

Put yourself in the picture...
Find the courage to write your own story



Courage & Lessons Learned: Reaching for Your Goals

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www.hermentorcenter.com

Stories

We all have a story to tell and our past experiences shape it. What we learn from others helps us appreciate our own. In this e-book we present ordinary people who have had life-transforming experiences. As you read about them, notice their imperfections and yet remarkable courage.

A good narrative can stimulate ideas and action. The stories here are your stories. These folks are just like you, with attitudes, thoughts and feelings you may find familiar. When you think about the challenges you're facing and the inevitable changes, you may wonder:

Who am I now?
What are my strengths?
How do I grow?

To help you answer these questions, you'll find support, information and direction here. Best of all, the tips introduce you to practical strategies and effective solutions. Try them on – you'll see that they can work for you. We know you'll be inspired. And when you look inside yourself, you'll find your own hidden courage.

For more inspiration and practical tips

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Our Story

We're Phyllis Goldberg, Ph.D. and Rosemary Lichtman, Ph.D., family relationship experts who have developed a 4-step model for change you can't afford to ignore. It targets women like you, managing a family in flux while balancing work and family. Whether you're coping with stress, struggling with self-esteem or setting goals for your future, we provide field-tested solutions to the challenges you face.

Rosemary and Phyllis



We each have over 25 years of private practice experience guiding women through personal and family crises. Graduates of Dr. Martin Seligman's Authentic Happiness coaching program, we use positive psychology techniques in our work. We've developed workshops, facilitated focus groups and conducted interviews with women examining their emotional reactions to family problems. And our 100+ 'how to' articles have been published on the Internet.

Friends and colleagues, we joined together more than ten years ago to form Her Mentor Center, offering education, support and coaching for women. We provide smart strategies for reclaiming power when family relationships shift.

Just like you, we've raised children, cared for aging parents and grandchildren, worked in service to others. Our identity, like yours, has been redefined many times over the years, either subtly or more dramatically. We know that the relationships and roles in families are always changing and we're here to help you tackle these transitions head-on.

Visit our website, www.HerMentorCenter.com, to read articles and women's stories.

While you're there, sign up for our free monthly newsletter, *Stepping Stones*.

For practical tips about parents growing older and children growing up, log on to our blog, wwwHerMentorCenter.com.



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Contact Us

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Captain Sullenberger: Hope on the Hudson

Bravery and humility - often at the heart of fairy tales – are qualities that can inspire all of us to be the best that we can be. And, with the doom and gloom of the economic crisis, we were primed and about ready for a miracle. People want to feel hopeful again.

Chesley B. "Sully" Sullenberger III safely landed a US Airways flight 1549 with 155 passengers and crew onboard in the Hudson River when the plane encountered problems after takeoff. Everyone survived. A spokesman for the U.S. Airline Pilots Association says that Sullenberger acted 'very calm and cool, very relaxed, just very professional.' Apparently he was the last one off the plane, walking down the aisles two times to make sure no one was left on board. Now that's a hero.

The challenges you face and crises you endure may not be quite so dramatic. But there are lessons we all can learn from the passengers and crew who stayed calm and pulled together on that Airbus A320 flight:

- **Realize that support is a valuable tool.** Reaching out to others when you need encouragement helps you make it through what seems like an impossible situation. In an emergency, hold out your hand to a stranger. Confide in friends and family as you work through difficult circumstances. Getting a second and objective opinion from a family therapist or life coach will provide you with insight and direction. Join an ongoing group or attend a weekend retreat to share concerns and gain new perspective. Or find a workshop through your local university extension or mental health center. Spending time with others will validate your emotions and make you feel better.

