

The background of the book cover is a solid mustard yellow. It features a faint, artistic illustration of a fan of papers or a book's pages fanning out from the bottom center. Several butterflies are scattered across the cover, appearing to fly or rest on the papers. The entire design is framed by a thin white border.

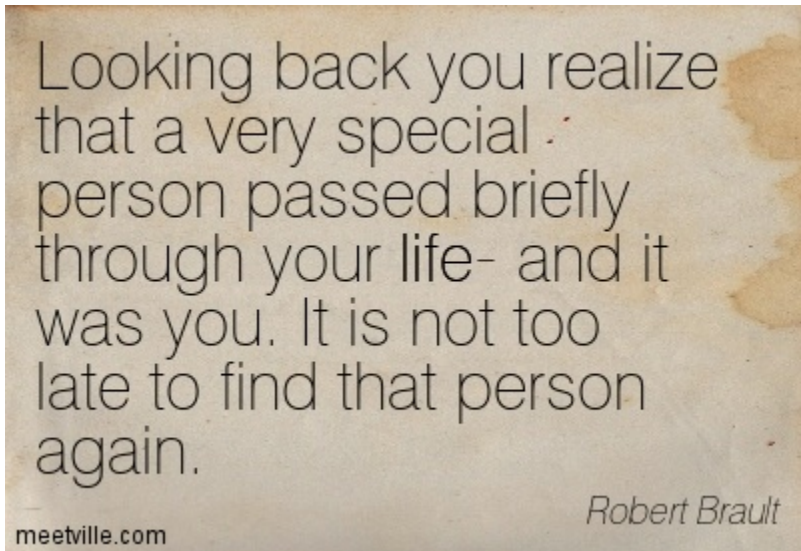
D DONNA HIGHFILL

SHINE ON

POWER UP YOUR STORY

DONNA HIGHFILL

Your Story



My hero as a young girl was Pippi Longstocking. She was brave and strong and adventurous. I always believed that I would ignore silly rules and run like the wind.

Then, somewhere along the way, I listened to other stories about how I shouldn't take too many risks, and write things that sell, and be a little quieter (never happened), and not laugh so much.

And I became a little less Pippi-ish.

If you want to succeed and move others and make a difference, ask yourself this:

- *Who was my hero when I was just a kid? What did I love about that hero?*
- Write down those characteristics.
- Start to rewrite your story in a way that incorporates some of those characteristics (unless your hero was Hannibal Lector. If that's the case, please find a therapist.)

You have one job in this world, and that is to be the best you there ever will be. It's your life, and your story.

Once you plug back into who you are, you will rock success.

Because you rock already.

Moving Others

"Story doesn't grab power. Story creates power."— Annette Simmons

Finding our own power is the first step in making a difference in the lives of our friends, or colleagues, or audiences. When we believe in ourselves and tap into our authentic journey, others believe in us. Like the Velveteen Rabbit, we feel real.

I could give you all sorts of clever bullet-points about being real that would make you want to stick a fork in your leg, or I could simply give you part of the story of the Velveteen Rabbit.

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

'Does it hurt?' asked the Rabbit.

'Sometimes,' said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. 'When you are Real you don't mind being hurt.'

'Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,' he asked, 'or bit by bit?'

'It doesn't happen all at once,' said the Skin Horse. 'You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand.'" - Margery Williams

Stories Touch the Heart of the Matter

Anybody else feel this story in the middle of their chest? I do. Today, be real. Be yourself. Chuck the bullet points and tell a story.

Scary Stories

"Lizzy Borden took an axe and gave her father forty whacks . . ."

We all told the stories of Lizzie Borden and Candy Man when we were kids. Every slumber party came with a séance..

While our stories as adults might not be about Candy Man, some of them still create serious fear. Ask yourself:

- What stories am I telling myself today?
- Which stories scare me? Make my heart pound? Give me a sense of dread?
- Are those stories true?

Much of our "down" days are not caused by actual events, but by our thoughts about those events. We all know the statistic that 85% of what we worry about never happens. I have no idea how they got that statistic, but it seems to be true for me.

Today, tell yourself a better story.

What if I fail becomes . . . becomes . . . I am going to do my best, so there is no fail.

I am not good enough . . . becomes . . . I have the same greatness within me as anyone else. I am good enough.

Different stories yield different emotions, different hormones, different feelings, and different results.

Now put the flashlight down and back slowly away.

Changed Perspective



Ever have one of those days where everything seems to go wrong?

