

Praise for *The Twelve Secrets of Highly Successful Women*

“Gail McMeekin is such a gift. Her *12 Secrets of Highly Successful Women* gets right to the loving heart of how women are redefining success and building lives that are wildly creative and creatively successful! I’ll be recommending this book for many years to come.”

—SARK, author of *Succulent Wild Woman*, PlanetSARK.com

“Reading *The 12 Secrets of Highly Successful Women*, you gradually discover the one real secret of a successful life: it is yours—and yours alone. You get to find and define it. You get to create it. You get to fall in love with it. And you get to live it on your own terms. That’s exciting, yes, but daunting, too. Be not afraid. Between these covers, Gail McMeekin has distilled a rich array of wisdom from thirty brilliant and successful women and her thirty years of coaching experience into 12 essential ingredients. Take them, sift them, stir them into your own brilliant and successful life.”

—Janet Conner, author of *Writing Down Your Soul*

“What looks like a practical guidebook quickly reveals itself to be a fireworks display of inspiration and encouragement. In *The 12 Secrets of Highly Successful Women*, Gail McMeekin not only gives women a map toward clearer success for themselves, she also offers the wisdom of other women to reinforce her message that success hinges on heeding the voice of inspiration. She’s let the cat out of the bag in her latest book: creativity is not only a part of success . . . it’s the heart of success. Whatever part of the journey you’re on, McMeekin’s book will help you tune in, turn on, let go, and shine brighter in order to create the life that defines success for YOU.”

—Mary Beth Maziarz, songwriter and author of *Kick-Ass Creativity: An Energy Makeover for Artists, Explorers, and Creative Professionals*

“Gail has done it again. What a powerhouse of practical, inspiring stories. I have flagged, underlined, and highlighted many, many passages. You will be dipping into this wisdom for years to come. Buy it for yourself and for all your friends who wonder, ‘How does she do it?’”

—Jennifer Loudon, author of *The Woman’s Comfort Book* and *The Life Organizer*

“Gail McMeekin’s new book on success secrets for creative women is even better than her first (which I loved)! She shares real stories of successful women—not just the glory but the details of how they got up from the falls, got past the slams and insults, and got through the fear. This book is a toolkit for the kind of success that comes straight from the soul.”

—Barbara Sher, *New York Times* bestselling author of
I Could Do Anything If Only I Knew What It Was

“This book weds access to meaningful work and heart-based action with practical, actionable steps toward business fulfillment and success. With precision Gail calls out the chronic undermining elements in a woman’s career and elevates the models for satisfaction and reward. She extracts the very best gems from her generous successful guides. It’s a treasure box: open it.”

—Mary Anne Radmacher, author of *Lean Forward into Your Life*

“*The 12 Secrets of Highly Successful Women* is a book for anyone who values the feminine perspective as an agent of change and healing upon the planet. Gail’s creative inspiration to give voice to women, whose leadership is needed now more than ever, is pure genius.”

—Brenda Michaels, radio talk show host, *Conscious Talk*

“Because it draws from the lives of successful women and because it identifies the strategies that any woman can employ to become more successful, Gail McMeekin’s *The Twelve Secrets of Highly Successful Women* is a must read!”

—Eric Maisel, author of *Coaching the Artist Within*

“Gail McMeekin is a trustworthy and experienced guide for any woman wanting to cultivate her highest creative potential. She writes with warmth, wit, and wisdom. She draws to her women who are seasoned on the path of making their dreams come true. Gail knows what questions to ask, how to get to the heart of anyone’s true desire, and how to guide them toward fulfillment.”

—Lucia Capacchione, PhD, Visioning® Coach and bestselling author of
Recovery of Your Inner Child and *Visioning: Ten Steps to Designing the Life of Your Dreams*

The 12 Secrets of Highly Successful Women

A Portable Life Coach for Creative Women

Gail McMeekin



Conari Press

First published in 2011 by Conari Press, an imprint of
Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC

With offices at:
665 Third Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94107
www.redwheelweiser.com

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ISBN: 978-1-57324-493-0

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

McMeekin, Gail.

The 12 secrets of highly successful women : a portable life coach for creative women /
Gail McMeekin.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-57324-493-0 (alk. paper)

1. Women—Psychology. 2. Creative ability—Case studies. 3. Success—Case studies.

I. Title.

HQ1206.M3697 2011

646.70082—dc23

2011017722

Cover design by Barb Fisher

Cover art © Yulia Grigoryeva (smilewithjul)

Interior by Dutton & Sherman Design

Typeset in Warnock Pro text and Argenta and Nexus Sans display

Printed in Canada

TCP

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials Z39.48-1992 (R1997).

To my husband, Russ Street; I thank him for his unconditional love and support—these are priceless gifts.

To my parents, Elizabeth and Herbert McMeekin; I am blessed that they taught and modeled for me a life of integrity, good works, tenacity, optimism, a strong love for family and friends, and dedication to community.

