

*New York Times* Bestselling Author

**CARLY FIORINA**

FOREWORD BY DR. HENRY CLOUD

**FIND**

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*your*

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**WAY**



UNLEASH YOUR POWER  
AND HIGHEST POTENTIAL

**FIND YOUR WAY**



FIND  

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your  

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WAY

Unleash Your Power and  
Highest Potential

CARLY FIORINA



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*Find Your Way: Unleash Your Power and Highest Potential*

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# FOREWORD

FOR MANY YEARS, what I knew about Carly Fiorina came mostly from reading about her in various business publications, hearing about her in the news, or seeing her in interviews. Still, from this casual and distant observation, my impression of her was that she was smart, tough, bold, controversial, and not afraid of a fight.

Then, one day I was asked to colead an off-site leadership workshop with Carly for a small group of leaders from across the United States—and my impression of her was broadened by real-life experience.

As I had surmised, she was very smart, experienced, straightforward, and resilient. But what came through repeatedly during the few days we worked together was her *humanity*. As we fielded questions, worked through leadership quandaries presented by the attendees, diagnosed problems, and crafted solutions together, I was impressed by her deep sense of empathy. It was not only clear that she understood the difficult issues these leaders were facing, but she also felt for them and was able to connect with them.

What I'm referring to is not just soft-hearted sympathy or "care for the individual." It was more her capacity to truly understand these leaders—and to let them *know* she understood—while also *joining together with them* to find a way forward. Said another way, she put the head together with the heart. She brought real answers and proven principles that helped these leaders see beyond their confusion or their feeling of being stuck—to see what was possible and achievable. Her intelligence, toughness, and candor were in no way incompatible with her empathy. In fact, quite the opposite. Everything worked together to move people forward to where they wanted to go.

When I read *Find Your Way*, I was similarly impressed. In these pages, I found all the same attributes I had observed in Carly in that initial workshop and in subsequent opportunities we've had to work together on other projects and leadership intensives. I saw the same combination of empathy and deep, practical experience in how things work. I saw audacious goal-setting as well as level-headed solutions for "How am I going to make it through the week?" kinds of problems.

As you read, you will feel understood, as if Carly were speaking directly to you. You will know that she has *been there* and identifies with what you are facing. And she will show you not only a way out of your current dilemma, but also a *path forward* toward the desired future reality that you've been wanting to pursue but perhaps haven't known how.

As a psychologist and a leadership consultant, I could not read this book without my own technical mind kicking in. Although Carly doesn't focus on the psychological, neurological, biological, relational, systemic, emotional, social, and

mental *science* behind her methods, I can assure you it is all there. As she tells stories and explains principles, I can see behind her advice an operating system grounded in the best science and research on human performance. I could write an entire commentary on each chapter, explaining how if you will do the simple things she suggests, your neurochemistry will change and engage the parts of your brain that have been stalled or not working to full capacity before now. How your interactions with other people will move them from being obstacles to what you're wanting to achieve to being helpful partners—and actually change their ability to perform. How the creative mind that you need to solve problems will finally wake up, and how you will find yourself with capacities you never realized you had. How your own emotional regulation will change, propelling you toward outcomes you haven't seen before. Carly's simple four-step problem-solving model alone will move you forward in unbelievable ways.

But enough about the wonky nerd stuff behind the curtain. As you read this book, what matters is that you will get to experience firsthand the helpful, proven wisdom and deep care that I have seen in working alongside Carly in leadership development.

I will close this brief introduction with perhaps the greatest endorsement I could give. I have two daughters, and I am not what you would call a “controlling” father. I believe in granting them great freedom and autonomy. But in this case, I'm putting my foot down: They *will* read this book.

*Dr. Henry Cloud*  
*Los Angeles, California*



# MOMENT OF REVELATION

A Word on Your One Wild and Precious Life

I WAS A MISERABLE first-year law-school student, suffering yet another massive migraine, standing in the shower in the upstairs bathroom of my parents' house on an otherwise uneventful Sunday morning, when the revelation hit me: *I could just quit.*

Quit?

