

This book will help you make positive changes to your life forever...

YOU CAN TOTALLY DO THIS



*Stop doubting yourself.
reach for greatness and Be Happy*

JOY TONBARA IKUMOINEIN

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authorHOUSE®

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ISBN: 978-1-7266-6306-9

Independently published

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In honour of my brother Titus,
who was brave enough to follow his passion of dancing.
You made us all proud. 1989-2018

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank ‘YOU’ for taking this step to self-improvement and for totally doing you.

Thank you to my Parents who believed in me so much so that I had no other choice but to believe in my awesomeness, no matter what. You taught me how to see myself.

Thank you to my best friend, Paul Okpenerho, for being the best thing.

Thank you to my sister, Linda Holford, for your unbiased support and unfailing love. And your constant reminder that there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

Thank you to my siblings Samuel, Emmanuel, Titus, Rachael, and Deborah for your endless support and most importantly your unconditional love

Thank you to my Friend Boyelayefa Idoro who listened to all my challenges and victories in the course of writing this book.

Thank you to my friends Kelly Sunshine and Chichi Jones, for your continuous support and enduring hospitality.

Thank you to my mentor, Dr. Patterson Ogon, for your support, humour and overflowing kindness

Thank you to Joy Ehonwa for your patience and soulful energy you brought to this project as its editor, you are a super star.

Thank you to Bura-Bari Vincent Nwilo, for reading the final draft and your meaningful suggestions. I thank you especially for calling out the best in me.

INTRODUCTION

'Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do It.' —Maya Angelou; American poet, memoirist, civil right activist, respected inspirational Icon.

My life has been one exciting journey, right from my days as a child living in Nigeria. Even then, I knew what I wanted to be when I grew up; I wanted to become a teacher. I was good at daydreaming about what my life would look like in the future, with me being a teacher for half of the day, and a homemaker the rest of the day, attending to my husband and children and giving them the care, attention and affection they deserved. I never thought of myself in the process, or how life would turn out for me eventually.

As time went on, I changed my mind and decided I didn't want to be a teacher anymore, but would rather prefer the position of a queen. I wanted to be all that and more. At home after school, I would daydream endlessly about myself becoming this powerful rich queen of an empire. I was married to a commoner of course who later became a king. The only time I was able to find quietness in the house for these daydreaming sessions was when I was in the toilet. I would spend ages there with my mind wandering through various adventures I would embark on when I came of age. I wanted to become someone very important, a force to be reckoned with. I wanted to change the world. My mind would take me places; I was usually brought back to reality by the raised voice of my mother who always wondered why I was spending that much time in the toilet. She said she could sometimes hear me speaking to myself, which was what I always did anyway. I was perceived as weird. I grew up thinking I was weird. That is how the mind of a child works.

As an adolescent in high school, my perspective changed. As teenagers we wade through life with reckless abandon, but become conscious of our anatomic developments. I became

self-conscious and was very much aware of how I looked and how people defined my looks. I never felt pretty enough and struggled with self-esteem; always thinking I would never be good enough. My childhood imaginings all vanished.

As a teenager, my thinking became limited. I felt that because I wasn't pretty enough, there were certain jobs or vocations I couldn't pursue. I wanted to become a journalist, because I was good at literature in high school and also because of the love I had for the English Language. I made an attempt at writing an article and posted it on the school's notice board. It got mostly positive reviews from students and teachers alike, but because I couldn't find the courage within me, I backed out. I never practiced writing again.

When it was time to write my final examinations in high school, my dad sat me down and asked what I wanted to become in the future. I told him I wanted to be a war correspondent. I will never forget the look in his eyes when I said that. He tried to discourage me from it, simply because I was a female and there were other 'noble' professions for females. I understood where he was coming from, partly because at the time he had only just returned from the Liberian war, where he'd fought gallantly for two years prior under the then ECOMOG brigade. He told me to take my time to think about it.

After much thinking and pondering, I was adamant about my choice of career. I was fascinated with the news and wanted to be there experiencing the happenings firsthand. Although I wanted to be a war correspondent, I naïvely thought that it would be a great opportunity to foster peace between the fighting parties. That's how easy I thought it was. At that age, we think of the world as an entity with compassionate humans. We don't see the world to be complicated and often beyond our reach. However, all that changed.

Exams came, and I was done with high school. In the gap year between high school and college, I bowed to pressure from my parents as to the choice of career I had made. You see in Africa, it is considered rebellion to go against the wish of your parents, particularly given the fact that you cannot afford to sponsor yourself and have to rely on them for financial support. There are no student loans in Nigeria so the best anyone can do is to obey their parents. That was how I succumbed to my parents' advice and decided to go with their option of becoming an accountant. I finally gave in and studied accountancy but I didn't feel like I was living. Each passing day made me feel inadequate, because I was not in my purpose. Life has a way of always bringing you back to your purpose. It starts with clues, and there is always a feeling of emptiness when we are not aligned with our purpose.

Before adulthood, we go through various learning processes, some good and some bad. Even though I went ahead and studied what my parents wanted instead of following my own choice of career, I excelled in it, with good grades and prospects for an even better future. I worked for some time as an accountant, but never really liked it. It was a task to get up in the morning and get ready for work. I was unhappy in my job. That is the thing with purpose; it keeps wooing you and tugging at you until you finally identify with it. One day, a colleague of mine asked me what my purpose was. I couldn't answer at the time because I sincerely didn't know. He asked again what I was passionate about in life; I gave him the same blank stare. It took me years after that conversation, for me to realise what my purpose was. This goes to show that there is no definite age for anyone to identify his/her purpose. You might be among the lucky few who know what their purpose is from childhood or as teenagers but sometimes, we get into adulthood without any inclination about what our purpose is. However, because we can't choose our purpose, it comes to us when it knows we are able to run with it.

In trying to discover my true purpose, I've switched careers about four times in various sectors: from finance to project management to media to education. I've lost multiple jobs. I've started businesses and some failed out rightly, while some didn't make a profit; I couldn't even break even. I've been crushed so many times, I became desperate and anxious. More than once, I fell into depression and became suicidal, thinking to myself I was a failure and wouldn't amount to anything in life.

Yet, in all those times, I kept reminding myself of my childhood dreams, and how I had seen my future greatness in my mind's eye. If I could believe in myself then as a child, why couldn't I do the same now? Whenever I fell, my childhood dreams wouldn't let me stay on the floor for long. I had to re-invent myself, re-strategize, set new goals, change my career and try again.

All this happened between 2005 and 2015. This was ten years of my life with nothing to show for it except my master's degree, which has never been used. I was making no impact on the world around me. Deep down inside, I knew this wasn't the life I was meant to live. I knew there had to be more out there for me.

During the times I felt down, despite persistent thoughts that there was no way out, I kept saying out loud to myself, 'There is always a way' even though everything around me said the opposite. I had to find it. All I could see at the time was a bleak future. I was well into my twenties, with thirty just around the corner, and I still hadn't figured out what I wanted to do.

I needed to find a way out, to search my soul introspectively, discover what was going to make me useful to my world, and turn my life around. I needed to become someone who would be a blessing to others, and also succeed while at it.

That was when the spark came. That was when everything changed. What I realised was, I was by myself in this race of life, and the expectations of others didn't count. I had to be true to myself and live the life I wanted. I had to embrace what I had always desired from my childhood days, which is to do great things, to inspire others. You can do anything if you believe in yourself, believe that you can. Where there is a will, there will always be a way. I knew right at that point nobody was going to do it for me; I had to decide to do it for myself. I had to first love myself.

In 2017, I came up with the idea to start a platform for teenagers and young adults called Living Joys. It is a place for support and mentoring as well as inspiring posts for everyone. Life is tough enough. While there are thousands of platforms out there, I personally don't think there is one for the growing teens and young adults to find answers to questions they might want to ask, especially confidential questions away from the prying eyes of equally concerned parents. This is the place to be, if you haven't been already.

I am currently in the business of coaching teens on personal development, and educational advancement if that is the path they intend to pursue. It is still in its blossoming stage, but I have seen some tremendous transformation already in the lives of these bright young minds I am coaching. I write because it gives me clarity, I speak to encourage people who think they are in a dead end situation regarding their lives, and I coach people generally on personal development and setting personal and professional goals. I am in my element and most of all HAPPY to be doing what I am doing, changing the lives of these youth and transforming their inquisitive minds.

At this point in my life, every day I wake up is a day to be thankful for. I am most grateful for the opportunity to live the life I want and literally count my blessings daily. Whenever I see myself deviating from my goals, I keep my focus

regardless of any obstacles. I do this by reconnecting with my childhood days when I believed everything was possible. Now I make a moment-by-moment effort to better my life every day, by focusing on positivity no matter what. I may not be where I want to be, but I'm certainly not where I used to be. I have come alive.

Everyone's life is a journey. This journey starts from when we were born, then our childhood where we have dreams, our adolescent years full of aspirations and then gradually into adulthood where reality sets in, and some things don't go according to plan. We most times only remember the things we are passionate about from our childhood, and eventually, these become foundations for us to build our ideas upon. Everything else becomes insignificant. You are not alone on this journey.

The fact that you are reading this is an indication that your life, just like mine, needs major improvements and a determination to make positive changes. You can be rich or poor, single or married, fulfilled or unfulfilled, educated or illiterate, street smart or bookworm, travelled far and wide or never left your comfort zone...whatever it is, there must be something that you know needs improvement in your life. This whole journey is usually about growth and learning until we figure it out eventually — that is why we are here on earth, isn't it.?

People often say, 'You can't have it all.' As much as I think that might be partially true, I believe you can be fulfilled with whatever you have, little or much, as long as it makes you happy. Life is about making constant adjustments fit for purpose. Your goal should go from wishing you had a better life, to actually making the shift, making an effort to truly change your life, for the best.

Are you happy with your current situation? Do you think you ought to be doing better? Are you ready to go from where you are to where you want to be? This is the book that will give

you that clarity of direction. I encourage you to read with an open mind, to imagine those childhood dreams you had that you have given up, to see things from a different angle. This book contains proven steps that I took; to love myself first, then love others. Practicing the steps in this book won't give you a perfect life; rather it will assist you to be in total control of your life. I hope this book gives you that aha moment as you continue on your own journey of life. Do not hold yourself back just to fit into other people's frame of how you should live your life, but have the courage to choose yourself and to live the life you want — to take charge of your life.

CHAPTER 1

BELIEVE IN YOUR AWESOMENESS

‘Believe in yourself and all that you are. Know that there is something inside you that is greater than any obstacle.’

— Christian D. Larson, new thought leader, teacher and author.

I make a conscious effort to start with the end in mind. We grow up thinking about what we’ll become in the future, even when we can barely spell out the word future correctly. Yet, that is just human nature and how the world has been, long before we were conceived.

For you to live the life you want, you have to be ready to be a wonder to the world. It’s your choice to make. However, it all starts with your mind. The sooner you let go of limiting beliefs, the easier it will be for you to be in control of your life, and create the life you love. It can be yours, if you believe strongly enough to get it. Like this quote I love so much says, ‘Where there is a will, there is a way.’

You have a fire inside of you that burns daily; it’s your responsibility to fuel that fire continually. You cannot depend on an external source to fuel the fire burning inside your soul. The fire that tells you that you are more than any situation you may currently be experiencing. Yes, that’s the fire I’m talking about. That was the fire that burned in my soul all the times I was down, so I couldn’t stay down for long because I knew without a shadow of a doubt I was meant to be somewhere, to be a helper, to be a blessing to others who might be going through similar situations in life.

Everyone gets to a crossroads in life, but the internal fire within us pushes us one step further in our pursuit of purpose.

The greater the fire within, the greater you believe in yourself and trust that you can do anything if you put your mind to it. The good news about this internal fire in you is that it doesn't hide. Everyone around you will see it, they will want it, and most people around you will want to light their own fire through you, to light up their darkness. Then you become a shining light to your world, and your gift makes way for you. Everything works in your favour simply as a result of your burning desire, your fire that causes you never to give up on yourself.

You should learn to listen to that inner voice that tells you what you should and what you shouldn't do. Only choose to do what ignites your fire. Don't succumb to pressure or outside sources on what you should be. Your fire begins to diminish anytime you decide to go astray and do something else that is not really you.

Nature loves courage; it's your duty to make the commitment and nature will respond to you. Making the commitment starts with believing in yourself to do it. Your belief will lift you up in times of trouble; it is what will combat every impossible obstacle on your way to getting to your finish line. You have to keep the end goal in mind and sincerely search your heart to know what is stopping you from reaching it. Are you limiting yourself by your doubts?

The reason some people stay in abusive relationships is that they don't believe in themselves enough to leave. They don't believe they can go out there and get the life and love they deserve. They live in bondage in their minds.

Every slice of time you have is a chance to create a change for yourself, for your life. These are opportunities to do something, to create the life you love. You have a chance to do something new every day. Be unique and do things differently. People will love you, people will hate you; either way, just do you.

I wish I had someone to teach me the things I know now when I was a young adult. I had a dream, but I was full of self-doubt. My priority then was to have fun with no thoughts of what the consequences might be. I know now that what I lacked then was self-love, self-belief and focus. If only back then help was readily available to be accessed. I had no clear direction on what my purpose was; otherwise I wouldn't have fallen down so many times. However, the good news is, I learnt from all the mistakes and experiences of failing and getting up again. It is not how many times you have fallen that matters, it is how swiftly you are able to get up, dust yourself off, and try again. The only real battle is the battle in your mind. You have to be able to ignore naysayers, to avoid friends and family who doubt your abilities. It is you that matters and the stage is set for you. All you need to do is just believe.

To believe in self is to promote self. No one is going to do it better than you. Don't wait for doors to be opened; you build the door. With courage and patience to get to the destination, you can create your own opportunities; the world is not waiting for anyone anymore. Everyone is in a hurry somewhere, so what are you waiting for? The government is at its wit's end. If you don't run with your dreams, you become stagnant. I can tell you that is a position you don't want to be in, seeing everyone around you making progress while you are stuck with your dreams. Now is the time to run with that vision of yours. Tomorrow is not guaranteed for anyone. Why waste time?

There will always be rejection. You should always think about rejection as a turning point in your life. Aim to improve yourself and your ideas, like how can I do things differently? You can't keep doing the same thing and expect a different result. I remember when I was declined admission to study for my doctorate in one of the Ivy League schools. I felt sad at that point, but took it as a blessing in disguise. I didn't give up, but went ahead and applied to other schools, where I finally

got the admission. Perhaps if I was there, I wouldn't have been able to do most of the things I can do now, due to school pressures and meeting their academic requirements. You see, everything works together for our good as people who love God and are called according to His purpose, but we sometimes don't realise it at that moment.

One thing I realised later in life was, if you have a dream or vision and you don't run with it, you find out later that someone else is already doing what you always wanted to do. Do you want to be the one left behind? I doubt that.

YES YOU CAN

I love the slogan used by the Obama presidential campaign, 'YES WE CAN'. It reminds me of my abilities and how well I can put them to use for my benefit. As a young adult, President Barack Obama believed in himself: he was going to someday become the President of America. He had all the odds against him, but that didn't stop him from believing. How could a young biracial man, born to an immigrant father who came to the United States as a black African student and a white Caucasian mother who was a lecturer and an ordinary citizen by American standards, tell himself he would one day become the President of the most powerful country in the world?

He did it. Barack Obama made history with his beliefs; by just believing in himself and working tirelessly towards it. If President Obama can do it, you can too. You deserve it as much as the next person does.

In his book, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*, Barack Obama highlighted parts of his personal journey that resonate with me. I will share a few here with you.

1. Life is not obliged to work out as you'd planned (Page 3): You can plan to be so many things, but sometimes life

happens; events beyond our control, things we can do nothing about, circumstances we can't change. The benefit of believing in yourself in this situation is that no matter where the ship of life takes you, you can always swim to the shore. Believing in yourself is like learning how to swim (which is very important by the way. You should learn how to swim if you haven't already. I'm still learning).

2. 'I began to harbour doubts about the path I had chosen.' (Page 4). No one said believing in yourself doesn't sometimes come with doubts. That is our nature as humans; the onus is on you to counter those doubts by affirming positively to yourself that you can do it.

3. 'Finding the right balance between our competing values is difficult. Tensions arise not because we have steered a wrong course, but because we live in a complex and contradictory world.' (Page 56). As we grow older, so many things compete for our attention and time. We try to make sense of it all and find a balance. Every individual is different, some can handle stress well while others collapse under pressure or maybe even give up completely.

First, you graduate from secondary school probably already sure of what you intend to study at university. You go to university with high hopes and finally graduate with so much expectation, yet full of uncertainty about how you will go into the world to accomplish your dreams. You realise too quickly that the world has changed. You either go ahead with determination or take a detour to find other interesting things you are passionate about. All this can only happen with the confidence that you carry inside: the belief that you can conquer any obstacle.

4. We should be guided by what works (Page 159): The journey of life is an individual race. There is no one size fits all. What works for you might not necessarily work for me. This is where uniqueness and talent come into play. You don't

necessarily become an actor just because your father or mother was one. It's not hereditary. You have your path to follow, why not stay on your path? I cringe when I see the unhealthy competition out there. Your destiny is different from mine, why do we need to compete with each other, or envy each other? I don't get it. Each one of us can be given the same task, but can choose different approaches to accomplish it; the end result should be what matters most. Use your approach to get your results, which is the crux of believing in yourself.

IGNITE YOUR GIFT OF IMAGINATION

We all have the gift to picture how we want our future to look like; only we don't know the process, how we will get there. You have to be hungry enough to fight for it. No one is handed a bright future on a platter of gold. It is working on your imagination that takes you there. I love this quote 'If you don't know where you are going, any place will look like it to you.' You have to use your gift of imagination to see where you want to be in 5, 10, 15 or even 20 years' time. Get a book and name it 'personal performance', then write down your imagination to give it meaning.

Sometime back in 2014, I imagined that I was going to write a book, a children's book precisely, but didn't know how. I hadn't even thought of what I was going to write about or who my target readers would be, but I wrote it down in my book. I tagged it, 'my book of life' where I would write down all my ideas, my imaginations. I told myself I was going to work my brain so hard to come up with originality. I also wrote down that I was going to publish my book in August 2014.

Well, that didn't happen. Other things competed with my time, but the fact that I wrote it down meant I kept seeing it every time I opened my book to write a new idea, or to tick off the ones I had accomplished. I never stopped believing I could do it. This year, I made it my life's goal to write this book, and

I'm glad you are reading it now. That is the imaginative power we have within us. If I can do it, you can too.

Believe that you are more than what you think you could be. You can do great things. If you want it hard enough, you can work harder to achieve it. This gives you the confidence to do anything. You don't stop believing; this is how dreams come true. You have to keep at it. Be diligent enough to follow it through.

BELIEVING IN YOU REQUIRES FAITH

Why give up on yourself when God hasn't given up on you yet? You may ask how I know. Well, I know because you wouldn't be reading this otherwise. This is a chance to get back on track. Get your life back. You deserve to live a good life. Believe everything is available to you regardless of your present circumstances. All you need is to have faith strong enough to move mountains, take immediate action, and see yourself succeed.