To women everywhere; claim your creativity, be your true self in the world, and trust.

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Preface

Hello!

You are about to embark on a journey of self-discovery and learn the wisdom of success. I suggest that you invest in a compact, beautiful journal that you can carry with you long after you read this book for the first time. Throughout the book, you will find many special Challenges exercises to complete to make this experience more meaningful for you. Use your journal to record your responses to these Challenges.

Then, after you have finished your first reading of this book, carry your journal with you and note down your own secrets to success and your stretch goals for a happy and prosperous future of heartfelt success and a life of fulfillment. It all begins with loving yourself and extending that love to others by being the person that you aspire to be. Do creative work that nourishes you, other people and creatures, and the planet. You are meant to be here. Take advantage of it.

Just a note, as there are so many wonderful, successful women in America, I invited a diverse group of one hundred women to be interviewed for this book, with a goal of only interviewing twenty-five, although I interviewed a few more than that. The women who responded positively to my request generously and openly shared their work and life experiences and their wisdom with us. As with my first book, *The 12 Secrets of Highly Creative Women: A Portable Mentor*, I did not chase women for the book. I trusted that each woman who chose to participate and to serve as a mentor to other women knew intuitively that it was the right thing to do and that she wanted to be part of this project. We owe each of them our gratitude and respect. Their website addresses are in the back of the book in the Resources section. I thank them with all my heart.

Gail McMeekin, LICSW, Creative Success LLC
Boston, Fall 2010

Acknowledgments

Last spring, I was getting ready to pitch a few new ideas to my publisher, Conari Press, when out of the blue, Associate Publisher Caroline Pincus got in touch with me first. We agreed on two book ideas: this one you are reading, and a journal to accompany *The 12 Secrets of Highly Creative Women*, which my readers have been asking me for since it was first published. I will write the journal this winter. Caroline is a dream editor, and she feels a bit like my fairy godmother as she weaves her magic. She is smart, fast, loaded with clever ideas, and very supportive. She is a gift and I hope to collaborate with her again in the future. I also want to acknowledge Barb Fisher for designing the beautiful, playful cover for this book, which brings me joy every time I look at it. Major thanks also go to Bonni Hamilton and Lisa Trudeau and the entire marketing team in Newburyport, Massachusetts, for their efforts to get the word out about our books and for teaching us about the new world of social media and blogs.

I feel very lucky to be part of the Red Wheel Weiser/Conari Press family. My two books are still selling, and I still get emails or Facebook posts from all over the world thanking me for writing them. What every self-help author wants is for our work to endure and continue to motivate people to create better lives. The entire staff at Red Wheel Weiser/Conari Press deserve credit for birthing wise and visually appealing books. I salute them all.

I am deeply appreciative of the community of women who made the time to be interviewed for this book, shared their varied experiences, and agreed to be mentors for other women. It felt important for me to duplicate the formula that worked so well in the first *12 Secrets* book. This group of women is also highly creative, as well as kind and caring, which were criteria for selection. These are remarkable, no-nonsense women of courage who have a strong passion for life and for their mission of service. They don't "settle," but instead they take action and make big things happen. They fail sometimes, as we all do when taking positive

risks, but they get right back up again and move forward on their paths. I am grateful to each of you for participating in this sacred project with me.

I also hired a team of people to help me with all the administrative details of this book, and there were many. I want to especially thank Linda Poirier for her endless patience and perseverance in dealing with many changes and challenging tasks, and for her edits. To Beverly Morrison and Clare Nielsen, my transcription team, many thanks for the hours you spent listening to the recordings of my interviews and for being so quick and accurate. I also want to thank Barbara Williams, Crissy Sutter, and Patrice Birenberg for holding down the fort with my newsletter, my website, and my clients, etcetera while I was submerged in weeks of intense interviewing and writing.

On a personal note, I must first thank my husband and soul mate, Russ Street, for once again stepping up to bat (he used to be a great baseball player) and taking care of things so that our lives stayed glued together. His support astonishes me daily. To Marilyn Veltrop, my daily email partner, our exchange gives me a daily dose of your intuition and your insights which enrich my life and ground me each morning. I am grateful to Nancy Monson and Deborah Knox for their special offers of support for this project. To Mary Headley, whom I just met in a year ago, courtesy of Suzanne Falter-Barns, thank you for inviting me to be your guest at Lisa Sasevich's amazing workshop called "Speak to Sell" in California. This invitation opened many new doors for me, plus we had great fun traipsing all around the country going to other incredible workshops this year hosted by Ali Brown and Baeth Davis, as well as Lisa and Suzanne. Our adventures were life-changing—thank you. My learnings from those workshops are interwoven into this book and several of the women in the book either ran or attended these workshops. I also want to thank my friends and family, as well as my cheering section on Facebook, who checked in on me to see how this book was coming along. It meant a lot. Of course, I am grateful to all my wonderful clients who share their creative journeys with me and whom I learn from as they grow into their own personal, heartfelt success. Lastly, I am grateful to my Trusted Source for inspiration and inner guidance which facilitates my creative expression.