Surely I had that wrong.

I couldn't *quit*.

My parents were well acquainted with struggle in life, and they were determined that their circumstances would not define them. My mother, the only child of an auto assembly-line worker, had lost her own mother at age ten. She grew up with the proverbial evil stepmother. She was a bright student, a valedictorian, but her father refused to allow her to attend college. So she ran away from home at eighteen and somehow made her way to Texas to join the Women's Army Corps. She eventually became the secretary to the commanding officer at the military base, which is how she met my father.

Mom was a richly talented artist who mostly put her art aside while she poured herself into her three children—determined

they would have the education, the experiences, and the opportunities she had not.

My father grew up with a noticeable physical deformity in a tiny Texas town. When he was thirteen, his father and brother died within nine months of each other, and his mother never fully recovered from the shock and grief. After World War II, he went to the “wrong” law school—University of Texas, before anyone had ever heard of it—definitely not Harvard or Yale. He succeeded in law by dint of sheer hard work and intellectual prowess. He eventually became dean of Duke University Law School, a deputy US attorney general, and a federal judge on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. He taught his children that they would succeed if they just kept going when the going got tough.

My parents were not quitters. They were not sympathetic to the phrase “I don’t like it.” Hard work and perseverance were their credo, and what they wanted more than anything was for me to fulfill my potential. They both thought that following my father’s footsteps into the legal profession was the right plan for me.

I knew how much they had invested in me. I knew how many of their hopes and dreams were reflected in me. I knew they had overcome so much more than I could understand.

Surely I couldn’t just quit!

Still, I was ready to quit.

Until that point in my life, the only thing I truly excelled at was *people pleasing*, particularly *parent pleasing*. I worked hard to please my parents—much to the resentment of my brother and sister at times.

I was not going to be the one to disappoint Mom and Dad.

However, by the second day of class, I knew I *hated* law school. When my dad came to visit, I told him how much I hated it. I told him about the constant headaches, and the complete lack of joy or interest I felt each time I walked into the classroom.

“Give it a year, Carly,” he said. “See how you feel then.”

A year sounded like an eternity to me.

Shortly after his visit, I traveled home to see my parents. I did not have in mind that I would quit that weekend. Nevertheless, it was during that trip, while standing in the shower one morning, that I made up my mind. This was my *life* . . . what poet Mary Oliver calls my “*one wild and precious life*.”<sup>1</sup> It didn’t feel wild or precious just then. It felt dreadful and disappointing at best.

I craved the wild-and-precious thing.

Resolved, I dressed, headed downstairs, ushered my parents together, and plunged headlong into my announcement.

“I hate law school. It is not what I am meant to do. I quit.”

My father said the worst thing he could have said: “Carly, I am very disappointed. I am afraid you may not amount to anything . . .”

*Ugh.*

My mother, looking very grave, asked, “What are you going to do?”

“I don’t know.”

*I don’t know? I don’t know?! I have always known what came next!*

I did not want to disappoint my parents. I felt heartbroken by their obvious resignation to the fact that their daughter was making a terrible, terrible mistake.

And not knowing what came next, I felt terrified.

Still, I did not want to sign up for a life that wasn't my own. I was heartbroken and terrified, but by the end of that agonizing conversation with my parents, I also realized that I felt totally, utterly *free*.

The following day, I flew back to Los Angeles, packed up my sparse belongings, and vowed never, ever to look back.

---

I spend a fair amount of time these days speaking to civic organizations, university students, corporate audiences, church groups, and others. I love connecting with people from a variety of walks of life in these somewhat intimate forums, and I always stick around after my talks to greet anyone who cares to chat. I've given hundreds of talks, maybe even thousands by now, and after nearly every one, at least one person has approached me to say, "Thank you. I feel so lifted up."

It's uncanny how often this happens, and it's always those same two simple words: *lifted up*.

In a day and age when so many people feel anxious and overwhelmed, hopeless and helpless, weary and annoyed and afraid, such a boost is no small thing. We need our *sights* lifted from our present circumstances to what is possible in the days to come. We need our *thoughts* lifted from negative self-talk and chronic comparisons to confirmation of what makes us distinct. We need our *hearts* lifted from despondency and despair to openness, expansiveness, and peace.