- Your car won't start.
- Your child is sick on the day of your big meeting.
- You sneeze while putting on mascara.
- The person who hates you most at work has just become your boss.
- You give a presentation you've been working on for months and it sucks.

We all have those moments and those days when we stop believing in ourselves. In my [Power Up blog](#) today I share a story of mine about an interaction with an owl that resulted in a changed perspective. You might be concerned about me after reading it, but it's okay. My family has been concerned about me for years.

Power Up Your Perspective Today

Today, I wish for you:

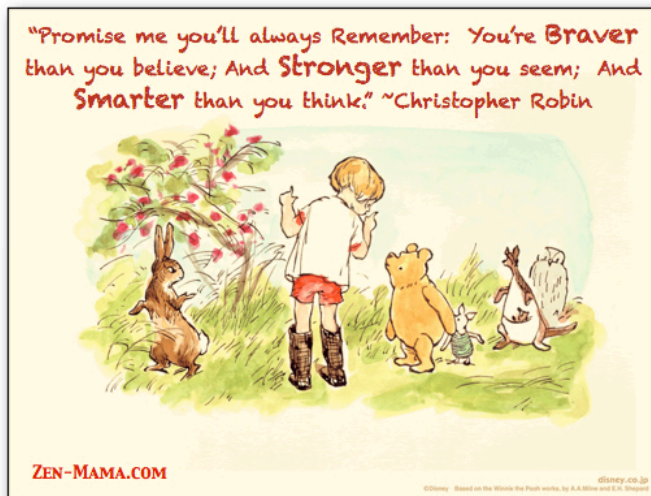
- An understanding of how absolutely amazing you are,
- An awareness of the stock from which you are created,
- And a belief in the limitlessness of your possibilities.

Yes, I have days when I want to crawl into a corner and have a very elaborate pity party for myself. But then I remember the many people who love me and the absolute magnificence of this earth.

And I come out of my corner like the Hulk.

Wherever you are in life today, don't let your self-judgment or the judgment of others snuff out your light. Find your owl story and hold onto it. Allow it to give you the power you deserve.

Be Afraid



As I delve more into the soul of things, I know some of you might be wondering if I've smoked something a little too strong. Here's the thing -I think true, lasting power comes from the soul.

Sometimes our change journeys require a willingness to be afraid. We have to do more than dip that toe in the water. It means jumping in, going under, and wondering when we might get to take another breath.

Yes, I almost drowned . . .

I remember taking swimming lessons when I was young. Since I kept grabbing the leg of my teacher who had been an army drill sergeant, I was tossed into the deep end (which for me was 4'). I sank to the bottom of the pool and wondered if I would ever breathe again. My protective older sister reached down and saved me.

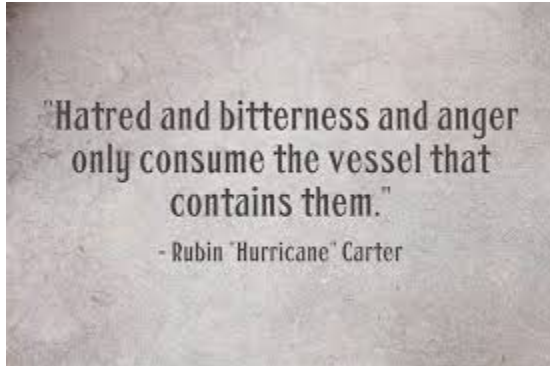
Sometimes that's what we do. We sit at the bottom of our career aspirations and dreams, too afraid to move. While I appreciate my sister, I kind of wish I could have kicked my way to the surface. Because I still can't swim. So, don't invite me to a pool party.

Do you know how brave and strong and smart you are?

I wonder. Do you know? Are you amazed by the things you have done? Are you willing to jump in again and again?

I hope so. Maybe I'll call the YMCA and take swimming lessons.

Be You



Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter was a middleweight boxer falsely accused of a triple murder. [Read today's blog here](#) to see the movie clip and summary of his life.