Secret One

Express Your Creative Gifts and Life Purpose



“I’ve come to believe that each of us has a personal calling that’s as unique as a fingerprint—and that the best way to succeed is to discover what you love and then find a way to offer it to others in the form of a service, working hard, and allowing the energy of the universe to lead you.”

—Oprah Winfrey

Over the past ten years, I received notes from thousands of women (and men) worldwide who said that my first book, *The 12 Secrets of Highly Creative Women: A Portable Mentor*, changed their lives, gave them inspiration and hope, and allowed them to embrace their creativity again and run with it. In contrast, I have run into many women (and men) in my travels who react to the title of that book by saying “Oh, that’s not for me, I’m not creative at all.”

My heart aches when I hear those words, as we are all creative in our lives, not just writers, artists, and actresses. Watch a healthy two-year-old child at play while they gleefully try out new projects, like throwing sand to see what happens, running after a butterfly to see if they can catch it, discovering the wonders of glue, and sticking together everything they can find.

As we know, the definition of creativity is “to make or invent something new”—to make connections. Children allowed to engage in free play (as opposed to being perched in front of a DVD) invent and make all kinds of original creations without intimidation or self-consciousness.

But something happens to many of us as we grow up—we freeze up creatively or disown our gifts. Then we get bad advice and often get on the wrong path. Thus,

creativity goes underground. Or we follow a creative path but we don't treat our work as a profession and end up living on the margin, and we don't get the recognition or financial rewards that we deserve. Other people have a creative outlet that they consider a hobby, like knitting, and choose to have a different day job. But both the job and the knitting can be creative outlets, too. Part of our creative process is to craft the life and the business that we want.

Then there are women who actively choose to pursue their creative interest (or interests, very often), and become highly creative women. But even then, they may fall prey to bad advice, low self-esteem, not marketing themselves actively, and the terror of being seen. This book will help each of you, regardless of which category you are in.

- You are creative—own it!
- You have the potential to become highly successful.
- Your creativity is an essential ingredient to building a successful career, business, and personal life.
- You can learn to be successful creatively by following the advice in this book.
- You can potentially change your entire life and lifestyle to honor your creative gifts and finally feel free, fulfilled, and prosperous.
- You have an inner brilliance that allows you to solve problems with novel and innovative solutions, help others, and profit from it.

This book is your ticket to becoming the highly creative and successful woman you long to be. But first, you have to do some healing work, learn new professional development and lifestyle strategies, and empower yourself as an entrepreneur or as a key contributor to an ethical, quality organization where you enjoy working. Even if you choose to spend some time working for someone else, you need to keep your eye on the door, your skills and your About Page updated, and a strong network going. Your best security is to grow yourself. You need to follow a special path for creative success. It will reawaken that creative little girl who either got squelched or silenced or went out on the creative path with the wrong guidance and has been stumbling along. If you are already operating as a highly creative woman, this book will propel you to the next level of growth, stretching your comfort zone and pushing you to step fully into a CEO mindset.

THE MAGIC OF TWELVE

Many of you may be wondering why I am writing another book with the title “12 Secrets” in it. In doing a little research, I discovered that 12 is the number of a whole and perfect harmonious unit. There are 12 months in a year, 12 signs on the zodiac, 12 inches in a foot, 12 face cards in a card deck, and 12 basic hues in a color wheel. And of course we have 12-Step Recovery Programs that are very powerful and teach a complete outline of what works. So my intent with this book is to share with you my model for the 12 secrets of highly successful women, compiled from my own life journey, the myriad of clients I have coached over thirty years in my business, now called Creative Success LLC, and the wisdom of the thirty women who I interviewed for this book, some of whom have been powerful mentors to me. Some of these women are multimillionaires and on television, while others value their lifestyle more than just money, and make business and lifestyle choices around those desires. Many of the women are trying to have balanced lives and be wealthy at the same time, or have already achieved that balance. They all work hard, feel strongly connected to their work, and feel called to express it in the world as a gift to others. Their stories are meant to illustrate the 12 ingredients that I outline that are essential to the soup of success for you.

DEFINING HEARTFELT PERSONAL SUCCESS

In my thirty-plus years of experience helping people to heal and create a life of fulfillment, I have been struck repeatedly with how essential it is for each of us to do the necessary soul searching to design and live by our own definition of our success. In this celebrity- and media-crazed culture we live in, it is easy to get confused about what composes a high quality and successful life for ourselves. Defining heartfelt success is a very personal and unique endeavor.