Faith is hoping for things that you haven't yet seen, but you know are possible. It's not about having the proof first, but rather knowing that there is nothing impossible for God to do. You'll have to get over your fear of failure and your insecurities. Get into the habit of pushing yourself over and beyond your comfort zone, doing things no one ever thought you could do. Because you know what? You are going to surprise people who thought you'd never amount to anything. You will break old records of accomplishments.

Even when you think things are impossible, your job is to have faith anyway. Go for it. The moment you stop believing, you let yourself down and you start drowning. Belief is like floating on water, which is fine, until you think, *wait a minute, I can't swim!* Then you start to sink (self-doubt). Until your faith becomes greater than your fear, you haven't truly believed.

I don't know what your personal beliefs are; we might not be of the same faith, or beliefs. However, I believe in God who created the universe. Your gifts and talents can make way for you, but they can only take you so far. You need supernatural power to assist you. I have a mantra I say to myself daily, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' That is my own belief in the power of the invisible God, who knows the end from the beginning. I say this to start my day and set the motivation ball rolling. So when I come across any obstacle on the way, or when my mind tells me it's too much for me to do, or I just feel fatigued at work trying to juggle different tasks, I say it quietly to myself.

I've got small notes posted around my house to motivate me, to remind me of the power I've got inside of me, that tells me never to stop believing I can achieve my goals in life. I encourage you to practice that as well. If you put it into practice, you will notice how much better it will make you feel. Find a quote that motivates you, and say it to yourself daily. You need faith to move to your next level in life. You need faith to believe you can, and I assure you, you definitely will.

You have the power to change your situation. Whatever chains you think are holding you in bondage, originates from your mind. Break free from being a prisoner of your mind. Even in your darkest moment, still believe that everything you ever wanted to accomplish is within your reach.

HOW YOU VIEW YOURSELF IS WHAT THE WORLD SEES

Believing strongly in yourself boosts your self-esteem. You become fearless and kind to yourself and others. You intentionally rebuke negative comments and beliefs about you from other people. You do not take the opinion of others as your own.

It's not your fault that you believe in what you know already. From the moment we were born to where we are now, we have been fed with so much information that we just don't know what to believe in anymore. You hear things like, becoming a doctor, engineer, accountant or lawyer is the real career path to take. Which implies that if you were to study anything else, you might not succeed or you will not be respected enough. In my lifetime, I've come across many people in those fields who feel unaccomplished. Some of them left those 'promising' careers to study something entirely different that resonates with them and their purpose.

To be a strong self-believer, you will need to think and talk positively to yourself. I constantly self-talk myself to victory in difficult situations. I remember one time I had a job interview. Just minutes before the interview, I became shaky. I was sweating profusely even though it was cold in the waiting room. I told you I've changed jobs several times; this particular interview was on project management which I had no experience in or suitable qualifications for. What I had was just a certification and 6 weeks of weekend training, but I went in with determination, because I was ready for a career change. At the time, to me it was a matter of win gleefully or fail woefully, and I wanted to win at all cost. At that moment I began talking positively to myself. I told myself over and over again, 'I can do this'. I said after all, no one has two heads in there, why should I be scared?

At the interview, I sat down calmly when asked to, and looked directly into the interviewer's eyes. I don't know where the boldness came from, but I had it. At that point it didn't matter if I got the job or not, but I overcame my doubts by telling myself that I could, and I did!

Believing in yourself makes things happen for you. It makes you the captain of your ship. You are the one who can make it happen. It doesn't matter what is holding you back right now.

You can be hurting from a heartbreak, broken relationship, broken friendship, broken marriage, loss of a loved one, loss of job, betrayal, examination failure, difficult childhood, difficult parents, difficult country...the list is inexhaustible. No one is a failure in life, unless they allow it. Don't accept what other people think you are as your truth. Your strong belief in yourself is your truth.

People all around you will continue to tell you things, some positive and some negative. The choice is up to you what you accept. What you choose to believe will make all the difference in your pursuit of greatness. If you believe you will have a fulfilling, great and amazing life, you are right. If you believe you will have a life full of obstacles and chaos, you are also right. The power to choose what life you want is in your hands. Choose this day not to entertain any negativity in your mind. If you want a better life and a better future, you need to truly believe in yourself that you deserve it.

Getting better health, a better relationship, better grades in school, a better job, or better finances starts first from your inner self. What is your mind telling you at this moment? Is it saying you can succeed? Or is it saying you can't do it? The ball is in your court. You deserve to live a better and happier life. You owe it to yourself to do what it takes to succeed.

Someone in this world definitely believes in you; that person helps you by speaking encouraging words to you. Don't disappoint that person by not believing in yourself. Take a leap of faith towards your unknown world. You will thank the universe for that, because eventually, you will succeed. You will figure everything out. It will all become clear like daylight.

STEPS TO TAKE:

- 1.What hindrances are there in your life right now, stopping you from believing in yourself? Write down at least 10

obstacles.

Tip: I asked this same question to some students I coached; the answers ranged from, fear, age, children, and gender, to looks, social media, family, friends, and more.

Look for evidence around you to disprove these negative beliefs. Make positive daily affirmations that you can do it.

2. When you are in a quiet place without distractions, think about how you want your future to look like, and what makes you excited about it. Write down 20 ideas you would love to work on. You can do it. You've got the gift of imagination inside of you. Make your brain, work hard; it has the capacity to do so.

3. Write down your plan for the future. Your plan for this year, if you haven't already. Have your 5-year, 10-year, and 20-year plan. There is no limit to the number of years to plan for.

4. What limited beliefs do you nurse in you? Who told you that you couldn't be great? These beliefs have to be dropped right now. You do yourself a disservice if you let yourself down just to please someone else.

5. Stand up for yourself and be the best version of you. You are born to shine. If anyone can't stand your sparkle, then they should use glasses. It's not about them but about you at the end of the day.

6. Choose to believe in yourself more. If you don't, who will?

CHAPTER 2

JUST LOVE YOURSELF

'For what it's worth: it's never too late to be whoever you want to be. I hope you live a life you are proud of, and if you find you're not, I hope you have the strength to start over again.'

— F. Scott Fitzgerald, novelist and short story writer.

I haven't loved my self well enough until recently. As far back as I can remember, I struggled with self-esteem, inferiority and un-forgiveness. Growing up was fine albeit with some issues. I had loving parents who worked tirelessly to give my siblings and me the best in life. I am ever so grateful for that.

Throughout my younger years, I didn't think anything of myself; I was like every other kid around the block, full of life and prospects about what the future held...well, not until I became a teenager. Obviously, that's the age where you start to look at yourself in a different light, and get admiration from others.

At the time, I began to notice that my friends got winks and air kisses from boys, but I didn't even get as much as a second glance. In other words, I was often overlooked or sidelined. I didn't think much of it, until my close friend called me ugly. From that moment on, I became self-conscious, always alert to people around, and utterances they made about my looks. I was very insecure.

You see, the reason I was called ugly was because I've got facial scarification (also called tribal marks). In those days in Africa, it was a common practice for babies to receive these marks. I searched for a way to get rid of them, unsuccessfully. I used various creams and soaps, chemicals; you name it, all to no avail. Most of the solutions only ended up creating more problems, causing more scarification.

The truth is, because I believed what my friend said about me, and allowed her words to frame my mind and perception of how I viewed myself for a long time, I was living it. I was living in someone else's opinion of how I looked. A lot of people live their lives based on someone's opinion of them. Until you love yourself first, you will constantly remain in that trap.

Some believe that that loving yourself is selfish love, which is not true by the way. They tell you it's against culture, it's selfish, or it's greed. Self-love should be a universal culture, and out of it you cultivate your tribe. You have to love yourself, to choose yourself for happiness. If you are unhappy, how will the people around you be happy? Happiness is contagious.

Loving yourself is you saying, I'm taking my destiny into my hands and choosing myself over and beyond any circumstances, I find myself in. That is not selfish in my opinion. If you don't first love yourself, how can you then love others? Likewise, it is hard for other people to love you, when you don't love yourself. One of the most important aspects of living amazing is having positive and healthy relationships with the people you love, and the meaningful things you do.

YOU ARE AMAZING JUST THE WAY YOU ARE

Self-love begins with acceptance. You accept and love yourself just the way you are. You should approve of yourself daily, first by looking and talking to the person you see in the mirror and saying 'I (Insert your name) approve of myself. You should say it with meaning and conviction until it becomes your song. You don't need anybody to tell you that. Whenever you find yourself lonely, you draw strength from your love, knowing that you are strong and resilient.

To find love and acceptance elsewhere, you must first give it to yourself. The greatest love you will ever find is the love you

have for yourself. Do away with beliefs that some people are not lovable. Everyone is lovable. Do not give up your power to love yourself to anybody. You possess beauty inside of you. Loving yourself has more to do with your heart and goes beyond your face or body. Remember also that loving yourself is not being arrogant or vain. When we accept ourselves the way we are by a show of love, we create a life of fulfilment and joy.

If you love yourself genuinely, you shouldn't experience low self-esteem. A lot of people battle with low self-esteem. You may often think, I'm not good enough, or beautiful enough, or brilliant enough, or tall enough. That is your mind playing tricks, using your thoughts to deceive you and rob you of your worth. It's all lies. I first started by loving myself just the way I was concerning how I looked. I learned to love myself especially my face. I loved my face and pampered it even more. I wasn't going to let social pressures push me into a corner, or dictate how I should look like. I changed my mind about changing my looks; if I was to do it, it would be for myself, not because I need to look a certain way for others.

Positive self-esteem gives you confidence. It will empower you to face obstacles and defeat them. You will know that you are worthy of happiness. You and I are imperfect beings; this is what connects us together. That perfect person you think has got it all together? It's a mirage. That person is as vulnerable as you are. We all need that courage to be ourselves and live truly. You hand the power of validating yourself to others if your self-worth is based on what they think of you. Do not strip yourself of your power to validate yourself. You are the best version of yourself.

LOVING YOURSELF CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

We are inundated with social expectations of how everyone should look from glossy magazines with pictures of models that have probably been photo-shopped. Now, the internet is full of fakes. You shouldn't live your real life based on some other persons' make-believe life. You are the best version of yourself. What you think about, you speak; what you speak about, you believe; what you believe, you become; what you become is your reality. Always present yourself in a positive light.

I had a terror of being visible, because of my facial marks. I would hide away every opportunity I got, and was always too shy to talk in public let alone give speeches. However, all that changed the moment I told myself 'enough is enough.' How long will I continue hiding? People's opinion of how I look is what it is, just opinions. It will not bring me wealth or pay the bills for me. I concluded that people who shame other people because of their looks are small-minded.

You should carry yourself with dignity in all of your glory, and not let people trample on your self-esteem. What people think about you doesn't matter; what do you think of yourself? Conduct yourself in such a manner that people around you cannot bring petty talk and gossip to your hearing. Your persona should tell that you are too busy chasing your dreams, that you don't have time to look at what the next person is up to.

Physical presentation is also important in living an amazing life. Don't look or dress shabbily. You are royalty and should be seen as such. Create a climate of acceptance anywhere you go. You should endeavour to dress appropriately for any given occasion. To dine with kings and queens, you should present yourself as one of their own. This might sound like a cliché, but it's true. 'How you dress, is how you will be addressed.' Love yourself enough to look your best wherever you go. Be beautiful inside and outside.

EVERYONE IS BEAUTIFUL

Don't wait to become perfect before you know you are beautiful. You are already perfect as you are this moment. Don't question your greatness. Beauty is inside of you.

When you know deep down in your heart that you are beautiful inside and outside, you see everyone around you as beautiful. The moment you accept yourself truly, you become beautiful. Everyone is created uniquely with individual gifts. You are created with abilities that the next person doesn't have.

Remember, no one can make you feel inferior without your consent. Nobody is *more* perfect than another. We are all perfect in our own ways. You don't have to be great looking to achieve your dreams. You are the best promoter of yourself. Nobody questions anything when they sense your confidence and intelligence. Be proud of yourself at all times. Your uniqueness makes you awesome.

I have been struggling with losing weight for some years now; I work hard on my weight one year, and gain it back the next year. So it's fair to say I've been on a weight roller coaster. However, I don't let it define who I am. If you are like me, struggling with a weight issue or any self-image related issue, do not lose hope. Each one of us is a work in progress. The key point here is not giving up. You are not a quitter. Never entertain any thought in your mind that says you are not beautiful, handsome or attractive enough. You are more than enough. You are BEAUTIFUL.

Everywhere you turn, you see messages trying to distract you from your real life, telling you who, what and how you are supposed to be. So we learn to hide our struggles and shame. We shy away from being judged by others, pretending that all is well with us, even when it isn't.

My insecurities cost me my relationships in the past. I realised that hating certain parts of my body was unhealthy to my mind. I had a negative outlook on life. I thought only beautiful people attained success, not knowing that beautiful is a relative term. What is beautiful to me might not be beautiful to you. Like the saying goes, beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. I lost good friends as a result of my negativity and attitude. However, I did a reality check, and started with working on my mind first. I turned my negative energy into positive energy. I made a vow to myself that I was going to live truly, love my body, love my face, love my flaws and most importantly love myself.

You are different and unique. A lot of people find it difficult to accept you because of your uniqueness. You don't follow the crowd, and they are not used to it. You don't fit into their standards; so they try to make you look small, make you think you are weird or flawed. They forget you are created in God's image and as such you possess extraordinary beauty inside and out. Let them live in their questionable opinions of you, because what matters most is only God's opinion of you. Learn to live your life for an audience of one — your Creator.

COMPARISON IS THE THIEF OF JOY

You should have unconditional love for yourself, by embracing your flaws as well as the flaws in others, and know that nobody is perfect. You are ready to live free to your full potential. You are ready to achieve anything you want to.

Great self-esteem comes from within you. The moment you are able to admire others and compliment genuinely without comparison, and you can avoid any negative thought about your self-worth in relation to that individual, you are confident.

There is nothing wrong with you. Always have that in your mind. Negative self-image robs you of confidence. It causes

mainly feelings of inadequacy, which can lead to depression. You can get depressed by comparing yourself to others. Depression is a disorder that often requires medical attention.

All my friends were married and had kids of their own. Some with good intentions even tried to link me up with friends, but I didn't want any of that. I knew I needed to work on myself first, and marriage was not going to fix it for me. It was only going to make it worse. I was slowly disintegrating and could see life slipping away from me. I was alive but not living. I wanted desperately to turn my life around. I didn't know how. I went to church regularly, but still felt empty, because I bottled up my entire problem.

I struggled with depression in my life from 2014 to the later part of 2015. I felt I was a failure. I was already in my thirties and was not married; I had no job and was becoming homeless, as I couldn't afford the rent anymore. I moved in with my cousin and her children and wouldn't invite anyone to come see me because I was ashamed of where I lived. I felt I had fallen from grace to grass. I would call my mum who is my confidante, and cry to her, but never tell her what the real problem was. Sometimes she would cry with me and pray with me at the end of the conversation and advise me to read my Bible and also seek counselling. I finally agreed to seek counselling and began the steps to turn my life around. I was determined, first for myself and then for my family.

Stop comparing yourself to other people as there will always be some people who have more than you have, and some who don't have as much as you. Begin now to accept yourself as you are. You have a giant inside of you.

We all have things we fight within our minds, but the worst of it all is comparing your life to the next person. That is the chief killer of destinies. Learn to find joy in your today, because no one is promised tomorrow. Just be happy with where you are now, and work harder to get to where you want

to be. Find joy in the little things, and watch how the big things unfold in your favour.

CHOOSE TO GIVE LOVE ANYWAY

When you look around you, you find love in every corner. Cherish and appreciate the people around you. What you give out is what you receive. If you give out love, you receive love. Love is a healer. We make the world a better place by becoming better as individuals. You can't help others if you don't help yourself.

Get in touch with people in your life every now and again. Sometimes we lose touch with people and don't even bother to check on them. To love others is to be concerned about the welfare of your family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, acquaintances and old schoolmates. No man is an island. Don't live in isolation.

It is important that we share our experiences with the people within our circle; your story can heal you and also heal someone else. Some people you know are lonely as we speak. What can you do to add joy to their life right now? Show some love.

DO WHAT YOU LOVE

In my coaching workshop with teens and young people, they tell me their biggest worry is caring about other people's opinion of them. These are often opinions from classmates, family or peers that motivate what they do. They never sit down to think, *am I really doing what I love? Or am I just going with the flow of what others are doing?* I tell them it is normal that they think that way at their age, because as they grow older they will become less concerned about what other people think. Their main focus should be on taking the right steps to become better individuals.

What truly matters is that you love what you do. It will make a visible difference in your life and the lives of those that come in contact with you. You deserve a joyous life while you are alive. Doing what you love brings you abundance in life. Expect the best from yourself at all times. Love yourself enough to get your hands busy. Don't just sit down idly. It is said that an idle mind is the devil's workshop.

Manna will not fall down from heaven a second time. You have to put yourself out there; you can't afford to wait to be rescued. No one will fulfil your needs. It is your situation, and you are responsible for changing it. Now is the time to work hard at what you love, now that you are still young and have got the physical ability.

You have to remember that it is your life. You are not living it for someone else. Celebrate your journey as you go along, and be your authentic self. It is survival mode for everyone. Decide that you want a change, and you want it now. Get into the action with your decision. Don't let people or things hold you back. Love yourself truly to overcome your personal obstacles like laziness, insecurity, negative thoughts, or excuses. Quit making excuses.

Blaming others won't solve your problems. Instead learn from the mistakes. If you are in love with yourself you will forgive yourself for any pain or hurt and move on. Love yourself more than that situation that is bent on keeping you down. Defeat that negative baggage you carry around, you don't need it. It's a burden that will slow your progress in your quest to live an amazing life.

You can do what you love as a career, and live your dreams at the same time. If you are not doing what you love, you are only wasting your time and energy, because at the end of the day, what counts is finding fulfilment that leads to happiness in living an amazing life.

STEPS TO TAKE:

1. Ask yourself genuinely, what is stopping me from loving myself?

Write your answers down and think about them. Remember you don't need someone to validate you. You are greatness.

Accept your flaws. No one is perfect and your flaws are what make you special and unique.

Tip: It might be looks, body image, or other insecurities.

2. Who do you compare yourself with and why? Why do you think that person is better than you? Write down 10 qualities/ talents you possess and evaluate them. Can you ride a bike? Can you drive? Can you swim? Are you skilled with your hands? Do you know there are a lot of people out there who can't do many of the things you do? You are unique. Do you still think someone else is better than you?

3. How do you define beauty? Remember beauty is relative. You don't need to change any part of your body to show you are beautiful.

Write down 20 positive attributes or qualities you have that make you proud of yourself.

4. Remember your needs come first before others'. You are your number one priority. Love yourself enough to stand up for your truth about who you are. You owe no one an apology for being true to yourself.

