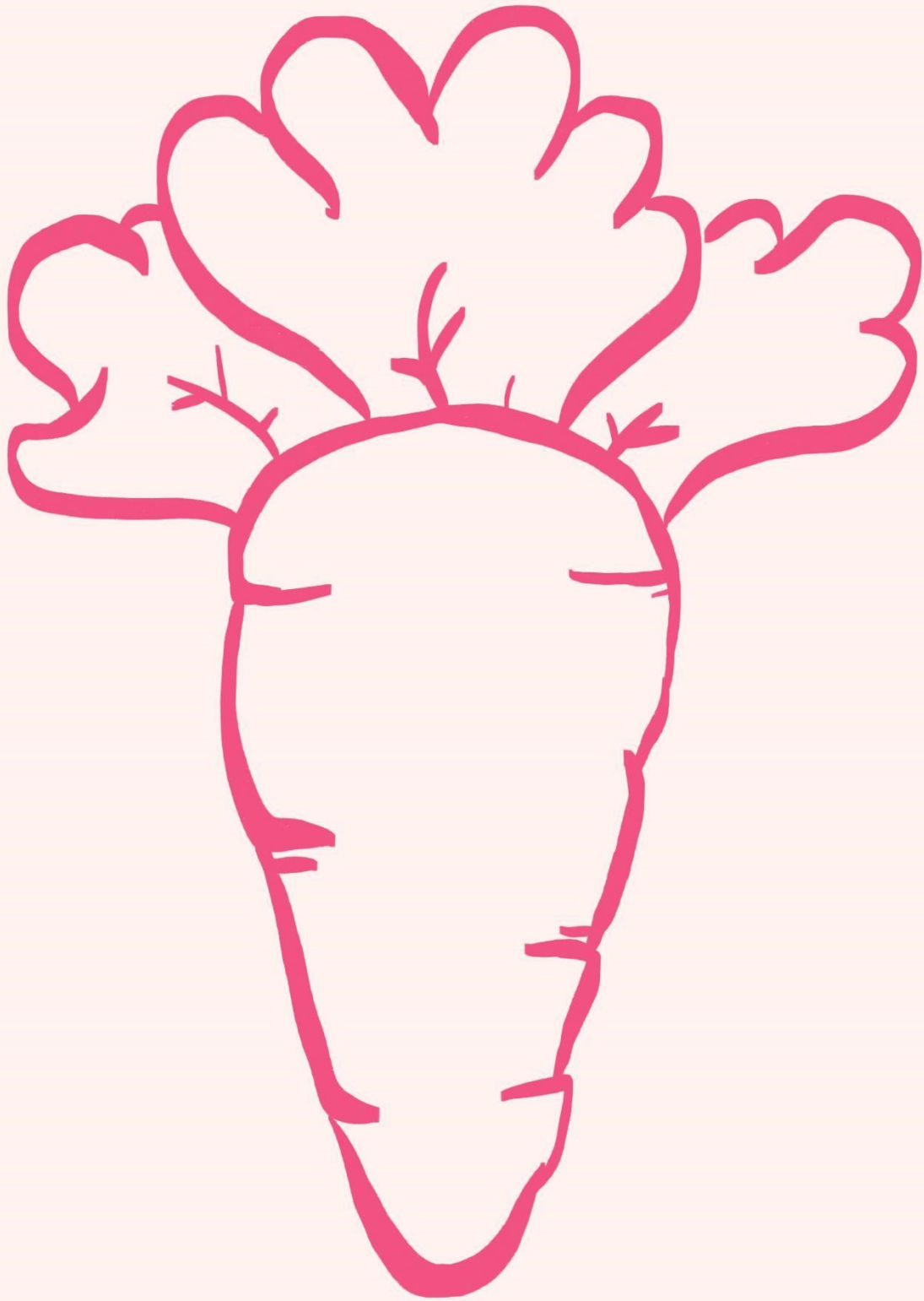
Complete the exercise below, filling in the carrot with the following:

The Leaves:

Realize that the meeting between your ideas and the outside world is not in your control and that’s okay! The sunlight and water that will support and feed you to grow will show up all on their own. You only need to worry about outing yourself and your talents out there. Focus on your pursuit.

The Carrot:

Write what your life would look like if you took a leap of faith and were successful in your pursuits. Closer to the bottom, list all the beliefs and limitations that you feel are stopping you from pursuing your purpose.



Whenever you feel like giving up, that middle section should be the fire that keeps everything burning. Focus on the end goal, the desired result and you will continue to strive to live in your purpose. Studies have shown that this approach yields good results (Blankert & Hamstra, 2016).

Now let's consider some incredible women whose stories will inspire you in your pursuit of purpose.

Be Inspired

Wangari Muta Maathai

Wangari was a Kenyan environmental activist and politician. She is most well known for being the first African woman to receive a Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her work around environmental conservation. She overcame ridicule from her society and the perception that she was stepping out of traditional gender norms to pursue her dreams, fighting for a cause that many did not have any knowledge of at the time. Her views on democracy and fair governance also led her into trouble with local Kenyan authorities, and she was even arrested at several intervals of political unrest. Her foundation, The Green Belt Movement, also struggled with financial support at its inception which made it more difficult to conduct their work. But Wangari remained resolute in her view of what the world needed—environmental consciousness and activities around conservation. She used her talent as an orator and the influence she could garner to raise awareness, even if it was risky for her. Eventually with all the international attention her work received, her organization thrived, and she received many honors and accolades for her contributions (The Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2019).

Nadia Comăneci

Nadia is a Romanian gymnast whose claim to fame was the perfect 10.0 score she received as an Olympian, making history as the first gymnast to gain this prestige in 1976. She is considered a revolutionist in her sport, as she took risks and applied herself creatively to present a unique routine during the Olympics. Her risks did not come with sacrifice—it required her to spend many hours learning and practicing, and it also took a toll on her physically because of injuries and sprains. One can only imagine what it did to her psyche as she is recorded to have shared her desire for perfection (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019). From this example, we can learn that when one does what they love, and does what it takes to hone their skill, they can also give the world something they did not know was needed by paving new paths yet unexplored.

Hedy Lamarr

Hedy was an Austrian-American actress who wowed audiences with her beauty, grace, and talent. However, what many did not know was her keen science curiosity that was fuelled in no small part by her father. It is reported that from a tender age, he would teach her the inner workings of different machines. It was apparently not uncommon to find her nose buried taking apart her toys to see what fuelled them. This childhood hobby is why it is not a surprising fact that when she made it to Hollywood she became very good friends with Howard Hughes who was a pilot and businessman. It was through this relationship that she further explored her curiosities from childhood. Hughes even gifted her a set of tools that were set up in her trailer so that she could work on her innovations between takes during filming for her movies. Her most notable invention came as a result of a friendship between herself and another keen inventor, George Antheil, fueled by the Second World War and a shared desire to contribute to the war effort. They ended up creating a communication technology that involved frequency hopping, which would effectively prevent the signal from being intercepted (Cheslak, 2018). This invention was a precursor to modern-day wifi, Bluetooth, and GPS technologies. She was the first woman to be inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame, although it

was posthumously (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019). Hedy's story serves as a reminder to make no excuses to follow your passions—often, your purpose is hidden somewhere along that path.

PART 2:

Empowering Through Interactive Elements

This section of the book is heavily focused on things we can do. We are really getting into the nitty-gritty details of what your life now needs to look like as someone who is on a journey to build confidence. Hopefully, by now, your way of thinking has changed, and we now need to consider how your daily life can change so that you are living in line with all the newfound knowledge you have acquired.

Words without action are just words. I'd say this is the most critical section of the book as you and so I hope you are fully present and participate in everything that is laid out for you.

The main things we will deal with are

- establishing healthy boundaries
- daily rituals
- transformative self-development techniques
- self-love in action

As in the previous section, there will be many exercises for you to complete that will help you to introspect and hopefully see things, and yourself, differently. There will also be a section at the end of each chapter dedicated to shining a light on inspirational women from around the globe who have accomplished what you hope to accomplish, harnessing their inner power to become the best version of themselves and contribute confidently and boldly to society.

Let's dive in.

Chapter 5:

Setting Empowering Boundaries

We are going to start this chapter off on a reflective note. I want you to think back to a time in your life when a lack of boundaries caused discomfort or unintended results.

I think we can all agree that not setting boundaries can cost us our peace of mind and, perhaps more seriously, our well-being. Learning how to set boundaries that are effective is an important part of building assertive confidence.

