

How to Sparkle Where the Sun Don't Shine

Staying Positive When You're Surrounded by
Assholes

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to anyone who has ever been bullied, abused, neglected or made to feel less than by an asshole. I see you. I was you. But know that anything and everything is possible. You just need to decide it's your time to shine!

Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars and to change the world.

-Harriet Tubman

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CHAPTER 1: THE SAME OLD STORY

So you're surrounded by assholes, and they are bringing you down, huh? Every time you try to do something good or positive, those asshole naysayers, Debbie Downers, Negative Nancies, Pessimistic Patties, and Butthurt Billies slide right in and squash your dreams. I get it. It's super frustrating!

You want to be a positive, upbeat, and uplifting type of person. You've read books about having a positive mindset and all the benefits that come with it. You try your hardest to be the optimist. You go out of your way to help others. You want to inspire others to live a good life. You're the person who roots for others to do well. Your biggest obstacle, though ... Assholes. Your friends are mostly assholes. Your family members – yep ... assholes too! You love your friends and family despite their shortcomings; after all, isn't that what unconditional love is supposed to be about? So why do you feel slighted on a routine basis when that same unconditional love isn't thrust forward at you like a supercharged rainbow with a jet engine behind it? Why do you find yourself repeatedly let down, sad, angry and frustrated with everyone around you?

In this book, you will learn about dealing with assholes. Later in the book, I will teach you some amazing strategies for creating and maintaining positivity and happiness! You will start to see things from a new perspective as well as be given new tools to deal with those assholes in your life. By using the acronym P.I.E. (perception, intention, expectation), you will learn to take a look at those people who are driving you bonkers and determine if they truly are just an asshole or if perhaps they are people just like you and I but maybe having a bad day. You will also learn techniques that you can use to help you find your happy place, so you don't carry the frustration around with you all day after encountering someone who makes you question your sanity.

I have a long history of dealing with assholes. I grew up with an abusive stepfather, I married a controlling, jealous, physically,

emotionally and mentally abusive asshole, as well as many encounters with the everyday assholes at work, backstabbing friends, in public, on social media, on the roadways, on public transportation, you name it. Assholes everywhere!

The problem with assholes isn't necessarily the asshole themselves. The actual problem is that they irritate us to the point where they steal our happiness and joy. They get us so wound up and pissed off that we get ourselves all stressed out. We then carry it with us like heavy baggage. We tell our friends about it, our family, our co-workers, our significant others, anyone who will listen. We hope to feel better. We hope to feel validated by talking about what some asshole did to us. We think if we can only vent and let it all out that we can gain back our sanity. But that rarely happens. We can vent all day long, but somehow, it just doesn't seem to do the trick.

I don't want you to be walking around in a huff because of what some asshole did to you. I want you to be able to shake it off as fast as possible, move past it and find your joy and happiness again.

It's easy to tell you to just not let them get to you, but we both know that's easier said than done. This is why you need to change your mindset and how you cope with assholes. You need real strategies you can put into place, so you don't dwell on their negativity and carry it around with you all day. You have to get a plan in place and practice it, so it becomes a habit and eventually becomes your default mode.

Once you have some tools in your back pocket of how to deal with assholes, then you can work on new ways to create positivity in your life. The reason I will teach you about dealing with those difficult people first and then about staying positive is because the assholes will always be there, and I want you to have a solid base to deal with them. Because as you move into the second half of the book where you'll learn about staying positive and learning how to sparkle, those assholes are still going to be there, but now, you will have those tools to get you through it while you are learning and implementing new daily tasks.

I will walk you through the acronym FOCUS (Find Your Freaking Jam, Optimism O'clock, Confidence Counts, Unicorn University, Seeking Solutions). Each strategy of FOCUS will help you take baby steps into setting new goals and implementing daily tasks. These will help you move through your day with less frustration and stress. You will finally start to attract good things into your life! You will feel more confident and be able to power through uncomfortable situations. You will also be able to discover your true passions and what you really want in life. Most of us feel "stuck" where we are at and not really sure what we want to be when we grow up. I am going to challenge you to think outside the box. And not only that, I will encourage you to then make small steps to put your new ideas and goals into place.

There is always room to grow, so even if you are in your dream job, have your dream house and perfect partner, you will still be able to use these stackable strategies to live an even happier life.

From the time I left that abusive marriage in 2006 until now, I have found what works and what doesn't work when dealing with assholes. I have also discovered what those small daily steps were that I did to move past the poor-me negative mindset to a more positive one that helped me improve my confidence, learn to say yes to myself, and realize I could live an abundant life that created a new future that I would have never imagined myself being in! I got married to my current husband who is my absolute best friend, who respects, supports and loves me for exactly who I am. I was able to quit my 40-hour a week job to pursue motivational speaking, launch my first podcast, surround myself with like-minded successful women, and write this book.

If you had told me 13 years ago that I would be a happily married, motivational speaker, author, podcast host and actually have confidence in myself, I would have called you a complete liar. Through this process, I was also able to become a better mom to my two daughters. I was finally able to do some self-reflection and healing from my past. I now am able to communicate much more effectively with my girls, which has made our mother/daughter relationship much stronger.

I want you to have amazing results like this! It doesn't have to cost you tens of thousands of dollars to learn how either. It took me years of experience, trial and error, and figuring out what worked for me to get to where I am now – despite all the asshole naysayers. Trust me, as you discover your potential, find happiness and learn how to stay positive, the assholes don't just stop coming. In fact, you might have an overabundance of assholes coming your way. But guess what? You'll use what you learn in this book to help you navigate your way around them.

Let's talk about assholes!

Assholes come in all shapes and sizes. We all define someone who is an asshole in different ways. If you ask 20 people what their definition of an asshole is, you'll likely receive 20 different answers. You may think someone is being an asshole when they are just a very straight forward person. You may perceive that behavior as rude, blunt and categorize them as an asshole. You may feel someone who is very detailed-oriented and tends to micromanage those around them is an asshole. You may feel the person who forgot to use their turn signal is an asshole. Some people might believe an asshole is someone with specifically bad intentions, while someone else may feel an asshole is anyone who does something that is even slightly irritating.

We deal with assholes in all areas of our lives. We are friends with them. We are related to them. We work with them. We run into them at the grocery store, online, on the phone, in emails, on social media, and everywhere we turn. They are our neighbors, our politicians, in our churches, and in leadership roles.

I'd love to give you a chapter full of statistics of the damage that assholes create when they are rude, demeaning, intolerant, ignorant, pessimistic, and insulting, but we know they cause damage that can be longstanding. This isn't a surprise. I could also spend the first half of the book describing in detail all my personal experiences with assholes, so you know how qualified I am to write this very specific "How To" book. I will talk briefly about some of my experiences a

little later in the book, but I appreciate and value your time, so I won't waste your time talking about myself in more detail than you care to read.

You are here to learn real strategies and ways to deal with assholes in your life. Let's face it, would it really make a difference to you if I skipped the whole self-inflated bio proving how much of an expert I am using statistics, quotes, testimonials, studies, and references on everything asshole? Probably not. I think it is important, however, to give you a little peek into a few experiences I have had, which is why I will chat with you about those a little later in the book.

I'm not a therapist, a scientist, a college professor, or any kind of researcher that I can boast about. However, I have lived a pretty crazy life so far and have discovered some great techniques that have worked for me.

The people around me do tend to notice my unwavering positivity, which I'm sure is more of an irritation than admiration to some. Even if I tend to be annoyingly positive, I do get countless messages and emails asking for advice when dealing with difficult situations. They almost always start out as, "You're always such a positive person, so I was wondering if you could help me with something." Most times, it's a mom or stepmom dealing with custody issues or a woman who is dealing with an asshole boyfriend or husband. Sometimes it's a woman dealing with social media "haters" and rude comments. I have never positioned myself as "everyone's" expert on positivity. I think without even having to say so on social media, my message just resonates more with women.

When I get an email or private message, the first thing I do is read the message a couple of times before responding. If you're reading this and you have sent me a message asking for advice, it's likely you saw that I read your message but took a little time to respond. The reason for this is, I like to take a step back and read between the lines. I imagine the full scenario that is going on. Like it or not, there are two sides to every story. I try to determine if the person writing me is in fact, the asshole of the situation. Most people, I have found, don't even realize when they are the one in the wrong – they have

tunnel vision and only see their own side of the story. I try to maintain a neutral stance when I reply, not only letting them know I understand their frustration, but also that there are better ways to communicate – since this is usually one of the biggest issues with conflicts. Then I try to give them advice on how best to proceed with the situation. Whether they take my advice or not is totally up to them. When dealing with custody issues, I always make sure they are thinking about the best interest of the child. Sure, your ex is a total asshole, but your kids love him, right? Just because you know he's a total piece of shit doesn't mean your kids do or should. Why parents want their kids to hate another parent is beyond my understanding. This only harms the kids.

Other times, I get messages about work situations with coworkers or bosses. Because of all these messages, I got to thinking; this is a huge problem for the people around me. Doing a quick search on Amazon and Google, I found there are quite a few great books out there talking about how to deal with assholes. But the people who are coming to me are women who desperately want to be good, positive people. They aren't just complaining to hear themselves complain. These are usually women who are in direct sales, multi-level marketing, entrepreneurs, in leadership roles, stay-at-home moms, etc. They are moms and wives who just want the best for everyone around them. They want to sparkle and shine in life, but they just keep getting knocked down by the many assholes around them. These are the women who inspired me to write this book.

If you're reading this book –

Let me guess. You're creative. You have tons of ideas. You're a dreamer. You know you have a deep passion for helping others. You see a new opportunity, and you run at it like a squirrel to a nut! You learn everything you can about this new shiny object, and you can't wait to tell your friends, your neighbors, your family, and your social media following all about it! You know it's a great product or service, and you can see the financial benefit. You pour out your heart to your friends and family through emails and Facebook messenger. You're stoked to read their replies, but then, nothing. Crickets. Or worse yet, you are battered with comments like,

“It’s a pyramid scheme!”

“OMG, that will never work!”

“That sounds like a scam!”

“Someone told me that stuff is super bad for you!”

“I bet that’s illegal.”

“Is it all natural? Because I don’t want any weird chemicals in my body.” (As they suck down their 5th Diet Coke along with a Twinkie before noon.)

“Why don’t you just get a real job?”

“Ugh. All you ever post about is that new fad!”

Any of this sound familiar?

Or maybe you’ve never been interested in those MLMs or any moneymaking side gigs. Maybe you just want to open your own business. You want to quit working for “the man” and make your own hours and rules. You are again pummeled with similar objections:

“You’ll never be able to afford that!”

“Do you have any idea what that’ll cost?”

“You’re not serious, are you?”

“You’ll never get a small business loan.”

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you.”

“What’s wrong with just staying where you are at?”

“Yeah, but most people just can’t make a go of it these days.”

“You mean as a hobby, right? You’ll still work full time, won’t you?”

“How will you be able to afford all your bills?”

Maybe none of that is true for you. Maybe you just find that no matter what you do, you are just surrounded by negative people who would rather sit and bitch about everything than to actually do something productive. As soon as you offer some insight or constructive criticism, you’re met with a barrage of complaints and how that will “never work!” They are closed off to ideas. They are shut down from hope. They complain, whine, piss and moan about how life isn’t fair and why does all this bad stuff “always happen to

me”? - insert dramatic eye roll-

It seems like positive people are just too few and far between. For some reason, you keep attracting people into your life who are absolutely miserable. They always tend to look to you for advice that they never take. You put serious thought into helping them, making suggestions, being that ever-so-positive Polly, spending countless hours trying to convince them they deserve better, but they never change. They never implement any of your suggestions. They routinely gripe about their life, their significant other, their job, their kids, their social life, etc. They are never happy with anything! And they can't wait to tell you all about it! They suck the life right out of you just by listening to them for five minutes. It drains your energy and makes you feel crazy. I lovingly refer to these people as "assholes." They ask for advice that they will never take.

You start to get down about life. Why all the negativity all the time? Why does everyone have to crush your dreams before they even get a running start? You start to lose steam. You quit messaging anyone about that great new product. You feel defeated once again.

Soon, you find you can't seem to get yourself out of this dark cloud of misery where you can't help but seek out all the bad stuff that has happened to you. And once you step off that cliff and are at the bottom of that pit – it's a long, hard climb to get out.

You start to wonder what the point is of being positive at all or trying to help people. Why even try? What has life ever done for you? You've gone through some shit! And man, if people only knew your life story, they'd be shocked at everything you've endured up until now! And they think their life is bad?! You've had some bad experiences, bad relationships, bad jobs, and you've been backstabbed more times than you care to think about! You start adding up all the losses, lies and traumas in your life. You start to keep score of all the wrongs people have done to you. You sit and dwell... and dwell. Your energy decreases. You get a burning pain in your gut. You feel bad about yourself. Your confidence drains. Your self-esteem – right down the shitter. You rely on self-deprecating comments to make those around you tell you how great you really

are. You don't believe them of course; after all, they *have* to say something nice when you talk about how fat you are or how you look like a strung-out druggie that day, right?

You start to lose steam on projects you had started. Your house is a hot mess because you have no ambition or energy to clean it. The laundry piles up. The dishes pile up. You haven't showered in at least two days. Your messy bun is now a dried-up matt of hair that's going to hurt like a bitch to comb out. You tell yourself you are the worst person on earth and the worst parent on earth. You start to get paranoid that your boss is trying to fire you because your coworkers are out to get you. You start to get suspicious that your significant other might be cheating on you – because why would they want to be with you? You're awful, right? It's a deep dark pit of gloom and doom, and you've fallen all the way to the bottom. You are the guest of honor at your own pity party, and no one showed up to help you celebrate your life's disappointments.

Then something randomly good happens. Maybe it's unexpected money, or an old friend comes to town. Maybe that MLM you joined just sent you your first commission check or someone joined your team. And BAM! You're back on cloud nine again! Your energy is up! You're feeling good about yourself again! You take a shower, spend an hour on your makeup. Heck, you're feeling and looking so good – why not take some selfies? Social media blows up with comments like,

“Daaaamn, girl!”

“Gorgeous!”

“Hot!”

“You're so beautiful!”

And you're like, “Awww, thanks, guys!” This was just the ego boost you needed!

You get to work on those goals you wrote down six months ago. You dust off your treadmill. You're going to lose 20 pounds by next week FOR SURE! You start bombarding your friend's with messages about that MLM and how it's seriously the BEST THING

EVER! You go out and spend that \$45 commission like no one's business! Things are going to take off now, right? You start contemplating how long it will take before you can tell your boss to suck it! At this rate, you are going to be a millionaire before the end of the year! Just wait until all those assholes see your success!

Then – crickets.

Your friends are nowhere to be found. Your family starts in on you with their negativity again.

And the cycle repeats.

Sound familiar? It may be a different storyline, but the same beginning and same ending. The details may be different, but it always begins with that high energy and positivity that soon falls into the abyss due to the people – the assholes – you're surrounded by.

CHAPTER 2: MAYBE IT'S YOU

Yes, I'm just going to say it. Maybe you're the asshole! GASP! Okay, stay with me here. I know this one is a bit much to swallow. You've heard the saying, "What you put out into the world, comes back to you multifold." So if you're surrounded by assholes, you may want to take a long hard look into the mirror. Now, stop with the furrowed brows and scoff and hear me out.

Have you given any thought to this? What energy are you putting out into the world that keeps attracting the wrong people into your life? What are you busy dwelling on that is magnetizing all the scarcity, drama, and naysayers to come at you at 100 mph? I know you're shaking your head right now and thinking I'm out of my damn mind if I think that you, Miss Polly Perfect, Mr. Optimism Prime, could in any way be responsible for the assholes around you.

When dealing with assholes in your life, you have to consider these options: 1) You are somehow attracting these assholes into your life. 2) You assume and expect the people in your life to be assholes or do asshole things. 3) Your perception might be off.

Let's talk about the first option: You are somehow attracting assholes into your life.

Okay, so you might not be 100% responsible for attracting these people in your life. I know a lot of them are likely blood related to you, right? But let me ask you this: What are your regular thoughts about these people around you? Do you have the attitude that no matter what you do, assholes just always seem to find you? Whether in relationships, at work, in public places? Always assholes. Do you assume whenever something good happens that you have to hang on tight because something equally awful is about to happen next? Are you always waiting for the other shoe to drop? Do you commonly ask yourself, "Why me?" If you are generally of the feeling that the world is out to get you and that if something bad is going to happen,

it's likely going to happen to you – then we need to change that!

This could be the exact reason why you are attracting low-quality people into your life – aka assholes. I'm sure at some point or another, you've read about how human beings are made up of energy, right? Energy vibrates at different frequencies – kind of like different radio frequencies. Let's say you hate country music, but all you think about is how much you despise country music, how country music stars are the worst, and that you'd rather jump off a cliff than listen to anymore country music. But yet, every single time you turn on the radio, are in a doctor's office, in an elevator, or out with friends, all you hear is ountry music! This is because your vibrational energy is tuning in to what you are focusing on. Your "frequency" is set on the country music station. Frustrating, isn't it?

What you think about, you bring about.

This is why affirmations are always focused on the positive and not the negative. Keep your focus on what you want, rather than what you don't want. Instead of focusing on how much you hate country music, start to think about how much you love the '80s. Focus on the particular songs that make you happy. Think about the '80s bands and musicians that you love the most. You'll find that the background music you heard before will start to change. Your attention will no longer be on the country music you dislike and instead be focused on the '80s music you do like!

