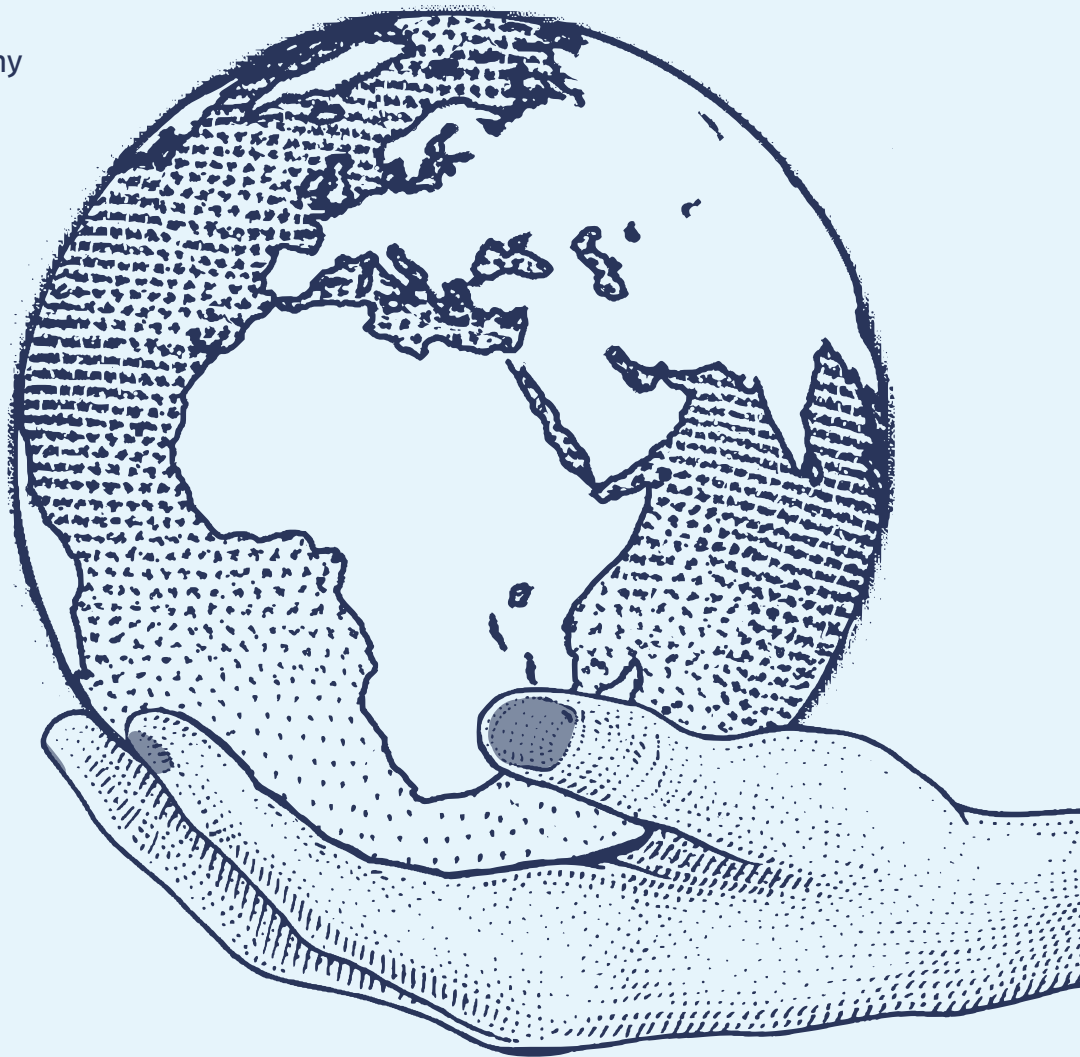


THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

# RESILIENCE

*How 20 Ambitious Women Used Obstacles  
to Fuel Their Success*

By Veronica Dagher  
Host of @WSJ's 'Secrets of Wealthy  
Women' Podcast



Sponsored By:



**UBS**

**WSJ+**

INVITES + OFFERS + INSPIRATION

<i>Acknowledgements</i>		3
<i>Introduction</i>		4
<i>The Hardest Step</i>		
KATE WHITE	Finding Your Confidence	6
ANGIE HICKS	The Carrot Diet	9
JEN SINCERO	Garage Banned	12
MELISSA FRANCIS	Being Honest	15
<i>Managing the Juggle</i>		
REBECCA MINKOFF	Turning “No” to “Yes”	19
KATIA BEAUCHAMP	Letting Go of Balance	22
JOSIE NATORI	A Family Business	25
AYESHA CURRY	Making Time for Your Passion	28
<i>Thriving Despite Personal Trauma</i>		
MARY HIGGINS CLARK	Writing Off Loss	32
BONNIE ST. JOHN	Getting Up Fast	35
SUKEY NOVOGRATZ	Help Yourself First	38
SUSAN PACKARD	Connecting to Your Feelings	41
<i>Overcoming Doubt</i>		
MARIA SHARAPOVA	The Grand-Slam Challenge	45
LOREEN ARBUS	Confronting Pain Head On	48
SHEILA JOHNSON	Winning the War	51
RANA EL KALIOUBY	The Power of Networks	54
<i>Embracing Risk</i>		
BARBARA CORCORAN	Welcoming Failure to Succeed	58
CLAUDIA ROMO EDELMAN	Finding a Big Mission	61
JEAN CASE	Embracing the Unknown	64
BARBARA BRADLEY BAEKGAARD	The Beauty of Plan B	67
<i>Questions to Consider</i>		70

## *Acknowledgements:*

The news editor on this book was Aaron Lucchetti, and the lead editor was Amber Burton. The photo editor was Angela Owens. Design and production was overseen by Jay Morris, Valerie Siebert and Alix Milne. Special thanks to Matt Murray, Alexandra Kaptik, Charles Forelle, Anthony Galloway, Louise Story, David Reilly, Colin Barr, Dave Pettit, Paul Rekoff, Aaron Kuriloff, Laura Saunders, Brian Hershberg, John Wordock, Annmarie Fertoli, J.R. Whalen, Charlie Turner, Sarah Coffey, Lynn Cook, Vanessa Fuhrmans, Cory Schouten and Ben Weltman. Ongoing appreciation to Tanya Bustos, producer of the “Secrets of Wealthy Women” podcast, and to all of our dedicated listeners. Many thanks to Patrick Mormino, Monica and Bill Dagher.

—*Veronica Dagher*

## *Introduction:*

Resilience is a key trait of all of the successful women who have been guests on our “Secrets of Wealthy Women” podcast.

The women whom I interview typically are household names in industries including beauty, fashion and entertainment. Many have faced hardships.

They’ve coped with bitter divorces, failed businesses and sexual assault. They’ve had to fight for equal pay, leadership positions and funding for their businesses. They’ve been stretched between work and family commitments, leaving little time for themselves.

An important difference between these women and those who aren’t as successful is that they don’t quit.

Yes, there were instances when they wanted to, but they kept going. Perhaps their initial goal changed or adapted with the circumstances, but they didn’t give up on themselves or their dreams.

They pressed on despite all of the rejections, other people’s negativity and their own personal traumas. They keep going.

Our “Secrets of Wealthy Women” podcast listeners tell us that they’re inspired by these women’s stories of bouncing back and overcoming what, at times, can feel like insurmountable obstacles.

This book aims to share some of those stories of resilience. The goal is to inspire you and demonstrate that even if a woman appears to have a life full of wealth, fame and success, she’s encountered some sort of struggle along the way.

Great success is possible for you too—however you choose to define success. Yes, there will be sacrifices. There will be bumps and pivots along the way, but if you commit to your passion, believe in yourself and work hard at creating the life you truly desire, you can do it, these women say.

Resilience takes many forms. It may mean overcoming your own self doubts or the doubts of others. It can mean thriving despite sexual assault, prejudice or other trauma. It can mean having the courage to take a difficult first step, advocate for yourself or take a risk that everyone thinks is ill-advised. It also may mean learning to accept yourself as a woman, and if you’re a working mother, creating your own definition of work-life balance.

You’ll meet 20 incredible women, including Katia Beauchamp, the co-founder of Birchbox. She says the key for many is forgoing the “mythical idea” of work-life balance. Instead, accept and be proud of what you do, however you decide to prioritize your life.

Significant success can come at any age. The subjects of this book understand that anything is possible (good or bad) and that you have the strength within you to cope with the challenges life will surely present. They also show that taking an active role in your finances can help you be prepared when those uncertain times occur.

Know you’re not alone. It is OK to ask for help. And during this Women’s History Month, know also there have been many women who have gone before you and who have thrived during and after difficulty. There are allies—women and men—who are ready and willing to help mentor and sponsor you.

You too can achieve greatness. You also can bounce back from failure. Don’t give up. We need you. The world needs you.



*Veronica Dagher  
March 15, 2019*

# THE HARDEST STEP





# KATE WHITE

## Finding Your Confidence

Generations of young women looked to Cosmopolitan magazine editor Kate White for advice about love, career and fashion. Ms. White, who served as editor in chief of Cosmo from 1998 to 2012, and who is now a best-selling author of both career books and suspense novels, has inspired countless women to ask for what they want.

But Ms. White, who is often spotted wearing leopard-print clothing, wasn't always so bold. After she moved to Manhattan from a small town in upstate New York in her early 20s, she says she lost confidence for a period early in her career.

After winning Glamour Magazine's "Top 10 College Women Contest," Ms. White envisioned pursuing her dream of becoming a magazine editor in New York City. But she lost the nerve to ask for a job in the editorial department and ended up instead in the magazine's merchandising department.

"I had a bad first boss and I was living in a crappy apartment, and since I was new to the city, I had few friends," she says. "All of that seemed to suck away this great confidence I left college with."

An executive in the magazine's promotions department saw that Ms. White was floundering. She eventually hired Ms. White as a promotions writer in her department and allowed her to write freelance articles for the magazine in her free time.

Ms. White's confidence—and nerve—began to return. She eventually landed a role as feature writer after producing a 13-page proposal about why she should be in the editorial division.

From that experience, Ms. White learned the importance of having more senior people within a company advocate for your career advancement. She also learned how crucial it is for women to advocate for themselves.

Speaking up is especially important for women as they're less likely to be promoted than men and are typically paid less than men who do the same job.

"As I look back on my career, gutsiness always paid off for me, and I couldn't find any examples of where it got in my way," she says.

When voicing an idea or opinion, it is important to be aware of the company's corporate culture. If your company uses data to decide which businesses to launch, be sure to include relevant data in any pitch, she says. And understand why your boss and company should invest their time and money into your proposal.

Ask "what's in it for them?" she says.

Ms. White attained her goal of becoming an editor in chief at age 37, taking the role at Child magazine. She was ahead of schedule. In her early 30s, she figured out that most top editors of women's magazines were around 39 or 40 years old when they first received the title. Doing some career math, she realized she didn't have much time left to achieve her dream.

So she started acquiring skills that would help her progress more quickly, including public-speaking classes.

At age 48, she got the top job at Cosmopolitan, where she increased circulation by 30% and oversaw an array of brand extensions, including Cosmo Books and Cosmo for Guys.

Her biggest challenge was getting inside the minds of Gen X and Gen Y women, who seemed very different in some respects from baby-boomer women like herself. They seemed "wonderfully more confident, more willing to take risks, less interested in protocol, and sometimes, to their detriment, less focused on the long game over the short game," Ms. White says.

***"As I look back on my career, gutsiness always paid off for me, and I couldn't find any examples of where it got in my way."***

She thinks of herself as an editor who goes with her gut, but because her audience was younger, she also relied on research. She made a point of reading every reader email. She also had every item in the magazine rated by readers.

Ms. White managed being a working mother by leaving the office at 5 p.m. and then working for a couple hours after her children went to bed. She looks back on those years as exhausting, but thrilling.

One thing she'd do differently: let the babysitter make dinner so she could focus more on her family. She also wishes she had been more direct with friends who may have been hurt by her lack of contact, the byproduct of a busy schedule.

Today, Ms. White has been able to reconnect with many of her old friends now that she is a self-employed writer and speaker.

The longtime editor eased her transition to life after Cosmo by taking time early in the morning to write something unrelated to the magazine. Since she left the magazine world, she's published two career books and five suspense novels.

---

## *Kate's Tips*

- Find a sponsor
- Advocate for yourself
- Leave work at 5 p.m. and log on later
- Be direct with friends





# ANGIE HICKS

## The Carrot Diet

A self-described introvert, Angie Hicks didn't plan to be an entrepreneur. Nor did she expect to become the face of her eponymous online rating and reviews platform, Angie's List.

When she graduated from a small, liberal-arts college, DePauw University, in 1995, she assumed she'd work in consulting or banking. But her shyness was an obstacle during interviews, she says, and she had difficulty finding a job after college.

Then, her former internship boss William Oesterle, a venture capitalist, proposed they start a company together. Mr. Oesterle would raise the initial capital and Ms. Hicks would go door-to-door signing up subscribers for a directory of crowdsourced reviews of Columbus, Ohio-based businesses.

Ms. Hicks was reluctant to accept Mr. Oesterle's offer at first as she thought it sounded too risky. It was only after speaking to her grandfather, a survivor of the Great Depression who reminded her that at age 22 she had little to lose, did she agree.

The recent college graduate moved from Indiana to Columbus, a city where she knew no one except Mr. Oesterle and his family, to launch the company.

Those early years building the business were extremely isolating and difficult, she says.

She worked alone out of a 10' x 10' office that had a window overlooking a cinder block wall, a card table for a desk and a telephone from her parent's house.

She spent her mornings going door-to-door trying to convince people to pay \$20 a year to join her fledgling subscription service.

Ms. Hicks could spend five hours walking around in various neighborhoods and might only sign up one subscriber.

To help cope with all of the rejection, she focused on the numbers and the idea that while they were moving slowly, they were at least moving.

“I realized I had to make 20 calls to get one or two sales,” she says. As long as she made two or three a day, it would be fine.

Her resolve was tested about four months after starting the business. It was a particularly slow period; she only sold 30 memberships in an entire month.

Frustrated, she met Mr. Oesterle at a coffee shop where she spent an hour crying about her lack of progress. At times, she cried so hard she could barely speak. By the end of the meeting though, Ms. Hicks told her co-founder that she refused to quit, and Mr. Oesterle complimented her determination, she recalled.