5. Don't entertain an excuse for bad behaviour from anyone. You are no dust mat for dumping bad attitude.

CHAPTER 3

FORGIVENESS IS YOUR CROWN FOR GREATNESS

*'The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.' —
Mahatma Gandhi, non-violent civil rights activist, freedom fighter and father of the
Indian Nation.*

A lot of us struggle with forgiveness at some point in our lives. To be able to forgive is a moment-by-moment effort in our daily lives. The act of forgiveness is a difficult process, but you can do it. You can move on and get past the hurt and pain. To forgive yourself and forgive others is to free your mind and soul. Most people find it hard to sleep at night, laying there thinking about past hurt and betrayals. The downside of that is, the person that hurt you might actually be sleeping peacefully.

To live free of anxiety, anger and possibly depression, is to forgive. Forgiveness is a healer; it brings peace and happiness to your life. However, you have to work at it. Not everyone has the ability to forgive easily, for some it takes time and effort. Having the ability to forgive is a great attribute for you. You are doing your body good, and allowing yourself to progress pleasantly towards the future.

Forgiveness was one of the hardest battles for me. I've had my own fair share of betrayals and disappointments from people. When I became aware of myself as a teenager and realised I had facial scarification (tribal marks), I thought, *how could anyone do this to me?* I harboured resentment towards my parents for it. I was constantly angry and upset even though I was told how it came about. I was distraught wondering how anyone could hurt an innocent child. You see, I got the scarification as a child from my grandparent. I was helpless and couldn't defend myself.

At that time in the rural village where I was born in Nigeria, West Africa, it was a common practice that was done on sick babies especially babies like me who had a convulsion. It was the belief then that the scarification was the traditional medication used to cure that particular ailment. It was the preferred orthodox medicine. Even in other cultures now, it is still being practiced.

I was upset and kept demanding answers to why I wasn't taken to a proper medical centre. I found it difficult to let go of the grudge I had. It slowed my progress and ability to move forward. Un-forgiveness makes you operate below your full potential in life. It stifles your personal psychological growth.

To choose an amazing life for yourself, you must choose forgiveness. You can't live in past hurt and pain. I had to completely forgive to live freely. Holding on tight to anger and resentment only hurts you. It is you giving permission to the offender to control you. Forgiveness gives you back your control and allows you to let go of the painful memory. Seek counselling if you want to forgive someone but you just can't. A therapist is trained to help you understand these problems better.

FORGIVE YOURSELF FIRST

You cannot really forgive others completely if you are yet to forgive yourself. The person hardest to forgive is you. You have to learn to forgive yourself, to move on successfully and live amazingly. Any feeling of shame and guilt you feel should be dealt with. Everyone makes mistakes, but learn to move forward. Mistakes are experiences we learn from daily. Don't condemn yourself by putting your life on hold in an emotional trap. Always be kind and loving to yourself.

To begin the healing process of forgiveness, you have to reconnect with your inner soul, from the inside out. Deal with the disappointment you feel about yourself. Get your thoughts

in harmony with the feeling of complete peace. You are the master of your thoughts, emotions and reaction to situations, you've got the power to reject any negativity you feel about yourself. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'We must develop the power and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us.'

Forgive yourself for your past. Be willing to fight for your life. It's human nature to go through periods of hurt and unhappiness, but don't dwell there. Guilt has a way of making life difficult. What you did and didn't do replays itself over and over again in your mind. It makes you sick and depressed, and when this happens, it is time to do something about it.

I was in a very dark space after my last relationship was ended by my fiancé for no tangible reason. I held on to the grudge as weeks became months. What I didn't know was that I was cutting opportunities from my life. I couldn't forgive myself for introducing him to my parents in the first place. I blamed myself for the embarrassment I caused my family. I was resentful towards him as well.

Inside the dark space, I began to seek help. I didn't want to remain tied to the old emotional baggage that kept me down. It was stopping me at every attempt I made to move forward. I said to myself, 'I can't live like this. I am more than a conqueror. God said it, and I believe it. God said I'm well and strong.' I began by reading what my Bible had to say about forgiveness, as well as self-help books relating to forgiveness. I began to heal, using the examples and exercises as my guide.

Acts of love make out a way for forgiveness. They help you focus on the solution and move forward, rather than focus on what created the problem in the first place. Sometimes the heart demands explanations before it can forgive. That is normal; you hear people say things like 'I need the explanation

to have closure.’ However, it isn’t always necessary. If you genuinely want to make progress in your life and live a wonderful and amazing life, you don’t need someone to get closure, you can do it yourself.

Forgive yourself by breaking every chain of guilt around you. If you don’t forgive yourself, you remain a slave to stagnation.

You lost a job — you will get a better one.

Your marriage broke down — you will rise again.

You lost a loved one — time will heal.

You were betrayed — let go.

You lost a friend — work on yourself to be a better friend to someone else.

For everything else — move on.

HEALING FROM EMOTIONAL PAIN

The emotional pain made me physically sick. I had chest pain and heart palpitations whenever I thought about how hurt I was. It was a combination of being hurt by my ex as well as being upset with myself for time wasted. I was always crying and thinking to myself how I was going to start all over again. It was a time of constant regret about the wrong choice I made in choosing a partner, and all I could feel internally, was disgust, guilt, and shame. And, I got a pity party from family and friends too, but that didn’t help my situation; I was still crying myself to sleep when I was alone at night.

Gradually my healing came when I stopped blaming myself for the mistakes or decisions that I made or didn’t make. I turned my pain into forgiveness. I said to myself that I deserved a million second chances to try again. It was not the end of the world, and I wasn’t the first person to be heartbroken. Even as I write this, there are thousands of people

going through a heartbreak right now. Armed with that thought in mind, I was able to forgive myself, and try again.

The cause of emotional pain is within. The mind often holds on to pain for too long and triggers emotional reactions. Usually, outside events only magnify the pain within.

To live is to experience setbacks and conflicts; it is how we cope with these challenges that matter. The first step is to accept that you feel the pain, shake off any feeling of shame and guilt, and then you can get clarity on the way forward. Let go of the things you can't change or control. Most times the outcome of these situations is beyond our control; no matter how hard we try. We can only do our best.

You owe it to yourself to live an amazing life. Holding on to emotional pain will not make that possible. You will only end up doing yourself more harm than good by inviting sickness and diseases into your life. You can find healing by letting go completely, not letting it fester in your mind, and learning from past mistakes or failures.

True healing cannot come from apportioning blame or fault to whoever hurt us. That is looking back to the past where the hurt originated from, and that doesn't help you because you can't change the past. What you can control is how you handle the impact now. This will determine how you break or make your future.

STEPS TO TAKE:

1. Write down what emotions you are feeling right now about situations in your life. Is it anger, frustration, regret, sadness, revenge, stress, or fear?

2. Be objective about your feelings. Do not identify with your hurt feelings; it only brings negative thoughts. If you say, 'I'm upset', 'I'm depressed', 'I feel miserable', 'I feel stressed out',

it will be difficult to detach yourself from the feeling and let go. Try to use self-positive affirmations to boost your mind.

3.The practice of forgiveness. Think about you or that person you feel offended by for a second, and how the emotional pain is acting as a hindrance to greater things in your life. Write it down on paper.

Relax your mind and let it go. Say this out loud: 'I TRULY FORGIVE (YOUR NAME/NAME OF OFFENDER). I release you from my mind and soul. I am free from your hold. I wish you well.'

4.Emotional Pain.

- What is the worst emotional pain you've ever felt? How are you dealing with it? Write it down in your book.

- Write down various issues in your life that are bothering you. Ask yourself if they are important. What are you trying to fix? Can you control the outcome? Can you change the person? If you can't change anything, why not let it go?

- Find something to do to preoccupy your mind. Look for a distraction. Travel somewhere that will make you happy. It doesn't have to be to an exotic destination. Sometimes leaving your immediate environment can help you heal.

- Practice meditation at least once every day. Meditation connects you to your true self. In meditation, we disrupt any negativity in our subconscious mind; we focus our energy on positivity in our lives. Think about the good things that have happened in your life.

- You can seek counselling from a professional as well. It might also help to speak to someone about your pain. Don't bottle it up.

- Some people meditate by praying. Praying is a personal supplication to God. It is saying, I can't do this on my own, God please help me.

-Take some time for yourself and read about something you love. Do some mindful exercises like breathing slowly and deeply, imagining your hurt feelings like a dark cloud that will soon pass away and then comes the sunshine.

-Practice self-compassion. Be slow to anger. If you feel troubled and stressed, remind yourself who you are. Tell yourself nothing can destroy you; not fear, not anger, not revenge. Tell yourself you know you are upset right now, but this is not the real you. Be kind to yourself. This too shall pass.

-Give yourself a break. Everyone makes mistakes, period. You need to get past it and forgive yourself for it. You tell yourself, *I should have known better*, but you accept the mistake, move on, and learn from the experience. Do not allow it happen a second time.

5. Turn your failure into something positive. Don't just sit there and cry over spilled milk. You can't change what is past. It's in the past for a reason.

6. Make up your mind finally, that you will not waste your life thinking negative thoughts about things or people. Rather, work hard on your emotions daily. Keep moving forward with ambition, hope, determination, purpose and most importantly, faith. You can achieve an amazing future.

Truths about forgiveness:

- Forgiveness has great value and can lead you to a happier life
- Forgiveness is a gift to yourself and to others
- Forgiveness wipes the board clean and gives you grounds for a fresh start: an opportunity to move forward in life.
- Forgiveness is you choosing to embrace peace and happiness, to live the life you love.

- Forgiveness releases your emotions, so you don't keep them bottled up. It gives you freedom.
- Forgiveness comes with health benefits. It prevents depression and anxiety.
- Forgiveness creates better relationships and trust.
- Forgiveness is to know that resentment and revenge have no place in your life.
- Forgiveness gives you control over your destiny. Do not allow the actions or inactions of others determine your mood.
- Forgiveness is never too early or too late. Once you realise the hurt, try to forgive.
- Forgiveness is forgiving in advance. People will always hurt you, it's best to live life knowing that you are able to forgive even before the offence happens.
- Forgiveness is making a new start today for a better and more productive life.
- Forgiveness is saying, *I've been given another chance to make a new beginning.*

What Forgiveness isn't:

- Forgiveness is not condoning the act, being defeated, or pretending that nothing happened. It is letting everything go.
- Forgiveness is not remaining in an emotionally, verbally or physically abusive relationship. That indicates self-esteem issues. Go back to chapter 1 and 2 to refresh your memory about believing in yourself and loving yourself. Get out now, before it's too late.

Tip: The reason why it's best to write all these down is because it will give you clarity on how to tackle issues. Also in

written form it gains true momentum and action. It is a good practice to keep a journal.

CHAPTER 4

GRATITUDE BRINGS IN MORE BLESSINGS

‘As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.’

—John F Kennedy, 35th President of America.

I begin my day with prayers. Each day for me starts with being thankful for everything around me. I mean everything I can think of, good or bad. For me, everything happens for a reason, and I’m grateful to be alive to witness it. That I am able to breathe freely without the help of a machine, is a marvel on its own. I never take anything for granted. It is not my making; it is the grace of God.

To live a happy life, you need to form the habit of creating a trail of happiness behind as you move forward in life. This brings a phrase to mind that says ‘Do not burn the ladder on your way up, as you may need it on your way back.’ I have been in the habit of counting my blessings and writing them down in my gratitude journal. You should have one too. It makes you aware of all the goodness around you, and stops you in your tracks whenever you start complaining about the things that aren’t right in your life.

Gratitude and faith usually go hand in hand. Living a life of gratitude open doors for you that you didn’t even know existed. Living a life of complaints only magnifies the problem. No matter where we are in life at this moment, it is enough to be thankful for. Learn to appreciate everything going on in your life right now. By cultivating this habit, you are bound to notice the right things, rather than the things that are wrong. Your eyes become open to seeing problems around

you as an opportunity for growth. Live life daily with optimism, hoping for the best.

We most times get stuck looking for the big things, and we forget the little things in life. We fail to recognise that the things that money cannot buy are more important than the things money can buy. We complain about not having nice shoes, but we forget that there are people out there who can't walk and are still living life grateful.

BE THANKFUL FOR LIFE

My gratitude to God deepens, as I get older. It is an attitude I have developed over time. I continue to see God's love, mercies and grace all around me. I choose not to be a victim of circumstances in life. So many times I tried to find an excuse to remain down, but God kept pulling me up. I am more than thankful to be alive.

In life, we sometimes find ourselves in situations where we feel sorry for ourselves, and blame circumstances or our parents for our woes. We use these excuses as an opportunity not to take responsibility for our lives. This is your life, and you should own it. That you are alive is a reminder that God is not finished with you yet. You should wake up each morning thankful for the wonderful family and friends you have around you. Love surrounds us, if only we look beyond our present circumstances. We all go through different phases of life, and every phase is another reason to be thankful. You have a choice not to remain a victim.

Begin each day by being thankful for everything you can think of. Life is in seasons, sometimes high, sometimes low; our attitude to it is what makes all the difference. We live in an abundant world full of natural beauty, so appreciate the beauty around you. Think of the things you love and desire, and start giving thanks for them. Never fail to tell yourself that

everything works together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Take a second to appreciate the good around you. Appreciate that you are alive. Show gratitude for what you've got going, not dwelling on what you still want. Our focus daily should be on the things that are right rather than the wrong things. Appreciate everything you have. Bless that which you want. Don't be a hater. Don't be jealous.

PLEASE SAY THANK YOU

We, myself included, should make it a habit to always use 'please' and 'thank you' more frequently. Saying thank you is appreciating the goodness of other people. Live your life golden, by adding sunshine to other people's lives. Expressing thanks to others brings joy to our own lives.

Mentor yourself in gratitude. Express appreciation for every favour someone did for you, no matter how little. To be thankful is to stand out from everyone else. A little word of appreciation goes a long way on our behalf. Anyone who has been instrumental in your life is worthy of thanks. One way or the other, they made a decision to help you move forward. When we get favour from people, they are irreplaceable; why not value them? To become great in life, we need to learn to say 'thank you' even to those beneath us. One of the characteristics of being amazing is the ability to say thank you for every favour you have received.

My parents were very strict about manners around the house growing up. They always sounded in our ears that 'charity begins at home.' My mother, in particular, was quick with her slaps if you ever forgot to say the words 'please' or 'thank you' when we either made a request or were given gifts. I remember getting scolded as a child for not saying thank you after a meal. I thought it was weird that my mum insisted when we finished our meals, we should say 'thank you' to her

for preparing the meals, and another ‘thank you’ to dad for providing the means, and that was after we had first said the ‘grace’ by thanking God for the resources. That was her way of teaching us the magic of saying ‘thank you.’ I will never forget this song I loved to sing as a child before every meal:

*Some have food but cannot eat, some can eat but have no food,
I have food and I can eat, glory be to thee oh God. Amen.*

Start from this moment to develop an attitude of gratitude. Create your thankfulness list. Begin with the people who have made a significant difference in your life. We all claim to be busy most of the times, but that shouldn’t stop us from saying ‘thank you’ to the people who have impacted our lives however little or big it may be. Show appreciation via any means possible, especially if you don’t get to see them often.

Make a conscious effort to send notes of appreciation to family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances, class mates, business partners, anyone. You can send a personal note of appreciation to show how grateful you are for their support, encouragement, friendship, love, patience, and positive criticism. Sometimes if we don’t get criticized, we don’t move ahead. We need someone to push us to become our best self.

Remember to show appreciation to your parents, and give from the heart. The fact that our parents brought us to the world is worthy of appreciation. They may or may not have influenced your life as a child, but that shouldn’t stop you from saying *thank you for birthing me*.

DO SOMETHING GOOD FOR SOMEONE

No matter where we are in life, there is always someone we are ahead of. There is someone out there who wishes they were in your shoes. Do not take your current position for granted. At times when I feel down, and the urge to complain about my situation wells up, I remember the words of Gandhi who said ‘I cried because I had no shoes, then I met a man

who had no feet.' You will be amazed that what you take for granted today, is what someone else is praying for.

The receiver always remembers random acts of kindness. We receive the reward for our kindness here on earth. A good deed always comes back to us in many ways; don't stop doing good deeds just because someone failed to appreciate your kindness. It's their loss not yours. To show kindness is an innate gift; not everyone is kind. Some people lack empathy and compassion.

We live in the same world with other humans who lack humanity. Everyone is in a hurry to get somewhere, anywhere. Some people don't care who they hurt along the way to their destination. Simply put, in a world full of chaos, our show of kindness is the peace it needs. To be kind in our world is a rare gift.

It is true that some people will take advantage of your goodness and consider it as a weakness; be good anyway. Your good deeds will always pave ways for you. Plant seeds of abundance as you go along in life, and expect the best from people by keeping an open mind.

Get involved in charitable causes around you; freely share your skills, talents, time and love without expectations of anything in return. People will remember you for your generosity and kindness, not for how many material things you own. Of what good are our riches, if we can't help the needy amongst us? Show kindness to strangers, random acts of kindness elevate the soul. Giving of yourself is one of the best things you can do.

In giving of self, find a middle point. You can't give what you don't have or give yourself away to your own detriment. You should choose to live for self as well as live for others. Do not let anyone make you feel like you owe him or her something. You do not. As much as I encourage you to be charitable, it should be done with good judgment. Some people will try to

take advantage of your kindness, but do not let that stop you from helping those genuinely in need.

Be genuinely interested in other people. Be a giver. Declutter your life. You have things you don't use; instead of holding on to them, why not bless someone with them? I read somewhere that if we have clothes or shoes we have not worn for over a year, it means we don't need them. Give them out.

STEPS TO TAKE:

1. Make a list of the people who have impacted your life positively. Write down why you should be thankful for them. Your list should be anyone from your circle. Any person who offered you support at any point in your life, who encouraged you, who stood by you in difficult times. Think hard, so you don't overlook some people just because they are so close to you.

2. Write a thank you message to everyone on your list. You can send it via email, text message, inbox message, or call them. Remind them of the good deed done, and how grateful you are to them.

3. Who are the people who motivate you daily to become a better version of yourself? Write their names down and send each one of them personal messages to say thank you.

4. Write down the abundance in your life, a list of things you are grateful for. You will be amazed at what you take for granted.

5. List all the things around you that make you joyful. What are the little things in life that you haven't been grateful for? Write them down and begin this moment to be thankful.

6. Describe the things you will need in order to share your abundance with people around you. Write it down. What can you do today to show kindness? How can you be of help to anyone? Remember, every little helps.

CHAPTER 5

CREATE YOUR OWN HAPPINESS

‘Ultimately our greatest joy is when we seek to do good for others.’

— Bishop Desmond Tutu, social rights activist and clergyman.

When I was in college, I always looked forward to the weekend. I thought it held the key to happiness. I wanted to be like everyone else in school who travelled for the weekend.

My school at the time was in a remote area, and was usually deserted at the weekend. Every friend of mine travelled to the big city at the weekend, so I wanted to be a part of that cool gang. I got myself a boyfriend in the city as well, so I could ‘feel among’. Conformity was happiness to me. Little did I know that the weekend could have been the best time for me to study while everyone was gone and the hostel was quiet. Maybe I would have gotten a better result than what I graduated with.