We do this with people as well. If you are always focused on a person's negative attributes, then it only makes sense that that is all you'll see from them. You keep focusing on the negatives, and you'll keep attracting more of the same experiences. If you don't expect more, you'll never receive more from people. If you don't assume the best, you'll never get the best from people.

Let's talk about the second option: You assume and expect the people in your life to be assholes or do asshole things.

Do you routinely think about how grateful you are to have them in your life? Wait. What? Grateful for assholes?

Stay with me. Don't let me scare you away just yet. Have you ever stopped to think that maybe the people around you are simply living up to your expectations? What we tend to do is, once someone disappoints us, we tend to keep expecting that behavior again and again. So when you barged into your sister's house to boast about that brand new weight loss pill you are selling, and she gave you the stink eye, did it really surprise you? Or had her previous reactions gone down about the same way?

Could it be that the people around you are perpetuating the thoughts you think about them?

When my sister and I were growing up, neither one of us ever believed our mom was a Negative Nancy. She would sew clothing for us and our dolls, she was our Brownie Troop leader, she volunteered at our school, and she just didn't have a negative attitude about things. But then something changed. Once my sister and I had kids, we started to notice that she got very anxious around our daughters. She would panic when they were walking or running on a concrete sidewalk or driveway and yell something along the lines of, "Oh my God! Grab her quick! If she falls, she'll bust her head right open!"

I found that my sister and I would then start to make fun of her and make jokes to her about it. We became complete assholes! She would call me and ask how the girls were doing and what they were up to. And smart ass me would say something like, "Oh they are outside on the concrete driveway running with scissors!" She did not find it amusing, needless to say.

But here's my point. Maybe all it took was for her to worry about the inevitable skull-cracking concrete once, but it was something that stuck with my sister and me. We then started to tease her about it, and 100% expected her to comment and worry about the girls falling on the concrete. Did my mom go from being a more Positive Polly to a Pessimistic Patty or did she simply start to perpetuate our expectations of her? When we carry our own negative thoughts and expectations about people, how can we expect to see them any other way? Technically, you are kind of the asshole for thinking negative

thoughts, and therefore, you are attracting the negativity back into your life. I know what you're going to say. "But, Wendy, that person DID do things to make me assume the worse and think negative thoughts about her/him?" Okay, yes, I agree that might be true; however, if you want change in your life – you want more positivity – then it's up to you to make the necessary changes. That means, despite the negativity the people in your life have projected onto you, you have to stop the pattern of negative thoughts that are in your head. This is how you begin to change your thoughts and how you view the world. This will start to change what you attract into your experience. Ideally, the assholes would simply realize they are assholes and stop acting all asshole-y and doing asshole-ish things. But you've already wished for that, right? And how did that go?

That brings me to the third option: Your perception might be off.

Let's chat about perception. We see things the way we want to see them and not exactly as they truly are. Have you ever despised someone and yet they seem to have a ton of friends? And you can't help but think... HOW? How do their friends put up with that person? How can they not see through the bullshit act they put on? Doesn't it just boggle your mind?

What about the asshole at work? Your boss loves him! They even hang out outside of work! Yet, all you can see is the passive-aggressive dickwad that spends more time trying to micromanage you and make more work for you than anything. You wonder what he even does all day besides purposely try to make your life miserable. You've brought your concerns up to your boss, but all he says is, "Well, that's just the way he is." Your boss makes excuses that even though he's received a lifetime worth of complaints about him, that overall, he does a pretty good job and he just cannot see disciplining him for simply annoying people.

How about that relative that everyone fawns over? She talks about everyone behind their backs, goes out of her way to hurt people's feelings and complains and bitches about everything! And somehow, your family can't seem to get enough of her. It leaves you scratching your head, wondering if you're living in some alternate universe!

These people always seem to have a following of sincerely nice people, so how is it you can see through their bullshit and those other people can't? Have you ever stopped to wonder if it's YOUR perspective that is skewed? Maybe, just maybe you are looking at things the wrong way, or maybe you are getting a little butthurt over nothing? I bet you're shaking your head right now thinking that you are totally in the right and that person is just a serious asshole, and the rest of the world are just idiots! Well, that could be. But likely, you need a new perspective.

Imagine you are driving down the road at night. You are listening to the radio, tapping along to the beat on the steering wheel when the car coming at you fails to turn their bright lights off. As they pass you, you have to squint your eyes all up and concentrate on your lane since their lights are blinding you. What is your reaction? Do you ignore it? Or do you feel a bit of road rage, call that person a complete asshole and then go on and on about how some people need to learn how to drive! Or maybe you assume they just aren't paying attention or they're on their phone, and they need to stop being a distracted asshole and pay more attention!

Is that person really an asshole for your slight inconvenience? Are they really a bad or distracted driver? Should their license be taken immediately? Let's think about this a minute. You are stewing a bit about being blinded on your way home from work by the distracted asshole. Your brain takes off on its own tangent of road rage. You start to think about the other irritations that happened that day. And as your mind is reeling, you pass another car. Though this time, you look down and realize you left YOUR brights on! You just blinded the poor guy that was coming at you! What do you do? Do you throw your arms up in the air and yell out loud about what an asshole you are? Do you assume because you were distracted that you should have your license taken away immediately? No! Of course not! Because you know it was just an oversight. No big deal, right? In fact, you likely even apologized the moment you realized what you did. Didn't you? But guess what? To that other driver... YOU are now the asshole. See what I mean about perspective?

Just because you are right doesn't always mean the other person is wrong. If you always hold that attitude, then you are likely just an asshole. If we can just stop to take in what is happening and look at the asshole in question from a new perspective, then maybe we will realize whatever they are doing to annoy the shit out of you isn't intentional.

Besides perception, the other thing to consider is intention. We assume other people's intentions all the time. We seem to take the easy route and assume the worst of people. Someone hurts your feelings, and suddenly, they did it on purpose with evil intentions. I realize there are evil people in this world; however, I think nine times out of ten, you're just assuming malicious intention. Once we categorize the people in our lives, they are stuck in a box in our brains. We have all categories for those people, but once we label who they are to us, put their personalities in a box, and never look back – we make it nearly impossible to change our judgments about someone.

Have you ever done something and thought to yourself, "Man, that was an asshole move!" And then ponder how bad you feel about it? You made a mistake. You probably pissed someone off, and you are now categorized and put in a box in their brain and will be forever judged for that one thing. You can't seem to figure out why no matter what you do, that person just doesn't seem to like you. It doesn't even have to be some grand-stand asshole thing. It can be just some mild inconvenience to another human on this earth. But because of their childhood, their teenage experiences, the emotional and mental damage they've endured – that slight inconvenience is now a superstar asshole move on their radar. You have officially been placed in the asshole box in their brain!

Perception and perceived intention. Both of these things are within your control. You have the ability to take people out of those boxes and re-categorize them in your life. Maybe, just maybe you'll start to see them as their asshole friends see them.

In all seriousness, you need to learn to reprogram your brain to stop

assuming the worst from people. This is not an easy task, especially if you're someone who has had a lot of bad experiences in your lifetime. It's likely you have some major trust issues because of all those bad experiences. Maybe the little boy in your kindergarten class stole your Hostess cupcake out of your lunchbox, and now you don't trust anyone with any of your possessions. We don't always recognize the past hurts that affect our judgments today.

So the question remains, how do I do that? How do I change my perceptions and perceived intentions of other people? How do you look at someone you once despised and try to see them as something other than a miserable swine?

The way I started to do this was, I tried to dissect WHY they are an asshole, from my perspective. Take that dickwad you work with that micromanages you and seems to go out of his way to make your life at work a complete and utter hell. Something or someone in his experience somewhere is causing him to have to be a control freak. Someone who chronically feels the need to micromanage other people have a lack of trust and confidence in themselves. If they trusted themselves, they would feel confident that they have trained their employees or coworkers to do their job. But instead, they feel if they don't manage every single little thing, it will all fall back on them. So Danny Dickwad doesn't actually think you don't know how to do your job, but because of his personal experiences, he feels he needs to overly communicate with you to make sure he feels like he is doing a good job. Most times, people who micromanage don't even realize they are doing it. Because they lack self-confidence, this behavior makes them feel good about themselves, like they are in total control of the situation. They will likely pat themselves on the back when you do a good job and try to take all the credit. Yes, I agree, it's an asshole move, but look up the psychology behind people who micromanage. Does this mean it's okay for them to do this to you? Hell no! But at least you will have a little insight into why they behave this way.

You might actually start to feel bad for that person and wish they had more confidence. When you can stop and recognize the possible reasons someone might be acting like an asshole, this is the perfect

opportunity to hope for better for them. Another way to look at this particular situation is to be 100% honest with yourself. Are you doing your job to the best of your abilities? Are you being micromanaged because you tend to forget details? Do you routinely make excuses for not getting things done on time? Maybe if you can work on yourself a bit, perhaps the situation would start to resolve itself. No one likes to take a good, long, hard look in the mirror and be willing to be honest with themselves. And if they are willing to do this, then it's usually harder to accept that fact and make changes. Do you agree?

Here is your first assignment: Think of one person in your life that is without fail, a negative Nancy; aka an "Asshole." Now, for the next couple of days, I want you to think about all their positive attributes. Yes, you may have to really dig deep with some of these people. But everyone has good qualities, some a little less obvious than others but they are there. I want you to feel grateful for those positive things about that person.

Do you know their full story? Has that person had a difficult life? Maybe you aren't sure. So, what you will do next is hope for the best for them. Say things like, "I hope they find peace and healing in whatever obstacles they are facing currently." Maybe that person is always anxious. You could say something like, "I hope she finds calmness in her life." So basically, if you're a Christian, pray for that person. If you're more spiritually oriented, then hope for the opposite of whatever they struggle with. Do this for a few days routinely. Be grateful for their positive qualities and hope for the best for them.

Then I want you to pay attention. Whenever you interact with that person, notice if they seem a little happier, a little less frustrated with life, a little less anxious – a little less asshole-y. What you are doing here is changing your perception of that person. You are creating new thoughts about how they interact with you and the rest of the world. You are seeking the positives. Maybe the person doesn't really change, but your perception of them will. You will find them less annoying, less complain-y, less negative in the conversations you have with them. Is this because they changed or is it because you opened

your perception up to the positives? When you do start to see a change, then practice this with the other people in your life. Start feeling gratitude for the little things that you like about them. Try to keep your focus on the good, then hope for the best for them.

As you can see, I don't believe that all humans are bad. I believe our own experiences, perceptions, and intentions affect everyone around us. We all react accordingly. But of course, there are always exceptions to the rule. Sometimes an asshole is just an asshole.

CHAPTER 3: YOUR BUBBLE

If you truly want to make changes in your life, you have to create what I like to call “your bubble.” This is the space in your head with all the feel-good vibes, the “hell yeah, I’m amazing” self-talk, the “no one can get me down” corner of your mind. This is the place that is sacred to you. This is your comfort zone, your safe space where all negativity is shot down in the blink of an eye. Your bubble is where you disappear to when you meditate, when you are working out, doing yoga, or when you are daydreaming of abundance and true love. This is where you keep all your compliments from friends or strangers. This is where you remind yourself that you have a purpose in this life and deserve to be happy. This is that warm fuzzy feeling place where you keep all your cherished memories, tightest hugs, and favorite love stories. I want you to be able to recognize the space in your mind where this is for you.

If you don’t have your bubble already, then you need to create one. Maybe your life has truly been so full of assholes that the moment you even started to think about your happiness bubble, some asshole came along and popped your bubble. This is more likely the story you relate to. But things are about to change for you. You are not only going to build this amazing bubble, but you are going to lock it up, concrete it in, wrap a 50-foot-tall fence around it with barbed wire across the top of the son of a bitch and keep it safe! This will be the one space that no asshole can penetrate! Got it? Good.

Now, how exactly does one create this glitter-filled, unicorn-like, rainbow-of-happy-feelings mystical bubble thing? Easy. You decide to. Yes, it’s that simple. Your bubble is the place I will be asking you to go just before you go to sleep at night. Your bubble is the place where you will disappear to when life starts sending assholes your way at rocket speed. This is the place where you are going to turn off

the low-vibing mindset, the “why me” bullshit, and the sabotaging self-talk that is literally Uber’ing assholes to your front door! What you think about, you bring about. Remember that.

I say this is “easy” because once you learn how to do it, you’ll realize just like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz –

“You’ve always had the power, my dear. You just had to learn it for yourself.”

Here is your second assignment: Find your bubble.

Take 5-10 minutes today (longer if you’d like). Go somewhere quiet and close your eyes. Now, I want you to think about every single moment where you felt absolute bliss, happiness, or love. Take a trip down memory lane. Was there a special moment with a parent? Or a road trip with your sister or your friends. A day when you laughed so hard, your gut was sore for two days afterward! Maybe it was your first crush or your first love. What about that first kiss? Remember the butterflies in your belly? You were nervous, a little scared but so excited all at the same time. How about the first time someone said, “I love you” to you? The very moment you saw your baby after he/she was born. Maybe it was the last time your grandparent hugged you. You can still smell their hair or shirt. You know exactly the perfume your favorite grandma wore, and you can smell it 15 miles away on a stranger. Maybe your sweetest grandpa smelled of cigarettes and Old Style beer. It can be anything that brings a smile to your face and a warm feeling in your heart. But again, maybe all the assholes in your life have stolen even your fondest memories. Maybe your life up until now has been nothing but absolute shit. Maybe you’ve suffered abuse or trauma and have nothing “real” to reflect on that pertains to happiness.

If that is the case, then you will have a different assignment. If you cannot seem to pull a pleasant memory up in any way, shape or form, then you will create new memories. You will use your imagination and create and feel a brand new memory that hasn’t happened yet. You are going to dig deep and feel it in your soul, walk through it like an old movie, and play it again and again in your mind. You

might think that sounds a little crazy ... after all, how can you feel something that you haven't experienced, right?

Here's how. I'm going to type a story below. After you read each sentence, I want you to close your eyes and imagine you are there and doing what I'm writing. Then open your eyes and read the next sentence. Close your eyes again and imagine doing that. Got it? Okay. Here we go.

NOTE: If you start doing this exercise and realize stopping to read and then closing your eyes isn't very effective, then have someone read the steps to you as you close your eyes and imagine all of this happening. It's much more effective if someone else reads it to you.

You are standing in front of the tallest building in the United States. Looking up, it's the Willis Tower in Chicago. (Now close your eyes and "see" it.)

You notice the building is so tall that the top of the building fades into the clouds. Bring your eyes all the way back down to the front entrance.

You look at the door going into the building. It's one of those circular revolving doors, and you walk through it.

You're inside. There are a bunch of people there. You look around.

You look to your left, and you see a wall full of elevators. There must be at least ten of them!

You start walking towards the elevators and realize they are all gold-plated and shiny.

You reach out and push the gold "UP" button. It's smooth and cold to the touch. You wait.

The doors to the elevator on your right open. You step in.

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The elevator doors shut.

You look at the panel of buttons on the right side of the door and see there are 110 stories.

You feel overwhelmed for a moment but push the 110th floor button.

You feel the elevator start to move.

You keep going up and up and up ...

You feel a light airy feeling in your belly as you pass each floor.

You pass the 25th floor, 26th, 27 ...

The elevator continues to climb to the 50th floor, 51st floor, 52nd floor. You start to feel woozy.

You get a nervous feeling in the pit of your stomach from the height you are now at.

You look up and watch the top of the elevator door and see the numbers continue to climb as you feel yourself rising floor by floor.

Floor 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95

You take a deep breath ... floor 99... 100 ... 101 ...

Your legs feel heavy as the elevator climbs to the highest story.

Floor 106 ... 107 ... 108 ... 109 ...

DING! 110! The doors open!

You see the Skydeck in front of you. You feel a cool breeze blowing into the elevator.

You step off the elevator and feel a slight movement under your feet

as if the wind is blowing the Skydeck ever so slightly.

Your legs are shaky as you walk further towards the railing.

You are feeling a little lightheaded and nervous, but you walk forward, reach out and touch the railing.

You slowly move your body closer, and now you're looking over the railing and straight down.

You have to look through the clouds to see the city below. Keep your eyes closed and take it all in.

Now ... WHAM! I shove you from behind, and you go over the railing and fall!

Okay. What did you feel? Did you feel the elevator going up? Did you feel the breeze on your face? Did you feel nervous or shaky? How about when I shoved you? Did you have a quick jolt inside you of fear?

I borrowed this exercise from a seminar hosted by Jack Canfield, author of the Chicken Soup for the Soul.

Now, none of that actually happened did it? It was literally all in your mind, but you still felt it didn't you? If you are one of the fortunate people reading this book that has some great memories to swoon over, then I want you to relive those moments and feel exactly how you felt when it actually happened using the same type imagery in your mind as you did for the exercise above. This will be Your Bubble. This will be your new happy place.

If you are the person who needs to create some new memories, I want you to go back to a place in your life that wasn't so great. I want you to rewrite that section of your life to a better story – no, a GREAT story! Be the hero of that section of your life and completely rewrite what you wished would have happened instead. It will be like the experiment you just did. You will imagine the new storyline and then walk yourself through it as it is happening and feel each and

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every brand-new amazing feeling.

Once you do the assignment and know what it feels like inside your happy place, I want you to make a note to go to Your Bubble every night as you close your eyes.

CHAPTER 4: YOUR FUTURE BUBBLE AWAITS!

You found Your Bubble. You can identify some great feel-good memories, or you've created some fantastic "new" memories to give you the warm fuzzies. Great job!