- **Express your gratitude often.** One airplane passenger, on a rescue raft in the frigid cold, went up to Sullenberger, grabbed his arm and said 'thank you on behalf of all of us.' Those are the moments in life that create a lasting impression. Try it yourself. Say thank you to a family member, a friend or a colleague. You'll see that others will feel more valued and you'll benefit from putting your appreciation into words. Studies show that gratitude helps you attain a better mood, increased self-esteem and a greater sense of connection to the world.
- **Develop stress relievers.** If you have endured an extraordinary physical or emotional experience, take time out for yourself. By regular exercise, good nutrition and proper rest, you'll be taking better care of your body. Attend to your mind and your spirit as well. Practice techniques of deep breathing, relaxation or your own form of meditation. Set aside quiet time and do what it is that gives you personal pleasure. Relax and have fun as you bring more balance into your life. Look at it as investing in your emotional bank account. You'll generate positive memories that you can draw on when you need them.
- **Recognize an acute stress reaction.** After an event where you could have died, it's natural to have a greater appreciation for life. Subsequent to a traumatic event, on the other hand, an immediate emotional reaction can turn into Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This is more likely to occur for those who have suffered a previous trauma, a weak support system, a history of addiction or depression. If your symptoms persist - sleep disturbance, sadness, fears, irritability, flashbacks or nightmares – don't hesitate to make an appointment with a mental health professional.

- **Be as prepared as possible ahead of time.** Sullenberger was ready – he's a former air force fighter pilot, an expert in safety reliability methods and has 40 years of flying experience. Although you may not need training for an emergency landing, you can be equipped for what lies ahead. If you're making an important presentation at work, setting guidelines for your kidult who can't find a job and is moving back home or talking to your dad about giving up the car keys, learn as much as you can about the issues. Research the subject, write out talking points, get feedback from those whose opinions you value.

As you look back, how have you dealt with trauma in the past? And how has this changed you? Take the specific strategies that you learned and apply the most effective ones again and again. Look at the ways you can continue to build on your internal and external strengths. A double bird strike disabling two engines is a highly improbable set of circumstances. Yet there are many extraordinary situations we cannot predict. Hopefully you won't ever have to brace for a crash landing. But being prepared never hurt anyone.

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6 Lessons Olympic Athletes Can Teach Boomers

In the summer of 2008, billions of fans watched athletes from around the world compete in the Beijing Olympics. Even with political controversy and global tensions running rampant, these diverse games reflected the delicate balance between reality and entertainment. For many Sandwiched Boomers, the Olympics satisfied the yearning for distraction from immediate concerns about economic instability and caring for a family in flux.

The Games provided color, drama and a broad demonstration of excellence. The full range of female athletes on the Olympic teams made it clear that age and family responsibilities aren't the barriers to participation in the Games they used to be. Stories highlighted the courage and resolve of the mothers of the world, as they demonstrated their athletic prowess and won gold or silver medals.

In addition to news about the winners and venues, information from Beijing went well beyond who was winning and losing gold medals. Significant were the 20 mothers on the USA Olympic team, including past medalist, swimmer Dara Torres, a role model for any mother wondering if it is too late to begin again. Now age 41, Dara began participating in the Olympics twenty-four years ago. Retiring, getting married and wanting to start a family, she skipped the 2004 Games and had a child two years ago. Swimming for fitness after the birth of her daughter, Tessa, she thought she was done with competitive swimming. But she found that her times were better than ever.

Eight long years after her last Olympics, Dara marched in the Beijing opening ceremonies with 9 medals to her credit, the most of any USA athlete in the Games. Swimming in individual and relay team competition, she won 3 silver medals, losing gold in the freestyle individual event by only one one-hundredth of a second. She now can now be proud of a record 12 Olympic medals in her career - so far! Asked "what will you tell your daughter about your record at this Olympics," Dara said, "You don't have to put an age limit on your dreams."