The Man, the Boy, and the Donkey

A man and his son were going with their donkey to market. As they were walking along, a countryman passed them and said: *"You fools, what is a donkey for but to ride upon?"*

So, the man put the boy on the donkey and they went on their way. But soon they passed a group of men, one of whom said: *"See that lazy youngster, he lets his father walk while he rides."*

So the man ordered his boy to get off, and he got on himself. They hadn't gone far when they passed two women, one of whom said: *"Shame on that lazy lout, letting his poor little son trudge along."*

Well, the man didn't know what to do, but at last he took his boy up and placed him on the donkey with him. At this point they came into town, and a man stopped and said, *"Aren't you ashamed of yourself for overloading that poor donkey with you and your hulking son?"*

The man and boy got off and tried to think what to do. They thought and thought, till at last they cut down a pole, tied the donkey's feet to it, and raised the pole and the donkey onto their shoulders. They went along amid the laughter of all who met them till they came to Market Bridge, when the donkey, getting one of his feet loose, kicked out and caused the boy to drop his end of the pole. In the struggle, the donkey fell over the bridge, and his fore feet being tied together he was drowned.

"That will teach you," said an old man who had followed them:

"Please all, and you will please none."

Mirror Adjustment



My second-grade teacher, Mrs. Lindville, favored me and thus appointed me as class leader, responsible for leading my peers in and out of the classroom. Then Mrs. Lindville, moved out of the area, and we got a new teacher who didn't take a liking to me for some reason. I don't know why. I thought I was adorable.

The first time she asked me to move from the front of the line to the back of the line, I burst into tears. What? What did I do wrong?

I never found out. But the rest of my 2nd grade year was painful because I kept watching the new teacher's face to see if she liked what I said or the way I helped her with the class.

She became my mirror, holding my self-esteem in her every reaction.

Mirrors can be dangerous . . .

All of us look to others for approval, for love, for praise. However, there are times in life when something goes wrong and somebody just doesn't approve of us. Maybe we are in their way; perhaps we remind them of their annoying Uncle Bob or a sibling who got all of their parents' attention. Whatever the case, the more we try to get them to like us, the more they'll dislike us.

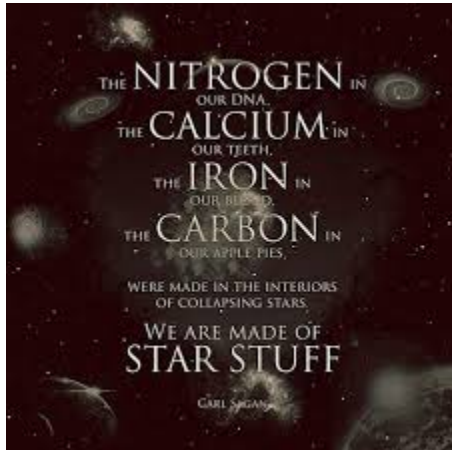
Because power is like that. Desperation is the anti-magnet; nobody is attracted to it.

So, if you're going through a tough time, don't base your self-esteem on somebody else's perception of you. Motivate yourself. [Be your own best reflection.](#)

Because nobody should believe in you as much as you believe in you.

Plus, you can't help it if you remind someone of their Uncle Bob.

Amazing You



[In today's blog](#), I talk about the miracle of our bodies. It all amazes me, the intricate balance of our human life.

We are not just recipient of gold stars. According to research, we ARE the gold stars.

My Star Challenge . . .

Since we are made from the stuff of stars, I want you to add the following to any negative thoughts you have during the day, "*But I'm made from the stuff of stars, so I can overcome it.*"

1. "I should have never made that comment in that meeting" . . .*but I'm made from the stuff of stars, so I can overcome it.*
2. "That person has totally stabbed me in the back" . . .*but I'm made from the stuff of stars, so I can overcome it.*
3. "Being a parent is exhausting, and I don't always make the right decisions" . . .*but I'm made from the stuff of stars, so I can overcome it.*

Don't allow the bad news or the negative people to keep you down today, because you are made of the same stuff that incorporates a universe much more vast than we can even imagine.

You are big stuff. Literally.

Friend Power



Personality has power to uplift, power to depress, power to curse, and power to bless.- Paul Harris

Let's say you are an electrical plug looking for the right socket. Stick with me here, this metaphor is not as dirty as it sounds.

You are a person of light, looking for a place to plug in that will complement your energy.

Would you look to a socket that withholds electricity?

Probably not. And, yet, those are often the souls that we plug into on a regular basis.

In [today's blog](#), I offer four ways to find the right energy. I hope you read it, because I think we all can use it. Until that time, conduct a quick assessment of those with whom you surround yourself.

- Do they make you feel bigger, even more able to achieve goals? Or do you always leave feeling a little bit smaller and less sure of your abilities?
- Do they add carbonated joy to your soul? Or do they add heaviness in your chest that stays with you until you've inhaled an entire bottle of Tums?
- When you leave them, do you believe a little more in your light? Or do you have a sudden desire to go to a dark room and watch the most horrific scenes in "*Game of Thrones*" for the rest of the night?