Understanding Boundaries

Considering the definition of a boundary as a limit exerted on something, we can see that a personal boundary is a limit that you exert in how others interact with you in different facets of life. Boundaries can and should be introduced in all types of relationships. They include but are not limited to emotional, physical, sexual, and financial areas of your life.

Next, we will focus on how you can adopt and maintain healthy boundaries.

Why Are Healthy Boundaries Important?

Here is a quick exercise that not only lists some important benefits of asserting healthy boundaries but also helps you self-assess to see how you are doing on the boundary scale.

Indicate with an “X” where you would fall on the scale in relation to each boundary benefit, where one is poor and five is expert.

Boundary benefit	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional Autonomy					
Space & Time Autonomy					

Independent Thinking					
Mental Wellness					
Self-awareness					
Mutual Respect in relationships					

If you did not score high in this exercise, don't be discouraged—there is still hope on the other side of this chapter. What is important is gaining an awareness of what the current state is. Reading the book is already a decision to do something about it. Be proud of the affirmative action you are taking!

Healthy boundaries play a significant role in fostering self-improvement because they help you establish trust with others and give you an overall sense of safety. Plus, they contribute to respectful relationships. They also help in building confidence in your decision-making abilities contributing to your overall likelihood of success in your endeavors (Odell, 2023).

There is also a direct correlation between cultivating self-respect and establishing healthy boundaries. A simple way to consider this correlation is to complete the exercise below based on some common symptoms of low self-worth (Zandifar, 2018):

Indicate with an "X" where you would fall on the scale in relation to each aspect of self-worth.

Self-Worth Scale Key:

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Once in a while
- 3 = Often enough
- 4 = More often than not
- 5 = All the time

Self-worth scale	1	2	3	4	5
Needy behavior					
Self-sabotage					
Unfounded shame					

People-pleasing					
Biting off more than you can chew					
Staying in toxic friendships or relationships					
Always apologizing					
Never saying no because of guilt or shame					
Preferring to blend in the corner					
Feeling like you can never be enough					

There are certainly more parameters that can be considered to determine self-worth—these ones simply give an overview of the most common markers. If most of your answers to the above exercise are three and below, then that may be an indication for you to pay closer attention to how you assert boundaries in your life.

Notice that many of the points associated with self-worth have something to do with control. In this case, if your self-worth is low, chances are other people are controlling your time, money, space, and how you live your life. By taking back control, you can fix both problems in one go. And one takes back control of their life by, you guessed it, establishing boundaries.

Now let's get into the meat of this chapter.

How to Establish Healthy Boundaries

By taking learning from psychological studies into how our brains process our interactions with others, let's take this in steps to make sure that nothing is missed (Nash, 2018).

Step 1: Self-Awareness

You need to have a high level of awareness to be able to determine what feels okay for you and what doesn't. If you have never paid close attention to your comfort, use the below exercise to reflect and try to figure out simple situations that make you feel uncomfortable in everyday life. Your answers could be something like a friend insisting on hanging out after work when you want to rest or your boss calling you after work hours. This exercise is to get you thinking about what does not feel good but that you have become accustomed to and therefore never challenge.

Situations that make you uncomfortable

Step 2: Communicate

Now that you have determined what doesn't feel good, your next step is to communicate or be prepared to communicate with the relevant parties involved. Using the example of a nagging boss, your response might mean respectfully asking them not to contact you after working hours. It is important to remember that you *do not* have to explain yourself or apologize when communicating your boundaries.

With reference to the previous exercise, write out scripts for how you would communicate your discomfort with the parties involved in your boundary breach.

Practice scripts to assert my boundaries

Step 3: Stick To Your Guns

Now that you have done all the work to determine and communicate your boundaries, you need to follow it all through with assertiveness. Otherwise, it would all have been for nothing. I certainly don't want your work to go to waste, so spend some time strategizing on what you can do to continue being assertive.

Using the nagging boss example, you can decide to switch your phone off if they continue calling after hours, and then follow it up with another polite conversation. If they persist, it would mean having a sit-down with your human resources department. If that is not possible, then you can simply ignore them when they call.

Strategize below based on your above entries from steps one and two.

My strategy for asserting my boundaries

Wonderfully done!

We have one final step for you before wrapping up our work on setting boundaries—yet another scale! This time, you will be assessing how you are doing in different facets of life in terms of setting effective boundaries.

Effective Boundary Setting Scale Key:

- = Completely and utterly failing
- = I am just getting by
- = Only when it is convenient for all parties
- = I am on my way to freedom
- = Winning and staying on top

Facet of Life	1	2	3	4	5
Mental					
Emotional					
Material					

Internal					
Conversational					
Physical					
Time					

If you scored all fives, you can skip to the end of this chapter! If you have many below three, don't lose hope. Practice makes perfect. Once you practice self-awareness, communication, and assertiveness, you will score fives in no time!

Let's start you off with some good practice with some fake scenarios based on asserting boundaries in each facet of life. Most are excerpts of what someone might say to you in a social setting, or what a friend or family member might say. Have a go at it.

Facet of life	Scenario	Your assertive response
Mental	"Your culture is so backward! There is nothing wrong with kissing your partner in public!"	
Emotional	"You are being so selfish! Today was supposed to be about me, not you and your work problems."	
Material	"Why are you being so stingy? I will pay you back on time, I promise."	
Internal	"I know you're an introvert but you have to come to my party this weekend!"	
Conversational	"How about you? What's your body count?"	
Physical	You have been introduced to someone and they come in for a hug which makes you uncomfortable	

An aspect that may also need a guide is how to be assertive as this quality may be challenging for some. Below are some helpful pointers courtesy of the University of Kansas:

- Avoid beating around the bush. Get to the point.
- Be specific about what makes you uncomfortable.

- You never have to explain yourself unless you choose to do that.
- Avoid sounding accusatory by using “you” to address the problem. Instead, opt for “I” statements.
- Be kind and understanding of the other person’s humanity. Try not to humiliate or embarrass them when finding a way to respectfully communicate your boundaries.

Let’s move on to my personal favorite part of every chapter.

Be Inspired

Brené Brown

Brené is an American professor, author, and podcast host who has dedicated her life to sharing insights on self-improvement, specifically on topics to do with vulnerability, courage, shame, and empathy. One of the main topics she has dealt with, across many publications, popular media platforms, and shows, is the importance of setting boundaries, and how that practice contributes to your overall state of well-being. She is the writer of six best-sellers and credits her husband Steve as one of the biggest supporters in her life (Brown, 2023). Having dedicated her academic life to studying vulnerability and shame, she did not have a lot of support from academia because of how uncommon her choice of subject matter was, and her work did not lack critics. But she allowed herself to be courageous to stand up for what she believes in (Stanton, 2019).

Michelle Obama

Michelle is a former first lady of the United States of America, and she is no stranger to talking about the importance of setting boundaries. She has shared personal stories around these topics in her own books, where she expresses that juggling multiple roles as a mother, wife, and first lady took some strict boundaries and knew her limits. One has to be able to set boundaries. She also emphasizes the importance of communication in achieving this successfully. Some of the methods she has used are prioritizing—especially when it came to ensuring that her family always came first, allowing herself to have personal downtime, establishing boundaries in social media, and limiting her exposure to social media. She continues to encourage people to go after their dreams but not at the expense of their mental health (Banks, 2022).

Chapter 6:

Daily Empowerment Rituals

I am sure by now you have an appreciation of the fact that the journey of boosting your confidence begins with you, which can only translate to meaning that it also begins from the moment you wake up in the morning. As a woman who wants to be intentional about how she lives, you need to also be mindful of what you do throughout your day.

In this chapter, I am going to deal with your morning, day, and night routines. You will self-assess to see if you are self-sabotaging or making decisions that are supportive of helping you present the best version of yourself on a daily basis. We will also consider stories from women who have championed winning the day through effective productivity and planning.

Buckle up and prepare for the ride!

The Power of Ritual

There is power in following a daily ritual. It will help you confidently approach life and gain a better sense of control over your day and time. Plus, daily rituals give you better security because you have a plan of action. As a result, you'll likely experience reduced levels of anxiety and distress throughout the day, making you more productive (Brennan, 2021). If you haven't tried daily rituals before, this chapter may very well be the most impactful one in this book from a practical, lived experience perspective!