That early focus paid off. After the company developed a website, moved the business online, scaled to national marketing and added venture funding from Silicon Valley, it went from 30 to 100 markets in just 18 months.

Not only did Ms. Hicks eventually expand the business nationally, Angie’s List went public in 2011. The company was bought by Barry Diller’s internet conglomerate IAC in 2017 for over \$500 million. Ms. Hicks remains on the board of IAC’s ANGI Homeservices Inc. and is now the company’s chief customer officer.

Looking back, Ms. Hicks says her unwillingness to fail was a crucial part of her success.

“I think what it comes down to is really perseverance and just be willing to move the dirt,” she says.

***“I realized I had to make 20 calls to get one or two sales.”***

She says entrepreneurs who are feeling frustrated should look for signs that they’re making progress. Learning to celebrate “wins,” even though they may be small, helped motivate her when she wanted to give up.

She eventually learned to acknowledge the achievement of getting just one membership, which was one more than she had before.

“Create carrots for yourself along the way,” she says.

Get used to doing things you’re not comfortable with or don’t feel like you’re particularly good at, she says. For example, despite her many years as spokesperson for Angie’s List, Ms. Hicks doesn’t enjoy public speaking.

So when it is time for a speech, she gives herself a pep talk ahead of time. To help recharge after a talk, Ms. Hicks avoids scheduling meetings the following day. She also tackles tasks she doesn’t enjoy early in the day.

Ms. Hicks, who has three children, says it is possible for women to have their own companies and also have a home life. But it is unrealistic to expect a perfect “work-life balance.”

“We eat a lot of pot roast in the crockpot,” she says. “I’m not a good cook, but it’s dinner together.”

No one is going to make your family a priority for you, she tells working mothers. “I don’t care how great your boss is, they are never going to come up to you and say—Hey Susie, aren’t you supposed to be at your daughter’s ballet recital right now?” she says.

As a result, working women need to make choices and not feel guilty when they need to attend to family matters, Ms. Hicks says.

---

## *Angie's Tips*

- Celebrate small wins
- Give yourself pep talks
- Tackle unwanted tasks early in the day
- Choose to make your family a priority



# JEN SINCERO

## Garage Banned

Jen Sincero always felt she was meant to do something great.

But she was well into her 40s until she figured out what that was.

For decades, Ms. Sincero lived paycheck to paycheck.

After college, she worked in the music industry in Manhattan for a few years and played in a band. She then moved to New Mexico in 1996 to become a freelance writer and to continue to play music.

She scraped by but because she kept her expenses low, she was able to pay her bills.

A few years later, she moved to California, where she continued to work as a writer. By the time she was 41, she struggled to pay the roughly \$900 in rent for the 200-square-foot converted garage where she lived in Venice Beach. She liked living so close to the beach and didn't really have another plan so she stayed in the small space.

Despite making money writing articles and knitting, she thought her financial future was doomed. Her frustration increased when she couldn't afford surgery for her cat and had trouble moving her neck because she slept on a futon instead of a mattress. During these years she also wrote two books that weren't widely commercially successful and didn't improve her financial situation.

A trip to India in 2007, shifted her mindset. Several friends had recently traveled there and said it changed their outlook on life. In turn, she decided to travel there alone for five weeks.

“I really wanted to shake things up,” she says. Ms. Sincero was both “excited and terrified” to make the trip.

As she backpacked through the country though, she met people who greeted her warmly and who seemed happy. Some of those people were wealthy but many of them were very poor.

When she returned to her garage in California, she realized how unsatisfied she felt.

While she felt grateful for what she had in comparison to some of the people she had met, she felt a pressing need to improve her surroundings.

“India woke me up,” she says. “I realized I was really settling and playing small.”

She was ready to change her financial and personal life. She couldn’t stand listening to herself complain anymore.

In turn, she hired a personal coach. The woman inspired her to launch an online business helping other writers create book proposals. Ms. Sincero also started coaching female entrepreneurs.

Around 2008, she moved into a traditional apartment as the business took off enough for her to upgrade her lifestyle.

Looking to further improve her life, she read over 30 self-help books. She realized that none of the books made her laugh. In turn, she sensed there was an opportunity to write a humorous self-help book.

She wrote a proposal for a book but it was rejected by 10 publishers, including those that had published her two prior books.

“They said the world doesn’t need another self-help book,” she says.

She didn’t give up hope, and in 2013, her book “You Are a Badass: How to Stop Doubting Your Greatness and Start Living an Awesome Life” was published by Running Press.

***“Cling to your decision to create the life you desire like your life depends on it. Because guess what? Your life does depend on it.”***

Ms. Sincero knew the book had an important message to share with readers and believed that if she and her agent kept trying, it would find a publisher. Although she didn’t really want to, she knew she could self-publish, if necessary.

In the book, she encourages readers to push past their fears, let go of their limiting beliefs and decide they are capable of creating a better future.

“Cling to your decision to create the life you desire like your life depends on it. Because guess what? Your life does depend on it,” she says.

It took about three years, but thanks in part to readers’ recommendations it became a New York Times bestseller. Ms. Sincero was 51 at the time.

The book’s wide commercial success made Ms. Sincero a millionaire, a paid speaker and sought-after coach. It also spurred other “Badass” books including “You Are a Badass at Making Money” and “You Are a Badass Every Day.”

Ms. Sincero says her initial view of money—that it was evil and made people do bad things—had to change in order for her to become successful. Today, she owns a home in New Mexico.

She eventually realized that becoming wealthy would enable her to live the life she desired and stay in nice hotels when she traveled.

After she started receiving royalty payments from “You Are a Badass,” she sought the help of a financial adviser. This person helped make sure her money would last for decades.

Ms. Sincero realizes her path may not appeal to everyone but that “everyone has it within their soul to create what they desire.”

Visualizing your future success, meditating and spending time with others who encourage you all help greatly.

It’s important for women to love themselves and not be afraid to pursue the dreams and life they desire to live.

Doing so isn’t selfish or evil, rather it’s healthy and natural.

For example, if a woman has always wanted to be a writer, why not starting writing stories on the weekends? Then start pitching them to editors and work toward your goal of being published.

Or if you want to lose weight, don’t just talk about joining a gym, do so.

“Take action,” she says.

Remembering that you’ve only got one life to live is also a good motivator.

Considering the pain of not living your dreams can inspire change too.

While it may seem difficult to take action, living an unfulfilled life can actually be more painful.

“It’s hard to live life with that nagging feeling that you’re not measuring up to your potential,” she says.

---

## *Jen’s Tips*

- Acknowledge past success to boost your confidence
- Money isn’t evil
- Take action
- Remember you only have one life to live





# MELISSA FRANCIS

## Being Honest

Melissa Francis has been working since she was six months old.

The former child actress and now Fox Business Network and Fox News Channel television anchor started appearing in commercials as a baby. She ultimately was best known for her role as Cassandra Cooper Ingalls on “Little House on the Prairie,” a part she began playing at the age of 8.

Growing up in Los Angeles, her mother took her to auditions. Ms. Francis described her as “mercurial, domineering, but also devoted” in her 2012 memoir “Diary of a Stage Mother’s Daughter.”

When she was 18, Ms. Francis left California to study economics at Harvard University. She wanted to see what life was like away from Hollywood and chose a career for herself. Though she had enjoyed aspects of her time acting, the career wasn’t one she had chosen for herself. Time away, she thought, would determine if this was truly her calling.

When she arrived on campus, she held a number of jobs, from chopping vegetables in the dorm kitchen to working in the school’s information-technology department. Some people, including fellow “Little House” cast member Melissa Gilbert, were surprised that she was willing to work for minimum wage after a childhood full of red carpets and high-paying acting jobs.

Ms. Francis didn’t see it that way. She wanted to become a television journalist and knew she needed to get experience outside of Harvard’s economics department. And since TV-news work was often in the form of unpaid internships, she needed money from extra jobs to support herself.

The ends more than justified the means, she thought. But she also knew that all work, regardless of the wage, was worth doing and worthy of respect.

Later, when many of her classmates received offers of high-paying jobs in finance or consulting, Ms. Francis remembers being the only person in her graduating class to move to Maine to pursue her dream, learning the ropes of television journalism as an entry-level producer.

The pay was still low—minimum wage, in fact. She later landed a job on the air in Manchester, N.H., but after struggling for three months, a new boss took over and fired her. The boss told her she was “too young and inexperienced,” Ms. Francis recalls. By the time the tearful young reporter had returned to her desk, there was already a cardboard box waiting for her to pack her things.

Ms. Francis says she went home to her apartment, cried some more and ate a carton of ice cream. A few hours later when she “had no more tears,” she realized she had a choice to either give up her dream or prove that news director wrong.

“I’m going to get a job in a better market,” Ms. Francis swore to herself, referring to a larger television market with more viewers.

Over the next six months, she cold-called station managers across the country asking for meetings. She faced more rejection. During that time period, she also drove up and down the East Coast in a rental car seeking meetings with news directors. Some would meet with her and others weren’t interested.

Understanding that managers of rival local stations are in competition, she devised a strategy to help get through the door. She would call one station and tell the manager she was coming into town to meet with a rival, and then offer to drop off her resume and video reel while she was nearby. With their curiosity piqued, they would agree to let her stop by their station as well. Much of the time, mention of the initial meeting had been a bit of a fib.

***“You don’t have to make up for the setback all at once.”***

But Ms. Francis was prepared if she was ever found out. She would declare, “Isn’t that exactly the reporter you are looking for? Someone who knows how to get through the front door?” After six months of knocking on doors, she achieved her goal, bouncing back and getting hired. She worked in Providence, R.I., a bigger market than the one from which she had been fired.

While the experience was painful, it ultimately boosted her self-confidence. “I thought ‘wow’ I can come back from failure and defeat,” she says.

It also showed her the importance of not giving up, especially in the hyper-competitive news profession. In addition, she realized an important part of recovering from a career setback: set a new, bigger goal, and then take just one step forward.

You don’t have to make up for the setback all at once. Don’t even map the whole route to recovery, she says. Who knows what will change along the way? Rather, tackle the recovery one step at a time, to build back confidence and endurance.

After working in local news for about seven years, Ms. Francis landed her dream job as a business reporter for CNBC. She carved out a niche reporting on energy and commodity prices, broadcasting live from the floor of the often-raucous New York Mercantile Exchange. After nearly a decade at the channel, she moved to Fox Business as an anchor in 2011.

Today, Ms. Francis is the host of “After the Bell” on Fox Business and “Outnumbered” on Fox News. (Fox News and Fox Business parent 21st Century Fox share common ownership with The Wall Street Journal parent News Corp.)



Ultimately, Ms. Francis contends that getting fired from that first on air job set her up for career success, because once she was forced to pick herself up from failure and fight her way back to a reporter job in a bigger market, she realized she had the strength to turn around disaster.

A strong faith in God has carried Ms. Francis through difficult times in her life such as after the death of her older sister Tiffany. "Faith is my life raft and foundation," she says.

A mother of three children, Ms. Francis says working moms should be themselves. Remember no one is perfect, despite what is portrayed on social media.

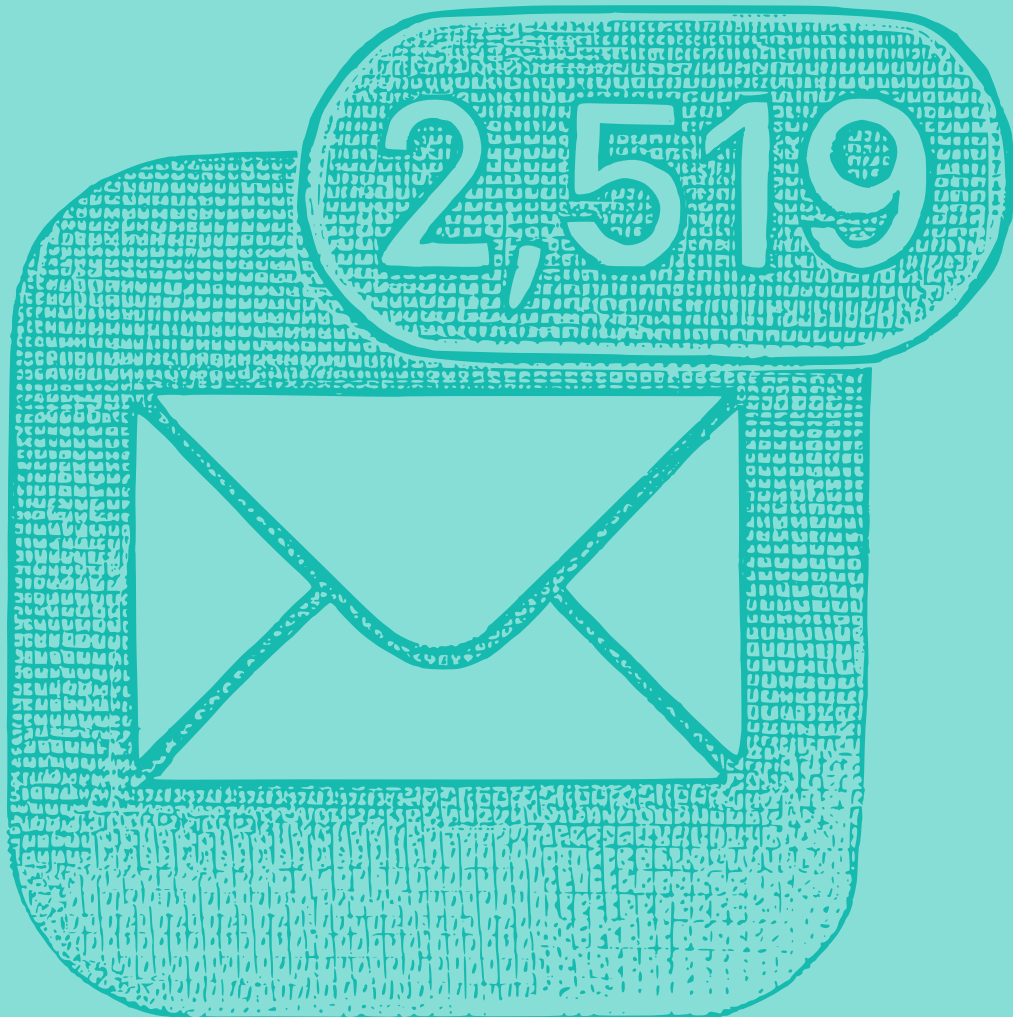
"I don't have time to be Superwoman," she says. Be honest about your flaws and people will appreciate you more.