You are now ready to graduate to your Future Bubble. In this bubble, you are going to first, get into your happy place like you did before. You are going to imagine something wonderful. If all the stars lined up and the world was a perfect place, what would this look like to you? I want you to imagine this in perfect detail!

Close your eyes, get to that happy place first in Your Bubble. Now, let your imagination run crazy in your Future Bubble. Look around. What does your house look like in your perfect space? How much money is in your checking account? Are you on vacation or packing to leave for vacation? Did you just pay off your mortgage or buy a new house? Are you traveling the world? Did you find your perfect partner? What is your dream job? Are you a successful entrepreneur? Maybe you found peace in your life. Maybe your happiness has nothing to do with money or material things. Maybe you found true love. No matter what your Future Bubble looks like when you close your eyes, make it something that blows your freaking mind! And more importantly, FEEL what that feels like! Feel the happiness in your heart. Feel the excitement of each incredible moment your imagination pulls up. Get creative and free your mind of "reality." Do NOT... I repeat, Do NOT let the assholes sneak into Your Bubble or Future Bubble with their "that could never happen" mindset! Imagine punching them so hard in the face that they shoot out the side of Your Bubble and float off into space. Then please resume creating your new Future Bubble. This new fun task will be what you'll do when you go to bed at night.

When you have a moment where you're feeling negativity or rudeness from some asshole, I want you to distance yourself from the asshole.

This means, if you are dealing with this on social media, then yes, I want you to get off social media at that moment. I know you're stewing in anger right now and the last thing you want to do right now is walk away. However, if you truly want to know how to stay positive when you are surrounded by assholes, then you will do this for your own good and mental wellbeing.

Next, you're going to take some deep breaths and tell yourself they are not worth your time or energy. Breathe.

Don't get me wrong; I know this is not going to magically take you from completely pissed off to as Zen as a yoga instructor. However, it will calm you down slightly and allow you to walk away and not have to deal with anymore of their asshole crap.

Give yourself a little time to calm down about the situation. Try not to spend more than a few hours with anger sitting in the pit of your gut. I say a few hours because I know this takes a lot of practice to let go of anger and calm down.

When you find yourself stuck on something an asshole said, I want you to try to get into Your Bubble. Why? Because the more time you spend in anger, the more time you allow yourself to invite more negativity in your life. I'm sure you've heard people talk about the laws of attraction before or maybe you've read books about it. Whether you feel it's all a bunch of silly fluff or mystical bologna, it doesn't matter. I say this because it's like the laws of gravity. Whether you believe gravity is a real thing or not, doesn't matter. It's still a law of the universe – just like the laws of attraction. It's physics. Period. So when you are angry, your vibrational energy lowers, and you attract more things at a lower vibrational energy that matches. I promise I'm not going to go into a whole spin-off about the laws of attraction. Let's keep it simple and just say, when you are frustrated and pissed off, the longer you stay frustrated and pissed off, the higher your chances are of attracting more of the same situations that will keep you frustrated and pissed off.

This is why it's necessary to remove yourself from whatever is frustrating you and try to take that anger down a notch as best you

can – little by little.

I have to clarify something before we move on. The situations I'm describing above are situations that cannot be resolved by civilised conversation. I'm not talking about having a disagreement with your spouse or your bestie where effective communication can be utilised. No. I'm talking about those people in your life – the true assholes – who just say things to piss you off. They love to argue, complain and be the biggest Willie Whiners you've ever met! These are those people that will shoot down your dreams just to watch you suffer. These are situations that honestly won't do any good to stay engaged in. There are no true solutions besides walking away.

Once you are able to take that anger down a few notches, then you can try to get into Your Bubble. You'll find it'll be harder to concentrate and keep your thoughts positive because your mind is going to want to hang onto the anger. You'll go back and forth between the irritating situation and your happy place. But you will notice that in doing this, you will start to feel better. Usually, you'll find that you are able to shrug these situations off sooner with more practice.

CHAPTER 5: HAPPY THOUGHTS

Peter Pan was the boy who never grew up. He had the everlasting hope and optimism of a child. He used fairy dust and happy thoughts to fly. He had no sense of fear.

I believe somewhere in the story of Peter Pan is a bit of the law of attraction being sprinkled in. After all, if you think happy thoughts, you can fly, right? What does this teach us? I believe it shows us anything is possible when our thoughts are in the right place. Did you know that the fairy dust aspect was not part of the original story? This was only added in later due to children getting hurt from jumping off things trying to fly. So they added the necessity for fairy dust so children wouldn't think they could simply think happy thoughts and fly. Interesting, huh?

The point I take away from this is that mindset is a huge factor in how our lives play out. Peter Pan had the mindset of a child. He truly believed in who he was and what was possible. I realise this is just

children's story, but nonetheless, I'm intrigued by it.

Why did the author choose "happy thoughts" in order for Peter Pan, Wendy and the kids to fly? It lends nicely to popular quotes like:

“Think it. Believe it. Achieve it.”

The whole idea of positive thinking has been around since the beginning of time. It's even in the Bible if you look. They may not call it "positive thinking," but I promise you, it's there.

Matthew 21:22: “And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”

This is why affirmations have become so popular and effective. It's a way for you to speak and affirm in the present tense. We know the brain is a complex machine, but we also know through science that it takes 21 days to create a habit. You've likely heard this anytime you've tried to change your eating habits or stop smoking. It's proven that when you change your behaviours for a consistent period of time, it starts to become a habit.

You and I both know this is true when you're trying to lose weight and diet. If you can make it past at least the three-week point before finding yourself elbow deep in a box of Twinkies, you're on your way to a whole new you!

If you notice, even popular weight loss shows always tackle the issue of mindset when contestants are struggling to lose weight. That is because our belief system runs deep, and at some point in our lives, we convince ourselves that we are total bags of shit that don't deserve anything good in our lives. This belief system is built in a lot of us stemming from a combination of all of our experiences.

Of course, I would always recommend if you are struggling with some deep scars and traumas, that you seek professional help with a therapist. I believe we could all benefit from a little therapy in our lives.

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But if you feel you have a pretty good grasp on life and it's just those awful human beings you've been stuck dealing with that's bringing you down, that's a horse of a different color!

We can work on that!

CHAPTER 6: HOW DO I KNOW?

You might be wondering what makes me this big authority on dealing with assholes, creating Bubbles of the warm fuzzies, and thinking happy thoughts.

I'm not an expert at all. Whoops! Sorry, I guess I should have mentioned that in the first chapter. Here is the thing: my life experiences have led me to this place where I now stand on stages and talk to audiences about effective communication, positivity and conquering fear. I don't have some fancy degree. I use my personal life lessons to help people.

I grew up with an abusive step-father. He would beat my sister and me with a belt and routinely called us unspeakable names. He would tell us we weren't worth anything and would never amount to anything. I always felt like no matter what I did, it was wrong. But it wasn't always like this. Somewhere in this mean-spirited man was a man who loved us like we were his own. I know you might be

thinking it sounds a lot like Stockholm Syndrome. I totally get that! However, I'm only speaking about my personal situation. Even though I feared this man most of my life, I also knew that when shit got real, he would be there. During my sister's divorce, he was a huge support for her. When I cut my fingertip off in a freak wood-hauling accident, he not only sat in the backseat holding my arm up the whole way to the hospital – keeping me calm, but he also went in and held my hand through all of it. He could be the Super Trooper of Assholes for sure, but somewhere deep down, he was able to love us and be a dad to us. As I grew up, I learned more about his life and his childhood, which explained a lot about why he was the way he was. Was it okay? No, of course not. But as an adult now, I can look back and see things from a different perspective. Forgiveness goes a long way in your healing.

Needless to say, I was very conflicted when he passed away. I felt a sense of relief from the fear I held in my gut from my childhood, but I also felt guilty for feeling that relief. Part of me felt that because he was so strict, that's why I never did things like underage drinking and drugs. I was too scared he'd beat my ass! There were the times when his demeanor was softened. Like when he was in the hospital a couple of weeks before he died. It was just him and me. He had two sons from a prior marriage who he hadn't seen in ages. This was of his own doing because for everything my sister and I endured, it was ten times worse for his boys. I recall him looking particularly down that day. And for whatever reason, I asked him, "Do you want me to get a hold of the boys?" He put his head down. Thought for a minute and replied, "No, they wouldn't care anyway." What he meant was that he was too filled with guilt to cross that bridge. He didn't say that, but I could feel it in the way he spoke.

It's easy to look back at my childhood and pick and choose all the bad stuff. But there was a lot of good too! We vacationed to Branson, Missouri and went camping in Wisconsin. We went to Six Flags Great America many times. We had our own pool in the backyard and never went without. My mom was an incredible seamstress and would make clothing for my sister and me and our dolls! She even made us a dollhouse with miniature furniture to play with! We had lots of extended families that loved us, and we spent time with.

You might be thinking, “But why didn't your mom do anything about the abuse?” Honestly, I used to hold a lot of anger when I thought about that question. But the truth is, she didn't see it. When I go back into my memories, I cannot pick out even one time when he brought out his belt to whip us when she was present. He was a Jekyll and Hyde. He would pass off his mean comments to us as "sarcasm." He had a pretty ruthless sense of humor, so I can see how it was “just how he was.”

And the craziest part? I never considered myself a child of abuse until I was an adult. I never questioned being beaten with a belt. I just thought I was an asshole of a child and deserved it. It never felt like there was some secret of abuse going on that I couldn't tell my mom. It was just day to day life. It didn't feel out of the ordinary.

Something you will learn about me very quickly is that I will always ask you to focus on the good stuff, even in the midst of all the bad. Believe me, I have done more than my fair share of sulking, feeling sorry for myself, being angry, lashing out at everyone around me, blaming my mom for literally everything, etc. No good comes out of that. Yes, it helps to move through the pain of trauma and feel what you need to feel, but there is a better way to go about it than to spend years feeling bitter and pissed off at the world. I went for months without talking to my mom because of my perception that was in my head. She honestly had no idea when I confronted her about the abuse from our step-father. My anger was all in my head. The blame that I thrust upon her was also all in my head. I wasted months being angry. You don't get that time back for yourself or with other people. I lost countless hours of happiness over it. Invest in therapy. I mean that. Work with a professional who can help you get from feeling A to feeling Z a lot quicker with a lot less damage to yourself and those around you.

I have to go back sometimes and remind myself that I am not the abuse that happened to me. And that I can choose to be all the GOOD stuff that happened to me. That's how I decide to remember my childhood now.

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To be 100% honest, this was the hardest chapter for me to write, mostly because part of me still feels conflicted about my stepdad. Plus, I still have guilt over blaming my mom for so many years. I think sometimes we are so focused on forgiving others that we forget to forgive ourselves. I'm still working on this.

CHAPTER 7: DADDY ISSUES

As I'm sure you might have suspected from the last chapter, my "daddy issues" did not exactly lend well to my choice in men as a teenager. And when I say "men," I use that term very loosely.

My parents owned a tavern, so I was usually around men in their early 20s to men in their mid-40s. That was just the crowd of "regulars" for the most part. So it shouldn't come as a huge surprise that my first boyfriend was 22 years old when I was only 15. Yikes! That was in 1990. It didn't occur to me that this age gap was "wrong." Let me reassure you that this relationship lasted a mere two weeks and was not sexual at all. In fact, that is why I ended the relationship because with him being 22, I knew there would be certain expectations, and surprisingly, I did know myself well enough at that time to know I wasn't ready for that kind of relationship.

Hold onto your shorts because I'm about to tell you a story about a 16-year-old girl who started dating a 29-year-old man who had five children (from two different moms) and a live-in girlfriend. I was a complete Asshole, with a capital A! I am certainly not going to make excuses like, "I was young and naive or that it was all his fault" etc. No. I did know better, and I will not excuse my assholeness because I

feel guilt and shame about it now. I don't let myself off the hook that easy.

But as they say, Karma is a bitch. Karma came at me like a fat kid to cake!

By age 31, I had two amazing daughters who were 7 and 10 years of age at the time. However, I was severely depressed, barely making it out of bed by noon on the weekends. If the antidepressants weren't keeping me completely numb and I spoke about my unhappiness, it would be assumed that I forgot to take my "happy pills." *Insert eye roll.

In hindsight, there were plenty of red flags from day one. But again, I was a 16-year-old with daddy issues, so everything was sunshine and rainbows in my eyes. All I wanted was to be married and have kids and live happily ever after. I had no big plans for myself.

I want so desperately to go into detail here and tell you why I suffer from a form of PTSD due to those 15 years of my life. This is why I sought therapy and why I still have triggers that can easily put me in the fetal position mentally/emotionally. However, to rehash that part of my life is a huge trigger for me now, and it doesn't help anything or anyone.

Not to mention, I don't want to be that asshole who writes crap about an ex in a book, especially when I have forgiven him since (for my healing). Fortunately, he has become a much better human being, and I truly only want the best for him. I wish him nothing but happiness and peace. I have practiced exactly what I preach in this book. By hoping for the best for him, I am seeing this come to fruition.

However, divorce does give life to a whole other of assholes in your life.

Let's just say when you leave an abusive situation, you will learn exactly who are the biggest assholes in your life. They might have

been disguised as friends for a long time, but divorce gives you 20/20 asshole vision. You learn quickly where your support system is. You learn quickly how rumors and gossip get out of control. You learn that people will believe anything about what's being said about you. Even the people who knew what you were enduring, who questioned why you stayed for all those years – they will turn on you at any lie thrust their way. And there is nothing you can do about it but hold your head up and move on.

So yes, I do consider myself somewhat of an Asshole Expert in a way. I think we are all Asshole Experts when you think about it. If you have learned from those experiences and have found ways to maneuver around asshole experiences, I fully believe you should share that knowledge with the world and help others.

CHAPTER 8: LEAVING FEAR BEHIND

Sometimes we are too afraid of confronting or walking away from assholes in our life. We feel like if we say something, we will be judged or worse, be portrayed as an asshole ourselves. We let fear paralyze us in those situations. We are afraid to simply let go. Toxic people can and will destroy you. They will destroy your self-confidence. They will destroy your happiness, success, friendships, and every other area of your life if you LET them! Yes, that's right, you don't get off the hook so quickly.

Toxic people are just that – toxic. You have the power over who you allow into your life and how you allow them to make you feel. The reason you don't simply walk away from these people – no, run far far away is due to fear. You are afraid of the unknown. How will everyone perceive you if you do that? Will they understand? Will they think you're being unreasonable? Will they turn their backs on you? Sure. All of the above could potentially happen. But let me ask you this: if all of the above happened, what would that tell you? Would that show you who is truly loyal to you? Would that show some true colors of those you've surrounded yourself with? What would this tell you about their character?

Something else could also happen. Those people around may have been waiting for you to put your foot down and stand up for yourself. They may have been quietly praying for you to walk away from that toxicity. People will surprise you. In either case, guess what? You win! Either way, you get rid of toxic assholes from your life and make room for new supportive people.

I can already guess what your next concern is. What if these people are your closest, bestest friends and family members? What if you are just not able to shut them out of your life? It's okay. Not everyone will be able to draw a line in the sand around themselves to keep the assholes out. I'm one of those people. I am a people pleaser. I will lose sleep if I think someone is mad at me. I will sit with a stomachache if I think an irrational confrontation is coming – even if

I know 100% I'm in the right. In fact, just the thought of the word "confrontation" makes me extremely uncomfortable. Again, this is a fear-based reaction. Most of us were not taught self-preservation behavioral strategies. Most of us were taught to be people pleasers and to just smile and be nice. We don't cause a scene. We don't raise our voices in public. We don't become keyboard warriors on social media. Why? Fear. Fear keeps us at bay. Fear makes us sit silently taking abuse, hate, bullying, and worse because we are too afraid to speak up, stand up and say, "NO MORE!" We are afraid of being judged, criticized, gossiped about, and scared of what people will think.

How does one get over that fear?

I already talked a little about my stepdad. He was a pretty strict guy and didn't really understand me. When I was about 15 years old, I entered this contest. In the teeny tiny town I lived in (population 773), we had a yearly festival called Polish Days. Each year, teenage girls would give a little speech about what good they want to do with their lives and how they are an outstanding citizen in order to be chosen as a Polish Day Princess or be crowned Polish Day Queen. Yes, this is a title we actually wanted! So shush!

This particular year I threw my hat in the ring, and to my surprise, I was named a Polish Day Princess. I received a \$50 savings bond, a silver-plated necklace and the highly sought after Polish Day Princess sash. This was a big deal to me. I was a nobody. I was more of a wallflower at school. I never stood out at all. I didn't make enemies, but I also didn't have a lot of friends. I just "was." So it was completely out of character for me to even enter this contest. To be basically "on display" for everyone to see.

The morning of the parade, I spent several hours on my hair and makeup (we did our makeup and hair back then. Crazy, right?). I picked out a long shimmery red dress I had worn for homecoming the year prior. My stomach had butterflies just thinking about being on the float and doing the obligatory elbow-wrist-elbow-wrist waving out to the crowd. It made me feel amazing just thinking about it. I had a change of clothes packed into a big brown paper bag for after

the parade, extra hairspray (always extra hairspray!), tennis shoes and I was ready to go!

I walked out into the living room all dressed up and excited to be dropped off at the school for the parade. My mom sees me, and her face lights up. I knew I looked good and her face was all the reassurance I needed! She was getting herself ready to go to work, and I knew my stepdad would have to be the one to give me a ride.