We will only focus on three daily rituals that have proven benefits and many testimonials from people who have successfully adopted them. But first, let's talk about the mental state with which to approach your day for the best results.

A Winning Mindset

It is helpful to establish rituals that remind you of previous achievements and successes because doing so sets the tone for your mindset as you approach those activities and future endeavors. It is a proven fact that celebrating past achievements increases one's motivation, creativity, and innovative edge (Amabile & Kramer, 2016). The following activity is meant to guide you to re-discover and celebrate some of the maybe obscure and smaller achievements you often don't think about, but that can springboard you into action towards approaching everything you encounter with confidence.

We will only consider five sub-sections so as to not overwhelm your senses so early on. As you fill in the sections, below are some questions that can get you started on thinking of what to include.

- What are some challenging scenarios I overcome every day but have become used to?
- What skills does it take to carry out what I so easily do every day with ease?
- How do I support others daily or weekly in ways I may take for granted?
- Where have I applied innovative thinking to make a positive difference in someone else's life?

Personal	Healthy living
Professional	Learning or teaching

Now that we have sorted out your mindset toward how awesome you are and the wonderful things you do every day without even flinching, let's do something fun.

Create an empowerment playlist (EP) of music that hypes you up and puts you in a good mood. You can turn to it whenever you need an extra boost of energy or motivation. Music has been found to have a positive impact on our mood, cognitive skills, and productivity (Schäfer et al., 2013). Write down the songs in your EP for safekeeping, in case something happens to those pesky gadgets!

My empowerment playlist

Great! We are all set to begin working on our daily rituals.

Daily Rituals to Live by

Ritual 1: Visualization

The mind is a powerful place. Worlds are built and also destroyed firstly in the mind. And what you feed it can determine the course of your life. It is no surprise that you can use the power of visualization to your advantage in building your confidence.

Put simply, visualization is associating your goals with mental imagery and allowing yourself to feel the feelings as if the goal has already been realized. Many successful people have listed visualization exercises among the top contributors to their success (Crestani, 2023). According to scientists, the brain cannot tell the difference between a detailed and immersive visualization and reality. This skill is what you can use to your advantage to be successful (University et al., 2020).

You can take a peek at the “Be Inspired” section of the chapter to start getting some inspiration and motivation from women who have walked in these shoes before and found great success with these concepts.

There are several methods you can employ to execute visualization. Let’s consider some of the most effective ones.

Method 1: Affirmations

We have already gone into much detail with affirmations when we discussed dealing with limiting beliefs, but the concept deserves special mention here too. The daily reminder of what you are capable of is a better boost to the morning than caffeine. Don’t argue!

The key thing to grasp here is that there is power in words, so use them to build yourself up.

Method 2: Vision Board

This method relies on an outward expression of one’s goals in images. You can simply cut out images from magazines or download and print your idea of success and assemble it. Then all you have to do is put it up in a place where you will see it daily. The main idea behind this method is that it primes your mind to recognize opportunities that can lead to success in your endeavors. When viewed at the prime time which has been

found before you fall asleep at night, it creates a visual mindmap for you to follow while filtering out all the irrelevant information (Scipioni, 2019).

In the exercise below, create your own vision board for a single goal you have but have been putting off for one reason or the other. Make it something that excites you when you look at it. When you're done, consider transferring this exercise to a bigger canvas and creating a whole project of it.

My Vision Board



Method 3: Creative Visualization

In this instance, you really have to adopt all your senses to figure out a way to have a real experience of what you desire to achieve. Imagine the taste, smell, touch, and sounds. You can also use any aids that will make the experience more real for you. Much like the vision board, it involves tricking your mind into believing something has already happened so you become more in tune with things that will get you there faster in reality (Scipioni, 2019).

Method 4: Guided Visualization

This method is perfect for you if you really have no idea how to get started. The whole idea is that a gentle, guiding voice takes you through creating scenes in your mind of you accomplishing your desired goals. There are so many free guided visualizations online. You can find ones that are specific to your goals, or ones that are more generalized, allowing you to create scenes specific to you.

Ritual 2: Journaling

Journaling is a practice that enables you to become more self-aware. The principle behind it is for you to spend time reflecting on your day, which enables you to pick out certain patterns and mindsets. By doing so, you have the opportunity to resolve what needs to be changed or identify where there are gaps for you to fill. For example, if you notice that whenever you sleep in or keep pressing the snooze button, your day does not go as planned, it gives you information on what works and what doesn't work for you. Your emotional intelligence also improves as you become more aware of how you naturally respond to situations.

The Journal Snapshot

The following exercise is a simple journaling template to get you started if you are not accustomed to the practice. It barely takes five minutes but gives you enough of a chance to introspect on your day and get to know yourself better which empowers you to approach life with confidence.

Morning Prompts:

One thing I am grateful for is

My intention today is to

My top priority task today is

Afternoon Prompts:

Today, I am feeling

I am still looking forward to

My productivity and motivation level is

 **Evening/Night Prompts:**

Three things I learned today were

Three things that happened today that I am grateful for are

If you love to write, you can even choose to just write in prose in a notebook. Your guide would be to think of how you're feeling at the present moment, what your aspirations are, what you have planned for the day, what you are grateful for, and really, anything that comes to mind.

Ritual 3: Mindfulness

A conversation on self-empowerment cannot be concluded without mentioning the powerful technique of mindfulness. One of the key benefits of mindfulness is that it helps you to be more resilient, and improves your overall mental wellness. It also reduces stress and helps you in managing it better. You also have better self-awareness, empathy, and self-control which improve your quality of life and your relationships (Xiao et al., 2017).

The obvious way to adopt mindfulness into your life is through meditation, but there are also other ways you can incorporate it that are not spoken of as often. Use the scale below to self-assess how well you approach your life with mindfulness. This task will also give you clues about what you can change going forward.

The Mindfulness Scale Key:

- 5 = Always
- 4 = Most of the time
- 3 = Sometimes
- 2 = Hardly ever
- 1 = Never

Activity	1	2	3	4	5
Do you eat while distracted?					
Do you take time to look around at the world when you're on your daily commute?					
Do you always have something playing on TV while doing chores?					
When you're with friends, do you put your phone completely away?					
When you wake up, do you check your phone immediately?					

These few examples can hopefully point you in a direction that shows you how much you live intentionally and are fully present, especially during mundane activities. If you haven't lived from a place of presence, it is never too late to start!

It's now time to receive a boost in confidence and motivation by drawing inspiration from other women.

Be Inspired

Serena Williams

The world-renowned American former tennis player has talked publicly and at length about how she harnessed the visualization technique to prepare herself before matches, stating that it improved her overall performance.

Sara Blakely

The creator of the popular women's underwear brand Spanx, Sara has attributed her entrepreneurial success partly to visualization. One of her more common anecdotes is a fake cover story she wrote of herself, imagining she had been interviewed by a popular business magazine. Eventually, that came true and so did her dreams and goals (Miller, 2020).

Lupita Nyong'o

Lupita is a Kenyan actress who has shared how much journaling has impacted her life in helping her be better able to express herself with no reservations. She has also used it as a tool to document her journey and keep track of how far she has come, which we have seen is a powerful way to stay motivated and optimistic.

Gisele Bündchen

Gisele is a Brazilian model who has not shied away from sharing how her holistic approach to life allows her to live a more fulfilled and intentional life. She has spoken at length about the benefits she has found in daily meditation in her own life, and she has credited it to be one of the things that saw her through very challenging times in her life, stating that the practice offers much-needed clarity on different things (Echevarrieta, 2020). Seeing as she is one of the most famous models ever, we can take a page from her book of what success looks like!

Chapter 7:

Transformative Personal Growth

One could argue that transformative personal growth is what we have been doing throughout this book already, and yet here we are. It is important to approach the subject with clear intentions so as to get the most out of this process.

Understanding Personal Growth

By definition, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, we can infer that “personal growth” is the process of an individual’s progressive development as they acquire new knowledge to aid in better self-expression and more success in life. Ensuring that this personal growth is transformative, in other words, changing the nature of what is already there, is a step that must not be skipped or missed.

When one decides to make changes in their life, there is an overarching sense of realization that there are things that can and should change—which is a good thing. It is equally important to ensure that there is a clear strategy to enforce that change otherwise it will all be for nothing.

In a nutshell, this concept is what we will be handling in this chapter.

What Do You Stand For?

Any successful company needs to have this question answered before they start doing anything. The same should apply to you. How can you walk into the world boldly and with confidence without knowing what your personal purpose and convictions are? Let’s work on how we can bring those aspects of you out.