Here are 6 tips about how to incorporate the deeper meaning of the Olympics into your life and fulfill your own dreams:

- **Find your unique passion and cultivate it.** There were hundreds of events at the Olympics, each representing a specific activity that athletes had chosen to pursue. They ranged from rhythmic gymnastics to javelin throwing, from fencing to sailing, from synchronized swimming to boxing. What brings you joy and the ability to be fully engaged? Recognize the creativity and excitement that emerge as you follow your dreams.
- **Excellence comes with hard work and practice.** Learning about the training schedules of Olympic athletes reminds us that accomplishments don't come easy. Repetition is the handmaiden of success. Set long-term goals as well as realistic and incremental steps to reach them. Give yourself credit when you achieve an objective and move ever closer toward your ultimate goal. Strive for your personal best - and remember the most important competitor you have is actually you.
- **Expect to fail sometimes.** And when you do, pick yourself up and start over again. Every athlete who has made it into Olympic competition has suffered injury and disappointment along the way - but that has not been the end of the quest. They know that they can learn more from failure than success. You'll become more resilient and adaptable as you, too, use your setbacks as a teaching tool.

- **Relish the support that comes from those who care about you.** Individual athletes depend on an entourage of people assisting them - coaches, trainers, family, friends, sponsors and teammates. As you work toward your own goals, the cheering section may be more limited - family, friends, teachers, support groups. But, whatever the size, accept the encouragement. Function as a team and be available to help sustain others when they need it. Athletes talk about the Olympic village and see themselves as part of that community. Figure out who makes up your community.
- **Explore other cultures.** With its symbol of five interlinking rings, the Olympics celebrate the unity of the games while honoring individual nationalities. Athletes pay tribute to each other by trading pins with those from other countries. China has a population of one and a third billion and is composed of over 50 distinct ethnic groups - all represented in the show of diversity and solidarity at the ceremonies. Learn more about people who are different from you. You don't have to travel to exotic places - it could be a bus ride to another part of town. You'll be enriched by others who don't share your history and experiences.
- **Enjoy your successes.** Did you observe the Olympic athletes when they stood on the winners' platforms with their medals, listening to their national anthems? Their pride and emotionality were palpable. Reward yourself when you reach a significant target and savor the feelings of power that come from your achievement. You deserve it.

As you think back over the spectacle of the Beijing Olympics, don't remain a spectator. Jump into the game of life and become a winner yourself. If you've ever questioned whether you're too old to reach your goals or balance family and career, you can learn a lesson from Dara Torres. It's never too late to challenge yourself. With maturity, drive and focus, you can always achieve your dreams.

What Sandwiched Boomers Can Learn from Tim Russert

When Tim Russert died there were non-stop tributes to him, from erudite political friends to strangers traveling long distances to pay their respects. He was the toughest interviewer in broadcast journalism and few had even come close to rattling him. He clearly understood how the media game was played. But he knew an awful lot more than that. Think about what you can learn from his legacy and how you can apply it to your own life:

- **He knew how to be a good son, father and husband.** Tim Russert loved his family and told them so on a regular basis. He placed great value on parenting and made certain, above all, that his son was a priority. As knowledge is power, try to better understand the transitions that your own family in flux is going through right now. Gather more information about how to manage change from the Internet's search engines and the self-help section of your local bookstore. Talk to friends and family whose opinions you respect and who have had similar experiences. And take this opportunity to get some realistic feedback and concrete advice.
- **Tim Russert never forgot where he came from.** He was proud of his blue-collar origins, growing up in Buffalo, delivering newspapers as a boy. You, too, can find your roots. Dig deep and listen to your inner voice. What does it say about who you are, what you want, how to nurture your family and still take care of you? Set specific long-range goals about what you want to accomplish. And identify short-term objectives as you work toward making your plans a reality, step by step.

- **He did his homework.** Russert researched every subject he covered so that, when it was time to go on the air, he was well prepared. How can you get ready for what lies ahead? It's often said that history is prologue. As you look back in review, how did you deal with major changes in your family life? And think about what's worked in the past. Take the specific strategies that you learned from those experiences and, once again, apply the most effective ones to the challenges you face today. A positive attitude will motivate you to stay on track and ultimately reach your goals.
- **Tim Russert was confident and a man of strong faith.** Look at the ways you can continue to build on your internal and external assets. Evaluate your basic character strengths and how they have benefited you in other circumstances. Are you fiercely curious and determined to find a solution, no matter what? Discover the community resources, such as caregiver programs or parent support groups, that will help in your decision making process as you deal with the specific family challenges.
- **He was a role model for those in the media.** Many of his colleagues called him their cheerleader and gave testimony to how he shaped their careers. Co-workers who felt close to him identified with his values. He was authentic, nurturing and encouraging. When you have problems, do you recognize the importance of support? Talk with friends and family to clarify your needs as you work through a process of change. Getting a second and objective opinion - from a family therapist, gerontologist or life coach – can provide insight, direction and encouragement.