I've come to believe there are two kinds of people, both in your relational sphere and in mine. There are those who push us down, tempting us to tap into the worst, smallest, most

self-centered version of ourselves; and there are those who lift us up, compelling us to reach for the best *us* we've ever known.

I've written this book with the singular desire to be the kind of person who lifts you up. My hope is that the lessons I've learned since that moment of revelation in the shower, and the decisions I've made to reclaim my own power, take possession of my own life, and find my own way, will be instructive—and inspiring—for you as well.

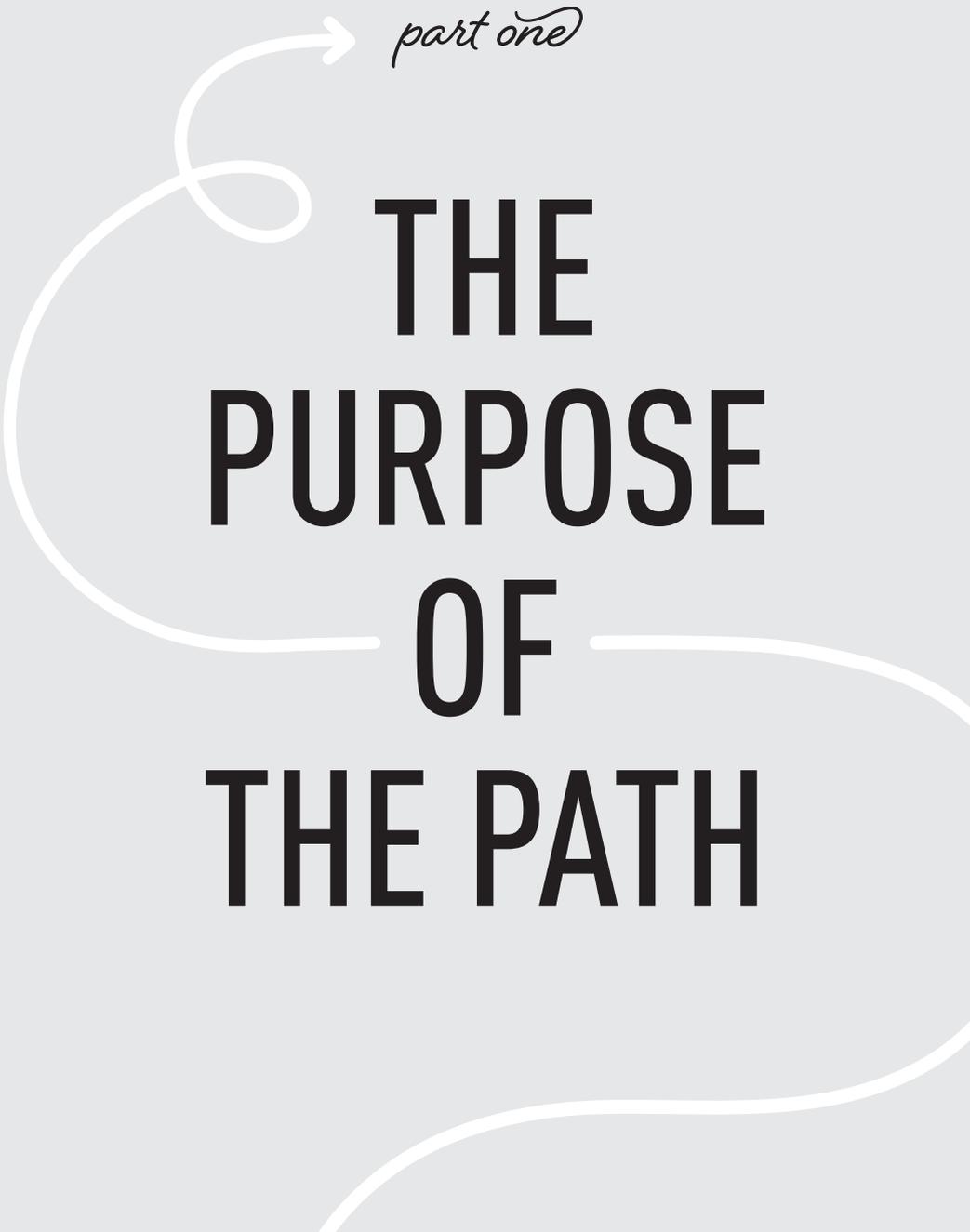
I know what it feels like to possess an abundance of anxiety and a scarcity of peace. I know what it's like to try to live someone else's dream, to strive for someone else's goal, and to attempt to get where I'm going by following someone else's plan. I know what that soul-level dissatisfaction feels like. I know the drudgery. I know the disappointment. I know the pain.