I have worked with thousands of clients who have been tortured by the agony and confusion of living according to someone else’s values, misconceptions, scripts, or formulas. Just because your mother thought you were overly dramatic doesn’t mean you *are* or that being so is even a liability. While the media or your family might worship fame, money, entrepreneurship, or corporate ladder-climbing, none of these pathways guarantee happiness for you unless you freely choose them. We all deserve prosperity. The starving artist syndrome serves no one. Yet fulfillment in life means knowing what we want while appreciating what we already have and having the self-worth to think independently and create a life that’s original.

Webster defines success simply as “a favorable or satisfactory outcome or result.” I like to add the adjectives “heartfelt” and “personal” so that you can visualize results that express your true self. Whether you are twenty-four or eighty-four, it’s time to stop the lies. For example, I have a client now who keeps brainstorming with me about ideas for this elaborate international consulting business. But if you look at her overall life goals, she really wants to only work twenty-five hours a week. That means that her business plan has to be carefully designed to target the work that can be done quickly for the most fulfillment for her in terms of either impact

*The best time
management strategy
in the world is letting go
of fantasies and working
within your own desired
paradigm.*

or financial reward. It may take her several years to achieve this model. The best time management strategy in the world is letting go of fantasies and working within your own desired paradigm. Successful people focus on the outcomes that resonate for them—creating viable businesses that service their customers and clients—and so they can revel in the joy of that heartfelt, personal set of goals.

I interviewed many successful women for this book. Here are some of the unique elements of their definition of success.

Ali Brown, millionaire entrepreneur, mentor, CEO of Ali International LLC, member of the *Inc.* “500 in 2009,” and leader of the Millionaire Protégé Club and the Shine Conference:

Success for me, in the beginning, and this may be true for everyone, was liking the *stuff*. I wanted the house and the car and I love my creature comforts and I love beautiful things. But once I reached these goals, I looked around and said, “Okay, now what?” I’ve got this gorgeous house on the beach and I have a wonderful life; what is this all about? And I realized that success is truly being just true to myself and that whatever I define success to be, that’s what it is. And I think women need to give themselves permission that success can look like exactly what they want it to look like. I’m here in a big way and building a global business to empower women entrepreneurs internationally, but not every woman wants to make some of the sacrifices I have made.

Gillian Drake, serial entrepreneur, editor, writer, and publisher of many books and the *Cape Arts Review*, real estate designer and developer, and now a medical intuitive:

To me, success is living on your own terms, being who you truly are, being your authentic self. I know that the standard definition of success means a high paying, prestigious job, the perfect marriage, a beautiful home—the American Dream, I guess. But that’s not for me. I need freedom, independence, and a series of creative projects to work on in order to be happy.

(You should see her villa in Italy that she redesigned and built.)

Lisa Sasevich, known as “The Queen of Sales Conversion,” author of *The Invisible Close*, and leader of large workshops like Speak to Sell Bootcamp:

...The reason I feel successful the most is really that I feel blessed to have healthy children, a loving husband, and work that is meaningful that makes a difference. As I discovered a few years ago, my blessing is to help experts who are making a difference to get their message out—people who love what they do but hate the sales part—and last year my business took a quantum leap from \$130K in sales to 2.2 million in sales. I also feel successful because I can be an inspiration to other women who also have a busy life, to be able to really create the lifestyle of their dreams and make a huge contribution at the same time.

Victoria Moran, author of ten books, including *Living a Charmed Life*, spiritual-life and holistic health coach:

I see my success as moving forward each day as a spiritual being having an earthly experience. I believe that this life is extremely important. I don’t have the idea of “Oh well, you know, work and the body and things like that are physical so they don’t matter.” They matter tremendously. But when I think of success it has to be both—the here and now and the forever after.

Sheri McConnell, CEO of Smart Women’s Institute of Entrepreneurial Learning and author of several books, including *Smart Women Know Their Why*:

Western entrepreneurial women will save the world and our mission is to create positive change in the world—making the world a better place.

Caroll Michels, career coach, artist advocate, author of the classic book, *How to Survive and Prosper as an Artist*, and creator of the ArtistHelpNetwork website:

I’m happy. I mean it is just as simple as that. I’m happier than I have ever been in my whole life and I just wake up happy.

Chellie Campbell, creator of the Financial Stress Reduction® Workshop and author of *The Wealthy Spirit* and *Zero to Zillionaire*:

The number one thing I want is a business that I run, not one that runs me. I want work to get me to a life, not be my life. I want my life to be beautiful. I want to have a lot of time off for fun, to enjoy the ride of it.

Brenda Michaels, co-host of Conscious Talk Radio, emotional and spiritual coach, and author of an upcoming book called *The Gift of Cancer: Awakening the Healer Within*:

First and foremost, I define success through relationship with myself, and how well I take care of myself. How well I nurture myself and how well I allow myself to honor my feelings and my needs, and my willingness to bring balance and harmony into my life. I believe this is important because we can't truly give to others what we withhold from ourselves. Living this way allows me to give love in such a way that there is peace and integrity in my personal relationships, as well as in my professional relationships.

