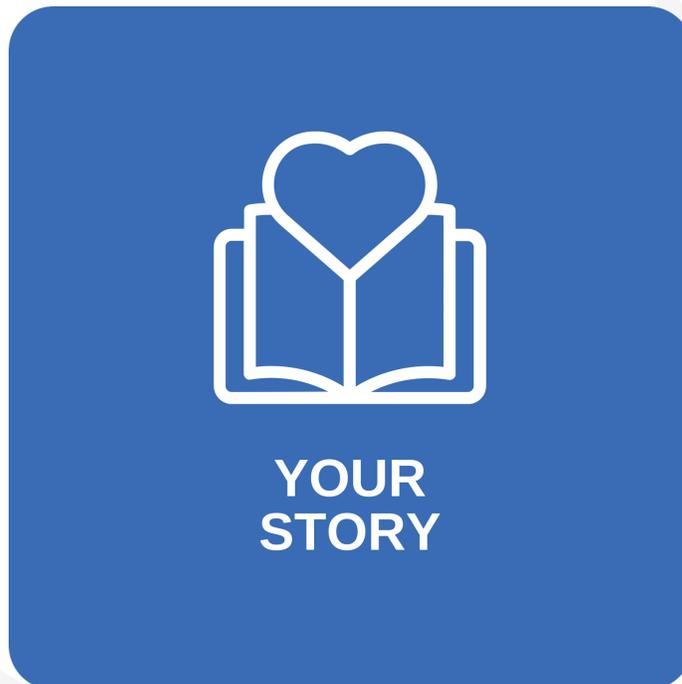


Your Story

A Weapon of Hope™



Guidebook

"I Stand on My Story"

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The 9 Weapons of Hope™ Your Story



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The 9 Weapons of Hope™

While life is messy, it also affords us incredible opportunities to use our lessons to rise up out of the muck and mire. Yours should be a testimony to the power of standing up and claiming all of it – no matter how unappealing some parts may appear. Somebody (or lots of people) needs the inspiration of your truth. Stand on your story, not in spite of, but because of it.

Module 7: Disrupt Self-Defeat

□ Watch “Disrupt Self-Defeat”

Humans need to know. There is satisfaction in finding answers to the millions of questions that start with, “Why.”

During my entire Roller Coaster From Hell ride and beyond, I asked *why* incessantly. Often, the *why* was followed by *me* - “Why me?”

I couldn’t understand why my life had fallen apart when I had tried so hard to keep it together. I wondered what I had done to make God so mad that he would punish me like this. Why? Why my child? Why is this or that not working out? Why did a friend steal our savings? Why?

Many of our questions are pure curiosity or a need to understand. But the queries we are most desperate to answer are those that will often elude us forever.

After beating my head against the wall, I finally looked into the mirror (while I was running the *why me* question in my mind) and asked the woman staring back at me,

“Why *not* you?”

You wish you had drawn a different card from the deck of life’s problems, but here you are with *these* problems. So, why not be the one who stands up? Why not prove it is possible to be happy again? Why not be a role model? Why not you?

Be the person in your family the breaks the generational cycle of hopelessness, depression, or addiction. It could be you that stands out in your family lineage as a warrior in hope. You can be the person people are still bragging about decades from now. Your story could be one that causes a domino effect of courage. It won’t be due to hiding your past nor concerning yourself with what

Module 8:

Recognize the Value of Your Story

- Watch “Recognize in the Value of Your Story”

What holds too many people back from becoming their best are shame and guilt. Climb up out of the muck and the mire of your story and stand on top of it. This situation happened or is happening. It is your reality. A heartbreak knocked you down. Your child is off course. Somebody betrayed you or left you feeling damaged. You live with a hole in your heart. Fear has gripped you. You made a mistake or became complacent. **But none of this needs to define you.**

The Value of Your Adversity

One of the reasons we stay down is we don't feel our story has value. We believe we have made too many mistakes or have been at too big of a disadvantage. When I first developed the 9 Weapons of Hope™ (a.k.a. the 9 Actions) and decided to write my first book, I was optimistic, but it didn't last long. Fear thoughts crept in, and I began to doubt the impact of my story. I wondered who would want to listen to someone who didn't have it all figured out. What would people think of me when they knew I couldn't save my daughter from addiction? Nobody would consider me very wise if I shared my poor choices. My life was far from where I planned for it to be. How could my story have any real value?

In considering the stories that had impacted me most, I came to a realization. They were not celebrities or royalty. They were not the people who seemed to have no problems or had all of the answers. They were everyday people like us who stood up and reclaimed their lives. The stories that touch our hearts and give us a glimmer of hope are those of people who fought their Beasts and overcame adversity.

Letting go of guilt is not being flippant or disregarding past behaviors but instead unloading the heavy burden you are carrying. Everybody makes mistakes and wrong choices. You can't change the past, so it's time to let go of it.

Some of your guilt might belong to another person. Their problems and choices have become **your** responsibility. Many people are carrying guilt for other people. I felt guilty of being the mom of an addict when, in reality, I had nothing to do with Jamie's addiction. I made it about me when it wasn't.

You might be lugging this guilt around because you don't want to place blame where it belongs. You love this person too much to place the blame where it belongs. You somehow believe you could have or should have prevented them from being on the path they are on. Let me tell it to you straight - you are not that powerful! You are not doing anyone any favors by carrying the blame for them. Torturing yourself with guilt over your choices only serves to keep you in self-contempt, doubt, and shame.

A helpful perspective is to put yourself into a friend's shoes. If they were in your situation and relayed their guilty feelings, what might you say to them?