But that's not all I know. Along with that decision to take back the power that had been mine all along—the power to assess, the power to reason, the power to *choose*—came a new wave of learning and insight. Among other things, I learned these key principles:

- Fulfillment is found by first tending to our own souls.
- Decisions that are right today are those we can look back on without regret for the rest of our lives.
- The burden of other people's expectations is a weight we can—and should—put down.

There is only one wild and precious life with your name on it, just waiting to be lived. The chapters that follow will show you how.





*part one*

# THE PURPOSE OF THE PATH



*chapter one*

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# FUTURE YOU

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The Only Limitless  
Asset Around



→ NO MATTER WHERE you are in your life right now, and no matter where you've been, you are not yet all you can be. If I were to net out the big idea of this book in one neat line, that's it: *You are not yet all you can be*. Life can shift. Circumstances shift. You can glean fresh understanding. You can change. You can grow. And as you seize the opportunities that are within you and right in front of you, you'll find a certain steadiness in your life that perhaps you've never known before.

You see, though my undergraduate degree in medieval history (yes, I know) didn't exactly point me toward a lucrative career after graduation, it provided me with a gift that has proved invaluable throughout my life: *perspective*. To study history is to be reminded that one thing has remained the same down through the ages. Amid all the changes in culture, technology, and knowledge, the one thing that has stayed the same is *us*.

*People.*

People *never* change. Sure, we change our hairstyles, fashion trends, home décor, exercise regimens, parenting approaches, spending patterns, modes of transportation, preferred forms of entertainment, culinary tastes, and relationship patterns all the time. But behind and beneath and alongside all that window dressing is the same human soul that has always been there, longing for the same

*No matter where you are in your life right now, you are not yet all you can be.*

things we've always wanted: *meaning, purpose, fulfillment, dignity, love, and peace.*

---

I started a foundation called Unlocking Potential to provide an opportunity for staff of nonprofits to get better at their work. Many nonprofits are solving—or seeking to solve—some of the most severe and intractable problems in human society; and yet, historically, precious little investment has been made to lift up these people, provide them with the training they need, and celebrate the important contributions they make in communities around the world. Specifically, I wanted every nonprofit we worked with to learn how to magnetize and retain strong leaders who would consistently take personal responsibility, better navigate critical transitions, speak a common language of leadership, and help others in their organizations to grow. When these groups were reminded of the power they already possessed, they felt inspired to thrive. We saw this potential unlocked through our partnerships.

These results are tremendously gratifying to me personally because they validate two of my most fundamental beliefs: (1) Every person possesses astounding God-given potential, and (2) their potential can be unleashed.

Think about it: Human potential is the only limitless resource in the world. Not time. Not money. Not skill. Not fame, beauty, or charm. I don't care if you're jaw-droppingly gorgeous, at the top of your vocational game, or have more money than you know what to do with—at some point, those wells may run dry. Wrinkles will show up, and your vitality will begin to wane. The needs of the marketplace



may shift. The stock market might plummet, leaving you with an empty or depleted portfolio. But that is never the case with human potential. *Who you might become* is forever before you, beckoning you onward. *What you might accomplish* keeps whispering your name. However much of your potential you unleash, there is always more, just waiting to be tapped into.