Jeanne Carbonetti, watercolor painter and teacher, owner of Crow Hill Gallery, and author of many books, including *The Heart of Creativity*:

Yes, I do feel successful and for me, success is doing what I love and being able to make a living at it and I am able to do that. It also means feeling like I am fulfilling my purpose in life. I have a strong sense that everything in my life was guiding me to be devoted to teaching the power of beauty and that's what I spend my time doing.

Dr. Elizabeth Stewart, MD, physician in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota and researcher on fibroid treatments:

I do feel successful. For me it means being able to do work that is interesting and challenging and to have some element of creative fulfillment as well, and also being able to balance that with life outside of work.

Deborah George Tsakoumakis, founder/owner of Wire a Cake/HB Bakery Connections®, a company that sends cakes all over the world, including to many of our troops overseas:

Yes, I feel successful. And as far as success, we have to define success as not exactly measured in dollars, but rather success in knowing that I have accomplished something that has had a positive effect these past twenty-three years

when I started the cake business. I see the effects that my cakes have had with respect to the families that receive them, especially my military families. I send families a picture of the cakes I ship and I'll get emails back from an army wife, for example, and she will say, "I'm in tears right now, looking at this cake, and knowing that I can send a cake to my husband who is deployed, has made all the difference in the world."

FALLING IN LOVE WITH YOUR WORK

A few years ago, I planned a wonderful Mediterranean cruise for my husband and me. It had been a lifelong dream and it was time for us to have the experience. I was charmed by the cliffs on the island of Capri, the beauty of the French Riviera, and the periwinkle blue and white buildings on Santorini. It was an amazing adventure to places of staggering beauty. It was an investment in the joy of travel.

On the cruise ship, I met an incredible pianist, Pearl Kaufman. Since the publication of *The 12 Secrets of Highly Creative Women*, a number of people have said that they wish I had interviewed more musicians, so I took the opportunity to interview Pearl. Pearl performed on the ship three times, and each performance sparked a standing ovation with cheering. People fell all over each other in the line to buy her CDs. She was adored, and she plays on cruises all over the world to enthusiastic audiences (talk about a great job!). As Pearl said to me, "everyone should experience the joy of being cheered—there's nothing like it." Pearl decided to become a pianist while watching a movie at age eight, and thankfully, no one tried to talk her out of it.

She received a music and scholastic scholarship to college, played for Igor Stravinsky, and is known for her famous movie performances with Henry Mancini and John Williams, among others. She loves all kinds of music, and believes strongly in its inspirational qualities. I asked her if she had any special favorites and she had an intriguing answer: "I'm like Elizabeth Taylor—I fall in love with everything I play." Pearl says she does not get blocked or bored and never plans to retire—just slow down a bit to enjoy her grandchildren. Her advice for aspiring creatives: "Go where the action is. You can't stay home and expect your work to be seen or heard. You have to make the effort."

Love is an essential success strategy for any endeavor. Doing work you love captivates your life force and enthusiasm. If you are settling for doing work you hate, you are missing this joy of full engagement. Falling in love with our work, over and over again, fulfills us like a great marriage. Our work is a potent relationship,

and love is an essential lubricant. Pearl's love affair with her piano and its possibilities reminds us all that expressing love through our creative work is a peak experience of life.

CHALLENGE

Spend some time this month “remembering” what captivates you about your work and renew your vows.

MANAGING HIGH CREATIVITY

Highly creative women often have special aptitudes that give rise to creative intelligence, a superior ability for innovative thinking and application. In today's marketplace, our ability to think differently about problems and solve them with original and novel solutions is a key to success. Highly creative women can have problems if they don't see themselves or their abilities clearly. In my experience, some of the strengths and necessary talents of highly creative women can also be their downfall if not managed well. This book is meant to be a guide to help you to leverage your abilities and counter these potential pitfalls. These would include:

- Being overly sensitive and therefore too thin-skinned to be out in the world much
- Ambivalence about money and therefore being afraid or uncomfortable charging what they deserve
- Intuitive—getting wrapped up too much in other people's life decisions, which distracts the highly creative woman from her own life
- Divergent thinking—going from project to project—too many ideas at the same time can be overwhelming and make it difficult to focus
- Independence—being afraid/disinclined to ask for emotional support and business help when they need it
- Severely critical—perfectionism can be paralyzing and prevent highly creative women from ever releasing their completed work into the world or finishing projects at all

- Non-conforming—being scapegoated by others for being too far “out there” and not following enough protocol to successfully do business in this world—can lead to isolation and loneliness
- Not completely confident—having damaged self-esteem or lack of expertise in certain skill areas that they may need to learn or to delegate to others
- Can be workaholics and ignore their own needs for self—nurturance, serenity and relaxation
- Need for solitude—the highly successful woman must honor this and negotiate with partners and family
- Can make simple things complex due to a long list of internal comfort criteria
- Sad—often feel that they haven’t met their potential or realized their dreams for this life
- Fear of being who they really are and telling the truth about it and risking disapproval
- Feeling guilty about not having chosen a traditional career path with job security, a pension, and securing people’s understanding of what they do
- Feeling confused by having too many interests and not knowing what to specialize in
- Fear of rejection as being unbearable and something from which they won’t recover
- Fear that pursuing their creative work will hurt the ones they love
- Being labeled by others as a risk taker or being hesitant to take the necessary risks to succeed

Fortunately, there are remedies for all of these issues, and this book is your guide to creative success and peace of mind. Most of these creative liabilities are also strengths, but you must learn how to capitalize on them and redesign your strategies of being in the world.