When I mentioned I was ready to go, he snapped at me and said he wasn't taking me uptown. Immediately I felt my face flush with anger, my stomach got tight, and I felt the tears start to build up behind my eyes as I listened to him belittle me about how stupid the whole thing was and how he didn't understand why I even entered the dumb contest. He went on and on about how I should have found my own ride to the school and how my lack of a ride was not his problem. My mom immediately yelled at him telling him he was being mean and unreasonable. At some point, I completely blanked out everything they were saying. The anger took over. I burst out crying, threw my big brown paper bag of clothes, shoes, and makeup across the room, screamed something along the lines of him being a complete asshole and ran to my room. I sobbed my eyes out. I could hear my mom ripping him a new ass as I cried all my makeup off. Then my bedroom door swung open and my mom said to get my things – she was taking me uptown.

I remember sitting on that float with big dark sunglasses on to hide my swollen, cried-out eyes and feeling defeated as I did the obligatory elbow-wrist-elbow-wrist wave. All the excitement was verbally beaten out of me. I felt small, unimportant., and like the wallflower I was. Why did I think I could be anything more?

That day, however, I had done something I had never done before. I yelled at my stepdad. I swore at him! I had never spoken back to that man ever! Not only that, I had chucked my bag of things across the room as I screamed at him. This was NOT my meek personality he was used to. I wish I would have taken a moment to see the look on his face, but I never did. I didn't look up as I walked out of the house sniffing the snot running out of my nose and wiping the tears away.

And my face feeling hot and as red as the dress I was wearing.

Things changed that day. I don't recall him ever belittling me again like that. Well, except the one time he told his buddies at the bar to look at his "dirtbag of a daughter" because I dated a much older biker a few years after the parade incident. Daddy issues, remember?

I spoke up for myself. It changed things. I didn't even realize it until now. So it's okay to lose your cool once in a while when you need to. Let that fear fly right out of your mouth in the direction of whoever is making you feel unworthy, unimportant, or like you don't matter.

Until you find the strength to speak up that very first time, you won't know how good it feels to push past any fear that's holding you back. Of course, you don't need to whip a brown bag full of your things and scream at the top of your lungs and storm away to your bedroom for this to be effective. A simple few choice words letting that person know their words or actions are no longer welcome in your life will do the trick. Honestly, the calmer and nicer you can be, the better this works. It's easier for people to react to screaming than it is to react to someone who is calm, cool and collected, simply stating facts and setting boundaries. This is a much better approach, and you'll feel better about yourself handling it like an adult.

No, this still isn't easy. However, it will be worth it.

As for those close "friends" and family you know you'll never do anything about – my advice? Small doses. If you have to spend time with friend-holes (asshole friends), then make sure to cut the time down. Always have an "out." Meaning, always have an excuse ready to go as to why you need to leave. Maybe you have emails for work you need to get to. Maybe you have animals at home that need to be let out or fed. Maybe you have to get to bed early or make some phone calls. Whatever you can think of as "outs," keep them ready.

Also, word to the wise, always spend time out of your own space with those friend-holes or family. Never, I mean never invite them to your place! If you do this and they start to make you feel bad in any way, shape, or form ... you're stuck with them until they leave. A

better plan is to meet anywhere other than your safe space! You then have the option to leave whenever you see fit.

Another tip is to drive yourself. Unless you are riding with someone other than the friend-hole or asshole family member, then it's okay. You never want to have to depend on a ride from or with someone you might want to get away from. If you hold your mental health as a priority, you will take this advice.

This is a win-win for those of you who aren't able to set clear boundaries or remove toxic people from your lives completely. Remember, limit your time and always have an "out" ready to go. You ARE worthy of good people in your life! Your time is valuable! The energy you surround yourself with is of the utmost importance! You matter!

When you start to limit your time with toxic people, you allow time and space in your life for more quality people. Little by little, you will notice how you feel better about yourself and limiting your time with these people will be a lot easier. In fact, you might find that you stop making plans with them altogether! Either way, you'll be putting your mental and emotional health first, and fear will no longer control you around those assholes!

CHAPTER 9: EASY AS PIE

Dealing with assholes can be as easy as PIE. I touched on this a little bit at the beginning of this book. PIE stands for:

- P - Perception
- I - Intention
- E - Expectation

Perception

Perception: A way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something; a mental impression. Physical sensation interpreted in the light of experience – A collection of experiences, good and bad, from the day we are born until the present day, all lend themselves in the way we see the world and people around us.

You might think your boss is an asshole. However, subconsciously, you might perceive them as having characteristics of someone who hurt you as a child. You likely aren't even aware of the underlying reasons. Your perception of a situation – even if you experience the

same thing an entire room of people have – will always be a little different. You might go to a large conference and see a bunch of motivational speakers. One speaker in particular really resonates with you. You feel moved and motivated by their speech. Parts of it brings you to tears. Afterward, you tell your friend who was there with you how much you enjoyed it. They look at you like you are an alien and say they hated everything about it. You're speechless. That's perception. Your life up to that point helps you see the world in the way that only you can see it. Same for your friend.

When you are dealing with an asshole, you have to keep perception in mind. Take a step back from the situation for a moment. Think about what it is that truly bothers you about this person. Sometimes when someone comes into our lives, even briefly, whom we deem an asshole, likely there is something about that person reflecting something about ourselves we don't like.

Some people will never like you because your spirit irritates their demons.

For example, I was a part of a closed group on social media. There was one particular woman who just drove me crazy. She was pompous and arrogant, and a complete know-it-all, or at least that's how I perceived her. When commenting on posts, she would usually quote herself from a blog she wrote or put up links to her book. This bothered me because the group rules specifically said no self-promotion, but those rules apparently didn't apply to her. It bothered me that she positioned herself as an "expert" and her comments were generally harsh or put in a very matter-of-fact way as if her way was the only way.

Finally, one day when I was particularly annoyed with this group member, I challenged my perception. I decided to figure out what it was that bothered me so much about her that I repeatedly (in my head) referred to her as a complete asshole.

Then it hit me. Imposter syndrome. Something I have struggled with. Being a speaker, no matter how many times you speak and give a presentation that the audience gushes over, sometimes you just feel

like a big old fraud – like sooner or later someone is going to figure out that you are just a regular person – or a nobody who has no right standing on a stage.

As a speaker, you want to position yourself as an expert, or at least know a little more than your audience. The problem is that we are just regular people using our personal life experiences (generally speaking). So it's all just a state of mind. But I was seeing this quality in this other woman. I was reflecting my insecurities through what I was perceiving her as. Because she does hold herself as an expert, I was trying to mentally bring her down a level and label her an imposter, a fraud. Truth is, she is a successful speaker and author. She does have bragging rights. She is not an imposter or fraud. As I quoted earlier, her spirit was irritating my demons.

However, in saying that my perception was a reflection of my insecurities, it does not excuse the way she worded her comments. Expert or not, her wording could have been chosen better, and maybe they wouldn't come off so asshole-ish. Just saying.

Taking the time to figure out why I held this perception of her helped me see my insecurities, and now this is something that I can work on.

I will challenge you to take a step back and take a deeper look into yourself the next time you perceive someone as an asshole. This is not an easy task. When I first challenged myself, I wanted to just take the easy route and hold tight to my belief that she was an asshole due to the way she commented on posts. However, even that is a perception. Simply reading a comment – we cast our own spin on how we interpret it. Once I got past the surface level of my irritation and thought about the actual "why" her comments bothered me, that's when I was able to take that hard look at myself and see that imposter syndrome reflecting back at me.

Sometimes our perception of someone being an asshole is a reflection of how someone else in our life has treated us. Again, this can and usually is at a subconscious level.

A friend of mine had an issue with a coworker. She just complained about the coworker nonstop and felt this coworker was always out to get her. She labeled her a narcissist and a micromanaging bitch. She always felt like a scolded child around her and had no idea why. She was going through therapy post-divorce and brought this coworker up to her therapist. What she discovered was that the traits her therapist had her list about this coworker turned out to be the same traits as her mother, who she also deemed a narcissist and asshole. She had recognized these traits in her coworker and allowed it to affect her as if she was back in her childhood.

Remember, when you are viewing a situation from only your perspective, you aren't open to seeing the full picture.

Take some time the next time you find yourself quite annoyed about a person or situation. Think about other possibilities of why you feel that way. Are you jealous of what the other person has? Jealousy can rear its ugly head in many situations, and you might not even recognize it. You might be annoyed about how a person seems to have it all, and they just get under your skin. What might actually be happening is, you want what they have. You are jealous. It's a hard pill to swallow for most of us, but once you recognize this in yourself, the easier it will be to shift your mindset.

Instead of being mad that this person has what you want, change your perspective and go from an angry observer to an eager student. Learn how they did it. What strategies are they implementing in their life that they have obtained all those wonderful things? Make your enemy into your mentor. You'll not only change your perspective of that person, but you'll be a better person for it. You'll also likely learn some amazing things about them that potentially benefit your life!

Intention

Intention: a thing intended; an aim or plan. A determination to act in a certain way. What one "intends" to do or bring about.

We can never truly know another person's intention. It's much easier to assume intention, and usually, we assume the worst of the people around us. We assume when people annoy us or do things we deem as "bad" that they did it on purpose – they intended to do it; it was intentional. We generally never give people the benefit of the doubt unless it's someone we like.

If you have kids, likely you've heard a fight break out that sounded something like this:

"You did that on purpose!" the first child yells. "Nuh-uh! I did not! It was an accident!" the second child screams back.

This can go on for quite a few minutes unless you interject. Even though the first child feels the other one intentionally touched them, hit them, stole toys, whatever, that doesn't mean that's truly what happened. The second child might have been spinning around and came into contact with the first child and accidentally hit him. Maybe he thought it was okay to borrow that toy so did not intentionally steal it. Then again, maybe the second child is a liar and did intend those things. In this case, you might have an asshole for a kid!

All kidding aside, we do this as adults. We assume the intention of other adults. We look at a situation and label the person involved an asshole and that they fully know they are an asshole and acted intentionally.

Here's the thing about that – most adults that I know are so wrought with insecurities and low self-esteem that they walk around apologizing for every little thing! They accidentally brush into you and say, "Oh! I'm so sorry." They speak a moment too soon and interrupt you and blurt out, "Oh my gosh! I'm sorry!" They routinely

have the words "I'm sorry" on the tip of their tongue so they can avoid being assumed an asshole when they do something on accident. And yes, routinely you'll hear people complain about them and say things like, "She said she was sorry, but I know she did it on purpose!"

Really? You KNOW she did it on purpose?

We have gotten to a place in this world where we are more likely to complain, point fingers, and accuse than we are to compliment, assume the best, or praise those around us. Why do we do this?

It's because we have programmed ourselves to be in a default mode of negativity. As much as I love social media, it's become a breeding ground for negativity, attention seeking, bullying, and complaints. Just like any behavior that you repeat over and over again – it becomes a habit. Once it becomes a habit, likely you don't even realize you are doing it. It's your default mode.

We need to start practicing the act of giving compliments, praising each other and most of all, giving each other the benefit of the doubt. We need to start assuming the best and not the worst. Assuming intention the way we have is saying everyone around us are evil, awful people. And I, for one, refuse to believe that.

Okay, yes, there are always exceptions to the rule. Yes, of course, there are evil people out there. Well, let me clarify my thought on that. I don't feel people are inherently "evil." I feel they have mental disorders and mental illness. I know a lot of people believe in true evil lurking out there in the world, and they are probably right, but for my mental health, that thought gives me nightmares, so for the sake of argument – I like to assume mental illness. This again also gives a little benefit of the doubt.

When that asshole person is annoying you once again, and you feel like they know they are doing it and are definitely doing it on purpose, stop and ask yourself if this is really true. Or even better, flat out ask that person if they are purposefully acting like an asshole. This might shock them a bit, it's likely they'll be able to explain what their true intentions were. We have to learn to be bold in what we do

and say. Otherwise, when we assume intention and aren't brave enough to clarify with whoever is annoying us, it becomes our own internal battle. It becomes the poison that we drink in hope of the other person dying. You know you do this! Someone irritates you, and you end up dwelling on it over and over and over again. You complain about it over and over and over again. You never actually talk to that person to clarify what was said or done or even ask what their intention was. If someone says something that doesn't sit well with you, simply stop and ask them, "What did you mean by that?" Now, don't turn into a judgey snide asshole when you ask that question, but just matter of fact – "What did you mean when you said that?" Flat out ASK for their intention.

How can it hurt? By allowing others to explain themselves, this will hopefully, in turn, allow them to see how perhaps others perceive the way they speak or act.

If you were asked that question over and over, wouldn't it make you wonder why? Would you question how your tone or actions come across to others? Would you wonder why people question your intentions? I would hope so! We all say that if someone has an issue with us that we just wish they would tell us to our faces, right? But what happens when they do? I'll tell you. We get our backs up, get our undies in a bunch and are usually offended, right? We need to change that as well!

Let's make a pact right here and now that we will work harder to see the good in people. We will do our best to assume good intention. We will also, in turn, realize people may assume the worst about us and that gives us the opportunity to clarify our intention. Let's agree that before we speak in anger or take offense to everything said to us, that we take a moment, take a deep breath and reflect on what is the best way to respond.

- 1) I did NOT mean it that way! You're twisting my words!
- 2) I'm sorry you perceived what I said/did that way. Let me clarify what I meant.

HOW TO SPARKLE WHERE THE SUN DON'T SHINE

Which of these two options might actually SOLVE a conflict? How do you think the other person might respond to each?

Once we realize we cannot control other's actions, and we can't truly know their intention without asking, then we can start to be more open to assuming the best instead of the worst. While we cannot control how someone responds to us, we can definitely control how we respond to them.

Expectations

Expectations: a strong belief that something will happen or be the case in the future. A belief that someone will or should achieve something.

I'm guilty of having high expectations! I expect people to behave in a certain manner all the time. I expect people to watch their kids and not let them run around, be loud, or annoying. I expect people to treat one another with kindness. I expect to be treated with kindness by others. But guess what? My expectations are usually shot down in a hurry.

On the flip side, I expect my mom to have an anxiety attack if my two-year-old niece runs on the concrete driveway. I expect her to panic and yell that she will likely fall and bust her head wide open. I expect people around me to be skeptical. I expect people to need an explanation for everything I do.

I also expect unconditional love from my family and close friends. I expect when I call them with good news that they will laugh and cry tears of happiness with me. I expect when I have a meltdown that they will be understanding and give me a shoulder to cry on.

We are full of all kinds of expectations of those around us. We expect all the good and the bad. We learn what to expect from prior experiences.

My mom has been a grandmother for 25 years, so understandably, she is very protective of her grandchildren, and at times, this will completely stress her out. However, in saying that, she hasn't always had so much anxiety. She hasn't always experienced immediate panic whenever a child under five years sets even a foot on concrete stairs or a paved driveway. She used to be a more relaxed person. So what changed?

I've been told by so many women that when you become a grandmother, it's such a special, incredible event and is so different from becoming a mother. When you have your own children, you learn what to panic over and what to let go. This is especially true for women who have more than one child. The first child falls and you race over, kiss the boo-boos and then wrap the child in bubble wrap! But the second child falls and you look over, make sure they are okay, tell them they are okay and to brush themselves off. There is less panic. You start to let things go easier.

But when you become a grandmother, that sense of panic never leaves. As a mom, you have the children day in and day out and are used to their daily clumsiness, falling over things, into things, etc.

I think with my mom's case, though my sister and I certainly did not help with her anxiety. Once we started to learn how much anxiety she experienced when the children would run across the driveway or climb up concrete stairs, we started to make fun of her and tease her. She was legitimately concerned for their well-being and worried what would happen if they tripped or fell and would voice her concern, yelling something like, "Wendy Kay! Grab Jennifer! She's going to fall on the concrete and crack her head wide open!"

As a mom, it seemed like an over the top concern considering my child has crossed back and forth over this driveway since she started walking. Instead of being understanding, I turned my responses into tormenting her.

Of course, now we fully expect her to be in a constant state of panic around the youngest grandchildren and great-grandchildren. And she perpetuates this behavior all the time. What we expect of others around us is how they will always be from our perspective. How can we expect others to change their behavior when we constantly have our own expectations? So even though it can feel annoying that she panics in these situations, we expect this behavior, and she perpetuates it.

Expectations can be a dangerous game because those around us will either live up to those expectations (good and bad) or they will

disappoint us for not living up to our expectations.

You go into a coffee shop and order a French vanilla cappuccino with skim milk, and when you get it, it tastes like it was made with full-fat milk. You expected your coffee to be made perfectly, but those expectations were not met. So, you complain. Your expectations do not take into consideration that the barista was having a particularly hard day, going through a difficult breakup and having to find a new apartment. She simply grabbed the wrong milk when making your coffee because she was not in her usual state of mind.

While we all make mistakes, we tend to hold other people to higher expectations, especially those in customer service positions. We feel they should put aside personal issues and just do their job. However, when we are personally dealing with something difficult, we expect others to be understanding, especially when we make mistakes.

We might label that barista as stupid for making a mistake. But we label ourselves as "only human" when we do it. We expect better from those around us. But we never expect others to hold us to the same level of accountability.

When we drop the expectations, we open ourselves up to fewer disappointments. When we expect people to be humans and not robots, we become more understanding and sympathetic. We become kinder in our responses.

I once received a message from a woman saying how very disappointed she was in me for not fulfilling her expectations. There was a whole scenario that played out, but to keep it short and to the point – she had an expectation, and I did not meet that expectation.