You and I have both heard stories about children whose potential was recognized early—as a dancer, a chess master, a debater, or a lawyer—and who grew up surrounded by people who helped them realize their potential and live a full and fulfilling life. But for most of us, life isn't like that. I have known people who, even at the end of their lives, felt as if they never found their calling or realized their potential. Perhaps you know some of these people too. My hope is that by the time you reach the end of this book, you will be on the path to unlocking your full potential and reclaiming your own power.

---

If you're like most of the women and men my team and I have worked with, this process of realizing your fullest potential will feel as if something inside you is being unlocked.

*Realizing your fullest potential will feel as if something inside you is being unlocked.*

We've all had the experience of feeling "locked up." My latest visit to the dentist's chair comes to mind. It must be part of a hygienist's formal training, this knack for asking in-depth questions of their poor patients

who sit with water spigots, tiny vacuum cleaners, and a stranger's hands stuck in their mouths.

*Can't you tell that we're all locked up down here?*

I also think of being wedged into an airplane seat at thirty thousand feet, flying through the middle of a thunderhead. Perhaps nothing has improved my prayer life quite like running for president. Let me tell you, all those cross-country flights on mini-me airplanes that require you to duck your head as you make your way to your seat, lest you crack your skull on the ceiling, force a *deep* faith. When we would hit turbulence, I would reflexively flatten my palm against the window, as if I could single-handedly keep the plane aloft.

*Just get this thing on the ground safely*, I would silently will the pilot, who was seated only six feet away. *Locked up* is precisely how I felt.

Or what about when you're stuck in bed sick while others are out having fun? I was due to fly to Chicago not long ago for a series of meetings that mattered greatly to me, but on the morning of my departure I awoke with a bad case of laryngitis. When I tried to greet my husband, I sounded about as smooth as a Texas bullfrog. Wanting to verbalize but having no voice? Yes, that's a bit like being locked up.

And then there's *dieting*. If you want to experience a locked-up sensation, give the Whole30 plan a try. No bread. No cheese. No ice cream. No fun. But to the diet creators' credit, at least it's only for thirty days. I have heard of people who eat like cavemen for a *lifetime*, which makes me wonder: Do they sneak doughnuts from the office breakroom when nobody's looking?

Surely a few of them must.

Indeed, the thing that helps us move through these experiences of feeling locked up is just that: *It's only a feeling*;

we're not actually locked up. We know that eventually the dentist appointment will end, the plane will land, the sickness will abate, and we'll eat bread and cheese once again. But what about being *endlessly* locked up? How would we cope with that?

Consider those on death row, or elsewhere in our prison system, with no chance for parole. What does being *locked up* mean to them?

Or those who suffer a life-changing event—a stroke, a traumatic brain injury, a devastating car accident—that forever alters their mobility, their personality, their ability to function. Would they say that they feel locked up? When I went through treatment for breast cancer—the chemo, the hair loss, the ensuing surgeries and infections and pain—I wondered about things like *permanence*. Would I ever feel whole again? And when my husband, Frank, and I lost our younger daughter, Lori Ann, at age thirty-five, only eight months after my devastating cancer diagnosis, it made my darkest days even darker.

Lori Ann knew well the feeling of being locked up. She suffered from addiction. And then, in a moment, her astounding potential was *gone*.

You and I both recognize these two types of being locked up—the temporary and the permanent. And yet there is a third, more tragic, form of paralysis we often overlook—that is, *the locked-up states we choose for ourselves*.

Just off Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco Bay, between the Golden Gate Bridge and Treasure Island, sits Alcatraz Island, home to the infamous federal prison where, between 1934 and 1963, the most hardened criminals in the country

were sent. Chicago Mafia boss Al Capone and violent murderer Robert Stroud, better known as the Birdman of Alcatraz, both did time there. Yet, even within the walls of this notoriously harsh prison, there was a place where even the roughest, toughest prisoners admitted defeat: D Block.

D Block was where the solitary-confinement cell was located, a soul-crushing “time-out” for prisoners who misbehaved.