There was a massive outpouring of emotion for Tim Russert because he was much admired at a time when family values had taken a back seat to more immediate gratifications. See this as a teachable moment. Character matters. The country responded to someone they didn't necessarily know but whom they saw as representing them, their struggles and possible solutions. People felt as if they could depend on Russert, just as your family does on you. You, too, represent hope for your family and the future of our country.

Cheer Captain Phillips and Train for Your Own Success

Americans were thankful and joyous to learn of the successful rescue of Richard Phillips, captain of the Maersk Alabama, a commercial ship bringing much-needed food and supplies to Africa. Capt. Phillips acted heroically when his ship was attacked by Somali pirates five days earlier, surrendering himself as a hostage while protecting the crew from a similar fate. President Obama noted that Captain Phillips' demonstration of courage was "a model for all Americans." We all join in admiring his unique combination of integrity, professional training and bravery.

Back on the USS Bainbridge, with Commander Frank Castellano, Capt. Phillips was quick to give credit to his rescuers, saying, "I'm just the byline. The real heroes are the Navy, the Seals, those who have brought me home." The admirable behavior of many throughout this ordeal made the daring rescue possible: Capt. Phillips himself, Navy Seals, Cmdr. Castellano, officers and crew of the Alabama, as well as other Navy personnel and ships coming to aid in the rescue efforts. We wonder, what gives someone the strength to act as selflessly as Capt. Phillips did? His merchant marine training and position as a leader certainly played a large role, yet his actions also seem to reflect a deep personal commitment to his fellow man.

How can you begin to incorporate these successful techniques for handling difficult challenges in your life? Use these 6 tips as you draw upon your own resources and support to accomplish goals when you're in stressful situations.

- **Respect your job and take it seriously.** Capt. Phillips is an alumnus of the Merchant Marine Academy where, undoubtedly, he was trained about what to do in numerous emergency situations. He had a plan to protect his ship and crew and immediately instituted it when the pirates attacked. Train hard for your job and treat it with the significance it deserves. If you are a parent, your work at home is just as important as your career. Pay attention to what is going on in your family and have contingency plans for how to keep members safe.
- **Don't give up, even when all seems hopeless.** Captain Phillips was in a frightening situation when the pirates attacked. Yet he didn't surrender his ship and crew, rather he put his own life at stake. Hot, hungry, tired and alone with his captors on the lifeboat for five days, Capt. Phillips didn't admit defeat. Instead, when he could, he jumped off the boat and attempted to swim to safety. When you're faced with tremendous difficulties, hang in there. Draw upon your personal character strengths - like persistence, hope, leadership, integrity, creativity, bravery, spirituality - to carry you through the ordeal.
- **Think outside the box.** Capt. Phillips appeared to be going along with the pirates' commands but he stayed alert and constantly thought about what he could do, first, to save his crew and cargo and then himself. He paid attention to his captors' behavior and tried to escape, surprising them by jumping into the ocean. When that attempt failed, he remained attentive to rescue efforts so that he could play his part. You too can be creative when you are faced with a seemingly impossible situation. Often you can improvise when a solution doesn't readily appear. Use your skills to develop resiliency. Your first plan may not work but keep revising until you have plans that you can implement.

