



Seasons of Success

selected passages from *Become Your Own Great and Powerful*

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I didn't know it at the time, but this experience would take me years to recover from. I had learned that my guiding tenet was wrong. I certainly could not do everything that most "successful" men I met could do. I could not sell out my employees so that I could benefit financially. I could not hire a less-qualified friend over a more qualified person who was different from me. I could not turn my back on the social benefits of my company (i.e., providing the service free to charitable organizations that help patients conduct medical research privately), so that we could maximize profits. I could not satisfy the needs of my ego at the expense of everyone else I worked with, and those who had invested in my company.

I knew all this, and yet I felt like a colossal failure. I no longer "had it all." And, worst of all, I had failed in my mission to change the world. I was not a shining example of success that other women could follow. I did not have a stream of women beating a path to my door to mentor them. As I came out of the overwhelming grief and shame of this loss, I kept going over every choice I had made, trying to figure out why it had all fallen apart. And I made an important discovery.

As I looked back on my life and career up to that point, one nagging thought haunted me. Why did I have to live a man's life to be successful? Why couldn't I live my own life and be successful? I decided to do just that. And I decided that "changing the world" meant demonstrating to other women that you can discover the guilt-free confidence to throw off others' expectations, create your own, and use your powers to transform your world.

From "You Can't Keep Your Tiara On Straight If You're Living a Man's Life"
By Barbara Bellissimo

I wasn't living well; I was a wreck inside. I wasn't loving my husband well; my ambivalence reinforced avoidance of difficult choices. I wasn't loving myself well; I'd quit taking good care of myself, something I'd even prided myself on in the past. I acted as though I had to accept whatever I was receiving from life, like I had no choice in the matter. Even worse, I knew it.

I had quit listening to my intuition and gave a few old submerged beliefs – beliefs I thought had been extracted – the run of things: my needs don't matter, don't shine if someone will get hurt, work hard. I nearly worked myself to death. And, I didn't want to let go. I believed in love. I loved my husband; I believed he loved me. There had to be a way to save our marriage and, by golly, I had tried desperately to find it. Yet, confronted with myself, I saw that I had to "let go."

Finally, one day four years into the marriage, actually days strung together like beads in a child's necklace, I knew that the struggles of the previous few years would continue to repeat unless I chose differently this time.

From "Intense Heat = Sparkling Success"
By Chris L. Johnson, PsyD

But I hadn't shaken the chill of the early morning tirade. After all, this was one of those injustices I had pledged early on to fight.

I took a deep breath. "If you ever treat me like that, I will walk out the door and never return."

He laughed the kind of laugh you hear when you know you're not in on the joke.

"I mean it." I sounded just like a child threatening to run away.

"You live up to your red hair," he said and chuckled again. Now normally, I love joking about my red hair, but somehow I couldn't find anything to laugh about. "Take the money and don't worry about it. Have a good time."

And off I went back to my office, in a daze, not sure what had just happened.

From "And Cherry On Top...Come Up and See Me Sometime"
By Shannon Cherry, APR

Over the course of those eight months, I had become increasingly unhappy with the sense of limbo I found myself in. It was clear that Jerry loved me, and yet whenever we took steps towards greater intimacy, he would withdraw into a shell that I couldn't crack. This invariably happened when the question of marriage came up. I found myself becoming cranky, withdrawn, aloof, distant – not talking when something bothered me, trying to punish him with my silences. I alternated between pretending that he wasn't that important to me and it didn't matter what he did, and pouring my heart out about how much I wanted to be with him. I lost track of what I really wanted in trying to figure out what would make him want me.

Interestingly, in all this emotional confusion, it became clear to me for the first time in my life that I would be fine no matter what – with one or the other of them, or without either one. During that year of grieving and learning to take good care of myself, getting close to someone new and breaking up, something shifted. For the first time in my life I wasn't losing my mind over the question of whether I'd get married or not. I wasn't hearing any ticking from my biological clock, and I certainly wasn't basing my value as a person on my relationship status.

From "Finding a Whole Among the Pieces"
By Danielle Machotka

While this marriage provided the most fertile of soils for me to discover and develop myself, finding an ideal partner will never make anyone a Superhero. No, the road to claiming my super powers was a journey I had to take on my own.

The fairy tale union with my husband had a hitch. Although we wanted children, we faced an insurmountable combination of fertility issues. For years, I dealt with uterine fibroids, which increasingly compromised my health and ultimately necessitated a hysterectomy at age 38.

Like the mythic Ferryman transporting me across the River Styx, my surgeon delivered me to the banks from which my hero's journey would begin. There instead of Cerberus, the three-headed dog, I met a Dragon named "Thou Shalt." Cleverly disguised as a procession of hospital roommates and staff, make no mistake, this was a Dragon. Representing my greatest vulnerabilities, it would take superhuman strength and courage to face this beast head on. As I was transferred to my hospital bed, Thou Shalt awaited to begin the Superhero initiation.

From "An Unlikely Superhero"
By Laura Young, MA