Pay attention. Put on your power radar. Because there are people out there who are dead sockets, and you need to spend as little time with them as possible.

You have great things to do while you're here. Partner with great people.

Power Quotes

Never give up on
something you really
want. It's difficult to wait
but it's more difficult to
regret.

[Today's blog](#) is pretty personal - it's about my struggle over the past few years. It was a tough stretch, and for the first time in my life I, occasionally, threw in the towel. I wanted to share this experience with you because maybe, just maybe, you've been there.

To complement the blog, here are some of my favorite quotes on never giving up. I hope they give you power today.

Power Quotes

"Never, never, never give up." -- Winston Churchill

"When you get into a tight place and everything goes against you, till it seems as though you could not hang on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn." -- Harriet Beecher Stowe

"Never lose the childlike wonder. Show gratitude . . . Don't complain; just work harder . . . Never give up." -- Randy Pausch

"Never give up; for even rivers someday wash dams away." -- Arthur Golden

"I ran and ran and ran every day, and I acquired this sense of determination, this sense of spirit that I would never, never give up, no matter what else happened." -- Wilma Rudolph

For me, I found that giving up is the easy way out. It's self-pity at its worst. I have a purpose here, and I owe the one who gave me breath the determination to never give up.

Today, have firm resolve, and power up rather than give up!

Courage Warriors



You are faced by things that scare you on a daily basis. It might be bad health, or a work problem, or the dentist.

[In today's blog](#), I share my own warrior story from the fourth grade and talk about courage through the eyes of my favorite character in "The Wizard of Oz." [If you ever need to power up, by the way, watch this movie again. It will provide you with everything you need.]

Below is an interaction that shows the true courage of a lion who is a reluctant warrior:

Cowardly Lion: All right, I'll go in there for Dorothy. Wicked Witch or no Wicked Witch, guards or no guards, I'll tear them apart. I may not come out alive, but I'm going in there. There's only one thing I want you fellows to do.

Tin Woodsman, Scarecrow: What's that?

Cowardly Lion: Talk me out of it!

You face your fears on a regular basis. You go to that interview or stand up for a coworker or follow your passion. No matter what, you are a warrior.

And what if you run away from a fear? No regrets. Warriors stumble.

Just dust yourself off and pick up your courage and start all over again.

You Matter



I spent this weekend babysitting my great niece and nephew and taking my mother to the emergency room. In both instances, I was amazed by the power of love. The love I felt for that tiny niece who wore sunglasses shaped like stars and melted me with one smile. And the caring hands that took my 82 year-old mother in for testing.

When I was asked to help in both situations, my first thought was, "Oh, man, I am so busy. What is this going to do to my schedule?"

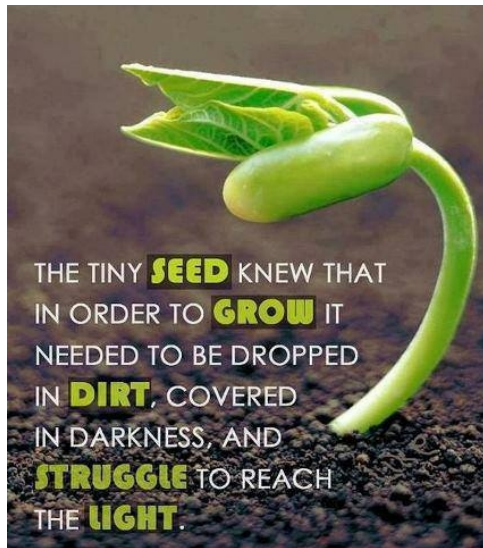
Thoughts. Our brain chatters all day long, whether we want it to or not. And it tends to be a frightened little thing, always telling us what might go wrong so we can survive. Think of your brain as that overprotective, nervous mom.

So how do you handle it? Let it chatter its brains out, but let the chatter float by as if on a ticker tape. Then, repeat to yourself a new message. "I am so lucky to be with my mom right now, and I am grateful for the fact that she is funny and laughs and has raised me with love. I'm going to let work float by and focus on her." And it will work.

Because you are walking love - you just forget it sometimes. And you mean as much to someone as my mother does to me . . .some day, when you leave this earth, it will leave a hole in someone's heart.

So, live accordingly. Care without limits. Love in a way that heals others. And don't worry about that schedule. There's always more to do and more to buy. But in the end, there is only love.