But here is the thing. I never agreed to the expectation, so she had no right to be disappointed in me. Unless you agree to a certain expectation, I feel it is unfair for other people to hold you accountable for their expectations. The same is true the other way around. When you feel disappointed in another person, you need to ask yourself a question: did that person agree to my expectations? If

the answer is no, then you have no grounds to be disappointed. Only if the answer is yes, you do have a reason to be upset.

When other people don't meet our expectations, we say they are lazy, we call them assholes, or label stupid or incompetent. But are they really? Or did we set ourselves up to be disappointed from the get-go?

Putting all the elements of P.I.E. into action when you feel you have encountered an asshole who is making it difficult for you to stay positive will take some practice. It takes a lot of self-reflection. You can start to ask yourself questions like: Am I the only one who feels this way? Am I assuming the other person's intentions? Did this person agree to my expectations?

Once you can answer those questions honestly and try to look at the situation from another angle, then you might realize that we are all just fellow humans trudging along trying to do something with our lives. You might realize that no one is out to get you or purposefully irritate and annoy you.

Make a conscious decision to look for the good in people, assume the best, and take it easy on the expectations of those around you. You'll hopefully find that you are less irritated, run into far fewer jerks and assholes, and find it easier to be happy and positive.

CHAPTER 10: STAND TALL

When you think someone doesn't like you, doesn't spend as much time with you as you'd like, or maybe causes the most drama around you – stop giving them your attention! We tend to think we need to try harder to make them like us or want to spend more time with us or if we don't give them the attention, they'll lash out and cause even more drama in our lives. These assholes are sucking the life right out of you! You are so busy thinking about it, focusing on it, mulling it over in your head and trying so hard to please those assholes that you lose sight of your happiness.

Look around. Who are the constants in your life? Who are the people who have forever been your personal cheerleaders? Who do you call first with good news and reach out to first when you need to have a meltdown?

Those are your people.

Stop breaking your neck to please the difficult people in your lives. Stop beating yourself up trying to make other people happy. Stop fighting for their affection.

We do this because we crave acceptance and love. But when we cater to those difficult people in our lives, we are teaching them how we want to be treated and how their behavior towards us is okay.

Shift your energy back to those who are with you through thick and thin.

When you get to that place where you look around and decide who truly are the assholes around you, meaning you've applied the P.I.E. technique and still could not see them in another light – then they

might just be assholes.

So, what can you do? First, stop giving them your attention. Stop worrying if they like you or why they aren't showing up in your life more. People who want to be in your life are there now. You should never have to twist someone's arm to spend time with you. If you aren't sure if someone likes you, just ask. Jump clear out of your comfort zone for a change and simply say something like, "Hey, I noticed you don't come around much. If you're not interested in being friends, just say the word. I don't want to waste my time or yours." Now, remember people don't like to be asked direct questions, especially if the answer makes them uncomfortable. Pay close attention to their answer. When they answer, do they seem genuine? Or is there a hesitation before the answer. They likely will say they do like to hang out but then give excuses why they haven't been able to.

The main distinction between someone who truly wants to be around you and someone who doesn't is the hesitation to answer and the emotion behind the answer.

Asking direct questions are very difficult for most of us. Why? Is it because it seems too forward or confrontational? Or is it because we are afraid of the answer? Most people will only ask a direct question if they are fairly certain of what the answer will be.

Something I've noticed throughout my life is that difficult people, aka assholes, seem to get away with their behaviors. No one seems to want to confront them or correct what they are doing. It's easier to ask the people who aren't assholes to tip-toe around the asshole, so they don't get upset. They make life difficult for everyone around them. And yet, we continually allow this because no one wants to deal with the asshole.

Ignoring the issue hasn't gotten you anywhere thus far, has it? Blowing up and having a temper tantrum doesn't seem like the best option either.

What do you do?

Stand your ground. If you have honestly tried to see this person in a different light, you've worked through P.I.E and still feel as though this person is an asshole and is treating you poorly, then give yourself permission to stand your ground.

Give yourself permission to ask the direct questions. Does an asshole say something passive aggressive to you? Look them right in the eye and say, "What did you mean by that?" Call them out. Stand your ground. Make them clarify what they were saying to you.

You can ask a direct question but be nice about it. Even if you've gone through P.I.E, you still cannot truly know someone else's intention as we talked about earlier. So, ask nicely. This way, you avoid looking like the asshole if the person explains his/herself and you turn out to be in the wrong.

Be open to talking it out. If the person gets upset with you, ask them to explain further so you can better understand what they are trying to say or do. Then listen to what they are saying. Your perception and expectations might shift at this point.

If the person is still being unreasonable, decide if there is someone else who can help. If this is a work issue, can you go to a higher authority? Most people don't want to do this, but you aren't doing yourself or others any favors by allowing this person to continue to be an asshole.

Now that we talked a lot about dealing with the asshole let's talk about the "staying positive" part of this book. Let me show you some fun daily strategies you can implement to help yourself stay positive, especially when you're surrounded by assholes!

Now that you've learned about how to identify if someone is truly an asshole or not by using P.I.E, as well as the techniques we chatted about early for keeping your sanity, standing your ground and moving past the frustrations of dealing with assholes, I want to move on to teach you how to sparkle and stay positive and even help you develop new habits to create happiness and abundance!

In the upcoming chapters, you are now going to focus on “the how” to sparkle aspect and teach you about staying positive. I am going to walk you through the acronym FOCUS.

F: Find Your Freaking Jam

O: Optimism O'clock

C: Confidence Counts

U: Unicorn University

S: Seeking Solutions

Each one of these stackable strategies is going to help you create more positivity in your life and help you maintain that positivity. Together, combined with what you learned in the previous chapters to deal with assholes – you will be armed with all the tools you need to sparkle where the sun don't shine. And not only be positive but stay positive regardless of the people around you!

CHAPTER 11: FIND YOUR FREAKING JAM!

What is YOUR song? What is that song that makes you want to yell at the top of your lungs to all the people around you, "THIS IS MY JAM!!!" It's the one song that makes you dance no matter where you are. It's that song that maybe has a special meaning to you. Maybe it's the tempo or the music, or perhaps it's the lyrics. It's not a slow jam; nope, it's that upbeat fun song you cannot help but tap your foot, wiggle your hind end, or snap your fingers to. Maybe it's not just one song. Maybe it's an entire playlist!

There have been so many studies on how music affects the brain. Music boosts brain chemicals. For example, dopamine is the brain's "motivation" chemical, so boosting your dopamine will help boost your motivation! Dopamine is also an important part of the pleasure-reward system in your brain. Research shows that listening to music reduces stress, anxiety, blood pressure, and pain. Not only that, it can help you sleep better, improve your mood and your memory and help you stay more mentally alert. Listening to music has been directly linked to our emotions. It's good for your brain and your body! I could go on and on here about the effects of music on the brain, but not everyone loves the neuroscience behind things. I will keep it simple and just let you know – the research is strong, and music can help you boost your energy and motivation to help you live a more positive life!

Your assignment is nice and simple. I want you to find your freaking jam! Pick a song or create a playlist of only upbeat songs that you absolutely love! It has to be something that makes you feel like dancing – even if you're not the "dancing type." This may come very quickly for some people, and for others, well, it may take some time

to listen to many playlists. Luckily, in today's world, music is right at the tips of your fingers at all times! You can use Spotify, Amazon Prime, YouTube, Pandora, Shazam, IHeartRadio, Slacker Radio and so many more! And of course, there is always the radio! You can listen to your jam with headphones on or from your phone, a huge stereo with a sick bass beat – however you like!

You will do these "assignments" daily. Get out a notebook or create an event in your calendar or put these on your to-do list.

Day 1 Assignment:

1. Start your song or playlist right after your alarm goes off.
2. Start your song or playlist as you start your day: while you're in the shower or getting ready.

You want those spikes of dopamine running through your groggy, sleepy brain first thing in the morning. It'll help wake up your brain and boost your energy. Listening in the car is great too, but I want to be sure you are paying attention to the road!

For best results – listen to upbeat music throughout your day! If at any point in your day you are feeling stressed or tired, hit the PLAY button and listen to your freaking jam!

Day 2:

Okay. You found your jam. You made a playlist, and you've been happily tapping your toes, bouncing around the kitchen or bedroom as you crank up the tunes. You've been increasing the good ol' dopamine running through your brain, creating happier, upbeat vibes. How do you feel?

Look around for some clues. Did you find people were a little nicer? Did you find that *you* were a little nicer? Sometimes just opening our eyes a little can help us change our perspective a little. Of course, finding your jam certainly helped! Just being aware of yourself and those around you and looking for happy moments, bigger smiles, happier people – will change your perspective so you can see those things. Most days, we go through life on autopilot, and there can be happy, smiling people all around us, but we just don't see them.

It's kind of like buying a new car. My husband and I needed to get a new vehicle. We lived on this crazy hill, and the driveway was super steep. In the wintertime, after a good snowfall, my little car would make it maybe three quarters way up the driveway and then slide all the way back down! Scary! So we decided it was time to get something with a little more "oomph," and of course, 4-wheel drive. We headed to the car dealership not really knowing what we wanted. We mainly just wanted something we could afford. We ended up getting a Dodge Nitro. I lovingly referred to it as a "Toaster on Wheels." Google a Dodge Nitro and you'll see why *winky face*.

I hadn't seen many of these on the road before, but we took it for a test drive, and the price was right – so we purchased it. Now, mind you, like I said, I hadn't really seen these on the road before. But suddenly, everywhere I looked, all I noticed was Dodge Nitros!

This is how our perception changes. It's not that the same day we purchased our Nitro so did everyone else - no, it was that I was now aware of these vehicles, so my eyes were opened up for them! They had always been there, but I just never noticed them.

HOW TO SPARKLE WHERE THE SUN DON'T SHINE

Opening your eyes to the things around you, or rather, looking for certain things around you, will bring them into your consciousness, so you begin to notice them.

Day 2 Assignment:

1. Repeat Day 1. Be mindful of the people and events around you. Make note of any good thing that you notice.
2. Crank up the tunes and repeat throughout the day as much as you can!

Day 3:

This is what I want you to do. It might seem silly. It might seem a little tedious, but trust me – adding in this little element to what you've already been doing will definitely be a game changer.

Be grateful. That's it. Simple, right?

You're probably shaking your head like, "Um, how is this a game changer?" Well, because you aren't going to be grateful for just those big things that you would normally be grateful for – like your boss praising you, or your kids going to bed without a fight, or your dog not pooping on the rug right in front of the door. Nope, you are going to be grateful for EVERYTHING!

Did you put a spoon full of sugar in your coffee or tea this morning? Yes? Then be grateful for the sugar. Be grateful for the tea or coffee. Be grateful for the spoon and the cup. Be grateful for the coffee pot or tea kettle. Be grateful for the energy that ran the appliance. See how one small thing has so many other things you can be grateful or thankful for? So, in your mind or heck out loud if you want to, say a little "thank you" and think about how that little bitty small thing makes you happy.

Go through your entire day and do this. Even the bad things! That's right! Even the things that you would normally perceive as "bad" – be grateful for them. Say a little "thank you for cutting me off, strange bald man. I appreciate that you allowed me to check that my brakes were working." You could also add, "Thank you, middle finger, for being so flexible when I needed you to be." See? It's simple to be thankful for even the "bad" things. You can also practice releasing your anger by doing this.

Day 3 Assignment:

1. Find your jam. Keep doing this every day.
2. Listen to your jam or your playlist as much as possible.
3. Be Grateful. What were some of the things you noticed you were grateful for that you hadn't really noticed before?

Day 4:

You need to find your warrior stance!

No, I'm not joking. Stand with a nice, strong, wide stance, chest puffed out, chin up, hands on your hips with your elbows bent and imagine your warrior cape flowing gently in the breeze. This is a power stance. This is what psychologists refer to as an "open posture." This is a stance in which you convey more confidence. Or in other words: stand like a warrior, feel like a warrior, act like a warrior.

Once you get into your warrior stance, you will repeat after me:

I AM POWERFUL.

I AM WONDERFUL.

I AM MAGNIFICENT.

I AM CARING.

I AM HARD WORKING.

I AM AMAZING.

I AM RESILIENT.

I AM GIVING.

I AM HAPPY.

I AM STRONG.

I AM HEALTHY.

I AM FULL OF LOVE.

I AM WORTHY.

I AM CAPABLE.

I AM KIND.

I AM FULL OF ENERGY.

I AM CREATIVE.

I AM PEACEFUL.

I AM ABUNDANT.

I AM WORTHY.

I AM WORTHY OF LOVE, HAPPINESS, HEALTH AND WEALTH.

I AM A WARRIOR!

You can repeat these things out loud or in your head. But whichever way you decide to do it, make sure you are in your warrior pose, and you repeat the "I AM" phrases like you mean it! Don't be all willy-nilly with this part. Self-love is something most people struggle with. And we need to LIKE ourselves, and more importantly, LOVE ourselves. You need to be nice to yourself and remind yourself often that yes, you are pretty spectacular!

Day 4 Assignment:

1. Find your jam.
2. Keep on toe tappin' to your jam through the day.
3. Be grateful for everything!
4. Be nice to yourself and repeat the "I AM" statements while in the

warrior pose. (PS: Extra credit if you come up with more of your own positive "I AM" statements.)

5. Extra EXTRA credit if you do this in front of a mirror! Yes, it'll feel awkward and silly, but it'll make a bigger impact!

You have four days' worth of assignments. I want you to keep practicing these things every day! Take notice of how your mood changes. Do you feel less stressed? Which of these assignments did you struggle with most? I want you to work on those things that you struggled with. We will cover more of this later in the book.

CHAPTER 12: OPTIMISM O'CLOCK

Why Optimism O'clock? Because it's ALWAYS a good time to be positive and optimistic!

You are going to work on focusing on the good even when things seem bad. This week, you will learn new techniques to deal with unexpected things perceived as "bad."

Personal development and the laws of attraction are sometimes misconstrued as just "positive thoughts create positive things" – which can be mostly true, but it's easy to find the positives when things are going well. It's easy to have those happy, feel-good feelings when you just got a raise or your child comes home with good grades.

This can quickly change when something unexpected happens. You're on your way to work when you get a flat tire, or you get to work, and that workplace asshole tries to micromanage you. There are all kinds of things that can come up in our lives that even on a good day, our faces will flush red and hot and we could bust at the seams with anger. Then to have someone say something like, "It's okay, just think happy thoughts." That doesn't usually work, does it? In fact, it's likely makes things worse!

So, how do we get out of that funk of anger or even sadness?

It takes some focus and desire to change. I mean a **STRONG** desire to change. I am going to challenge your desire to change. You'll be taking notes during your day looking for the "good" but also jotting down how you feel when something unexpected comes up, or you find yourself feeling down or upset.

Make notes as you go through your day and be self-aware of how you are feeling. Just do this as you notice your mood changes. I still want you to work on what you learned in the last chapter of course, so my hope is that you have already begun changing your thoughts and what you are saying and noticing through your day. I hope that the things that normally would have sent you into a blind rage will now be more of a slight anger or annoyance. But don't worry if you do still get pushed to that blind rage because we are going to work on that after today.

You will be as self-aware as you can, noting what time it is and what happened that made you upset, mad, sad, and even happy. If something happened that helped you feel more joyous, then definitely write it down. Today, you are going to learn to find the good in all situations and people – even people who you're not a fan of. This will be a challenge for most of you. We generally find that if we do not like someone, we keep finding more things to not like about them, or we find that they take up space in our minds filled with hatred, annoyance or sadness and frustration.

You are not everyone's cup of tea, and neither am I. At some point or another, either you have, or you will come across someone who just does not like you. Whether they have a sound reason or not, it doesn't really matter. The point is, there is something about "you" that just upsets them. Most of us have grown up as "people pleasers," so when we learn that someone doesn't like us, boy, it sets us into a full-blown frenzy trying to make sense of it. Don't they know we are amazing and wonderful? How could they not like us? This is something we can spend an obscene amount of time focusing on. Why do we do this?

This is one of the best quotes I've come across pertaining to this:

"What other people think of you is none of your business."

Paulo Coehlo

You have to let go of the thought that it matters what other people think of you. We all base our opinions, perceptions, and ideations on

what we have learned and experienced throughout our lifetime. When someone doesn't like you, that is something they need to deal with, not you. Usually, when someone does not like us, it's a mirror into their own lives. Perhaps it's a fit of jealousy or something you've done or said that reminds them of something from their past – usually a thought formed subconsciously. They may not even understand it themselves.

Just as you learned earlier in this book, if someone has clearly done something to you or said something disrespectful or wronged you in some way, then we can easily see why we feel this way. But now ask yourself this question, WHY does it bother you so much? What is it about their opinion or how they acted that sets you off? Maybe it was family? Perhaps a close friend?

But here is the thing – it doesn't matter! That's right, it doesn't matter! It comes down to recognizing what you are allowing that person to do when you get repeatedly upset about their actions or words. You are allowing them to walk through your mind with their dirty feet. By repeatedly dwelling on these things, speaking about these things and venting about these things, is only harming YOU.

Find the GOOD in everyone! This works best if you start with people who have wronged you. You don't know their whole story. Even if you know "most" of their story, everyone has parts of themselves they never share, so we can never know someone's entire story. Take time today to give them the benefit of the doubt and find something GOOD about those people. You can even pray or say positive affirmations for those people like we talked about earlier. Think about it this way: if you wish someone only finds anger and bad things, they will always be angry and do bad things according to your perception of them which will always just upset you more and give you more things to complain about. But when you search inside your own heart to wish those people well, wish for them to find inner peace and happiness, you'll find your mind is more peaceful as well. This will be quite a challenge for some people, but really dig deep and find something good about all the people in your life and wish them well, wish them peace and happiness.

