# 

TO Leave

CINDY PAIGE

#### ENDORSEMENTS

"Cindy Paige takes a practical look at what steps to take on your journey with humor and realistic examples. 'IT' made me laugh out loud! This book gives you a guide to knowing where you want to go after a loss, and how you're going to get there."

Liam Stryder Humorist

"Bravo for *Summit*! I love the analogy of facing our fears, our devastating moments, and our crises to climbing Mt. Everest. I appreciated how *Summit* pointed out that we can't just hope or wish our situation away – we have to plan, strategize, and face the things we fear the most. This book provides a wonderful guide/plan and laser focus tips and techniques to use when life throws us a curve ball. I am the mountain!"

Phyllis Flowers
Senior Manager, Learning &
Organizational Development

"As a therapist, what I was most struck by when working with Cindy on Summit, A Guide from Pain to Peace, was her encouraging, passionate "voice." It's as if she is ahead of us on the trail, saying, "C'mon - I know you can do it! I know you can move beyond this pain. I've done it, and I'll show you how." Cindy is an ever-present companion on the trek up the mountain to healing. And her insights and guidance for doing so are grounded in time-tested, effective strategies and spiritual faith. She illuminates moments when we can stop and consider how our actions may have contributed to painful pasts, as well as when we should rest and visualize

our dreams for a peaceful, satisfying future. As her editor, I think that readers will especially appreciate the many vignettes illustrating challenges that most of us will face at some time in our lives. With this offering, Cindy has become one of the dependable sherpas to guide you through the most painful straits of your life. Good journey."

Tracy Hart, LICSW/Editor

"As we all look for inspiration every day and certainly at this globally uncertain time with the pandemic looming over all our lives, now more than ever, the insights of Cindy Paige are priceless in her book, Summit. Cindy brings us into her well-earned experiences and wisdom with a gentle humility to engage the reader to see themselves in each scenario of the metaphor of the summit. We all find insurmountable mountains of challenges in our lives, as well as, the many valleys. Cindy takes us through the way to evaluate and discern the best goal to set, to strategically plan the course, how to pivot and course correct to both survive and thrive and then the achievement and road back to reflect and celebrate a win and plan for the next. This book is for anyone simply looking for inspiration or for someone seeking a much more intrinsic meaning to deepen your personal awareness to navigate your external and internal emotional world. Cindy's Summit is a must read during this most prescient time of global and personal transformation."

> Fara Gold McLaughlin Founder & CEO GoldMark Seniors

Specializing in Senior Housing Strategic Marketing and Management Services

A Guide from Pain to Peace



ACADEMY O

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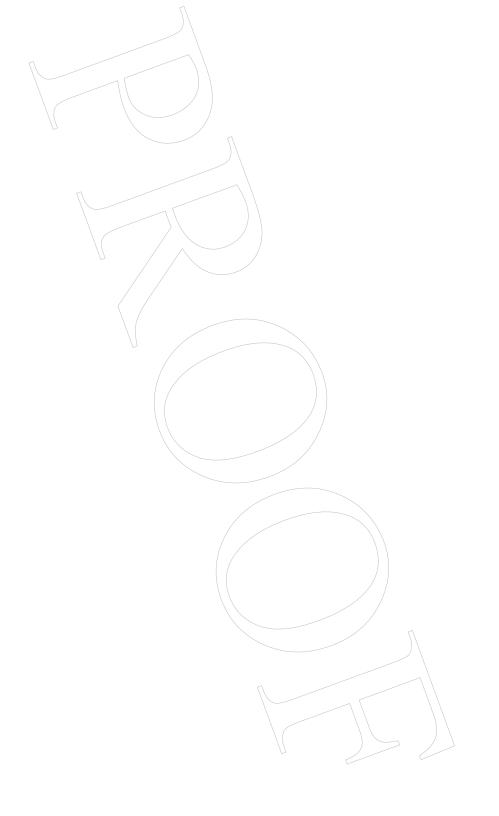
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Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

# Dedication

This book is dedicated to my husband, Curtis. You are my best friend, my partner, and my love. Thank you for your unwavering support, my Sirdar, my chief Sherpa. There would be no summit without you.

...and to the many other Sherpas in my life - past, present and future.



# USE THIS BOOK TO HELP NAVIGATE BEYOND THE PAIN CAUSED BY THESE (AND OTHER) STORMS:

Death...of a child, partner, parent, sibling, or close friend

A loved one's suicide

Loss of fidelity

Divorce

Loss of custody

Disease

Gradual loss of a loved one due to Alzheimer's or dementia

Abuse: sexual, physical, or emotional

Loss during childhood

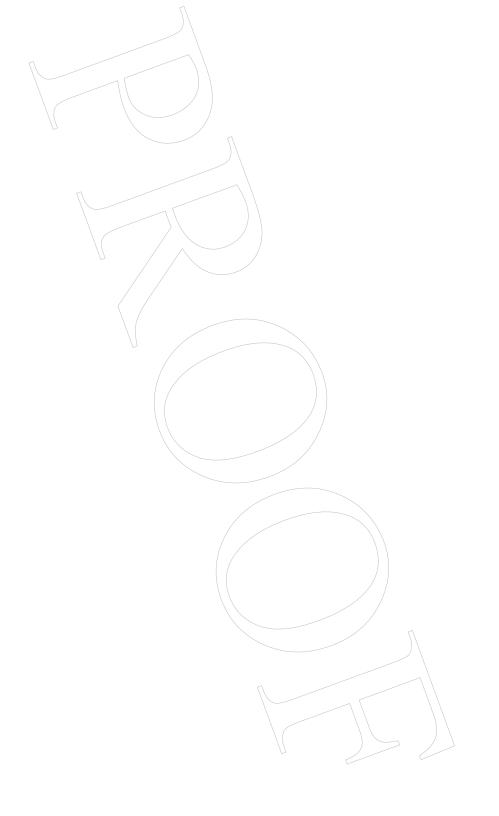
Survivor guilt

Loss of job

Empty nest syndrome

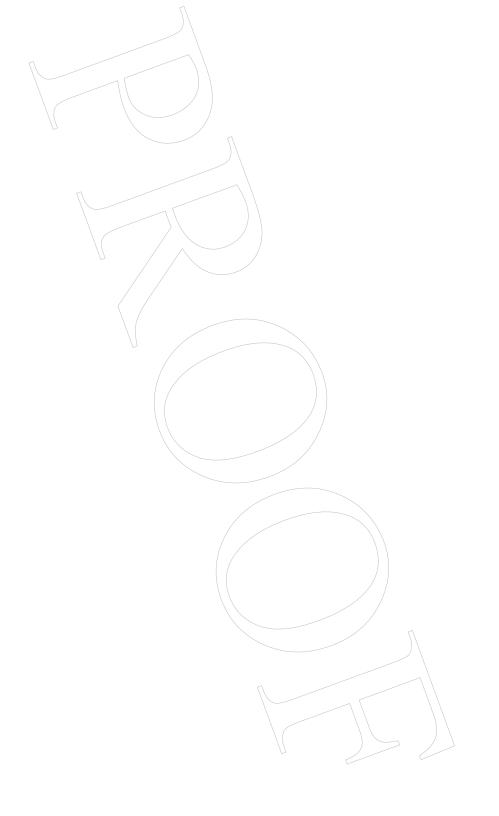
Loss of life as you expected

Your personal storm



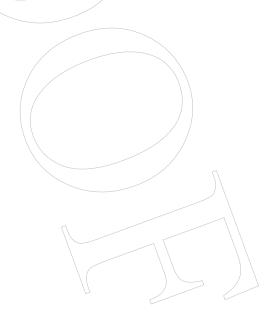
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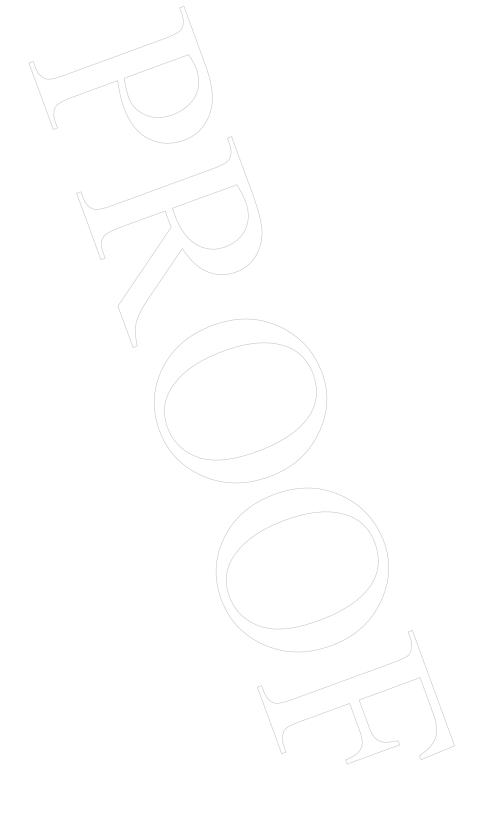
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Thank you for letting me join you on your journey. If you are 'Summit Bound' and would like to climb deeper into some of the tips and tools introduced in Summit, visit my website at www.cindypaige.org.





## THE STORM

The storm screams. Wind-whipped snow densely blankets me Visibility is nil, and gusts of wind beat me from all directions A whiteout

My chest is heavy, but not with the effort of exertion Something bigger

What is happening? Something is wrong

Cold sinks into me like death

Why is everything white?

And why is it so cold?

Reality harshly soaks in; I close my eyes

Despair washes through me, colder than the freezing air

I hope this is a dream

Pray it is

But there is nothing dreamlike about the storm that rages Snow so thick I can't tell if the road is in front of, or behind me Where am I?

I bury my face beneath my hands, teeth clench, a barrier against tears scalding the back of my eyes

I will not cry. I've cried enough for a lifetime. Two lifetimes A whiteout

If only...

What I wouldn't give to be one of these nameless snowflakes. To drift out of the sky, not caring where I land, lasting only a heartbeat before dissolving into nothingness. One frozen moment of existence, one easy freefall

Done Gone

Over

Anything would be better than this terrifying silence Even the silence is muffled

I look at the snow-covered ground, wishing I could just lie down ... let the cold seep in and coax me into a forever sleep. Is it the fog in my mind, or is there fog around me, too? I realize my breath is making crystalline clouds in the icy air—tiny puffs that appear and drift, dissipate and disappear. I stare at the misty evidence of my existence and know what it is to be truly afraid And I know how hard it is going to be to conquer this fear Until then, I will do what I do best

Survive

### INTRODUCTION

This book focuses on a journey that we shall all travel at some point in our lives. It's the route out of pain and loss. I liken tragedy to a devastating blizzard. While the storm rages on, you are terrified. The wind, the snow, the formidable sounds of fierce weather surround you. You prepare, search for resources, fight—try to get through each day and survive. The future, or what you'll be left with when the blizzard is over, is unknown.

Our storms hit in a variety of forms—each as individual as we are. Some are predicted, slow to build, then last so long we give up hope that we'll escape. Others can arise with dazzling suddenness, seemingly out of nothing, leaving devastation and destruction in their wake. Cold, deep, and universal (yet as unique as a single snowflake), feelings which follow the tempest make themselves known. The worst may have passed or more devastation of life as we know it is on its way. The only thing we can be certain of—we are in terrible pain.

The divorce is final.

A family member's battle with cancer has ended.

Wounds took your leg.

Our home is gone.

A beloved child died by suicide.

You are in survival mode. It was a cataclysmic storm, but you knew you had to get through it. Now the worst of it has settled, and you realize you are lost. Left with heartache. He'll never walk through that door again. There will never

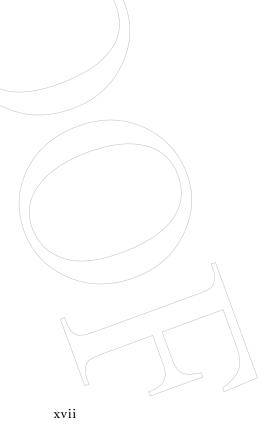
be another Christmas at Grandma's house. You'll never walk again. The unimaginable has happened, but you must go on.