Get Big



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I don't know about you, but some days I am covered in more dirt than others. I feel like I'm digging my way out and every time I get close to the surface, something happens and I struggle all over again.

I've discovered that this metaphor brings to mind my greatest fear of being buried alive.

Secondly, I've discovered that the definition of "surface," of that goal we hope to reach, doesn't really exist. I used to believe that if I would just get that job, or buy that car, or lose that weight, then I would have arrived.

I finally learned that my struggle isn't about one specific goal.

It's about accepting getting BIG.

My hope for all of us is that we don't arrive in 2015, or 2016, or . . .

Instead, I want us all to grow, and to realize that we are --

- Bigger than our fears.
- Bigger than our insecurities

- Bigger than our projects.
- Bigger than those who would thwart us.

Because we are. It's not the dirt that slows us down, it's the fear that we'll never get beyond it. Believe me, if there is a plan for a tiny seed, then there is a plan for you.

By the way, check out this week's Power blogs -

- ["I'd Say More But I'm Practicing Silence"](#) - How the book "Unbroken" taught me about the power of silence.
- ["Simplifying My Life"](#) -- How paring down my "stuff" is helping my spirit soar.

Now, go stare at a flower. Check out its beauty. You are born to be big and beautiful.

Stand Tall



I was eight years-old the first time I freaked out over something. My mother was telling a story about how she met dad in college. While I'm sure the story was hilarious (my family has very high standards when it comes to the entertainment factor of stories), all I remembered were these words: *"Well, my parents had dropped me off . . ."*

What the heck? Dropped off? I proceeded to ask her to define that particular term. She mentioned that her parents left her many, many miles from home in August, and the next time she saw them was in December.

Later that night my mom heard me crying, and asked what was wrong. "I don't ever want to leave home," I blubbered. Mom, being a realist, gently said, "Well, we all have to leave home eventually. But you will be fine."

Suddenly my life changed . . .

For the first time I realized that life at home with my siblings and parents was not going to last forever. Someday, I would be dropped off. Two weeks after the story incident, my dad was an hour late picking me up from Honor Choir and I was sure the drop-off had happened sooner than expected.

The day my parents left me at college there were lots of tears, and some big fears, but by that night I was organizing a jock raid on the boys' dorm.

Fears only last through the stories we tell ourselves . . .

What is your biggest fear today? Is it illness? Or job loss? Or the fact that you can't fit into your favorite pants?

Whatever it is, know this - you're going to be fine. There might be tears and fears, but they will only last if you keep retelling sad, frightening stories to yourself.

So, leave the campfire of dread, stand tall, put your hands on your hips, and focus on walking into the next moment.

Check out this week's Power blog --

- [Buy Some Ruby Slippers and Start Walking](#)- Why somebody whispered "it's okay" when I moved my office and other stuff about change.

Tears and Fears are normal - just don't wallow in them. Instead, stand up and walk on.

Fierce Love



Yes, sometimes tough love is required.

I remember the morning I told my mother that I was going to skip school because it was the day of the homecoming dance. Mom told me she appreciated my honesty, but if I skipped school, I would not go to the homecoming dance that night. I immediately regretted my extroverted need to verbalize everything.

I left the school campus around 11:00 a.m. went to the mall, and a deacon from our church spotted me at JC Penny. She immediately called my mother, and I missed my homecoming dance. The moral of this story? Don't go anywhere that might house a deacon when you're the preacher's kid.

Tough love is the world's most annoying but effective teacher . . .

Refusing me a homecoming dance was harder on my mom than me. She was stuck with a blubbering teenager for the next four hours, and the fear all parents have that her decision would cause me to turn into Lindsay Lohan.

But that didn't happen. I knew that I took a chance when I skipped school. I knew that it was wrong. And if mom had given in, I would have learned that lies pay off.

Love is not always easy . . .

Love doesn't mean never having to say you're sorry. You say you're sorry a LOT when love is involved.

Love means caring enough to teach yourself and others. It means setting standards and living up to them. It takes into account the fact that human nature often wants to do the easy thing rather than the right thing.

To power up this month, fall in love with doing what is right. Let love be both your comforter and your commander, and not in the *Fifty Shades of Grey* way. Fierce love protects that which is important

Check out this week's Power blogs -

- [If Life Were the Hunger Games](#) - All about turning 50 and how to find what's important in your life.
- [Love is a Four Letter Word](#)- Because sometimes we have really bad days, and that's okay.



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