When I started to do this, I was amazed at how much better my life and my relationships were. I perceived certain people in my life to be cold and mean or just very annoying. I started to think about why they might be that way. Perhaps they had a rough childhood. Perhaps

something was going on in their personal lives that made them lash out to others around them. Once I took the time to wish them peace and happiness and for good things to happen to them, I found my perception of them changed. There is one particular person in my life I was really upset with, so I put this idea to the test, and I have been absolutely amazed at the changes it has brought to our relationship. This works great with family and close friends.

You're learning to find the good in the people around you and being more self-aware of your moods.

Everyone has struggles and challenges in their lives. We all eventually experience the death of someone close. We all have hardships or money troubles, etc.

I want you to take a quick jog down memory lane. I want you to think of all the obstacles that came into your path. Some of your darkest moments seemed so bleak like things would never get better. But they did get better, didn't they? What were the GOOD those situations brought to your life?

An example I can give you from my own experiences is my divorce. I was in a toxic, abusive marriage for 13.5 years. I could go on and on about all the awful things I endured and how my life was so bad back then. But the GOOD that came out of that is, I appreciate the man I'm with now so much more. Had I not experienced such utter disrespect from my ex-husband, I may not have appreciated the quality of respect in my current marriage. I am a much stronger person for having gone through that situation. My perspective changed wildly. You have to take every experience and find the GOOD. Everywhere you have been in life has brought you to where you are now.

Make a timeline. You can either do this in your head or write it down.

Think about your past, things you struggled through. Think about that one particular thing that had you so upset. Now think about what your life would have been like had you not experienced that thing. Did you meet new people because of it? Did you learn something about those around you? What GOOD came out of it?

Find some quiet time today and sit down with a piece of paper and pen or pencil. It's important to physically write these out instead of just thinking them or typing them on a laptop or computer or on your phone.

Imagine you are trying to beat the world record of things to be grateful for. Number your paper as you go. Write down everything you can think of to be grateful for. When you get stuck (and you will), look around and start to write down the little things around you that help make your day better. You can be grateful for literally anything, big or small! You can be thankful for the coffee mug holding your favorite warm drink. You can be thankful for the electricity running through your home. You can be thankful for the chair you're sitting on. The "big" things are easy to be grateful for – love, friendship, money, etc. But look around and dig deep and list as many things as you can!

Now, when you have finished that list of things you are grateful for, I want you to start a NEW list of things you are grateful for. But this time, you are going to imagine all the things you wish you had in your life and write them down as if you already have them and you are SO grateful for them! Write it in the present tense.

For example, if you'd like a new house, you would write down:

I'm so grateful for this new home I live in. It has three bedrooms and two bathrooms with a lovely wrap-around porch. I'm so happy and grateful that it is in the perfect location and has tons of storage. We truly love our new home!

The idea is to be as specific as possible about whatever it is you are grateful for. This is a really fun game to play as it allows you to think and dream BIG! There are no limits on this! Reach for the stars on

this! You can update your list as often as you'd like. I would encourage you to start to write these lists out daily or weekly. Set aside time and even schedule time to do this. Soon you'll find that there are somewhere between 1 to 5 items that are always a constant on your list. This will help you keep visualizing what you'd like to attract into your life.

Finding the good can also just be about setting yourself up for success.

Take for example, smoking. Say you've been a smoker for 20 years, and you have decided to quit. Will it make it easier for you to be smoke-free by being around other smokers or by trying to be in places where smoking is not prohibited?

What if you are trying to diet? You promised yourself you wouldn't eat anymore cupcakes. So, would it make sense then to leave your house and drive to a bakery? No, of course not.

Likely, if you're trying to diet, you've made a grocery list of healthy foods, you might prep some food for the week to make it easier to grab and go. You might make sure you have healthy snacks in the house. These are all things we do to set ourselves up for success.

The same technique goes for paving yourself a new journey with happiness, prosperity, abundance, and gratitude.

Be mindful about what you're watching. Instead of watching a violent video about animal abuse, try watching a happy video showing an owner reuniting with his lost dog. When we put positive things in front of ourselves such as pleasant images, movies, books, etc. – this is "prepping" ourselves for success.

If you are on social media, be very careful about what you do and don't comment on and what you are allowing into your life. This one is probably the most difficult for all of us. If you have a friend who is routinely posting negative images, statuses, photos, etc., you should unfollow them. You do not have to "unfriend" them, but you do have the option to unfollow. Try cleaning up your social media to set yourself up for success, so you are only presenting positive images,

stories, posts, and statuses into your awareness.

Prepare yourself for success. Monitor your social media and unfollow as you need to. Seek out happy stories. Make it a habit to watch uplifting videos and motivational type videos. Surround yourself with positivity! Remember, Optimism O'clock, because it's always a good time to be positive and optimistic!

Let's incorporate some laughter into your life! Finding humor in life is a great way to create optimism. When you are laughing and having a good time, you are much less likely to be a whining, griping Negative Nelly. Laughing will help raise your vibrational energy; therefore, helping you attract more things to be happy and laugh about!

What trips your giggle trigger? What makes you roll on the floor LOL'ing? Is it a movie? A specific comedian? Is it when someone farts or burps? Is it kittens falling off of window sills? Doesn't matter how childish or immature it is. If it makes you laugh, then good.

I want you to start seeking every single laughable moment you can! If you're getting ready for the day and you drop your brush or comb, laugh about it! Don't get mad and stomp all about. Instead, laugh it off! Find the funny today!

Okay, but let's be crystal clear here; I'm not talking about laughing at someone else's expense. No bullying or finger pointing! That's a huge no-no!

What I'm talking about are the funny moments we tend to overlook or feel like we have to stifle our giggles. Why do we do this?

I remember being in 5th grade, and in my house, when someone "cut the cheese," we all cracked up laughing. However, when you're in school, tooting/breaking wind/shedding a butt bubble was just not heard of! In fact, if you even cracked a smile, oh boy! Not cool!

But why do we do this? For heaven's sake, our bodies make noises! We burp like truckers sometimes. We sneeze. We cough. We blow

our noses. We hiccup. Our bodies do all sorts of crazy things at inappropriate times. It's not like we can stop it. So why can't we embrace the fact that we are all human and well sometimes ... shit happens! (Hopefully not after a burst butt-bubble of course heehee.)

Anyway, getting back to my story. When I was in 5th grade, a bunch of us were hanging out on the playground, and someone said something funny and I gave out a good old laugh, and well, my butt gave out a good old laugh too as it suddenly let out an incredibly loud, butt-cheek-slapping "brrraaaapppth." I felt my face get hot. I wanted to crawl into a hole and die, but for whatever reason, I just blurted out "Bahahaha." I started to laugh uncontrollably so much so that I had tears rolling down my face! And all those 11-year-old girls just stood there with a look of horror on their faces as though I took a huge deuce right there on the school's lawn! Needless to say, not my proudest moment, but looking back, it is something I can give a good chuckle at now.

Lesson here is LAUGH. Who cares what other people think! Life is funny, and we have to find the joy in it!

CHAPTER 13: CONFIDENCE COUNTS

Confidence: A feeling of self-assurance arising from one's appreciation of one's own abilities or qualities. To believe in one's self.

What is a good quality you possess? We all have something that we like about ourselves. Whether it's a physical trait, an internal quality, or maybe it's a talent or gift we possess. You may have been conditioned not to talk out loud about the things you love about yourself. From an early age, you might have been told that it sounds "conceited" to speak highly of yourself. We say people are "full of themselves" if they mention an accomplishment they are proud of or speak kindly of how they look.

We are also taught from a young age that we shouldn't brag about our accomplishments. I couldn't disagree with these things more! I personally believe when we stifle ourselves and our children from being able to voice happiness about something, we end up chopping down any confidence we have built up.

Of course, there is a difference in how you say something. You can simply say, "Wow! I'm so happy I completed a 5K race!" Or you can say in a very condescending tone, "I finished the race that you didn't even participate in!" Can you hear the tone I'm referring to?

We have to re-learn how to be proud of ourselves and how to

celebrate our accomplishments. We need to learn to look in the mirror and appreciate what we see. Not only that, we need to learn to love the person looking back at us!

Outward confidence is built from inward love.

When you feel better about who you are, you feel better about letting your guard down and allowing others to see you – the real you. When we lack confidence, we put up walls and sometimes pretend to be someone we are not.

Have you ever had to go to a meeting or a social gathering alone? Do you remember the feeling you had in your gut when you walked through the door? Did you feel like all eyes were on you? Did you pull out your clothing and feel uncomfortable? Did you look at the floor and the walls to avoid making eye contact? Did you nervously grab your phone and bury your face in your screen? Did you feel your face get hot and red? Did your hands and feet suddenly feel cold? Did you get shaky and feel lightheaded?

You might say it was fear that was taking over. You felt a fear of being judged. You feared someone wouldn't like what you looked like – your hair, your clothes, your makeup. You feared making eye contact would be interpreted as an invitation to start a conversation with you. You feared feeling alone and not knowing anyone. You worried you'd be judged for sitting alone. This made you fear that you wouldn't fit in or that someone would think you didn't belong there.

We torture ourselves on a daily basis due to lack of confidence. We constantly second guess ourselves and assume we will do or say something wrong. Because we are all so different, this can stem from so many different reasons. All of your experiences up to now have taught you how to be awkward and uncomfortable. Somewhere in your past, you had to go somewhere alone, and you felt these things. You now expect to always feel awkward, nervous, and alone when you walk through the door, so your body interprets that and acts accordingly. Your face feels hot and red. Your hands go cold. Your body goes into fight or flight mode.

I remember starting a new job when I was 18 years old. It was a factory job that I did not want. Right out of high school, I was working three jobs. During the day, I worked as a temporary secretary for a small family- owned factory. I worked an 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. shift. From there, I drove to my second job as a waitress where I would work from 5:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. or later. On the weekends, I would work both Saturday and Sunday mornings at a little grocery store as a cashier from 8:00 a.m. until about 3:00 p.m. Most weekends, I would also then go to my waitressing job and work until after 11:00 p.m. I had no days off. I honestly did not mind it. I enjoyed making money!

This factory job was a night shift and was fulltime. I hated the thought that I would be stuck in a factory for 40 hours each week. But I knew something had to change. Working three jobs was getting old fast. So, I reluctantly applied, interviewed and was hired.

On my first day, I was so nervous. I arrived a good 15 minutes early before the start of my shift. I was to go into the breakroom and wait for my supervisor to come get me.

When I walked in, there were a couple of tables full of employees. I felt like everyone stopped talking abruptly as I walked in. It was like a scene out of a movie where the main character walks into a bar, and the music stops with the sound of a needle scratching across the record, and all heads turn and stare. I felt my face get hot and my hands go cold. I didn't know where my eyes were supposed to look, but I knew I did not want to make eye contact with anyone staring in my direction. I made my way to an empty table, put my things down and decided to get a soda while I was waiting.

I fumbled through my purse to get change. A few quarters, dimes, nickels and pennies spilled out on the table creating a ruckus that again turned heads in my direction. I tried to ignore it and picked up the change. I went to the vending machine and put in my quarters and chose a can of Sprite. I can still feel eyes on my every movement. After all, I was the "new kid," and everyone was trying to decide who this awkward 18-year-old girl is. I sit down and crack open the can of

soda. I take a sip and when I put the can down on the table, the bottom edge of the can hits the strap of my purse, and it tips over and spills everywhere! I look at the mess in absolute horror! Bursts of laughter shoot out in my direction. I feel like I'm going to cry as I race over and grab as many napkins as I can to clean up the mess.

The shift whistle blows, and everyone gets up and walks out of the break room. I finish cleaning up the soda and plop down in absolute disgust of myself. I don't want to work here anymore. I don't care about the money or the benefits. I don't care if I have to work those three jobs again. I just don't want to face even one of those people who just watched me make a complete ass out of myself.

The tiny shreds of confidence I had when I walked in, went completely out the window. I felt like for the remainder of the night, whatever I touched, I knocked over or bumped into. The nervous energy coursed through my entire body. My first day on the job and I already hated it.

It's so easy to let one small moment knock us off our axis and make us feel out of orbit with the rest of the world. The problem is that we have so many of these small moments that add up over time and soon we are left with little to no self-confidence. Those are just the small moments. We haven't even touched on the big moments!

Add in the big moments, and you have the potential for a low self-esteem shit show! Hot mess walking! Once you get to this point, as most of us do at some point in our lives, we are more likely to give up, accept this is who we are and stay stuck in the rut we've buried ourselves in. It's no surprise we find ourselves raging with jealousy at others who are chasing and catching their dreams. Their confidence makes us feel even worse about ourselves.

I'm here to tell you that you have the power to change this! You do not have to accept that this is just who you are and will never be able to change. You can change! You can do anything you make up your mind to do! You may need a little convincing, I'm sure, but you can learn to have confidence and even start to believe in yourself! To get to this place, you will have to learn to let go enough to lean in to the

new you.

Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? I get that. I was in that place a long time ago when I wouldn't have even read this far in a book like this. I would have rolled my eyes and assumed it was possible for everyone else but not me.

I would have used my predicament to make excuse after excuse for why it would never be possible for me. Back then, I would have said my husband was far too controlling to ever allow me pursue my songwriting dreams. See, besides all my other titles, I am also a lyricist. I have been writing poems and songs since I was about 11 years old. I always felt this was my gift from God, but for years, I was too scared to share my work, for fear of rejection or judgment. I loved what I wrote. It made me feel good about myself. But I lacked the confidence to let anyone read my work.

Finally, one day, I took a leap of faith, and I let people read my work. Because of the praise I received, my confidence started to build. I started to write more and more and let more people read them. Soon, I was asked to write poems for weddings, funerals, birthdays, etc. When someone would ask me to write a poem for a lost loved one, I would sit in a quiet place and try not to force the words. I would wait until they just came to me. Then I would frantically write them all out as they came. It would take me less than 5 to 10 minutes to write these poems. I felt like there was a higher power giving me the words, guiding my pen. Time and time again would prove that this gift was definitely something outside of myself.

The first time I knew the poetry I wrote came from another place besides my mind, was writing a poem for a five-year-old little girl. I will never forget that day. Her mom was my sister's high school friend. It was late in the afternoon when the news broke. This beautiful five-year-old little girl had gotten off the school bus. She crossed in front of the bus and had gotten to the side of the road by the driveway. She must have dropped something in front of the bus and went back to grab it. The bus driver wasn't aware she had walked back in front of the bus as she pushed the gas pedal. In a moment's time, tragedy struck.

I felt numb when I heard. I remember having to go to the store that night with my daughter who was 1 or 2 years old at the time. I can still feel how tightly I gripped her little hand. Fear rushed through my veins that day. In a moment, so many lives changed forever – a moment. I couldn't even take the thought of what that 5-year-old's mom was going through.

The thoughts would come in waves, and I had to immediately talk myself out of thinking about it. When a mother loses her child, hell can't even be a strong enough word to express what she must go through. I couldn't bring myself to think about it.

The phone rang. On the other end was a familiar voice asking if I would please write a poem for the funeral services. I felt my stomach knot up. What words could I possibly write about such a horrific event? There were no words that could ever comfort a mother in this situation. But for reasons I still don't understand, I agreed to do it. I had never actually met this little girl and hadn't seen her mother in years. I struggled with my thoughts and the heavy weight on my shoulders of what I would write.

I sat down with a pen and notebook. I stared at the empty page and cried. I shook my head in disbelief that I agreed to write a poem for this. What could I possibly write? Why couldn't I find any words to even start? It was like words didn't even exist suddenly. I took in a deep breath, closed my eyes, forced the air back out my lungs and out my mouth and tried to completely clear my mind.

Then something happened. Like a lightning rod struck my pen – the words spilled out onto the page. They came to me in such a way that I almost couldn't write them down fast enough. It was a blur. I just kept writing until the very last two lines. Then I hesitated. I re-read what I had already written. Where did these words come from? I tapped the pen on the table. How do you end a poem like this? Which words would carry the burden of the last two lines – the final thoughts? I looked around the room searching for letters and vowels to appear out of thin air and form themselves into something that made sense. And then it happened. The last two lines exploded in my

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mind as if lyrics from a song I had heard a thousand times.

In Memory of Tori -

Mommy, I know you'll miss me
And I know that you'll be sad
And I know you think you'll never smile
Or find happiness again.

I know your heart is breaking
As you ask yourself the question "why?"
But all the love that you've given me
Will last 'til the end of time.

Just know that I'm in heaven
And I know it will be a while
But try to remember me with happiness
And someday again you'll smile.

I'll always be in your heart
And I can visit you in your dreams
You always knew I was an angel
Just now ... I have my wings.

I waited until I knew the wake was almost over before I went to the service. It was unbearable to walk through those doors. My eyes welled up with tears as I scanned the room looking for her mother. She was sitting on the couch looking defeated, exhausted, overcome with grief. Her eyes were heavy with pain. I handed her the poem.

She read it slowly. Tears rolled down her already red, tear-chapped cheeks. She finished reading, put her head down and cried. When she finally looked up at me, I will never forget what she said:

"How did you know I called her my angel?"

