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“A generous heart will never care to go part way;  
it won't be cowed if there is passage anywhere,  
but set out on the hardest road;  
nothing can cause it misery,  
and with faith soaring like a cloud  
it feeds on something I don't know  
that one may come on randomly...”

-St. John of the Cross

For John , Jason , Charles, Libby, Nana, Papa and Uncle Rich who have gone on ahead to help us ...I carry your hearts in my heart, always.

And for Antonio, Patrick, Ryan and Connor...the future Warriors of the LIGHT!

## Thank you

-**GOD** for always blessing us and always helping us.

- Erin for being there, always being there

- Jeff for EVERYTHING, ALWAYS...

-Mark for your kind and generous heart

-Gabby and Celeste for being here and helping with all of it...

## Foreword

The Mission of A Generous Heart® and the Revealing Excellence® Projects is to teach people how to think in a different way, so that they can overcome circumstances and conditions that they find unacceptable or limiting.

Teaching people to think in new ways allows them to create their own solutions...and allows them the opportunity to create futures unlike the past.

This little book is designed to make you think in different ways about what it means to be successful...we hope that you enjoy it...

Noelle Federico

October 2010

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## **Love and Service...**

Success is directly tied to love and service...If you are not serving humanity in some way, making other people's lives better by your presence here, then you are NOT fulfilling your real purpose.

Excelling at something, or even many things, without having a purpose bigger than yourself may lead to seeming personal accomplishment -- yet, it falls short of true success.

A greater purpose means making it your business to improve the quality of other people's lives. It could be as simple as helping at your child's school, volunteering in the community, teaching or being kind to your partner when you really want to condemn and criticize...real LOVE is a work in progress...sometimes a fairy tale, sometimes a BAD B movie...the truth is life is what we make it – for both ourselves and others.

Get outside of yourself today, demonstrate success by giving... move outside yourself today and make contributions to others...

## **Success means giving up the right to criticize**

Have you noticed how critical we are as a culture? It seems like we are always complaining about something and finding fault with something else...complaining, judging, evaluating and finding fault have become as commonplace as brushing our teeth. It starts first thing in the morning...the coffee line is too long, our kids are too slow, there is too much traffic, the news is all bad, people can't drive, the weather isn't right, etc., etc...

Consider how much energy we expend on complaining and being critical. Imagine what could happen if we turned that into a positive experience; if we actually looked for the good in situations; called attention to it; acted upon it. There is good in everything, we often need to look hard to find it and sometimes we have to trust that it is present whether we see it or not. Faith is a very powerful tool that can be used to alter even the worst of circumstances. However, like any tool it must be used often in order for us to strengthen it.

Criticism can also be a powerful force for change if used in the correct fashion. There is destructive criticism and there is constructive criticism.

***Destructive criticism*** points out what is wrong with situations and people with no solution—that man is a slob, that woman is unhealthy, that building is dirty...

***Constructive criticism*** can be used as force to correct problems and unite people for the greater good because it offers an action at the end of the complaint...that outfit doesn't suit you, however I have one that does...there is trash everywhere so let's pick it up...you are always late so let me buy you a new watch...

The most bothersome issue is that people fail to recognize that constant destructive criticism kills joy, good humor and hope...it causes people to despair and feel like life is just too much trouble. It can create a terrible momentum that becomes almost impossible for the target of criticism to overcome.

Think about the people in your life that are always finding fault with someone or something. How

enlivening is it to be in their presence for more than 5 minutes??? The air can literally seem to become thick and foul around them. You may even feel as if a shadow descends upon you the longer you stay in their presence.

Criticism and cynicism shut life down instantaneously...possibility cannot exist where there is no listening for it and critical/cynical people have no field of vision for what is good or what is possible.

Critical/cynical people look through a particular filter that only allows them to see more of what they talk about and since they always talk about what doesn't work or what is wrong, that is all they are able to see. Their blindness to the positive possibilities that abound is not only dangerous to those within their circle of influence, it is contagious!

Most of them don't even notice what limited vision they have given themselves. They just go around believing that life sucks, people are awful, and that misery is the default setting that they must endure.

Stuck in this way of looking they will not even see a random act of kindness or goodwill...they will only continue to gather evidence that life is hard and people will hurt you.

Life is truly what you make it and we have the choice in every, single moment to interpret circumstances as good or bad. We can call to the possibility in something or we can be defeated and harmed by it, the choice is always ours.