---

## *Melissa's Tips*

- Every job is worthy of respect
- You are capable of bouncing back from rejection
- Take the next logical step to move closer to your goal
- Give up the need to be "Superwoman"

# MANAGING THE JUGGLE





# REBECCA MINKOFF

## Turning ‘No’ to ‘Yes’

From the time she was 8 years old, Rebecca Minkoff knew she wanted to be a clothes designer.

Today, her handbag and apparel company generates more than \$100 million in sales and her products can be found in stores including Bloomingdale’s and Saks Fifth Avenue. Her bags and clothes are celebrity favorites and have been worn by Beyoncé and Debra Messing.

But Ms. Minkoff’s road to this spot was far from easy. Her parents didn’t object to her path, but they weren’t going to hand her everything she asked for either. When times got tough, she turned to a different family member, her brother, who helped the business get off the ground.

At age 18, Ms. Minkoff wanted to come to New York to intern for designer Craig Taylor. Her parents consented with the condition that she’d have to support herself. It was a similar approach to the one they’d taken when Ms. Minkoff wanted sewing lessons or wanted a new dress.

Others were more negative. Aunts and uncles told her that she should instead go to college and “get a proper education.” They also said her late grandmother would be appalled.

She decided not to listen to their warnings. “I just went for it,” she says.

She spent about three years working for Mr. Taylor, first as an intern and then as a staff designer.

It wasn’t easy to meet her bills as a young woman making \$6 an hour and paying \$800 a month in New York City rent. Meals were frequently bagels and cream cheese, ramen and leftovers from her landlady’s kitchen.

Then at age 21, Ms. Minkoff was fired from her low-paying job. The chief executive, her mentor Christina Kumi Kimball, felt that she was ready to go out on her own and that she was more interested in her own work. Ms. Minkoff says it was an amicable parting that forced her to start the business she'd been hoping to launch anyway.

She sewed clothes in her studio apartment and bedazzled T-shirts all while pitching her samples to various fashion editors.

She did this for four years, but faced plenty of rejections.

"I would hear 'no' 'no' 'no' all day long," she says.

Ms. Minkoff had a breakout moment after 9/11 when a friend, actress Jenna Elfman, wore one of the designer's "I love New York" T-shirts during an appearance with Jay Leno. After that, Ms. Minkoff sold thousands of the T-shirt. While she gave the shirt's proceeds to charity, the experience gave Ms. Minkoff name recognition in the fashion industry.

But despite the excitement, she was broke.

She recalls one harrowing instance when a bill collector from the electric company kept pounding on her door demanding payment. (Ms. Minkoff eventually answered the door and wrote a check that nearly bounced.)

Ms. Minkoff was able to start paying her bills again after she asked her older brother Uri Minkoff to become her partner and help teach her about business. For starters, Mr. Minkoff, an entrepreneur, helped her file the company's taxes and set up separate bank accounts.

In 2005, Ms. Elfman asked Ms. Minkoff to design a handbag for her to wear in an upcoming movie. Ms. Minkoff had never designed a bag before but did so anyway and spent essentially her last \$1,600 making two samples of what became her popular "Morning After Bag."

***"If you knock on enough doors,  
something will happen."***

Women in their 20s and fashion editors started taking notice. "People who had previously said 'no' now said 'yes,'" she says.

During that time, Ms. Minkoff says she realized that when someone says "no", it doesn't mean no forever (unless the "no" is said in the context of dating).

Ms. Minkoff says other entrepreneurs who want to achieve success should keep trying and asking for support.

"If you knock on enough doors, something will happen," she says.

Having business partners has also helped her. In times when things were difficult and she wasn't sure the business would succeed, her brother was able to help boost her spirits, and vice versa.

Working so closely with her brother also helped her endure some of the many sacrifices she's had to make such as working through holidays, weekends and two of her three maternity leaves.

Ms. Minkoff says the "glamour" that sometimes comes from being a fashion entrepreneur, such as the parties, the ability to have your own business and the name recognition, is "about 2%" of the job.

The rest of the time typically involves working weekends and in her case, knowing that she is responsible for a staff of over 90 people. "Work actually doesn't ever stop," she says.

Despite the challenges, Ms. Minkoff says entrepreneurs—especially women—need to keep

pushing. A female founder's success will depend, in part, on how "forward", she is, Ms. Minkoff says. Entrepreneurs need to keep asking for meetings, for funding and for new business. If you don't, someone else who is hungrier will.

"You have to grab opportunities as no one is going to ask for you," she says.

As a mother of three young children, Ms. Minkoff, 38, says her boundaries between work and home life are still evolving. The biggest sacrifice she's had to make to be the mom she wants to be is her sleep, her time with friends, date nights with her husband and taking time for herself.

However, she knows that as her kids are older and less in the "needy zone," that she'll begin to "put back pieces."

She thinks that every mom should explore her own boundaries and figure out what works best for her family. In addition, Ms. Minkoff says women need to stop judging each other and start being more supportive. "Women need to compliment rightness in other women," she says.

---

## *Rebecca's Tips*

- In business, "no" doesn't always mean "no" forever
- Expect to make personal sacrifices as an entrepreneur
- Ask for opportunities
- Compliment other women



# KATIA BEAUCHAMP

## Letting Go of Balance

Birchbox Inc. co-founder Katia Beauchamp says working women need to let go of the “mythical” idea that they’ll ever achieve work-life balance.

Instead, the beauty-company CEO and mother of four says women need to focus on all the good things they are doing for their companies and families.

“We need to change our inner monologues from always wondering if we’re doing enough to celebrating what we are doing,” she says.

Having four children while running a company prompted Ms. Beauchamp, 36 years old, to realize that working mothers “need to accept their identities.” For example, after she had twins more than four years ago, Ms. Beauchamp felt a “visceral pain” in going back to work full-time.

However, she understood how work was very important for her mental and emotional health. Working also helps her feel happier and more grateful when she’s home with her children.

Ms. Beauchamp, who cocreated the online beauty-product subscription service in 2010 while at Harvard Business School, has faced plenty of skeptics.

Major beauty companies, which historically gave away product samples free, said the Birchbox model where customers pay \$10 monthly to receive five samples of items such as mascara and blush, wouldn’t work.

Many investors, most of whom were men, didn’t understand the business either, sometimes because their wife or daughter didn’t often wear makeup, she says.



“No matter how I was able to show the scale we could achieve,” Ms. Beauchamp recalls, “all many investors heard was that I was a woman who likes makeup.”

She refused to give up. Over the next year, the Texas native kept pitching brands and potential investors.

Soon, Benefit Cosmetics partnered with Birchbox to offer Benefit products on Ms. Beauchamp’s site. Other brands such as Smashbox and Kiehl’s soon followed. About four years later, Viking Global Investors led a \$60 million venture-stage investment in the New York-based company. The move has helped Birchbox pursue an independent course while it turned the corner toward profitability.

After some recent turbulence for the company, including layoffs and a scaling back of growth plans, Viking took a majority stake in Birchbox when acquisition talks with some large retailers didn’t result in a deal.

Ms. Beauchamp says entrepreneurs who are seeking funding need plenty of resilience. Potential investors may believe in you one year but may not return your call the next year.

Whether you get a “hot or cold” reception from investors, founders have to believe in themselves and their mission, she says. They also need to understand that business is cyclical.

“If you let other people’s doubts define your self worth, you’ll be on a horrible roller coaster,” she says.

Still, it is crucial to listen to other people’s feedback to “sharpen your focus,” she says. The key is to understand other people’s motivations in saying something negative, she adds.

Ms. Beauchamp says successful entrepreneurs are attracted to being “extremely uncomfortable.” Entrepreneurs know there is always something new to learn and a fresh challenge to tackle. And while their business may achieve certain milestones, entrepreneurs are always looking to attain that next level of success.

***“We need to change our inner monologues from always wondering if we’re doing enough to celebrating what we are doing.”***

Birchbox now has over 2.5 million active customers, 500 brand partners, 230 employees, and operations in the U.S., U.K., France, Spain, Ireland and Belgium.

The company also recently partnered with drugstore chain Walgreens, where in select locations across the U.S., customers can purchase subscriptions, get tips from Birchbox-trained beauty consultants and build their own Birchboxes.

For their own health, entrepreneurs have to accept that much of their time will be spent in uncertainty, Ms. Beauchamp says. “I realize the game and the point of it all is to be really good and happy in the tunnel,” she says.

Her advice for women who are thinking of starting a business: just start. Too often, entrepreneurs spend so much time with their spreadsheets, they don’t get up the courage to test their business on potential customers.

“Your business shouldn’t feel precious,” she says. “You need to get it into people’s hands to try it.” Don’t let the fear of failure stop you, Ms. Beauchamp adds. Even if a business fails (which most startups do), entrepreneurs will gain valuable skills and learn their strengths, she says. They’ll also become a greater asset to future employers as they’ll gain a greater understanding of what it takes to run a business.

Ms. Beauchamp says raising four young children has convinced her that working women have to “be nice to themselves.” Ms. Beauchamp also says companies need to do a better job in making it “worth it” for women to come back to work after childbirth.

She’s not just referring to pay either. Sometimes, companies assume that after a woman becomes a mother, her career ambitions end, she says. That is often

far from reality. Working mothers still want to strive and achieve greater career success. Women shouldn't have to make a trade off between flexibility and high-profile opportunities.

She argues that more women need to ask for the support they need from their employers. Whether it is raising their hands for a promotion or the flexibility to go to their child's recital during the day, women need to articulate what they want.

"There's absolutely nothing that breaks down about your possibility as a human because you have a child," she says. In fact, "you become superhuman."

---

## *Katia's Tips*

- Embrace uncertainty
- Don't let other people's doubts dent your self worth
- Learn to be happy throughout the vagaries of entrepreneurship
- Recognize the good work you do for your family and company





# JOSIE NATORI

## A Family Business

Josie Natori believes that family can be a significant asset in succeeding at business.

Never one to doubt herself because of her gender, the 71-year-old entrepreneur long believed she was capable of anything because she's a woman.

Born Josephina Almeda Cruz, the lingerie designer was accustomed to being inspired by hard working, strong women thanks to the matriarchal culture in which she was raised.

While growing up in the Philippines, she observed her entrepreneurial grandmother working in various businesses from five in the morning to midnight everyday.

Ms. Natori's grandmother taught her the importance of being financially independent. She also stressed that Ms. Natori was expected to "make something" of herself.

"She told me there was no limitation to what I could do," Ms. Natori says.

That belief inspired Ms. Natori to move to the U.S. for college in 1964. After graduation, she worked for a few years on Wall Street, where she met her husband.

She eventually decided she wanted to start her own company, but wasn't certain what type of business to launch. She considered buying a McDonald's franchise, but then decided to start a lingerie business after showing some Philippine garments to a buyer friend at Bloomingdale's.

Saks Fifth Avenue was the first to buy. That helped The Natori Company gain the respect of other retailers including Bloomingdale's that eventually signed on to carry the

company's line of lingerie and sleepwear. Five years after the company launched in 1977, it was in over 100 stores, with \$7 million to \$8 million in sales.

Despite the quick success, Ms. Natori was about to face one of the most difficult times in her career.

After Filipino politician Benigno Aquino Jr. was assassinated in August of 1983, Ms. Natori's company wasn't able to receive any products from the Philippines for about four months due to political turmoil in the country. Because the Natori Company made its goods abroad, the halt in production was devastating, she says.

The company had to cancel all of the orders from the major U.S. retailers that were expecting shipments for that coming holiday season.

"We could have gone under," she says about the business.

Fortunately, the stores understood Ms. Natori had encountered a situation she couldn't control.

When her products were ready to be shipped the following January, stores resumed their orders. And Ms. Natori's father, a successful Philippine construction entrepreneur, was able to lend her money until production resumed.

Ms. Natori says her father told her: "Life is like a wheel. There's no such thing as always being on top, you have to be prepared to go down."

To get through difficult times, entrepreneurs must be tenacious and work hard to persevere, she says. Wallowing in a past defeat or setback isn't an option, she says.

Having good relationships with your customers also helps, she says. Ms. Natori never lost her strong sense of self confidence, even in the difficult times. She knew that even if the company failed, she'd eventually succeed in another business if necessary and be able support herself.

***"Life is like a wheel. There's no such thing as always being on top, you have to be prepared to go down."***

The Natori Company bounced back and expanded. Today, its brands include Josie Natori, Natori, N Natori and Josie. The brand covers lingerie, bras, sleepwear, home goods and legwear. It is sold in 20 countries.

Ms. Natori, who has worked with her husband Ken Natori since the company launched, says the couple always put their relationship ahead of the business.

They decided early on that if working together was going to cause marital trouble, they would sell the business. They also agreed that Mr. Natori would focus on the company's finances and strategies while Ms. Natori would focus on the creative side of the business.

The couple has been married for nearly 50 years and has worked together through the entire stretch.

Ms. Natori also managed to build the business while raising the couple's son, Kenneth. She never felt guilty about being a working mom as she says many American-born women do.

Having seen her own mother work long hours, she was unapologetic about working away from the home.

Ms. Natori says women who want to be both mothers and entrepreneurs can do so. She says they should consider "getting rid of their hang ups" of constantly wanting to be the perfect mother and an "over involved" presence in their children's lives.

She's not speaking about becoming an "absentee" mother, but rather a mother who is confident in having her own career and giving her children the gradual independence to gain their own self confidence. "I told my son's elementary school 'I will give you anything but my time,'" she says.

Ms. Natori's strategy was to rely on family and a carefully-selected nanny in raising Kenneth. The son is now 43 and president of the company, working alongside his parents.

"As a working mother, I tried to give quality of time where I could," Ms. Natori recalls. "Kenneth was always independent and developed his own trajectory for his life."

In recent years, Ms. Natori has had to adapt to some of her son's more modern ways of doing business.

For starters, when he built the company's e-commerce division 11 years ago, she gained an appreciation for the importance of such a unit.

She's also learning about how social media can expand the company's business thanks to her son.