I didn't. It was at that very point I knew for the first time, God put these words on the paper – not me. This was my gift. I had no way to know the poem had to be from her five year old's perspective as if to speak directly to her mom and say exactly what her mom needed to hear.

That moment still brings tears to my eyes.

This was a turning point. As hard as that moment in time was, it changed me. Oddly, it gave me confidence and helped me trust myself. It gave me the power to know not to force things. When I had to force words onto the page, I was never happy with what I wrote. If I could grip the pen a little lighter, breathe in and breathe out, clear my mind, the words would come. I had to let go enough to lean in.

I want you to think about a moment in time when you felt confident. Was it a new outfit you fell in love with and bought? Did you race home, put it on and stand in front of your mirror to admire how your body looked in it? Did you turn from side to side to see how it shaped you perfectly? Did you watch yourself move around and admire how simply blissful you felt?

This is that feeling of confidence.

You may have left your house that day expecting 100 compliments! You were beaming with excitement! You thought everyone would notice. But what happens if no one says anything? What happens if you don't get even one compliment? Your confidence might fade. You will second guess yourself and wonder if you look as good as you thought you did. You might take that outfit off, put it in your closet and never wear it again.

Why do we do this? Why do we let the outside world determine how confident we feel on the inside? When you put that outfit on, you felt like a million bucks! But when you took it off, you felt like a bum on the side of the road. All because of the presumed notion that no one else liked it.

The truth is, everyone else was likely just so wrapped up in their own lives that they simply didn't realize it was a new outfit. They likely did notice it and probably even meant to compliment you on it but just didn't get around to saying it out loud.

So, how can you become more confident? How can you start to feel confident? It's not as hard as you might think.

I am going to share with you some of the small daily things you can do to help put a little pep in your step and start to feel better about yourself. This will all be done in baby steps. Slow and steady wins the race! You can't just erase years of low self-esteem overnight. This will take practice and creating new habits. It will take learning to feel a little uncomfortable and pushing through it.

You will learn to stop relying on others to make you feel more confident. I believed in my poetry before anyone else read it. Their positive feedback wasn't what made the poetry "good." I had to learn to trust my gut and feel confident without the approval of others.

1. Start with self-care. This can mean forcing yourself to take a shower or a long bath to relax. Life gets busy and messy. We put our own needs last. This can look like a dirty hair in a messy bun for four or five days, yoga pants and an old t-shirt day after day because we

haven't done the laundry. If taking a shower, doing a little something with your hair or putting on makeup makes you feel good, then do it! When you feel better about yourself, you might feel more inclined to catch up on laundry or go out of the house for some fresh air.

2. Start to think positive. When you catch yourself mentally complaining or nitpicking yourself about something, stop, take a deep breath and think of the positive version of that thought. For example, maybe you are doing the dishes, and you drop a fork and say either to yourself or out loud, "Ugh! I'm so stupid and clumsy!" Stop, breathe. Then say, "Look at how quickly I can pick it up, brush off the frustration, and keep going!" Even if it feels silly, try it anyway. You can turn any negative thought into a positive one.

Get a piece of paper and write down all the thoughts you routinely think about yourself. Write down at least ten. Now, across from those negative things, write the positive.

For example:

I am lazy.
I hate my hair.
I'm always late.
I have no friends.
I hate my job.

You can turn each one of those things into a positive.

I am lazy / I am energetic!
I hate my hair / I love that I can change my hairstyle!
I'm always late / I love being on time!
I have no friends / I can easily make friends!
I hate my job / I'm excited about a new opportunity!

No matter what that negative list looks like, write down the positive version, even if it isn't true ... yet.

3. Affirmations. Now that you have an idea about how to turn negative thoughts into positive ones, you can start to write

affirmations. An affirmation is a positive thought. This can be something that is already true or something that you want to manifest or come into your life. By using this simple formula, you can learn how to use affirmations in a way that will benefit you the most.

Formula: I want. I have. I am.

State what you want. Then imagine you already have it. Next, you will write your affirmation statement, "I am ..."

I want success.
I have success.
I am successful.

I want to be loved.
I have love.
I am loved.

I want happiness.
I have happiness.
I am happy.

I want abundance.
I have abundance.
I am abundant.

Compile your "wish list" of things you want to come into your life. Write them out with the formula above; I want, I have, I am.

When you can move from the "I want" state of mind, which is coming from thoughts of scarcity and lack to being able to imagine yourself having these things, you'll then be able to transition to the "I am" abundance mindset. Take the examples listed and say them each out loud. Notice the difference when you say them. Feel how your body reacts. When you say you "want" something, you are acknowledging you don't have it. Your body will feel this statement and almost have a hollow feeling, knowing you don't possess it.

When you close your eyes and start to imagine how you will feel

when you do have that thing and start to say, "I have..." you are getting much closer to an abundance mindset. Your body should feel excited when you say the "I have..." statement.

When you get to the "I am" statements, this is a feeling of confidence that not only do you have it, but it is now part of who you are. You *are* abundant. Your body should now feel grounded and strong. It moves from excitement to a feeling of strength.

Write all your "I am" statements in a list. This is the list you will read every single day at least 2 or 3 times a day. Say them out loud or re-write the list at least once each day. It's even more beneficial to say them out loud in front of a mirror. Sure, it will feel silly and awkward, but try your best to stand tall, maybe incorporate the warrior pose and say them out loud.

4. Be grateful. We talked a bit about the power of being grateful earlier in the book. This can also help you feel more confident. You can combine your affirmations with the gratefulness strategy. Instead of saying, "I am abundant." You would say, "I am so grateful now that I am abundant."

You are affirming the feeling of abundance and expressing gratefulness for it. After you say your "I am" list out loud, try using the same statements with the "I am so grateful now that I am ..."

Doing these small steps will help your internal dialogue with yourself. We are our own worst critic. Self-doubt and negative thoughts will never get you a positive life. This is a new habit you will need to strive for. It will take practice and lots of it!

There are other things you can do as well to start to feel more confident.

5. Speak slowly, stand tall, and know your priorities! When we get nervous, most of us can start to ramble and talk really fast. I tend to lose my filter when I'm nervous, and only God knows what might come flying out my big old flapper when I'm in a tizzy! When you feel nervous or anxious, by mentally trying to slow down your

speech, you will help those racing thoughts slow down. Hopefully, this will help you from word vomiting all over the people around you!

If you can correct your posture in those moments by standing up straighter, this will also help you feel more confident and sure of yourself. It will signal to the people around you that you are expressing confidence.

When you are slouched over, arms crossed, head down, you aren't looking very confident. You are signaling that you are closed off and unsure of yourself. By simply being mindful of your stance and posture, you can immediately feel a difference in your confidence level.

Try it. Stand with a slumped posture, folded arms and let your head hang forward and down. Then stand up straight, put your arms at your side, chest out and chin up. Do you feel the difference?

Know what your priorities are. What are some things that you will always put first and foremost? Family, religion, your career? Write down your top five priorities. By knowing what these things are, you can be and feel more confident when something challenges those things. If your boss asks you to work weekends but that is your family time, and you have family as your #1 priority, you will have an easier time telling your boss no and feel confident about that decision.

If you don't have a firm grasp of your priorities, then you will likely not want to do something but reluctantly say yes to it because you weren't firm in your beliefs and priorities.

Start to implement all of these things slowly. You don't have to do all of these things. That could feel overwhelming. Instead, maybe pick one or two of the suggestions and try them for a couple of weeks. Keep a journal of how you feel before and after you try them. Then add in a couple more suggestions. These are buildable strategies you can put into place when you are comfortable doing so. Some of these things can and will feel uncomfortable at first, but if you can push

past that feeling, you will be able to create a new habit and look and feel more confident!

You can even use the "fake it until you make it" strategy! If you start to *act* confident on the outside, even if you don't feel it on the inside, your mindset will start to shift to that of actually believing you are confident. You can exercise this like a muscle. The more you use this technique, the more your body and mind start to adapt and become more confident. To "act" confident is to implement strategies 1-5 on the previous pages.

Lastly, practice these things when nothing is at stake. You can practice your confidence when you go into the gas station to pay for your gas. Mentally stand taller, speak slower, and ask the cashier how their day has been. Speaking to strangers can be intimidating at times. Practice "acting" confident in these situations. If you can conquer the fear of speaking to a stranger when nothing is at stake, you will start to build up that confidence muscle. Then when you have to meet someone of importance, you'll feel more confident about speaking to them.

CHAPTER 14: UNICORN UNIVERSITY

FOCUS. Thus far you have learned about finding your freaking jam to create positivity and happiness throughout your day. You have tackled optimism and why it's important to find the positives in every situation. In the previous chapter, you learned about confidence and how to implement buildable strategies to feel and be more confident.

This chapter is about discovering that the sky is not the limit. What do you imagine when you hear the word "unicorn"? Do you picture a mystical creature with a horn and wings? Or do you think more metaphorical about what is possible and seeing what no one else has ever seen before?

For me, a unicorn is not just a mystical creature, but the idea that anything is possible. If you believe unicorns exist, then you are more likely to dream about making something possible out of the impossible.

This chapter is about challenging you to push outside of your comfort zone, dreaming bigger than you've ever dreamed before, and setting goals that scare the shit out of you!

Are you already feeling a little nervous about this chapter? If so, good! If not, that's good too! See, if you're nervous about thinking and dreaming bigger, that means you won't have to reach too far to

find something outside your comfort zone. If you aren't nervous, that means you likely already have some goals and dreams in place and are ready to challenge yourself for even greater possibilities.

You already wrote out your affirmations, but now I'm going to challenge you to go bigger! How much money in a year would you like to make? Did a number flash into your mind? If so, double it! No, triple it! Make that number so big it feels uncomfortable and scary! Now write it down.

I make \$_____ a year!

What is your dream career path? If you could anything, what would it be? If all the stars lined up perfectly and money wasn't an issue, what would you do? Write that down.

What things would you love to have in your life? It doesn't have to be material "things." It can be finding the love of your life. It can be feeling closer to God. It can be spending more time with your family or feeling more loved by those around you. Or maybe you just want a really hot car! Maybe you want a giant house to entertain all your family and friends in.

Write it all down. Create this dream life on paper! Each time you think of something to write down, stop and ask yourself, "How can I make this idea even bigger or better?" What would make you beam with happiness? Write it down.

Go over your list and challenge yourself to think bigger!

Then go back over your list and get even more specific. For example, if you wrote down you wanted a new home, write down what that home would look like. What things do you consider your "dream home"? Is it a big kitchen, open concept living room? Start to construct what this home might look like in your mind. Just as you can imagine what a unicorn looks like, close your eyes and stand in that dream home. Walk through your dream home and notice what you see. Write it down.

Did you write down to find the love of your life? What does he/she look like? What characteristics do they possess? Are they funny? Smart? Caring? Maybe having someone who does little romantic things for you is appealing to you. Perhaps you want someone who respects your ambition, who is trusting and allows you to grow and flourish. Write down all the personality traits and physical characteristics that you prefer.

Sometimes we limit ourselves before we even allow ourselves to dream or set goals. We have limiting beliefs that tell us we can't do something. Maybe you want to own your own business but have never gone to college. Maybe you don't have the knowledge you need to advance in your current profession. You might say you could never do that because ...*insert excuse here*.

That's all they are – excuses. There are people who have been literally homeless that have become self-made millionaires. People who haven't graduated high school and never attended a day of college run successful businesses. It happens every single day. It's not about education. It's about passion and the will to try and believe you can do it.

Mindset will make or break you. It's not about money. They say it takes money to make money, and yet, there are so many rags to riches stories of everyday people who had a dream and made it come true – and they started without a penny to their name. If you have the mindset of "that'll never happen for me," then you are right. If you feel deep inside your soul that you were meant to do more and achieve something huge, then you will.

There are countless books on mindset, laws of attraction, and how to manifest your dream life because people have done it and are still doing it!

But it had to start with a dream, a thought, a goal, an intention. That dream, thought, goal or intention has to be something you are passionate about. It has to be something that excites you just by the mere thought of it. Again, I would challenge you to take that dream and make it bigger. Aim for the moon, and even if you don't make it,

you'll likely still reach the stars! Set the bar so high it might seem impossible.

I am inducting you into Unicorn University right now. Congratulations! You are now a student!

From here on out, you are a student of dreaming big and living loud! You aren't searching for the unicorn. You ARE the unicorn! You are that mystical creature. You are the impossibilities made possible! You are the one that makes things happen! You are the unicorn that other people dream of finding or being!

Set your intention now. Tell yourself whatever dream it is you've been putting off, that you will at least start to close your eyes and see it happen. You will feel what it feels like.

Earlier in the book, I had you use your imagination and go into an elevator and go up the highest building and step out onto the Skydeck. Remember how that felt? I need you to do this with your dreams. Close your eyes and walk through what it looks like when that dream comes true. How does it feel? Does your belly get butterflies? Do you have a permanent smile on your face? Do you feel confident and stand tall? Do people treat you with respect? Create a video in your head that you can play on repeat. Add more details each time you watch it. Each time, I want you to dream a little bigger, add more details.

Play that dream video in your mind as you go to sleep at night. Why am I making you do this? Because your mind is a powerful tool. Just like the moment when I said I shoved you from behind in the exercise at the beginning of the book. When you imagine something, your mind does not differentiate between reality and imagination. Your body felt a state of panic even though you were safe and sound in your chair. You weren't in a place where you could potentially fall to your death. And yet your body felt the fear.

Have you ever wondered how hypnotism works? How can someone who is hypnotized be told they are freezing cold when it is 75 degrees in the room? The hypnotist tells the subject they are

experiencing temperatures below 0 and suddenly the person starts to shiver and struggles to get warm. Is it the power of suggestion? Is it magic? Is it some kind of weird voodoo?

Hypnotism is a combination of focus and relaxation. By listening to the hypnotist's voice, you are focusing all your attention on their voice and verbal cues. They will walk you through getting into a state of complete relaxation. Your mind is so busy focusing on these things that your own thoughts aren't able to come in and take over. This allows access to your subconscious mind. This is the "behind the scenes" part of your brain. When you get to that state of hypnosis, your conscious mind becomes the backseat driver to your subconscious mind.

Hypnosis has become a very popular tool to help people lose weight, stop smoking and move past limiting beliefs.

So what I'm asking you to do by playing your dream video on repeat is to be laser-focused on what you want. And be able to repeat this so often when you are in a relaxed state, such as when you are laying down to go to sleep at night. The goal is to get your conscious mind to take that back seat so your subconscious mind can believe what it is seeing and feeling so it can work towards manifesting that dream.

When someone who wants to lose weight is hypnotized, it's not that they magically start dropping the pounds with no effort. It's actually the suggestion of craving healthier food and feeling motivated to work out that helps them lose weight. The subconscious mind then takes over to help the person get past those limiting beliefs that they don't deserve better health. It basically starts to reprogram their mind to see themselves eating healthier food and see themselves enjoying that healthier food. They will see and feel themselves working out and enjoying it.

As I have said previously, I am not a scientist, researcher, and certainly not a hypnotist. But I do love to read about these topics, and from my personal experiences, I have found that this works. And hell, if it doesn't work, you have absolutely nothing to lose, right? It doesn't cost anything to use your imagination. It doesn't cost

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anything to challenge yourself to dream bigger. But it can cost you your happiness if you don't at least give it a try. Because if I'm right and it does work ... just imagine the possibilities!

CHAPTER 15: SEEKING SOLUTIONS

“A goal without a plan is just a wish.” - Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

As wonderful as it is to dream magnificent dreams, you still have to take some action to set it into motion.

In the last chapter, we talked about creating a dream video in hopes of opening your subconscious mind. In turn, the thought is your subconscious mind will find ways to manifest that dream. So, what will this look like?

Once you start to implement this strategy, you need to start to pay attention. Open your focus to new things presenting themselves to you. When you start to manifest your dreams, it's not usually the way people think. Most people don't just suddenly open their mailbox and have a surprise check for a million dollars in there. Instead, you will manifest ideas and opportunities that lead you to that million dollars. Thinking and dreaming about having a Porcha doesn't mean you go out to your garage and one just appears. That's not how manifestation works.

You have to start seeking solutions. This means being open to new ideas and opportunities that show up. You might hate your job and be dreaming about doing something you are passionate about. Maybe you want to open your own restaurant.

Your subconscious mind might start manifesting this in ways you didn't see coming. You might suddenly get fired from your job

because your company is "restructuring" or "downsizing." Normally, this would be devastating. However, this could be the path that leads you to take the leap of opening your own restaurant. Sometimes we need a big push from the Universe to get us out of our comfort zone and into what we truly want to do.

Ideally, you might think manifesting your dream life would look more like suddenly getting a huge raise or promotion to put more money in your pocket. However, if that is not your dream or what you're passionate about, then that extra money isn't going to make you happy. It might help you as startup money for a new business though.

The point is that you have to be awake to what is happening around you and be open to taking a leap of faith. You will know in your gut if it feels right or not.

When you are seeking solutions, this also means taking small daily, weekly, or monthly steps towards those dreams. What can you do that will put you one step closer to what you want? Can you save even \$1 a day and put it into savings? Sometimes just taking that first small step can make all the difference. You might find that you can actually put \$5 aside each day, then maybe \$10 a day.

You might take 10 minutes each day to look up how to start a business or look into taking a class that would help you.

Maybe you need to start searching for homes for sale that meets the criteria of your dream home.

