



**KNOW YOURSELF**

We are all different. We are all uniquely created with skills and experiences that I believe have a purpose in this world. In the introduction, I felt like it was important to show you who is filling these pages with content. I felt like I needed you to understand where I came from, the obstacles I have faced, and that I did not write this book because I have it all figured out. I am *not* always balanced. I have walked these experiences, have faced obstacles, and have found out what it takes for me to push my life forward. I wrote this book because I have knowledge, experience, and time-saving information to share and I know that, with application, the content within these pages to come will change your life!

Before we take any steps forward I want to start by asking you to take a look in the mirror at who you are, at what makes you tick—at your strengths, your weaknesses, and your own journey—and learn to be thankful for it. Knowing oneself is a process, and typically we find out who we are as we are growing up. Knowing ourselves takes time, and it is no easy feat. We are constantly changing and growing, and I can assure you that continuing to develop who you are will be a lifelong pursuit.

When I was growing up, I wanted to be a lawyer. I saw lawyers in their sleek suits, looking so important and smart. I knew I wanted more out of life and I was willing to go through the education and struggle to get myself there. During college (while studying corporate law) I became intrigued by the stock market. Soon after, I started reading *The Wall Street Journal* every day and doing some day trading. In the WSJ, I saw articles about women who were making waves in the business world and I thought to myself, *that could be me one day*.

My final semester in college, I had a professor who taught small-business management. This class really piqued my interest; I read all the books the professor suggested. During this class we were able to run a business via a simulator. I had to figure out and understand cost of goods sold, return on investment, profit and loss, and how it all played into marketing,

PR, and accounting. I loved it! My company that semester was the most profitable during the class, until I made a risky move and lost it all. This particular instructor was a wealth of knowledge, as he had owned several companies, sold them, retired, and decided to go into teaching to share all he had learned. The other business professors were always dressed to a T and drove nice cars. He was different. He wore nice enough clothes, and he drove a perfectly middle-class car that looked to be at least ten years old.

One afternoon I stayed after class to ask him some questions about his life and businesses, because I was so intrigued. After talking with him I discovered that he was probably one of the wealthiest instructors on campus although you wouldn't know it by looking at him or the car he drove. I asked him about his car and he said, "Why would I invest my own personal already taxed money on a nice car, when it is nothing but a depreciating asset? And why would I give all of my talents to a company to build their dreams when I know I am capable of building my own dreams?" That conversation changed me and it made me literally redefine what success meant in my own life.

That semester, I decided I was no longer going to be a lawyer, or someone who did day trading on Wall Street, or someone who climbed a corporate ladder—I wanted to create my own company. I didn't have a clue in the world what it would be, but that was my dream. My earlier aspirations had just been mere ideas of what I thought looked appealing, but I was at a point in my life where I really did not know what I was good at or what I would even enjoy. If you are still at that point in your life, shadow others, get an internship, or talk to someone in the profession you're interested in. Sometimes your dreams get put on hold when bigger things happen, but you should still try to figure out what your dreams are. As you've read, my husband had a health problem and life unfolded like it did, not according to any of my plans. I felt like my life was no longer mine to live, but that I was clinging to hope and normalcy.

Suddenly, everything changed. That is the tricky part of dreams. Once you decide what you want to do, life will often come in and throw you a curveball. In my case, there were multiple curveballs: my husband's medical condition; my choice to pursue owning a business and being a mom; and the decision to walk away from one career that I loved to start another that I felt called to do. Often, unexpected events in your life define not only your path, but also who you become. They shape your passions and define what is important to you and how you measure success. Do you know what I did after my husband had his brain hemorrhage, and we had spent countless nights in the hospital? I kid you not, I went back to my college campus and met with my counselor to determine what additional courses I would need in order to go to medical school. I wanted to fix my husband and to fix others who were in his shoes. I didn't pursue that path, but I want to remind you that good and bad things will happen in your life—if you're lucky, more good than bad—and I believe these events will mold you into who you are meant to be. Looking back over my journey, had any of it been different I wouldn't be the person pursuing the passions that I am today, so I wouldn't change a thing.

The reason I'm telling you all this is not to say that life is hard or dreams will get sidelined, or that you might have to change the path of your dreams. I am telling you all this because this is how growth happens. You might still be in the discovery phase or you might be in a phase of feeling stuck. We grow the most when we are forced to endure failure, obstacles, or tragedies. This is how life impacts us—shaping us into who we are in this world. That time in my life—my husband's medical issues, my believing I was going to become a doctor—was a two-year period. As you can imagine, over the last ten years those kinds of scenarios have been endless for me, with pursuing different passions and raising a family. Read the biographies of any great self-made leader or businessperson and you'll find the same story. No one got where they are without challenges along the way. It's like climbing a mountain—the closer you get to the top, the more challenging it is, the thinner the air,



# SUCCESS LIES IN PERSEVERANCE.

—KRISTY DICKERSON

#STARTBALANCING



the rockier the earth, and the more likely the path is to be worn away or confusing or nonexistent. This is where people either become successful or do not. Success lies in perseverance; it is the decision to press forward through the hard times, keeping your vision and goals clear. I don't think this part ever stops, and you will constantly encounter things in your life, both good and bad, that will affect who you are. People, circumstances, and tragedies will affect everyone. I believe this is all for a reason and a bigger purpose. You might not see it that way when you are in the thick of it, but I believe that everything does happen for a reason. If you are currently in a bad place in your life, please believe it is for a greater purpose. Hang on, believe, and keep pressing on.