"I've learned it's not just my way or the highway," Ms. Natori says, which she adds is an important lesson for other entrepreneurs as well.

---

## *Josie's Tips*

- Women are capable of anything
- Life is like a "wheel" so be adaptable
- Relationships matter, especially during difficult times
- Don't apologize for being a working mother



# AYESHA CURRY

## Making Time for Your Passion

Lifestyle entrepreneur Ayesha Curry doesn't worry about having a perfect home.

"My house is an absolute mess," says Ms. Curry, the chef and self-described "mompreneur."

Ms. Curry tries to be organized, but with three young children, multiple business ventures and her NBA star husband Stephen Curry's busy schedule, it is not always possible.

So instead of focusing on the mess, she spends time with her family and knows any clutter can be tackled later. This outlook is "very important" for her own and her family's well being.

"Perfection doesn't exist and if it does, are you leading a happy life, truly?" she says.

Ms. Curry, 29, does have a lot on her plate.

In 2013, she started a blog with about \$500 and launched a YouTube channel with a desire to give readers and viewers cooking, lifestyle and beauty tips.

Her work resonated and over the past six years, she's accumulated more than a combined seven million followers on her various social media channels. She just launched her new website, *Homemade*. She's become a best-selling author and a television personality with her own cooking show on the Food Network. She has a line of home products including cookware, kitchen textiles and bedding.

In addition, she opened three of her International Smoke restaurants with chef Michael Mina and was named a CoverGirl cosmetics spokeswoman.

Her path to success wasn't always evident to her though.

She married Mr. Curry, an NBA All-Star and Golden State Warriors point guard, in 2011 when she was in her early 20s. The couple initially met at a church youth group in Charlotte, N.C., as teens. They reconnected over social media about five years later and started dating.

At first, it was difficult for Ms. Curry to find her own identity as part of a famous couple and as she adapted to being a young mom and new wife. But once she tapped into her lifelong love of cooking, she found her way.

Find your passion, she tells other women. "The success will stem from the passion," she says. That passion will give you drive and help you press forward when other people tell you "no."

"Work while everyone else is sleeping," she says.

She tries to spend time at her restaurant in California as often as she can, but the goal is two to three times a week. There, she oversees the chefs and greets customers. Ms. Curry manages Homemade from her home office and has support from her sister and sometimes her parents when she needs to attend business meetings outside her home.

She often takes the children to attend her husband's games on weekends and big games on weeknights. Otherwise, they stick to a strict schedule. Ms. Curry enjoys cooking for her family and her favorite dish to make is a medium-rare steak with fresh pasta.

Ms. Curry is aware doors were opened for her because of her spouse, but she's adamant that hard work and drive has fueled her success.

"I had to be the one to walk through the doors and be the one to put in the work to stay in the room," she says.

Knowing that she's worked hard gives her the confidence to face the critics who assume her achievements are only thanks to her husband.

***"I had to be the one to walk through the doors and be the one to put in the work to stay in the room."***

Ms. Curry's mother, Carol Alexander, greatly influenced her desire to become an entrepreneur. Ms. Alexander has owned a hair salon for decades.

"Not one day went by in my childhood that I didn't see her working her butt off," Ms. Curry says.

Her mother's work ethic and, strength and beauty inspired Ms. Curry to become a business owner.

Other women also nudged her in those early days when she faced self doubt.

About five years ago, she had ideas for a book and a restaurant but wasn't sure if they'd be successful, partly because she didn't go to culinary school. Also, she hesitated because she knew it might be difficult for a woman to become successful in the male-dominated culinary field.

When she was trying to decide what to do, she invited two women to her home to share their advice and feedback. The women, Amanda Haas, the cookbook author and former culinary director of Williams-Sonoma, and Stanford Graduate School of Business marketing professor Jennifer Aaker, provided encouragement.

"I had a whole cloud of self doubt over my head," she says. "And they basically broke down the walls and told me that I should press forward."

Getting that support from other successful women gave her the "push" that she needed.

"I think I can do this," Ms. Curry thought after hearing their promptings.

Women need to be fearless, she says. Don't hold back or think you need to be "confined to a box." Set goals and work hard to obtain that goal, she advises. "There is no ceiling," Ms. Curry says.

In addition, she recommends getting support from other strong women. Gone are the days where it is "every woman against every woman," she says. Rather, success will come as women "lift each other up" and seek support from their "girl tribe." For her part, she works to nurture her relationships with other women and looks for ways to collaborate.

Meanwhile, Ms. Curry is encouraging her young daughters to be confident. Her daughter Riley, age 6, has become a bit of a star in her own right after appearing at news conferences with her father.

But she's determined to make sure the children don't become entitled, despite all of their privileges.

The Currys want their children to learn a work ethic, use manners and understand boundaries.

"We're not going to hand anything to them," she says.

Ms. Curry doesn't focus on the couple's wealth either. She doesn't buy everything she wants. In fact, she often puts items in her online shopping cart but never clicks "buy."

She says doing so is a stress reliever and helps her realize what she does and doesn't need. If she comes back later and has forgotten about what's in her cart, she knows she didn't really need it.

Having money isn't a license to shop endlessly, she says.

Rather, it is an opportunity to help others, fulfill personal goals and make sure their children are OK.

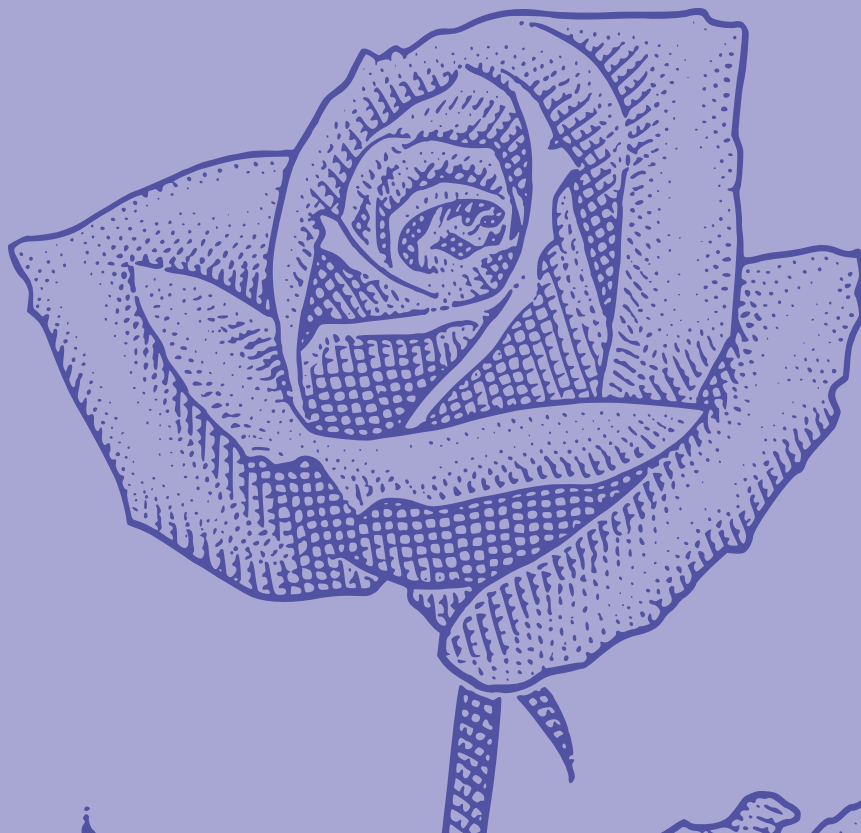
Ms. Curry also spends time developing her relationship with God. "It's the foundation of who I am," she says.

---

## *Ayesha's Tips*

- Forget perfection
- Find your passion to develop your identity
- Encourage other women
- Embrace the difference between wants and needs

THRIVING  
DESPITE  
PERSONAL  
TRAUMA







# MARY HIGGINS CLARK

## Writing Off Loss

Personal loss and professional rejection never stopped Mary Higgins Clark from achieving her goals.

When the best-selling author's father died of a heart attack when she was 11, she started writing poetry to help her grieve and cultivate her love of writing.

About 25 years later, when her husband Warren Clark passed away, the mother of five children ramped up her career and started writing novels after stints in advertising and dabbling in short stories.

Now at age 91, Ms. Clark is known as the "Queen of Suspense," and has sold 100 million copies of her 51 books in the U.S. alone. In 2000, she got an advance of \$64 million for five books, making her one of the highest-paid fiction writers in the world.

The nonagenarian hasn't slowed down much, even though she long ago passed the point where she needed money. "I wanted to be a successful writer, not necessarily wealthy," she says. "The funny part is now that I can afford to buy anything I want, I'm thoroughly bored with shopping."

Ms. Clark grew up in an Irish-Catholic family in the Bronx. As a teen, she worked part time as a hotel telephone operator to help her mother pay the bills and wrote short stories on the weekends. After two years as a flight attendant, she married Mr. Clark in 1949.

While raising five kids, she started taking writing classes at New York University, where her professor encouraged her to write short stories.



She wrote more than 60 short stories, often before the children awoke, about mothers at home and the adventures experienced by stewardesses. All of them were rejected by editors at various papers and magazines. One at Cosmopolitan magazine told her the stories were “light, slight and trite.”

Ms. Clark’s response? “I simply refused to be discouraged.”

In her late 20s, Ms. Clark sold her first short story in 1956 to Extension Magazine for \$100.

About six years later, when her husband was diagnosed with heart disease, she knew she would have to return to the workforce. Remembering how her own mother struggled financially after becoming a widow, Ms. Clark wanted to make sure she could support her children.

She accepted a job writing radio scripts. The same day, her husband died suddenly. At 36, Ms. Clark became a widow. Resigning herself to grief and inaction wasn’t an option as her children missed their father and needed to be clothed and fed.

“I had no right to curl up in a corner and feel sorry for myself,” she says.

Ms. Clark was grateful for the job in radio, but her first boss was difficult. “Nothing pleased him,” she says. But Ms. Clark bided her time. Her children modeled for magazines, which helped supplement the family’s income.

Before long, she wasn’t only writing the radio scripts, she was also meeting with clients to develop and sell campaign ideas. Ms. Clark and a partner soon started their own radio programming agency.

She never gave up her goal of becoming a successful author though. When the short-story market dried up in the 1960s, Ms. Clark’s agent suggested she write a novel. Her first attempt was historical fiction, but it didn’t catch on.

***“For the love of God, call them back before they change their minds!”***

Around that time, she decided to go to night school to get her Bachelor’s degree from Fordham University. Since she enjoyed reading suspense novels, she figured she could try that next.

She sold her first novel, “Where are the Children?” for \$3,000 to Simon & Schuster.

The big breakthrough came in 1976, when Ms. Clark was in her late 40s. She was on her way to her evening class when her agent called and told her to consider an offer for her next novel. The offer was for \$1.5 million.

“For the love of God, call them back before they change their minds!,” she remembers telling her agent.

The windfall came at an opportune time. On her drive home from Fordham, the muffler and tailpipe on her seven-year-old car broke off.

Plenty of doubters had told Ms. Clark she wouldn’t become a successful writer. Had she listened to them, she and her children’s lives could have been very different. They may have lost their home in the New Jersey suburbs, much like Ms. Clark’s parents lost their home during the Depression.

Having been a single working mother, Ms. Clark understands how difficult it can be for women to make time for personal goals. Ms. Clark says look for small ways you can work toward your dreams, such as getting up a few minutes earlier to work on your pet project.

When a mother pursues her dreams, she will be happier in all aspects of her life and also may have a greater opportunity to help her family achieve their own financial goals, she says.

Ms. Clark also counsels being open to falling in love, regardless of one's age. She married retired Merrill Lynch executive John Conheeny when she was 68. The couple stayed happily married for more than 20 years. Mr. Conheeny died last year.

Ms. Clark is currently working on a novel that will be published in November. She also cowrites a novel each year with Alafair Burke in the "Under Suspicion" series.

For women who want to become authors, Ms. Clark recommends writing your own story. Older authors may enjoy this project, especially when they can hand the story down to grandchildren.

Ms. Clark also tells writers not to get discouraged by a slow start. She says the first 50 pages in a novel are often hardest for her. Working on one book after she married Mr. Conheeny, she recalled her new husband confided to Mary's daughter, Patty Clark, that he worried about the new book.

"For God sakes, we've heard that for 30 books," Patty told him. The book was, quite predictably, a best seller.

---

## *Mary's Tips*

- Carve out time to pursue your passion
- Keep trying despite rejection
- Following your dreams may help your family
- Be open to love at any age



# BONNIE ST. JOHN

## Getting Up Fast

Despite a very difficult childhood, Olympic medalist Bonnie St. John refused to feel sorry for herself.

Born the daughter of a financially-strapped single mother, Ms. St. John suffered from a rare birth defect that led to her right leg being amputated when she was 5 years old.

The surgery and recovery were brutal, she says. After the amputation, Ms. St. John would spend long, painful hours in physical therapy.

One particularly gut-wrenching exercise: pressing her amputated stump into a pile of books to make it tougher. The goal was to prepare Ms. St. John for a prosthetic device.

A nurse would make her push the books that were placed on a bathroom scale until the scale registered at least 5 pounds. Despite Ms. St. John's tears, the nurse didn't relent.

"She taught me to push through pain," Ms. St. John says.

In addition to the physical trauma, she suffered emotional trauma secretly. From a young age, Ms. St. John says she was sexually abused by her stepfather.

For years, out of fear, she didn't tell her mother. Instead, she suppressed the abuse in order to function, she says.

An unlikely distraction came during Ms. St. John's high-school years. An amputee from a poor neighborhood in San Diego, the teenager didn't fit the normal background of a competitive skier. However, when a friend from school invited her on a holiday ski vacation, Ms. St. John decided to go.

There was a lot of falling at first. “I was bruised and beat up, but by the end of it, I was skiing,” she recalled in a 2016 interview.

As she worked to become better, Ms. St. John worked several jobs—often as a waitress where she had to stand on her prosthetic leg—so she could have the money to get herself to ski races far from home.

At Harvard, she took a break from her studies for a year to train. She also lived on a glacier in the summer so she could ski year round and continued to seek out people who would push her beyond her self-imposed limits, much like her nurse did earlier.

