

# CANDY GIRL MENTALITY



KEYS TO TURNING BITTER MOMENTS  
INTO SWEET SUCCESS

LISA L. HOWZE

FOREWORD BY LINDA D. FORTE

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“Gifts aren’t to be paid back; they’re to be paid forward.”

~ Cedric Crawford



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Some names and characteristics have been changed, some events have been compressed, and some dialogue has been recreated to protect the identity of the innocent and guilty.

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## FOREWORD

I stand in complete awe of Lisa LaShawn Howze! She is incredibly young to own the lifetime of wisdom, courage, and strength that she imparts with impassioned purpose to her readers. I remember our first meeting like yesterday. Lisa was an intern for the large commercial bank where I worked as a senior C-suite executive. I was one of few African American females in my position. As such, I believed it was extremely important to welcome young talent to our firm, share insights, and address questions they might have in hopes of them considering permanent employment with the bank.

At one of the bank's weekly networking events, I recall meeting Lisa and being very impressed with and somewhat amused by this intelligent, inquisitive, and confident young woman. When I asked about her major, she expressed an interest in "marketing." Surprised by my disapproving reaction, she quickly decided to recommit her focus to the accounting program that she had begun at the prestigious University of Michigan. Although we could not persuade her to continue to work for the bank after graduation, I was pleased to learn years later that she had a successful start to her career in public accounting. Since then, everything she has accomplished personally and professionally has been nothing short of outstanding.

Lisa's spirited attitude and strong belief in herself were evident to me from the very beginning. I sensed that this young woman was destined to explore and discover the full extent of her capabilities.

She was ready for opportunity and willing to entertain other people's ideas of success. Lisa savored a broad landscape of perspectives, tried them on for size, and leveraged the ones most suitable to help her breakthrough to the next level.

*Candy Girl Mentality* shows all of us why strength, courage, and wisdom are needed to overcome obstacles and elevate our lives, careers, and finances through Lisa's example. Her experiences are eye-opening, her reflections are riveting, and her authenticity is abundant. Together, they provide guidance to the novice, reinforce learnings to the more experienced, and cause the most seasoned of us to reminisce about our own timeless collection of life lessons that can and should be passed on to future generations.

As you read this masterful piece of literature, I invite you to breathe in and breathe out—in yoga fashion—the deep meditative impact of Lisa's life-learned discoveries. Enjoy a smile and outright laughter when you meet her unique humor in the valleys and high points of her journey. Share in her successes and empathize with the depth of her pain and emotions during times of setback. Finally, when you reach the part of the book that gives you an opportunity to participate in a powerful exercise, I urge you to engage wholeheartedly. While Lisa mentions how writing *Candy Girl Mentality* has been life changing for her, nothing can be more compelling than reading this book, completing the exercise, and going through the life-altering experience for yourself.

In closing, Lisa is indeed the finest example of a self-actualized person that I know. It has truly been a pleasure to have sustained a long-lasting connection and friendship with her. Like a beautiful butterfly, she has been consistent in her evolution and willingness to lift others as she climbs. With her talents and understanding



of what makes one whole and happy on full display in *Candy Girl Mentality*, I am honored to have been a “fly on the wall” to witness a well-lived life. Therefore, I know without a doubt that after reading her story, you will feel the same as I do.

Warmly,

Linda D. Forte

Senior Vice President, Business Affairs and  
Chief Diversity Officer, Comerica Bank (Retired)

## P R E F A C E

I have a collection of journals that over the years have documented and captured some of my most intimate thoughts. While poring through pages of notes, I could tell the condition of my heart based on the nature of my prayers, the ambition of my goals, and sentiment of my reflections.

The entry that best caught my attention was penned on May 12, 2013—Mother’s Day! In it, I accounted for how I attended two different church services that Sunday, with each having its own celebration and tribute to mothers. In writing about that experience, I said:

“I felt my emotions stir as I reflected on my mother and our times together. I tried to focus on the more tender moments; the loving, supportive moments when my mother was my biggest cheerleader. When she sat in the front-row seat of my success. When she held my hand when I felt scared or afraid, and I held her hand as she slowly drifted away from me.”

I concluded the entry with a statement that suggested how rekindling memories from my past, particularly about my mom, had a way of conjuring up emotions and evoking sadness that I had not planned to feel that day. So, what did I do next? I did as I had always done. I bottled up all those melancholy feelings and kept it moving—at least until the pain I had been suppressing got triggered once again.

Does this sound familiar?