It takes a particular kind of person to see the good and call to the positive aspects in a situation...a person like this has the ability to transform any circumstance into something beneficial. That particular kind of person is in ALL of us – we simply have to let that inner optimist emerge.

You have the power to be a person like this...it takes courage, faith and strength of character and it takes the understanding that life is far more contributed to by the ongoing choice for good. The first step to a positive approach is to simply take that first step with an attitude of opportunity and confidence that what happens next in life is something to embrace rather than fear.

**“Some blessings wear a hell of  
a disguise.”**

**-anonymous**

## **Take Responsibility...**

How many of us really live our lives like we are the ones responsible? How many times do we blame other people for the way we feel and for the circumstances in which we find ourselves? Certainly the behavior of other people can affect us; however it is our choice to keep accepting what doesn't work.

A good percentage of the population is too lazy to take responsibility for their own lives...it is far easier to blame someone else for your unhappy marriage, your horrible divorce, your uncompromising lover, your terrible job, your smoking, your excessive drinking, your 30 pounds of extra fat, the fact that you don't make enough money.

It would take far more energy, discipline and hard work to change. Unfortunately, our personal laziness and complacency has manifested its way into our entire culture...everybody thinks solving the problems of humanity is someone else's business. How many of you would be willing to be inconvenienced to help someone else? We all like to **think** that we would help someone who needed our help, but how many of you really would? Or more

importantly, really do? If you were running late to work and you saw an elderly person outside the coffee shop had dropped their belongings would you stop and help, or would you just assume that someone else would take care of it?

If you were racing out of Walmart, hurrying home to make dinner and you noticed a child that had wandered away from her mother would you stop and take the time to make sure she was safely returned, or would you assume that it was someone else's job because you have your own family to attend to?

Ask yourself honestly...would you take the time to randomly act in kindness for no reward and no recognition???

What if it was your grandfather that needed help?  
What if it was your child that had wandered?  
Would you wish for someone to help them?

Suppose it was your responsibility? Suppose we all started to act like we had something to do with everything and everybody...imagine what an incredible change could occur in our collective consciousness as a culture.

Personal responsibility...what an engaging concept... Do you think that 80% of Americans are now overweight by accident? Do you think that children watch too much television and don't have enough personal interaction by accident? Do you think that people actively hate each other all over the world by accident?

Nothing happens by accident...there are always moments in time where people can step in and make a difference...this is called Divine Intervention or The Grace of God and it is a tool given to us to help ourselves and humanity. Far too many people think that they can't make a difference so they don't even try...they turn their heads, they avert their eyes and then they blame someone else for the condition of the world. They embrace their status as a victim rather than rejecting it.

Many people say that the planet is in the worst condition we have ever seen...the doom and gloom crowd says we are in dire straits... ***Don't buy into that lie!*** We as individuals have the POWER to change ourselves and thereby alter humanity as a whole. We simply have to assert our power to do so.

It will take courage and it will take strength of character, it will require paying attention and loving your neighbor as much as you love yourself, however we Americans are a smart bunch...we are bright and innovative and we really do care...we just need a reminder that true joy comes from giving of ourselves.

***“I am an optimist. It does not seem too much use being anything else.”***

***-Winston Churchill***

## **Foundations and Wisdom...**

Webster's New World defines **Foundation as 'the base on which something rests'**. Is your life resting on a solid foundation? When you build a structure it has to start with a solid and strong foundation – without it the structure won't hold up to the tests of time, gravity and shifting fault lines. In order to have a successful life we must also start with a solid and strong foundation, otherwise we will have nothing to ground us when the going gets tough...and there are times when the going will get tough.

What makes a solid and strong foundation? Is it integrity, a belief in God, ethics, treating others as you want to be treated, a forgiving heart, an open mind, perseverance, willpower or a combination of all these and more? It is a combination of the aforementioned and more...a solid and strong foundation comes from a belief that you have power in your own life and that you have the ability to change even the direst of circumstances as long as you can keep your wits about you. If you are a constant reaction in the middle of your life you will be incessantly pinging off the walls and in essence will be powerless to change anything. Change can

only come from being able to choose your response to a person or situation and this ability is born from having a strong foundation.

Understanding that life is based on principle and based upon something more than our own narrow and pathetic self-concerns is the first step to an awareness that will enable you to remain secure and stable when life hits you with something unexpected. Armed with that awareness, you will be able to recognize and observe what is happening and then wisely choose a proper response rather than become caught up in a thoughtless reaction.