I didn’t know that I was responsible for creating my own happiness, that my happiness wasn’t dependent on the weekend or running to some boyfriend in the big city, who never really cared about my arrival anyway. I was jeopardizing my future just for the feeling of happiness I thought I would be getting at the weekend. So many times, things never go to plan as expected. After the first few hours, I usually felt the same as I did over the week. I remember my lecturer then who always advised me about the dangers of travelling every weekend. He said, and I quote, ‘There will be so many weekends in your life that you wouldn’t know what to do with them. Why not sit down and face your studies, instead of the constant travelling you do?’ I didn’t take his advice. I thought to myself, *he’s old-fashioned and doesn’t understand the current trend*. All I was

busy doing was pursuing happiness instead of creating happiness.

Now I look back and remember how true those words are. I have some weekends where I just want to lay in bed all day. I get invited for parties, but I kindly turn the invitations down, not because I'm busy, but because I've got so much to do at home and I don't want to leave the house. Some weekends I get so busy working, I don't have time to take a shower or even eat. However, because I work for myself, I can choose any day to be my rest day, not necessarily the weekend.

To be happy takes a deliberate effort on your part. You choose to be happy no matter what life throws at your doorstep. You are hopeful with the knowledge that there is something better out there for you. You speak positive words into your daily life to bring positive karma to you. Happy people make right decisions, as the worst time to make any life-changing decisions is when you are sad or disoriented. Desist from murmuring, grumbling and wallowing in self-pity. Seek fulfilment, then happiness will come. Happiness always comes to those who seek it. You get happiness by constant gratitude for everyday blessings received.

Consider your own happiness first. Your happiness shouldn't be tied to how people react to you. Stop educating people on their foolishness; it will end up rubbing off on you. See a vision of yourself as happy, glowing and radiating with joy.

LIVE A JOYFUL LIFE

Life is a roller coaster, full of ups and downs. Your down moments shouldn't define who you are. Living a life of joy is dependent on you. It is how you have made up your mind to be. Circumstances shouldn't make you happy or sad, it is you making a decision that you will be joyful.

Each day you live, should be a day to give the best of you. If you put it into practice, you will achieve it. Live your finest

days starting now, with a joyful heart. A joyful heart is where you will draw contentment and fulfilment from, not from becoming rich. There is nothing worse than being an unhappy person, wasting your life on irrelevant things when you could have been working on your dreams and making yourself happy.

If you were thankful for the blessings you have, you wouldn't have the time to focus on the blessings you don't have yet. Be focused only on the things that matter and add meaning to your life; they eventually become your reality.

Embrace each moment with a heart full of joy knowing God is working to favour you.

WORRY IS YET TO SOLVE ANY PROBLEM

Most times what you and I call problems or troubles in our lives haven't even happened yet. We just worry too much in our head, going over and over again about things.

Fear is of the mind. If you give it the attention it will reside there permanently. Suddenly you realise so much is going on in your life and you need direction, so you worry about every little detail. No one has ever achieved anything by worry. When you find yourself completely overwhelmed with situations, all you need is a change of perception.

HELP OTHERS GROW

'Do not look down on anyone except it is to admire their shoes.' How I love this quote. In economics, it is said that for an economy to flourish, it is the collective effort of its citizens. When everyone grows, the economy grows.

This same logic applies to individuals as well. For you to grow sustainably, you have to help others around you grow. Your service to others will bring immense satisfaction, which releases the happiness hormone. It is also humanity to touch lives and make a difference in any little way. Be willing to

reach out to people, by showing genuine concern for their personal growth. Talk to them about plans they've got for their lives. It is a good thing if others succeed because of you. The feeling is priceless. An African proverb says, 'If you want to go fast go alone. If you want to go far go together.'

Do not decide on someone's value before you even get to know him or her. Everyone you come across deserves a chance. They deserve to be treated with respect and kindness from you. Be nice to people and appreciate their individual worth. Make them feel important by showing that they count. It is by so doing that you boost their self-esteem. Look at every opportunity as an opportunity to help. Build up someone, anyone, by reminding him or her they're worthy of love and attention. Be the light to their darkness. So many people are constantly battling with insecurities in various aspects of their lives, which could be anything from relationships, to career, to illness, to just wading through life. Why not be the calmness to their storm? Reassure them that they will come out of the fire stronger and better.

STEPS TO TAKE:

1. Follow these simple rules of happiness to live a better life:

- a. Don't worry
- b. Don't hate
- c. Give more
- d. Expect less
- e. Live truly

2. What are the issues bothering you and stealing your happiness? Write them down. Are you worrying too much about things you cannot change? Why not change the things you can first?

3.Happiness comes from the inside. Allowing another person to spoil your mood is your choice. You can choose to be happy no matter how horrible people are to you. You have the power to decide what you should allow into your mind.

4.Happiness is putting you first. You are more than enough to go for your dreams. You don't need an escort.

CHAPTER 6

YOUR PASSION WILL PRODUCE YOUR PURPOSE

'It's what you do right now, today, that determines how your mind and body will operate ten, twenty, and thirty years from now.'

— Warren Buffet, business magnate, investor and philanthropist.

As children, we all have that dream of what we want to become when we are older. I was no exception to that, but things changed. As an adult without a clear direction where my life was going, the feeling that remained with me constantly was to live a life of contribution to the world. That never left me. I wanted to contribute positively to the world, but how I was going to go about it, I didn't know. All I knew was that my life was meant for something great.

Most people wander through life without knowing what their true purpose is. We can understand this as teenagers, but as adults, we want to get clarity of purpose and direction. It is not wrong to become an adult and still not know what your purpose is. I didn't know mine until I was well into my twenties. A close friend asked me once, on my 27th birthday, what I was passionate about, and I couldn't find an answer to give. I was a bit evasive about the question, saying, 'I do know that I hate injustice and unfairness,' but I never gave a definite answer. After that day, in my quiet moments I kept asking myself, *what exactly am I created to do? Why am I here on this planet? There must be something I'm good at, that I can give to the world; something I can sell or give freely.*

Sometimes people around you will sense your purpose and make you aware of it. Pay attention to these suggestions as they come and how you feel about each. Does it make you go all giddy or do you lose interest immediately? These could be

signs you need to watch out for. Follow through with any positive feeling you get about a thing. It could be leading you to where you ought to be.

It is up to you to look inwards to see if you can find where your interests lie. It is never late to make a U-turn if you feel you are on the wrong track. You are better off starting afresh with fulfilment, than remaining on a road that leads to a dead end. Let your lane lead you to your destination and let your passion trump your fear of failure.

FOCUS ON YOUR JOURNEY

Remember, you are responsible for how you live your life. How you live presently is your creation out of what you already know. If you know better, you will do better. Be passionate about living your life to the best of your ability. You have a vision and you are responsible for finding it. Most people wander throughout their life without the attainment of a designated purpose. Have a purpose for getting out of bed every morning. Every day you wake up, is a day closer to your dreams. Pay close attention to what matters most in your life.

Planning your journey is sacrificing self for something greater than you. You are setting precedents for your unborn generations. You are building your empire. You start by setting daily goals for your life. What are the activities that get you excited? What do you do so well that you love? What do you do so well, that time passes and you are not aware? That should be your focus.

When you are truly living in your purpose, and not someone else's, you become happier, and contented. You stay focused on your journey and keep the motivation going. Do not get distracted by what others are doing. The grass is not always greener on the other side.

I started planning my journey later in life. I wish now that I had a book just like the one you have now in your hands that

could guide me properly. I constantly jumped from one career to the other. To be truthful, I switched to a career if someone I knew was doing well in it. That was the reason I changed careers so many times. Yet, it never really brought any fulfilment even though I was making a lot of money from it.

Albeit late, I realised that purpose and fulfilment never came from how much stuff you've got, how many countries you have visited for vacation, how many cars you have, or how many properties you have amassed for yourself. True purpose comes from fulfilment. You can leave a job that pays more, to do a job that pays less, simply because you want peace and purpose.

It doesn't take time to start planning. It is advisable to start young, but it's never too late to start. Start now. Get a journal and document all your ideas. Write them down so you don't forget. It is your determination that matters. Use your faith and creativity to forge ahead and discover new solutions when you find yourself in challenging times. It is your passion that will steer the wheel of change.

In planning your journey, you start with your goals in mind, the steps you need to take to achieve your goals, and record each milestone reached. You can start with breaking it down into smaller chunks called steps, and then work on each step one at a time. Set daily or weekly targets that can be checked off and marked as completed. Each step you mark off as completed, is a milestone achieved. You then move on to the next step, and follow the same process again. Ensure the steps are manageable and achievable tasks you can accomplish. Set a workable timeline for each activity and stick to it. What is important here is your discipline. Record your progress as you go along.

Find your rhythm as you plan your journey. Ideas don't come fully formed. You have to put in the work; you step into

greatness as you follow your own path. Trust your intuition and guts more than the suggestions of others.

FIND YOUR GIFTS AND TALENTS

You have a unique talent that is distinct and beneficial to other people. What you assume is of no value to you, might be of great value to your neighbour. You may not know it, or see it now. You will need to look inwards to find it. You shouldn't look at someone else and think, 'Oh well, I can do that!' That's wishful thinking. You might not have the same talent as the next person. Build on what you do have, which is what you are good at. There is always something we are good at, and therein lies our gifts and talents.

Use your talent to solve problems closer to you for a start. For example, you might be good at teaching; have you considered volunteering in a school close to you? That way you begin to develop your talent even before you get any formal knowledge on it. Start by building your talent first. Your talent is unique to you.

KNOWLEDGE IS IMPORTANT

It is often said that education is the bedrock of success. At least some level of education is vital. You will agree with me that learning to read and write is as important as the air we breathe in. I know you might be thinking, *but Bill Gates is a dropout and also a millionaire who founded Microsoft, or the founder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg is a dropout as well.* What many don't emphasise is that they were brilliant students who were able to secure admission into Ivy League universities in the first place. They were just not cut out for the four walls of a university. Nevertheless, they were brilliant students.

To gain knowledge gives us insight and understanding of the happenings around us. No matter how much you know there will be someone who knows more. Be humble enough to learn

from those who have gone ahead of you in your area of expertise. Find answers to questions regarding your trade. Be eager to learn more each day. Be interested in knowing what is going on in and around your vicinity.

The universe is working to make it happen for you, just as you thought it would be. Studying strengthens your mind. You learn something useful and valuable not just for yourself alone, but for others. It's not advisable to study on a need to know basis. I remember when I was in school, and how I was an unserious student who only studied to pass examinations. I was good at cramming my textbooks just days to the examination, and fortunate enough to get good grades, but that was poor studying because I was studying on a need-to-know basis.

Now I am older and wiser. I have learnt to make more informed decisions. I read every small print to be sure I know what I'm signing up for. I intently study every print I come across. I do not rush into any contract or agreement. I look at it carefully and ask questions. I do sometimes consult those who know better than me on things that require expert opinions, like an attorney or a broker.

No knowledge is wasted, as you might already know. Aim to acquire valuable knowledge that will put you high on a pedestal and give you an advantaged position in life. Your acquired knowledge today can be a lifesaver tomorrow. Your wealth and material possessions can be taken away from you, but what you already know can't be taken away from you. It's engraved permanently in your brain.

Your knowledge is your weapon to succeed. If you have something others are desperately in need of, they will come find you anywhere just to benefit from it. You build inner confidence knowing what you know that someone else doesn't know.

INVEST IN SELF DEVELOPMENT

Pursue information regarding your dreams. Any decision you make will affect your dream in the long run, so you don't want to be too quick to run with wrong information. Seek information and ask questions before you embark on any project. Concentrate on personal development either through traditional formal education, online courses or skill acquisition. Spend money and time on yourself to be good at what you do already.

The key to any meaningful development is constant learning. Be serious about your craft, improve on your skills, learn on the job, learn everything there is to learn, get better at what you do and be the best you can. Practice as many times as you can until you hone your skills and gain confidence.

Self-development can be both formal and informal. You can go to school to get an education regarding your dreams, or learn the skills via mentorship and apprenticeship. Where you get your knowledge is not as important as what you aim to learn. Benjamin Franklin said, 'The best investment you can make is an investment in yourself.' Investing in your own growth and development isn't selfish at all, it is you saying, *I want to care for myself from now on.*

READ A MINIMUM OF ONE BOOK EACH MONTH

From a young age I've been a voracious reader, thanks to my dad. At the end of every working day, he came back home with his daily newspaper. He would call out for me to come collect it. I was always looking forward to reading the news for the day; I would read from the front page to the very last page, which was the sports page. I was eager to know a little bit of everything even though I didn't particularly understand football at the time. As I got older, I craved for even more reading at every opportunity. I requested for books as birthday

presents from extended family members and friends. I read all the books in the house by the time I was fourteen years old. I read various genres, from romantic novels to world encyclopaedias.

One time during school holidays, because I had read every book in the house, I was bored. So while waiting for my dad to return from work, I started studying the maps and flags of the world. I would memorise the names of the countries and their flags. I was also good at reciting poems until I mastered them. It became my past time. I just wanted my brain to be occupied. I believe so much in the written word, because it is in written form that words gain true momentum.

These days, millennials are more concerned with what is trending on social media pages. If you know you can't do without checking your phone or tablet, why not buy electronic books (e-books) online and read those, instead of wasting hours on end navigating through other people's pages on social media and learning nothing from them, or looking at what they wear or places they visit. Remember a picture only tells you a tiny part of a story. Don't be deceived. Use your time instead to gain practical knowledge by concentrating on what will give you a brighter future, or make you more money.

Study everything there is to know concerning how you can achieve your dream. Educate yourself through reading, thereby activating your mind to be creative. Read books on your craft to prepare you for any future surprises. Learn as much as you can from people who know more than you and made the effort to put it down in writing. They clearly have seen further than you have seen, and can help you get going quicker.

YOU NEED A MENTOR TO GIVE YOU DIRECTION

Reach out to people who are willing to offer you their support, guidance and expertise. These are people, who have done what

you are doing, who have been where you are. Reach out to them and ask for advice. Observe those around you, especially the ones you admire. Ask them any question you need answers to, take time to think about the answers you got. Seek for mentors, counsellors, and coaches to guide you through your journey; you don't have to do it all on your own. Make your research to learn how they navigated through the storms in their time. Learn from the mistakes they made, so you can avoid making the same mistakes.

Be around people who know more than you do. Hang out with them, befriend them, study their works, learn their skills, and hire them if possible. Be willing to pay for their services so you get the best out of them. Watch out for what is coming next that might help you. Attend seminars and workshops. Find a personal trainer or teacher or mentor or coach that you can learn as much as you can from.

Find a support group with a platform for like-minded people like you. You will find those who are on the same path as you working on achieving their goals. You can visit my website, www.livingjoys.com, to join the forums where you can ask questions and find answers from various people on different topics.

LISTEN TO YOUR INNER VOICE

Whether you like it or not, people will form an opinion about you. What matters most is your opinion about yourself. Deep down you know what you are capable of, what you are worth, where you should be at now. Yet for some reasons, you think to yourself, *I'm not ready*. You might even be successful or have financial stability, but lack peace of mind. Ask yourself why you are doing what you are doing now? Does it make you happy? Are you living your truth? Or are you doing things just to please people who don't care, and never cared in the first place?

Listen to your gut. What is your intuition telling you? You have every answer inside of you. “What will people say” has tainted many destinies due to poor decisions on the part of the thinker. You need tranquillity and peace in order to hear your inner voice. You will need to tune out all external noises. It’s like sitting in a noisy room with ear buds. Tune out negativity and self-doubt. Filter in positivity and confidence, knowing that you can do it.

When I want to listen to my inner voice, I go for a walk alone. I sit somewhere quiet with nature and think. I listen to my soul, trying to hear what my heart is telling me, to get clarity about what my true purpose is. I tell myself I am responsible for making my dreams become a reality. I am the chief architect of my life. It is my duty to nurture my dream like a child, to protect my dream and to set out a working plan as to how it will make a positive contribution to my world.

Our ability to listen affects the decisions we make in life. Do not be quick to judge without hearing from all sides. In listening attentively to what happens around us, we are able to gather important information that may be beneficial to our success. Try not to dismiss any information as irrelevant. Take your time to process it, before discarding it. You never know whom it might save.

You’re a product of your own mind. If you think you are a giant, then begin to act like a giant. A lion begets lions. You can’t think you are a lion, and then act like a pussycat. Stop putting yourself down, thinking what you have isn’t valuable enough. Stop being a prisoner in your own castle. You have what it takes: your mind. Use the power of your mind to focus on what you want out of life.

Let your inner voice guide you as you follow it. What is it telling you right now that you are capable of doing? Just go for it. Fight every hesitation, procrastination and negativity telling you that you can’t. Free yourself from mental slavery telling

you the wrong things. Surround yourself with people that speak positivity to support and encourage you. You are just a decision away from living the life you love.

BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE

Don't sit and watch the world go by; change it. If a situation bothers you so much, then change it. Or change your attitude and approach towards that situation. It is about what your contribution is, to make it better. How can you make it better than you met it?

Make it your mission in life to make a difference in your community, one person at a time. To do this, you need to be conversant with what is going on around you. What can you do better? What are you good at that can be of help to those living around you? What good can you add to the world? The change we seek will never come from complaining about it, or waiting for other people or the government to fix it. We need to go out there and get our hands dirty by doing the work.

It is true that some people will take advantage of your goodness and consider it as weakness; still do well. The good you do will always pave the way for you. It will come back to you manifold.

Be open to change. It is said that the only constant thing in life is change. Recognise that change is inevitable and we need it to grow. For example, you might have a fantastic idea you wrote down years ago, but the knowledge you had is now obsolete. There may have been an updated version of the required knowledge. Learn to embrace new discoveries as they unfold.

STEPS TO TAKE:

1. What are your gifts? What are you good at doing? How do you intend to make a contribution to the world? Write these down.

2.Start with a plan. Write down what you intend to do with your life. How do you intend getting from point A to point B? Have you thought about what specific purpose you were created for? Do you already have a hint due to past experiences on what your purpose actually is?

3.Evaluate yourself based on things you have done really well in the past; are they things you still love to do till date? Do you think you can turn your hobby into a profit making business? Can you improve, and hone your skills? Write down ways you can improve your skills or talents. What businesses can you start based on your talents?

4.What changes do you need to make in your life? How will your life be different if you make those changes? Write down five habits that need changing. Do you need to watch how you speak to people? Is it your temper that needs a check? Maybe anger management classes or counselling? How about stopping smoking because of your kids and for your personal health? Is that something you struggle with and would like professional assistance for? Could it be keeping in touch with family and friends more often? Everyone has got some habits that need changing, including me, so you are not alone.

5.What measures are you putting in place to develop yourself? Continuous personal development is key in all stages of life. We can never really finish learning. Learning is a continuous process.

6.If money wasn't an issue at all, what would you rather be doing right now? That is the best place to start searching for your true calling. Ask yourself sincerely to see where your heart is. What makes you go on a happy spree when you think about it? What your answer is, is your sign right there.

7.Never say 'I can't'.

CHAPTER 7

TIME IS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT ASSET: USE IT WISELY

‘The key is in not spending time, but in investing it.’

—Stephen R Covey, educator, author, speaker and businessman.