If you are anything like me, you know what it is like to maintain a busy lifestyle that helps you avoid dealing with life's most sensitive issues. As the saying goes, "You can run, but you cannot hide." Instead of hiding, why not seek answers to help you unlock the following questions: Who are you? Where are you? Why are you here?

Four years ago, when I started this journey to become a first-time author, I had no idea that it would turn into an adventure in self-discovery. Through my coach's example, I was inspired to actively begin the writing process by first outlining the significant emotional events that happened in my life. From there, I found that I could take the years of notes written in my journals and translate them onto the pages of the book that you now hold in your hands. Were there events that came from out of nowhere that slowed me down in the process? Absolutely! However, I could not let them stop me. The messages and lessons that I impart by telling my story are too valuable to not be shared with the world.

Furthermore, I never imagined how rewarding the writing process could be. While my original purpose for writing this book was singularly focused on you gaining the perspective you need for the life and career you want, so much more has since evolved for both you and me. By revisiting certain aspects of my life, I was fortunate to see things that I had not thought about in years through a different lens. I even developed new narratives that are now more empowering than some of the stories I had previously been telling myself. Sure, I could have played it safe by only giving you my career highlights and treating the intimate details of my story as secrets that I kept close to the vest. However, if I had

taken that approach, I know I would have robbed you of a possible breakthrough of your own. I didn't want to do that at all.

Therefore, I decided instead to lean into this idea that I learned from a thought leader that says, "You cannot heal what you will not reveal." By choosing to be vulnerable and going beneath the surface, I know that my story will help someone who may have gone, is currently going, or is yet to go through a similar experience.

Finally, while the word "success" is part of the subtitle of this book, I want you to know that success is a relative term. Its meaning varies depending on who you talk to. However, in the context of what has been discussed so far, we can universally agree to define success as your ability to push past pain and persevere, go from hurt to healed, and share your own aha moments along the way.

# INTRODUCTION

If you could sit and have a conversation with your younger self, what would you say?

Like millions of other people in the world, chances are you have thought about this question more than once. As you get older, with every milestone birthday, there is a tendency to reflect on who you were and what you were like in your youth compared to who you are today. Granted, being young is synonymous with making mistakes, giving too many f\*cks, lacking focus, and wasting time, energy, and money on people, places, and things that hold less value today than they did when you were younger.

In a pointless attempt to rewrite history, you say things like, “If I had known then what I know now, I would have done things differently.” Bull\*\*t! Who are you fooling? Even if it were possible to go back and fix some of your past mistakes, you and I both would just find something else to screw up. And, if we are being totally honest, some of us waited until we turned 40 to “show your natural a\*\*!” as my mom would say. But that is a different story for a different book. 😊

Like me, you probably had an encounter with an adult-figure—like a parent, teacher, counselor, pastor, close relative, supervisor, older sibling, or mature friend, who tried to give you some advice, but you failed to listen. Here is the good news: There is no need to beat yourself up. If it helps, Alexander Pope said, “To err is human; to forgive, divine.” Besides, you cannot change the past by rehearsing

your regrets. However, you can mentor a young person and help them create a brighter future.

I may not have known a lot of things growing up. However, life has taught me many valuable lessons that I never could have learned from a textbook. If that describes you as well, do not be afraid to show your scars. Your imperfections. Your flaws. They should serve as constant reminders—not only of what you have been through but what you have overcome. When we share our downs as well as our ups, we give the next generation the freedom to fail without the shame of failure. For every young person and the young at heart, life will constantly put you to the test. Your ability to pass will be measured by how often you get back up and try again.

When I consider the opening question for myself, there is no need to travel back in time. Why? Because the younger me has never left me. She has been with me throughout this entire journey. The two of us—she and I—we—are inseparable. If, in fact, there was no “SHE,” there would be no “ME!” And, in case you missed it, I DID NOT WAKE UP LIKE THIS! It took a lifetime for me to become the woman I am today, and yet, I am still evolving.

What has been the secret to my success? I have been knocked down but refused to stay down. Though passed over, I never passed up an opportunity to get better and grow stronger. Despite being told “NO” a million times, I never accepted “NO” as the final answer. Therefore, the fight that is in me is because of the fight that was in her. The enterprising mind that I have today is the result of her rising to the occasion back in the day. Depending on which arena I am in, some people call me “Lisa,” others call me “Ms. Howze,” while some others call me “Representative.” However, my friends from high school affectionately call me “Candy Girl!” It

only makes sense given all the candy sales I transacted in the back halls of Cass Technical High School, located in my hometown of Detroit, Michigan. More on that later.