Known as “the hole,” the solitary-confinement cell was a soundproof, six-by-eight-foot space outfitted with only a bed frame, a toilet, and a small sink. General-population prisoners who were viewed as an imminent threat to others, or who violated prison rules, were placed in solitary confinement for up to nineteen consecutive days, during which they had no human contact and no exposure to light, except for the three-times-daily check-ins by a guard. During those meal breaks, the heavy outer door would open, allowing a shaft of light to stream through the room’s inner metal bars, and a tray of food, all lumped together, would be slid through a special opening. After about twenty minutes, the tray was returned, and the doors were closed, casting the cell back into pitch darkness.

Still today, if you visit Alcatraz as a tourist, you can opt to experience one of these isolation chambers for a few minutes, along with several others in your tour group. After being ushered into the cell, you are given a quick overview, and then the heavy door is slammed shut. There is nothing quite like the sensation of being in a space so dark and desolate that you can neither hear the outside world nor see your hand directly in front of your face. Whatever good you might bring to the world around you fades to black as you stand there hopeless, helpless, and afraid.

Now imagine choosing this fate not as an hour-long tourist attraction, but as a way of life. Real life. *Your one and only wild and precious life.*

My attempt at law school wasn't the only time I did this to myself. When I was in my twenties, I entered into a marriage unsure of who I was and what I wanted out of life. The man I married was interesting, charming, and more experienced than I was. My mother was suspicious of him from the outset, and she tried to warn me, but she couldn't articulate her concerns in words I was able to hear at the time. So I said "I do" to someone who would betray every one of our vows.

This *locked-up* feeling I'm describing? That's exactly how I felt after just a few years of marriage. In my heart, I know I did everything I could to make our relationship work, but I was unsuccessful. After six and a half years, when the truth about my husband's disloyalty had become plain for me to see, I knew I had to get out of this irretrievably broken relationship. Despite my best efforts and intentions, I found it impossible to stay married to someone who shrugged off commitment and everything good about married life.

I remember standing with him in the kitchen one night, asking him for the umpteenth time to sign the separation agreement my lawyer had drawn up.

I politely asked him to sign.

He refused.

I impolitely asked him to sign.

He refused.

I then *pleaded* with him to sign, rationally enumerating all the reasons that showed our marriage had already died.

Again, he stubbornly refused.

Silently, calmly, I stepped to the cupboard, opened the cabinet door, and removed a single plate from the shelf. I threw the plate at the kitchen floor and stood perfectly still as the china shattered into a thousand pieces. Now that I had his attention, with jagged shards of china all around us, I drew upon the only remaining leverage I had. Yes, I played the mother-in-law card. I looked at the man I had once loved dearly and said with steely determination, “If you do not sign this agreement, I will call my mother. She will come to visit, and she will stay with us, here, under our roof. And she will not leave until you sign these papers.”

He signed.

Whether we’re talking about an introvert in a sea of type A personalities, a thoroughbred trying to survive in a donkey-paced work environment, an imaginative dreamer tucked inside an accountant, a willing friend who finds herself friendless, a contributor who questions her ability to contribute, or a would-be success story needing assurance that she won’t fail, nobody in their right mind stays locked up voluntarily. And yet this is exactly what I see countless people do each day, in every imaginable vocation, location, and walk of life, when they forfeit the freedom that can be theirs. To keep your potential locked up is to look at the offer of all-encompassing liberation and say, “Thanks, but I think I’ll pass.”

May this never be said of you—or me.

May we instead be the kind of people who welcome our better, stronger, sturdier selves with arms opened wide—no excuses, no apologies, no regrets. In the coming pages, I’d like to show you how.

When working with partners and clients, my team's approach is to guide them through an intensive two-day Leadership Lab, which involves thoroughly, and at times painstakingly, introducing the key characteristics and tools of leadership, and showing them firsthand how to apply those tools to the most vexing problems they face. Invariably, the women and men who join us for these sessions leave energized and refreshed in their belief that they have the capacity to make a positive difference in their own lives, in the lives of others, and in their communities. They are emboldened to size up and solve future problems. And even more important, they are awakened to the potential inside themselves that has lain dormant for far too long.