Ms. St. John eventually qualified for the 1984 Winter Paralympics in Innsbruck, Austria, where she became the first African-American to win medals in Winter Olympic competition, taking home a silver and two bronze medals.

She says she wasn’t widely expected to get a medal, but exceeded expectations in part because she “outworked everybody.” In one race, she was ahead, but fell on the second run at a particularly dangerous spot. Ms. St. John still got up though, and since many others fell on the same spot, she took the bronze medal.

Ultimately, another woman who also fell won the gold. Ms. St. John says she learned that day that people fall down, winners get up, but sometimes, the gold medal winner just gets up fastest.

It is a message the 54-year-old has taken across the world as a speaker and leadership consultant. Since her Olympic feat, Ms. St. John has also met with three U.S. presidents and appeared on the Today show, among other TV interviews.

When she became a mother, Ms. St. John forced herself to confront a different challenge, the demons from her childhood.

It was around the time her daughter Darcy became the age Ms. St. John had been when she was abused. The “anxiety, fear, and hurt all bubbled to the surface and

*“I was bruised and beat up, but by the end of it, I was skiing.”*

became impossible to ignore,” she says.

Ms. St. John began to dissociate. She had often been abused when she came home from school. So, when Darcy came home from school, the memories were triggered and she would shut down, fall asleep or have trouble mustering the energy to do anything meaningful with her daughter.

After about two years, she realized what was happening and sought the help of a therapist. Exercise, including yoga, and prayer also helped her become more in tune with her body and emotions. She says she visited Holy Cross Monastery on the Hudson River so often that all the monks knew her.

Ms. St. John recommends that other women who have suffered abuse seek out professional support, so they too don’t transmit their pain to the next generation.

One exercise she uses to stay positive and focus on resilience is called “reversi.” If you experience a negative challenge, she explains, write it down on an index card. Then, on the other side of the card, write the exact opposite.

For example, if you wrote, “I don’t have enough time or money to get a higher degree,” on the other side, write, “I do have the time and money to get a higher degree.” The simple process of flipping the issue from negative to positive opens the mind to all kinds of possibilities, she says.

To reduce negative thoughts, she says women should avoid unhealthy comparisons. For instance, if a woman is feeling ashamed of her body size, she shouldn’t read fashion magazines with thin, airbrushed models. Instead, she should focus on what she likes about her body.

“Love yourself,” she says.

---

## *Bonnie's Tips*

- Push past self-imposed limits
- Seek people who challenge you
- Get professional help to heal from past trauma
- Choose to be positive



# SUKEY NOVOGRATZ

## Help Yourself First

Sukey Novogratz has become a leading advocate for victims of sexual assault and a proponent of the power of meditation to improve one's life.

She's had first-hand experience with both.

The summer before her freshman year at Princeton University, Ms. Novogratz, then known by her maiden name Sukey Caceres, says she was roofied at a party and gang raped by three students. The boys then dumped her half-conscious body near the side of a river and left her for dead. Doctors were able to resuscitate her and she was eventually released.

But healing from the trauma would take decades. She was convinced that an all-female judiciary board would expel her attackers. Instead, she says the boys, whose parents were wealthy, powerful and who could afford to hire good lawyers, were never charged with the assault.

Afterwards, she hoped life would return to how she remembered it before the assault. But in October of her junior year, she decided to take a year off as she realized she was still traumatized.

For years, in order to function, Ms. Novogratz says she ignored her trauma and stayed busy. She graduated from Princeton and got married to Michael Novogratz, a bond trader who would rise through the ranks at Goldman Sachs.

Her professional goals changed after the assault too. Before it, she had dreamed about going to law school. "But I began to question everything after the assault," she says.



Mr. Novogratz's job moved Ms. Novogratz and their growing family to Asia and then back to the U.S. The couple had four children.

"I had three kids right away," she says. "I labeled everything. I organized to a fault. I would even take the time to separate the Play-Doh colors that the kids had combined back into their original color packaging...It was my personal form of control."

In retrospect, Ms. Novogratz realizes she was "on autopilot" and that she wasn't confronting the pain she felt. "I wasn't necessarily consciously doing this, but it was certainly my first response to trauma," she recalls. "And I got stuck there."

After the death of her father, Ms. Novogratz realized she still had unfinished healing to do from the trauma of her teenage years.

"I could no longer ignore my uncomfortableness," she recalls. "My 40-year-old self began a dialogue with my 17-year-old abandoned self. It wasn't all pretty but necessary as my own two daughters were approaching the age of my assault."

Ms. Novogratz started to meditate and go to yoga retreats. She credits her husband for convincing her to take some time for herself through meditation, instead of staying so busy with family obligations.

Around 2013, Ms. Novogratz took another big step. Mr. Novogratz bought her a ticket to a fundraising luncheon of the Joyful Heart Foundation, which helps survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse heal.

Ms. Novogratz went and met women who endured something similar to her attack.

That lunch was a "kick in the pants," she now recalls. "When I was 17, I thought my rape was just disastrous luck...But now many, many years later, I understand that my waking up to the experience of my trauma forced me to find out what I was made of and, in fact, helped me become who I am today."

***"I realized that while I may not have had a voice or money or connections at 17 to speak up, I did at 40."***

"Becoming more resilient is getting beyond both," she adds.

Ms. Novogratz, now 51, subsequently became a board member of Joyful Heart, which was founded by actress Mariska Hargitay.

She also became an executive producer of "The Hunting Ground," helping fund that documentary and a second one called "I Am Evidence." Both films seek to raise awareness about rape, the first looking at the problem on college campuses and the second examining how police often fail to follow up on leads generated by sexual-assault forensic exams known as rape kits.

Originally, Ms. Novogratz says her charitable efforts were designed to change culture and to put perpetrators in jail. "But solutions are never as simple and clear," she says.

Today she's interested in how to drive the conversation of sexual harm in a direction that brings about accountability and justice without the punitive measures that keep society in a system of violence and hate. Over time, Ms. Novogratz has been able to use her trauma and financial resources for the good of others. For other women who are hoping to do the same, she says it's first necessary to work through your own pain.

"If you want to help others, help yourself first," she says.

Doing so isn't selfish but rather helps you become more effective and less likely to bring your own trauma into the equation, she says. If you haven't "danced with all of your ghosts and demons your ability to help will be limited," she says.

And while money is certainly a useful tool to help raise awareness of important issues such as sexual assault, it's even more essential for survivors to speak up, Ms. Novogratz says.

"Nothing moves the needle more than when survivors share their stories," she says.

Ms. Novogratz has also been increasingly vocal about how meditation has helped her endure the difficult years. She meditates twice daily for 20 minutes and co-authored with Mr. Novogratz's sister, Elizabeth Novogratz, the meditation guide book, "Just Sit: A Meditation Guidebook for People Who Know They Should But Don't."

She hopes the benefits of meditation could one day become as recognized as physical fitness. "Meditation is the kindest tool I know for touching pain," she says.

She's working on another book with her sister-in-law about awareness and also "thinking about how to bring meditation to more people using short media."

---

## *Sukey's Tips*

- Meditate
- Heal yourself to help others
- Use your voice, money and time to give back
- Seek support from other survivors





# SUSAN PACKARD

## Connecting to Your Feelings

Susan Packard believes in bringing her whole self to work, including her emotions.

For decades, she did just the opposite.

Despite her career success, Ms. Packard, who is the co-founder of Scripps Networks Interactive and the former chief operating officer of HGTV, felt disconnected from her feelings.

Ms. Packard, who grew up in Michigan, started her sales career at HBO in Chicago in 1980. At the time in her mid-20s, she wasn't accustomed to traveling for business. One time when she did, a man knocked on her hotel room door. She opened it and was assaulted by the stranger.

The experience left her feeling detached and restless. She spoke to her husband about the assault, but otherwise buried the experience.

About two years later, while traveling abroad to visit her sister, she was strip-searched at an airport. She felt violated once again. Instead of speaking publicly about the traumatic experiences, she put her feelings on "lockdown."

She soon left HBO. Even though she didn't hold the company responsible for the incidents, she felt restless and unrooted.

She landed a job at a startup cable channel that showed movies, Z Channel. About one year into her sales management role, tragedy struck: a colleague with whom she worked closely murdered his wife and then committed suicide.

Ms. Packard's response to the three traumas was to "shut down" emotionally. She presented a happy image to co-workers, buried herself in her job and showed up to work with a smile, "fully rehearsed."

"Like an automation," she writes about her behavior in her 2019 book, "Fully Human."

In 1989, NBC recruited her to launch a new cable programming division. Her first assignment was a financial channel that became CNBC.

As her career continued to thrive, Ms. Packard and her husband Bill Packard adopted a baby son from Romania. Mr. Packard eventually left his teaching job to become a stay-at-home dad for their now-grown son, Andrew.

Ms. Packard didn't let the fact that she was often the only woman in the room faze her in those early days of cable.

"I was pretty much a sponge to learn what I could learn in the business and so the gender thing just sort of fell away," she says.

While gender usually wasn't a "factor" for her, she knew with certain customers it was. For example, she sensed one client felt uncomfortable when she wore high heels that made her taller than him. For their next negotiation, she wore flats.

And as a woman leader, she understood how she was often held to a higher standard than many of the men.

"Women are watched more than men," she says.

In turn, she learned that how women communicate, including their ability to present ideas quickly and concisely, is crucial if they want to "command a room" and advance.

She says it is also necessary for women to speak up.

"You have to be your own best advocate and you have to argue for compensation and you have to argue for promotions," Ms. Packard says.

***"You have to make your case for yourself because no one else is going to do it."***

She doesn't mean women need to be "obnoxious" when they argue for what they want, but rather they need to clearly make their case to management. In her first book, "New Rules of the Game," she advocates a process she calls artful assertiveness.

"You have to make your case for yourself because no one else is going to do it," she says.

In 1994, she was tapped to be the second employee of Home and Garden Television, which was owned by the E.W. Scripps Company.

At HGTV, she was on the ground floor of a successful channel that became a household name. While at HGTV, the channel became one of the fastest-growing cable networks. She rose to chief operating officer.

During her stint at that company however, she experienced another trauma.

In 2003, her mother and sister both died suddenly within weeks of each other. Her father had died about two years before.

The experience of losing so many close family members made Ms. Packard feel even more numb. She took leave from work for about a month to grieve.

The first meeting back at work was difficult. She cried the entire drive from HGTV headquarters in Knoxville, Tenn., to the meeting in Nashville.

"I was thinking 'how am I going to show up at this meeting with my eyes all red?' But it's amazing what we can do," she says.

Over time, Ms. Packard realized she needed to make some major changes in her life. She entered recovery for a drinking problem. She started practicing centering prayer—a method of meditative prayer. As she started, she felt more peaceful, less rushed and became a better listener. Her relationships seemed deeper and she felt less anxious. Her relationships seemed deeper and she felt less anxious.

After more than a decade, Ms. Packard also left HGTV.

Showing up, as an honest, authentic person, has been crucial in her ability to thrive despite the pain she's endured.

Resiliency also has been crucial in her ability to thrive. "I think women have cornered the market on resilience," she says.

It's important to ask for support though. Whether it's help battling an addiction, coping with an assault or figuring out how to advance at work, seek out people who can help. Even if other men and women appear to have it all "together," we have no idea what their lives are really like, Ms. Packard says.

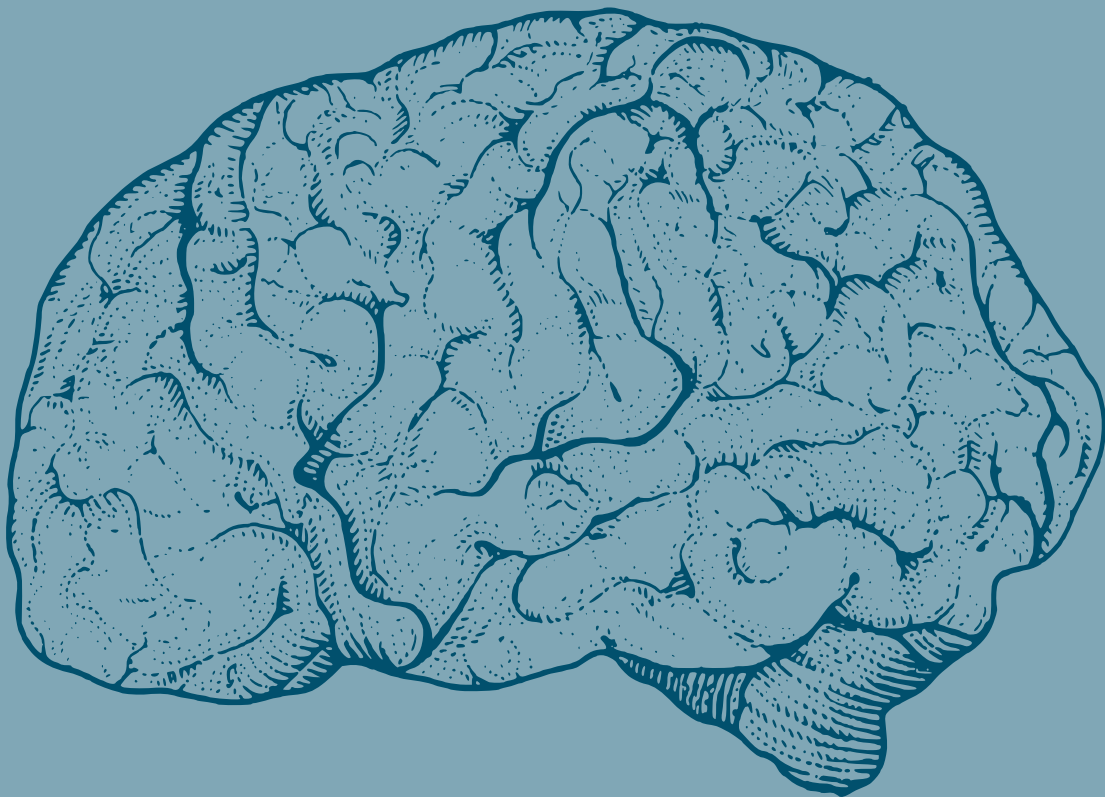
By supporting each other and by being open with our challenges, we become healthier, happier and more effective human beings, she says.