Planning time is not wasted time. Discipline is doing something, whether you feel like it or not. Developing a plan to achieve your dreams requires time and dedication on your part. Creating the time is dependent on what you value as important in your life. People trade their time for peanuts just to keep paying the bills, living from hand to mouth. If your job just pays the bills, and doesn't leave you enough to save towards your dream, that is when you know it's time to go. You will know when that job is not serving its purpose anymore; it's high time you left. Get another job; be brave enough to know that you are better than you think. Take the leap. Keep moving. Don't stop.

We are all gifted with an equal number of hours per day. I often wonder to myself, how the rich and successful get to use theirs. I have read enough of their autobiographies to know that they use their time wisely. Time is very important to them. They traded their precious time to get to where they are today. We sometimes envy them, not knowing how many hours they put into making it work. We never asked how much time was dedicated to their businesses. We only talk about the successes. What about the pain?

Rich folks don't use their time for idle talk, gossip, or watching television all day. They keep themselves busy studying. My friends tell me I'm bad with mobile phones.

They call me lots of times and I don't pick up. However, I always return their calls at my earliest convenience. If you are busy chasing your dreams, you won't have time to be on the phone chatting every minute of the day. You want to keep your line free for important business calls. That's not to say we should ignore family, friends or an emergency, but it is important to schedule your day and make time out for placing or receiving calls.

These days, people don't take time seriously. I once had a client who scheduled a one-hour appointment for 11:00 AM to 12:00 noon, and arrived at 11:45 AM without prior notification, saying 'I woke up late.' I said to her, 'I don't think your success is important to you. If it was, you would have been here on time.' People deliberately arrive for events late and blame it on one thing or the other. If it's not traffic today, it will be roadwork tomorrow. If something is very important to you, you will create the time for it.

If you find yourself doing other things instead of what you are supposed to do, it is a distraction and is costing you your time. Know what is distracting you and build a wall over it. Sometimes I find myself wandering into Facebook or Instagram when I'm working on an important project. Suddenly I realise I'm wasting my time instead of getting work done. What I do immediately is to turn my Wi-Fi off. I put a wall against my distraction pronto. I don't say, 'Oh let me just spend 5 minutes more' because I know 5 minutes might become an hour.

I love a song I heard so many times as a child. It translates to 'Time is money, use your time well, to do worthwhile things, then money will come.' You don't have to use unscrupulous means to achieve anything. If you do the right thing at the right time, you will get the right rewards. Have you ever heard the phrase 'easy come, easy go?' Yeah, that's right. Time is

your best asset, your most valuable currency. Why not trade wisely?

Time is never recovered when lost. Yesterday is gone, tomorrow is not guaranteed, what you have is this second. I cringe sometimes when I think back, at how I didn't place enough value on my time. I've been in situations where I gave more of my time than required. I gave my time to relationships that weren't worth my time in the first place; I gave my time to watching soap operas that didn't add any value to me. They were neither educative nor informative; just watching people live their life on television making their dreams a reality while I was wasting my time. I gave my time to idle talk over the phone, visiting friends who didn't care as much for me as I did for them. I can't get back those lost chunks of time, and I try not to beat myself up over it. I now know better how to manage my time and schedule my activities in order of priority.

To keep track of your time, keep a schedule of how you intend to spend your day, week, month and year. Keep a journal to track your progress towards your future. Prioritize your time by doing the most important things first. Keep to time whenever you have an appointment. Be on time, even if it's a garden party you are attending. Some people don't keep to time even when they are the ones organising the party. You get there for a 4:00 PM party, and they haven't even had their shower yet. Don't be that person. Put in the extra effort if you have to, but keep to time.

Focus on planning your time to give each task your utmost attention. Block out what is keeping you distracted. It could be mobile phones, emails, watching too many movies, or visitors. Focus on one thing at a time. Always ask yourself, what is more important at this moment, the distraction or achieving your goals?

Having a broader view of time will energize you to go after your goals in life, whether it's a new career, starting a business, starting an NGO, starting a family, becoming an expert in your chosen field, or travelling the world. The success of it all is dependent on a realistic understanding of the time it will take you to reach your goals.

Even if you are not totally happy with where you are now or what you have achieved so far, the best is still ahead of you. So wherever you are in life now, chances are you've still got time to start afresh. It's better late than never.

EVERYONE HAS AN EXCUSE

You would be wrong to think you are the only one who has an excuse as to why you can't be great. Everyone has one excuse or the other. The difference between great people and mediocre people is that great achievers don't dwell too long on excuses.

If you take time out to research great leaders, influencers and people who inspire you, it's not that they never had any reason not to succeed, it is the fact that they ignored all negative vibes around them telling them they couldn't. They know all too well that excuses are for losers.

I've talked to a number of people I know, who give me reasons why they don't think they can succeed. I hear those reasons, and I laugh. So many of those reasons are familiar grounds I find myself on every now and again but the truth is, I don't dwell there for too long. You hear things like, 'I can't find time', 'I'm too old', 'I'm not beautiful enough', 'I'm not intelligent enough', 'I don't have the capital to start a business', 'I've got kids', 'My spouse wouldn't let me'... and so on.

By the way, the first thing you need to start a business or any venture for that matter, is not capital. That is the last thing you will need. What you need is your dream and a written down

plan on action steps to take. We are a blessed generation with the advent of social media technology. Why not put your talent, gifts, abilities, and skills out there, and see how people will come swooning and flocking around you. You have to sell yourself; it's your duty.

If you are not bedridden, then you should get up and show up. Quit making excuses. Opportunity will not come knocking on your door, you have to go out there and find it.

STEPS TO TAKE:

1. How do you spend your time? Time is more important than money because you can get lost money back, but you can never recover lost time. Do you spend your time idling away? What are the things you spend your time on, on a daily basis? Are they adding value to your life? List the things that take up your time. Is there anything on your list that you know is taking up your time without adding value to you? Why not work on yourself to eliminate those things that don't add any value to you?

2. Tips on how to manage your time efficiently:

- a) Have a to-do list. Have a list for 'to be done now' and another for later. The shorter your list is, the better you will feel working with it. Example: write down your short-term, long-term and medium-term plans.
- b) Create time for the most important things. How come we always find time to do something if we are forced to or we are to meet a deadline? There is always time for anything that is important to you. Make out time for it.
- c) Avoid distractions. Time = Determination
- d) Break things down into manageable chunks: Start with the simple things first. When you see you are making progress, it will give you the zeal to work on more difficult tasks. When I decided to write this book, my

fear was, 'How am I going to write approximately 35,000 words while working full time?' I started by breaking it down into chapters and outlining what topic each chapter would be about. Starting first, with the chapter I love to talk about the most to my students, which is chapter 8.

- e) Delegation is a lifesaver. Are there tasks you know you are not good at doing, or you find yourself wasting too much time on because you hate to do them anyway? Why not delegate or outsource? Give it to someone who enjoys doing it because it's their forte; someone who is a professional in it. You can't do everything yourself.

3. Make out time to do the things that inspire you and motivate you to action. These are the top priorities that will make life fulfilling for you.

CHAPTER 8

SET GOALS FOR YOUR LIFE AND MAKE THEM HAPPEN

‘The best way to please yourself is to know you’ve done the best for yourself that you can do.’

— Ben Carson, author, neurosurgeon turned politician.

Excellence can only come from commitment. Set clear goals for what you want out of life. What is it you want to excel at? Set goals and put your plans to work. When you start working towards your goals, you are sure to find helpers that will make it happen. All you need is your commitment to it.

The good thing about setting goals is that it is not a fixed goal post. You are allowed to move the post as many times as you want. The most important factor is your commitment towards said goal. The question is, how committed are you?

Goals are continuous as long as we live. There is always a goal to achieve in different areas of our lives. We may have to dig a little deeper to find out ways we can achieve these goals more efficiently. Start with one goal first, then start working on your plans for the others.

8 THINGS I LEARNED FROM LINDA IKEJI

As one of Africa’s topmost bloggers, and the highest earning blogger in Nigeria, Linda Ikeji has done well for herself. She started her blogging career in 2006 when many of us didn’t know what blogging was all about. It wasn’t particularly a lucrative venture then, but she had hopes and expectations of what the future would be for her if she kept doing what she was doing. She created an opportunity for herself. She didn’t wait for it to come knocking on her door.

Miss Ikeji was consistent with her craft. According to BBC Africa, her website is one of the most popular entertainment sites in Nigeria, with a diverse readership. As of 2014, she was the most searched person according to Google Nigeria.

Although she achieved her dreams, success didn't come immediately. She had ventured into various businesses before deciding that blogging was her passion. She was once a model; she ran a modelling agency and events company called Black Dove Communications.

Linda has been a driving force for young girls in Nigeria for the past few years. She is a philanthropist championing a good cause for young female adults to become 'self-made' and not wait for handouts from people, especially older men whose intent is to exploit young girls with the promise of material gifts or money.

She always stands out for me as a woman of worth and courage. Not only is she a role model to young girls who want to succeed, but also to men who admire her strength and tenacity in a country where the voice of the woman is scarcely heard. Linda Ikeji is a force to be reckoned with, and according to her, this is just scratching the surface.

She recently launched her media company, Linda Ikeji Television. This lady is going places very few women have ventured into in Nigeria. She is worth emulating when it comes to her business acumen.

In her motivational video titled, 'They Will Come', Linda Ikeji spoke about how she started her journey from being a model, contested at a beauty pageant in 2003, and failed. She founded a modelling and event company, but didn't make any money out of it. She started a marketing and public relations company and failed. Started a magazine company and failed. She also failed at organising a TV modelling show and an annual fashion show.

After thirteen years of trying and failing, she was still broke. She was depressed at some point and often times cried her eyes out. No one was willing to give her a chance or look at her numerous business proposals. She had doors slammed in her face in her bid to make something for herself.

Linda Ikeji ventured into blogging in 2006 at a time when blogging wasn't popular in Nigeria mainly due to poor internet connectivity. She blogged consistently for five years, without any earnings. Her breakthrough finally came in 2011, and she has been making a difference since then. The good news is, in spite of all these challenges, she never gave up. She was determined to fight for her dreams and work harder until she found her breakthrough.

In her heartfelt message, she spoke about having a dream, giving one's self the life of their dreams, and not letting anyone tell you that you can't. Challenge yourself, be your biggest critic and be the best you can be. Everyone can't be Linda Ikeji, but we can certainly learn a thing or two from her resilience and her tenacity in not giving up. Find out what you are good at, that makes others go 'wow' and say, 'I didn't think you could do that,' but to you it is fun and simple, and then improve on it until it looks perfect to you. Then you sell it.

Linda emphasized that you shouldn't wait for someone to come save you, but rather save yourself. Likewise, don't wait for people to applaud you for you to keep going; go out there and fight for what you want. It is your dream, your journey and it is up to you to make it happen. Everyone has got some goals they intend to accomplish. The banks rejected her, but that didn't kill her dreams. She kept on going with her faith in God.

Her message to all dreamers out there is that whatever it is you want to accomplish, 'just start.' Don't worry about people who don't believe in your dreams. Don't be discouraged by people

who refuse to help you on your journey. Don't get mad when people shut the door in your face, bearing in mind that when you work on yourself they will come.

Linda concluded by saying, believe in God and yourself. Go out there and fight with your hands, might, strength, and time. All you need to do is keep pushing and believing in yourself. Do not put your trust in humans, because they will always fail you. Fight with everything possible until your dreams come true.

LESSONS LINDA IKEJI LEARNT

- 1.No will is stronger than the determination of a woman.
- 2.If she has will and determination, and works hard, she can get things herself.
- 3.People underestimate their power.
- 4.To use your mind, start young, dream big and never doubt yourself.
- 5.Be positive, work hard, stay focused, and be patient and persistent.
- 6.Be brave. Being brave starts in your heart.
- 7.Living your dreams gives you financial freedom.
- 8.Be determined to change lives.

These are my personal observations, and what I learned from her:

- 1.Your background is not the problem. I've heard several people who come for personal development coaching say to me, 'I'm from a poor background, that's why I find it difficult to succeed.' I tell them it's a lie. Looking back in history, there are very few rich people who were born into wealth. Most of them started from scratch. What they had were their goals and personal beliefs. What people said didn't distract them. I'm

sure some people would have called them crazy when they started, but they kept on going.

Yes, it is true that some people get help from parents or relatives. Some are lucky enough to get inheritance money, but that is not an assurance that they will succeed. Have you not heard of children who squander the money left for them by their parents?

Let's use Linda as an example. We know that she was born into a family with a humble background. Therefore by Nigerian standards she wasn't born into riches or with a silver spoon as we say. She became rich by her personal determination to succeed. She is self-made.

2.Be a big dreamer. A lot of us wade through life without any dream of how we want to live our lives. Youngsters these days say they don't have anything to aspire to. Having a dream starts from our childhood. Cultivating that dream until it becomes our reality is where work needs to be done.

Dreaming is free and without limitations. The limitations are usually self-imposed as a result of your mind. Having limiting beliefs in what you can achieve hinders your success. When you doubt yourself that is the beginning of fear. Fear has killed more dreams before they even start than failure ever will. Linda was a big dreamer who knew what she wanted out of life, and wasn't afraid of fighting for it. She published a magazine in the early stages of her career, which became too expensive to run according to her, so she ditched it. She worked odd jobs here and there to make ends meet, but still kept her eyes on the prize, which is fulfilling her dreams.

Having limiting beliefs is our greatest obstacle to a successful life, good health, and even loving relationships. If you can work on taming your mind, you become unstoppable. When you believe your own thoughts that you can't be great, the

universe dances to your tune. You are responsible for whatever outcome you get out of your thoughts.

3.Be you. Some people are called late bloomers in life. There is a reason for that. Not everyone identifies with what talents they've got when they are younger. Some people discover their talent much later in life.

Everyone has got his or her time to shine. My season may be different from yours. What matters most is that you are doing what you are called to do. We cannot all become bloggers in the same genre as Linda Ikeji, simply because she made a success out of it. I know some people who jumped on the bandwagon of blogging, not because they were passionate about it as she was, but because they wanted to be famous and rich like her. However, before you know it, they all faded away. Yet, she still stands.

Trying to imitate, by doing exactly what someone else is doing, is wasting time and resources. If you must do the same thing, why not improve on what is already done? Why not put your own twists and tweaks to make it your original? It takes nothing to blend in with the crowd, but by standing out, you become the go to expert. No one is saying you have to do what hasn't been done before; you can, if you want to. You can become an inventor and patent your inventions, or improve on what is already out there. Do not be afraid to be yourself. Be authentic and unique. As long as you are adding value, you'll be fine.

4.Persistence pays. As with anything in life, you need perseverance and persistence to excel. Nothing good comes easy, you must put in the work needed. Even lottery winners have to be consistent with playing for a long time before eventually making a win— if they are lucky.

Most often than not, on your way to success, you drive alone. Not everyone is willing to come with you, including family

and friends. You might start out all right with some people around you, but some of them will drop off somewhere along the line by giving up on their dreams.

I can list so many excuses people give on why they gave up, ranging from lack of support needed, to complete loss of focus. The core of it all is that they lack persistence. You being persistent is saying, I will get to the top, no matter what. It is you focusing all your energy, time, and resources on achieving your dreams. You say to yourself, 'I will make it, irrespective of any obstacles I find along the way.'

Linda was determined to make it work. She did everything possible to be out there, for people to recognize her craft. She had several setbacks, but instead used each as a comeback. She never gave up. I love the story she told of how she went to the banks for a loan to move her business to the next level, but was rejected several times. The good news is that, the banks are the ones that come to her now, offering her not just loans, but partnership and collaboration. She has built a brand name for herself, and they want to be a part of it. That is what persistence does. It takes you from the place of obscurity, to a place of fame. If you keep at it, they will come looking for you. It doesn't matter where you are.

5. Take risks. I cannot emphasise this strongly enough. Nothing good comes easy. That job will not meet you in your house; you have to look for it. Don't wait for an opportunity to come knocking on your door, go search for it. People are afraid of the 'unknown.' I say be afraid of remaining in the same place year in, year out. That is the worst place to be in. What will connect you from where you are now to where you should be is the risk you take today. Warren Buffett said, 'Risk comes from not knowing what you are doing.'

As human beings, we are created to evolve; that is our nature. Evolving means putting yourself out there for a change,

planning your next move, taking the next step. All these come with risks, but we have to keep things moving anyway.

If you speak to any successful business owner, you will be amazed at the risks they are taking every day. All we see is the glitz and glamour when they eventually succeed. The risk involved in getting the business to be a household brand name, is what you don't know. And if you don't have the opportunity to ask, you may never know. That is why having a mentor is very important. It is you trying to do things differently. You avoid the past mistakes of your mentor, by learning from their experiences. There will still be some risk obviously, but you would have averted the greater risks.

Linda wasn't afraid to take risks. She ventured into various businesses, before she found 'the one' that she was passionate about.

6. Build confidence. To live your dreams, you need confidence. You ask why? Well, I'll start by saying, for you to achieve anything in life, you need to go in headfirst yourself. You don't need anyone's validation to achieve your dream. You take bold steps towards your future by following your instincts, and not worrying about failures. You learn as you go along. Practice doesn't necessarily make perfect, but it makes your imperfection look perfect.

Linda has been pushing forward with confidence to live her dreams. She comes up with surprising innovations as she goes along. Due to the success of her blog, she has moved ahead to launch a television studio and her social networking platform. She is not afraid to take giant strides as it pertains to her business. Over time, she has gained confidence that comes with the experience of running a blog. This enables her to do other things by stepping out of her comfort zone to be better than her yesterday.

You don't need to know it all before you start. The first step is planning, and then gaining valuable experience as you go along. Be willing to let your imperfection show; in doing so you are able to develop confidence. Note that the more you do, the more you can do.

7. Honesty is key. In all of the obstacles Linda went through to get to where she is now, she stated that she faced temptation, but never gave in. She was determined to make it on her own through the right channels. She wasn't one to cut corners or look for the quickest way to make money. So many of us want to achieve success, but don't want to do it the right way. This only leads to more problems. To achieve any kind of success that is sustainable requires your honesty. It is the best way to build your empire for generations to come. If people don't trust you, they won't trust what you offer.

Linda has emphasised many times how in the early stages of her starting out, she made up her mind she wasn't going to defile herself to get to the top. She was going to keep her integrity intact. She willed herself not to rely on the help of any man, but on God. Linda ignored the offers of people who only wanted to help her in exchange for something. She ignored those with an ulterior motive behind their willingness to support her dreams.

To live a life of honesty requires a strong will and discipline. If you decide in your mind that you are setting a standard for yourself, people will always respect your boundaries. No one will disrespect your values unless you let them. Lift your standards higher and see how people will adjust to it. They might call you names like snobbish, mean, or unfriendly, but it doesn't matter. What matters is your integrity and that you are true to your values.

8. Give back. There is an old saying that goes, 'All fingers are not equal.' I personally agree with that. We are all born with different abilities, gifts and talents. Our life here on earth is not

to live for self-alone; living for others is a way of life as well, if you chose to. Nothing in nature is created for itself; it is created to satisfy the needs around it.

We live in a world of interdependence. In creating a life of your dreams, you will be helped by different people from all corners of the world. You will need support, you might need to work as a team, and you will work in partnership with other like-minded dreamers. The truth is, you cannot do it on your own. You have to be a giver and be open to receiving.