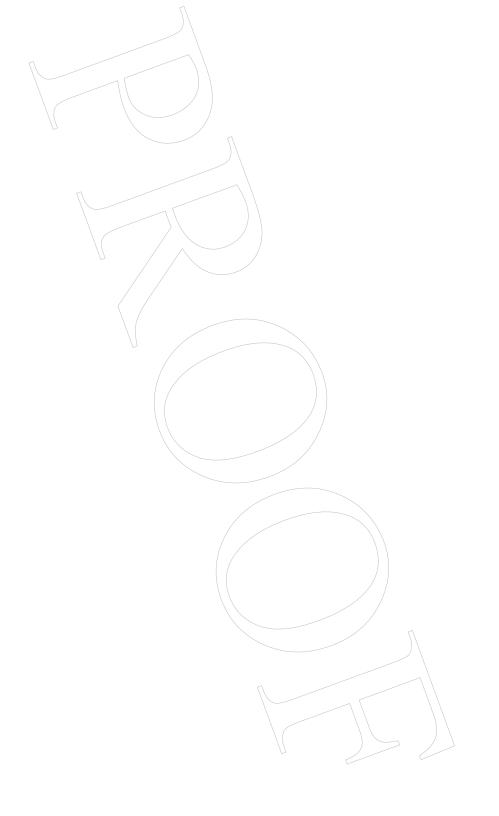
This book's aim is to help you do that and support you along the way. We'll start right now: I want to suggest something for you to try. I know it will be difficult, but for a moment...think forward. Imagine what it might be like once you're through this painful time. At the moment, it may not seem possible that holding onto life will ever feel comfortable again, that you will laugh spontaneously, or find joy in the people or events around you. But you will. The sun will rise and eventually shine after a storm. So, take a slow, deep breath. Can you create in your mind what the return of "fair weather" could look like? Where are you? Who is with you? How are you feeling? What are you doing? Wherever or whatever that is, that is your summit—if you can climb out of this anguish, you will get there. And that's where you'll find peace.

I was at this crucial crossroad in my own life when I had a dream. It was like no other I can remember. I was lost in a violent blizzard. Trying to get somewhere; but I had no idea where or which way to go or what I needed to do to get there. As the worst of the storm moved on, I was alone in waisthigh snow, aimlessly wading through it. But it came to me: If I could just make it through this snow, I would be okay. The snow became less deep, but travel was uphill. If I could just make it up this hill, I would find my way. A sudden and desperate longing came over me. If I could just keep climbing, I would find my way. I could reach my summit.

Loss visits all of us. The funeral is over, and everyone has gone home. Now what do you do? The kids are at your ex's, and you are utterly alone in a house built to be filled with family. Now what do you do? Rehab is over, and you are on your own. Now what do you do? *Summit* is a collection of stories, thoughts and ideas, woven into a metaphor of climbing a mountain. It is meant to inspire and strengthen you, wherever you might be in this process. It's filled with tips and

suggestions for how to continue to climb and navigate the various aspects of your personal journey. Though our stories may differ, the destination is the same for everyone: to reach our summit. Peace from the pain we are feeling. Peace in the new life we are challenged to create. Peace we can enjoy. Peace we can celebrate. Peace and happiness.





# THE SUN

A bright sun shines through the ice crystals Everything sparkles

But not with beauty
Too dead and austere for beauty
Everything has shifted; nothing is the same
Ahead lies my new path, my 'mountain'
Depressingly steep and formidable
I feel suspended in slow motion
I can't move
I won't move
I might not ever move, except

#### Except

Except for that most basic human instinct
The instinct to survive

#### THE STORM

In life, there is no shortage of storms. Situations that are "not fair." Sequences of pain and loss shock us, test us, and leave us wondering how we'll go on. We wonder if there's any guiding hand whatsoever in the universe. Survivors have to push forward, focusing upon what we *can* control, to arrive

at a place of peace and acceptance. Our difficulties teach us we're not in control, at least not completely, and the manner in which we've handled our lives so far may not serve us well going forward. There are lessons to be learned, heartaches to endure, and a grappling acceptance of our new life situation. Crises force us to stretch in completely unfamiliar ways; but first we have to survive the here and now. We can't stay at this crossroads of darkness and desperation. Where to begin?

#### THE SUN

Believe in yourself. The sun shines after a storm. We must find what will make us shine in the aftermath of the storm. Ask yourself: Who am I? Who will I become as a survivor? We can get mired down in the depths of our own despair. Questioning: Can we succeed in this new role? The first and most immediate step in survival mode is to gather our inner gear and believe that we do, indeed, have what it takes to climb this mountain.

#### Whisper it or shout it out: I Will Survive!

In times of sorrow, it's easy to get swamped by a deluge of self-doubt, failures, and things we don't like about ourselves. We feel crushed. In pain. Exhausted, physically and emotionally. And who knows our faults and shortcomings better than us? Tune in to your inner voice. How are you speaking to yourself? Do you find yourself thinking:

- This is my fault.
- I can't do this.
- I am worthless.
- I'll never succeed.

- I deserve this.
- I can't support my family.
- I'm too fat and ugly to be loved.
- Even God doesn't love me.

To become aware of our own negative self-concepts is the first priority. We have to prepare for this trek into survival. This step is like checking that our backpack of provisions doesn't include an extra 10-pound weight.

After a crisis which has changed our lives, it's natural to second-guess ourselves and our decisions. This is especially true if others have been affected and are hurting too. Maybe we are being blamed for their pain and wonder if there's any truth to that. Thoughtfully reflecting on events may help us to stand by our choices.

#### Tough Call

My mother served as the Power of Attorney for her aunt. At 98, Great Aunt Marcella was declining and rushed to the hospital after a fall. She was admitted that final time with weight loss, dehydration, and congestive heart failure. Marcella couldn't (or wouldn't) eat and could barely drink. Decisions had to be made. This type of drama far exceeded what my mother was emotionally equipped to deal with, so I was left in charge. I dug in. I found babysitters for my kids, stayed with her every day in the hospital and consulted with her doctors. The only option to sustain life at this point was a feeding tube. Many in the family and her circle of friends wanted this to happen. I began to research. I met with her priest and again with her doctor. What would it be like for her to endure the procedure and then live with a feeding tube? The decision was made; it was challenged, and then there was blame.

It's easy to let self-doubt creep in, holding you hostage for your actions, especially during tough times. When there's

conflict, self-doubt can send you spiraling into despair, but ask yourself—did I do the best I could do at that moment with the information I had at that point in time? If your answer is yes, take heart. Faith was the most important aspect of my Great Aunt Marcella's life, and I followed, with faith, the guidelines from her church, the doctors, and what we believed to be the right course of action for her. I consulted with my mom and sister on decisions made, but when challenges came, I was able to shield my mom from hurtful accusations. I felt confident that as difficult as they were, the right decisions had been made. We lost our beloved aunt, but she didn't suffer unduly. I was hurting, and I was challenged, but when it got ugly, I could still believe in myself.

#### TAKE FOUR

Four steps to believing in yourself:

- 1. Change your focus to empower you. Think, "When I get through this...," not "If I get through this." Where are opportunities for growth, love, fulfillment? Only you have the power to get you where you want to be. At any given moment, you have the authority to say, "This is not how my story is going to end."
- **2. Recognize your potential**. Although human, full of flaws and failings, each of us has another side of our humanity: an enormous potential within that we rarely acknowledge. In a journal or on a piece of paper, answer these questions:

"What do I like about myself?"

"What am I good at?"

"What have I done that I should feel proud of?"

If it's difficult to get in touch with positives, know that friends or loving family members often see things about us that we are blind to. Ask yourself, "What might *others* say are my strengths?" "What do *others* appreciate about me?" Don't be afraid to ask them directly, they might surprise you.

To counter the energy-draining, negative inner voice and to develop a supportive self-image, we must force ourselves to cognitively intervene. Note the old self-talk, but challenge it with thoughts on a higher plane of optimism and potential. Push yourself a little bit outside your comfort zone of believing

the old, false ideas about yourself to tap into the possibility of inner awesomeness. This is tough. You are hurting and overwhelmed—but do what you can and keep coming back

"THEY DID NOT KNOW THEIR LIMITATIONS, AND THEREFORE HAD NONE." UNKNOWN

to this. Start a list of ways you shine. It may start with only one thing, but as time goes by, adding to it will grow a more clear, positive way of feeling about yourself and your potential.

#### The Elephant Rope (origin unknown)

As a man was passing the elephants, he suddenly stopped, confused by the fact that these huge creatures were being held by only a small rope tied to their front leg. No chains, no cages. It was obvious that the elephants could, at any time, break away from their bonds but for some reason, they did not. He saw a trainer nearby and asked why these animals just stood there and made no attempt to get away. "Well," the trainer said, "when they were very young and much smaller, we used the same sized rope to tie them. At that age, it's enough to hold them. As they grow up, they are conditioned to believe they cannot break away. They believe the rope can still hold them, so they never try to break free." The man was amazed. These animals could at any time break free from their bonds but because they believed they couldn't, they were stuck right where they were.

Like the elephants, how many of us go through life conditioned to believe that we cannot do something, simply because we failed at it once before? Failure is part of learning—this knowledge actually increases the possibility for future success! (If we aren't defensive and view the event with a bit of emotional distance.) Break out of the mindset that failure is bad and pain is a dirty secret. Don't listen to the strongholds placed on you, or by you, which you carry from your childhood. Take stock of the depth of your potential. Believe in yourself—in your power!

3. Neutralize Fear. Fear, by definition, is the expectation of pain. Some fears are instinctual, like fear of physical harm or the fear of falling. Other fears are learned: fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of consequences, fear of the future. Fear is also a natural reaction to change. One strategy for managing this fear is to take control of as many of the puzzle pieces of your life as possible. Start by naming the fear. What are you most afraid of? Being alone? Living without them? Handling the financial consequences of this crisis? Having support or feeling isolated? Holidays? Not knowing how long until you feel like yourself again? There is no benefit in fearing what you have no control over. If a problem is fixable—if the fear is such that you can do something to solve it, then make a plan. If not, let it go. Live in today, not borrowing fear for what might happen tomorrow.

#### Shed a Little Light

Bobby was afraid of the dark. His fear kept him from joining other boys for sleepovers, but this was his best friend Leo's birthday, so he decided to give it a try. As the boys settled down in their sleeping bags in front of the TV, Bobby held tight to the flashlight his dad had given him. Just as he was falling asleep, he saw a movement.

Was it a monster? A crazy escaped convict who tortured little boys? He pulled out his flashlight and aimed it toward the kitchen. Oh, the monster was only Leo's mom, putting out donuts for hungry boys who might wake up early. We never let our imagination run away with the **good** things that could happen. With a little light, maybe we can find more donuts in the morning.

Shining a light on our fears signals, to ourselves, that we are ready to courageously deal with the storm. That we are willing to:

4. Take Action. Actions reflect beliefs. By taking even the smallest steps, we communicate to our self and the world: I believe in myself and my journey. Staying passive fuels depression, while taking action raises self-esteem and generates feelings of power and hope. Be as consistent as possible. Do at least one thing every day to move through the pain. Show yourself that you believe! You are reading this book. That's action! Take a shower. Get dressed. Go for a walk.

#### SO WHERE IS YOUR STARTING POINT?

Whatever the nature of your storm—you are hurting. Before you can begin to move forward on your journey, you have to address where you are. Even your car's GPS (global positioning system) makes you identify your current location. Your starting point...is your pain.

"Ugh. No! I'm barely 'believing in myself' and getting dressed every day. The pain is what I'm hiding from. As long as I don't 'go *there*,' I can survive. How about some tips on *that*?!"

You're right. This is normally what we don't want to do. It goes against a basic human instinct—to protect. Avoid, repress, deny. Numb, hide, eat, disengage—all ways we self-protect.

And unfortunately, we live in a culture that supports self-destructive coping mechanisms. When a storm hits, we usually try to take control of things and solve them, forget them or deny them—instead of accept them, experience them, or try to see the meaning they may hold for us. Who hasn't heard:

Move on! Chin up. Keep busy. You're better off. They're in a better place.

But you can't chart your course without knowing where you start. As much as you don't like it, acknowledge what you are going through. There is a new normal to accept. Own what has happened, and rally your strength to deal with it. Moving through and beyond pain is a process. And right now, you are grieving the loss of whatever your storm has damaged. A lost loved one, the relationship you thought would last, the career you were so sure of, the healthy body you took for granted...