Just do something. Each step is a building block towards that thing you want. Once you get one brick in place, then you can look for the next brick and start putting that into place. As you start to do this, you'll find that the bricks start to come quicker and build up faster. But if you are too focused on the end result, you will feel overwhelmed and never start.

I will use my husband as a great example. Poor guy gets used as an example in my motivational speeches a lot too. Thankfully, he still

loves me anyway. Right, babe?

My husband, Brian, is a very dedicated, hard worker. He has the dedication most employers dream of! He worked in the restaurant business for 20+ years as a cook and kitchen manager. He got to the point where he was sick of working for someone else. His dream was to go into business for himself. He wasn't sure what that looked like at first. We talked about it many times, but he was so reluctant to take steps towards that dream because it seemed overwhelming. He talked about the business loan application process, taking a business course, how we wouldn't be able to afford it as well as pay for our home expenses.

Over time, he grew more and more frustrated with his job and wanted a change. But being a dedicated employee, he didn't want to leave his employers in a bind since they counted on him. He had a good working relationship with his employers which made it even harder to think about leaving.

Then one of his best friends that he worked with put in his notice. He was taking the leap to open his own pizza place. I think this was a catalyst for Brian to really start to think about what he wanted in life and how to make it possible. He was now open to change and open to taking steps to make it happen. Then his friend called and wanted him to come work for him at the pizza place, and not only that, he wanted him to open a second location and have Brian run it. This was just the opportunity he needed to get into running a business without the overhead and responsibility of jumping into owning his own business. So, he took the leap.

Time went by and eventually, the second location didn't look like it was in the cards. His friend did everything he could to make it happen, but it just didn't work out.

At this point in time, I had also quit my 20+ year job at the hospital to pursue my dream of motivational speaking. I was getting speaking engagements here and there, but not many were paid gigs yet.

I had been speaking with another local business owner about

doing a speaking engagement for them. He mentioned looking for someone to cater the event. When I mentioned this to Brian, he started to think about opening a small catering business out of our home. He started to look into the laws and requirements to do this. It would be a great side gig to at least get started.

Then something pretty amazing happened. I was at the Chamber of Commerce in a meeting about donating my time to raise money for a local charity. When catering came up, I mentioned that my husband was looking into starting a small catering business. This was when the chamber representative mentioned a well-known, well-established catering company was looking to sell their business. I honestly can't tell you anything else we talked about in that meeting because I couldn't wait to get home and tell Brian about that catering business for sale! That day, he called and spoke with the business owner, set up a meeting, and well, the rest is history! My husband went on to buy the business and had pretty awesome success in his first year!

When he finally opened his mind to the possibilities and started to take those small steps such as just looking into the laws and regulations, everything started to line up for him. It seems like it all happened so quickly. I am so thrilled to see him so happy doing what he loves!

My story is very similar as well. In May 2006 when I left an abusive marriage, I never would have imagined that in 2019, I would be writing a book, launching a podcast called *Her Laundry: Unfolded*, as well as being a motivational speaker making more in one speaking engagement than I did in a month of working 40 hours a week.

It's the brick by brick strategy along with creating that dream video that made it all happen. Now, I will tell you this: I did not dream about being a motivational speaker to start with. When I left that marriage, I felt lost. I had no idea who I was or who I was supposed to be. I was newly divorced with two young daughters working fulltime. I was living in my mom's 16 x 80 mobile home and barely making ends meet. I was so stressed out that I lost about 25 pounds in a month.

But each day as I drove 40 minutes to work in a different town, I would daydream about living closer. I imagined finding a great apartment where I wouldn't have to worry about taking four hours to mow the lawn, where I wouldn't have to shovel snow or worry about driving down unplowed roads in the winter, endangering myself and my children in order to make a paycheck.

Even though I was struggling, I was happy. I finally was able to live my life. I was 31 years old and living on my own for the first time in my life. If I wanted to stay up to midnight watching TV, I could. So, daydreaming became easier because I was starting to see the new freedoms I had.

In the town where I worked, there was a newer apartment complex that I would occasionally drive by. I would imagine what it would be like to live there. They were nice, upscale looking apartments. It became part of my daydreaming.

In October 2006, just six months shy of leaving that marriage, my grandmother decided to move from living in the country by herself to an apartment. She moved into the apartment complex I had my eye on! I was so excited for her! This would be where my daughters would get off the bus after school. Then in February in 2007, the apartment directly next door to hers became available, and I had enough money saved up to move in!

That dream video I had playing over and over about that apartment complex actually manifested. Of course, I had to take small steps like being able to save a little extra money each week.

Remember how I said I was a lyricist and poet? Do you remember a little social media platform called Myspace?

Well, this is where I discovered a place to post my lyrics and poetry. I started to dream about hearing my lyrics with music and being able to hear someone singing my songs. One night, a guy named Kenny Star sent me a message. He said he loved my lyrics and was curious if I would let him put music to them. At first, I wasn't

going to let him. My initial reaction was to say no. But at this point, I was starting to let my guard down and was just happy someone saw potential in my lyrics. I figured I had nothing to lose, so I said yes.

I think it was less than an hour later when he sent me something to listen to! It was a dream come true! From there, over the next few years, we co-wrote over 90 songs together, entering and winning contests, having a song plugger in Nashville pick up our songs and start shopping them around Nashville. While we never did get anything professionally recorded, we got pretty close a few times!

What I want you to know about this experience isn't the songwriting part. While it was a huge boost in my confidence, what really changed my life was the fact that Kenny had introduced me to the laws of attraction. I had never heard of this concept. It sounded a bit crazy woo-woo magic fairy dust'ish at first. But then, he had me read "The Secret" by Rhonda Byrne, and it made so much sense to me! From there, I read "Think and Grow Rich" by Napoleon Hill. I was awakened to a whole new world of personal development and a growth mindset.

This changed my life. This gave me new building blocks that I started to implement daily. This is how this book came about. The next 12 years would be a learning and growing experience. I may have been flailing around in the dark most of the time during those years, but hindsight is 20/20! I have been able to look back and make sense of what worked and what didn't.

This is where I learned to start seeking solutions and being open to what was being placed right in front of me. And also learning to say yes and trust my gut to make big decisions and take those leaps of faith.

As I said, personal development books became my new best friend. Everything I was learning in these books would take time to wrap my head around and implement, but I did it.

In early October 2008, the night I broke up with my then live-in boyfriend, I was sitting in a bar across the street from my apartment

sobbing my eyes out. A good guy friend of mine was there with his best friend. They comforted me and told me it was for the best and that I deserved better. These were men that I trusted, and so I found comfort in their words. I remember thinking, "Man, why can't I find a guy as good as this guy friend? He's a hard worker, caring, smart, and we love all the same music." Not to mention he was good looking too! He was the type of guy I could sit and talk to for hours. Many times during my single days, I'd run into him when I was out with friends dancing, and he'd even dance with me. Why couldn't I find a guy like this?

Then fate decided to not only open my eyes; it basically smacked me in the head with a hammer to wake me the hell up! And on Halloween 2008, my guy friend and I went on our first date. On September 19, 2014, like a scene out of a twisted, crazy fairytale, I got to marry my best friend! Yes, Brian was "that" guy friend! Funny how the universe works, isn't it?

Again, all it took was me recognizing the true traits and characteristics I longed for in another person for my eyes to be opened to it.

Over the years, I continued to listen to audio versions of personal development books. Instead of things getting easier, they became more difficult. I started to dislike my job at the hospital. I had done medical transcription for about 13 years, and the hospital decided to outsource their transcription. I was scared I'd lose my job. Thankfully, my boss had my back and offered me a position in medical coding. Even though I had no schooling or experiencing in coding, she believed I would be able to learn it. It was very difficult for me to make the transition. I felt completely in the dark. It was an entirely different language to me than doing medical transcription.

Over time, I found myself more and more frustrated with this position. I was trying my hardest to stay positive and look for the good aspects of it, but I was really struggling.

Life changed as it always does, and things took a big right turn in

my personal life and tested my physical and mental strength. In October of 2015, I had my first mammogram. I was 41 years old at this time, and I had just learned that my cousin – two years younger than me – had just been diagnosed with breast cancer. Her mother (my paternal aunt) had lost her battle with breast cancer when she was only 50 years old. So the news of my cousin now being diagnosed scared the shit right out of me! I made an appointment. Ironically, October is breast cancer awareness week.

I won't bore you with all the details, but my results came back that I had so many microcalcifications that the radiologist couldn't count them all. I was sent for a biopsy, which fortunately came back benign. It was suggested that due to my family history, I should consider genetic testing. Of course, I had the testing done, and that's when I found out I was BRCA2 positive. This means I have a high, increased chance of breast and ovarian cancer, colon cancer, skin cancer, and pancreatic cancer. I was given options of watchful waiting with mammograms and MRI every six months, or I could consider prophylactic mastectomy.

I decided due to my family history and the BRCA2 gene mutation to go forward with the bilateral prophylactic mastectomy. This was another form of seeking solutions. I did my research and came to my own conclusions of what was best for me. My surgery was set for April 11, 2016. I felt confident in my decision because I knew I had done everything I could to prepare for this next step in my life.

Then, that March, my family was devastated as my younger cousin passed away due to sepsis from a severe infection.

I'll be honest; I almost canceled my surgery. I was terrified. Breast cancer isn't what killed her. It was an infection. What if I got an infection? I chose to have immediate DIEP flap reconstruction, so it was a longer, more invasive surgery than having implants which came with higher chances of things going wrong.

Ultimately, I went forward with my surgery. It ended up being a 12-hour surgery. After I recovered from that surgery and went back to work, I was hopeful that I would have a better outlook, a fresh

start. I kept listening to more personal development and trying to implement anything I could to make things better.

Things didn't get better. I became more and more frustrated at work. I started to dread coming in each day. My productivity was not where it should be, and I wasn't seeing eye to eye with a coworker about the quality of my work, and it caused a lot of stress that I did not want to deal with.

As I said, I continued the audiobooks and still believed I could manifest something better even though life seemed to be going downhill quickly. I kept trying to come up with ways I could create additional income that might eventually allow me to quit my job at the hospital. I did a couple of MLMs (multi-level marketing). While I made a pretty good go of it, it just wasn't what I wanted to do. I wasn't finding passion in that.

Fate stepped in once again. In January 2017, I was listening to a book by Pam Grout. I was listening to the audio version when she mentioned something called the 21 Day Complaint Free Challenge. This concept was founded by Will Bowen, the author the #1 international best-selling book: *A Complaint Free World*. I was intrigued! I was doing an awful amount of complaining about how my life had been going and what a brilliant idea to stop complaining! I looked up Will Bowen's website to learn more about his message. Then I went to social media to learn more.

Here is where things get crazy! I find Will Bowen's Facebook page, and that very day, he had posted a status saying that he was looking for ten people to train and certify to become motivational speakers to help share his message. Without a doubt, I knew I wanted to do this! But why? I wasn't a speaker and had never done public speaking. It didn't make sense, but I was so drawn to the whole idea that I ignored the little voice in my head telling me I was ridiculous to even apply for it.

Weeks later, I would find out I was one of the ten people from around the world chosen to be trained and certified as a Complaint Free World Trainer/Speaker! I was shocked!

Let's go back a little bit and review what happened. I was doing the work trying to be positive and manifest changes in my life. I was listening to personal development and finding little bricks to put into place to make my life better with the side income. Yet, life kept handing me obstacles that made my efforts seem like wasted energy. I kept seeking solutions for each obstacle that was placed in front of me. I kept finding ways to stay positive despite wanting to quit my job. I had no idea what I wanted to do at that point. I just knew I wanted to do something more, something different, something that made a difference.

After I trained with Will Bowen and started doing free speaking engagements, I was hooked! I loved the message I was sharing. I was creating a difference in people's lives and getting great feedback. But I wasn't sure how to balance my fulltime job and start putting the real work in to start getting paid speaking engagements. A lot of the speaking would be during the week, during my working hours. I couldn't afford to quit my job when I wasn't getting paid to speak yet.

Once again, life slapped me in the face. That August, my biological father lost his battle with cancer. I got the call that morning from my sister that I needed to come right away. I left work and went straight to my mom and dad's house.

(Side note: Just so you aren't confused, this is my biological father I'm writing about. My step-father passed away in 1999 due to a massive heart attack. And oddly enough, in 2006, my mom and biological father got remarried!)

Hours after I arrived, we all said our goodbyes and my dad passed away.

Losing a parent has a way of making you realize what is truly important in life. I was off work for a few days, and I did some soul-searching about what I really wanted to do with my life. Did I really want to give even another day of my time to a job that I no longer liked, for people who didn't even care enough to send me a sympathy card when I lost my dad? The answer was no. I was done.

Brian and I sat down and talked about what options we had in order for me to quit my job and move forward with a speaking career. It wouldn't be easy, but we made it happen. I put in my two weeks' notice and never looked back.

Now, I'm not saying everything was sunshine and rainbows. I had to do the hard work, keep my head in the game and book anything I could. I had to think outside the box on how to bring in more income in the meantime. So I went online and signed up as a wedding officiant! This gave us a little extra income as well as got me in front of an audience to speak. It was a win-win! People laugh when I tell them about this, but I found I loved being a part of the weddings! I usually ended up making new friends in the process.

I taught a kickboxing style class twice a week too. I rented out the small ballroom that I taught my workouts in for other events as more side income. I started to be known for my "Jill" of all trades way of life! I was a busy girl and happier than I have ever been! I was doing what I wanted to do and on my own time!

Whenever a new obstacle came up, I would put everything to work that I have taught you in this book. I was creating FOCUS without even knowing it! Each step I was taking to seek new solutions to new problems was another brick I was placing to build my dreams!

Soon, I started getting paid speaking engagements. I was able to start raising my price. More speaking opportunities would come in, and again, I could raise my prices. I started to book speaking opportunities out of state that paid even more! And it was a great opportunity to travel – all expenses paid!

Each time a new problem would arise – an unexpected bill or medical expense – I would seek another new solution.

As long as I keep my FOCUS, I find I am able to stay positive and keep trucking along! I also learned how to deal with all the assholes that came along for the ride!

CHAPTER 16: GOODBYE ASSHOLES. HELLO POSITIVITY!

Will you ever be free from assholes? Probably not. But using all the tools you have learned in this book, I hope you at least can change your perspective, take into account what you learned about intentions, and of course, work on changing your expectations of the people around you.

I hope you use self-reflection to know whether you are being an asshole or not. Be aware if you are stuck in a negative mindset and attracting more assholes to your doorstep! It will get easier to recognize when you are doing this, and you'll become an expert at changing your thoughts, so you lessen your chance of the Universe raining assholes all around you!

When you do find yourself winning the asshole lottery, with some practice, you should be able to shake the frustration quicker and have a better day! If you practice shifting your mindset, you might even get to that point where you are recognizing why an asshole is being an asshole. My hope is that you will wish for better for that person, so they start to become much less of an asshole.

Don't forget to find or create your bubble! This is very important for keeping up with your positive self-talk and guarding yourself against those naysayers, Negative Nellies, Pessimistic Pollies, and Butthurt Billies. Creating this bubble will help you imagine something better for yourself.

Use your warrior pose – either physically or mentally – when you are struggling with fear or self-doubt. Practice this and know how this feels in your body and your mind. You can also use this when dealing with not just the assholes in your life, but toxic people too. This will help you feel stronger and more equipped to walk away from people who don't truly want the best for you.

There will always be assholes that try to discourage you, talk you out of living your full potential or just try to knock you down emotionally and mentally. Keep pushing forward. Make it your intention to implement what you learned about FOCUS.

Find your freaking jam and let that be your new soundtrack to your life!

Optimism O'clock will be the key to staying positive despite any assholes or negativity going on around you.

Confidence Counts on so many levels. Start to practice the strategies you learned. Practicing these techniques over and over will create a new habit that will lead to you feeling confident. It will likely be a subtle switch that one day something will happen, and you'll notice that you felt really good about yourself and actually felt confident! From there, you will become confident! You will make the shift from acting (fake it until you make it) to feeling and then to believing!

Unicorn University is where you are the valedictorian! You dream bigger and are so far out of your comfort zone that you would need GPS to get back in it!

Seeking Solutions is your final step. You have to have a goal and

HOW TO SPARKLE WHERE THE SUN DON'T SHINE

a plan. Brick by brick you will build your dream. Just keep your eyes open for the opportunities you once would have passed up. Even when things seem bleak, just know something amazing is coming! Those hard times are just setting you up to really appreciate and be grateful for those dreams you are going to make come true!

As you change, the people around you will likely change. The assholes will be less bothersome. Those "friends" who don't truly have your back will show their true colors and fade away. You will start to attract your new tribe. You will be open to making new friends and create better, longer and lasting relationships.

You will finally Sparkle Where the Sun Don't Shine and Stay Positive, even when you're surrounded by assholes!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wendy Babcock is a Professional Speaker and Certified Complaint Free World Trainer. Wendy inspires audiences to communicate more effectively by implementing the 21 Day Complaint Free Challenge. Wendy was trained and certified by Will Bowen, World Authority on Complaining as well as #1 Best Selling International Author and creator of A Complaint Free World. She also serves as the Director of Complaint Free Trainers.

Now adding author to her many titles, she has set a new intention to help those who are desperate to live a life of positivity, free from Debbie Downers, Pessimistic Patties and Negative Nancy's, as well as Rude-Asshole Rudies. One of the most common strategies Wendy is asked about is – how to stay positive and productive when you're surrounded by assholes. Thus, a book was born!

To learn more about Wendy's speaking appearances, visit WendyBabcock.com