Both business and life are about knowing and understanding people. You have to know yourself first, and then you have to know others. To find success, you must know who you are in order to align yourself with individuals who can help get you there by being able to fill in your weaknesses with their strengths. Everyone has different motivations for working. For some it is money, for some it is to have a purpose, and for others it is a responsibility. Knowing your own motivations and recognizing others' will give you the greatest chance for success.

You need to be able to identify your own strengths and weaknesses. From a strengths standpoint, you should pinpoint and look honestly at what you are good at and (on the other side of that coin) what you are not good at. Just because you have weaknesses doesn't mean you won't be able to achieve your dreams. One of my biggest technical weaknesses is grammar and writing, and one of my biggest weaknesses from a business perspective is not being able to give up control. I have a hard time trusting that others will get the job done the way I want it done. I have a tendency to try to do everything myself. Did I pretty much just say I was a control freak? Yes, in general terms! Yet I am writing this book and continuing to trust, teach, and delegate tasks to others because I know that where I have

weaknesses, there are others far greater than me who can do the task better, and this dream wouldn't be realized otherwise. Because you know what? I know for certain that although my name is on this book and my thoughts and ideas fill these pages, I didn't create it alone because we are not designed to be good at everything. Sometimes knowing your weaknesses is the greatest strength of all.

Understanding your weaknesses allows you to grow both personally and professionally in order to make things happen. If you spot a grammatical error in this book I will be pointing the finger to someone else because I delegated that task. You see the beautiful cover design and graphics throughout? I didn't do that. I knew I had a calling to write a book to share these tips and my life's experiences in order to inspire others, but I also knew I couldn't do it alone. I had a clear vision of a self-help book that focused on how to be productive in order to *Start Balancing*. I knew from an aesthetic perspective I wanted the book to have a clean, modern design. Although it might not stand as thick as other business books, I intentionally wanted the text to be straightforward so that it would authentically convey my message as precisely as possible. I wanted the book to be square to indicate that it is different from the other books on the shelves, evenly proportioned to represent balance, and concise and practical to be considerate of your time. I wanted quotations to appear throughout the book to be encouraging and to keep you inspired, and I wanted you to feel as if I were reading the book with you. I had a very clear vision of what I wanted *Start Balancing* to be, and I knew I couldn't make it happen alone. If I, someone whose single biggest weakness is grammar, can write a book, that right there should be a lesson that with knowledge and a clear vision you can do anything! You just need to know yourself, understand what you are good at, and then find resources to help you with your weaknesses.

Now don't get stuck on weaknesses. Be willing to list all your strengths! Some of them will be major, and some of them may (at first) seem inconsequential. I know my strengths: I am

a numbers gal, I'm a visionary, I understand operations, I can problem solve quickly, I am competitive, I like leading others, and my motivator is not money but responsibility and purpose. If you're unsure of your own strengths, I encourage you to take a personality test to help you understand yourself more. I have suggested a few of these tests at the end of the chapter.

When assessing your strengths and weaknesses, have you uncovered a passion? Is there something that keeps you up at night? Is there a cause or a benefit for the greater good that you are passionate about? It might be a product, service, or a personal strength that you have tapped into. If you know what you're passionate about, you are one of the lucky ones. Harness this knowledge and apply it. That doesn't mean you need to own a business. I am an entrepreneur and I know entrepreneurship is a passion of mine. Owning a business is not for everyone, and you can use your strengths in other pursuits to become a force to be reckoned with. Knowing what you are passionate about is half the battle; finding some way to utilize your strengths is the second part.

Failure doesn't keep us from success; fear of failure does. I don't care how old you get or how much knowledge you gain—fear is still there and is a very real thing. It is something you just have to learn to control. Experience, knowledge, and a support team will help you lessen those fears. I want to be frank when I say this: *the reality is that you might fail*. You might have already failed. I have started companies that have been nothing shy of mediocre. I have poured countless ideas into projects that didn't pan out for one reason or another. For a long time, I used my failure as a reason to not press forward. I let that hold me back and define me, thinking, *if I do something else, will I fail?* Failure or the fear of it can stop you in your tracks. Failure is part of success, and you only truly fail if you give up. But which is worse: trying and failing, or never trying? To me the fear of never trying at all is worse. To me, chasing a dream is just as necessary as breathing oxygen. I don't feel fully alive or purposeful if I am not reaching for my calling.