Respect your need to grieve, to mourn, to shed your tears. You have to recognize and allow yourself to be in the grieving process. A wise counselor of mine once said, "Why do you think you shouldn't be sad?" Give yourself permission to feel what you feel. Don't let sadness consume you, but allow yourself space to feel the pain. In doing so, you create a foundation for the healing process. And healing is the gift we give ourselves when we acknowledge our brokenness. You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.

#### GOOD GRIEF!

Grief is good. It's a natural reaction to the loss of loving someone, or something, very dear to us. It's normal, and it's

necessary. It's been said that grief is the emotion we fear the most. Amen to that! We avoid it and steer clear of anyone who appears to be in the throes of it. Have you been to a funeral recently? Anyone caught crying is often isolated from the crowd. You may think you are giving them privacy during their time of pain. Are you? Or are you staying as far away from that exposed grief as possible? What if it's contagious? It makes me so uncomfortable. Oh no. No! No. No. No. I don't want to get near pain like that. Funerals today have become more like parties, a celebration of the life that has ended. There is certainly a need for shared memories of happy times—but not to the exclusion of denying the pain of the loss.

Grief is the aftermath left in the trail of the storm, and it has to be dealt with. Locking up sadness and pain and pretending that they aren't there, causes poison in an already painful wound. It may work for a while, but eventually our feelings will demand expression. Which is necessary, because

you need an intimate understanding of your emotions in the aftermath of the storm. If you want to heal from it, you have to go through it; you cannot go around it. And, it cannot

"THE ONLY FEELINGS
THAT DO NOT HEAL ARE
THE ONES YOU HIDE."
HENRI NOUWEN

be rushed. Time alone does not bring healing for grief. It's what you do *with* the time that makes the difference.

After reading countless theories, stages and thoughts on grieving, I've gathered them together into what I call **The Four Ps**. Can you identify where you are in the grief process?

• **Protect.** Your first response to pain is to protect yourself. To avoid the pain and the feelings that come with it. Sometimes this shows up as denial. It is a natural defense mechanism that kicks in as you are forced to accept the unthinkable. Denial can

sometimes help us to absorb tragic news at a slower rate so we are not completely overwhelmed by it.

- Prevent. What could I have done to prevent this? "What if...?" "If only I'd..." Anger, resentment, bargaining. Take some time to sort out the true scope of your responsibility or control. We can't control what we have no control over, but that doesn't stop us from wishing we could have changed the path to destruction we are facing. If not resolved, intense feelings of guilt or remorse can block the healing process. This can lead to serious depression or unhealthy coping mechanisms.
- Pout Be sad!! Wallow in it. This sucks! You have every right to feel unhappy and depressed, though it's a scary part of grieving. We have to allow ourselves time to be sad, and possibly to disengage from our regular routines. But recognize when you may have crossed into an unhealthy phase of depression. Not eating, sleeping, or showering, are flags to seek professional help. It's not shameful; it's smart. You are in the middle of a mess of devastation without the right tools to handle it. You wouldn't try to clean up tornado wreckage with a fork. For goodness sake, go buy a shovel!
- **Persevere**. Your loss eventually becomes integrated into your life story. You go on. Life goes on.

Grief is a reminder of the depth of our love. The Four Ps are reflective of my own journey. I remember learning the five stages of grief in a college psychology class: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance, by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. She wrote the definitive work about grief in her 1969 book, *On Death and Dying*. Since then, there have been many attacks on her work, different theories, deeper interpretations

of each stage. But I am struck most by how she's responded to misunderstandings about her contribution to the research. In her book with David Kessler, On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss, she said, "They (the five stages of grief) were never meant to tuck messy emotions into neat packages. They are responses to loss that many people have, but there is not a typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss." She feels these stages are tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling as a result of various losses in our lives.

Alleluia! Grieving is a complex process. And it's messy! There are NO hard and fast rules, no timeline. Each and every one of us is unique. Recognize that! Check out where you are. Get help if you need it.

#### STOP CRYING!

Why? Why are we plagued with so many barriers to showing our emotions? Tears are a natural and appropriate expression of the pain associated with loss. Tears are the medicine of grieving. When you cry, your loss moves through you to the point of exit. That which is eating you up, as you try to hold it inside, gets released, and you can move on. Crying releases harmful negative chemicals that build up in your body due to stress. Let it out. If you need to cry, have at it. If not, that's ok too. Be yourself. Know what you feel and what you need. What's important is to do what is intuitively YOU. Forcing yourself to not cry, or to cry, or excessive crying—can be more harmful than good.

#### The British are Coming.

I'm a Crier! Yep! I cry. Loud, and often. Normal and acceptable, yes. But let's be honest, you can't cry all of the time. In front of your young children. In line at the grocery store. In a meeting at work. It scares people. But I teeter on the brink of excessive

crying—so I took some good advice. Make an appointment with yourself to grieve. I would try to control my emotions in public or in front of the kids. But when I was alone, or with a trusted friend, I would allow myself to think about the storm, the pain, the fear, and I could cry. Allowing myself to naturally express my pain helped me to move through it.

No matter which storm has raged through your life, it's okay to admit you feel angry, upset, fearful, and vengeful.

- Set aside 15 minutes each day to feel your emotions.
   Allow yourself the same compassion you would grant another person you love. Do not judge yourself.
   Don't let your mind interfere; simply sit and feel what you feel.
- You can journal your thoughts and feelings.
- Don't be afraid to cry if you need to.

Your life only gets better when you do. Work on yourself, and the rest will follow.

#### MEN ARE DIFFERENT

Different how? Compared to women? Isn't that stating the obvious? You would think so, but it does bear further explanation. When it comes to 'feelings,' men and women's are distinctive. Our brains are wired differently, our hormones and emotional needs are not the same.

Women are prone to talk about what they are thinking and feeling. They communicate their emotional states with tears, facial expressions, hand gestures, and body language. Many women seem to be more comfortable figuring out how they feel by talking through it.

Men tend to work out their emotions by finding solutions and action. Most men want to manage things and maintain control. Often, a man will avoid highly emotionally charged settings when he hasn't got a plan. (Know any men who habitually avoid conflict or "discussion" of difficult issues?) Unfortunately, due to cultural pressure, men often stuff uncomfortable feelings (sadness, vulnerability, envy), letting them simmer and brew, and potentially eat away at them. Eventually, they may become twisted into anger or violence. They probably are as emotional as women, but don't appear so when their feelings are suppressed. It's not a matter of having the feelings, but more about how they process those emotions.

Regardless of one's gender, life is not 'tidy or nice,' and pretending it is or keeping one's emotions bottled up, will only hinder your own healing and journey through pain.

#### Buried Truth

Life had been good to Mark, with a successful career, loving wife, healthy children, and a nice home. He had it all, and he was in the driver's seat of his picture-perfect life. But, life's not without its challenges, and with a growing family, career, bills, responsibilities, and obligations, Mark became overwhelmed. He was losing control. When his marriage began to crumble, he desperately tried to force his wife, children, and LIFE, back within the boundaries that he understood and could command. His idyllic world fell apart. To resolve his feelings of loss and failure, he rewrote—in his mind—truths he could accept. He hadn't failed, his wife had. He hadn't loved her anyway. He hadn't lost the big sale at work. The client was a jerk. He hadn't been too drunk to drive; he was just blowing off steam. He hadn't cheated on his wife. That woman was only a friend. Initially that mental strategy worked, but eventually he was caught up in a web of untruths and rewritten history which conflicted with what others knew or remembered. He had put himself into a vicious cycle of

trying to maintain power over situations and emotions that he could not control.

Hurt doesn't go away simply because we refuse to acknowledge it. It's tempting to think that denying pain or painful truths will keep them from being true. Ultimately, avoidance takes over our lives. Not owning and integrating our stories affects our emotional health and physical well-being.

#### PREPARE YOUR BODY AND YOUR MIND

#### SHAPE UP!

Although we are not literally training for a mountain trek to an actual summit, it would be remiss to think that physical fitness and health do not play a significant role in our overall journey. It's the difference between having stamina to support our efforts, or letting low energy or illness drain us when we need to feel strong.

Feeling even mildly depressed can prompt high-calorie comfort eating, or make the idea of exercising totally unappealing. Finding a friend to schedule regular brisk walks or to join you at the gym can serve three purposes: eliminate feelings of isolation, build vitality, and provide an emotional boost from endorphins. Try to eat right (more veggies), drink more water, stay active, and get some sleep. Fuel your physical health to support your emotional strength!

#### CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

For every storm in life, there are various angles from which to view it. Much of your success in reaching the summit will involve your ability to reframe your situation. Auschwitz survivor, Viktor Frankl, said that our chosen response to life

is our final and ultimate freedom. Our perspective literally has the power to keep us alive or cause our death. In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl insists that we must learn to see life as meaningful despite our circumstances. He emphasizes that there is an ultimate purpose to life. We cannot avoid suffering, but we can choose how to cope with it, find meaning in it, and move forward.

Much of our unhappiness comes from our reactions and perceptions to events in our lives. Learning to avoid destructive emotions and develop positive ones is an ongoing process. This takes time and practice. However, changing our perspective is much easier than changing our emotions. Maybe we

will gag if someone tells us to look for the silver lining. Maybe we aren't ready to reframe pain this great, that could only be the result of an initial gift of a deep and unconditional love. But at some point, focus not

"TIS BETTER TO HAVE LOVED AND LOST, THAN NEVER TO HAVE LOVED AT ALL." ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

on the loss, but on the gift of having loved.

Remind yourself of how strong and resilient you have been during other tough times. How did you persevere? How did you grow? Could this be an opportunity to learn, to develop, or simply to embrace a new avenue previously closed off? When you look at things from this perspective, it can feel empowering. And remember! Just because an event unfolded in a particular way, doesn't mean it will happen again. Even patterns and habits can be altered and broken with awareness and effort!

#### Aesop's The Lion and the Statue

A man and a lion were discussing the relative strength of men and lions in general. The man contended that he and his fellows were stronger than lions by reason of their greater intelligence. "Come now with me," he cried, "and I will soon prove that I am right."

So he took the lion into the public gardens and showed him a statue of Hercules overcoming the lion and tearing his mouth in two. "That is all very well," said the lion, "but proves nothing, for it was a man who made the statue."

It's a matter of perspective. We can easily represent things as we wish them to be. Challenge yourself to consider another point of view.

#### FACE YOUR REALITY GAP

Life's not fair. And, it's not what you see on TV—even when it's labeled 'reality TV'. Often life offers one option when you want an entirely different one. The greater the distance between what you have and what you want, the greater the pain you may experience. Fighting reality is wasting energy. Recognize that the reality you wanted did not come true, and you must shift to living in a different world. Instead of resenting your situation, acknowledge that you must adapt.

For instance, if you lack financial resources, don't keep spending money like you have it. Acknowledge that your financial habits are out of line, and get started on a plan to change them. If you thought that when you got married, your wife would stay home, raise the children, and keep the house clean—wake up. She's at work, and you are going to have to vacuum. If you thought a college degree was your ticket to a six-figure salary and no one's called you with an offer, you might have to work in retail a little longer. You might have to be patient until economic factors change. You were sure that you and the love of your life would grow old together. Now, you're not. This isn't a negative message on squashing your dreams—but a reality check. Be realistic about where you are at this moment, in this situation.

Mom's Doing Great

Bryan saw his mom and dad regularly. Mike and Rachel lived nearby, and he often stopped after work to talk with his dad or drop off food from his wife. Sometimes they came to his house for dinner. Everyone knew that when Grandma started a story, she would likely repeat one or many parts several times, get flustered, and give up. No one paid much attention, and Bryan enjoyed talking 'shop' with his dad. It was a shock when Mike got the virus—and never recovered.

Rachel went on living in the house she and her husband had shared over the last forty years, and Bryan got caught up in his work, family, and grieving the loss of his dad. He called Rachel every weekend, and she seemed fine and busy, never talking for long. But the next time he stopped in with some leftover cake, Bryan couldn't believe what he found: dishes piled in the sink, his mom disheveled and dirty, wearing clothes that looked like they hadn't been washed for weeks. There were pills spilled on the kitchen table and spoiled milk in the refrigerator. Something was desperately wrong.