---

## *Susan's Tips*

- Use caution while traveling alone
- State your case concisely
- Pray and meditate to tune into your feelings
- Ask for help

# OVERCOMING DOUBT





# MARIA SHARAPOVA

## Embracing Uncertainty

Tennis star Maria Sharapova uses uncertainty to fuel her success. She's had a lot to work with recently.

The five-time Grand Slam titleholder was banned from the sport for 15 months in 2016 after she tested positive for a banned substance, meldonium. She said she was given the drug by a family doctor because of a magnesium deficiency and a family history of diabetes, adding that she didn't know the drug had been banned at the beginning of that year.

Her return to the sport has been challenging, as the 31-year-old athlete and businesswoman has battled both injuries and critics on and off the court.

"I think you learn who is your friend and who isn't your friend," Ms. Sharapova says of her return to the sport she's played since she was 4 years old. "The question I kept asking was how much do I still want this and how much do I still love this and how much do I want to fight for it."

Ms. Sharapova became accustomed to feeling uncomfortable early on. When she was a child, she moved to the U.S. with her father, Yuri Sharapov, and about \$700. The two weren't sure where they'd live and if their move to Florida from Russia would work out.

But Ms. Sharapova's father told her that if she worked hard, developed her talents and surrounded herself with the right people, she'd have a greater chance of success.

The family found a small apartment and Ms. Sharapova took lessons. She eventually won a scholarship to a prestigious tennis academy.

While she spent her days developing her sport, her father found various jobs such as dishwashing to help provide for the family.

Ms. Sharapova saw how hard he worked for little pay. When Mr. Sharapov got injured and couldn't work, the two were almost evicted out of their apartment. They eventually moved to a friend's home.

She turned professional at age 14. In 2004, when she was 17, she won Wimbledon, beating Serena Williams in the finals. Two years later, she won the U.S. Open. For the next several years, she was a top-ranked player and won many tournaments around the world, sometimes while injured.

As her fame grew, her list of endorsements did too. She signed contracts with major brands including Nike and Tiffany & Co. Thanks largely to endorsements and sponsorships, she was named the highest-paid female athlete in the world in 2006, with annual earnings of over \$18 million, according to Forbes.

In 2012, she also launched her candy business, Sugarpova. The privately-held company sells items such as chocolate rum cherry truffles and lip-shaped gummy candy online as well as in Hudson News outlets at hundreds of airports and other transportation hubs.

Sugarpova's sales, which the company doesn't disclose, are projected to reach \$20 million in 2019, according to a recent Forbes article. The company doesn't have any retail outlets, but has done pop up stores in New York's Grand Central Station as well as at tennis tournaments in China and at Wimbledon.

Ms. Sharapova is in daily contact with the team that manages Sugarpova's operations and meets with them monthly. She ultimately makes the decisions and directs the brand. She says being new to the business was an advantage, since great ideas can often come from a fresh perspective.

***“The question I kept asking was how much do I still want this and how much do I still love this and how much do I want to fight for it.”***

During her hiatus from tennis in 2016, Ms. Sharapova used some of the time off to continue learning. She took a management course at Harvard Business School. She also started mentoring female entrepreneurs.

Ms. Sharapova also faced many questions about her future in tennis. Some critics thought she should be banned for life and stripped of her titles while certain fans chastised her on social media. Swiss watch brand TAG Heuer dropped its sponsorship of the tennis pro.

Some fellow players thought she received preferential treatment upon her return due to her past success and earnings. Ms. Williams took issue with some of the things Ms. Sharapova wrote in her 2017 memoir “Unstoppable: My Life So Far.”

Ms. Sharapova said that despite the critics, her commitment and passion for the sport have never waned. In addition, she still “thrives” on becoming a better athlete. She adds that many fans supported her during the ban, writing letters encouragement.

“It just made me value what I did so much more than before because I realized that I wasn't just doing it for myself and for my family, but I was doing it for so many other people that I had inspired,” she says.

Ms. Sharapova says she's maintained confidence, despite uncertainty, by constantly looking to improve. “I think confidence comes from consistency,” she says. Sticking to a routine also helps one avoid falling into bad habits with say, sleep or nutrition.

Seeking counsel from other people is also valuable. While she's still learning to network, she appreciates its value. Even if speaking to someone in a different industry doesn't help you with your job, meeting new people and hearing their ideas can help you grow and learn, Ms. Sharapova says.

Get out of your comfort zone, introduce yourself and go to events, even if you don't feel like it, she says. "I much prefer to stay in with a glass of wine and pajamas, but sometimes you get a lot of incredible information," she says about networking.

Ms. Sharapova remains closely involved in managing her money and sees this as particularly important given her humble upbringing.

"I'd say when you start from not much and you make money throughout your career, I think you better be involved," she says.

She regularly meets with the adviser who manages her portfolio, makes decisions about her investments and asks questions to boost her financial knowledge.

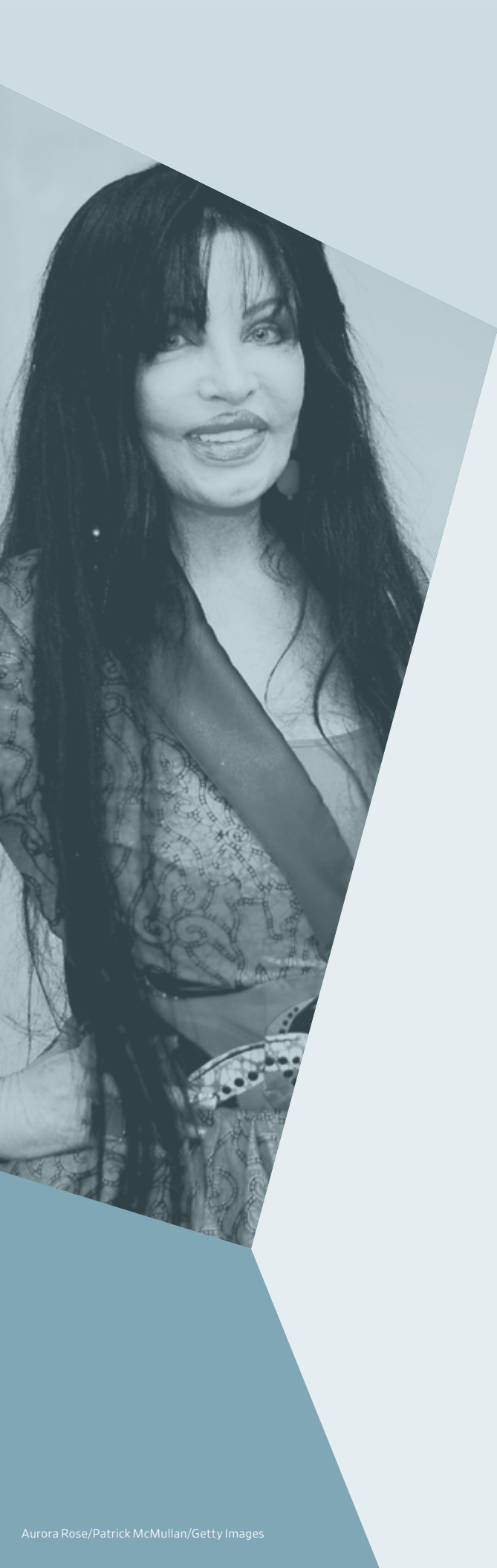
Ms. Sharapova has had some success on the court of late, advancing to the fourth rounds of both the U.S. Open last summer and the Australian Open in January. Soon after that tournament, Ms. Sharapova pulled out of play due to a recurring shoulder injury. She plans to return to competition soon.

---

## *Maria's Tips*

- Consistency builds confidence
- Become an expert
- Get out of your comfort zone and network
- Take an active role in your finances





# LOREEN ARBUS

## Confronting Pain Head On

When Loreen Arbus confronted doubters in her career as a media executive, she sometimes thought about what her sister had to endure.

Ms. Arbus is the daughter of Leonard Goldenson, the man credited with building the television network ABC. She and her family saw her late sister shunned by society.

Genise Goldenson, who was born with cerebral palsy and other disabilities, was frequently isolated when the family went out in public.

For example, if the Goldensons went to a restaurant that had empty tables, restaurant owners would still say the establishment was booked. Many hotels didn't want to accommodate the family either.

"We very often received a look of 'I can't be bothered. Why are you here?'" Ms. Arbus says.

The experience deeply affected Ms. Arbus, who loved her older sister and saw her value, despite what other people thought.

"She was a lovely soul and so beautiful," Ms. Arbus says of Genise, who died at age 29 in 1973.

Ms. Arbus has long been committed to the ostracized and marginalized. A national advocate for people with disabilities and women, giving back is a core part of her identity.

"There's an amazing catharsis that occurs when one confronts head on the source of pain—and goes through the pain to emerge stronger and resilient," she says.

In addition to being an active supporter of United Cerebral Palsy, a charity her mother Isabelle Goldenson co-founded, Ms. Arbus supports many other nonprofits. She is president of The Loreen Arbus Foundation and The Goldenson-Arbus Foundation, was a two-term governor for the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and served on multiple boards including Women Moving Millions and Women In Film.

Ms. Arbus also hosts many charity events at the colorful apartment she rents in New York overlooking Central Park. In one account, the unit is described as a joyous, dizzying whirl. She says that not-for-profits shouldn't have to spend extra to get a venue and frequently invites several women with disabilities to be her guests at charity galas.

Ms. Arbus does so partly because she wants to make sure people who are typically not invited to such events literally get a seat at the table. She's also aware that some may be afraid of people with disabilities. Ms. Arbus wants to help more people push past those fears.

One need not be wealthy to make a difference in the lives of the marginalized, she says. Helping others is more about caring and kindness.

Ms. Arbus felt like an outsider as a girl because of her father's fame. People would assume that she could get them access to celebrities, jobs and parties because her dad was a network executive.

Her sister's disability took a toll on her mother, who suffered from mental illness. Her mother's sickness further caused Ms. Arbus to feel different from many of her classmates as she was growing up.

In addition, peers of Ms. Arbus frequently assumed she didn't have to work and had everything handed to her because of her family's wealth.

*“There’s an amazing catharsis that occurs when one confronts head on the source of pain—and goes through the pain to emerge stronger and resilient.”*

Nothing could be further from the truth, she says.

Her parents expected her to work and a portion of any money she earned was to be given to charity.

By age 13, she decided to change her name from her given name of Loreen Goldenson to Loreen Arbus, her maternal grandmother's maiden name. She hoped that by doing so, she'd establish herself as independent person.

“I didn't want to ride on my father's accomplishments,” she says. Mr. Goldenson died in 1999, and Mrs. Goldenson passed away in 2005.

When she entered the television business in her 20s, Ms. Arbus says she often worked harder and longer than many of her peers, staying late and getting in early.

She was usually the only woman in the room and because of that, she again was frequently overlooked and her abilities were discounted.

For instance, she recalls attending meetings with a junior-ranking male. The other men in the room would ignore her and defer to him.

While the experience was frustrating and hurtful, she didn't let it stop her. Instead, she used the feeling of being underestimated as motivation.

“I would think, if they only knew what they were missing,” she says. She would then remind herself how much she had to contribute and not get discouraged.

Her persistence paid off.

Working in cable in the 1980s and 1990s, she was named the first woman to head programming for a major cable channel, which she accomplished at both Showtime and Cable Health Network/Lifetime. She also went on to found an independent television production company, Loreen Arbus Productions Inc.

Ms. Arbus refuses to attribute her success to “luck” and says other women should eliminate that word from their vocabulary too. “You worked so hard, often twice as hard as the men, so take credit,” she advises.

---

## *Loreen’s Tips*

- Advocate for the marginalized
- Don’t rest on other people’s accomplishments
- Heal your trauma by giving back
- Take credit for your success



# SHEILA JOHNSON

## Winning the War

Sheila Johnson helped create a \$3 billion company, but she still had difficulty getting a loan to build a hotel.

In 2002, she bought a 340-acre property in Middleburg, Virginia, where she planned to build an equestrian-oriented resort.

She was looking for a fresh start. That same year she had completed her divorce from her husband of over 30 years, Robert Johnson, after a bitter and public parting.

About two years earlier, the Johnsons had sold the cable channel they co-founded, Black Entertainment Television, to Viacom for about \$3 billion.

Ms. Johnson thought the beauty of Middleburg and its proximity to Washington, D.C. would be an attractive spot for visitors.

But her idea wasn't welcomed by many in the town. The plan was vehemently opposed by some members of the community, who cited concerns about crowds and the resort's environmental impact. "It was a struggle, it was a war," Ms. Johnson says.

She initially hired the wrong team at first, she says. "I lost \$12 million of my money by hiring the wrong people to help me start my company," she says.

Ms. Johnson says women who achieve wealth need to be careful that they don't bring people into their lives who have their own agendas. She calls them "energetic vampires."

The 70-year-old is no stranger to struggle and heartache.

Her father was one of the few African-American neurosurgeons in the U.S. But because of his race, he had trouble finding work. As a result, Ms. Johnson's family had to move 13 times.

Her mother, an accountant, also struggled to find work and when she did, she was paid far less than her white counterparts.

Despite their professional backgrounds, the family struggled financially, says Ms. Johnson.

"I remember going to bed at night and I could hear them fighting over bills," says Ms. Johnson.

Traveling around the country in the 1950s was difficult as the family faced prejudice from hotel and restaurant owners who refused to serve African-Americans. In turn, they relied on the guide known as the Green Book which listed establishments where African-Americans were accepted.

"I just remember the humiliation of all of this," she says. "It's something I will never forget."

By the early 2000s, Ms. Johnson was worth hundreds of millions of dollars, but she still faced obstacles. Her hotel project in Virginia, for one, was further delayed by the 2008 recession.

Since Ms. Johnson didn't want to use all her own money to build the hotel, she sought outside funding around this time. But she says she faced difficulty in part because she's a woman.

"Men can go to any bank with a little business proposal," and no matter how "wacky" the idea is, "they're going to get the financing," she says. "Women do not have that ability."

Despite having a specific business plan and significant wealth, she didn't feel respected when she set up a meeting with one bank.

***"I could tell right away. They weren't taking me seriously. They didn't bring their top guns in there."***

"Banks don't trust us as lenders," she says. "I could tell right away. They weren't taking me seriously. They didn't bring their top guns in there."