We will deal with this question as one would a business, so you will discover the following information:

- your vision
- your values
- your mission

Once these factors have been determined, we can then assess your path for transformative personal growth.


Defining Your Vision

Hellen Keller, an American author and political activist once said, “the only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision” (Philosiblog, 2015). I think this statement perfectly exemplifies why it is important to have a vision. It gives you a direction in life—a reason for being, and a reason to get out of bed to pursue your dreams every day. It can also help you with course correcting when you have been walking blindly, and essentially, with no direction (Leighton, 2018).

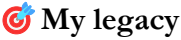
Envision yourself in the next five and ten years. In as much detail as possible, what would your life look like? Think about your relationships, career, lifestyle, and everything in between.

 **Five-year vision**

Which activities make you lose track of time when you are doing them? What ignites a fiery passion within you?

 **Ten-year vision**

Imagine yourself at the end of your life. What would you like to see to believe that you made your mark and are leaving a lasting legacy?


Empty space for student response

Defining Your Values

Having at least five core values that you live by is important. This statement is not to say the rest are not worth pursuing, but these are the non-negotiables for you in any circumstance. Having known core values makes decision-making easier, and it improves your focus on the things that really matter in life. In turn, your chances of successfully executing your vision are increased. Core values also serve as guiding principles that inform your moral compass and help you assert boundaries and ways of working (Applied Positive Psychology Learning Institute, 2020).

In this activity, think carefully and circle the five top most important attributes that you would like to embody. Then in the space below, explain why you chose what you chose. This exercise is for you to gain more mental clarity on your choices as well as ensure you are introspecting on what truly matters to you.

Honesty	Justice	Fairness	Friendship	Community
Respect	Freedom	Equality	Family	Authenticity
Empathy	Independence	Diversity	Spirituality	Responsibility
Compassion	Flexibility	Environmental Stewardship	Optimism	Trust

Kindness	Curiosity	Empowerment	Innovation	Resilience
Loyalty	Creativity	Leadership	Growth	Harmony
Accountability	Ambition	Collaboration	Learning	Peace
Authenticity	Perseverance	Teamwork	Adventure	Purpose
Generosity	Gratitude	Open-mindedness	Balance	Wisdom
Integrity	Patience	Humility	Wellness	Generosity

Why are these values important to me?

Defining Your Mission

The best way to think of your mission is the actions you will take to accomplish your vision, while also incorporating and staying true to your values.

What are you currently doing that is helping to achieve your five-year vision?

If you drew a blank, no worries! You can come back to this section in a few months to reflect on your progress. Instead, you can commit to three actions that you will take starting today to get you closer to your goals.


1.


2.


3.

Something more to consider when working on your mission is your strengths and talents. They allow you to see where your limitations are and give you an idea of competencies you still need to acquire and therefore any upskilling that is necessary. Every successful person knows that learning never ends. In fact, the more you learn, the more you realize that there is a lot that you do not know (Dennison, 2023).

The next exercise will assist you in determining the skills you already have and what you still need to acquire to reach your goals.

 Write down what you consider to be your top achievements:

 Now consider which key competencies, including natural talents, helped you to accomplish these things:

 Which skills would have made your path to success easier or quicker that you don't already have?

 What can you do immediately to fill the gaps?

 What can you do long-term to fill the gaps?

Now look back to your vision statement and your action plan to determine if there is anything else you need to add in order to make your vision a reality:

It feels tedious right now, but trust me, your future self will be glad that you did all the hard work to ensure a better tomorrow.

Now let's consider real-life examples of women who have also used this process to accomplish transformative personal growth and success in their lives.

Be Inspired

Princess Diana

Anyone who has followed the story of Princess Diana knows how she led her philanthropic activities based on strong and unshakeable values even if it meant being held in contempt. For example, she made a statement against the use of landmines by walking through a minefield in Angola in 1997 in spite of the backlash she got. She believed in fighting for the rights of people who could not fight for themselves. She also boldly pursued controversial topics such as HIV/AIDS awareness at the time and showed great compassion to people (Red Cross, 2021).

Aung San Suu Kyi

Suu Kyi was a politician, diplomat, and Nobel laureate who rose to prominence because of her approach to her advocacy efforts for the non-violent struggle for democracy in Myanmar. She was known to strictly live by her values according to her Buddhist faith, and she was unwavering in her views because of it. She spent 15 years in captivity but remained steadfast (Tan, 2014).

Rachel Hollis

Rachel is an American author, motivational speaker, and blogger who has dedicated her life to teaching self-improvement to people through her work. She has written and spoken at length about the importance of establishing your vision and defining your goals in order to see success in the path you set out for yourself. She has also specifically shared how vision boards help to maintain your focus on your goals as well as assist in keeping you motivated on your journey of transformation (Meis, 2019).

Chapter 8:

The Power of Self-Love

Self-love is instrumental in your journey to building confidence. It informs your self-perception and the value you attach to yourself. Plus, it helps you grow as a person. Self-love is a crutch for many of the challenges and setbacks you will undoubtedly face on your journey as it often marks the difference between your ability to bounce back from hardship and challenges presented to you along the way.

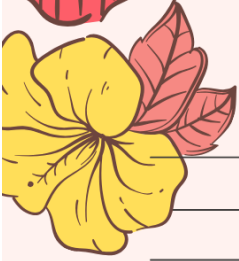
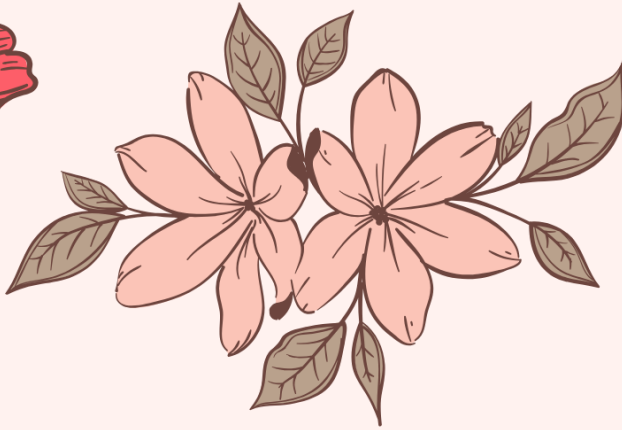
Understanding how self-love affects your perception, how you interact with the world, and how you respond to different circumstances in your life is the main focus of this topic.

Understanding Self-Love

It is important to make the distinction between self-love and self-indulgence. Many people feel conflicted by the implications of self-love as they may feel it is driven by selfishness and a lack of concern for other people so it is critical we uproot that view before we go further, in case you are one of those people.

In its purest essence, self-love is about treating oneself with the same kindness and compassion you would to a dear friend or family member. It is about ensuring that you are well taken care of physically, mentally, and emotionally without making any excuses (Asghar, 2022).

Write a heartfelt love letter to yourself that celebrates your achievements and encourages yourself for the future. Also, spend time admiring your talents and what you are good at, and give yourself praise for those things.



A series of horizontal lines for writing, consisting of 18 evenly spaced lines that span the width of the page.



Were you comfortable writing that letter? Or did you find yourself feeling bad for praising yourself?

Did you feel like it was a self-indulgent exercise? Explain your answer.

This exercise was meant to check your comfort levels by showing yourself love and compassion. If you feel uncomfortable, it is a good indication that you may need to spend more time indulging in self-care and finding ways to show yourself kindness.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, self-indulgence, on the other hand, is when one shows no limits or boundaries to gratifying their every desire. It is not a good trait to have—it is exercised by someone who does not have a good level or understanding of self-love. For example, overindulgence in food will more likely lead to health complications, and so it is not a way to show oneself love.

Self-Love and Your Relationship With Self

We will now explore different aspects of self that are influenced by our level of self-love as they relate to our ability to live life from a perspective of confidence and achieving goals.

Positive Self-Perception

Self-perception is how you see yourself, and it forms the basis for confidence. Everyone else may see you as a shining star, but if you think little of yourself, no amount of praise can ever change that. Hopefully, the following exercises will give you some insights into how to have a positive perception of self, warts and all.

Self-Portrait Exercise

Draw or describe yourself in as honest and raw a form as you possibly can based only on your physical attributes. Make sure to also include the things you may not like about yourself or the things that you think other people or society do not like. Be sure to leave a space at the top of your drawing or writing.