What Bryan learned was that while he had thought everything was fine with Rachel, the reality was that she had been steadily declining with dementia for years. Mike had been physically taking care of her and their home almost single handedly as her ability to perform tasks became more limited. It was a shock, but Bryan accepted that Rachel needed help. He'd need to grieve the loss of his father while taking over the care of his mother.

#### SHIFT INTO THE PRESENT

When the storm raged around you, your survival mission was clear. Your goal was compelling. Your focus laser-like. Your power reserves of energy, determination and courage were tapped. But when the storm subsides...

Treating the Cancer

Li's husband Simon was diagnosed with stage four liver cancer. Devastating and painful, but only the beginning of hardship to come. Years were spent in treatment, research, and the physical fight to survive. The mission was to fight the cancer and cure Simon. When he lost his battle, the storm died too. The clear sense of purpose Li had during the storm enabled her to focus all efforts on what mattered most, compelling them to take risks and push forward, regardless of the odds or obstacles. But, now that the storm was over, her purpose had shifted. To what?

Without purpose, we can fall into disillusionment, distraction, and despair. What is your reason for moving forward? Knowing what you want is good, but digging into why you want it will help propel you out of the mire and onto the road to recovery.

What vision or passion compels you to want to move forward? Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you. Do you have children to raise and support? Young or old, are they watching to see how you model handling loss and change? Wouldn't the person no longer in your life want you to be as strong and loving as before? What are your priorities? Why? Our why and our dreams tangle together to become our summit.

Your Why? Why, by definition, means 'for what cause, reason, or purpose?' Humans need more than to simply survive. Understanding your why is a first, real step in figuring our your how. A clear sense of purpose can help you tap into knowledge and energy you didn't realize you had. With your why incorporated in your summit, you will find the courage to take the risks needed to get moving, stay motivated when challenged with obstacles. and move your life onto an entirely new and rewarding trajectory. Your talents, your values, your

passions, and your skills, support your why, but how do you begin to find it?

- Create a vision board. This was a simple bulletin board in my bedroom. I didn't realize at the time that it was my vision board. It's where I showcased things that made me smile. The worn friendship bracelet my daughter made for me that summer; a note from my son; a magazine clipping of a happy-looking, retired couple; a scripture; a name badge from my job... A story emerged. A pattern. I learned a lot about my soul's desires by studying that bulletin board.
- Don't give up your hobbies. What inspires you or excites you can sometimes reveal a direction to travel: a stimulating career in a field you are passionate about; new friends with similar interests.
- Notice what you notice. What do you 'like' on social media? What do you post about? What gets your attention? The topics that get you talking or drive your interest are the ones that you care a great deal about.
- Research. Careers, housing, education, child-rearing.
   You don't know what you don't know—so read, listen and learn.
- Keep talking. Put your phone down and talk. Talk to your neighbors, talk to the person in line with you at the coffee shop, other people at the same conference, or in the waiting room at the pediatrician's office.
   Connections, ideas, and opportunities are everywhere, if we speak up and listen.

Now You're Talking

Keisha was chatting with one of the vendors at her daughter's school fund-raiser. Since Vince got laid off, money was tight, so she was making up for not buying anything by complimenting the woman's sweater. The woman told her that she got it at a shop at the mall where she worked weekends, and that they were looking for more help. Keisha was surprised by the hourly wage and the hours. Wow, that schedule would work around the kids and maybe it would be enough to make sure the mortgage got paid until Vince found something else. It turns out, Keisha liked working outside her home. She had pride in contributing to the financial well-being of her family and felt more confident. Vince felt less pressure and stress in his new job, knowing he and Keisha were a team. Several things shifted in Vince and Keisha's vision for future dreams, as a result of one simple conversation.

# VISION CHECK

You are already equipped with some important tools for your journey. Compass points, if you will, of foresight, hindsight, and insight. Turning the lens of your life into focus can help you with your map. This is a prime example of a time to get your pen out and try your hand at journaling.

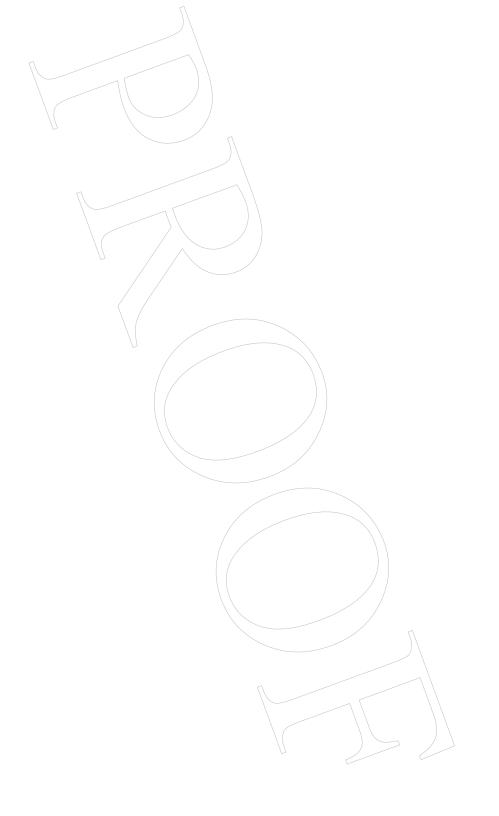
Foresight. Can foresight be 20/20? How close can we get? Look forward. What could manifest in your future? Don't let your current reality hold you down. If life were perfect and things came easily, where would you want to be? What would you be doing? Dream. Think. Pray. Make a list. More than a bucket list. Be bold. Be fearless!

Hindsight. It is said that we learn from history or are doomed to repeat it. Think about past experiences. Where have you been? What have you learned? What mistakes have you made? What successes can you celebrate? What patterns do you repeat? What were your expectations? Hindsight is the tendency for people to view events as more predictable than

they actually were. Visualize a file in your head marked 'expectations.' Whenever you start dwelling on how things should be or should have been, mentally store the thought in this file. Expectations can be dangerous. They are rarely lived up to and even more rarely communicated to those closest to us.

Insight. Look within. What do you really want? Not what you think you are supposed to do, want, or be. But, what do you want? What will feel satisfying? Stimulating? How could you use and develop a hinted at interest, known talent, or hidden passion?

So, right about now you may be thinking: How great that I found this book. You feel bad. Really bad. However! You believe in yourself enough to acknowledge how much pain you are in and how bad you feel. Are we going anywhere with this? Hang on! That's exactly what we are doing. Going somewhere.



# THE MAP

Survival!

Survival!

I need to take action

But what?

My skin is crawling with anxiety

It's cold and getting colder

The nameless dark enshrouds me

Stark

Grey

Raw

Where is color, movement?

I see boulders, I see snow

I could curl up among the rocks and drifts of snow

Give in to the mindless bliss of exhaustion

Minutes tick the silence into hours

Defeat

Give up?

No

I won't give in

Move

Move forward

Dear God! I don't want to

Resolve

One tiny, shuffling footstep at a time

Breathe

One ice cold, knife-sharp breath at a time

In. Out

Step. Step

In. Out

Step. Step

I see nothing

In. Out

Step. Falter

I stumble in the frozen tundra and land on my hands

The ice grates across my palm

The sharp sting of tearing flesh brings a new source of pain

I live, I feel, I/hurt

I look down at the snow and the offending ice beneath it

I see something other than white

Ice

Rock

It's some sort of path

# DISCOVER YOUR ROUTE AND CLIMB!

If this is a climb out of pain and devastation, you probably feel like you are at the base of Mount Everest. As the most famous mountain in the world, even the least adventurous of us has heard of Everest. Reaching 29,029 feet (8,848 meters), above sea level, it is the tallest mountain on Earth. To put that into perspective, it is roughly as tall as cruising altitude for an airplane! The average expedition to climb to the top of the world's highest peak takes almost two months.

Doesn't that climb seem unimaginable? Impossible? Certain death? Yet this metaphor is not meant to discourage your taking on a challenge difficult to complete, but to expose the parallels in achieving your own greatest climb. During raw, formidable life phases, it's hard to look forward, and it's painful to look back. But like a master mountaineer or an unseasoned climber who enlists an experienced Sherpa guide,

you need a plan—some semblance of control, in an otherwise uncontrollable situation.

If this were a trek up Mount Everest, we would have a route, a guide, gear packed, and supplies. We would research, train, and become conditioned. Our plan would be extremely detailed, but with flexibility built in for unexpected weather conditions, physical illness, equipment failures, bureaucratic red tape, or others getting in our way. We would need to tackle the climb in pieces and ascend slowly: traveling up and then down, from a series of camps. We would expect it to require a sacrifice of time and money.

We may not know every detail of our journeys beyond pain or foresee the obstacles that we'll encounter, but that does not mean that we can't take control of where we are—and where we want to end up. As you slowly traverse the mountains of personal difficulties, this book can be a source of comfort, to help and support you to find new strength and a sense of personal peace. Think of it as your printed guide. Use the following for encouragement:

- It doesn't matter which route I take, as long as I know my destination.
- There is no right or wrong way; it is just ONE of the ways.
- My journey may take longer than someone else's, but it's MY journey.
- My journey will be different from everyone else's because I will have a different view along the way.
- There will be times when my route will be "recalculated." I'll still get there, just in a different way.

Trust that sometimes the worst things that happen to us in life put us directly on the path to the best things that will ever happen to us.

# THE SUMMIT—YOUR DESTINATION

Climbing a colossal mountain isn't something people choose to do for the adrenaline rush or on a whim. They are called to the challenge. Something internal has compelled them to climb. Most feel like they have no choice. Given the opportunity, I don't think you would choose to be starting this journey if you could make another choice. It's something that you have to do. But where are you headed? What is your ultimate goal? What does your summit look like? Where do you want to

end up? If you can develop a clear vision of what you ultimately want to achieve, it will be easier to identify the steps to get there. Your course will be as unique and complicated as the chaos you find yourself

"THOSE WHO AREN'T CLIMBING TOWARD SOMETHING ARE DESCENDING TOWARD NOTHING." RICHARD PAUL EVANS

in—but it's the lifeline to get you out. So, what does your destination look like? Here are some examples.

STORM: DIVORCE

SUMMIT: LOVE MYSELF, MAYBE LOVE AGAIN

A few years ago, I was going through a painful divorce. My goal was to stop hurting. I was in a wretched place and even breathing felt difficult. To somehow stop what had become physical pain was the first summit that came to mind. But my mountain peak was as wide as my pain was deep. Also on my summit: To believe that I was worthy. To get out of bed. To stop crying. To protect my children and help them through the pain *they* were going through. Oh yes! That was a major goal.

And dare I include actually being happy someday? Oh God. And a career—not just a job. I've got to support myself and my kids. So, as long as we are dreaming, I would love to be a content woman working in a field I enjoy. My children would see a mother who was strong, funny, confident, and smart. Bonus, but not integral: a loving partner at the summit with me. Ok. There we go. I have a summit! I was a slobbering, blubbering idiot. But, in the deep recesses of my mind—that's what I wanted for myself. And...I had a lot to work with to plan how to reach my summit. Those step-by-step plans became my map. The will to be there is important, but the will to plan to get there is vital. And, honestly, planning is some of the worst work of the process. It's difficult with no immediate payoff, but it has to be done.

STORM: LAID OFF

SUMMIT: FINANCIAL SECURITY

If you just lost your job—your goal is not necessarily to get a higher paying job with more power and money. That may happen, but setting a destination that is realistic and attainable, will bring you healthy comfort. Break down the various aspects of your summit. That might include: living on a budget, attending school or a training program, living in a home that doesn't financially stress you out. Each aspect of your summit can ultimately lead you to financial security.

STORM: DEATH OF SPOUSE SUMMIT: RAISE CHILDREN

Maybe you've recently lost your husband and you have two children. Your summit may be to get them through school. Your summit may be to get through until summer, to long days of sunshine, flowers and butterflies. Your journey includes supporting them through their grief. Showing them, by example,

how to remember their father with love and honor him by leading a happy and healthy life. That's your summit. For now, you just need to get up every day and drive them to school. Some days, that's all you'll be able to manage. But every day ask yourself: How did I do today? Did I just endure the hours until I climbed back into bed? Did I cry just a little less than yesterday? Did I heal just a fraction of my broken heart? You'll have both good and bad days, and each in its own way will give you the strength tomorrow to take one tiny step forward. Even a tiny step counts to bringing you closer to your summit.