Ms. Johnson pressed on and more than a decade later opened the resort, mostly funding the project herself. Today, it has 168 guest rooms and suites, a 23,000-square-foot spa and 25 acres dedicated to horse riding. The facility created about 300 jobs for the town.

Through her hospitality business, Salamander Hotels & Resorts, she now owns and operates five resorts and hotels throughout the country, with more in the pipeline. Banks are more willing to lend her money now, she says.

Ms. Johnson chose the name Salamander for her company as she admired the amphibian's mythical quality of being able to "walk through fire and still come out alive." With the salamander in mind, she recites the words "perseverance, courage and fortitude" to herself every morning.

Ms. Johnson believes sports is one way women can gain the confidence they need to succeed in business. Through sports, women "play against each other, with each other and not hold grudges," she says. This is something, she says, men in business do well but women need to do more of.

By playing sports, "women learn to have each other's back," Ms. Johnson says.

Ms. Johnson became a partner and vice chairman of Monumental Sports & Entertainment which owns and operates the WNBA's Washington Mystics, the

Washington Capitals hockey team and the Washington Wizards. Ms. Johnson is the managing partner of the Mystics.

In addition to her work in basketball, she bought a private golf resort in Florida, advocating for diversity in the sport as a member of the U.S. Golf Association's executive committee.

In addition, she gave \$7 million to Parsons School of Design in New York and \$1 million to the State University of New York at Morrisville. She's also donated \$5 million to endow a fellowship at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Ms. Johnson enjoys spending time with her husband William Newman whom she married in 2005. She also likes mentoring students and entrepreneurs.

"I love my life now," she says.

---

## *Sheila's Tips*

- Don't let other people's limitations define you
- Be selective in whom you trust
- Don't quit
- Help other women





# RANA EL KALIOUBY

## The Power of Networks

The most important person Rana el Kaliouby needed to convince was herself.

When artificial-intelligence startup Affectiva was looking for a new chief executive in 2014, some people saw Dr. el Kaliouby as the natural fit.

Though just 35 years old at the time, she had all the technical knowledge, a doctorate from Cambridge, had co-founded the company five years earlier and already had been performing some tasks that CEOs typically do such as fundraising and representing the company publicly.

Still, she questioned her abilities. “I thought to myself, they should probably give this [job] to a guy who has done this before,” she said.

When she told a male mentor about her doubts, he reminded her that she was indeed qualified. She eventually came around to the idea, and the Affectiva board of directors made her CEO.

From this experience, Dr. el Kaliouby says she learned how women may “put obstacles in their own way to success.” They may not advocate for themselves because they’re afraid “that they don’t check every box” in the job description.

It wasn’t the first time she overcame doubts about her choices. A few years after getting her computer-science degree from the American University in Cairo, Dr. el Kaliouby’s Egyptian parents worried about her decision to move to the U.S. as a single mother to pursue a career in artificial intelligence.



Dr. el Kaliouby did it anyway, despite the fact that she was recently divorced from the father of her two children and that it went against the norms for a woman like her from a traditional Muslim family.

“I’ve always been a bit of a misfit,” she says.

She took a job at the prestigious Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In 2009, she formed Affectiva with her mentor at MIT, a professor named Rosalind Picard. At the time, Dr. el Kaliouby’s son was an infant and her daughter was six.

She became chief technology officer, using her skills to help build the business, which develops artificial intelligence to understand people’s emotions. It would soon create a database of over four billion facial frames from 87 countries around the world.

The computer whiz didn’t just stick to the code. She also served as its spokesperson, working to ease anxiety about A.I.’s role in the future. Far from displacing people’s utility, she said, artificial intelligence could enhance the human experience in a variety of significant ways from warning distracted drivers to intervening if a user’s facial expressions showed signs of depression.

Dr. el Kaliouby soon became aware of how few women there were in U.S. tech circles. In 2010, when Affectiva sought its initial funding from investors, she was often the only woman in the room.

When she went alone to represent the company, investors often didn’t have much to say to her in the way of small talk. However, she noticed when the company’s male chairman accompanied her, the atmosphere of the room became more casual as the men would at first speak about sports or their college years.

***“Remember that one day you will look back on your obstacles and laugh.”***

It was then when she realized the full importance of networking. Having something in common with potential investors, such as mutual friends, helps create a level of a trust, she says.

Now, before a meeting, she makes sure she has a mutual connection. She also goes on Twitter the night before and gets the latest news on sports teams, she says.

Dr. el Kaliouby says it is important to get female entrepreneurs and female investors to convene to support each other’s work. Affectiva hosted a dinner last fall to further the cause.

Being a single mother and entrepreneur has been a challenge, Dr. el Kaliouby says. However, she’s found ways to make both roles possible. For example, when her son was an infant and she didn’t have a babysitter, she took him to an investor pitch meeting.

Dr. el Kaliouby says she was fortunate that the administrative assistant who sat near the meeting room was able to watch him. “I prayed that he wouldn’t cry,” she says. Thankfully he was well behaved, didn’t cry and investors didn’t notice.

She says having children has made her “super-focused.” During her workday, she aims to be fully present in her job. And when she’s with her children in the early morning and at night before they go to bed, she puts away her phone and gives them her full attention.

Whenever possible, she'll volunteer at her son's school helping him and his classmates with an arts and crafts project. She recently taught them how to make Egyptian masks.

She doesn't always have much time for herself but believes it is important for founders to find time for self-care. She tries to attend a weightlifting class two or three times a week to unwind and enjoys taking Zumba classes. She's hoping to hire a nanny this year to help with her children.

Dr. el Kaliouby also keeps a journal that she rereads on occasion. Doing so reminds her that she's survived difficult times before and that she's capable of success.

Reading about how she's overcome obstacles in the past has helped her tune out the naysayers whether they were reluctant investors or skeptical family members.

However, Dr. el Kaliouby says the greatest doubter she's had to overcome is herself.

To build up the courage to do both the CEO job and raise two kids as a single mom, she gave herself frequent pep talks, remembering past accomplishments and why she was capable of handling the promotion.

This self-confidence is proving helpful today as Dr. el Kaliouby works to raise another \$30 million for the business. She's already signed up major clients and partners such as SoftBank Robotics to use Affectiva's technology.

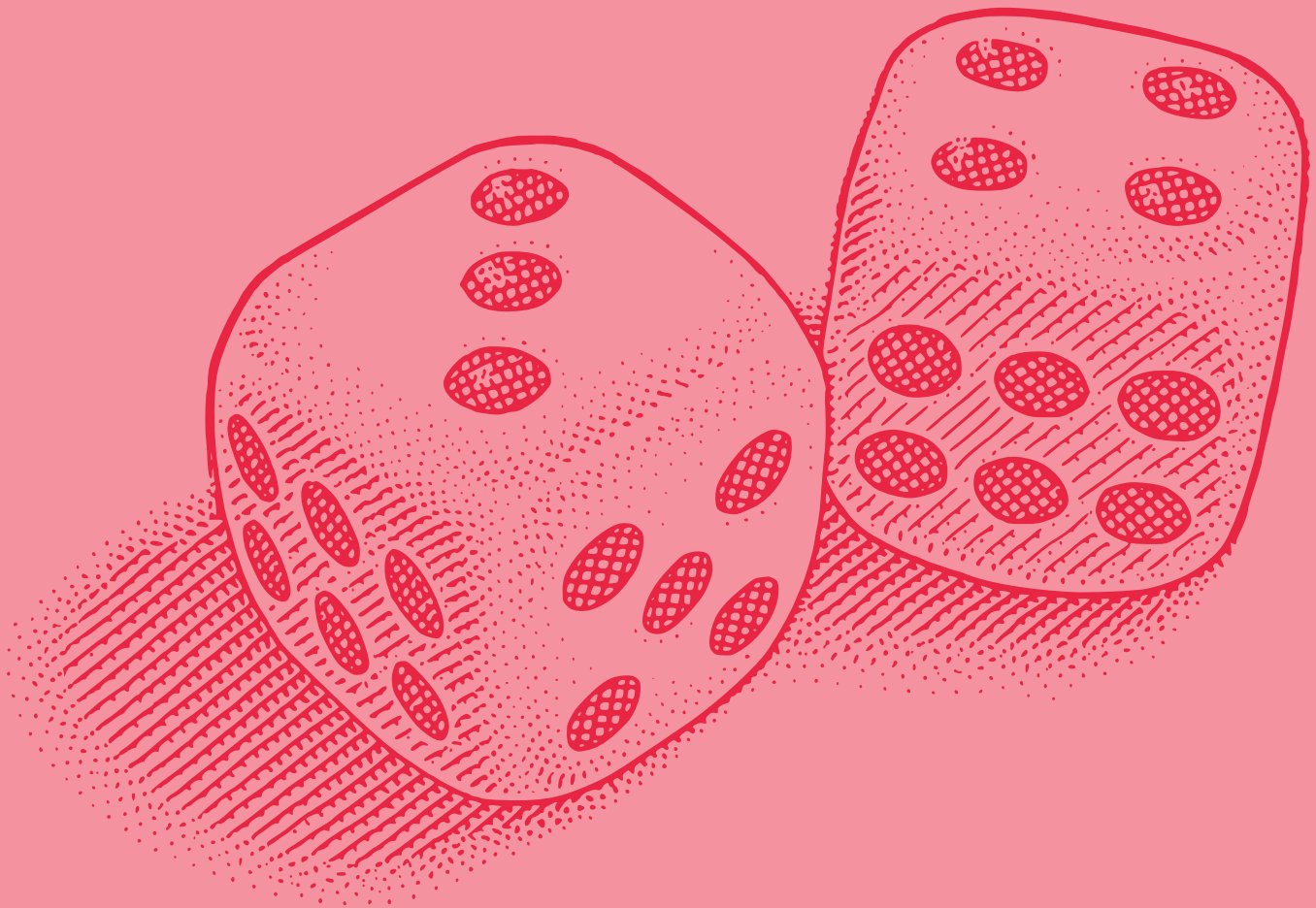
"Remember that one day you will look back on your obstacles and laugh," she says.

---

## *Rana's Tips*

- Follow your dreams despite the naysayers
- Network with people who support your vision
- Raise your hand for opportunities before you feel ready
- Journaling can help boost your confidence

# EMBRACING RISK





# BARBARA CORCORAN

## Welcoming Failure to Succeed

Barbara Corcoran had 22 jobs before she found the right one.

The New Jersey native remembers she had tried lots of different roles including waitressing, running a hot-dog stand and selling flowers before she started her own real-estate business using a \$1,000 loan at age 23.

“Experiencing failure is the best way to get back up,” she says.

Having grown up relatively poor, Ms. Corcoran struggled in school, especially with reading aloud during her elementary school years since she had dyslexia.

Nevertheless, her teachers would regularly make her read to her fellow classmates. As she stumbled over words and struggled with the assignment, other children laughed and snickered. No matter how bad it was, she often had to repeat the exercise the next day.

While it was a difficult experience to “fail” publicly in class, she says it was an early lesson in resilience.

A desire to prove naysayers wrong and a healthy level of confidence helped motivate Ms. Corcoran to start her own residential real-estate business in 1973. She would need it; her path to success had several near-failures.

Her business, the Corcoran Group, almost went bankrupt three times. The first time that occurred, about seven years into its existence, two of her real-estate agents offered to lend her money so the business could stay afloat.

One agent offered to loan \$400,000 in retirement savings. Ms. Corcoran didn’t accept the loan.

Instead, she thought of an idea that would save the company: a “one day/one price” sale. She sold 88 apartments at a 6% commission in less than an hour with this tactic. Curiosity brought the reluctant buyers in and the company made a little more than \$1 million.

She paid off the debt, opened another new office and a few months later the market started to turn around, she says.

Still, the agent’s gesture served as inspiration. “I figured if she was willing to bet on me, I should live up to her expectations,” she says.

Ms. Corcoran’s mother also encouraged her not to worry about money. She helped her remember her humble roots and reassured her that even if the business failed, Ms. Corcoran would be able to find success again.

She was able to endure various business cycles and eventually sold the business for \$66 million in 2001.

When Barbara sold the Corcoran Group, she held on to the chairman’s title for two years, but transferred executive duties to the firm’s new president.

She reinvented herself into a television personality, becoming a real-estate expert on NBC’s “Today” Show and getting a longtime role on ABC’s “Shark Tank,” a reality-show in which Ms. Corcoran and other cast members invest in various entrepreneurs’ ideas.

Since she started on that Emmy award-winning program in 2009, Ms. Corcoran has gained wider notoriety. On the show, Ms. Corcoran has invested in over 80 businesses, to varying degrees of success.

She says the most successful entrepreneurs she invests in have two characteristics.

First, they get up quickly when they face failure. They don’t spend time blaming other people. Rather, they take ownership of their mistakes whether it is a missed shipment or bad hire.

“They’re almost like a jack-in-the-box because they bounce back so quickly,” she says.

*“Declare war on the tapes in your head that tell you that you’re not good enough.”*

Second, they use their weakness as an asset or as a motivator. For example, the founder of one business Ms. Corcoran invests in was told by multiple people, including her own mother, that she’d fail.

That entrepreneur is so driven because she’s determined to prove the doubters wrong. For that woman, she’s motivated to keep going when she faces difficulties. The doubts she’s faced have helped her achieve success that Ms. Corcoran isn’t sure she would have achieved otherwise if everyone was praising her.

To be sure, Ms. Corcoran says the greatest doubts many women have to overcome are from within themselves.

“Declare war on the tapes in your head that tell you that you’re not good enough,” she says. “The moment that you see yourself at a disadvantage, you are at a disadvantage.”

In addition to positive self-talk, Ms. Corcoran says she routinely over-prepares to feel more confident.

When Ms. Corcoran faces an especially difficult negotiation or has trouble getting her voice heard on television, she reminds herself that she deserves to be in the room and that her competitors should be ready to see her succeed.

Another trait of the best entrepreneurs is that they aren’t afraid to start. Too often, could-be entrepreneurs get “caught up in fear and analysis,” she says. They think they want to start a business but never take the chance and do it. Rather, they spend years creating spreadsheets and dreaming but take no action.

She says the best time to start a business is when you’re “young and stupid.” However, if you’re not young and want to start one, still go for it, she says. You may need

to start your business as a part-time endeavor to see if it gains traction, but begin. If it fails, then at least you learned something and tried.