Now go back to the top of your self-portrait and write, “I am perfect just the way I am.”

Repeat the exercise, but this time, fill the below table with your positive and negative attributes. For this exercise, in the third column, write down actions you can take to work on your negative attributes.

Positive attributes	Negative attributes	Action steps to turn negatives into positives

This task is meant to show you and remind you that there are things that are worth putting in an effort to change and others that are not as important. You will be able to have more self-respect and respect from others if you work more on the kind of person you are, versus your outward shell.

I am not saying that taking care of your physicalities is not important. It certainly does contribute to a more positive self-perception as studies show. You are more likely to show confidence and perform better when you put your best foot forward and look your best. So do take a little extra time in the morning to get ready, eat better to maintain a good figure, and exercise regularly to maintain good levels of energy and a state of health.

Resilience

When you are led by self-love, you have the ability to bounce back from setbacks quicker because you know how to be compassionate to yourself, and you understand that failure is not the end of your journey. Your sense of self-worth will also not be attached to your achievements which is also a critical mindset to have in order to develop grit and survive through suffering (Thompson, 2020).

Can you think of an instance in your life where you had to be resilient and how you felt?

And here are some reflections you can fall back on when you need an extra boost of self-love for resilience:

- 1 When faced with challenges, allow yourself to look on the bright side by focusing instead on all the things that are still good in your life.
- 2 Remind yourself of the things you are grateful for.
- 3 Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and remind yourself that whatever it is will also pass.
- 4 Do something nice for yourself and do not neglect your health and well-being when going through a challenging stint.

This approach of reminding yourself of the things that remain constant and that bring you joy is a proven method of dealing with challenges in a loving and compassionate manner (Thompson, 2020).

Positive Self-Talk

Remember that one of the most important conversations you have daily is inside your head. How you talk to yourself sets the tone for how you present yourself to the rest of the world. Self-affirming talk is important, and so is forgiveness and kindness to yourself.

What are some negative words or phrases you often find yourself using to yourself? Note that some may be so ingrained that you don't even realize how detrimental they are. Think of how you react when you make a silly mistake or burn food while cooking. Or when you forget something important. What do you say to yourself?

Now make a commitment to yourself below, and promise to speak more kindly to yourself. What will you replace some of the above words or phrases with?

Positive self-talk helps in the process of reframing old beliefs that are negative to replace them with positive and life-giving statements. Listen to the voice inside your head, keep it accountable when it is mean, and replace it with a kind, compassionate, and understanding one.

Now let's consider how self-love influences our interactions with others.

Self-Love and Your Relationship With Others

Just like with self-perception, your view of how others think of you can be skewed if you do not hold yourself in high esteem. You are less likely to easily take offense or to have your entire value system shaken by a mere opinion. You will also be able to hold fast to your convictions in any situation and boldly assert boundaries without fear of your intentions being misconstrued. You are also more likely to be comfortable being yourself around people if you love the person you are and are happy to share that with others. Confidence will naturally emanate from you and people may also be more drawn to you when you show yourself kindness (Fern, 2014).

Reflect on how much your interactions with others reflect whether or not you love yourself by thinking of how you have reacted in the past to these scenarios or something similar.

False rumors are being spread about you:

Your values or ethics are being questioned unfairly:

Being falsely accused of something:

Now reflect on why none of these things would matter if you live your life from a perspective of self-love.

It is now time to draw inspiration from women who have used self-love to navigate some challenging circumstances or simply to propel themselves forward in their careers and lives.

Be Inspired

Misty Copeland

Misty is an African-American ballet dancer who has shared her struggles around being a black girl in a predominantly white field and how she struggled with that at the beginning of her career. She shares openly about how she learned to love who she was and how that encouraged her unwavering belief in her abilities and capability to succeed. She remains an inspiration to many young girls of diverse backgrounds to embrace their uniqueness and go after their dreams (Shona, 2018).

Jameela Jamil

Jameela is a British actress and activist whose movement, I Weigh, gained global popularity. She has been open about her own struggles with her weight which led her to eventually start the movement to encourage body positivity among women through self-love and self-acceptance. She has inspired many through her platform to also live from a place of self-love and to celebrate the unique qualities that make them who they are (Jamil, 2023).

PART 3:

Embodying Strength And Influence

In this section, everything comes together. We hone in on what happens when you are feeling confident in the areas we have already discussed, and then map a way forward. We continue to emphasize the value of continuous learning and the fact that the journey of self-improvement is a never-ending one. There is always more to learn, more to change, and more to embrace and accept. This chapter is the eleventh hour—the final quarter of the game.

Embodying self-confidence involves many things, as I am sure you now have an appreciation of. From embracing failures to standing firm in your beliefs and being assertive, you need to find a way to unify everything you have learned. This chapter aims to make that process easier for you.

We will delve into more detail on:

- How you can master decision making.
- How to become a mentor for self-confidence.
- How to wear multiple hats and still thrive.
- Embracing the continuous learning journey of building self-confidence.

Strength can be harnessed by confidently making decisions and sticking to them. It can also be cultivated by inspiring others to become the best versions of themselves.

Being able to exert influence on others allows you to appreciate the progress you have made on your journey. It also gives you an opportunity to appreciate how much you have learned, while also sharing it with others. And perhaps even more importantly, you are able to continue identifying gaps in your own knowledge in order to continue learning and enriching yourself.

Let's wrap this up!

Chapter 9:

Confidence in Decision-Making

Decision-making is an essential life skill that is often the difference between a lifetime of regret and being thankful for picking the wiser option. Relying on your instincts is a skill that can be learned and you should spend some time sharpening that tool. Equally important is your ability to be self-assured and not always rely on what others have to say about the decisions you make—but that takes a level of wisdom that some may assume is innate but actually, takes time and effort to learn.

Understanding Decision-Making

The principles of decision-making can essentially be split into two types:

- simple decisions
- major decisions

Often, we make simple life decisions based on our unconscious bias, previous experiences, and what we are exposed to in life. There are a few methods we often fall back to when making decisions and we will briefly consider each one for the sake of awareness. Then there is the “heuristic” approach, which is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as a problem-solving technique that employs trial-and-error and quick thinking. We use this approach when making everyday life decisions.

In the second section of the chapter, we will consider methods for making major life decisions and how we can be confident that we are making good choices with the things that impact our lives in an enormous way.

Just as a warm-up, reflect on and answer the questions below.

What kind of decisions are difficult for you to make?

Do you feel confident to make your own decisions? Alternatively, do you always need a second opinion or what you consider to be an expert opinion?

What are the key principles that inform your choices when making major life decisions, such as whether or not to move or if you should stay in your current job?

I hope you are beginning to recognize a pattern in your approach. If it is one you are not happy with, worry not! Ideally, at the end of this chapter, you will walk away with more confidence to make bold decisions that are also beneficial to you and those around you—and wise!

Making Simple Decisions

You can never be sure of a decision you have made unless you trust yourself. We can all agree that trust is earned. In the case of decision-making, this confidence can be achieved by adopting trusted methods of analysis when making a decision. By learning these methods, you can become more aware of why you make decisions the way you do, and you will also be better informed to make better decisions in the future.

The Single-Feature Model

This type of decision is one we often make without thinking twice but is based on information we trust. For example, when purchasing something, a brand, ingredients used, or the retailer can influence our decision-making (Cherry, 2013).

What are some things in your life that you make decisions on without getting your mind actively involved?

The Additive Feature Model

This method is a little more complicated than the previous one, where various features are taken into account when making a decision. Using the same examples of making a purchase, this process would involve

considering all the aforementioned, and then also considering specs, longevity, prices, and more. This process would also involve making comparisons with competitors for the same product to ensure you make the best possible decision (Cherry, 2013).

Apart from purchase decisions, what other areas of your life would you benefit if you adopted this method of analysis?

Elimination by Aspects

This method takes the previous one a step further by comparing aspects and making a judgment on which performs better or is more efficient. This method of choosing is good for making more important decisions as you continue to narrow down your choices until you consider the most important attributes of all before you finalize.

However, the true test comes when you have to make a decision on issues that are more ambiguous and need an immediate response with no time to weigh out all your options or analyze all the information available—when you have to take a risk. Here is where a heuristic approach comes in.

Heuristic Decision-Making

To ensure you understand what we would be referring to, circle the choices you think would require a heuristic approach.