# YOUR MAP

Reif Larson wrote, "A map does not just chart, it unlocks and formulates meaning; it forms bridges between here and there, between disparate ideas that we did not know were previously connected." Your map is your route to your summit. And your summit is the disparate ideas woven together and written as your dream destination. Visualize that dream destination. Stephen Covey made this famous when he said, "All things are created twice." First the mental, then the actual. First create the picture, visualize your summit. Then create the steps you'll need to reach it in reality. Those goals are the signposts on your map that lead you to the top. They will keep you from getting lost when the stress of a difficult situation or obstacle can make you forget your plan.

# GOAL SETTING

- Details, details, details! What do you really want? Be specific. The more detailed, the easier it is to plan your moves.
- Measurable: make your goals quantitative and measurable. The vaguer they are, the less attainable.

Measurable goals help to track progress in a tangible way.

- Attainable: challenge yourself, but not so much that you become overwhelmed. Challenge brings growth, growth brings change.
- Relevant: what are you willing to work for, what has worked for you in the past? Set your sights on what you believe you can do. Be realistic.
- Time-Bound: save the date. Plan your attack and set a deadline. Don't give yourself too much time; you'll get bored and lose your focus.

Visualize reaching your summit and you can reach it. Set Goal. Make Plan. Get to Work. Stick to it. Reach goal. It's ok to have a meltdown. You are human. Just don't settle in and stay there. Cry it out and then refocus on where you are headed. Break down your ultimate goal into smaller goals. Break down your yearly goals into monthly. Break down your monthly goals into weekly. Assess your weekly goals and break them down into daily goals. What are you going to do today!? By breaking down your ultimate goal into smaller ones—monthly, weekly or daily, you can see your success. When you get discouraged, close your eyes and picture yourself after you've overcome the obstacle. Visualizing your success is the key to reaching your goal.

Track your progress. As you work toward your goal, keep a journal, or chart your progress and your setbacks. Set yourself milestones along the way, and make sure to reward yourself for each one. Hold yourself accountable by sharing your goals and milestones. Remind yourself why each goal is important.

What you fight for and struggle with before earning, has the greatest worth. When something is difficult to come by, you'll do that much more to make sure it's even harder to lose. Your goal is worth the struggle, and each moment moves you

imperceptibly closer to the journey's end. It will be worth it when you shatter the last obstacle at your feet.

# NO TURNING BACK

Commit to your summit. Commitment transforms your goal into reality. A map can lead you to your summit, but you must do the climbing if you wish to get there. Starting is easy. Summiting... not so much. By committing, you give yourself every opportunity to persevere and become creative in the ways you view your journey, overcome obstacles, develop strength, and make progress. Success is a decision. How serious are you about making it to your summit? Are you willing to make it the priority? Achieving even the simplest of goals requires us to learn the meaning of commitment. Without it, you can't achieve anything.

Motivation is what gets you started. Commitment is what keeps you going. To commit, you must fully dedicate yourself to reaching your summit.

"THERE IS NO ABIDING SUCCESS WITHOUT COMMITMENT."
TONY ROBBINS

You've already had success in this area! Everything you have ever achieved sprouted from a commitment you made, whether it's your children, job, degree, or buying a house. Learning how to commit is not making commitments, but about keeping those commitments in the face of unforeseen hurdles. What does it mean to you to commit to the summit? Never give up! Never give in.

# Career #2

Joe had been laid off from his job at the bank. He wasn't surprised. His heart wasn't in it anymore, and he was burned out. If he was going to work this hard, for these many hours, he wanted to be doing something more meaningful than making more money for a lot of stockholders. What he really wanted to do was work with

seniors. He'd always enjoyed time spent with his grandparents and their friends. He loved hearing their stories, and he hated to see the struggles they had with insurance and care needs. But he had no experience and no idea what kind of job he was qualified to do. With his severance pay and savings, he had about a year to find another job. He took a part-time, entry-level job at a retirement community. His goal was to learn the workings of a senior living community.

Friends and past colleagues scoffed at his choice. "Joe's really hit rock bottom. I heard he's working part-time at a nursing home." Money was tight, and Joe still had bills to pay. But Joe was committed to finding his dream job. A job he could feel good about, helping others, and that he was excited to go to every day. A job with meaning and purpose. At his new job, he got to spend a lot of time with the elders he enjoyed and came to understand their needs. He learned about the variety of jobs he was qualified for in the field that he came to love. His commitment paid off. By the time his year was over, he had designed a new path for himself and several opportunities to pursue in a career where he could feel fulfilled.

There's a difference between being interested and being committed. When you are only interested in doing something, you do it when it is convenient. If the going gets tough, it's easy to give up. When you are committed, you accept no excuses, only results. To commit is to no longer consider possibilities that are inconsistent with the object of your commitment. If your brain is wasting energy traveling down pathways that are not toward your summit, you are not setting yourself up for the highest chance of success. A commitment is simply a really big decision. When you decide something, you are eliminating any other possibilities to consider. You are saying, "I will no longer consider other alternatives. I will only think about ways to accomplish *this* goal." You dedicate all of your energy to succeeding.

The Fable of the Chicken and the Pig (author unknown)
A pig and a chicken are walking down a road. The chicken looks at the pig and says, "Hey, why don't we open a restaurant?" The pig looks back at the chicken and says, "Good idea, what do you want to call it?" The chicken thinks about it and says, "Why don't we call it 'Ham and Eggs'?" "I don't think so," says the pig. "I'd be committed, but you'd only be involved."

People who are committed to reaching their summit think:

- I have to get there. What do I need to do to make that happen?
- How have other people gotten to their summit? How have they gotten through this?
- What do I need to change about myself or my life to make this happen?
- What sacrifices do I need to make to get to the summit?

People who are involved or interested but not committed to reaching the summit think:

- I'll try and see how it goes.
- I shouldn't have to do this; go through this. I am the victim.

"MOST PEOPLE WHO FAIL
IN THEIR DREAM, FAIL
NOT FROM LACK OF
ABILITY BUT FROM LACK
OF COMMITMENT."
ZIG ZIGLAR

- I'll never be happy; I don't really need to summit; It's just too hard.
- I shouldn't have to give up anything. Life's not fair.

Which one are you? Are you ready to map your own journey or give that power away?

# GETTING IT Together

Head Gear

Hand Gear

Sandals

Boots

Socks

Liners

Sleeping Pad

Sleeping Bag

Snow gear

Rain gear

Camping Gear

Don't pack too much

Don't forget anything

Get what you need

Pee Bottle

Pee Bottle?

Sunglasses

Head lamp

Batteries

Chocolate

Backpack

Take everything you need

Don't take too much
Make every piece count
No journey begins without baggage...

# THE GEAR

A typical Everest expedition takes 7 - 9 weeks. Climbers need *a lot* of specific gear. An expedition survives on its supplies. The following list is by no means comprehensive but can give you an idea of the amount of equipment required.

Footwear: Climbing boots; cold weather boots for base camp; running shoes and/or trail shoes; sport sandals; lightweight hiking boots; gaiters; booties; lightweight socks; midweight/heavy socks; liner socks

Clothing: Lightweight long underwear top; expedition-weight long underwear tops; lightweight long underwear bottoms; expedition-weight underwear bottoms; briefs; short-sleeved shirts; synthetic or fleece jacket; synthetic insulated pants; down suit; down insulated jacket with hood; down pants; waterproof, breathable jacket and pants; wind shirts/light shell jacket; one piece climbing shell

Head & Hand Gear: Liner gloves; wind stopper fleece gloves; insulated climbing gloves; mittens with liners; bandana; sun hat; wool or fleece hat; heavy and light balaclava; face mask

**Accessories**: sunglasses; glacier glasses; ski goggles; head-lamp with spare bulb; spare batteries

Climbing Equipment: Ice axe; crampons; harness; carabiners; webbing; Perion cord; Ascenders; rappel device

Camping Gear: Backpack; daypack; two sleeping bags; compression stuff sacks; sleeping pad; foam pad; water bottles; lightweight steel thermal bottle; pee bottle; pack towel; trekking poles; swiss army knife; large mug, plastic bowl, fork and spoon

**Medical & Personal**: Sunscreen; lip screen; toiletry kit; first-aid kit; water purification tablets; Ziploc bags; antiseptic wipes; ear plugs

**Travel items**: expedition duffel bag; small travel bag; nylon stuff sacks; lightweight long sleeve shirt; hiking pants; lightweight pants

#### BAGGAGE

As with the undertaking of any important expedition, we must be properly prepared, so we need to spend a few moments taking inventory of our gear. Each of us carries with us our own mis-matched set of baggage. Our experiences, our trials, our tribulations. Our scars, our past, and our sorrows. We have protective behaviors, defense mechanisms, and beliefs about ourselves that we've learned in the past. Some of our baggage is useful and healthy, some we carry around with us because, well, we always have. It's familiar. It's who we are. It's comfortable.

That may be true, but sometimes we need to take a closer look at what we are carrying. On a mountain trek, every piece

of gear in our backpack needs to earn its place. Extra baggage weighing us down will impede success. So, it's time to examine our baggage and see if we need to do a little repacking. What

"THESE MOUNTAINS THAT
YOU ARE CARRYING, YOU
WERE ONLY SUPPOSED
TO CLIMB."
NAJWA ZEBIAN

we are looking for are tools we need on our journey. If possible, lighten the load and throw a few things out. But we may also need to do a little shopping.

# I HATE the Carry-on

When was the last time you flew somewhere? Did you check your bags—for a price these days, or use a carry-on? Let me repeat: I HATE the carry-on! Yes, I have one. One with a collapsible

handle, rotating rollers, clips to attach OTHER bags to it. I drag it behind me through security. Load it, reload it. Stand by while it's examined by TSA wearing gloves and poking wands through it. I drag it through the Starbucks line. Take it to the bathroom with me. And essentially, stress out about it until I am seated on the plane and have found room in the overhead for it. I want to go back to the days when I could just check my damn bag. I could bring as many pairs of shoes as I wanted and not worry if my luggage was too heavy to carry. I could roam the airport for a few short hours of care-free, happy-go-lucky, 'I don't have any baggage' bliss! Surely, I'm not the only one who feels this way? Just drop it all off somewhere where someone else can be in charge of it? It would be nice. But even the airlines find unclaimed baggage. They track you down, sometimes in the middle of the night, and leave it on your doorstep.

Since we can't escape it, let's take a closer look at what kind of baggage we are carrying. If it's not earning its place, we need to let it go.

# THESE BAGS FLY FREE—INTERNAL 'GEAR'

## 1. A Positive Attitude

We cannot control the inevitability of events that put us on this journey, but we can influence their effects in our life by adjusting our attitude toward them. Being positive on the

trek is one of the most valuable approaches to help us keep taking steps forward, when all we want to do is turn around. It's not physical toughness, but mental toughness that will inspire us. A positive thought

"YOUR AFTITUDE, NOT YOUR APTITUDE, WILL DETERMINE YOUR ALTITUDE." ZIG ZIGLAR

is 100 times more powerful than a negative thought. Don't let your mind get stuck in the negative.

# The Power of Positivity

A 90-year-old moved into our assisted living community. She was elegant, well-dressed, and charming. She was also almost completely blind. Her husband of 60-plus years had just died, and she wasn't safe to live alone. As she walked into the community, I described her surroundings. "I love it," she said excitedly. "Wait until we see your room." I told her. "It doesn't matter," she said. "Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time. Whether I like my room or not doesn't depend on the furniture or the food. It's all in how I choose to feel about it. I already decided to love it. It's a decision I make every morning. I figure I can spend the day moping about my life or I can get up and be thankful for what I still have. Each day is a gift. As long as I remember that, I'll be happy."