This is a book of hope and know-how. Let’s start by looking at what inspires you.

SPARK YOUR CREATIVITY USING YOUR INTUITION

Worried that you're not creative? You are, but you may be out of touch with your creativity. Your intuition can lead you into a world of novel ideas, experimentation, and brainstorming that will perk up your work life and stimulate innovation and problem solving. Intuition is not just for New Agers. Many executives, business owners, and research and development professionals attribute their successes to following intuitive clues.

Intuition is your internal information and feeling source. It is an inner library of physical and emotional cues that can direct you onto the right avenue. It is the composite of "gut feelings" and perceptions unique to you. It is an inner way of knowing. Too often, we are trained to discount or repress that knowledge and therefore purposely neglect it, devalue it, or refuse to recognize its message. Intuition is a tool for insight and illumination. Can you recall a time when your intuition prompted you to follow a different course and connected you to a result you were looking for?

Susan recalls a time when her intuition prodded her to take an unfamiliar exit off the expressway on her way home. As she turned off, she felt foolish and almost turned around. But she followed a country road and passed an intriguing building with a "For Sale" sign on it. She stopped in amazement—this building fit her image of the gourmet shop she wanted to open some day. Here was her dream in reality; the rest was up to her.

The creative process demands that, like Susan, you are willing to step into the unknown and see what happens. Creativity is born of inspiration and your inspirations evolve from your passions. So follow your whims and see where they lead.

These excursions will stimulate new thought patterns and generate new paradigms for you. To help you to massage your intuitive talents, you can try a series of exercises to evoke creative prospects for you.



Exercise One: *What Inspires You?*

What do you feel excited by or passionate about? What kinds of books or magazines do you read? What kinds of people do you most like to talk with? What kinds of interests and projects are you drawn to in your leisure time? If you went back to school, what would you most like to learn about? What do you

fantasize about? What are your aspirations? What kinds of activities stimulate your creative expression? Do you long to paint or write or build or sing or play something? Write down everything and anything that comes to mind.

No idea is wrong or silly. What is your internal voice urging you to explore or experience? Let this exercise be the beginning of a creative journal. You may be surprised at the wisdom and guidance stored for you in these seemingly random thoughts.

To facilitate the new, it helps to clear away the past. Think back to any regrets you have about lost opportunities. Kim wishes she had studied engineering in college instead of teaching. Karen had a chance to go into business with a friend and turned it down because she was too scared. Her friend is now a millionaire who works part-time. It may not be too late for you.



Exercise Two: *What Creative Dreams Have You Abandoned and Why?*

Make a list of all the things you wanted to do, but didn't. Then, think back to what your intuition told you about these options. Choose one. Are you still interested in this path? What does your inner voice tell you about this choice now? Note any patterns that are still possible or an enduring vision that you want to manifest.

You need to make peace with these cast-off dreams. What can you learn from your mistakes? Rose learned that she hadn't been ready until recently to write her play. Her vision just became vivid enough for her to tell the story, so she was able to release her regrets. Melissa, on the other hand, always wanted to become a lawyer. At age fifty, she thought she was too old, but the dream still beckoned her.

This was a choice point for her. She could either live the rest of her life with the sorrow of not having become a lawyer, or she could go to law school. Or she could leverage her skills and become a lobbyist, a political activist, a paralegal, a city official, or fulfill her dream in numerous alternative ways. It was time for Melissa to move on.

Grieve what you must and then turn the corner and make room for the next episode.

Learning to trust your intuition is the critical foundation for creativity. Think back to the times when you were clear that a particular choice was not a wise one. Your “gut” warned you against it.

Nadia, a billing consultant, recalls a phone call she received from a potential client. The woman owned an antique store and sounded stressed, disorganized, and demanding. Nadia had a negative visceral reaction to the woman’s voice. But Nadia needed more business and this was a big account, so she hushed her intuitive radar and accepted the woman as a client. A year later, the woman sued Nadia for malpractice.

During the legal proceedings, Nadia learned that this woman had sued her last two billing agents and that lawsuits, not antiques, were her primary source of income. Nadia swore to heed her intuitive doubts in the future.