Choosing a restaurant	Judging job applicants
Buying a house	Buying a gift
Choosing a movie	Making small purchases
Choosing a life partner	Making travel plans
Voting in elections	Deciding what to wear

The answers will be revealed at the end of the section. Try not to peek! If you are unsure, you can come back to this table later.

There are two main aspects to consider in the heuristic approach, and we will tabulate the difference to make it clearer and easier to digest (The Decision Lab, 2023):

	Representativeness	Availability
Definition	Making decisions based on proximity in resemblance of one thing to another	Making decisions based on perceived possibility of occurrence
Example	Assuming a person who wears spectacles is smart	Assuming you are unsafe in a new city because of one reported incident of violence
Usage	Used in relation to people, objects, and occurrences	Used in relation to probability or one's ability to recall detail
Outcome	Leads to more accurate decision-making	Leads to bias-based decision making

With this approach in mind, how can you be more intentional about making better decisions and being confident in your choices when pressed for time?

Reflect On Past Successes

Think back to previous simple decisions you made that had an outcome you were proud of. What were those decisions, and how did you manage to trust your process of reaching them?

Decision	Decision-making approach

Now, we need to discuss a science-based approach to making major life decisions.

Making Major Decisions

Major life decisions are essentially informed by our beliefs and values at the core, and then also by acquired knowledge around a certain subject. This concept applies to decisions around romantic relationships, major purchases such as a home, or choosing a career. We will narrow the process down to four steps you can follow in order to improve at decision-making (Mindtools, 2023):

- 1 Do your research
- 2 Have a variety of options initially
- 3 Narrow down
- 4 Commit

Let's break it down further.

1. Do Your Research

You need to have all your facts straight. Make use of lists, multiple sources, testimonials, and really anything you can find that will give you more information. Also, be sure to acquire more knowledge at this stage if you

are not well-versed in the nuances of what you are looking into. For example, if you are not into cars, spend time with people who are or dedicate a few hours to reading about them before making a decision to buy a really expensive one. There is nothing worse than being stuck with the consequences of a bad decision that you could have prevented.

Below is a research template you can refer to when you need it.

Decision Breakdown

Key Aspects	Reliable sources	Expert Opinions	Comparative Analysis	Overall Impact of aspect
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				

You can, of course, add more aspects to your decision depending on what it is. This task is meant to give you a road map you can easily follow and a way to keep track of steps you can take to make a comprehensively informed decision.

2. Have a Variety of Options

Do not narrow down too quickly. This step is where you can really go into more detail as far as your comparative analysis is concerned. If it's a paint color you need to pick, for example, collect swatches from the paint shop and stick them up on the wall. See them in different lighting and at different times of the day. This task can save you from continuously painting and repainting a wall after making a decision too quickly.

Below is a comparative analysis template between two options:

Start by defining the scope of your analysis by deciding what the purpose of the analysis is. For example, is it based on features, desired results, or overall function?

Variable	Option A	Option B
Criteria		
Relevant data or specifications		
Similarities		
Differences		
Highlights (what you like)		
Lowlights (what you don't like)		
Strengths		
Weaknesses		
Further considerations		

You can add or subtract variables according to what you are comparing, but this chart gives you an idea of how to do it effectively.

3. Narrow Down

Now that you have completed an extensive analysis, you can make an informed decision on the best option or options. You can continue comparative analysis until you are left with two options before finally deciding on one.

4. *Commit to Your Decision*

This step is sometimes the hardest part of decision-making. However, if you have done your due diligence in previous steps, you can be rest assured that you will be making the most viable decision, you can step into it boldly. With checks and balances in place, you are less likely to make a decision you will be unhappy with. It is always wiser to take your time when making important decisions.

As the last exercise for this chapter, let us consider one aspect of decision-making that we have not touched on: Fear.

In this section, you will learn to apply an intuitive approach to your decision-making. Listening to your gut is an effective way to harness your skills of discernment. But of course, you have to couple it with everything else you have learned so that you can rest assured you are still making wise and well-informed decisions.

Name a decision you have been afraid to make:

List down your fears associated with it. Then in the next column, write down any intuitive feelings you have concerning that fear.

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Hopefully, through an objective review of the fears and intuitive feelings, you can weed out which responses are purely based on fear and learn which have valid reasoning. You can then take this review further and couple it with other techniques before landing on the final choice.

Be Inspired

Indra Nooyi

Indra is an Indian-American businesswoman who was the former CEO of Pepsico. She has discussed how much her decision-making strategy was instrumental in turning the fortunes of Pepsico around through brilliant strategy and restructuring at a time when investors were worried they would lose out on what they had taken a chance on. Her process was essentially identifying the problem, also getting multiple expert opinions on it, assessing the risks involved, and the multiple avenues of action. She also stayed true to her values throughout her analysis and evaluation process. Eventually, she landed on a winning solution that skyrocketed the company onward and upwards. This stuff works! Be committed and stay true to who you are (Yale School of Management, 2019).

Arianna Huffington

Arianna is a Greek-American writer who co-founded The Huffington Post. She has spoken and written multiple times about the importance of self-care when making decisions and how a state of fatigue leads to bad decision-making. She believes that a fully rested mind is more optimal and will be able to make better judgments during the analysis phase of a decision, as well as making decisions based on thoroughly considered information (Huffington, 2017). So remember to take your time and take care of yourself when faced with making big decisions.

Angela Merkel

Angela is the former Chancellor of Germany and has also spent time advising on the importance of analytical decision-making. For her, it was critical to approach a problem from multiple angles, assess all the possible outcomes, and then finally make a decision. She also had strong values that she relied on and kept to, to ensure that her goals were still reflected and accomplished through her decision-making (Esch, 2021).

Chapter 10:

Nurturing Others Through Influence

Influential people are almost always very confident too. What comes first, however, is learning the core aspects of building confidence, which you have done throughout this workbook. Now we are going to deal with what comes after the fact—exerting influence on others and how to do it well.

Understanding Influence

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “influence” as the ability to cause an effect on others. Influence can be negative or positive of course—we are going for the latter. Many people crave to be able to influence others as it puts you in a position of power. And let’s be honest, it feels good to know there are people who look up to you.

Influence plays an important role in the culture of empowerment because, in shared spaces, your demeanor and attitude towards life and others affect how they respond and interact with you. It is good to learn and embrace the nurturing side of influence to foster positive connections and healthy relationships.

My goal with this chapter is to help you become a positive influence on other women in the confidence space and beyond. Through how you live your life, your approach when dealing with others, and sharing your journey, you will unlock the hidden potential within you to influence generations of women.

Becoming a Role Model

Let’s begin with a reflection exercise. Below, write down who your top three role models are. In the next column, write down what inspires you about their life and how they live—or lived it.

Role model	Why they inspire you

--	--

I'm sure some of the things you wrote are in line with the people being authentic, showing vulnerability, and their achievements. Perhaps you also wrote about how they treat others and their values.

There are a few things that experts believe every role model does really well (Mindtools Team, 2023).

Complete the below exercise and reflect on why each of these is important to embody as a role model.

Role model trait	Why is it important?
Self -awareness	
Optimism	
Humility	

Compassion and empathy	
Professionalism	
Integrity	

To make your journey of becoming a role model easier, match up each value with the correct description of how you can embody it.

Value	How to embody it
	Being a person of your word and making the right decision ethically, even if it is not the popular option or easy.
	Being a patient listener who is mindful of people's complex emotional compass, and tries to understand another's perspective before passing judgment.
	Holding yourself up to excellence in all you do, respecting other people's space and time, and respecting yourself and your boundaries.
	Being honest and vulnerable about your own experiences and being able to deal with your emotions in a mindful manner. Also, exercising

	a good level of self-control.
	Willingness to admit knowledge gaps and learn from others. Comfortable with giving credit where it's due and empowering others to excel as you did.
	Spreading positive energy to others by being mindful of your own mood and energy. Being intentional about engaging in activities that make you pleasant to work with and be around.

An important part of being a role model that we should consider a bit further is vulnerability—being able to show and share your flaws. Being vulnerable helps others to realize that even with their shortcomings, they can still achieve and accomplish great things.

What are some shortcomings you can share with others that have not hindered you from accomplishing your goals?

It's not to embarrass or humiliate you. Instead, it is to show the people who look up to you that you are human too.

Strategies For Inspiring Confidence

There are many strategies one can use, but I will summarize them into a list of four that are crucial (Bradt, 2019):

1. It Starts With You

To be influential, you must embody whatever it is you are trying to be an influence on. So you need to exude confidence if you desire to inspire it in others. You have already taken a first step, but continue learning and be intentional about being confident around the people you want to inspire.