#### 2. Belief

We've talked about this. Belief sustains the journey. If you believe, you will get there. You must cultivate a fierce belief in yourself. Your true self—the self that is whole, the self that is enough and the self that no longer looks to others for definition, completion, or approval. When that belief develops into conviction, when it is anchored in your soul and nothing can destroy it, then belief becomes faith. And faith in yourself is a powerful force. The power of faith in ourselves allows us to push beyond the seemingly impossible. It pulls us through when all evidence suggests that we quit.

# Unstoppable

Maya's ex didn't think she could do it. Survive without him. He saw her as weak, dependent, inexperienced. Frustrated and disgusted, Maya thought, "Doesn't he know me at all?" Obviously not. In this case, Maya's belief in herself was fueled by anger. And, that's ok. Sometimes we need that kind of fuel to propel us to go the distance. Maya was so hurt and angry that her husband had so little faith in her, who she was and what she was capable

of—that she wanted to prove how wrong he was. She believed she was unstoppable, and so she was.

### 3. Will

There's no room for excuses. The adage, "Where there's a will, there's a way," whether it's over, under, around or through—is true. If you ferociously want to heal, grow, and thrive, you have to keep going. You must cultivate a strong will and conviction. It may take reading an inspiring saying that you post on your bathroom mirror and recite in the morning or at bedtime. A reminder such as: I love myself and I am worth fighting for; I will allow myself to move into a healthy, satisfying, joyful phase of life. Trust that with each trial, you will emerge stronger, surer, and more deserving of the dream itself. Your desire to summit will take you there.

#### I Will be Number One

Steve Roland "Pre" Prefontaine was an American middle and long-distance runner who competed in the 1972 Olympics. Prefontaine once held the American record in seven different distance track events, from the 2,000 meters to the 10,000 meters. He died in 1975. He is still considered one of the greatest American runners in history. He was popular for his accomplishments, but also for his all-out running style and outspoken opinions. Pre didn't believe in pacing himself during a race, he gave it his all from start to finish. One of his many famous quotes about running demonstrates his strong will. "A lot of people run a race to see who is fastest. I run to see who has the most guts, who can punish himself into an exhausting pace, and then at the end, punish himself even more."

# 4. Perseverance

The power of tenacity. Persevere, no matter what the challenges. Refuse to quit and one cannot fail. Every obstacle we encounter is a natural and necessary step on the journey

to reaching our summit. In the Greek language, the word perseverance is literally made up of two words. One means "to remain." The other word means "under." That tells us that perseverance is the ability to be steadfast under the pressure of difficulty. Add in a dose of resilience—and there is your winning combo! Not only do you have the strength to persist, but the ability to start over. Practice overcoming hurdles in everyday life. As you nurture your ability to recover quickly from difficulties, your mental power of perseverance is strengthened. When the going gets tough, the tough remain. Have you ever listened to the words of that Simon and Garfunkel song about the boxer? "I am leaving. I am leaving, but the fighter still remains." Be the fighter. Maybe you will have to change course, but don't give up. Effort only fully releases its reward after a person refuses to quit.

# 57 Marathons in 52 weeks

My husband ran 57 Marathons in 52 weeks. Yes, that means there were some weekends that he ran two marathons in one weekend. All while working a full-time job and driving around the country to marathons every weekend. Sometimes he would arrive back into town just in time to drive straight to work on a Monday morning. He was inspired by running programs in inner cities for disadvantaged teens. He hoped that by doing something big, he could bring awareness to those types of programs and more would be developed. That was his WHY. But, more incredibly, HOW? How did he do it? How could he keep his body moving for hours on end, over, and over, and over again? He simply wouldn't quit. Through illness, injury, and disappointment, he persevered. He refused all alternatives. He. Would. Not. Quit.

#### 5. Humor

Humor is so important we are going to talk about it at length in another chapter. But it bears mentioning here, as

part of our day-to-day gear, or even our armor. In fact, I never leave home without it.

Never underestimate the power of laughter; and if you aren't there yet, and the best you can possibly manage is a smile, that's good too. There is scientific proof that using the facial muscles required to make the corners of our mouths turn up—actually contributes to chemical reactions in our bodies to release endorphins—which make us feel happier. "Fake it until you make it." Sometimes that's all we can do—but on the inside, our bodies are working to help us along.

Do you know who's really funny? Me!

A few years ago, I reconnected with some old friends. As I got together with the old gang, someone said, "You are still so funny!" Huh? Is that how people saw me? I was funny? Did I even remember that I was funny? Is that how people used to think of me? I don't think anyone who had known me in the past few years would describe me as funny. When did I lose that? Was it repeatedly frowned upon until it no longer existed as a part of my identity? Never again! I will never let others take away who I am, or one of the things I value most about myself. I am funny, and I love to laugh.

# SUIT UP! EXTERNAL GEAR

I'll need armor to protect myself

Some days I don't get dressed
Most days I want to stay in bed or on the couch
Grab that ratty green sweater for comfort and protection
But survival doesn't exist within the perimeter of the bed
I'm going to have to venture forth
Out of bed
Out of the house
Out of my comfort zone
On my path

#### 1. Armor

Do you have a favorite robe or well-worn sweater that you put on when you're sick because it gives you comfort? Of course, you do. We all do. We have lucky socks, power suits, a favorite dress. Your 'sassy' date jacket. Your 'interview' tie. Your power t-shirt for demanding, strenuous workouts at the gym. These items are the armor we clothe ourselves in when we need strength for heading into a challenge. Well—open up the closet and dig deep. You need all of the armor you own right now!

# "Hello, Old Friend"

You think I've run into someone from my past? Not so! You've heard of comfort food? Let's talk about comfort clothes. I'm talking about that fuzzy pink bathrobe your kids always make fun of or your favorite college sweatshirt that you still wear, even though the cuffs are frayed and stains adorn the front of it. Here is one time when I was desperate for mine: My mother was gone. I didn't get there in time. I came home and threw the closet door open in a frenzy to find the green sweater I had worn for weeks. The one my kids had insisted I banish to the back of my closet. My need was almost obsessive. I HAD to have it. It had become my security blanket. With its matted sleeves, ripped hem, and balls of shredded wool—that itchy mess enveloped me in familiarity and security no hug could ever replace. I was going to be ok. And, as I stood there in that sweater, a sense of calm came over me. I needed this simple creature comfort to balance the emotional turmoil of losing my mom.

# 2. Knowledge

Knowledge is the most powerful tool you can own. Find it, use it, hoard it.

If you have cancer, find out about it. What kind is it, what can trigger it, what do 'other' doctors say about it? Treatments, medications, alternative treatments, diet. I am-astounded

every time I hear someone say, "The doctor said I need to see a specialist. I don't know why. I forget what kind. They are going to run some tests. Not sure which ones." You're not the doctor, nor do you play one on TV. But, you're not stupid. Learn everything you can. Remember: when we feel stressed, it's important to make lists to keep track of our thoughts. Write down questions for the professionals, no matter how insignificant they seem.

What don't you know about? How to assemble a trampoline? Applying for a mortgage? Taxes? What insurance you need? Money management? Investments? Fixing the sink? Drug interactions? Writing a resume? Alternative medications? Re-training programs? You don't know what you don't know. Read books, attend a workshop. With today's resources and technology, you can learn anything. Even directions to the computer store to figure out how to get online.

# Google to the Rescue!

Evas husband had always taken care of the house repairs and even finished their basement for the kids. When he suddenly died at 47, she had her hands full with three kids, a job, and house on her own. With his insurance, she was able to keep the house, but there was little room in the budget for maintenance or repairs. When the upstairs sink was leaking through to the kitchen ceiling, she panicked. The first plumber she called charged \$150 just to come take a look. She didn't have it! But she did have her husband's tools. She would have to figure it out. Google to the rescue! After some research and watching several YouTube videos, Eva could see that the problem wasn't that drastic. She turned off the water, found the right wrench, and followed the video.

# 3. Expertise, Please!

Bring in the experts. Counselors, financial advisors, career advisors, medical and mental health professionals, mentors,

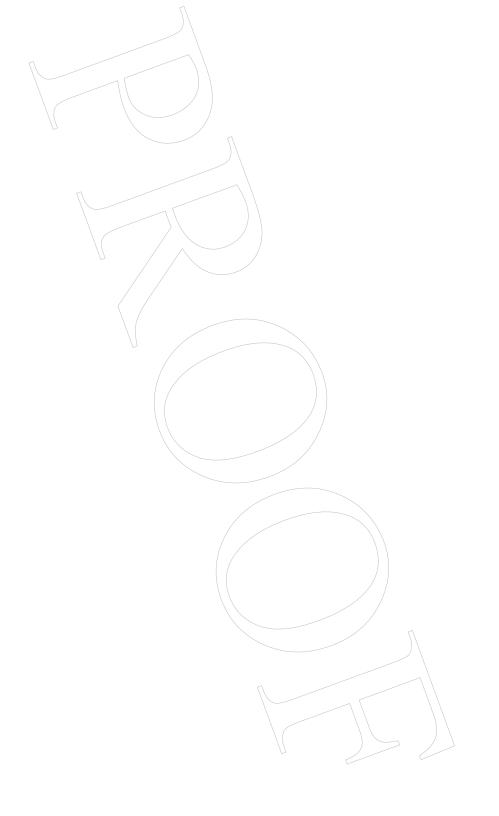
ministers, priests, rabbis, support groups. They're out there, people. Find them!

#### **PTSD**

Grant is in the Army. His unit has been deployed twice in the past three years—once to Iraq and once to Afghanistan. Grant has seen his share of firefights. Several times he came close to death from nearby explosions. Some of his friends weren't so lucky. Grant tried to leave those memories overseas when he came home, but it didn't work. He would wake up at night in a panic, reliving the attacks. He tried self-medicating with alcohol. He broke up with his girlfriend. He avoided his family. Grant is most likely suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. He can't fix this on his own. He needs help from a specialist in this field.

# BAG CHECK!

What gear do you possess, and what shopping needs to be done? You may have enough to get started. Perhaps you'll need to pick up a few things along the way. However, everything in your bag must earn its place or you need to leave it behind.



# WHO'S IN YOUR CAMP?

Why am I here?
This load is too heavy
This place is too frightening
It's not real. Not normal. I am in a graveyard of ice
I'm in unknown territory
I've never been this terrified
I feel my heart slamming into my throat
I have metal spikes strapped to my boots. I can't walk
I cannot breathe
It's too much
Stop
It's too much
Please don't make me do this

The crevasse is thirty feet wide, so deep that no bottom is visible. A great, yawning chasm of darkness. I am balanced precariously on an aluminum ladder – one of four lashed together to span the gap. My crampons scrape against the first aluminum rung, and I am frozen. The icy flush of terror paralyzes my limbs, leaving me with a dizzying sense of free fall. But if I fall, there will be no help. Trapped in an alien realm of ice, I will be lost forever "Don't look down."

But down is the only place to look

"Come, friend. Come with me."

Sherpas carrying enormous loads want to squeeze past me "Follow."

They are barely breathing hard despite the enormous packs they carry. These are the people employed to ferry the gear and supplies to the high camps in the mountains. These are the people who lashed the ladders together, strung the rope lines. They are the guides through the vast unknown

I have to follow

One step

Breathe

Step

Breathe

I will follow

#### SHERPAS

Atop Everest, your own preparation and training will support you to successfully make it to your summit. But as we all can attest (hence, my writing and your reading this book), the unexpected happens. Your only rescue squad are the others who take on the mountain with you. Your Sherpas. Technically, Sherpas are an ethnic group of people in Tibet. The first Everest climbers, in the early twentieth century, realized the importance of Sherpas to mountaineering expeditions. Since Sherpas have lived at high altitudes for generations, they are genetically stronger when closer to the clouds than are their sea-level counterparts. They've become specialists in assisting alpine expeditions in the Himalayan Mountains. Climbers are not only impressed with their abilities, but also their spirits.

Some people glorify the Sherpas as natural gods of nature, with stronger abilities than those possessed by the average human. They are mystical, pure of heart, powerful, accomplished guides with endurance, experience, and resilience. An excellent example of the benefit of different specialists for different

situations. These are the people we want to be surrounded by on our journeys. Our mountain may not be Everest, but Sherpas are the gift we can give ourselves to reach our summits.