FAILURE DOESN'T KEEP US FROM  
**SUCCESS;**  
FEAR OF FAILURE DOES

—KRISTY DICKERSON

---

#STARTBALANCING

NO ONE ELSE  
IS EVER GOING TO  
GIVE YOU PERMISSION  
TO CHASE  
YOUR DREAMS.

—KRISTY DICKERSON

#STARTBALANCING

Looking back over my journey I know hands-down that failure has stopped me from pursuing certain things. The older, wiser version of me knows that those failures were only failures if I let them be defined as such. I now see them as stepping-stones for my personal and professional growth. The challenges I have faced and the bad decisions I have made have helped me grow far more than my successes have. If you operate with the mind-set that you might fail, focus on past mistakes, or fear of what others will think, you might as well quit. Being bold and brave is not easy, but the bolder you are, the more opportunities you will have. Period.

Knowledge is power. The more informed you are about the situations you encounter, in life and business, the better you will become at making decisions and tucking fear away. Constantly seek knowledge and try to better understand yourself by reading business books and self-help books, furthering your education, or attending seminars or workshops. It is also okay to pursue something for a while and decide it is not worth pursuing anymore. No one else is ever going to give you permission to chase your dreams or say it is okay if your dream has changed—only you can do that. Only you can decide whether fear will control you or you will control it. You have to push that fear aside and not only say that you can achieve your goals, but believe that you can!

Is being an entrepreneur right for you? Is managing a household right for you? Is volunteering? What about going back to school? Are you someone who doesn't need or want to follow a blueprint? Or would you thrive being under someone else's direction and being able to do what you love most? Should you work from home or would you find more success at a 9-to-5 job that you're able to leave behind at the end of the day? Should



you work in corporate America? Independently? Should you become a parent? Should you start that other company? Understanding and knowing yourself helps to answer all of these questions while aligning them with your goals. I meet a lot of people who have basically set themselves up for failure. They are hustling, but not quite sure what their next steps are; they haven't utilized self-knowledge as a tool to make their dreams come to fruition. You also may be at a point in your life where you are doing your current job not because you love it because you have to. Of course you need the money, but these tools and lessons will help to move your life in the direction of your dreams. It is also important to note that often you may not be "ready" for those next steps in life—but when are we *ever* fully ready to dive in and make a change? You just have to be willing to roll up your sleeves, figure it out, and move forward confidently in the direction of your dreams.

Here is a scenario of discovery. Sarah goes to art school and studies interior design. Her dream is to run her own design studio. She graduates and starts investing in a space and the resources that she needs. She starts taking on various jobs to help bring in a little income. Her passion and strength are in decorating and connecting with customers, but she now finds herself crunching numbers, working 80 hours a week, and trying to figure out how to run her business. Success to her had meant running her business, but after discovering who she is and what her strengths are, success now means working for an interior design company or partnering with someone who loves design but has a strong business sense. This way she can focus on what she loves and let someone else run the business side.

Knowing who you are, the person who lies deep within, is important, and this can change often. The person you aspire to be is one of the hardest people to know. If you are still figuring out what you want to do when you grow up, you're not alone. For a lot of people

this is a lifelong process. What I do know now, after years of work and personal struggles and triumphs, is myself. I have learned who I am, what works for me, and what doesn't.

I know what I need to feel fulfilled on a daily basis, and that is what I am going to focus on to be happy, free, and successful. I want you to find the same happiness, freedom, and success. Take personality tests and ask the people in your life about you. If you are married, ask your spouse—I promise they won't hesitate to answer! Life will constantly happen, and everything you thought you were will constantly be reassessed. Here is the truth of the matter: no matter how hard it seems, no matter how out of touch with yourself or your dreams you might become when life and responsibility for others become overwhelming, you are worth fighting for. You were meant to do something purposeful and powerful. YOU are a beautiful creation and not only were you *meant* to succeed, but you *deserve* to succeed.

Let's take a moment to take a good look at ourselves. The worksheets on the following pages will help us to understand who we are.

# GETTING TO KNOW YOU

## MY OVERALL STRENGTHS

---

---

---

## MY OVERALL WEAKNESSES

---

---

---

## CHANGES TO IMPLEMENT IN THE NEXT 30 DAYS

☐

---

☐

---

☐

---

## WAYS TO CONTINUE EXPANDING MY KNOWLEDGE

---

---

---

---

---

---

## PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT RESULTS (I.E. GALLUP ASSESSMENT, MYERS-BRIGGS TEST, STRENGTHSFINDER)

---

---

---

---