In the meantime, if I could sit and have a conversation with the 17-year-old me, I would simply say, “THANK YOU!” and then hand her a letter that reads as follows:

*June 29, 2021*

*Dear Candy Girl,*

*You are the sh\*t!*

*I thank you for teaching me how to view certain situations in life. You never allowed anything to stop you. If you tried something one way and it did not work out, you were determined to find another way—a better way. And, eventually, you did. You never settled for “good enough.” You always strived for more because you had the audacity to believe that more was possible—not only for you but for others around you as well.*

*As an adult Black woman, I draw so much of my strength from the example you set as a teenage girl. Now the time has come for you and I to join forces and show the world what it means to have a Candy Girl Mentality!*

*Are you up for the challenge?*

*Of course, you are! So, let's GO!*

*Yours truly,*

*Lisa  
(a.k.a. “Your Future Self”)*



## What does it mean to have a Candy Girl Mentality?

In short, Candy Girl Mentality has nothing to do with gender and everything to do with an entrepreneurial mindset and how you respond to life's setbacks. When you think like an entrepreneur, you are unstoppable. Your persistence is unparalleled, and your focus is fierce. While being flexible, you do not let obstacles get in your way. Why? Because you firmly believe that for every problem, there is a solution. In many ways, *you* are that solution. As you think outside the box and consistently add value to the lives of people and organizations you serve, you can and will be able to name your price. Beware, however; there is a price that comes with reaching the pinnacle of your career success.

## What is that price, you ask?

It usually shows up in the form of setbacks, which are those uncomfortable, unpleasant occurrences that unfortunately are a natural part of life. You cannot avoid them. You can only learn to embrace them. While the path of least resistance may appear more attractive, there is no opportunity for growth. Therefore, whether the setback is represented by the loss of a loved one or failure to get promoted on your job, you always have an opportunity to choose your response. In fact, it was Lou Holtz who said, "Life is 10 percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you respond to it." Therefore, when you have a Candy Girl Mentality, you can turn your setbacks into bounce backs, losses into wins, and bitter moments into sweet success.



Is that enough to get you excited about what lies ahead? I sure hope so.

After reading *Candy Girl Mentality*, you will understand that:

- You were created on purpose for a purpose.
- All you have is all you need to get started.
- The best education sometimes comes from lessons learned outside of the classroom.
- You can overcome disappointment and still excel in your life and career.
- Losing is not always a bad thing.
- You can be courageous in the face of great opposition.
- Elevation usually follows your decision to maximize the meantime.
- You can bounce back from setbacks.
- Mentorship is important.

In sharing my story and all the above universal principles, my hope is that you will instantly be inspired and stirred into action, knowing that dreams do come true. As I always say, “If I can do it, you can do it, too. Except, when you do it, I hope you do it even better!”

## **How to Get the Most Value out of Reading this Book**

As you prepare to dive in, there are three things you should be aware of: 1) I have arranged the book in three sections—Strength, Courage, and Wisdom. I encourage you to keep all three attributes in mind, as they will be critical to your career advancement and financial success; 2) If you are anything like me, you loathe exercises at the end of each chapter, no matter how life-changing

the author says completing them will be. Good news! I decided to spare you the trouble. However, when you reach Chapter 15, please be prepared to accept my challenge and complete the exercises described therein. I guarantee it will be a rewarding experience and more than worth your investment. No cheating by peeking ahead! 3) Finally, I want you to enjoy reading my story as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Without any further delay, let the story of *Candy Girl Mentality* begin!



# SECTION I STRENGTH



*The power to push past limits*



## CHAPTER 1



# PARENTAL GUIDANCE

The captain's resonant voice permeated throughout the cabin as he announced the aircraft's descent into Detroit Metropolitan Airport. He continued, "The current temperature in Detroit is 33 degrees with overcast skies. Flight attendants, please prepare the cabin for landing. We will be arriving at the gate momentarily."

"Thirty-three degrees!" I exclaimed. I was just in Vegas where the weather was a blistering 88 degrees and sunny. What was I thinking? Michigan weather can be downright disrespectful, especially when I was returning home from a warmer climate! No matter how much I complained, the cold crisp air is exactly what I needed to awaken my sleepy head that had hardly touched a pillow in over 20 hours at that point. Let's be clear, my lack of rest was not the result of a reckless night of roulette or the persistent play of slot machines in the smokey Vegas casinos. Gambling of that nature is not my thing. I will leave that to the thrill seekers who do not mind easily parting ways with their hard-earned cash.

Instead, I had been in Vegas for a three-day personal development training event that wrapped up on Sunday night. While sleep deprived, I made my early morning flight which returned me to