# WHY BUILD A TEAM?

Even in climbing, there can be a stigma about asking for or using help. Hiring Sherpas. Or not using bottled oxygen. But we are not professionals. We are not setting a world record in pain and suffering. Sometimes it takes a crisis to teach us that we don't have to do it alone; shouldn't have to do it alone. Jeff Bauman, who lost both legs in the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013 urged survivors of catastrophic events to accept help being offered by friends and loved ones. "Trust the people around you. Use your support group," Bauman told Megyn Kelly on The Today Show in October 2017. "That's huge, because usually when people go through something traumatic, you tend to isolate a lot, and I did in my recovery." He went on to say, "I isolated a lot and pushed people away from me that were trying to help. So, I would just recommend that you don't isolate and that you work on both your physical and mental recovery."

There is no shame in assistance. Teams strengthen the cause, and right now—the cause is you and your journey. You need to build a support team of friends, colleagues, family, advisors, and mentors. A highly trained special unit of allies and accomplices with a variety of skills and diverse talents. Sometimes small. Sometimes large. But always strong enough to support you emotionally, and knowledgeable enough to guide you to success. Your personal support team will benefit you with a wide range of abilities—psychologically and sometimes physically, and keep you accountable when you stumble or lose your way.

Inventory existing contacts and identify role models for strength and inspiration. Find others to "believe" with you

and ask for help! Though you may lean on your friends, some will be Sherpas and others will not. It doesn't make them any less important or change your friendship. But, with Sherpas, you are relying on the diverse talents and skill sets that they provide you through your journey. An acquaintance or friend of a friend may become a Sherpa. Some you may not even know yet. As you are thinking about who your Sherpas may be, keep in mind that you'll need both: knowledgeable support (your experts), and emotional support. No one achieves greatness by themselves.

# EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

The quality and quantity of understanding support you receive on your journey will have a major impact on your success. You cannot, and you should not, try to do this alone. Having someone rooting for your well-being and reminding you of the good in your life is an effective way to stay on track. Talking to someone who is truly supportive can build self-confidence. It can be a friend you trade positive text messages with every day, or the group that meets once a month. Surrounding yourself with supportive, positive people can increase your odds of staying positive and reaching your goal. To be truly helpful, the people in your support system must appreciate the impact of what you are going through. Look for those rare people who ask you how you are...and wait to hear the answer.

# FOR OUR HEALTH

Social support not only assists us on our journeys, but it's an important part of a person's well-being. A study at the Mayo Clinic finds that friendships improve our health by:

- Increasing a sense of belonging and purpose
- · Boosting happiness

- Reducing stress
- Improving feelings of self-worth
- Helping us to cope with trauma
- Encouraging us to change or avoid unhealthy lifestyle habits

Research proves that social interaction affects the immune system as well. Lack of it can negatively lead to the first signs of depression and anxiety. However, they are not sure about which comes first: depression or social isolation. With life-threatening conditions such as cancer or HIV/AIDS, a strong social network can aid in recovery and improve one's quality of life—extremely important for the mental health of a seriously ill person. The vital takeaway: People need People!

# BUT NOT NEGATIVE PEOPLE!

Think of life like an elevator: on your way up, you may have to stop and let certain people off. Sometimes it's easier to find support from a complete stranger or a new friend. They don't carry preconceived ideas about what you can or cannot do. What you should or shouldn't do. They simply support what you are trying to achieve. You are the company you keep. Consciously focus on the positive feeling of support until belief in yourself registers in your subconscious and manifests in how you think and feel every day. Your Sherpas will support your focus.

# KNOWLEDGEABLE SUPPORT

Mentors provide invaluable insight into changes on the route that will get you to the summit. A guide who has traveled the same path can accompany you at intervals along the way, initiating small corrections in direction. You might be blind

to inherent dangers that exist or shortcuts to consider. In the end, guides can save you a lot of wasted steps. This support may come from friends, acquaintances or professionals you hire to get you what you need.

# MY SHERPAS

I honor my personal Sherpas with my eternal gratitude. I have a Sherpa for Experience, Power, Spirituality, Blue Skies, Mojo, Loyalty, Laughter, and Inspiration. Sherpas change with the ebb and flow of life. Let me introduce you to a few of the Sherpas who have helped me on my journey.

**Experienced Sherpa** Diana set the pace after college graduation by finding a job first. She was the first to get married, the first to own a home, the first to become a mother, and the first to get divorced. The die was cast. Diana is my "Experienced" Sherpa. The Expert. The Advisor. The Survivor. Diana knew how to land a man, run a home, and be a mom. She went from Lady Di, Princess of our posse; to Dr. Di: authority on all things important—and I went to her with every question.

Di, can I have the recipe for those cream cheese brownies?

Di, what should I serve at a bridal shower?

Bills? How do I keep track of all of these?

Pregnancy? Childbirth?

Diana, how do I treat RSV, chicken pox, vaccines, fevers? I can't stop crying. If I get meds for this, can he use it against me to get the kids?

Lawyers? Maintenance? Child support? Taxes?

For every curve in the road, Diana has always been there before me. I couldn't have gotten through life without her sound advice, resources, and hours and hours of telephone counseling. Forever the practical one, Di is always available to advise me WHAT to do. Coincidence? I don't think so.

**Loyal Sherpa** While Diana settled into her "adult" life, Paige and I were Divas of the 80s—flaunting our giant earrings, big hair and shoulder pads.

We finally grew up and into relationships that changed our lives. Continuing to live fairly near to each other, we were loyal friends—through weddings, careers, and babies. Her lake house became our retreat and offered respite from the adult life... And like the "loyal" wife she was and is, Paige followed her husband to the coast, so he could pursue his dreams. It seems like yesterday that we were enjoying our final weekend at the lake. I tearfully drove home, thinking about her new life on the West Coast and crying over losing my best friend. I walked into my house, lost and sad, only to find out that a best friend moving across the country was not the worst thing that could happen.

The storm had broken, and it was the most horrific time of my life. Life's brought other storms, but this felt catastrophic. Maybe because I didn't have the skills I needed when the first one hit, but thank goodness, I had Sherpas. From across the country, Paige helped hold the shattered pieces of my world together. I was not surviving. I was barely existing. Paige kept me breathing. She is the truest of friends. Listening to me, crying with me, and pointing out a few harsh realities. How or why she kept answering the phone, I'll never know. But Paige was the lifeline I needed during the worst storm of my life.

Spiritual Sherpa Marie and I met when her son and mine became friends in first grade. I felt intimidated by Marie and her family. She was, and had, everything I thought I was lacking. She has several sisters; her mom was her best friend. They were the closest family I had ever seen. Beautiful. Intelligent. Trendy. Always smiling. Close. Close. Close. One was never alone. And their love for each other was palpable.

Marie, the oldest, was surely the leader of these ladies, but not by force. Marie exudes quiet grace. She-possesses a

natural beauty that shines from within. Always showing love. Never passing judgement. Never drawing undue attention to herself. Full of the most obvious common sense that fulfills her priorities, which never waiver. From a Christian perspective, when you hear that Christ manifests himself in the people around you, I see that in Marie. God shows me Jesus in her every smile.

So, there we were: the princess and the court jester—on a path that neither of us expected. I remember our first serious conversation, beyond, "Hi, your son is such a sweet boy." We were working the same volunteer shift at a school function, and I was fretting and stressed about something. Anything. It didn't really matter. I was constantly getting worked up.

After listening to me carry on, Marie said, "Oh, I never worry about stuff like that. Things always seem to work out." What?! Was she nuts? Didn't worry?! It was Wednesday... How could she not know what they were doing for the weekend and which birthday party they would go to on Saturday afternoon? Was she insane? Didn't she *care*?? What did she mean, everything always works out? Not in *my* world it didn't!

And that became one of the defining conversations of my life. One of the great secrets had been revealed. I was not in control. I recognize my spiritual Sherpa as being instrumental on my journey by teaching me that my life is divinely guided, and I believe she was used by Christ to help me learn this lesson. Regardless of your personal religious or spiritual tradition, gratitude for those who enlighten us about existence is universal.

**Power Sherpa** Laura is the Sherpa that I hadn't even met when my storm broke. Ironically, that hasn't stopped her from becoming my 'vault,' the one to whom I confide *all* the intimate secrets of my sordid world. True to form, each of my Sherpas had a *piece* of my story. I've typically held back. I've usually kept a few secrets. But, as with all of my Sherpas,

God puts people in my life for a reason. Through Laura, I learned to trust. To let myself be vulnerable. And in giving myself over completely to her—including flaws and failures, I've been given back the power to handle it all.

Laura and I met through a direct marketing pyramid. Yes, I actually did that, and more than once. When we started working together, I was a lost soul, trying to make a dime and keep my family together. Laura and I got into the habit of meeting for coffee to discuss business. We spent hours talking and laughing about anything BUT business. Nothing was sacred. Our conversations bounced between defective products, to troubled kids, to TV. Trips we wanted to earn, food we had to eat, and crazy coworkers we had to endure. Building a sales empire, selling a house—I've never laughed so hard in my life! But what we came back to over and over, besides the humor, was the power. The power of believing in myself.

Through business, we were exposed to leadership training about feeling empowered or inspiring others to be. Combine that with our own research to find enlightenment, and we were linked. Laura has the gift of empowerment. She knows her strengths and isn't afraid to embrace them. She can welcome imperfect moments and know that she has the knowledge, confidence and ability to be in control of her own life and take on her biggest dreams. And when her batteries run low, I've been there for the jumpstart she needs as a reminder.

I can't remember the first time she looked me in the eye and said, "You are a powerful woman." But I remember distinctly the day we were having coffee and she said, "You're not happy." I was fighting a divorce, begging for a reconciliation. It was misery, and it was time to give in. Thank goodness for my Sherpas.

Less and less became taboo to share as I poured my inner thoughts and feelings into Laura's listening ears. When one of us dared to tread into dangerous waters, it was with love and trust and laughter. One time, I called crying. She listened

with sympathy for a few minutes before saying, "How much longer are you going to feel sorry for yourself?" What? Did she need coffee? But that sincerity was exactly what I needed. She snapped me out of it. After snuffling a bit, I answered that I was almost done, and could I have just a couple more minutes...

Today, I can't remember what I was so upset about, but I remember how my Sherpa Laura helped me find power from within. We moved apart after that, but she left me a legacy of empowerment; and besides, I learned long ago that friends don't have to be close, to be close.

The best kinds of people come into your life and make you see sunshine where you once saw clouds. People who believe in you so totally, you start to believe in you, too. People who love you for simply being you. Once in a lifetime kind of people. I hope the descriptions of a few of my Sherpas help you to identify your own and realize the power and support that you gain from them.

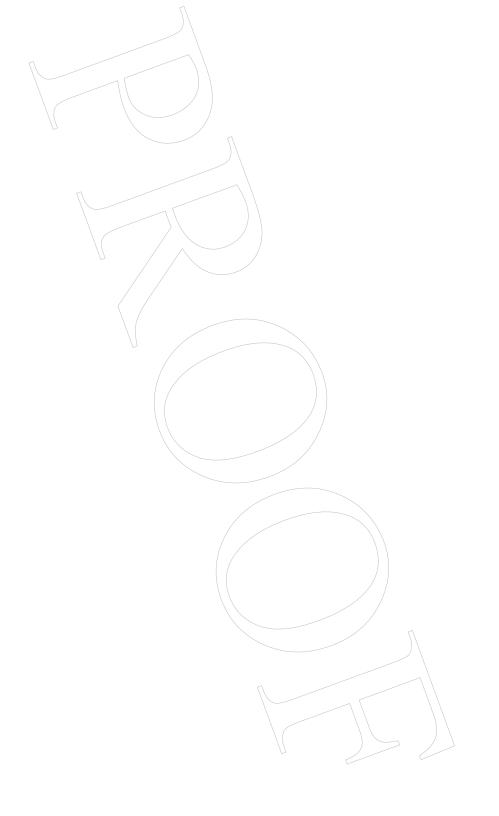
# TIPS FOR SHERPAS

Because deep relationships are reciprocal; we may be someone else's Sherpa.

- Be there.
- Be willing to listen.
- Acknowledge their loss.
- Don't judge.
- Answer questions honestly. You don't need to have all of the answers.
- It's ok to say, "I don't know what to say."