Every interaction we have as humans is an opportunity to touch lives, to give and receive. Gifts can come in any form or shape. Gifts can be love, support, friendship, your honest opinion, being generous, your thoughts about issues, your prayers, advice and action, or financial support. Be on the lookout for an opportunity to contribute positively to someone else's life anyway you can, and see how it will all come back to you manifold.

Linda saw her interaction with her fans as a gift. She knew she could learn and grow from her critics. She decided it was time to help her fans grow too. She started a pet project called, 'I'd Rather Be Self-Made.' The purpose of this was to give back to humanity by helping budding young female entrepreneurs who were serious about their dreams but lacked the funds to start.

She connected like-minded young females together who had potential to benefit one another. She offered to put them in touch with people who could help. She organises coaching sessions for young teenagers and young female adults on choosing to be self-made.

Get into the habit of giving back to humanity. Say positive things about other people. If you're happy with someone's work, recommend them. Help others grow. Give sincere compliments to people you meet. Acknowledge people's presence, compliment their looks or dressing. Tell them how

good they look. Give gifts to people around you, no matter how small. Remember it's the thought that matters most. Make contributions to the lives of others via your words, interactions and actions. Watch your life blossom as a result, and see yourself living a more fulfilling and contented life.

NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED

People will always complain about the society and how it's unfair in one way or the other. Don't let that be you. You have gifts and talents; use them. You hear people say that the odds are against them and they can't make it. Think about Linda Ikeji and the obstacles she faced in her own journey to success, and how she turned out successful against all odds.

Let your goals be the most important mission you pursue. Avoid distractions from negative critics who tell you it can't be done. Don't remain cramped in your little world. Spread out. Even if you have a job currently, learn a trade or a skill.

The courage to say YES to your dreams will only come from inside of you. The moment you accept the calling, everything around you works in your favour. Nature comes in tune with your spirit person and gently nudges you towards achieving that dream of yours. Every move you make towards that dream is accompanied by speed, not by your own making, but by supernatural powers. As you give to the world, the world will give back to you.

HOW COMFORTABLE IS YOUR COMFORT ZONE?

Comfort zones are for people who want to remain in their mediocrity. I get it, it's your familiar place and you are so scared to let go of it. Those who made history didn't do that sitting in their comfort zone. They got to work. You lie to yourself about how you are contented with a stable job that pays the bills, you try to play it safe and play small by settling

for less. How can you play small and win big? To be a big winner, you must be a big player. You ignore conformity and people pleasing and just do 'you.' We tend to let the giant in us sleep for too long. You know deep within you that you can achieve more than you are doing at the moment, so why the wait? Why not take the risk now and enjoy the rewards? There is never a perfect time. You don't want to end up living a life of regrets, do you?

In order to avoid the competition that playing bigger can create, a lot of people get stuck in their comfort zone doing repetitive tasks day in day out. They are ready to launch out, but the fear of the unknown keeps them down. If we let that fear control us, we may never leave that place. You can't follow your dreams from a place of safety. To follow means moving, taking a step. It is not being stagnant.

I was working for a good company that paid me top wages. When I first got the job, I was happy. Little did I know that it was a temporary happiness! After a few years, I didn't feel fulfilled anymore. I had gotten so used to doing repetitive tasks that the job became boring despite the good pay. I wanted out immediately.

Another reason my job became boring to me was because it wasn't in line with my purpose. It was just a job. I fought with my mind for a long time thinking, *how am I going to pay my bills if I leave?* One day, after 4 years, I finally took the plunge and resigned — after putting some money aside to start my business by saving for a year. The day I resigned, I felt truly free and excited. All the fear I had all those years, holding on to the job, disappeared.

I may not be earning as much as I was back then, but the fact that I'm doing what I love gives me tremendous joy. I am living in joy and purpose. I am impacting my world, one person at a time. I want to live life knowing that I did what I was destined to do.

Making a decision to change your current circumstances is the best move for you. What you're doing is getting rid of your tired stories and excuses, and taking action towards the right direction for you. If you are used to doing things a certain way, why not try doing them differently and see if you will not get better results? The answer to your future lies outside your comfort zone.

STEPS TO TAKE:

1. What goals have you set for the year? Write down what your goals are in life. You can have as many goals as you want, only make sure they are realistic goals and you can track their progress. What are the things you want to achieve before a certain age, or time? How many years do you think it will take you to achieve them? Write down every thought that comes to your mind.

2. Think of where you are now, and where you want to get to in life. How do you intend to reach there? Write down your step-by-step approach to achieving the goals you've written down.

3. Write your ideas down and create a plan of action. Example: how do you go about registering a business name? Do your research using the internet, newspapers, informative blogs, and so on. Now write down a timeline regarding when you want to execute your plans. Give yourself a reasonable timeline. For example, in writing this book, I gave myself a year to start, and publish it. I'm pretty much within the time frame.

4. What goal makes you excited just thinking about it, and gives you a wave of energy affirming that you can do it? Write down 5 goals you want to achieve and why you want to achieve them.

5. What is your most important goal in life at this moment? Take a minute to think about it. Some might say getting married, getting a doctorate degree, writing a book, travelling the world, living by the seaside, building/buying your own

house/apartment. What can you do now to start? If you want to build or buy a house, you will need to start saving some money and cutting costs to achieve that. Give yourself a reasonable timeline i.e. how long will it take to save the money? Will you need to borrow? How much will you need?

6. Are you willing to vacate your position in your comfort zone? Challenges will never stop arising. It's your willingness to keep pushing forward in spite of every new challenge that rears its head, and not let it weigh you down, that will put you among the successful.

CHAPTER 9

AIM FOR SUCCESS – NO MATTER WHAT

‘The secret to success is to do the common things uncommonly well.’ — John D Rockefeller, business magnate, philanthropist and America’s first billionaire.

A successful life is one of peace, love and contentment. There is room for growth as long as we are willing to learn daily. In learning, there is no limit. The journey of success starts with taking the first step. If you say, ‘Oh, I’m waiting for the perfect time, the perfect place, the perfect conditions...’ it may never come.

Success starts with our childhood dreams and what we wanted to become in adulthood. As children, we often speak with a sense of confidence and assurance. Achieving success boils down to our individual commitment. You can never succeed at doing nothing, because nothing comes from nothing. You do something to get anything.

What area of life do you desire to be successful in? Know that ‘Ambition is the first step to success.’ You can’t be ambitious without a dream to start with, and you need to take an ‘action step’ to bring that dream to fruition.

The reason why top achievers are successful is because they do things differently. They are willing to do the things other people don’t think of doing, and won’t do. Successful people go the extra mile, they think deeper, and they don’t rest until they find a solution to a problem.

You aim for success by looking around you. Are there problems around you that need solutions? Why not think outside the box to proffer solutions? People will rush to you if you have the solution to their problems. That is how you

become successful. Where you live, is there a need for the skills you have? If there is a shortage of schoolteachers in your local school, can you start an agency to recruit qualified teachers and supply to the school? This is how your success journey starts; you build it up gradually.

Like I wrote earlier, that you are an offspring of a poor or average parent doesn't mean you can't be better off. You don't have to remain in that same state. You have the power within you to break that yoke of mediocrity and poverty in your lineage. You can be the rule breaker by doing better to become better. You just give your best to whatever area you are talented in, and see for yourself how things will transform beyond your wildest imaginations.

I agree with Ben Carson, 'It is not where we are coming from but where we are going that counts!'

WHAT SUCCESS MEANS TO ME

Success means that when I take my final breath, I know that my time here on earth was well spent. I want to die knowing that what I was called to do, I did. I want to be remembered for all the good things I've done for humanity. Success at this moment is getting this book published and making sure it reaches you wherever you are. Success is measured in stages. You don't have to achieve the biggest goals; start with the small goals first.

Making my family proud of who I am and what I do as a professional person is another definition of success to me. I might not be able to give them everything they need, but the fact that I am doing something good by making people's lives better thanks to nature of the work I do, I know will always put smiles on their faces. This to me is an achievement of a lifetime that no amount of money can replace.

Success is not about having a position of grandeur with fancy titles, or having a prestigious job with notable positions. You

can't describe success by how many houses a person owns or the number of cars parked in their garage, or how often they go on vacations, without a visible impact on humanity.

Being successful is first and foremost assessed by how many lives you have touched. Have you helped those around you yet? What have you done so far to assist in solving the problems closer to you? Did you put a smile on someone's face today? Have you contributed to a cause like eliminating hunger? If you have invested your skills, time, resources in any of these ways, then you are successful. No one should measure how successful you are by the things you own or do not own. You might not see it now, thinking it's insignificant or that you are not operating on a big scale yet, but you are definitely on the right track to success. It is only a matter of time, and how consistent you are.

If what you do is an inspiration to others and motivates those around you to dream bigger, learn better, and become better people in society, then you are on the right path. You cannot say you are successful without an impact on those around you.

Rick Warren said, 'I don't know all the keys to success, but one key to failure is to try to please everyone.'

BE PRODUCTIVE AND FLEXIBLE

Strive for excellence in every area of life. Your life is a journey of discovery and constant change as a result of learning and growth. Success is putting your dream into action by working for it. You start your life thinking about what you will become, but things don't always go according to plan, things change. You adapt to these life changes by being flexible.

Your consistency and adaptation to each situation matter a lot. You can either be the best version of yourself, your work, your craft, your business, or be nothing at all. You strive for excellence to the best of your ability, armed with the

knowledge that there is no perfection anywhere. Getting things done is better than making sure things are perfect. Remember that consistency pays.

Do the best you can do when given the opportunity, without compromising on standards. Believe in your abilities to make a difference with what you do. That is your contribution to a better world. Making a difference one person at a time is greater productivity to mankind. Avoid distractions that will stand as an impediment to your dreams.

Mistakes will happen, but you have to be ready to make corrections. Whatever you are working on, I encourage you to keep at it. It is the steadiness that counts. Getting better at anything depends on your ability to keep a productive schedule. Find a time every day where you can dedicate some time to building your dream. If your dream is to lose weight, find a time to go to the gym. Be consistent with it; that is the only way you will see results. Don't underestimate the details. Live life intentionally, giving each day your best.

Not trying anything at all is more dangerous than making a mistake while trying. A dignified life comes from working diligently. Working on things you are passionate about creates continuous and ongoing improvement in every area of your life. Don't let a mistake be the excuse that will stop you from reaching your goals and living your dreams. Make a decision today not to remain in the same place as you were last year. Growth is the only guarantee that you will have a better tomorrow.

YOUR SUCCESS DEPENDS ON HOW DETERMINED YOU ARE

This quote resonates with me: 'Your determination today will lead to success tomorrow.' I have never heard anyone who says they are successful without a determination to succeed from the beginning. It's your desire for success not your

destination that matters. You can prosper anywhere. Your love for success should be greater than your fear of failing.

Determination is your refusal to stay down when you get knocked down. It's easy to find an excuse to stay down as a lot of people probably do. However, if you've got someplace you are headed, which is towards your dream in this case, you will refuse to remain down. You will try as many times as you can until you get to your intended place. That is the spirit of determination. Positive growth is not for weaklings.

My little brother Emmanuel has always been very determined, even as a young man. It is a quality I have always admired about him. Growing up, he was the one that never performed well in school amongst us. He repeated classes so many times I lost count. We thought he was the dumbest in the house. I remember vividly when he was asked to repeat Primary Three (Year 3) for the third time in a row, because he was very bad at reading and writing. Everyone, including his teachers and head teacher, assumed he had learning difficulties and advised my parents to look for a special school for him. My mum declined.

Mum insisted that her child was fine. She felt that it was taking my brother a longer time to adjust to the Nigerian schooling system, because he started his primary education in England, and the mode of teaching and curriculum there were completely different from what was obtainable in Nigeria. Nobody could convince my mum otherwise, even when she was reminded that he had been back in Nigeria for nearly three years. She still insisted that he was adjusting slowly.

By the time he got to Primary Five (Year 5), he was wiser and was ashamed that he was older than other students in his class. He tearfully pleaded with my mum saying he wanted to skip the next class and go straight to secondary school. My dad refused, but my mum, who always insisted that her son was still adjusting, to the change in the environment after all these

years, consented that he could go to secondary school, if he passed his common entrance examinations. He passed.

On getting into secondary school, my brother who was only a year behind his actual age mates, began to perform better. He attended a boarding school known for its high academic standards. From his first year, his grades began to improve. At the end of each academic year, during the long vacation, my mum would enrol him for extra classes with a qualified private tutor. This enabled him to learn ahead of his mates before schools resumed for the new academic session.

With time and dedication, my brother started getting to the top of his class. He surprised every one of us by opting for science subjects as his core subjects. I personally asked him if he was sure of the choice he was making, and he replied in the affirmative. By the time he got to SS2 (Year 11), he insisted he was ready to write GCE (GCSE) one year ahead of his classmates.

My mum obliged him and paid for him to take the examination. His results came out fantastic but for one subject, which meant he had to wait for another year and take the examinations again, this time with his classmates.

He gained admission into university to study environmental sciences and graduated with good grades. My brother broke the news to us that he was going to further his education, and it came as a shock when he informed us that he had already secured admission to study for his Master's Degree (MSc), in Environmental Sciences in the UK. Before we knew it, he had processed his visa and set a date for his travel. On reaching the UK, he became one of the best students in his class and graduated with honours. This was the same person who had bad grades in primary school.

I think what marvels us is his sheer determination to succeed against all odds. He was determined to make his family proud

and prove the naysayers wrong. After completing his master's degree, my brother came back home to Nigeria to secure a scholarship for his doctorate program because he had promised my mum that he was going to reach the pinnacle as far as education was concerned. On reaching Nigeria, it became a battle to secure a scholarship. He wrote the qualifying examinations three consecutive times with no luck. He was not even shortlisted for the next stage.

As a family, we were inspired by his tenacity and personal resolve to not give up. For the fourth year in a row, my brother applied for the scholarship, and this time around was shortlisted for the next stage which was another elimination stage. You either exceeded the cut off mark or you were disqualified.

I remember chatting him up several times late in the night when I noticed he was online. He would say to me, 'I'm doing some research that's why I'm online.' He continued to push the boundaries and studied even harder. He passed the second stage and was called for the interview stage. After the interview stage, it was a game of waiting, because you weren't told immediately if you passed or not.

On that fateful day in April 2017, I received a text from my brother, and it read 'Sister, I've been selected for a four-year scholarship for my Ph.D. program in Canada.' I was over the moon, tears of joy running down my face. I thought about where he was coming from and all he went through to get to where he wants to be. He was, and still is, an inspiration to me. I rang him up and congratulated him, knowing how hard he had worked to achieve this feat.

His determination from all those years before has led him here. At the time of going to print, he was already in Canada starting a new phase in his journey towards his dreams.

There is hope for everyone, if only we believe. With determination and perseverance, you can reach your desired goals in life. You can do it; you can achieve your dream as long as you don't give up. If you have a vision of how successful you can become, you won't be afraid to try. However, you cannot become successful without constant learning, personal improvement and determination. Those are the positive habits that will push you to go the extra mile.

‘Most of the time it's not lack of experience that is holding us back, but rather a lack of determination to do what we need to do to be successful.’ — Jen Sincero

FAILURE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO START AGAIN

Failure is inevitable in life. It is the ability to keep it moving even when we hit rock bottom that matters. Think differently at every stumbling point. Think about what you can do differently, what you can improve on.

The reason why research and development is something great companies invest a lot in is not farfetched. They want to be ahead of the competition at all times. For example, Apple spends large amounts of money on researching new software, and developing innovative ways to be ahead of Samsung.

Failure in most cases gives birth to wisdom. When we fail, we find time to think hard about why we failed. You go over the events in your head several times, until you find the root cause. That is when you should launch a comeback. You make a grand entrance into the competition because you have learned from your failure. You have modified your product and need to re-launch. That is why failure is necessary. To make us better at what we do.

Show me a great man who hasn't failed before. Great achievers are risk takers who have failed several times before, but never gave up. If you have a passion to succeed, it doesn't

matter how many times you have failed, you find the courage within you to try again. When you hit a rock, keep it moving.

DO IT ANYWAY

I always say, yes I can do it. Then go learn how to do it, if I don't know it already. Nothing comes out exactly how we want it to be; the key here is to be able to adapt to it and make the change when necessary.

Whenever I'm gripped with fear of the unknown when starting out on a project, I calmly say to myself, 'What's the worst that can happen?' As long as it doesn't kill me, then I'll be fine. I go head on and just do it. If you have a passion for your dreams, you don't need to consult anyone to start. You don't need someone's validation. Just do it.

Your pain can produce your purpose if you pay attention to it. People sometimes go through painful moments to discover what their true purpose is. These defining moments can bring out the best in you. You can use the experience as a way to help others who are going through what you've been through.

What is that particular thing that you have postponed indefinitely in your life? Is it going back to school after a long time at home? Starting your business? Starting a family? Travelling to places you've never been? Becoming a better person? Becoming more efficient? Being friendlier to your neighbour? Everyone has got what it takes to begin; the question is when will you ever be ready enough? There is no better time than 'NOW'. Establish what your goal is, clear your doubts, and just do it.

STEPS TO TAKE:

1. Write down what comes to your mind or the first things you think of where failure is mentioned. Is your list full of positive or negative failures? Positive failure means that you learnt

something from it, and negative failure means that you didn't do anything about it for fear of failing again.

2. In every failure, you learn a thing or two about how to succeed. What have you failed in, and what did you learn from it? Write a list of your failures. It could be dropping out of school, getting expelled, failing to plan, or succumbing to distraction. Write down five things you learned from your failure.

3. Think of areas in your life where you would like to improve. What areas do you need to work on right now in order to become successful? What is stopping you from succeeding right now? Write down what action you need to take right now to get you moving.

4. Act the part. If you really want success, begin to act successful. Do away with limiting thoughts. If you really want it, you will get it.

CHAPTER 10

HAVING A DREAM IS JUST YOUR FIRST STEP

'You're never too old to set another goal or dream a new dream.'

— C.S Lewis, poet, novelist, educator and Christian theologian.

You must have heard countless times about dreaming big. It is said that if your dream doesn't scare you, then it's not big enough. Taking charge of your life requires you to work smart and work hard on your dreams. Not on your qualifications, but on your dreams. You are responsible for creating your reality. Set achievable goals on how to reach your dreams.

Your focus starts with what your first step should be. Ask yourself what dreams you have. If you don't have a dream, you haven't started living yet. Having a dream is knowing that there might be limitations on your journey, but you are confident in your strengths.

KEEP YOUR DREAM ALIVE

Not everyone will support your dream, but go for it anyway. Your dream is worth something. When you tell people your dream, they might see trash or think your dream means nothing. They may laugh at you, overlook you and not believe in you, but you know it's there, they just haven't seen it yet. If only they look beyond your present circumstances. However, you know this is your moment, you know what you've got inside of you. You know you will live your dream and be successful. You can see it clearly like a rainbow in the sky.

You know you're working towards your dream when every feeling of fear is eliminated. Think about the freedom and peace of mind you will get from knowing you can try anything out. At every hurdle you come across, you are able to

encourage yourself by focusing on the end result. You treat your dream with care and the attention it deserves. Look at it like a special task given to you to accomplish, because you are the best person for the job, which means no other person can do it better than you.

Taking small steps towards your dream creates big joys within you. Little steps in the right direction give you a level of confidence to push further. You are responsible for keeping your dream alive. You don't need the verdict of a partner, sibling, friend or relative to make your dream a reality. It is dependent only on you.

When I'm faced with difficulties concerning my next step in executing my dream, I say to myself; others who are doing it don't have two heads, so why can't I? I push forward with a positive thought in mind. That boosts my confidence, that I can do it, no matter what. I concentrate on creating a path that will bring my dream to life.

Your dream is your seed and it's worth fighting for. You plant and nurture it and then wait for the harvest. You need patience and perseverance while you wait. You can also start by experimenting with your dreams while you still have your job to pay the bills. Your ability to not let your dream die shows how passionately you want it. Whoever says you can't dream big and start small? Take baby steps, but keep it moving.

'Believe that you are enough to make your dreams come true.'
— Linda Ikeji.

Whenever you feel down, remind yourself why you want to achieve your dream, and the rewards that await you when you live your dream. You will be motivated by a renewed drive to not give up.

SELF-CONFIDENCE IS THE PATH TO YOUR DREAMS

In your daily life, move forward with confidence knowing everything will be OK. Don't wait for validation from anyone, or lower your standards just because someone else feels insecure around you. It's their problem, not yours. In order to determine the worthiness of your dream, look at the energy you get when doing it. Do you feel energized and time just passes by in a blink? Then you are doing what your heart wants.

Fear is a roadblock, while your dream is the road. A roadblock is temporary and can be shifted along the road or removed completely when there is no need for it anymore, but the road itself is a permanent fixture. It can't be moved or removed. You have the authority to replace the roadblock called fear with the road sign called 'confidence.' You can choose to point your road sign forward towards the right direction: the direction of your goals.

Commit to your dreams. It builds up your confidence knowing that you are making progress no matter how slow. Take deliberate action each day by saying yes. You might not get all the answers at the beginning, but with time and experience, you become a pro. All you need to start out is your crown of confidence and a total commitment on your part.

I get my confidence knowing that whatever happens is for a purpose which will eventually turn around for my good. I try not to entertain any self-doubts that will distract me from making my dreams a reality. I stand strong knowing God is backing me up along my journey. Why then should I be intimidated by what others have achieved? It isn't a competition, there will always be a set time and season for everyone.

Be confident and always ask why. Find answers to every question in your mind. It is in gaining more knowledge, that you build your confidence. Be inquisitive about why things are the way they are. Remember things don't just appear out of

nowhere, someone must have put them there. Your question should be ‘why’ was it put there, ‘where’ it came from, ‘what’ the reason behind it is, ‘when’ it was put there, ‘how’ it got there, and ‘who’ said it should be in that spot. Always ask questions.

To be bold is powerful. You have the courage to start working on your dreams. And when you are committed to your dreams, every drawback you have fades away. Where you were once hesitant, you begin to take giant strides. You call the shots on your life. That is what boldness does. Like attracts like, if you want to be a great achiever you will need to do things that will attract one. Until you take that bold step to move, providence doesn’t move on your behalf.

DREAM BIG, DREAM EVEN BIGGER

You have a gift to share with the world. You may not know it yet, but you need to search it out. Dreams usually don’t come to us fully formed. Your dreams are your inner passions that need attention. Find your voice through deep personal introspection and inspire others to find theirs.

Be open to possibilities that lie ahead of you and see beyond your present circumstances. The price you put on your dreams is what people will pay for. Your dream is as important as the value you put on it. If you are given a telescope that can see your future now, what will you see? What changes or adjustments will you make now, to counter what you see in your future using the telescope?

Dreaming bigger is using your gift of imagination to go where you’ve never been before. You are preparing yourself for a shift, it’s not just about opening your horizons. You turn your life around by continuously living your dream no matter where you are, and saying NO WAY to mediocrity. Everything is within your grasp if you just believe. Why settle for less when you can get the best?

Often times, we place limits on our abilities and on ourselves. We become weak due to our limiting beliefs.

One example is to consider a flying passenger airplane. When it gets to 36,000 feet, it caps and doesn't fly higher than that. Under current regulations, a passenger plane is not permitted to fly above 36,000 feet, because that is the maximum cap put on it. One of the major reasons is the concern for health and safety. When a plane gets to that altitude, the air in the atmosphere is thinner and lacks oxygen. It becomes difficult to survive at that level without an oxygen mask. This means that the plane is restricted and can't fly above, even though it has the capabilities. When you have limiting beliefs, you are like a plane that can't fly above 36,000 feet. You impose restrictions in your mind, even though you are capable of reaching beyond your restrictions. The difference is, in your case, you have the power to lift this self-imposed restriction and see beyond your beliefs.

On the other hand, a rocket has no such restrictions. When a rocket takes off, a fire underneath it propels it. It shoots up into the atmosphere beyond the skies. Rockets always fly with their head pointed up higher and above an airplane. Whereas an airplane flies from city to city, a rocket flies into space. It defies gravity. You should be like a rocket and defy gravity. Let go of limiting thoughts and beliefs that make you doubt yourself and think you can't do it. Anything that your mind presents as an excuse, is a false belief. If you don't stop yourself, no one can stop you. What you think is an impediment, might just be a blessing in disguise. If you don't search for treasure, how will you find it?

Have you ever heard about how gold, platinum, and precious gemstones like diamonds are found? They have to be dug from the ground. You don't find them on shallow surfaces just lying around waiting. It takes time and effort put into it, so much hard work and toiling. To find precious stones, one has to drill

thousands of feet deep into the ground. That is why they are rare, precious, and very expensive. Your gift is rare and sought after, so why not reach beyond, using your gift of imagination to dream bigger dreams?

YOU'VE GOT THE POWER

Everyone is allowed to dream until their last breath. Dreaming is not only for the young. It's not over yet. You don't want to live many years down the line and say to yourself 'If I knew then what I know now, I would have pursued my dreams.' Now is the time to take action steps.

There is a giant inside every one of us. All you need to do to find your giant is to have full belief in yourself. You don't want to be a sleeping giant who doesn't know his/her worth. Wake up! Your worth is invaluable. Your worth is priceless. When you get paid a salary, what you get paid for is your time put in, not your worth. Keep in mind that you can get paid for your talents and gifts, but not your worth.

Procrastination is a thief of your future. Until you beat procrastination, you will never get anything done. There will never be a perfect time for you to start working towards your dreams; the best time is to start immediately. Tomorrow may be too late. Even if you fail or succeed, there is always something to learn from it.

Change every habit that is not getting you closer to your goals, procrastination being one of them. Be committed to a daily practice of writing down your achievements at the end of the day. For example, before going to bed at night, write down in your journal what you have done today to make your day productive. Did you work on your goals? Did you put a smile on someone's face? Did you solve a problem for someone or for yourself? You can write it down in the pages of this book, or get a special journal to document the progress of your goals.

Goals and plans don't have to be set in stone. You can make changes and adjust as frequently as you like, after all it's your dream we are talking about here.

COMMIT TO LIVING YOUR DREAMS

Embrace the truth of your future by treating your dream with urgency and a strong determination. Living the life of your dreams is living a life of abundance knowing your dream must happen no matter how long it takes. You experience continuous joy and satisfaction knowing you spend your days engaged in activities that are truly you.

All of your dreams are achievable. The answer to whether or not you can achieve your dreams lies in you. Remember you can choose the way you think. If you think you can't, then you won't. If you think you can, you will. Where there is a will, there is always a way.

Constant development is doing something meaningful to improve yourself by taking practical steps. It is one thing to write down what your dreams are. It is more important to follow through with your dream until it becomes your reality.

You ask, how can I take practical steps? Well first off, start by finding a need that aligns with your dreams. Let that need become the goal you intend to achieve. You don't just jump at every opportunity, your dreams should align with your purpose and what you are passionate about.

In writing this book, I saw a need. I realised that a lot of young people, especially in Nigeria, are not privileged to get counselling or coaching workshops regarding personal development. Some high schools and universities have got counsellors employed by the school authorities, but a vast majority of schools don't have one. Students go through school without a clear direction about where their life is going or what steps to take. Most times the closest to any form of motivation they get is via religious gatherings.

This book is my way of taking practical steps to bridge that gap. I may not be able to hold workshops in all schools in Africa to coach teens and young adults about their future plans, or to tell them personally that the future they so look forward to lies in the decisions they make today to take practical steps and turn their lives around. Yet, one thing I do know is that this book will go places I might not physically reach. It will serve as a practical guide to youngsters on what steps they need to take to turn their lives around using the exercises included at the end of each chapter.

SOMETIMES DREAMS COST MONEY

Some dreams don't come cheap and might cost you a fortune, while some require little or no capital at all. It all depends on what it is, really. I'm of the opinion that money cannot give you happiness, but it sure answers all things.

For you to transform your life, you need to invest in yourself, which costs money. Money is the currency you need to bring life to your dreams. You can work and save money towards your dream, or borrow to fund your dreams. Either way, you are investing in yourself which will bring you more rewards and the peace of mind that you deserve.

Speaking negatively about money will chase it away from you. Refrain from phrases like 'I'm broke' and 'I can never afford it'. If you want financial abundance then you need to call it upon yourself. You need to think of yourself as coming from a place of abundance, and not lack. It narrows down to believing that you can have your heart's desire, that it's yours. Then it becomes yours.

How successful do you intend to be? Find out what it will cost you to get to the level you want. Write down the exact cost of your dreams and then set out with determination and faith towards success.

STEPS TO TAKE:

1. Where do you dream about going, to pursue your passions? Have you started making a move towards it? If your dream is to go to university, have you started researching the courses and schools you want to go to? Have you started reading related books?

2. What are your biggest dreams? What you think about the most is what your dream is. You can start with that now. Begin by taking small steps. What can you do today to start? If your dream is to start a boutique, have you found out where you want to open your shop? Do you know where you will be getting your supplies at wholesale prices? How much do you need to rent a shop? How much will your first consignment cost? Will you need a salesperson, or do you intend to be there yourself to run it?

3. To fulfil your dream, you will need to focus on it. You know yourself better than anyone, so you know what your distractions are. What is distracting you right now? How can you avoid the distraction in your life right now, to pay attention to what is more important, which is your dream?

4. Write down all your desires, dreams, and how you want to create a life you love. Call it your 'dream of life' list. What will make you love your life so much, that you want to live forever? Would becoming a president of your country, make your life fantastic? Write it down clearly. My dream is to one-day drive a Ferrari. I've not given up on it yet, because I know it will happen. No thought is irrelevant. Every thought you conceive is valid. It is achievable.

5. Everything in life comes with its own problems. In your quest to achieve your dreams, problems will arise. How do you intend to combat the problems when they arise?

6. What limiting beliefs do you have of yourself? Limiting beliefs can be anything from thinking 'I can't' to 'It's too late.'

Write down what you think those beliefs are. Why do you see them as limiting?

7. How important is that dream to you? Do you think you are investing enough time into achieving your dream? Write down how much time you will set aside every day to work on your dreams.

CHAPTER 11

LIVE THE LIFE YOU LOVE

‘Love the life you live, live the life you love.’ — Bob Marley. Singer-songwriter, musician, guitarist, and a musical and cultural icon.

Close your eyes and daydream for a minute. Where do you wish to be at this moment in your life? Are you happy with where you are? Are you happy doing what you are doing now? Or would you rather be somewhere else? Living is going ahead unafraid and doing what you’ve always wanted to do — no matter what.

Life’s problems will never end. As long as there is daytime and night time, problems will continue to exist. You are not called to the world to solve all the problems of life. Problems will surely come; it is how you deal with it that affects you. Sometimes you just have to adjust to the situations around you and give yourself some space. Situations usually don’t adjust to how you want them to be. When facing difficult circumstances, develop a personal freedom from the situation. Take time off to think of a possible solution knowing you can’t solve all of life’s problems.

I grew up knowing I can’t always change every situation around me. Sometimes I get upset at myself if I can’t change things for the better, when I want to. On a second thought, I say to myself, ‘You can’t change everything, just do your best and God will do the rest.’ I do the best I can do at all times, giving it my all.

Children’s movies like *Superman*, *Spiderman* and *Batman* are make-believe stories. These characters tell us that they are capable of changing the world single-handedly. As a child, you believe everything you see or hear. Knowing that your favourite cartoon character can do something, makes you feel

you can do it too. That is why it is said that in a child's mind, everything is possible. A child sees no impossibility.

You are not permitted to think that way, as you get older. As you become older you know that the cartoon stories are all fables, and unrealistic. You know the difference between good and bad, love and hate.

You already know by now, that to live the life you want, expecting to find solutions to life's entire problem in one go is unrealistic. Do what you can for a day, and begin again the next day. Live your life daily with optimism, hoping for the best.

Life is about the little things. What are the things that give you immense joy? Is it cooking, travelling the globe, driving fast cars, jogging, singing, dancing, or listening to music...? Whatever makes you happy is what you should live for. Let each day of your life contribute in a meaningful way to your life as a whole.

I ask myself if I am living a life of contribution, of service to others, and of character. I make every effort to live a life of worth, where I add value to those who came in contact with me. I love everyone, irrespective of who they are or what they do. I show genuine concern and care for people, and I am appreciative of all the goodness around me.

Know who you are and live it. If you love to travel, why not travel and see the world? See the beauty of other people living in our world. Live a life of freedom, where you have a choice to be whoever you want or whatever you want without apologies to anyone. You don't owe anyone an explanation as to why you should live the life you love. Your aim should be to cherish the life you have by living it amazingly.

LOVE YOURSELF ENOUGH TO MAKE SOME CHANGES

Do an introspective check on your life; how have you been living your life before now? Are you proud of your life or are you ashamed of how your life has turned out? The answer lies in you, and you alone can change that.

If you know in your heart that you have not been living a life worthy of emulation, now is your chance to change that. Don't wait until you hit 'rock bottom' to make the much needed change. You have to bear in mind that whatever level you are at, there are people who are looking up to you. You may think no one notices you, but every step you take in life, there is someone watching you.

Embrace the truth of your future. You will have some good and some bad days where things don't go your way. The bottom line is to hang in there. Apply flexibility as you go along living life; nothing is as rigid as it seems.

To live a life of greatness, you will need to cut away crap from your life. What irrelevant things do you give your attention to?

CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS, CHANGE YOUR LIFE

We create our realities via our thought patterns. If you constantly think of poverty, you will be poor, and same goes for thinking rich thoughts. These thoughts shape what our future eventually looks like. You've got the power to think anything, and to change any thinking that is not moving you closer to your next breakthrough. Where you are right now is not your final destination, there is still somewhere called upward that you need to be and you can only get there by channelling your mind to think that you are already there. Own it already. Believe it is yours already. I tell you, it will eventually be yours if you take action steps now.

I get worried when I see youths with smartphones in hand moan about having a hard life. I say to them, 'if you can eat twice a day, you are doing fine.' You've got a smartphone,

that's a good life. Have you been to war -torn countries to see the level of devastation there, or how they live? What you see on television is just telling one part of the story. Until you experience it first hand, you can't get a clear picture of what people are going through.

You are fortunate to pick a book up and read at your leisure. This is a positive step towards changing your life. No meaningful change can be attained without first changing how we see the future, which happens with changing our thoughts about the future.

You are better than you think. What you think you can't achieve now only requires a little bit of time and hard work from you, and you will get there. It is in how you see yourself. Do you see yourself as a lion or a pussycat?

THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY OUT

When you worry too much or think too much about things that are beyond your control, you are inviting depression. The gradual decline into depression starts with a thought, which then matures into hopelessness if you let it. Whenever you feel like there is no way out, it's your thoughts playing tricks on you. When you switch your thoughts to the possibilities out there for you, and the fact that you are alive to explore those possibilities, it brings in a positive feeling, a sense that there is hope.

Depression is a deadly disease that creeps into your mind if you let it. It makes its home inside your mind, blurring your vision of a brighter future. For you to think there is no hope in the future is a sign you are gradually declining into a depressive state.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Once you notice the first sign, you speak to someone about it. Seek help from a professional expert who deals with the

psychology of the mind. Get a coach who can help you through your personal development. Seeing yourself making progress might help elevate your spirit.

DITCH YOUR UNHEALTHY HABITS

What habits have you got that need disposing of? Habits are what we do all the time. They are either good or bad habits. Successful people have successful habits. For you to become successful, you will need to cultivate the success habits.

Pitfalls like indecision, anger, a strong temper, and anxiety are to be avoided completely to live an amazing life. If not checked, they become bad habits that can hinder you from reaching your full potential.

There are areas of your life where you need to replace a bad habit with a good one, like trading your bad time management for good time management, or trading your constant lateness for punctuality. Any behaviour that will make a good positive change in your life should replace previous not-so-good behaviours.

A habit when formed over a long period of time, becomes hard to break. If you find yourself struggling to break free from a habit, it's wise to seek help. Seek help from professionals with proven results who have handled cases similar to yours. Decide to make the changes and don't look back. Keep working, do whatever you have to do until you start seeing yourself developing new good and successful habits. Be disciplined enough to make it work.

STEPS TO TAKE:

1. Imagine that the next chapter of your life is a blank page, a journal. What do you want to write in it? Remember your past is not your future. How do you fill up this blank space with your breakthrough message? What will be your comeback

message? It's high time you re-write your story in your own words, not what some person thinks of you.

2. You can change how you live from now on by changing specific areas of your life that need adjustment. What specific area in your life do you think needs a change now? It could be anything from waking up early to get into an exercise regime, or staying up an extra hour to work on your goals. Whatever it is to you, write it on a Post-it note and put it on the bathroom mirror where you can see it when you brush your teeth at night before bed and first thing in the morning. It will serve as a constant reminder to you.

3. Identify the habits you want to change by making a list. You have to be willing to change them. You can't change all at once so you start with the first one on your list.

4. You visualize yourself changing, and replace each unhealthy habit with a good one. It will take time, but you have to keep at it by taking baby steps daily.

CHAPTER 12

IMPROVE ON YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

'We can improve our relationships with others by leaps and bounds if we become encouragers instead of critics.' — Joyce Meyer, author, preacher, wife and mother.

Family and friends are a part of our life's journey. They can either make or break you. To live a happy life, you want to have great relationships with the people in your life.

It is a bitter truth that you cannot get along well with everyone in your life, but it doesn't mean that you can't respect their feelings. Be open and respectful to those around you. Every person you come across is not a mistake. They either come into your life as a gift, or you learn a lesson from them. It depends on you what you make out of your interaction with them.

I've been blessed with friends all my life, both good and bad. I always try to learn from these relationships. When I get negativity from friends, I drop them diplomatically so there is no row. I choose my friends wisely, friends who inspire and motivate me. I am great at connecting with different types of people easily. People tell me I'm soft spoken and easy to tell their problems. Maybe that's why I'm in the coaching industry. It is better to be a good listener, than to be a good speaker.