What are some ways you will be intentional about showing confidence?

2. Give Praise—It's Free!

People are generally quick to criticize and slow to compliment. Turn that around in your own life, and never shy away from giving credit where it's due. There is nothing quite like the feeling one gets when they are praised that increases motivation and determination to do even better.

Can you think back to your own journey, when a mentor, boss, teacher, or anyone you looked up to gave you a compliment on your work? What happened and how did it make you feel?

3. Give Constructive Criticism

There is absolutely nothing wrong with correcting errors and mistakes but the manner in which you do it is important. Be sure to point out an error, and then give information on what could have been done differently or knowledge that can be acquired to improve on a specific thing. You should also try to glean something that has been done well, and lead with commending the good thing. You also need to ensure your tone of voice is kind and empathic to save the recipient from embarrassment or shame. Remember to also do it in private and not in front of other people. That only makes it appear as a dress-down and that is no way for an influential woman to act, of course. We are kind, compassionate, and understanding.

Think of some words or phrases you can use to initiate a hard conversation when giving constructive criticism.

4. Contribute to Their Learning and Development

Desiring to be a role model also means you know something that others want to learn. Be willing to share your knowledge and allow others to also take up leadership in your space. A true mentor always has someone they are training to be their replacement when they move on to better pursuits. Don't be stingy with knowledge or resources. Invest in the people that look up to you in whatever way you can.

What are some ways you can teach and share knowledge with people who look up to you?

It would be prudent to also briefly consider some leadership skills that are worth learning and having to ensure that you can lead others to aspire to lead more confident lives.

Must-Have Leadership Skills

Warren Bennis, a leader in research on leadership, has stated that leadership is the ability to bring your vision to reality. Influencing people requires you to do something outstanding, not necessarily grandiose in scale. However, it is essential that you have a success story backing you that makes people believe in your ability to help them improve their own lives.

According to Reach, there are some key qualities that good leaders possess (Psychology Today, 2019):

- sociable
- a curious mind
- an ambitious mindset

- assertiveness
- social intelligence

Which areas do you know you need to work on? Go a step further and detail your plan of action.

Leadership quality	Action plan

Now also consider the areas where you have done well, and take time to note down your achievements and notable instances where your embodiment of a quality showed through:

Let's also draw inspiration from women who have managed to become outstanding role models in their areas of influence.

Be Inspired

Rupi Kaur

Rupi is a Canadian poet whose work tugs on the heartstrings of her readers. She has garnered influence through her honest and vulnerable work that shares personal experiences that so many people can relate to. She also shares her anecdotes and maintains a very specific image and brand that allows people to look up to her as a flawed person who is still managing to thrive in life. Who doesn't love a good story of a normal human being, living life, overcoming challenges, and going through suffering but coming out on the other side?

Shonda Rhimes

Shonda is an African-American television producer and writer who has influenced storytelling in the film industry. She has brought to light many issues faced by the black community in America and continues to

champion writing stories with positive black leads which was not as common a couple of decades back. Many in her field look up to her good work ethic and value-driven projects. She continues to challenge stereotypes, encourage inclusivity, and embrace different people as they are.

Nadia Murad

Nadia is a Kurdish-Yazidi woman who is now based in Germany. She is a human rights activist who is also a survivor of human trafficking. Her stories inspire thousands of women to also share their stories and take a stand toward protecting other women from this evil. She received a Nobel Peace Prize for her work and contributions as she continues to fight for those who do not have a voice.

Chapter 11:

Balancing Multiple Roles With Grace

The landscape of life for women has long changed since the old days when women only had to worry about being mothers. Because of the work of the suffragettes, we can do much more than domestic duties, but we now need to split our time and effort across many fronts. Even if you are not a mother, you still have a life and aspirations outside of your career.

In this chapter, the aim is to give you tools to be able to juggle everything and still be able to come up for air and avoid being burnt out. I believe that you can have it all. Our main focus will be on how to balance your career, relationships, and personal aspirations.

Understanding the Concept of Multiple Roles

All the hats we wear in our lives are known as social roles. Each one of them has its own behaviors, expectations, and activities that need to be carried out (McLeod, 2023). Take, for instance, a working mother of three. Early in the morning, she may have to get all her kids ready for school and play the mother role. Then she goes to work and switches roles again to fulfill the demands of her job. At work, she also plays the role of a friend and maybe even a mentor—each requiring its own set of commitments and responsibilities. Then back home in the evening, she needs to play the role of a wife and be there for her husband, while also still playing the role of a mother. To put it like that makes it sound very exhausting, and that's because it is!

What are some roles that you have to play in your life? List as many as you can.

As I'm sure you can appreciate, you do a lot! It's no surprise that you can easily end up stressed and tired and have no idea why you feel so exhausted after eight hours of sleep. Mental exhaustion has far-reaching effects on our levels of energy as well as productivity. It's pertinent to organize this facet of life if you are going to manage to show up confidently in every area. But hope is not lost! Research shows that it is possible to achieve balance in our lives (Nortje, 2021). Time to learn how!

Art of Prioritizing

The tasks that need your attention probably feel like a never-ending stream of information. Therefore, it is important to set up a system that will allow you to package this information into boxes, where you will decide which ones to deal with first, and which ones are most important. I am talking about learning to prioritize!

What is your natural response to the overwhelming sensation of having too much to do?

Knowing how you deal with this kind of situation will shine a light on actions you need to take. For example, if you procrastinate, you need to learn to remove all distractions. If you multitask but end up making meaningful progress in anything, then you need to learn to do only one thing at a time.

What have you learned about your coping mechanism and what can you do to change it?

Now consider this proven method for classifying and prioritizing (Tan, 2022):

Make a list of all the commitments you have. Think about this from the perspective of what you have to do from when you wake up until you go to bed. Think about all the people you need to serve and support.

Are you happy with the results of what you spend most of your time and energy on? If you are not, what would you like to change?

	Activities	Time invested
Morning		
Afternoon		
Evening		

Now redo the exercise, but instead, lay out your day, time, and energy commitments as how you would ideally want to expand them.

	Activities	Time invested
Morning		
Afternoon		

Evening		
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Now determine what needs to change to make this plan a reality.

When thinking of how to implement your new plan, are there other roles you can overlap, or any opportunity for essentially killing two birds with one stone? Write these down and see how you can re-incorporate into your plan.

You will find that there are things you will need to sacrifice, and that’s okay! Prioritizing is an activity where you need to be led by your values and what matters most to you. Luckily, we already figured that out earlier in this book. You must allow yourself to be guided by that.

As a reminder, rewrite your top five values here too.

Now reassess your plan and check if it is in line with these values. If not, you have to be honest with yourself about which part is honest—your plan or your values? Revise accordingly.

Cultivating a Balanced Perspective

It is extremely crucial to have a flexible mind when it comes to managing a life with multiple roles. Life happens and things do not always go how you plan. You need to have enough flexibility and wiggle room in your plans to allow for emergencies and off days—where your energy is depleted and you need to take time off.

Consider how you can schedule time to rest, daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly. As much as you can, plan in advance! This planning also leaves you open to more flexibility as you will have an overview of how your time is organized into chunks.

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Yearly

You should also let go of the idea of perfection and focus instead on ensuring that your batteries are fully charged. In any case, you cannot give your best if your own energy is depleted. This idea is also why the next section is extremely important.

The Value of a Supportive Network

When you establish your rest plan, you must also consider a contingency plan, specifically for rest. You need to pay close attention to maintaining a supportive network around you who can stand in and assist when you really need the help. Even a woman as strong and powerful as yourself needs help—and that’s okay!

Who makes up your current support system? If you don’t have one, brainstorm some ideas of trustworthy and kind people you can approach to plan with. Whether it’s for watching your kids while you go to the spa or taking your dog for a walk while you sleep in. A support system makes all the difference in helping you manage your life.

Still on the point of support systems, it is also important to establish open communication with the people in your space to ensure that everyone is playing a part to help ease the burden on one another. It could be colleagues, a spouse, roommates, or even your children. Draw as much support as you can from those around you.

What conversations can you initiate immediately to ease the strain on your time?

Reflect, Adapt, and Thrive

Looking back and assessing what has worked or not worked in the past can be a powerful tool to help you unlock new ways of balancing your life now by acknowledging your past achievements in this area.

Think back to a time when you balance your life successfully. Can you remember what enabled you to do this:

Are there any strategies from that time that you can repurpose to fit your life now? Write them down if you haven't already mentioned them previously.

With your current roles, what achievements can you celebrate in balancing your life, no matter how small?

Now, let's consider some success stories from women who are just like us, and who have managed to juggle very full lives. If they can do it, so can you!

Be Inspired

Sallie Krawcheck

Sallie is an outstanding business leader who was the former head of Bank of America's Global Wealth and Investment Management division and is currently the CEO and co-founder of Ellevest—an investment platform and financial literacy program for women. She has been very public about her views on being led by one's values in making decisions and prioritizing, in order to better balance the multiple roles that we often play as women. She terms it "redefining success," where matrices are based on personal convictions versus societal norms and expectations (Krawcheck, 2019).

Reese Witherspoon

Reese is an American actress who is vocal about recognizing the multiple roles women hold in society, but she emphasizes the fact that women are more than mothers and wives—she believes their roles even in entertainment should go beyond these stereotypical definitions. She even went a step further and founded a media company, Hello Sunshine, to really put some action to her words and care waves in the industry (Lang & Lang, 2022).

Sheryl Sandberg

Sheryl is an American businesswoman and author, and she is also the former Chief Operation Officer (COO) of the social media giant Facebook. She founded the Lean In Foundation and authored a book by that name—save for “Foundation”—to help women make the most of their careers and goals. She speaks extensively on the necessity of being fully present in all your roles as a woman. She encourages women to pour themselves into their careers while also maintaining their personal lives and aspirations. She continues to be a force to be reckoned with in the women empowerment space (Bosker, 2012).

Chapter 12:

The Journey of Self-Improvement

You have taken the first step of the never-ending journey of self-improvement! Learning the basics and getting your mindset into a place where you are primed for learning is critical—and what you have done. By now, my hope is that you realize just how much more there is to learn. The willingness to learn is key in continuing this journey you have embarked on. Confidence is not a destination. It is a skill you continue to work and build upon.

In this chapter, you will learn how to successfully continue on your learning journey, and why it is important, in case you still need more convincing.

To get your mind started, what is the next skill or competency you want to learn after putting this book down?

A Learner's Mindset

Let's consider some key components of the mindset of an individual who is committed to continuous learning (Walsh, 2018):

Curiosity: Having a genuine interest in things you have previously not been exposed to. Don't only stick to the stuff you know. Expand out of your comfort zone too! If you're an artist, learn how to code! If you are a scientist, take a business management class. Go beyond the requirements of your career or how your life is set up, even if you are a housewife.

Name examples of random topics or fields you have always been curious about but never went out on a limb to learn about.

Adaptability: As times change, new technologies are taking over the scene. Instead of feeling disempowered, empower yourself with knowledge on how to use it and you will continue to find success and be confident in your skillset.

Which new technologies will you commit to learning?

Ambition: The desire to continue to progress in your career and in your life in general is a critical mindset to have. This mindset will naturally drive you to want to fill your knowledge gaps and continue to create opportunities for yourself through knowledge.

Innovation: If you remain driven by a desire to find new ways of doing things and therefore, increase efficiency, you will naturally be drawn to learn new things.

It is also important to note that core drivers for learning are motivation, agility, and a trigger, so make sure to embark on learning something that genuinely interests you, and that you feel you will be able to do. Otherwise, you will drop off from it before you even start!

There are also other factors that can lead people to want to upskill and learn new things. Can you think of ways each of the following factors can influence this behavior?

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

Embarrassment

Frustration

Status

As you can see from this list, sometimes a driver behind a desire to learn can be something negative. But the best way to deal with negativity is to replace it with a positive mindset or behavior.

Have a Plan

So what happens after you decide that you want to commit to a continuous learning journey? You have to have a plan in place, of course.

Step 1

Determine what you want to learn, that is, your learning goals. Let's start with three.

Step 2

Outline the timelines for your learning path. Will you take a course, read books, join a class, or do all three? Or do you have other ideas of how you will learn? Do your research and write it down below.

Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3

Step 3

You're all set! Now you need to start. To keep yourself motivated, keep a tracker to check your progress and celebrate small wins. This tracker will fuel your engine to continue pushing forward on your path of growth.

Navigating Growth Plateaus

We cannot ignore the very real challenge of experiencing a growth plateau. You may reach a point where you feel there is nothing exciting to learn. Or perhaps you feel like you have acquired as much knowledge as you can handle on your topics of interest. A plateau can also be a point at which there is a lack of evidence of improvement or development.

Let's consider some signs that indicate a growth plateau in the self-improvement space (Bensla, 2023):

- repetitive mistakes
- lack of interest in learning or growth paths
- negative feedback from colleagues, peers, and mentors
- stagnant performance

1. Reflection

Now is a good time to look back on your journey and do an honest self-assessment of how far you've come and where you would still like to go. For example, if you are now the CEO of a company you have worked at for years, you now have to decide what the next conquest would be. Sometimes, it will mean conquering an entirely new mountain if you have reached the peak of the current one.

What point would you need to reach in your life or career to feel like you are at the highest peak? And have you ever thought of what you would do after that?

2. Consolidate Your Knowledge

You feel like you have learned all you can handle. Now you can package it and do something with it. Whether it is just for self-assessment or to also share the knowledge with others. It can even be a second income stream—to share knowledge on your expertise.

Can you think of ways you could potentially monetize your expertise, no matter how niche it is?

3. Prepare for the Next Phase

After doing steps one and two, you will be in a better position to figure out where you want to go next. A new journey can be intimidating, but it can be done!

Step 1: Develop a new plan of action that can help you feel motivated again to learn. Consider also changing your approach. For example, if you have always taken physical classes, try something online.

Step 2: Ask for feedback from the people around you on how you are performing. They may also give insights into what you need to focus on and perhaps things you had not previously considered yourself.

Step 3: Be intentional with maintaining a growth mindset and challenging yourself to take risks and do the things that are uncomfortable.

In addition, take the advice of experts such as Joshua Foer, an author who specializes in the science of learning and memory. He suggests a cyclic approach to learning new skills where you take breaks between chunks to avoid being overloaded and to ensure you remember what you learn(CNN, 2012).

Final Thoughts

No matter what stage you are on in your learning journey, one thing I have noticed that keeps my mind fresh to new ideas and new methods of growth is reading personal development books.

Do your research on topics you are interested in and prepare a reading list below. That way, no matter what is going on in your life, you are always learning something new that will continue to enhance you as an individual. More often than not, you will also get inspired through these books to continue to aim higher and find new challenges to embark on.

Reading List:

January	February	March
April	May	June
July	August	September
October	November	December

Be Inspired

Mary Barra

Mary is American and the CEO of General Motors, and she has shared openly about her commitment to continuous learning and personal development. She also ensures that the company invests in the education of employees as she believes that this is the best way to remain ahead in innovation and ensure a positive impact (Chen, 2018).

Rosalind Brewer

Rosalind is an African-American and the CEO of Walgreens Boots Alliance. She shares her dedication to continuous improvement as a leader as one of the strategies she employs and encourages others to do the same. Even in how she leads the company, she is committed to ensuring that innovation is spearheaded from a perspective of continuous improvement for the consumer's benefit (importer, 2013).

Jane McGonigal

Dr. Jane McGonigal is an American game designer who is committed to continuous research in her field to ensure that she applies an innovative approach to her creations with a view to aid people with mental health and overall well-being through her work. In a field where there is much outcry due to the perceived dangers of video games, she challenges these narratives and works hard to change people's perceptions to see how they can benefit people and aid in learning new skills that can be transferred to the real world (McGonigal, 2010).

Conclusion

You have now reached the end of the workbook but the beginning of your journey to building your confidence! I hope as you worked through it, it was not just a workbook but also a celebration of your achievements and other women's achievements. Remember, the goal is to remind you of your unlimited potential. This empowering guide encourages you to take each step towards building self-confidence—celebrating your progress and growth along the way.

As you discovered in the final part of the book too, now that you are armed with knowledge, you should share it with others and be an inspiration to them. We have seen how you have what it takes to do and be anything you set your mind to. You can now tackle your goals and dreams with the confidence of a titan going to the battlefield.

Remember that the journey is continuous and so I hope your efforts to better yourself do not end here. Keep feeding your mind with information that transforms your mindset and behavior, and also make a commitment to act! That is where the true potential lies.

Good luck on your journey!

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