Life throws us unexpected curve balls. If we have a wide, stable stance and are in position to anticipate and act upon what confronts us then we will deal with those curve balls successfully rather than finding ourselves scrambling and reacting with uncertainty and panic. Reacting to events seldom solves the problems and often brings more trouble as we get so caught up in the reactionary fallout that we lose sight of the problem we actually need to address.

Seems like it would be prudent for us all to give a little thought to what kind of a foundation we have

created for ourselves and then to consider if we wake up every morning resting on that foundation...or do we wake up every morning and base our day on the reactions of the moment?

***Wisdom*** is defined by Webster's as '***the power of judging rightly***'...my definition of **wisdom** is something like '***the conclusions you finally arrive at after life has knocked you around enough***'...

Wisdom is something that comes over time and thankfully it is something that keeps expanding as we get older. Wisdom comes when it finally dawns on us that behaving the same way and doing the same things will produce the same result. The opposite of wisdom is insanity which Albert Einstein defines this way, "the definition of insanity is when you keep doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result."

How many times have we followed the same path over and over again expecting to end up at a different place? There is a reason why maps are important and useful. If you follow the exact same route on the map time and time again you will end up in the exact same place. Yet so many of us follow

the same, well-trodden path to our own personal despair and disappointment and are then shocked to find ourselves where we have been so many times before. It happens in our workplace, in our relationships and in our bad habits.

Like a mouse running time and time again down the same path in a maze and finding no cheese, we often find ourselves running with the same anticipation and zeal that led us down the wrong path so many times before, yet we are distraught when the outcome doesn't change. Recognizing the path to positive outcomes and following that path is important. Recognizing the path to negative outcomes is also important. Choosing the right path when confronted with those forks in the road that have become so recognizable to us is when wisdom begins to emerge.

Develop your own personal GPS and start using the memory setting to pursue the paths that have dependably produced the results you desire. When you first notice that the route you have chosen seems to be leading to the destructive and damaging end that you have seen before that is the moment to exercise your wisdom muscle and take the next exit ramp or detour! Turn on your personal GPS.

**Exercise that wisdom muscle. And then relish the new and exciting locations that you will have the opportunity to visit time and time again.**

“The only ones among you  
who will be really happy are  
those who will have sought  
and found how to serve.”

-Albert Schweitzer

## Some Advice from Papa...

\*adapted from 'advice my father gave us'...written by my mom, Toni Stone

**“Thanks to Papa we know how to get up every day even when we would rather not.**

**We know that no one else is going to do our work for us.**

**We know what's past is OVER and GONE.**

**We know that when we leave something it is for a reason and once we are done we don't go back...because the reason we left is still there...**

**We don't try to live in yesterday or get it back.**

**We keep GOING, NO MATTER WHAT.**

**We remember that disappointment is not the end of the world.**

**We know people will screw us over unwittingly, unconsciously or on purpose. We won't be stopped by it. We won't take it**

**personal and we WILL keep a good eye on them after that...**

**We will also stay tuned to all the players...some people aren't wrapped too tight, some are living in another reality, some don't know their ass from a hole in the ground and others are just cruising through to see what they can get every day.**

**We remember that 75% of people have to be dealt with very carefully and some of them are dangerous characters...we remember to WATCH WHAT PEOPLE DO, not listen to what they say...actions speak volumes...promises are lip service unless followed up on with actions and results.**

**We do not count chickens before they are hatched.**

**We always have cash, just in case..."**

## **Sometimes You Gotta Stand Up and Fight and Sometimes You Gotta Stand Down...**

There are times in life when it is appropriate to 'Stand Down'. The Military defines 'Stand Down' as *the movement of soldiers in combat to a safe place for rest and recovery. It is also a method used by the Military to correct an issue that has been identified as a problem throughout its ranks.*

American Heritage Dictionary defines 'Stand Down' as: *to withdraw, to end a state of readiness.*

Have you ever fought for something so hard only to have it keep whacking you in the face over and over again with its stubborn refusal to yield to your intention?

There comes a time in a wise person's life when the pain and suffering that they have endured to stand by something has exhausted them to the point of heartbreak...a time when they are disillusioned, disappointed, disheartened and discouraged beyond belief...perhaps a time when this something has caused them to feel that people are inherently flawed...

This would signify the time to 'Stand Down'. 'Stand Down' does not mean to give up, instead it means to detach and quell the emotional reactivity of a situation.

Sometimes things have to become worse before they can improve and actually the seeming appearance of 'worse' is really good at work... in disguise.

When you are sure that you have done all you can in regards to a particular situation it may be the time to 'Stand Down'---you will know in your heart of hearts when you have prayed enough, been angry enough, been disappointed enough, been lied to enough, been played enough, been betrayed enough, cried enough, talked enough, yelled enough and worked hard enough.

One day, suddenly perhaps, you will wake up and feel that it is time to 'Stand Down', time to move away from the attachment of that situation...time to let the other characters see the cost of their behavior...time for you to re-group and remember that there is occasionally more power in 'Standing Down' than there is in continuing to 'Stand Up and Fight'.

Some of the best warriors and most brilliant minds have seen the wisdom in a 'Stand Down'. Even those of us that are strong-willed, control freaks can see the value of an occasional 'Stand Down'. There are times when it is better to withdraw than to compete with things that are beneath you or which threaten to drag you down into the muck and mire.

'Stand Down' does not mean that you are weak or that you lack the courage to keep fighting, it means that you are able to see the point in a situation when it is time for you to pull in and observe. When it is time to stop pushing so hard and just let nature take its course. When you have done all your work in a particular situation you can trust that the overall outcome will be for the good, even if the present circumstances resemble a giant garbage dump.

Refreshed, rested, armed with perspective gained from standing down and stepping back, you can re-enter the battle with new commitment and energy.

Life has a way of teaching people what they need to know...and you can count on people's actions returning to them in kind...

If someone loves, they will be loved. If someone harms, they will be harmed. There is no avoiding the cause and effect laws of the universe, no matter who you think you are.

So take heed and if you are faced with a situation that requires it, 'Stand Down' with style and Grace...then get back into action when the timing is right.

“Ride the horse in the  
direction that it’s going.”

-Werner Erhard

## **Giving Up Is Not An Option...**

Look at your life and pinpoint for yourself some things that you really, really want. Got them? Good. Now tell me how bad do you want them? Do you want them bad enough to change everything about yourself that stands in the way of you getting them? Do you want them bad enough to give up your behaviors that don't work? Do you want them bad enough to not give up until you get them?

Most people will probably tell you that they want certain things, however, I would bet that they are not willing to do **WHATEVER** it takes to get them and that is why they still do not possess the things that they want. I would also bet that most people don't even fully understand the concept called 'whatever it takes'---most people quit at the first sign of difficulty.

There are some people however that don't quit...the Navy Seals don't quit and truly self-aware people don't quit either because they know that quitting only perpetuates the circumstances in their lives that they don't like. Seals are driven by the mantra that the only easy day was yesterday!

Let's talk about where most people lose it along the trail of getting what you want...you start out with a business or a goal or a relationship and everything looks kind of groovy at the beginning. Then we move along in time and obstacles start to appear...the business doesn't seem like such a good idea, the new relationship looks like a disaster, the goal you set out to accomplish looks WAY TOO HARD.

So you start to buy into that you didn't want it anyway, you start to think of other things that you can do that would be "easier" ---we call this the "grass is greener" syndrome---news flash---the grass is NEVER greener somewhere else....smarten up and learn to cultivate your own grass to make it the green that you want it to be---another news flash---this is HARD WORK...it requires commitment, discipline, purposefulness and doing what you said-- NO MATTER WHAT.

If you want to win and get the things you want in life then you must go to war with all the things about yourself that don't work.

Going to war with yourself means that you set out to prevail no matter what. This means that you must give up paying attention to your ailments, grievances and complaints. This means that you must only look at what you want... keep focused on the goal, the intention and let go of ANYTHING that is counterproductive to forward motion.

This looks like doing what you said no matter what opinion you have about it, it means not giving attention and energy to what isn't working, it means NEVER giving up no matter what it looks like all around you...you keep yourself focused on what you want to achieve and you refuse to be swayed by anything that doesn't get you to where you are going.

This kind of war on your self is not easy, in fact it is very, very difficult and therefore the average person would never even begin to attempt it.

The average person gets stopped in life by the first sign of trouble...they hit the first obstacle and they quit.

