

Introduction



At one point in my life it seemed like everywhere I looked, I saw tragedy. My brother, both of my parents, and a dear friend were all battling cancer at the same time. Other friends were losing jobs and fearful about the prospects of finding new work. The evening news was full of financial scandals, plant closings, kidnappings, and war.

As I sat in the sun on my front porch in March 2009, I wished I had a book to send to my brother to read during his chemotherapy treatments - something to remind him that he was not alone and to encourage him to fight for his life. I wanted a book that could give him hope, inspiration, and encouragement on every page.

Due to a series of miracles, the book you are now reading is my wish come true. In a very short time a team of wonderful people came together to create this book with just one purpose: to encourage you, the reader, to overcome whatever obstacles are lying in your path to happiness.

As you read the stories in this book, you will find real life tales of remarkable courage, strength, and perseverance. You will be inspired,

entertained, and uplifted. Some of the stories will make you laugh. Some of them will make you cry. All of them will make you proud of the power of the human spirit.

You will find this a book of diversity. There are many authors, from many walks of life. However, they all share a common bond. They triumphed over tragedy and gleaned wisdom in this process. While this is not a religious book, these are stories full of faith, of many kinds and flavors. It is funny how in your darkest times, faith often becomes your brightest light.

All of the contributors to this book want to encourage you to hold tight to your belief that a better day will come. It is their sincere desire to pass along what they've learned through their own trials, to make your journey easier.

I hope that you wear this book out by highlighting meaningful passages and bending down the corners of the pages you want to read over and over again. There is true wisdom in these pages that can help you feel strong, brave, and hopeful.

May you be blessed by this book and inspired to overcome!

Lynne Klippel
St. Peters, Missouri
September, 2009

When Tough Times Hit, There Is Always HOPE!



Mary Hays-Bridges

“Mary, they’re calling for you in surgery.” It seemed as if I was stuck in the black hole of a revolving door to the operating room. My well-written plan of action for my life was now an empty sheet, and there was nothing that I could do to stop the impending implosion. I knew that focusing on the “why” or the “if only” was wasted energy, but the empty numbness I felt couldn’t stop the “what just happened” questions from bombarding my conscious thoughts. To make the torment worse, I had been admitted to the pediatric ward of the hospital, which was a tough pill to swallow for a 20 year old cadet. Coming to consciousness, I realized that apparently I now seemed to have a 6 year old “buddy” using his artistic talent and crayons to draw new highways for his toy cars, using my full-leg cast as his medium.

Since age five I dreamed of becoming an astronaut. Suddenly fatherless at age twelve, I prayed for a Father to help me to become an astronaut and teach me about life. I asked for one - two were sent: Col. James B. Irwin, (Apollo 15 – 8th man on the moon), to be my mentor, and Dr. Robert H. Schuller, (*Hour of Power* TV program), to be my possibility thinking coach.

Coincidence is God's Way of Remaining Anonymous



Martha-Lee Bohn

Hurricane Katrina. For most people, these words conjure images of desperation, flood waters, and incompetence. For thousands of others, however, Hurricane Katrina is a story of hope and Divine inspiration.

Within days of the storm, trucks loaded with chain saws, generators and water arrived from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Churches became disaster recovery centers without the benefit of committees examining the problem and deciding what to do.

As Director of Youth Ministries at my local church, the teenagers, who were out of school for six weeks after “the Storm,” hung out with me at the church. We were there when volunteers started showing up with tools and supplies, offering help. We became “camp hosts” for the church, dispatching volunteers to help families “muck out” their homes.

Months after the storm, volunteers were sent to the home of an elderly couple. Debris piles were everywhere. Street signs were down, fabric hung from trees, empty neighborhoods. Their house was a mess with moldy furniture, wet sheetrock, and debris.

The couple had managed to clear a space in the kitchen and set up

One Size Does Not Fit All



Nancie Benson

I was 100 pounds overweight and had reached the point where I absolutely could not start another diet, no matter how much I wanted to. I tried starting over several times and just couldn't do it. The yo-yo was broken. The days of losing weight only to gain it back were finished for me... and I was terrified. Whatever it was that had always reeled me back into the range of so called "normal weight" for much of my adult life was gone. Kaput. I was in trouble and not sure where to turn.

While on the weight rollercoaster, I had tried a lot of diets! My first one involved eating mostly meat and vegetables and taking mail-order diet pills. I joined a popular diet program on more than one occasion, only to fail miserably each time. On one occasion I ate so much broccoli that it took me years to face the stuff again. To this day I still have issues sometimes with spinach. The scariest thing was that I gained more weight after each diet. My high weight always continued to rise. I really believed that when I was uncomfortable enough, I could just diet and lose the weight I had gained. It had always worked for me before.

Decide to Go Seek: Overcoming Life's Chronic Little Challenges to Let Your Purpose Shine Through



Julio Blanco

It took me a while to put the pieces of life's puzzle together. And by a while I mean the better part of two decades. I had long sensed a purpose awaiting me beyond my corporate career, and the desire to live this purpose intensified with time, but boy, was I slow. It took years at a turtle's pace to discover my life's true purpose and act on it.

I had to overcome serious obstacles to get here, the biggest one being... me. Along the way I learned that life's challenges come in two varieties. Sometimes we face acute challenges such as a life-threatening illness or accident, the death of a loved one, a job loss, or a business failure. Trials like these knock you right down and force you to deal with life on very stark terms. Live or die. Eat or starve. Thrive or fail.

The more common experience, however, involves the murkier, chronic challenges that bless and plague all of us. While often slow and subtle, they are no less significant. They come in a jumble of forms that mix and mesh in tangled webs. They include your fears and unhealed emotional wounds. They lurk in countless limiting beliefs about your potential. They often manifest in self-defeating behaviors

Getting Older (and Over!) The “Not Enough” Syndrome



Marlene Oulton

As I examined the “laugh lines” surrounding my still baby blue eyes the other day, I thanked God for letting me live long enough to overcome what I call the “Not Enough” Syndrome. Most of us have been affected by this self-confidence squasher at some point in our lives. The “Not Enough” Syndrome covers a myriad of ills, and a few telltale symptoms are as follows: not being pretty “enough,” smart “enough,” thin “enough,” tall “enough,” or not worthy “enough” are just a few I have personally experienced. I am by no means a psychologist, therapist, or formally licensed “anything-ist,” but I do know that having defeated the “Not Enough” Syndrome qualifies me to offer my remedies for beating this mind-altering malaise.

The “Not Pretty Enough” Syndrome Rears Its Ugly Head

I was the third child, and the only girl of four, born to hard-working, decent parents, who lived in a very rural village in New Brunswick, Canada. I thought I was just your average typical little girl... until I hit the age of ten and overheard a conversation that planted a painful seed