I've had friends who treated me badly in the past, but as time passed, I was able to forgive completely. Forgiveness is key to having meaningful relationships. People also appreciate openness and honesty in relationships, so be bold enough to say it as it is. Speak your mind and let your word be your bond. It's a false relationship if all parties are pretending to each other; You'll only end up hating yourselves.

For you to get on well with others, look out for how you can support or help them. If you are a seasonal friend, who is only available when everything is going well, but unavailable when things are not going so well, you don't deserve to be called a friend. Friendship is reciprocal. You can't expect what you don't give.

If you care for someone, show it. Love is action not inaction. Our relationships are important bedrocks in life; we should invest our time in nurturing them. The people you know are your most important resources; you never know when you might need their help.

In my life, I work hard to build meaningful relationships regardless of how difficult the person is. I believe this 'difficult' person might be the one with the solution I might need in the future. If you burn the bridge you used to cross the river, how are you going to get back if you don't like it there? Even when you think the person treated you badly, especially in a work environment, make amends before you leave. If you must quit, quit quietly. It is better to hand in your notice of resignation and leave in peace. Nobody knows tomorrow.

ACCEPT PEOPLE FOR WHO, NOT WHAT, THEY ARE

Not everyone will be your ideal person. You will meet some people who will bond with you almost immediately, while with others, you have to put in the effort. They may come off as snobbish or rude, but you need to be friendly anyway.

No matter how kind you are to some people, they may never like you. You just do your bit and leave them to deal with their personal troubles. I try as much as possible in my personal and professional life to stay clear of negative people who only emphasise failures all the time instead of success. They never see the good in anyone or anything.

Show compassion to even the most difficult person you meet, it might be all they need to change. You could be the blessing sent to that individual to show them how to treat others well.

Criticising how other people live their lives shouldn't be a priority for you. If something is bothering you about it, why not have a conversation with the person? Maybe then, you can see things from their point of view. Positive criticism is good when done with love and compassion. Show consideration for the other person's feelings.

Putting people down in front of others tells a lot about your own insecurities. People should feel safe and secure being around you. They should be able to open up to you and you to them. Don't be the town crier who goes around announcing information without the owner's consent.

You already know by now how I hate body shaming. I find it offensive and a higher form of bullying. Why would someone who has never created a strand of hair before, feel the need to tell another person who and how they should look like? Why should anyone shrink their life to fit into the world's frame? It is inhuman to call another person names like fat, ugly, slim, short, dull, just because in your opinion you feel superior. I see it as cowardice. Nobody has the perfect body; there is always a flaw. They choose what they want you to see. Even children should be taught kindness, and the uniqueness of every individual. Everyone is working towards a personal goal, and it is not a competition or about who gets there first.

FIX EVERY RELATIONSHIP

Spend more time with loved ones. They are your strength and your greatest resources you can fall back on at any time. Give them your commitment and the deserved attention.

We all have shortcomings in life. Just as you can't fulfil every one's need, be realistic and accept that no one person can fulfil all your desires and needs. The closest humans are identical

twins, but they too aren't the same. They each have got their unique peculiarities.

'Familiarity breeds contempt.' If you have known someone for a long time, you could take each other for granted. This is usually a lack of effort from both sides. Sometimes you just don't care because you know the person loves you anyway. This is the misconception a lot of people have. You don't just assume that because a person loves you, you stop putting in the effort to grow your relationship. A great relationship equals great love, but a great love does not equal a great relationship. You can choose to love someone from afar.

There should be a clear direction as to where every relationship is headed. It should be beneficial to all parties involved, and be non-judgmental. When there is a disagreement, you work together in unity to fix it before it gets out of hand. Try as much as possible not to go to bed with a grudge in your heart; create freedom for yourself by letting go.

All relationships have their difficulties and pass through storms now and again, but never forget the good times shared, wonderful memories and beautiful moments. Apart from family relationships, there must have been something that attracted you or that you admired from the personality of those you call friends. Whenever there is a conflict, strengthen your relationship with an open communication and listening to what the other person has to say before jumping to conclusions.

RELATIONSHIPS ARE ABOUT LOVE

You are love and capable of love. You shouldn't be second best. You are the best. If you feel stifled in a relationship where you have no freedom of expression and have no voice, that's not love. That is a possessive relationship. You are in danger and should seek help immediately or run as far as you can away from such an individual. Can I point out here that

you cannot correct someone you love with a fist? If you say you love someone, your duty is to protect the person.

Every relationship should be about love and trust. Building a relationship of trust takes time, but when trust is broken, it is never the same again. Imagine a ceramic plate smashed on a hard floor. No matter how much skill you have at fixing things, you will never fix it perfectly. It will still show all the cracks. That is what happens to broken trust.

If you love, love whole-heartedly without holding back anything. Love does not seek not its own, it is not greedy, and it looks out for the good of others. You support whomever you love to become a better person, by investing in their lives.

A relationship where you cannot be your authentic self and have to pretend is a fake; nothing good can come out of it. Do yourself a favour and find compatibility. Life is too short to pretend to be who you are not. I once had a relationship where I wasn't my real self. I did everything to fit in. It was like being in a closed box where I only had a chance to breathe when the box was opened occasionally. I thought it was love and I was in love.

My Ex, wanted me to look a certain way and dress according to what he classified as his 'taste'. He assumed I was a novice when it came to having a good sense of style. I agree he had great fashion sense, which was what I admired most about him, but that didn't give him the right to make demeaning remarks about my fashion. I was hurt and living in pain. So many times he tried to convince me to go for a surgical procedure on my face. It was usually very subtle and patronizing: 'You know you would be more beautiful if you took out your tribal marks?' or 'Don't you think wearing high heels will help your height? You should wear them more often especially if we have to go for dinner.' I had to look a certain way for him all the time. It took me a long time before I realised he was manipulative.

You are under no obligation to live your life in a certain way to please another person. If you want to do anything to your body or change your look, it should be your choice. You can decide to wear whatever it is you want, it is your prerogative. No relationship is worth your pain.

I remember a horrible period where he kept criticizing everything I did simply because I said no to any form of body enhancement or surgical procedure to look prettier — in his own opinion. I was hurt in my soul. I cried myself to sleep several nights thinking about the time I had invested in the relationship, and how I was going to recover from it. I was afraid to leave my comfort zone, which was a beautiful house with all the amenities. I was constantly asking myself, ‘Where will I start from?’ I was a walking skeleton with flesh, breathing but having no life. I resented him.

My lucky day came when I read a book called *An Enemy Called Average* by John Mason. In his book he talked about people intentionally living a life of mediocrity and unfulfilled dreams. He gave wisdom nuggets on how to do away with a mediocre life. It was a powerful and yet practical book that changed my life forever. I knew right at that moment that I needed to regain my pride and my freedom if I ever wanted to make an impact around me. I made a decision to leave for my own good. I called a taxi, packed my things while waiting for it, and left that night. I left everything behind. The nice car that was a gift, what I thought then was a beautiful house, and the fake life I was living. It was all not worth the freedom to be me again. What I wanted more was to live free on my own terms.

CHAPTER 13

IT'S TIME TO GO

'In any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or to step back into safety.' – Abraham Maslow, psychology professor.

This is the right time to get things moving. You've got no time to waste any longer. Having read through to this point, I am confident that you have learned something from each chapter. The best way to learn is to write everything down. Write down every idea that you ever thought about. Write down every dream and goal you thought were too farfetched for you to achieve. Just keep writing them down.

At this point you know you can do all things, if you just believe. You know now that what you think, is what you eventually become. There shouldn't be any room for you to think yourself inferior or small. You know you've got a giant inside of you, and all you need do is wake it up. There is no one more equipped to take that risk than you. Never has been, never will be. You are unique and you are capable. Go for your dreams.

CREATE YOUR OWN FREEDOM

You can create your personal freedom regarding how you decide to live your life and how you intend to run your business. What you care about the most should come topmost on your list. Prioritise the things you've got going on in your life to live a contented and well-rounded life. What makes you happy should be the first on your list. Living an unhappy life when you know you can choose to change your situation is dying in silence. It is dangerous not only to your health but to those around you.

Life is about little things: the air you breathe, a functioning brain, love around you, peaceful moments, and more. We sometimes ignore the beauty around us and focus on irrelevant things. The road to freedom for you should be about creating your personal happiness rather than about being right. You don't have to win every argument or to always make your point. Your personal freedom has a lot to do with how you can function properly without worrying about 'what if.' You will need to allow yourself enough breathing space, so you don't choke on the problems of life — which are not ending any time soon.

The best gift you can give yourself is freedom. Nothing compares to the freedom you get from living life on your terms. You cherish every moment of it. Living the life you love will require some effort on your part. You create that life by getting rid of any toxic thing or situation around you. Whether it's a bad relationship, negative influence on your life, addictions, or crime. Whatever is making you unhappy is not good for you. Work on yourself so you can become a better citizen of the world.

Life can get overwhelming sometimes, and if we are not careful, it suppresses one. When I find myself in a situation I know is becoming too much for me to handle, I take time out for myself to regain my sanity. Yes, I love myself that much. Usually, I travel far away from everything and everyone. I go to a place I love that gives me the peace I need to think things over. It calms my nerves and I am able to re-strategize. My hideout location is known only to about a handful of those close to me, just so they don't get worried about my sudden disappearance. Believe me, when I come back, usually after a few days or even a couple of weeks, I feel refreshed and ready to take on any task ahead. You need your sanity once in a while, to help you think things through. To 'reason life,' like my friend Kelly would say.

Remember that your life counts, so put in the effort to make it truly count. This is your life we are talking about; it's your only life. This is the one chance you've got to love it, treasure it and live it.

DO SOMETHING GOOD WITH YOUR LIFE

Everyone has got something in them that someone out there needs. You have goodness inside of you that will benefit another human being. What are you doing with your life right now? What plans have you got to get a life you love, and live it with abundance?

You are created for a reason. You are not an accident or a mistake. Contrary to what some of our parents might have said, you are you. No other person will ever be you. You are your own best friend. You are a shining star. Why are you dimming your sparkle? Go out there and let the world hear about you. You deserve the centre stage.

Your existence is beyond you and requires justification. You are not just here on earth just to be counted among the seven billion human beings on the planet. I know you didn't ask to be born, but you didn't create yourself, either. I'm sure your Creator meant for you to become great. Do whatever it takes not to disappoint your Creator.

Anything you do is something, as long as you are not idle. So many people have died without a second chance in life, but you are fortunate to be alive. Why then live your life as if you are just passing by? Caring about what you do with your life is important, and better than wealth. Your true wealth is measured by how much of life you have experienced first-hand. You have your chance now to do something good with your life.

MAKE A DECISION NOW

Your decision to become successful in life starts with you. No one owes you success. If you are among the lucky ones, who are likely to get inheritance money, it's still not a guarantee that you will remain rich for long. You still have to make a decision as to how you will invest the inherited money wisely, so you don't squander it or lose it.

You are wise and intelligent. Go out there and make a living for yourself. Make something out of your life. Become whom you have always dreamt of becoming. You are the decisions you make. If you make a wrong decision, you regret later in life. If you make a right decision now, you have yourself to thank in the future. Making a wrong decision doesn't affect just you alone; it has a cumulative effect on you, your loved ones and friends. On the flip side, making a right decision not only benefits you and your family, its impact extends to the world, thereby making it a better place.

What is holding you back from reaching your goals, from living your dreams? Why are you waiting to start? There is no better time to start than this moment. Do not sell yourself short, you are more than capable. Believe you can, and you will. I know for sure that 'YOU CAN DO THIS.'

STEPS TO TAKE:

- 1.Are you living in bondage or are you living a life of freedom? No one can know it except you. Write down five things you think are stopping you from living the life you love. It could be a spouse, lack of money, insecurity, or uncertainty of the future.
- 2.Why have you not started yet? Write down ten reasons you think have kept you from living the life you deserve.
- 3.You are seconds away from creating the life you will be proud of. Start now by jotting down where you want to start from, using the lesson learnt in breaking down your plans with achievable timelines.

4. Using positive self-talk is powerful and will motivate you to get going. For example, 'I can change my life for better.' You should find a phrase that resonates with you.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I'd like you to open your heart and mind to experience what the universe has for you. Yes the future is unknown, but you can't access it with fear. You will need courage, bravery and faith. No one wants to hear your touching stories, they want to see action.

Live your life like it's golden, because it is. Your life is precious and worth more than all the currencies in the world combined. Why would you want to give it all up just to please some other person? Do not short change yourself by living in denial about how you actually want your life to be.

Beware of using phrases like *I can't, I will never, I won't, I'm not good enough, I don't have, I'm poor, my parents are poor, I wish, I'll do it one day* (one day is no day).

This should be your new vocabulary: *I can do all things. I will do all things. Nothing is impossible; I just need to learn it. I will do it right now.*

Most important of all is to love yourself unconditionally, knowing fully well that whatever you want to become, you can with faith. There is no limit to what you can accomplish. You are a superstar indeed.

There are opportunities all around us if we look in the right direction. Life is full of possibilities as well. The question is, are you ready to take them? You can do something great by tapping into these opportunities and improving on them. Life is wasted if we think of ourselves alone, when we can be of great benefit to other people.

This is your life, love it and live it. A few changes you make today can make a huge difference. Go on and take your life to new heights, you deserve the best there is. And yes, I trust you can totally do this.

UNPREPARED

I didn't prepare for the news I received during the publication stages of this book. It was the sad news of my brother passing. It is the worst thing that has happened to my family and I. I got a call at about 7:00 PM from my dad, that my loving brother, who always had a zest for life was rushed to the hospital for breathing difficulties. For some reason, I became worried that evening, panting and unable to concentrate on anything else.

By 11:00 PM, I got THE call. The dreaded call everyone wishes they never get in their lifetime, that my dearest brother had passed.

You see, my brother, Titus was a fun loving, bubbly fellow who loved to dance and followed it through. He signed up for a dance competition as a professional dancer, where he came to the second runner-up. He was so passionate about his craft and skills that he set up a dancing studio for children who were interested in dancing. He was also involved in promoting a dance culture within schools, organising competitions amongst secondary schools. He was a legend to these young impressionable minds.

His grit and bravery were beyond comprehension. Always willing to go where others dare to. I once had a great chat with him concerning his ambitions, he moved so fast with the speed of light, no one in the family could keep up with his achievements. Intelligence is an understated word to describe how his brilliant brain worked. He was always one step ahead of everyone. You can imagine why his death came as a shock to everyone; family, friends, and acquaintance.

One thing that clearly resonates with the theme of this book, is his tenacity and strength. His constant appetite for greatness. He fought so hard for what he believed in, whatever he was passionate about. He made an impact on those who came in

contact with him, and I know also that in his short time here on Earth, he definitely contributed positively to make this world a better place.

Dealing with his demise is the hardest thing I'm coping with in my life right now, we were not just siblings, we also worked together on various projects. He was the administrator in charge of the LivingJoys platform, touching lives one person at a time.

It has been a wake-up call for me in particular. If I hadn't believed before, I know now, that life is truly short. I'm putting an end to every procrastination, and you should too. I have vowed to live life intentionally, with a yearning to better the world starting with the message inside this book. To take things easy, to live my best life, to put my best foot forward, to not sweat the little things, to reach out to people more often and touch as many lives as I possibly can in my lifetime. So help me God.

What legacy are you planning on living behind when it is time? What would those around you say of your existence here on Earth? Would you be a positive influence? How much of our lives are we living to the fullest? Are we worrying about the future, or living in regrets and mourning the past? You still got time to do the right thing, to make your best better. I sincerely do hope that you live your best life, regardless. Quoting Kurt Vonnegut, "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be."

As said earlier, time will surely heal. I know everyone loves a recovery story, so I'm not going to sit here and say that I will be healed in a months time or maybe a year or two. But I do believe that time will not take away his memories, it would rather heal me, heal the hearts of my parents, heal the heart of my siblings and every one of you going through any form of hurting. I believe my family and I can totally do this. We will cope with this pain and I'm hoping more than anything else,

that this brings us much closer as a family and that his wonderful, loving memories will forever be etched in our minds.

I miss you brother. Until we meet again. Thank you for all you've done for our family and for me in particular. I love you.

USEFUL RESOURCES

These are some of the motivational books I read from great teachers I admired. They helped shaped the way I viewed myself and how I've learned to see the world. I am hoping these books will inspire you as much as I was inspired by it. I admonish you to read them. The only constant thing in life is change. Until the mind is changed, then you see changes in your circumstances. Reading books is one of the best avenues to change your thinking.

BOOKS

1. Choose yourself: Be happy, make millions, live the dream by James Altucher

This book talks about James and how he failed so many times and lost millions of dollars. His heartbreaking and inspiring story tells us how he picked himself off the ground and started again. Only this time around he chose himself to succeed.

Forgiveness: The healing power of forgiveness by Ace McCloud

A short book with straight to the point answers on using the power of forgiveness to truly live a much happier, productive and fulfilling life. It contains proven steps on how to forgive others and yourself.

You can overcome every obstacle: No matter what by Lisa Nichols

She is a go-getter who was determined to go after what she wanted. Lisa was suicidal and ready to give up, but remembered what her grand mother taught her about standing for herself and showing love. She wrote about human imperfections and self-acceptance, and that every single one of us has an important place in the world to fill.

Think Big: Unleashing your potential for excellence by Ben Carson

Ben wrote about his mother a lot and how she helped shaped him to be who he is. He is a celebrated neurosurgeon from a poor background, but refused to let his poor background shape his future. As a child growing up, he was regarded as a dull student, but with great determination and a strong sense of self worth, he turned his trials into triumphs.

The power of your subconscious mind by Dr. Joseph Murphy

This book explains the laws of life and how we can use our minds to change our circumstances. He said the subconscious mind responds to the mental picture we already have. It teaches readers that your thinking is what you eventually become.

Secrets of the richest man who ever lived by Mike Murdock

You discover the secrets to enduring wealth and lasting success in this book. He wrote that the greatest achievers who ever lived were the great men and women of faith in the scriptures. King Solomon was considered the richest man on earth, and the wealth and wisdom of the life of Solomon is unmatched in history.

Conquering an enemy called average by John Mason

This book is an attack on mediocrity. It is full of truths, wisdom, motivation and practical principles to achieve excellence in your life. It shows you how you can break yourself free from self-doubt and become all that God created you to be.

Reasons to stay alive by Matt Haig

He was depressed and suicidal in his life and was diagnosed with a mental illness that almost destroyed him. Matt learned to live again and vowed to make the most use of his time here on earth. He went through a crisis but triumphed in the end. It is a moving book full of humour.

The power of Now: A guide to spiritual enlightenment
by Eckhart Tolle

Many people find it hard to be in the present. This book will tell you how. It teaches you to look at the world with different lenses. He was able to turn his life around, and focused his energy on writing his book.

You can heal your life by Louise Hay

Louise was sick with cancer but didn't give in to her sickness. She cured herself using the principles of self-love. She tells us of how diseases and injuries in the body can be cured via the healing power of the mind. If miracles are your thing, then this book is for you. It has got practical steps on how to get your healings.

Rich dad, poor dad by Robert Kiyosaki

The principles of saving for the rainy days are all embedded in this book. It teaches you about savings and investment in its basic form that even a child can understand. He uses principles he learned as a child that worked for him to show you that you can do it too.