Exercise Three: *I Am Grateful To My Intuition For the Following:*

When has your intuition steered you right? Make a list of the times when your intuition helped you make the right decision or prompted you to try something. What have you learned about how it operates on your behalf? One of the greatest blocks to creativity is fear. Fear keeps you from exploring new ways of doing things. Fear of failure keeps you from enjoying an experimental mindset where failure is expected and welcomed as new information. Fear of being wrong or criticized also clips your creative wings. Almost everyone can remember trying something fresh and new and being chided or teased about it.

Therefore, we learn to play it safe, cease taking risks, and stop the flow of creative solutions. While most people are educated in a school system that advocates one right answer, today’s workplace requires you to evoke new answers. The beauty of the entrepreneurial mindset is that it allows you to innovate and make up your own solutions. Fear of “getting the wrong answer” halts your flow of unique ideas.



Exercise Four: *What Frightens You Most About Expressing Your Creativity?*

What is your fear about? What creative traumas from the past still hold power over you? What do you fear from your internal critic and others? What person(s) from your past criticized your ideas and actions? Write this all down so you can see it.

Fear is a component of risk and risking is essential to creativity. When you read about writers and artists and business people, they all acknowledge fear. You will never be free of fear, but you can minimize it and strategize around it. Just don't let fear keep you from your true self. Whenever you accomplish something, you become vulnerable to criticism. Leaders are often controversial and therefore are targets for someone's arrow. Are you living your life for them or for yourself?

Don't let fear keep you from your true self.

When I get scared to write, I pick up a book called *Walking on Alligators: A Book of Meditations for Writers* by Susan Shaughnessy. Writing often feels dangerous to me, and reading about another writer's similar terrors helps me to forget my doubt and just start typing. You need to find antidotes for your fear. That's why I developed my *Creativity Courage Cards* with affirmations matched to beautiful photos—to counter fear. Mentors, support groups, classes, coaches, and readings all offer support systems that can undo the demons from the past. Figure out what solutions will most help your fear to stay in the background, and use them.

Another form of support for your creativity is a nurturing environment. Where do you do your best thinking? Where does your inner self feel most daring and alive?



Exercise Five: *Creative Stimuli*

Describe the ideal environment for your creative process. Imagine it in all its detail. What distracts and what stimulates you? Are you alone or with others? Is there music playing? Are you outdoors? What tools do you need? Are you at home or at a quaint inn? Knowing what sparks your creative fire allows you to make that space. Lots of creative people talk about having a studio or room of their own.

Kay, a painter I know, can paint anywhere that's light enough if she has her female jazz singers serenading her in the background. Music is her cue to let go and play with her colors. Trudie, a landscape architect, built an office for herself above the garage. As she lives in the city and doesn't have a view of trees, her office walls are plastered with pictures of plants and trees and gardens, and she has silk flowers all over. Her outdoor carpet spreads out like a lawn, and her desk is a table inside a rickety old trellis with strings of vines and garden tools attached to it. She keeps bags of dirt and peat moss in the corner so she can smell them and pretend she's in the garden. You know what business she's in by looking at her workspace. Even if you only have a small space, make it your own and fill it with personal catalysts.

Sometimes when you have a business problem or feel stuck on a decision, nothing seems to help. Sit quietly and ask your intuitive guide for suggestions. You can also write yourself a note requesting an answer and put it in a drawer and let go for a while. Or you can change the format of your project or question and see what happens. I often find that drawing a picture of what I'm trying to write about opens up new angles.

Other innovators try techniques like turning a project upside down or sideways, miniaturizing it, making it into a story, photographing it, or

discussing it with a child. These configurations often cut through the haze. You've heard tales of inventions that were actually mistakes or the result of a hairbrained scheme. Experiment with your dilemma and watch the solution appear.

Comparisons are also helpful. For example, Barbara's intuition urged her to ponder how her

*Experiment with your
dilemma and watch the
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decision about whether or not to cut staff was like a tree. So she bundled up in her parka and went out to look at the oak in her front yard. She finally realized that her employees were like the roots of her company; they held the tree up. Cutting an employee was like chopping off a necessary root—yet she had to cut the payroll. So she went back into the house and began to draft plans for reduced hours, part-time positions, and job-sharing. Honor your intuitive messages and allow them to help you.



Exercise Six: *Your Creative Saboteurs*

Write down all the things, people, places, activities, or thoughts that diminish your creative energy. What would you like to subtract from your life that interferes with the clarity of your intuitive channel?

Your intuition is a valuable asset; you can't afford to have it compromised by clutter, other people's needs, or busyness. Even if you only find the time to write in your creative journal or sit quietly for fifteen minutes a day, you are connecting with your intuition. Preserve the messages and insights.

From the above list, what can you subtract from your life to free up more creative space for yourself? What life choices support your ingenious energy? Honor your individual cravings and notions. Do you thrive in tranquility or excitement? Diligently restructure your lifestyle to cultivate your intuitive knowledge and its creative offshoots. Enjoy the new and exciting adventures that will result.