They learn to recognize their power.

They learn to multiply that power.

And they learn to apply their power to bring about good in the world.

In so doing, they come alive.

I want *you* to come alive as well.

Here's what I've discovered: As you learn to harness the power within you, you will begin to make more sense out of life. You'll find that you really can patch up the brokenness of your past. You really can find purpose and meaning here and now. You really can make a positive impact on the world for decades to come.

It's time to stop unwittingly giving away your power. Choose to invest it, *on purpose*, instead.

The late great poet and playwright Maya Angelou never

fancied herself a writer in the traditional sense; but all that changed one night at a literary dinner party to which she had been invited by her friend the renowned author James Baldwin. Once the guests had enjoyed the meal together, talk turned to stories of each person's childhood. When Maya's turn came, she held the other guests in rapt attention with her lyrical stories. The hostess of the party was so entranced by Maya's experiences—and by the way she poetically depicted them—that she placed a call the following day to a publishing friend of hers.

“You ought to pursue this Maya Angelou!” the woman said to the publisher. And pursue her the publisher did. The result of that chance encounter at a dinner party was the release of Maya's first autobiographical work, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

Not only did Maya Angelou experience what she referred to as great relief in “telling the truth” of her story, which tragically involved sexual, emotional, physical, and racial abuse, but she also helped liberate countless other young black women, who read Maya's book and felt understood—perhaps for the first time in their lives.

I had the privilege of serving alongside Ms. Angelou on the faculty of several conferences throughout the years, and the thought that she might never have had the opportunity to share both the revulsion and the redemption of her experience sends chills down my spine. What a colossal loss that would have been! Each time we crossed paths, I found her to be a woman of great composure and peace. After all she had been through in her life, it was amazing to behold.

Patching up our past brokenness brings solace to our

souls. You might say that is the backward-facing benefit of full-potential living. On top of that, the power that emerges from living out our full potential brings *purpose* to life today.

---

As I said earlier, the most profound outcome we see in clients who work through our two-day Leadership Lab is their growing realization that they possess potential far beyond what they thought or knew. I find it profoundly gratifying to see the testimonial videos our team shoots after the final Lab session and hear participants say something along the lines of “Until today, I had no idea how many resources were at my disposal for doing good in my home, in my job, and in the world. And who knew that those resources were *right here*, inside me, and in the people all around me, all along?” I experience a deep delight every time.

I love seeing people get unlocked and unleashed so they can connect with their true purpose in life. We are not here to be spectators. We are not here merely to acquire experiences and *stuff*. We are here to make a positive contribution so that we may leave this world a far better place than it was when we arrived. But we will never realize our purpose and our potential if we’re stuck in a hole, in the dark, alone.

Stay with me; you’re about to be beautifully *freed*.

---

Living to our full potential allows us to *promote an impact beyond ourselves*. Let’s think for a moment about the most influential people we know, the mentor-types who loved us when we were unlovable; who invited us into the game when

we were unskilled; who accepted us even after we failed; and who identified in us the capacity for good things. These high-impact people showed up instead of shrinking back. They lived big instead of playing it safe and small. And as a result, we were changed for the better.

When we choose to press into, not pull away from, our fullest potential, our influence goes well beyond *us*. We'll touch more on this point in part 3: "The Promise of the Path," but for now just be aware that the journey on which we're embarking is marked by *exponential impact*, as we learn to live joyfully beyond ourselves.

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In a manner of speaking, this book is your very own Leadership Lab—not leadership as society defines it, which is according to title, position, and prestige; but leadership seen as solving problems and changing the order of things for the better. I have learned over and over that leaders are made, not born: We can *all* be leaders. We can influence others right where we are. We can learn to take our troubles in stride; and when we lie down at night, we can know that we embraced our potential that day . . . that we lived life to the fullest . . . that we flourished and thrived.

I should warn you that the journey to unlocking your potential won't follow a codified plan. In fact, the very first thing you need to do is become comfortable with a rather disconcerting idea: *As you journey toward who you are meant to be, you will not always know where you're going.*