In Navy Seal training an average starting class of 80 people ends up to be about 20 or so by the time

graduation rolls around...the men that want to be Navy Seals NO MATTER WHAT are the ones that graduate. In Seal training they are wet, cold, sleep deprived, physically challenged, mentally challenged and pretty much put through what most people have nightmares about---the BEST part of this...they ASK for it...they WANT to go...they strive to EXCEL...they want to be THE BEST...imagine that?

Navy Seal candidates want it so bad that they will do anything to get it. Would you go through that kind of hell to get what you want? Are your goals important enough for you to overcome yourself to achieve them?

Any goal or thing worth having is worth whatever challenge you have to go through to get it...that is the beauty inherent in the system of achievement...when you overcome yourself, when you work hard, when you change yourself to achieve something, then you can REALLY HAVE IT...you can REALLY appreciate it, you can feel deserving of it because you know that you EARNED it and it is yours to keep...be it a relationship or a successful business or a degree...whatever.

If you get something and you didn't work for it the satisfaction of it is very short lived...hence the self-defeating nature of things like the welfare system...handouts don't teach us anything...challenging ourselves to be better teaches us a wisdom that can't be learned any other way...

***“It’s no use to grumble  
and complain;***

***It’s just as cheap and easy  
to rejoice;***

***When God sorts out the  
weather and sends rain—  
why rain is my choice.”***

***-James Whitcomb Riley***

## **And You Always Have To Forgive...**

Many people in the world have a hard time with the true concept of forgiveness. Not only do individual people have problems with forgiveness, countries have issues with it, as do political parties. Many of us feel that our anger, animosity, hatred and bad feelings are JUSTIFIED and God help anyone who tries to tell us otherwise. Given an opportunity most people will tell you about who did them wrong in life and if you watch closely you will see in the telling of that incident the true story of their lives...

Usually in the re-telling of the bad divorce, the lost election, the abusive childhood, the business deal gone bad, the unexpected death or the ultimate betrayal, a wise person is able to see the sadness and disappointment that reside just beneath the anger. Anger, sadness, hurt and disappointment held onto over time become vehicles for that which is against life.

The darkness in the world feeds off of these type of emotions and truly that is the only thing that gives life to the darkness. If people could come to understand that holding onto past hurts is actually

stealing their health and vitality perhaps they would learn to LET GO.

A great working definition of forgiveness is *letting go*. Forgiveness does not involve over-looking or forgetting what has happened—it involves letting it go, so that the incident no longer has any reactive power over you.

When you can maintain your inner equilibrium no matter what befalls you, you will have achieved a level of mastery unknown to most. You cannot control the behaviors and actions of others; however you can control your reaction to them. You can decide to be hurt or offended or you can decide not to be—the choice is always yours. People are doing the best they can for who they are in the moment and mostly they are not even conscious of how their actions affect others—people are pretty self-absorbed.

There is an incredibly high cost of holding onto anger and animosity. The cost is not just an individual one—not only does holding onto yucky stuff kill your health and vitality it also doesn't help the collective consciousness of the world.

Don't be foolish enough to think that the fight you are having with your brother has no effect on what is happening in Iraq or in Israel...energy is collective. Your hatred of your business partner or the guy who cut you off on the highway or the opposing political party goes forth into the ethers as energy...in this case BAD ENERGY. Your nasty attitude is not only effecting you, it is effecting all of us....so QUIT IT!

Should we all run around wearing orange robes, singing songs of love and giving out flowers? Nah. However, we can begin to take a deeper look at what anger and animosity we might be holding onto and how that is affecting our quality of life. It is easy to see what righteous anger and hatred is costing other countries (as people are literally dying to be right). Is it as easy to see what it is costing us as individuals?

Being angry takes up a lot of time and energy, it also affects your health and state of mind.

So next time you are feeling really hot under the collar and your blood pressure is rising—ask yourself—is it really worth it? Is this emotional outburst really helping me, or anybody else for that

matter? Is it changing the circumstances that have caused my anger or is my temper tantrum diverting my attention from what must be done? If I was watching my behavior would I be proud of my leadership and maturity? Perhaps most importantly, is my anger justified or simply a reaction to stuff I don't like. By the time you run through this checklist of questions and think it through, you may find that you have yourself back under control and can then focus on what is really creating the conflict that has you so bent out of shape.

Thank you for being willing to  
entertain some different ideas...please  
visit us at  
**[www.theworkingsinglemom.com](http://www.theworkingsinglemom.com)**

Remember that no matter what it  
looks like, possibility exists...always...

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