Take an hour to reflect, identify, and write down your own definition of success that expresses your self-knowledge, your loves and dislikes, your energy level, your recipe for balance, your values and life purpose, and your chosen lifestyle. This foundation gives you a guiding light of clarity to rely on daily as you transform your life, one success strategy at a time.

FINDING YOUR LIFE PURPOSE

One of life's universal questions is "Why am I here?" My clients and I work together every day to find the right answers. When we can grasp the meaning of life for us as individuals, we can create a travel itinerary for our life's journey. It provides a

focus and a framework from which to make life choices and direct our creative efforts. My definition of purpose is an intention with meaning. What is meaningful to us personally becomes the center point for our circle of life.

When I work with clients trying to help them find their perfect work and get their creative genius out into the world, I take them through a series of exercises just like the ones you just read, plus a number of other ones. I also use career and personality tests like the MBTI, the Campbell Skills and Assessment Test, and the Strong Interest Inventory Test as scanners to see if other options surface. I have also just been trained in scientific hand analysis, a tool that helps people to discover their life purpose that I now offer to clients. The results are amazing. The information from my client's self-assessment, testing, and personal development exercises, plus my intuition and years of experience, usually combine to give us a plan and target a few options. Then I send people out to do some strategic experiments to test out our hypotheses about what they are destined to do next in their lives. I have them keep a journal about how they feel and think about their experiences. Most of the time, we can find a clear path or maybe two paths to choose from. But sometimes people are still lost or conflicted, so we try other techniques like visualization, active imagination, my positive choices program, etcetera to try to shake loose what they may be resisting seeing.

CHALLENGE

- 1. Write down and/or make a visual representation of personal and heartfelt success for you. Include your thoughts on career, money, health, friends and family, romance, personal growth, fun and recreation, organization, home and, of course, your creativity! If you are stuck on this exercise, please refer to either of my books, my visualizations, or my website for an abundance of stimulating exercises to facilitate a vision for you. Even if you have done a similar exploration before, do it again. Our world has changed significantly, and so have you, so it's time to update your vision.**
- 2. Meditate on what contentment is for you and see if you can discover a symbol of success that will serve as a metaphor to guide you. One of my clients sees success as a wild kangaroo running free in Australia, while another one sees success as a cushy lounge chair. Once you find your symbol, figure out a way that you can interact with it daily. Then watch how much clearer and focused you are!**

A couple of years ago, I was on a teleclass call with Ali Brown. She talked about how a hand analysis reading with Baeth Davis had changed her life. Baeth had told Ali that she would become internationally known and help women all over the world to build businesses and happy lives. At first Ali didn't take this seriously, but now she does and is living that life. Baeth Davis is known as "The Hand Analyst." She helps people to find their life purpose, runs mentoring programs, and founded The Hand Analyst, Inc. A number of other women in the book also had their hands read by Baeth and found the information was a breakthrough for them. So, being committed to helping people to find their life purpose and create businesses and lives that are glorious, I had to learn the hand analysis technique.

When I went to one of Baeth's workshops and had my hands read, I was stunned by how accurate the information she gleaned from my handprint was. I did some research, and apparently hand analysis is a science with very specific outcomes that has been around for thousands of years.

Like Ali, Baeth has a huge vision. As Baeth says, "My intention is to reach hundreds of millions of people and help them discover their life purpose. I want to make the language about purpose commonplace in the world dialogue so that families wonder, 'what's my child's life purpose.' It's one of the first things they find out in order to nurture and support that child to truly actualize what they've come here to do."

Baeth believes that one of the major reasons that people struggle in their relationships and in their work is because they are not connected to their deepest self. She says, "The work I do quite literally offers you a spiritual plan, a set of spiritual tools to understand the 'why' and the 'what for' of your life on the planet, what you are here to express and accomplish in your lifetime. Because we have not only our own life purpose to fulfill, our own evolution, but we are working together to evolve the purpose of humanity." As Baeth says, she cannot read everyone's hands herself, so she is training a group of us to help her bring this tool out into the mainstream. I've always been a great believer in prevention, and if parents can use this technology to discover their own life purpose and live it, and then help their child to grow in the right direction toward his or her life purpose, then we can prevent the stress that so many people who are not in touch with their life purpose experience." I love big visions and this is one that I am thrilled to be part of; it fits my life purpose of Passionate Guide and Mentor in the Spotlight.

So many people show up in my office upset that they didn't have a miracle in their lives where a voice told them at a young age what kind of work or creative expression they ought to pursue. We do a terrible job in this country of helping

young people trust their inspirations and pursue work that truly fascinates them. Someone usually tries to talk you out of what you know inside to be true, and then you get into the wrong career and struggle. The Challenges in this book are meant to help you to tap into your inner knowing, your creativity, and your commitment to serve, and point you in the right direction toward your purpose. If you know your purpose already, this book will deepen it and give you powerful tools to unleash it.