- **Use all your resources.** The rescue of Capt. Phillips required the coordinated efforts of the U.S. Navy command, their ships and personnel, the Seals, merchant ships, the FBI, even President Obama. While you likely do not have these resources at your fingertips, you do have friends, extended family and community services to help you through challenges. Learn to cooperate with others and use teamwork as you strategize and move toward accomplishing your goals.
- **Align yourself with a higher purpose.** For Capt. Phillips, it was more important to protect his crew and their humanitarian cargo than himself. His altruistic perspective informed and directed his actions. You can build a meaningful life for yourself and your family as you form a strong connection to community, country, the world and a spiritual power.
- **Say thank you.** Capt. Phillips' first public statement when he reached the USS Bainbridge was to thank his rescuers for giving him back his freedom. He tried to direct the spotlight away from himself and towards them, labeling them the "real heroes." When you have been helped and nurtured by others, expressing your gratitude makes both you and them feel good. These two little words create a win-win situation for everyone.

We salute you, Captain Phillips, and welcome you home. Now, let's all use the tools we have to get busy creating our own rescue plans, whatever the focus. Even without the media coverage, we will surely be heroes in the eyes of those who care about us.

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Susan Boyle's Beauty on the Inside

Thanks to the Internet, we all had a chance to learn a lesson from Susan Boyle when she sang *I Dreamed a Dream* before judges of the TV show, *Britain has Talent*. What a surreal and thrilling moment for her. And what a wake-up call for the rest of us.

Her 15 minutes of fame aren't over yet. Countless viewers have seen her on You Tube and her debut CD sold over a million copies in the first week. Why the viral nature of this phenomenon? Of course, we're all pretty fed up with the media focus on either the economic meltdown or vapid teen pop stars. Who isn't desperate for a heartwarming story and a role model whose character inspires us to follow our dreams?

In some ways Susan Boyle is everywoman. Her initial appearance onstage, with the negative reaction from the audience and judges, taps into insecurities we all have. Who hasn't felt frumpy or unattractive, unsure of ourselves or at a loss for words? Susan has lived a simple life, caring for her elderly mother, singing in the church choir and practicing her music. When you see the instant rejection, it makes you wonder if our society is focused on the wrong things.

So what does all this fanfare about Susan Boyle have to do with you? You may not think you have an inner vision or the power and persistence to reach your goals. But here are some ideas that you may be able to use, even if you can't belt out a heartbreaking ballad about unfulfilled dreams:

- **Draw on what is really of value to you.** Assess your character strengths and resources, and how they've helped you get what you want before. And figure out how you can build on those assets now. Enlist your staying power as you keep your eye on the goal.
- **Let your creativity run wild so that you see yourself from a different perspective.** The first step is just to begin the process. Then your positive experiences will soon provide the incentive to continue. There may be stumbling blocks along the way, but never give up.
- **Don't be swayed by others and their attitudes, no matter whether they sneer or cheer.** Focus inward. Find the internal confidence to move forward on your own steam. Pay attention only to what you're doing. And finish the song, no matter what.
- **The unexpected can come at any time. Be prepared.** Try to stay motivated as you practice your skills. And pretty soon, step-by-step, you'll be able to turn your hopes and dreams into reality.
- **Try to be happy in your own skin.** Take it one day at a time and make the most of your life as it is now. If, by chance, you become a sensation, stay humble and don't let success go to your head. Appreciate your good fortune.

Susan Boyle had learning difficulties in school and was bullied. She said that her classmates' taunts left behind the kind of scars that often don't heal. Can you imagine how the initial negative reactions from the talent show audience felt to her? It seems as if, according to society, you should have the physical ability to seduce if you're going to be a torch singer. But when she sang about wasted youth and lost dreams, the crowd went wild. Don't we all love a surprise?

She's the classic underdog – shy, portly, middle-aged, non-threatening and largely misunderstood. It happens to lots of people all the time. She doesn't have boyfriends, is a stranger to romance and has 'never been kissed.' Singing was her salvation. On stage, courage could easily have failed her. Yet, in pursuing her long-held dreams, she managed to triumph over many disadvantages.