- Encourage normal activities and routine.
- Offer to spend time with your friend.
- Offer a hug.
- Allow time—don't expect the journey to end quickly.
- Ask them how they are doing at different times.
- Take care of yourself.

Sherpas are your guides on this journey. They may be existing friends, acquaintances, or people you meet along the way. Only you know who your Sherpas are and who you need to get you to the summit.



# THE TREK

Screeeeech? Screeeeech!

20,000 feet

Aluminum ladders strapped together

Frozen spikes strapped to my boots

Screeeeech

One misstep, one small error

Mooooaaannn

Seracs the size of office buildings are shifting and moaning

They can crush you in an instant

No warning

An eerie blue labyrinth

Blue because the ice is so dense only one color of the spectrum is

reflected

I'm climbing

Blood, sweat and icy tears

Every aspect of this climb is an assault on the mountain

I'm on a mountain

Beautiful

Scary

Scraaape. My crampon spikes scrape against an aluminum ladder Head down. One step at a time

Screeech

Over the ladders, but not out of the Ice Fall

Step. Scratch. Scrape

Moooooaaaan

Screeeeech

20 more steps

Screeech

10

One foot in front of the other

One step at a time

Inch by inch

I can see safety

A sudden, desperate longing washes over me to be there

8, 7, 6 steps, 5, 4, 3, 2

Safety

Look at me!

I am a mountaineer!

I did it!

I only have to do it 5 more times...

# THE KHUMBA ICEFALL

The Khumba Icefall is an icefall located at the foot of the Lhotse Face of Mt. Everest. No part of the Everest route is more feared by climbers. The icefall is considered one of the most dangerous stages of the South Col (Nepal) route to Everest's summit. It is estimated that the glacier advances 3 to 4 feet down the mountain every day. The icefall, moving at that speed, opens large crevasses with little warning, and the large towers of ice (seracs), can topple over suddenly. Some say it is the most technically demanding section of the route. For this reason, guides and Sherpas blaze a zigzag path through the ice towers using a mile of rope and something like 60 aluminum ladders.

The moaning is the sound of the glacier shifting, ice shattering, and water rumbling. From Mount Everest Base Camp, climbers must pass through the Khumbu Icefall. They can only

traverse this area with the aid of ropes and ladders. Even with all of the safety precautions, this section is extremely dangerous. Shifting ice, deep crevasses, falling ice, and avalanches have killed many climbers and Sherpas. Most climbers must navigate the Khumbu Icefall at least twice, and sometimes more, as they acclimate to the elevation.

We are treading on new ground and unfamiliar territory. It may not be level, solid, necessarily smooth, or free of debris. We may stumble and fall. There are bound to be pitfalls on parts of our path. We have one job: keep moving. Do not lose focus, even when it's scary. Forget what lies behind and reach forward to what lies ahead. Press on toward the summit.

# DISCOURAGEMENT—OUR PERSONAL ICEFALL

Someone said that one of the world's deadliest diseases was discouragement. That seems odd, but the more I thought about it, the more I could see the point.

- It's universal. We all get discouraged from time to time.
- It's recurring. Discouragement is not necessarily a one-time thing. We may suffer from it over and over again.
- It's highly contagious. Our discouragement can rub off on other people. Theirs can rub off on us!

# WHY DO PEOPLE GET DISCOURAGED?

1. The first cause of discouragement is fatigue. We get tired! Why is life so dang hard? Shouldn't it be easier than this? Haven't I been down this road? I'm sick of working through the pain. Dealing with the feelings, building new relationships! The payoff is slow and

the journey is long. Do you know when we are apt to get discouraged the most? When we're halfway through a project. Everyone works hard at first, but when the newness wears off and life settles into a rut, discouragement can take over.

- 2. The second cause of discouragement is frustration. When we focus on the obstacles instead of the goal, we run the risk of discouragement.
- 3. The third cause of discouragement is failure. The difference between winners and losers is that winners always see failure as only a temporary setback.
- 4. The fourth cause of discouragement is fear. When our discouragement is caused by fear—whether fear of embarrassment, criticism, or failure, we feel a deep, intense desire to run. That's because the natural reaction to fear is flee; to want to escape.

So, get the F out of here. The F of fatigue, frustration, failure, and fear. Discouragement is actually curable. When we feel discouraged to the point of wanting to give up, we can do three things to remedy the situation: reorganize, remember, and resist. Our Rx, if you will.

**Reorganize** - don't give up on your goals. Devise a new approach. We may be doing the right thing but doing it in the wrong way.

# Job Search

After her divorce, Jeanine had looked for a job for months, without success. She was desperate to start earning the money she needed to support herself and her children. Working a retail job at the mall was the last option she wanted to consider, but she needed something. She continued to pursue her goal of a job in Human Resources around her retail schedule. Once she was back in the workforce (even though it was at the mall), the routine and

positive feedback boosted her self-esteem. Her interviewing skills improved—she was less nervous, and employers saw her abilities and confidence. She eventually had to choose between two jobs in her field.

Remember - to recommit yourself to your summit. Remember, our thoughts determine our feelings. If we feel discouraged, it could be due to thinking discouraging thoughts. If we'd rather feel encouraged, be mindful of thinking encouraging thoughts. Visual reminders can help keep us focused on where we want to be. Ask yourself: did I make a dream-board, a collage, a picture of myself at my summit? Keep that on hand for tough times, to remind you where you are headed. Paste those inspirational quotes on the mirror; repeat positive affirmations three times a day. Remember how far you've come; not just how far you have left to go. You are not where you want to be, but neither are you where you used to be!

**Resist** - discouragement is a choice. If we choose to, we can give in to it. Or, we can choose to resist the temptation and refuse to be discouraged. Don't give up, even in the face of fatigue, frustration, fear, or failure. And, if experiencing a bad week or weekend—that's ok. Take a step back to acknowledge how you are feeling, regroup, and start again.

We must proceed like a dedicated mountain climber who spots a previously unknown and seemingly unreachable peak. She is at once attracted to its majesty and excited by the promise of its lofty secrets, but reluctant to begin her ascent because she knows it will be challenging. However, her love of the climb outweighs the fear of falling, and so she brushes away the last thought of difficulty. She understands that all she needs to do to reach new heights is to study the slope and start to climb.

# STUDY THE SLOPE

Sustaining motivation can be tough even in the best of circumstances. If achieving goals was quick and easy, everyone would be doing it.

- Visualize your goal—down to the most insightful detail.
- List the reasons you want to accomplish your goal.
- Set milestones and rewards. Neuroscience tells us that each small success triggers the brain's reward center, releasing the feel-good chemical dopamine. This helps focus our concentration and inspires us to take another similar step.
- Be prepared to change your route. There will be obstacles. Unexpected setbacks and storms. Don't be surprised. They *will* happen.
- Get help! Professional or part of your team. This is why you have Sherpas.
- Have a plan for waning motivation. How will you re-energize? Keep yourself going? Give yourself breaks? Don't be too hard on yourself.

# CLIMB

Keep moving forward. Don't look too far ahead. Speed doesn't matter. Forward is forward. Persistence is everything on our journey. We must persist, even if it is only with our wish to be persistent. Persistence is the grace that allows us to continue to move forward even when we are stuck in hell. I love Winston Churchill's words, "If you are going through hell, keep on going." This exemplifies the steadfast pursuit of

trudging forward until the hell looks less scary and the route seems more defined.

Remember the movie *What about Bob?* Richard Dreyfus is a therapist whose book on Baby Steps has Bob Murray taking "baby steps" all over the therapist's family vacation. Not a bad theory! Baby steps to the grocery store. Baby steps to the job interview. Baby steps to the doctor's appointment. The goal is progress, not perfection or speed. Just enough pace to keep up a certain momentum. Our intention put into action will keep the steps coming.

Someone said persistence is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did. Persistence is guts. It says: don't give-up.

We need to keep moving forward in spite of the forces that seem to be against us. Our only need is to want the summit more than the alternative. If it's

"ADOPT THE PACE OF NATURE, HER SECRET IS PATIENCE." RALPH WALDO EMERSON

important enough, we'll find a way. If not, we will find an excuse.

# Degree

Dana is working on her college degree. I asked her when she would finish, and she laughed. Oh, I don't know. I should have been done a long time ago, but I can only take classes when I have the time, the right class is offered when I'm available, and, of course, when I have the money to pay for it. I'm working a full-time job and two part-time jobs, but I haven't given up. The quiet steadiness of persistence is powerfully propelling her to her goal.

Be patient. Don't think about what can happen in a year or a month. Focus on the 24 hours in front of you, and do what you can to get closer to where you want to be. Just keep moving.

Aesop's Famous Fable of The Hare and the Tortoise
The Hare was once boasting of his speed before the other animals.
"I have never yet been beaten," said he, "when I put forth my full speed. I challenge anyone here to race with me." The Tortoise said quietly, "I accept your challenge." "That is a good joke," said the Hare; "I could dance round you all the way." "Keep your boasting till you've beaten," answered the Tortoise. "Shall we race?" A course was fixed and a start was set. The Hare darted almost out of sight at once, but soon stopped; and to show his contempt for the Tortoise, lay down to have a nap. The Tortoise plodded on and plodded on, and when the Hare awoke from his nap, he saw the Tortoise near the winning-post and could not run up in time to save the race. Then said the Tortoise: "Plodding wins the race."

### CELEBRATE SUCCESSES

It pays to acknowledge small wins. Alcoholics Anonymous doesn't ask its members to never drink again—that goal would probably seem unreachable. It asks them not to drink *that day*, and it recognizes small milestones by awarding 'sobriety coins,' usually monthly, for periods of abstinence. Take a lesson from this practice and find ways to celebrate incremental achievements. Concentrate on small victories.

Replace a negative thought with a positive thought. Celebrate!

Walk 30 minutes. Celebrate!

Eat dinner alone. Celebrate!

Meet with a financial planner to review what your spouse had always handled. Celebrate!

Journal about your day. Celebrate!

Tackle your late wife's closet. Celebrate!

Stick to the consequence you gave your teenager. Celebrate! Say NO to an event you don't really want to attend. Celebrate!

Make an appointment with a counselor. Celebrate!

Spend twenty minutes on your resume. Celebrate!

Recognizing accomplishments is vital. We don't have to wait until we've reached our goal to be proud of ourselves. Be proud of *every* step taken toward reaching that goal. Celebrating the small advances we make helps us to stay motivated and to realize our potential.

One of the best reasons to celebrate success is simply that it feels good. When we celebrate with good feelings, more good feelings arise. We want these changes in our lives because we want to feel better, happier. Success lies at the heart of it. A large part of success is about one's state of mind—so it's about having a success mindset. And this success mindset requires cultivation. Yes, techniques like affirmations and visualization have a part to play, but celebrating our success is another tool for cultivating this way of thinking about our progress.

Focus on what's been accomplished, rather than on what's not working or a long, overwhelming list of what's yet to do. Tell yourself: 'I am successful' or 'I can do this because I've succeeded before,' to build up self-belief and a success attitude. Downplaying our success, or not acknowledging our steps forward may be telling ourselves we haven't done enough, or we don't deserve to celebrate. Whereas when we notice and celebrate our advances, we begin to see ourselves as someone who is successful rather than someone who is trying to become successful.

# Sun A GUIDE FROM To Peace

Are you stuck in the aftermath of life's storm?

Climb out of pain to find peace.

Everyone experiences pain and loss—and it hits you like a storm. This book is a collection of practical strategies artfully woven together with storytelling of the pain of the journey and the humor of life. Told as a metaphor to climbing Mt. Everest, Summit will meet you in your current situation and set you up to reach your personal destination of peace and happiness. You will be guided to:

- Prepare. From where you are to where you want to be—you will map your destination and gather what you need.
- Climb. Learn practical tips and strategies to tackle your mountain and hear from others on their trek. You are not alone.
- Summit. The journey is hard, but not impossible.

Leace is yours.

If you are someone who has experienced a loss and would like to move forward in your recovery, this book is for you. Readers will feel the empathy of their own pain mirrored in the metaphor of the mountain climb but see the transformation of that pain into realistic milestones on the journey to peace. You can reach your Summit. Begin the journey today.



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AUTHOR ACADEMY