- What would you tell your friend about the guilt they are carrying for someone else?**

Now you will create a visual to distinguish between guilt you have for your own choices from those that belong to someone else.

- Take out a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle.**
- On the left side, enter all of your guilt that has to do with YOUR actions or decisions.**

Shed the Shame

Have you ever tried to strip off layers of paint from a piece of furniture? There can be so many that you are unsure you will ever make it to bare wood. Similarly, shame becomes layered over us until we can feel the weight of each one. It seems we could never strip enough layers to find out what is underneath it all.

One of the Beast's favorite tactics is to pile on the shame. If we remain covered with it, we are far less likely to stand up and use our story to make a difference. We isolate ourselves from much-needed support and wisdom. Isolation keeps the shame intact. Around and around, we go. Not being able to live in the truth of our story keeps us from being whole.

- **What has you covered in shame?**

Brene' Brown said this about shame:

I define shame as the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging – something we've experienced, done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection.

I don't believe shame is helpful or productive. In fact, I think shame is much more likely to be the source of destructive, hurtful behavior than the solution or cure. I think the fear of disconnection can make us dangerous.ⁱ

Helen Keller said,

“Never bend your head. Always hold it high. Look the world straight in the eye.”

You don't have to rent a billboard or write a book, but you should share your shame because that is a tremendously significant step in washing it off.

- Who can you share your shame with as a step toward ridding yourself of it?**

You Are Valuable

Esteem comes under attack from many directions. Kids can be hurtful to each other, with teasing, or worse. Often, teachers or coaches say something that stings and sticks. Parents can knowingly or unknowingly damage self-esteem. Bosses and coworkers can beat down your value.

You are valuable for a multitude of reasons. First, because God says you are! Not only are you valuable to your creator, but to other people you have been blessed to walk this earth with, who are grateful you are here.

Just as you value other people, you need to believe that you have the same value to them. No more shrinking into obscurity. No more false modesty. No more self-flogging. It is time to believe in your value.

- Who says you are valuable?**

Module 10: **Stand On Your Story**

□ **Watch “Stand On Your Story”**

You can focus on your life’s messiness, but that won’t get you anywhere worth being. You have made mistakes. Unfair situations have occurred. Like my life, yours is messy, too. And that is okay! It is normal.

Don’t be fooled into thinking that you are supposed to carry around the shame and guilt. That is the Beast’s attempt at keeping you down. Trust me, whatever you are feeling guilty about or ashamed of, is not big news to God. Forgiveness is yours for the asking.

Decide that you will become more, not in spite of what has happened, but because of it. Use your story, your pain, to propel you forward. Take the opportunity to learn and grow. You can become so much more because you have gone through your life experience. The lessons you have learned on your journey through life to date are invaluable.

You have never been in a better position to become the best version of yourself than you are right now, and it is because of your journey.

The Beast may have had you down on the mat, but ultimately the only one that can keep you down is you. Stand up and become better and stronger than you were before all hell broke loose.

Everybody has a story, so don’t feel like the Lone Ranger. Your commitment to this Weapon of Hope™ and the courage within you will have you standing on top of your story, using every experience as a building block to climb higher. You are creating your legacy right now, whether you like it or not. Now is the time to stand courageously and build an incredible one. (Check out the Your Legacy Weapon of Hope™).

- **Come up with as many confident times as possible and recall each one.**

Keep your confidence episodes in the forefront of your mind. Think about them often, so you will yearn for that feeling of confidence. Lasting confidence will take some time to build, and all of the Modules in this Weapon of Hope™ will assist you in getting there. Employ all of the Weapons, and watch out, here you come!

You Are More

- **Watch “You Are More”**

At a particularly difficult time, my sister-in-law, slipped me this note:

Val,

You are my sister and my friend. You are energetic, bold, clever and beautiful. You are a daughter. You are supportive. You love the family and sacrifice to serve the family.

You are a wife. You are sexy, hard-headed, and loyal. Richie digs you. You are a mother. Fiercely protective, nurturing, and carry the history of your children’s lives with you in your heart. You are the bow to their arrows, and your bow is strong and true. Sometimes arrows fly, unexpected, to places never intended. They may be lost for a time, until they are recovered. They may be scuffed and rusty, the feathers torn and tattered. But if returned to you, you would do your best to prepare them for flight again.

Lastly, you are Valerie. A little girl, with hopes and wild dreams that has grown into an impeccable woman who walks this earth with pride and pain, beauty and uncertainty, and a most contagious spirit.

Module 12: Goodbye Beast

□ Watch “Goodbye Beast”

It is time to write a goodbye letter to your “Beast” or “enemy,” as it were. This is the day you crush the Beast for good. You officially say goodbye. The Beast represents the negative voices, the devil, the evil, the THING that holds you back from living the most fulfilling life for you and your family. Talk directly at that thing and say “GOODBYE” for good. This is your breakup letter.

To get you started, I am sharing mine.

Dear Beast,

We have spent a great deal of time together in the past, so I know this may come as a surprise, but I don’t want to spend any more time with you. I guess you could say we are breaking up.

I’m sorry. I know you enjoy my company very much, and I understand how hard it is for you to let me go. For many years, I had no idea how to let you go. Now I do.

Some relationships are meant to last forever, but not ours. We had a good run. We were on the same page for many years. I even allowed you to be the leader for most of those years.

As comfortable as I became with you, we are in different places now. Before you even ask, the answer is “no.” We cannot get together, even on occasion. We are finished. Done. Our relationship is over.

Don’t take it too hard; there are plenty of people out there who are more than willing to spend all of their time with you. I am just not one of them.