Susan Boyle is a reminder that it's time we all look a little deeper. As a caring daughter and devoted companion, she has lived an important life. You're probably doing that too in some ways. So don't think of yourself as just one more person with no discernable talent. When life provides a stage, sing your heart out. You deserve the applause.

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Lessons Sandwiched Boomers Can Learn from Senator Ted Kennedy

Senator Ted Kennedy was the last of the Kennedy brothers whose power, challenges and triumphs dominated a generation of politics. He was eulogized as an inspiration to his family and to those in public service. His body of work toward progressive causes in the U.S. Senate was proof that he understood how policies affected people. Caring passionately about the people he served, he worked tirelessly on their behalf.

Yet his life was marred by tragedy and scandal - from the assassination of brothers John and Robert and the earlier death of his brother Joseph in World War II, to the deadly Chappaquiddick crash. Despite his personal losses and failings, Teddy Kennedy persevered. He served alongside 10 United States presidents and was well known for his political insight. Another significant role he played was as patriarch to his brothers' children and grandchildren.

Perhaps Senator Kennedy's life situation was more complicated than yours. And you may not have to live up to that kind of a legacy. But as Sandwiched Boomers you must have your share of crises and challenges. What follows are practical tips to help you face them:

- **Evaluate the situation without overreacting or putting your head in the sand.** Pay attention to what's going on around you. Yet avoid getting caught up in a pessimistic mindset that can result in higher levels of anxiety and poor decision-making. Remain calm and stay focused on what you need to do.

- **Realize that support is valuable.** Reaching out to others when you need encouragement helps you make it through what seems like an impossible situation. Confide in friends and family as you work through the difficulties. A second and objective opinion from a spiritual advisor or therapist can provide you with further insight and direction.
- **History is prologue.** As you look back in review, consider how you have dealt with other major trials and tribulations in your life. Think about what has worked for you in the past. Take the specific strategies that you learned from those experiences and, once again, apply the most effective ones.
- **Recognize how you deal with tension.** Avoid unhealthy activities like smoking, drinking, gambling or emotional eating. Pressure and stress can bring about more conflict and arguments in relationships. If any of these behaviors are causing problems for you, find healthier approaches to deal with your negative feelings.
- **Difficult times can offer opportunities for needed change.** Discover the many ways you can continue to build on your internal assets. Are you fiercely curious and determined to find a solution, no matter what? How can your strength of character and generosity of spirit benefit you in the present circumstances?
- **Set some long-range goals about what you want to accomplish as well as short-term objectives that will get you there.** These concrete plans will provide the basic foundation for change. As you successfully move forward step by step, your self-confidence will grow. And incremental action, as well as a positive attitude, will motivate you to stay on track and ultimately reach your goals.

- **Gain perspective, whether you're hit in the face with a crisis or making a slow transition into the next chapter of your life.**
Expect a cascade of feelings– anxiety, the desire to hold on, resentment, sadness, fear, even a sense of freedom. The emotional roller coaster ride is normal. If you have the fortitude to step back, take a deep breath and face the situation squarely, you can't help but grow from the challenges.

Kennedy had personal failings but he worked hard to right his path. And over his lifetime he became a better man. Presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin said that he will be remembered for his strengths and his weaknesses: "There's a great quote by Ernest Hemingway who said, everyone is broken by life but afterwards some are stronger in the broken places."

Senator Kennedy was a study in strength sustained through struggle. You too can overcome adversity. If you've made mistakes, be prepared to acknowledge them and act responsibly. Don't surrender to self pity and regret. As Kennedy often told his young son who lost his leg to cancer - keep fighting, you can do it. Tap into your spirit of resilience. And focus on your vision and the possibilities – you owe it to yourself.

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If you enjoyed "Courage and Lessons Learned".....

Is there something you've wanted to do for a long time - enroll in a class, reconnect with an old friend, run a 5K? Now that you're inspired, take the first step. That's courageous, in and of itself.

Watch for more of our e-books. The next one will feature tips to help you cope with these tough economic times.

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