“The people I meet who have regrets are the people who didn’t try,” she says.

She says “really throw your body into” whatever you’re doing. Whenever female entrepreneurs have done so, whether it is starting a business or helping other entrepreneurs, the universe has rewarded them for their courage.

Ms. Corcoran feels similarly about failure and risk when it comes to parenting. It is understandable that parents usually don’t want their children to fail in any way.

They want to protect them from harm and smooth their way so life is easy.

However, always letting your children succeed won’t teach them to be resilient when they encounter difficult times in life, she says. Instead, it could make them weak and powerless instead of empowered and independent.

For her part, she’s learned not to automatically let her children win during family board games. Rather, she only lets them win if they legitimately do.

---

## *Barbara’s Tips*

- Fail and get back up quickly
- Take responsibility for your actions
- Use positive self-talk
- Just start



# CLAUDIA ROMO EDELMAN

## Finding a Big Mission

Claudia Romo Edelman was raised to believe she was stronger than death.

Born Claudia González Romo, the philanthropist and public-relations expert, survived her two siblings. Her brother and sister both died from a rare genetic disease when they were just 18 months old.

When Ms. Romo Edelman was born, she underwent countless medical tests as her parents watched her closely. After she lived more than 18 months, her parents were convinced that there was a great purpose for her life.

“They told me if I survived it must be because I had a big mission,” she says.

Ms. Romo Edelman survived another close encounter with death when she was 14. When a massive earthquake devastated parts of her hometown of Mexico City in 1985, she was one of the thousand of volunteers that ran out into the street with her family as buildings had collapsed around them.

From the rubble of the earthquake, she heard the voice of a survivor. The debris was too heavy and dense for the Ms. Romo Edelman to reach the person on her own, but she could call for help. And she did, at the top of her lungs. This brought other rescue workers to the scene and together, they were able to save the girl.

After seeing the young girl’s eyes fill with hope when she knew she was going to be saved, Ms. Romo Edelman’s commitment to service was born. Not only did helping someone else make her feel useful, it became her life’s purpose.



“Giving is the ultimate,” she says.

Today, she encourages other women to not let other people’s perceptions of how outspoken they should or shouldn’t be influence their decisions.

“From that experience, I learned that speaking out is one of the most powerful things we can do, especially if we use our voice to convene others to a common and just cause,” she says.

Her own inspiration came from close to home. Her grandmother had “horrendous” arthritis; she could hardly open her hands. And yet, she started guitar lessons when she was 81 years old, Ms. Romo Edelman says.

“When my mother buried her second child, her knees weakened and she fell to the ground of the cemetery. My grandmother pulled her up from the arm and told her to stop crying as she had a survivor girl to raise,” she says.

Other women who want to use a trauma for good should first know they are not the only ones who have experienced such pain. In addition, they can use the experience to point them to their passion, she says.

Perhaps they experienced prejudice as a child. They could look to those moments and use them as fuel to volunteer with causes that work to end injustice. Or they could use their voice to spread a message of hope on social media.

“Anger is a great motivator for action,” she says.

Ms Romo Edelman recalls that she used to be told she was “loud” as a child. She now understands that her outspoken nature was actually an asset.

Defining success beyond money or power, she has tried to help others attain some of the many things she values: freedom, self-fulfillment, health, happiness, family warmth and balance.

After college in Mexico, Ms. Romo Edelman spent more than a decade in Switzerland, a period that included a stint as as Mexican diplomat. She also worked as

***“They told me if I survived it must be because I had a big mission.”***

a journalist and received a master’s degree from the London School of Economics.

She led public relations and marketing for global organizations including the World Economic Forum, the United Nations Refugee Agency and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. She also served as the chief of advocacy of Unicef where she managed their public advocacy campaigns to educate the public about social-justice issues including gender equality and diversity and inclusion.

Ms. Romo Edelman moved to the U.S. in 2014. She married her second husband, public relations executive Richard Edelman in 2017.

In 2018, Claudia started a sabbatical from the United Nations. Since then, she has been devoting herself to the We Are All Human foundation she founded in 2017.

“With so much divisive language eroding public discourse in today’s world, I hope that the We Are All Human foundation can help unify the Hispanics who are living the United States and create a shared agenda,” she says.

Ms. Romo Edelman says the Hispanic community is “divided” between ethnic lines with, for instance, Mexican-Americans not wanting to vote with one voice with, say, Cuban-Americans. If all Hispanics come together with a common purpose they can have a greater impact on public policies and elections.

Ms. Romo Edelman says lessons that global organizations learn about branding apply to individuals.

For example, a woman should know that if she isn't working to create her own brand in society, it is being done for her.

In turn, women who want to create their own brand should consider characteristics they wish to be known for such as integrity or creativity. "Branding will happen with or without you," she says.

As a working mom to her two children and Mr. Edelman's three children, she looks for ways to integrate her personal and professional life. For instance, the couple frequently hosts dinner parties at their Manhattan home. To teach her children social skills, she has them ask three questions of each dinner guest. Each child must speak to each guest for five minutes before the dinner starts.

---

## *Claudia's Tips*

- Don't be afraid to use your voice
- Volunteering provides sense of purpose and joy
- Pick three to five words to describe your personal brand
- Expose your children to your work



# JEAN CASE

## Embracing the Unknown

Jean Case serves as chief executive of a foundation that has given away over \$100 million.

It wouldn't have been possible had she not embraced risk during her career.

The 59-year-old philanthropist left a job and a promising career at General Electric in the 1980s to work for a startup that few of her peers had heard of at the time.

"Certain friends were very shrill," she recalls. They told her she was making a big career mistake moving to an unproven company.

The startup was America Online.

Ms. Case got in near the ground floor, joining the internet company in its early days. She worked as both its chief of marketing and later head of communications as the company grew dramatically in the 1990s.

At AOL, she met Steve Case, the company's co-founder and later CEO. They later married and blended their families, bringing together five children from their prior marriages.

AOL merged with Time Warner in 2000 in a deal valued at the time above \$100 billion.

The merger will be remembered as a sign of the peak of the turn-of-the-century internet mania. As tech stocks plummeted in the years following the deal, it soon became clear AOL Time Warner had big problems and the two companies weren't meshing well together.

The combined firm announced a net loss of \$99 billion for 2002. Mr. Case retired as chairman of the board of directors of the combined company in 2003.

Ms. Case has devoted her life since leaving AOL to investing in people and ideas, including many startups, that she hopes will change the world.

In addition to serving as chief executive of the Case Foundation since 1997, which has given away more than \$100 million, Ms. Case has personally donated with her husband more than twice that through their own personal giving. Having been a recipient of philanthropy herself and a leader in the technology arena, Ms. Case is especially interested in funding nonprofits that “harness the best impulses of entrepreneurship, innovation, technology and collaboration.”

The foundation is also focused on empowering those from diverse backgrounds who often are not provided opportunities, promoting “inclusive entrepreneurship.”

In addition, the couple joined the Giving Pledge in 2010, joining a group of other high-profile individuals including Bill and Melinda Gates, who committed to donating the majority of their wealth.

As author of the recently published book “Be Fearless: 5 Principles for a Life of Breakthroughs and Purpose,” Ms. Case identified five traits that are common to successful people who work in the private and public sectors. Being able to learn from their failures and let urgency conquer fear are among the characteristics that have helped propel these people to success, she says.

Ms. Case developed an appreciation for fearlessness by watching her mother.

Born Jean Norton, the philanthropist was raised by a divorced mother, Norma Norton, who worked as a waitress in the evenings to help pay the family’s bills.

Regardless of family’s tenuous financial situation, her mother woke up each day with a smile, Ms. Case says.

***“Sometimes failures tee up big opportunities.”***

Ms. Case’s mother believed that setbacks were surmountable. And despite their modest upbringings, she encouraged her four children to pursue their dreams.

Jean Case carried that sense of possibility throughout school. A full scholarship to a prestigious private high school in Florida provided her an education and an introduction to well-connected people.

In high school, she interned for a judge who eventually was elected to Congress. After she didn’t get into her first-choice college, Wake Forest University, she stayed in Florida where she continued to intern for the congressman.

She took college classes at night, but didn’t finish her degree and eventually moved to Washington to work for the federal government. After about a year, the job was put on hold due to budget problems.

The next day she applied for a temporary role to fill the gap—one offered at a local internet startup that was introducing a new online service.

“Sometimes failures tee up big opportunities,” she says.

The company, the Source, hired her for a permanent marketing role where she stayed for 2 ½ years.

Then, she received a recruiting call from General Electric where the company’s information-services division had plans to build their own online service.

She didn’t hesitate to make the switch, since she believed GE’s branding awareness and budgets would surely have great success in the nascent online-services realm.

She was tapped for the company’s world-renowned management training program, a sign that her career within GE was on the move.

But soon she came to realize that the same big company that was so successful in some markets was unwilling to take necessary risks to grow in the burgeoning online market.

As this realization set in, she received a call from yet another startup down the road that was planning to enter the fray with its own new online service. The company's executives asked her to come lead the marketing efforts.

In retrospect, the move showed that Ms. Case saw the potential for a new, unproven company to grab hold of disruptive new technology as well as a keen sense of confidence that she could take a risk to move from the comfortable to the unknown.

She felt AOL was "revolutionary" when she saw how the service made information available. She thought of how her mother struggled to pay for an encyclopedia for the family and how in the future that encyclopedia would be available free online.

"I understood how empowering that was," she says.

Too often, people focus on the negative aspects of trying something new instead of considering the risks of staying where they are. For example, they may not want to find a new job because they are comfortable in their current one. However, if they are no longer learning in their present position, their skills may stagnate. This makes them more vulnerable later on.

"Think of the risk of not taking a risk," she says.

---

## *Jean's Tips*

- Don't let fear paralyze you from taking action
- Big opportunities can arise from failure
- Give back to empower others
- Consider the risk of not taking a risk



# BARBARA BRADLEY BAEKGAARD

## The Beauty of Plan B

For Barbara Bradley Baekgaard, starting a new life in her 40s turned into a billion-dollar company.

In 1982, as Ms. Baekgaard and her good friend Patricia Miller were waiting for their flight home after a vacation together, the two women noticed an absence of beautiful luggage. They wished they had bags to match their own fun and colorful style.

In the following week, they went to a store (with \$500 between them that they had “borrowed” from their husbands) and bought fabric to design their first bags.

At the time, the bags seemed like they wouldn’t amount to much more than a hobby. After all, Ms. Baekgaard hadn’t been in the workforce before. She was married right after college and had four children in five years. Because of her husband’s job, the family moved often.

But soon, Ms. Baekgaard and Ms. Miller would officially launch a handbag and luggage company, naming it after Ms. Baekgaard’s mother, Vera Bradley. When she started, Ms. Baekgaard was in her early 40s and a stay-at-home mom in Fort Wayne, Ind, and Ms. Miller was one of her neighbors.

The women eventually hired about 30 sewing experts to craft the bags and then bring them to Ms. Baekgaard’s home so her friends and family could sell them.

To learn about accounting and other financial aspects of running a business, she and Ms. Miller went to SCORE, a nonprofit that provides free business mentoring services to small-business owners.

A chance encounter in 1984 at a Chicago gift show presented another break. The company's booth at the event was in the lower level, where there wasn't much foot traffic.

However, by happenstance, Ms. Baekgaard saw a 6-year old girl at a party for exhibitors and decided to show her some earrings that she thought looked cute.

Soon, she met the girl's parents — the father was William Little, the head of the gift show nationally. Ms. Baekgaard was upgraded to a better location for future shows.

The connection helped to get Vera Bradley bags more notice in the company's early years. Eventually, they were sold in about 2,500 stores around the country. Vera Bradley Inc. went public in 2010, and for a time had a market value over \$1 billion, though more recently the stock has fallen as online competition hits retailers and the company struggles to keep its brand up-to-date.

Looking back on the company's rise, Ms. Baekgaard says that having a good Plan B can be far better than the original formula. "Be positive and know what often doesn't at first seem like the best thing can turn out to be better than your initial plan," she says.

As Ms. Baekgaard business was taking off in her late 40s, her husband was planning to retire and move to Florida.

"He always said '50 and out,'" she says, referring to the age at which he hoped to retire.

But her company was just starting to achieve notable success and she didn't want to move.

While their divorce "was very tough," the couple decided to part ways.

In 1990 she married Peer Baekgaard, a gift industry executive, who fully encouraged her career.

*"If it doesn't work out, don't be ashamed."*

Mr. Baekgaard died in 2007, about three years before Vera Bradley went public and solidified Ms. Baekgaard's status as a self-made multimillionaire.

She served as co-president of the company from 1982 through June 2010. In May 2010, she was appointed chief creative officer and served in that role for more than seven years. She continues to work every day and serves on the company's board of directors as chief creative officer emeritus. She recently started a men's luggage line, Baekgaard USA, and has been increasingly focused on charitable causes, including breast-cancer research.

Her advice for women who want to start a business in their 40s and beyond: go for it.

"If it doesn't work out, don't be ashamed."

Instead, try another idea. "My father used to say you sell yourself first, your company second and your product third," she says. That is part of the reason she has focused on building relationships, surrounding herself with positive people and supportive family.

And don't get too caught up in the spreadsheets and planning the perfect strategy. "If you overanalyze, you'll put things off so much you'll never do anything."



---

## *Barbara's Tips*

- Have a plan "B"
- Look for the positive
- Be adaptable
- Don't be afraid to fail

## ***Questions to Consider:***

*Please share feedback on these questions or anything in the book at [Veronica.Dagher@wsj.com](mailto:Veronica.Dagher@wsj.com)*

Who is the most resilient person you know and why?

What's one professional "failure" you survived?

What's one professional risk you're proud of taking?

How do you decide which "voices" to listen to and which to ignore?

What's one way you cope with difficulties? (i.e. yoga, journaling, therapy, etc.)

How do you manage both your work and home responsibilities?

As a single woman, to whom do you look for support?

How are you teaching your children resilience?

How do you choose which charities to support?

How financially prepared are you to cope with a divorce or the death of your spouse?

What's one step you could take today to become more educated about your finances?

What's one obstacle that prevents you from living the life you desire?

What one step can you take today to work toward your desired life?



# RESILIENCE

*How 20 Ambitious Women Used Obstacles  
to Fuel Their Success*

Sponsored By:

