

J A N A K R O S S



THE RESILIENT WOMAN

A Practical Tips for Women over 50

Living Life with Confidence and Clarity for a Healthy and Peaceful Mind

JANA B. KROSS

The Resilient Woman

*A Practical Guide for Women Over 50; Living Life with
Confidence and Clarity for a Healthy and Peaceful Mind*

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“Resilience is very different than being numb. Resilience means you experience, you feel, you fail, you hurt. You fall. But, you keep going.”

—Yasmin Mogahed, scholar

Introduction

The Journey to Clarity

At long last, I've sat down to write the book that has lived in my heart for years. This isn't just a book—it's a deep, personal calling. I've carried the desire to explore emotional intelligence and self-awareness for women in my age group throughout my 50s. Now that I've reached 60, I feel more connected than ever to the importance of this work.

I want to tell you about a moment I'll never forget—my 50th birthday. I threw myself a party at the Copacabana in New York City, surrounded by friends and celebration. The night before, a few of us played pool and had drinks. We laughed, played, and talked—but I felt a sudden jab in my heart in the middle of it all. I didn't say anything. I quietly put down my drink, sipped some water, and focused on breathing. I told myself the feeling would pass as long as I kept breathing and stayed present. And eventually, it did. But something shifted in me. In that quiet moment, I realized I wasn't living the life I truly wanted. I was living a life based on expectations—of being a mother, a professional, a daughter, and a sister. I had become so used to living for others that I lost track of what I truly desired. The night of my birthday, I made a private decision: I wouldn't drink. I didn't explain it to anyone—I just did it. And for the first time, I decided without needing anyone else's approval.

That small act changed everything.

It was the first time I said yes to myself.

From that day on, I started paying attention to what I was doing and how I was living. I began asking different questions: What do I want? What do I need? What would it look like to live life on my terms?

The Resilient Woman isn't just a title—it's an invitation. This

book is for every woman who's ever wondered, "Is this all there is?" It's for every woman who's ever felt the tug of her voice whispering, *There's more*.

In my 50s, I listened more closely to my thoughts, energy, and needs. I realized I was often living re-actively, driven by circumstances or the expectations of others. I felt exhausted from constantly responding to the world instead of choosing how I wanted to live. And truthfully, I wasn't happy. I didn't feel in control.

This journey toward self-awareness, clarity, and confidence has been anything but quick. It has taken years of reading, reflection, healing, and learning. I've curated books, tools, and insights that helped me shift from simply surviving to intentionally living. And now, I want to share them with you. This is not a two-day fix. This is the lifelong journey of becoming who you truly are. This book will summarize some of the most powerful concepts that have helped me. They won't all be new, but they might hit you differently. I encourage you to approach them urgently as if your peace of mind depended on it. Because, in many ways, it does. You'll uncover who you are from the inside out as you read. You'll reflect on your patterns, beliefs, and emotional habits. You'll begin to see clearly what's working and what's not. And you'll realize—you have the power to change it.

Let me be honest: there are patterns in my life I've repeated so many times that I've had to stop and ask myself, "What the heck? Why am I doing this again?" It's a frustrating feeling—seeing yourself go down the same road, with the same kind of relationship, the same disappointment. But I now understand

it's part of the process.

I'm a consultant and youth development professional. At 50, I boldly decided to return to school, and I earned my doctorate at 55. It took five years of discipline and focus. Despite everything else falling apart, I didn't let anything interfere with that goal. Why? Because it mattered deeply to me. Earning my doctorate wasn't about the title but about knowledge, growth, and doing something just for me. For much of my life, I lived for others, especially for my mother, and as a twin, I was constantly compared to my siblings. That created a pattern of people-pleasing, insecurity, and competition. Add to that the confusion and shame around my relationships and identity, and I spent years searching for love and clarity, sometimes in the wrong places.

That whirlwind of emotion brought me here: learning to care for myself, stop performing, and start becoming. Today, I live with clarity. I've learned to monitor—not control—my energy, thoughts, and relationships. I've become aware of what lifts and drags me down. Most importantly, I've learned to say no to what serves me longer. This introduction is long because I want you to feel seen, to know you're not alone, and to know what to expect from this book.

What to Expect from This Book

This is your companion for reflection, self-discovery, and reinvention. You'll explore the why behind your thoughts, behaviors, and energy patterns. You'll learn to choose differently and love who you're becoming. I'll share my experiences to illustrate how

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I've applied these concepts. You'll discover nine life practices to help you align your mindset with your values. You'll reflect, journal, and reconnect with your inner wisdom. You won't be creating a "mud pie." You'll be clearing space to build on solid ground—with clarity, intention, and confidence.

This book is your guide, your lifeline, your mirror. Please feel free to come back to it whenever you need to realign. Once the foundation is strong, everything else—your peace, confidence, and clarity—falls into place.

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Chapter 1

My Life Reflection

At long last, I've sat down to write the book that has lived in my heart for years. This isn't just a book—it's a deep, personal calling. I've carried the desire to explore emotional intelligence and self-awareness for women in my age group throughout my 50s. Now that I've reached 60, I feel more connected than ever to the importance of this work. I want to tell you about a moment I'll never forget—my 50th birthday. I threw myself a party at the Copacabana in New York City, surrounded by friends and celebration. The night before, a few of us played pool and had drinks. We laughed, played, and talked—but I felt a sudden jab in my heart in the middle of it all. I didn't say anything. I quietly put down my drink, sipped some water, and focused on breathing. I told myself the feeling would pass as long as I kept breathing and stayed present. And eventually, it did. But something shifted in me. In that quiet moment, I realized I wasn't living the life I truly wanted. I was living a life based on expectations—of being a mother, a professional, a daughter, and a sister. I had become so used to living for others that I lost

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Chapter 2

Understanding the Origins of Your Beliefs

We all carry invisible scripts—beliefs formed long before we could understand them. These scripts show up in our relationships, careers, habits, and even how we talk to ourselves. But where did they come from? This chapter is about taking a brave look backward to step forward with clarity. I worked with a powerful healing coach named Irene O'Brien. Our process changed everything for me. Irene guided me through a deep emotional excavation, helping me uncover the hidden roots of the beliefs I had carried for most of my life.

I'm sharing her name here with gratitude, and I highly recommend you find someone like her if you choose to do this kind of work. While reading and reflecting can take us far, having a coach or healer walk with us can be life-changing. Whether for visioning, healing, or understanding your spiritual path, you deserve support on this journey.

This chapter invites you to go inward, to discover the *origin* of the beliefs that shape your thoughts, behaviors, and self-

perception. It's not about judging them. It's about witnessing them. Because when you know where a belief comes from, you get to choose whether you keep it or let it go.

My Story: The Smallest Bowl

Let me take you back to the beginning—my beginning. See, I am a twin. I remember listening to my mom tell the story over and over of when we were born. When we were born, I came into this world with a heart murmur and jaundice. My sister was brought home from the hospital, but I stayed behind in an incubator for three weeks. When my mother finally came to get me, she didn't recognize me. She said I didn't look like my sister and questioned whether I was hers. The hospital staff had to prove I belonged to my mother. That moment, though I couldn't name it then, became one of the roots of a belief I would carry for decades: *I don't belong. I'm not enough.*

I grew up always feeling second to my sister—less fed, less seen, and less valued. One memory that still lives in me is about oatmeal. My grandmother made the most delicious oatmeal, but the bowls were never the same size. My older brother always got the biggest bowl. My sister got the medium one. And me? I got the smallest bowl. It was a silent message I swallowed daily: *You get less.* One day, I reached for the big bowl when no one was looking. I devoured it, even burned my mouth in the process, and I got punished. Hard. It sent another message: *How dare you want more? Stay small. Stay in your place.*

The Beliefs Beneath the Behaviors

From these moments, I formed core beliefs, unconscious truths I carried with me into adulthood:

- I'm not enough.
- I have to compete to be seen.
- Wanting more is selfish.
- I don't deserve the big bowl.

These beliefs didn't just shape how I saw myself—they shaped how I showed up. I worked hard, always trying to prove myself. I achieved, succeeded, and pushed, but deep down, I still felt small, like that little girl with the smallest bowl. It wasn't until I worked with Irene that I realized I no longer had to hold those beliefs. They weren't facts. They were stories, a child's interpretation of her experience. And that meant I could rewrite them. But first, I had to face them.

Your Turn: A Journey of Reflection

I would like to invite you to join me now in this work. It's not easy, but it's freeing. We'll gently explore your childhood and uncover the moments that planted your earliest beliefs. Then, we'll create space to release those beliefs and write new ones.

Step 1: Breathe

Let's begin with breath.

Inhale through your nose for six seconds... hold... and exhale gently.

Repeat this three times to ground yourself.

Step 2: Journal Prompt One

Set a timer for three minutes and journal:

Think of a moment in your childhood, particularly with your mother or father, that didn't feel right. A moment where something inside you said, "This doesn't feel good."

Please write from the perspective of your younger self. Don't filter or analyze. Just write.

Step 3: Journal Prompt Two

Breathe again.

Now, reflect on another moment from your childhood—maybe at school, with siblings, or even something you witnessed that left an emotional imprint.

What did you feel? What did you believe about yourself as a result of that moment?

Write for another three minutes.

Step 4: Journal Prompt Three

One more round of breath.

This time, ask yourself:

What belief have I carried that defines how I see myself today?

Where did it come from?

This may be the moment you uncover your “I’m not enough,” or “I have to do it all alone,” or “I’m too much.” Let it come, and let it be okay.

Letting Go: A Ritual of Release

Now that you’ve identified these beliefs, it’s time to release them.

You might:

- Burn the pages (safely).
- Tear them up into tiny pieces.
- Say them out loud one final time—and let them go.

As you do, say to yourself:

This no longer defines me. I now choose something new.

Creating the New

The final step is about re-creation.

What do you want to believe now? Not just about the world—but about yourself?

Here's what I say to myself every day:

I am a beautiful, brilliant, and powerful woman.

And I've been saying it for over years because I need to hear it.

Create a mantra, a statement, or a truth that feels empowering and real. It doesn't have to be perfect. It just has to be yours. Repeat it often, say it aloud, put it on your mirror, and let it become your new foundation.

Be Gentle With Yourself

This chapter may bring up unexpected emotions. That's okay. Give yourself grace. Take a walk. Take a bath. Call a friend. Do something comforting. If something feels too heavy, reach out to someone you trust, such as a therapist, a coach, or a healer like Irene. You don't have to do this alone. Understanding the origin of your beliefs isn't just about healing—it's about becoming the woman you were always meant to be before the world told you who you weren't.

This is your beginning.

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Chapter 3

Clearing Your Mind Through Self-Forgiveness

Have you ever noticed yourself arguing with reality? I mean, really—have you ever caught yourself thinking, *“This shouldn’t be happening... It’s not supposed to be this way... They shouldn’t have treated me like that...”*? In her influential book *Loving What Is: Four Questions That Can Change Your Life*, Byron Katie introduces a concept that turned my world upside down—in the best way. She explains how much of our inner turmoil comes from a straightforward thing: resisting what is. Whether it’s a barking dog, a broken promise, or a life that looks nothing like what we imagined, we spend an enormous amount of emotional energy resisting the truth of our present experience. And in that resistance, we suffer.

I want to introduce you to one of the most complex yet powerful practices you can adopt: self-forgiveness. True self-forgiveness begins when we stop arguing with our past selves—who we were, what we chose, and how we saw the world then. Let me tell you a story. I once decided to marry a close friend. We had known

each other for years, and while I didn't feel a romantic spark, she did. I convinced myself it was the right step—I was getting older, still single, and constantly felt the judgment of others. Society had me believing that being a single woman in her 50s somehow meant I was incomplete.

So I said yes—not to love, but to fear. I said yes to trying to fix a hollow feeling by wrapping it up in a relationship I wasn't aligned with. And while I gained companionship, I didn't get the intimacy, fulfillment, or connection I desired. It took time, but eventually, I could look at that decision with compassion. I forgave myself—not because I made a mistake, but because I chose from a place of misunderstanding. I misunderstood my worth, love, and what I truly needed. But here's the grace: I did the best I could with the mindset I had at the time. And so did you.

In *Loving What Is*, Byron Katie teaches us that the path to inner peace begins with accepting reality as it is. The next step is to understand the stories we've told ourselves about what happened and how those stories have shaped our choices. When we shift our inner dialogue from blame to curiosity, we begin the real work: freeing ourselves.

The Principle of Self-Forgiveness

Self-forgiveness isn't about letting ourselves off the hook; it's about accepting our past actions and mistakes. It's about looking honestly at our decisions and recognizing that they were shaped by our beliefs at the time, beliefs about love, worth, safety, and success. It's about making peace with the truth that we didn't know what we didn't know. And most importantly,

it's about letting go of the internal war we've waged against ourselves. We can't move forward when stuck in a loop of regret and shame. Forgiveness gives us back our energy, clears the fog in our minds, and lifts the emotional weight we've been carrying, often for decades.

A Practice for You: The Self-Forgiveness Ritual

Let's try a simple yet powerful exercise together.

Step 1: Breathe

Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Inhale through your nose for a count of six... hold for a moment... and exhale slowly. Do this three times. Let your body relax, and let your mind soften.

Step 2: Write

Now, take a piece of paper and set a three-minute timer.

Write freely:

What do you forgive yourself for?

Let your thoughts flow without judgment. It could be a decision you regret. Perhaps it's a relationship you stayed in too long—or walked away from too soon. Maybe it's a dream you abandoned or a truth you ignored.

Breathe again.

And write again.

Repeat this cycle—breathing and writing—three times total. Each round may bring up something more profound. Let it come. Let it go.

Step 3: Reflect

Now, look back at what you wrote. Ask yourself gently:

- What did I believe about myself at that time?

- What was I afraid of?
- What did I think I needed?

This is where the healing begins. When you understand the belief behind your actions, you shift from judgment to wisdom.

Why This Is Hard—And Why It's Worth It

Forgiving yourself may be the most challenging part of your healing journey. It requires taking full ownership of your choices, without shame. It asks you to stop being a victim and start being a witness; that is where your power lives. You are not the same person you were back then. You've grown. You've evolved. You're reading this now because you're ready to lay down the armor and start living with more clarity, compassion, and truth. There may be days when this work feels too heavy. That's okay. Take your time, revisit the exercise, and let it become a gentle, lifelong practice.

I've had moments where I thought, "*There's no way I can forgive myself for that.*" But the truth is, I could. And I did. I was in those moments because I saw the scared, confused, hopeful woman, and I chose to love her anyway. And now, I invite you to do the same. Forgive yourself not because everything turned out okay, but because you are worthy of peace.

And peace begins with you.

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Chapter 4

The Power of Gratitude

When I think about gratitude, I think about what I have—right now, in this very moment. And sometimes, the most minor things bring us back to that sense of presence: the beauty of flowers blooming, the rustle of leaves in the breeze, the bright feathers of a bird landing on a branch. Gratitude, at its core, is a return to the present. It pulls us gently out of what's missing, what's wrong, or what could go wrong—and reminds us of what *is*.

Let me tell you a story. My son has traveled the world with his wife for over a year. They live like nomads, working remotely, exploring new places, and soaking in the magic of life. I haven't seen him in person in all that time—and yes, there are days I feel deeply sad and miss him with every ounce of my heart. But then... a simple text: “Hi, Mom, just thinking about you ♥” Suddenly, that sadness transforms into gratitude. I'm grateful he's out in the world, not just existing but truly living. He's with someone who loves him. They share a vision, a sense of wonder,

and the courage to live on their terms. How incredible is that? Gratitude doesn't erase sadness. It transforms it. It lifts our energy and shifts our perspective. It invites us to see beautiful things, even when things are hard.

Gratitude as a Daily Anchor

Gratitude connects us to what's real, not someday, not when we finally get the job, lose weight, meet a partner, or buy a house, but right now. Just like Robert A. Emmons reminds us in *Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier*, this practice is not just about good manners; it's about mental health. Gratitude rewires your brain. It helps you feel happier.

I've learned that the more we practice gratitude, the more grounded we become. The more we notice the beauty of the present, the less time we spend in anxiety, regret, or fear. A walk in the park can become a meditation when we notice tulips poking through the soil or catch the glimmer of sunshine through budding trees. Watching your dog run with joy can spark something profound because, in that moment, *you are here*.

Gratitude and Resilience

There are days when the world feels heavy. We see injustices, tragedies, or political chaos that leave us wondering, *Is this happening?* Some of what we're facing now in this country feels like something I never imagined seeing in my lifetime. When that overwhelm creeps in, I shift my attention to what's in front of me. I have a cozy, peaceful apartment. I have plants that are beginning to bloom. I have a chair that supports me, a bed to rest in, and sunlight that fills the room in the morning. These are not

small things. These anchors remind me—I'm safe, grounded, and alive. Gratitude helps us see that we already have something to work with. And that's powerful.

Creating a Gratitude Practice

Let's make this real. Start with a simple daily ritual. It could be:

- A morning prayer: "Thank you for this breath. Thank you for this day."
- A walk where you notice and name the beauty you see.
- A journal by your bed where you write down five things you're grateful for before sleeping.

This doesn't have to be profound. It just needs to be *intentional*. Be grateful for:

- A check that cleared.
- A warm cup of tea.
- A good laugh.
- A friend who texted back.
- The moment when the train *wasn't* late.

We often focus on what frustrates us—when things don't go our way. But what if we gave just as much energy to what *does*? What if we became experts at noticing what's good?

Gratitude Is a Choice

Practicing gratitude doesn't mean denying pain. It means we *expand* our lens. We hold space for both the struggle and the beauty. We get to say: "This is hard. But this is also good."

Oprah once talked about keeping a gratitude journal and writing five things she was thankful for every night. I've done it, and I can tell you—some days it's easier than others. But the days I stick with it, I feel more peaceful, joyful, and *myself*.

Let Gratitude Be Your Light

If there's one thing I want you to walk away with from this chapter, it's this: Gratitude won't fix everything, but it will *shift* everything. When you find yourself in the dark, reach for the light of gratitude. It's always there. Even if it starts with something as small as a bird, a flower, a smile... or a text from your son. Let gratitude be your anchor, your daily practice, your way of remembering that you are already enough—and that life, in its quiet beauty, is offering you something sacred now.

Gratitude Practice Prompts

Use these prompts to guide your daily or weekly reflections. You can write about just one each day or return to them as often as you like. The goal is to tune your awareness to what's *already* good in your life.

Start with the Present

1. What is one thing in your life right now—at this exact moment—that brings you comfort or peace?
2. Look around the space you're in. Name five things you're grateful for and why.

Relationships and Connection

1. Who in your life makes you feel seen or loved? What is something small they've done that meant a lot to you?
2. Think of someone you haven't spoken to in a while. What do you appreciate about them?
3. What are you grateful for about *yourself* today?

Nature and Beauty

1. Describe a recent moment in nature that took your breath away—even just for a second.
2. What is something beautiful that you noticed this week? A flower? A sunrise? A stranger's smile?

Mindful Gratitude

1. What is something you take for granted that you want to appreciate more deeply?
2. How did your body support you today? What are you grateful for about your health or movement?

Re-framing the Hard Stuff

1. Think of a difficult situation you're facing. What's one thing you *can* be grateful for in the midst of it?
2. Reflect on a past challenge. What lesson did it give you that you're now grateful for?

Daily Ritual

Complete this sentence each morning for one week:

“Today, I am grateful for...”

And each night:

“One good thing that happened today was...”

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Chapter 5

Developing Positive Self-Talk

Let's be honest—we can be incredibly hard on ourselves. We criticize how we look, the things we haven't achieved, the relationships we don't have, or the ones that don't feel like enough. From our weight to our wrinkles, from a mistake we made to the person we let back into our lives, the internal dialogue can be relentless. But here's the truth: what we say to ourselves becomes our reality. Negative self-talk doesn't just weigh on our hearts—it shapes our experiences. The more we affirm the negative, the more negativity we attract.

Throughout this book, we've talked about awareness—understanding who we are, what we believe, and want to change. In this chapter, I want us to take ownership of how we speak to ourselves. This is about reclaiming your voice and speaking life into your mind and spirit. The journey toward positive self-talk is not about denying hard feelings or pretending everything is perfect. It's about shifting how we *respond* to those moments.

It's about building resilience and designing a new way of seeing ourselves, one thought at a time.

A New Inner Narrative

We've all had those days. You gain a few pounds and suddenly feel like a failure. You look in the mirror and focus only on what you don't like. You forget something and label yourself "scatter-brained." You trust someone again who doesn't value you, and the shame creeps in. These moments happen. But what if we didn't beat ourselves up for them? What if we offered ourselves grace instead? Creating a habit of positive self-talk doesn't mean we ignore the parts of ourselves that need attention—it means we *support* ourselves through those moments with compassion and truth. Because when we consistently speak to ourselves with encouragement and love, we begin to feel better, stand taller, and live more boldly.

You're In Charge Now

I want you to remember: the little girl inside you who absorbed those limiting beliefs as a child—she did her best. She made up those beliefs because of how the world treated her. But you? The woman you are today? You get to take over now. You get to tell your inner child lovingly, *"Thank you for trying to protect me. I forgive you. But I've got this now."* You are powerful. You are creative. You are brilliant. You are love. You don't have to let old beliefs run the show anymore. You get to choose how you speak to yourself. From how you dress, to how you nourish your body, to how you respond to mistakes, your voice matters. And it can be the most uplifting voice you hear all day.

Positive Self-Talk Prompts

Use these prompts to explore, re-frame, and anchor your inner dialogue in truth and kindness. Speak them out loud, write them down, and return to them whenever you need to remember who you really are.

Remembering Who You Are

1. What are three things I genuinely love about myself, inside and out?
2. What would I say to a friend who feels like I am right now?
3. How do I want to describe myself when I walk into a room?
4. Complete the sentence:
5. *"I am a woman who..."*
6. (...rises after falling, radiates warmth, makes people feel safe...)

Rewriting the Inner Critic

1. What is a negative thought I've been repeating lately?
2. Now, rewrite it as a powerful affirmation. (*Example: "I'm so behind" → "I'm moving forward at my own pace, and that's enough."*)
3. Think of something you judged yourself for this week.
4. Now ask: What would self-compassion say instead?
5. What do I want to believe about the woman looking back at me when I look in the mirror?

Creating the New Narrative

1. Create your mantra or affirmation. Make it personal and real.
2. (Examples: *"I am a powerful, brilliant, beautiful woman."* *"I honor my growth, and I trust my journey."*)
3. When I feel low or doubtful, what can I say to myself to remind myself of my strength?
4. Write a love note to yourself. Begin with:
5. *"Dear [Your Name], I see you. I know it's been hard sometimes, but..."*

Remember: your inner voice is like soil. What you plant, grows! Choose to plant beauty, truth, strength, and love. You are not your past self-talk. You are the author of a new story. Let that story begin today—with your voice, power, and light.

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Chapter 6

Preserving Your Energy

I didn't think much about my energy for most of my life. I moved through the world responding to situations, people, and moods without realizing I had a choice. I let other people's emotions seep into my spirit—especially those closest to me: friends, lovers, even family. I absorbed it if someone was upset, angry, dismissive, or demanding. I didn't know I had the power to preserve my energy. I didn't think I could choose how I wanted to feel. But over the past five or six years, that changed. I began to pay attention to how I felt in certain conversations, around certain people, and in specific environments. And once I did, I realized something simple but powerful: I have a right to protect my peace. I began to understand that while I can't control someone else's behavior, I can control how much access they have to my energy.

Recognizing the Shift

Let me be clear: emotions like anger, sadness, or frustration are valid. They're part of life. But we don't have to carry those

emotions long-term, especially not when they've been passed onto us by someone else's words or behavior. When I started noticing my energy more intentionally, I realized people in my life consistently left me feeling drained, defensive, or unheard. And I had to ask myself: *Why am I still giving them so much of my space?*

That's when I started setting boundaries—not to punish anyone, but to honor myself. For example, I had a friend I'll call Anna. We'd known each other for over 40 years. But every time we spoke, the conversation became a constant debate. The glass was always half-empty. There was always drama, always control. For years, I tolerated it because... well, we had history. But then I realized: history isn't a reason to carry someone forward into my future. So I decided to end the friendship lovingly. I explained that I was choosing to step away because that kind of energy no longer had a place in the life I was building. While it wasn't easy, it was necessary because I wanted to surround myself with people who brought light, not shadow.

Choosing Your Circle

Let's talk about my friend Margie. We've also known each other for 40 years. But with Margie, the energy is different. We don't talk every day, or even every month. But when we do, whether after three weeks or three months, we catch up as if no time has passed. There's no drama. No competition. Just honesty, joy, and mutual love. That's the kind of energy I want more of. That's the kind of energy I *protect*.

Energy as a Compass

Preserving your energy is about curating your life—your

relationships, conversations, even your daily environment. It's about noticing your feelings and having the courage to say, *"This doesn't feel good—and I don't have to stay in it."*

That might mean:

- Spending less time with someone.
- Saying "no" to a request that drains you.
- Not responding to a triggering message right away.
- Speaking up, even when your voice shakes.

And yes—it might mean walking away.

Not to be mean.

Not to be cold.

But to honor your peace.

Because your energy is sacred, it is yours. You choose who and what has access to it.

Reflection Activity: Curate Your Energy Circle

Grab a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle.

On the left side:

List the energies you want more of in your life.

Words like:

- Peace
- Respect
- Honesty

- Vulnerability
- Joy
- Freedom
- Support
- Fun

On the right side:

List the energies you no longer want to carry.

Words like:

- Manipulation
- Chaos
- Disrespect
- Gas-lighting
- Over-explaining
- Judgment
- Criticism
- Exhaustion

Next to each energy on either list, write down the names of the people, environments, or activities that contribute to that feeling. Add a percentage of how often you experience that energy with them.

It's okay to be honest. This isn't about judgment—it's about clarity.

Final Thoughts

You don't have to end every relationship that doesn't feel perfect. But you can *choose* how often you're in that space, how deeply you're involved, and what boundaries you want to hold.

You are allowed to protect your spirit.

You can say “not today” or “not anymore.”

Your energy is your responsibility. And your power lives in how you care for it.

Chapter 7

The Power of a Daily Mindfulness Practice

There was a time when I never gave much thought to my energy, let alone my thoughts. I was too busy moving, doing, responding, and keeping up with the pace of life, especially as a woman, a caretaker, a mother, a worker, a dreamer. But somewhere in the last several years, I began to slow down. I started noticing how I felt in certain situations, around certain people, or even alone with my thoughts. And that's when I began to understand the power of mindfulness. Mindfulness is not about emptying the mind or becoming a guru overnight. It's about **paying attention** to your thoughts, energy, breath, and life.

The Story of the Stream

Let me share a story that changed the way I think about mindfulness. Two monks were on their morning walk, a regular meditation practice. As they passed a small stream, the elder

monk turned to his young student and asked him to fill a cup of water. The young monk walked back to the stream, only to find the water was murky, filled with twigs, leaves, and dirt. So he told the elder monk, “I’ll go further downstream where the water is clearer.” But the elder said, “No. I want you to return to this stream.” Confused but obedient, the young monk returned to the spot. This time, instead of reacting, he waited. He stood still and observed. And something beautiful happened: over time, the debris began to settle. The water cleared. And eventually, he was able to gather a clean cup of water. That stream? That’s your mind. Most live in the swirling mess of past thoughts, worries, and noise. But things begin to settle when we allow ourselves to be still and sit and watch without reacting. Clarity rises. Mindfulness isn’t about silencing the mind. It’s about noticing the noise and choosing not to attach to it. It’s about allowing the murky waters to clear, little by little, with patience and practice.

We Are the Watchers of Our Thoughts

So many of our thoughts come from the past—things that hurt us, disappointed us, or made us feel small. We carry them like baggage, and we react to them before we even know they’re there. But when we become the *watcher*, we reclaim our power. Here is a must-read book, [The Untethered Soul; The Journey Beyond yourself](#), by [Michael A. Singer](#), that explains it so clearly. When we sit in stillness, even for just five minutes, we teach ourselves how to see our thoughts instead of being ruled by them. That’s what mindfulness is, and that’s what meditation gives us. It doesn’t make the world quieter, but it makes us

steadier in the midst of the noise.

Creating a Practice That Works for You

You don't need to sit cross-legged on a mountaintop to find stillness.

Your practice might be:

- Five minutes of quiet in the morning before anyone else wakes up.
- A slow walk at lunch, paying attention to your breath and your steps.
- Writing in your journal with a candle lit beside you.
- Sitting with your coffee and simply *being* before reaching for your phone.
- Reading a spiritual passage or a poem that grounds you.

I love Emily Fletcher's book *Stress Less, Accomplish More*. She taught me the Z-Technique, 15 15-minute meditation that helped me build a simple, sustainable routine. It doesn't require perfection; it just requires presence.

We've been trained to wait for someone else to create peace. But I'm here to tell you: *You have the power to create it for yourself.*

Start Small, Stay Consistent

Begin with 15 minutes—five minutes of silence, five minutes of journaling, five minutes of reading something that feeds your soul—and build from there. Maybe it becomes a 15-minute morning routine. Maybe you take another 10 minutes in the evening to breathe and reflect. Maybe your mindfulness shows up in gratitude, walking, or even the way you prepare your food. Whatever it looks like, make it yours. And if you skip a day? Be

gentle. No judgment. Just return. This is a life practice, not a checklist.

You Are Creating a New Way of Being

Mindfulness helps you hear the truth beneath the noise. It helps you feel your own heartbeat. It helps you choose your next move from a place of clarity instead of reaction. Everything we've explored in this book—gratitude, self-talk, forgiveness, reflection—is all a mindfulness practice. You've already been doing it. Now, we deepen the work. You are learning how to know yourself from the inside out. To live with more peace, more confidence, and more grace. And it begins—always—with a breath.

Mindfulness Menu

A simple guide to help you create your daily mindfulness practice.

This isn't about perfection. It's about consistency and care. Choose one or more practices that feel nourishing today. Mix and match, add your own, and let this menu grow with you.

Stillness & Meditation

- Sit in silence for 5–15 minutes. Breathe deeply. Let your thoughts pass like clouds.
- Try a guided meditation on an app like Insight Timer or YouTube.
- Practice the “Z-Technique” (as taught by Emily Fletcher, in her book, *Stress Less, Accomplish More: Meditation for Extraordinary Performance*):
- 15 minutes of silent, eyes-closed meditation—no pressure,

just presence.

Journaling & Reflection

- Free-write for 5 minutes about how you're feeling right now.
- Reflect on a moment today that brought you peace, joy, or clarity.
- Use a prompt:
 - *"Today I am present with..."*
 - *"Right now, I choose to release..."*
 - *"My body feels..."*

Morning Rituals

- Light a candle and say the morning's intention: *"Today, I choose peace."*
- Stretch slowly, just five mindful movements with breath.
- Drink your morning beverage with no distractions. Just sip, breathe, and notice.

Movement with Presence

- Go for a slow, intentional walk—no phone, no music. Just observe.
- Do 10 minutes of gentle yoga or mindful stretching.
- Dance around your home with your favorite music—fully in your body.

Reading & Inspiration

- Read a page from a spiritual, inspirational, or poetic book.
- Keep a quote card or mantra visible and say it out loud 3 times: *“I am safe. I am calm. I am guided.”*

Evening Wind-Down

- Reflect on one thing you’re grateful for today.
- Do a short body scan: lie down, close your eyes, and bring awareness to each part of your body.
- End the day by placing your hand over your heart and saying:
- *“Thank you for showing up today.”*

Tips for a Sustainable Practice:

- Start small. Even one minute counts.
- Choose a consistent time (morning, mid-day, or night).
- Create a “mindful corner” in your home—just a cozy space with a journal, candle, or chair.
- If you miss a day, start again the next day. No guilt. Just grace.

You can also invite your readers to use this menu like a weekly planner:

Day. Practice(s) I Chose How I Felt After

Mon. Journaling Breath Grounded

Tue Walk Gratitude Light

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Chapter 8

Designing Your Vision for Life

What is it that you truly want?

This chapter is your invitation to dream with clarity, to be honest with yourself, and to explore the deepest desires of your heart without judgment or hesitation. It's about claiming your life—not just the life you've lived, but the life you want to create from this day forward. Another fantastic book is [Hero on a Mission](#), A Path to a Meaningful Life, by [Donald Miller](#). Imagine yourself ten years from now. What does your life look like? What energy do you radiate? What have you created? Who have you become? And here's something even more profound: What do you want your eulogy to say? What will people remember about the way you lived, loved, and energy you brought into the world? These questions are not about pressure. They're about *freedom*. Because the truth is: it's your life. You get to design it.

Shift from Doing to Being

After years of hustle, care giving, proving ourselves, and meeting others' needs, it's time to shift. Not because you've

stopped caring for others, but because you've learned to *care for yourself first* to have anything to give. You don't need to chase another goal to be worthy. You need to align with your vision. For me, that vision includes the sun and the ocean. I see myself with a home in Puerto Rico—my birthplace—where I can escape the cold New Jersey winters and enjoy the island's warmth, rhythm, and healing power. I see music, culture, good food, and peace. I see myself walking barefoot by the sea. But that's not all. I see myself traveling the world—not just for leisure, but to be in service. I want to visit youth centers, orphanages, and schools to learn how young people are raised and supported worldwide. I want to listen, witness, and contribute. I also see myself still writing, speaking—perhaps fewer keynote speeches, but powerful ones. I want to continue teaching educators, leaders, and anyone willing to do the work on emotional intelligence and self-awareness. And of course, I want to see my sons live whole, joyful, abundant lives. That's the heartbeat of my vision.

Build a Vision You Can See and Feel

Some people create vision boards, and others write out their visions in a journal. Both are powerful. What matters most is that you see and feel it. I would say that you revisit it often and write it as if it's already unfolding.

Ask yourself:

- What do I want in one year?
- What do I want in three years?
- What do I want in five years?
- What do I want in ten?

Life might surprise you by moving faster than expected—or

taking unexpected detours. But having a vision gives you a compass. It brings purpose into your days and courage into your decisions.

Let It All Come Together

Everything you've read in this book—gratitude, self-forgiveness, positive self-talk, mindfulness, boundary-setting—these are the *tools* that help you live your vision.

You now understand the importance of:

- Preserving your energy.
- Forgiving yourself and others so you can be free.
- Watching your beliefs and choosing which ones no longer serve you.
- Practicing gratitude to stay grounded in the present.
- Speaking to yourself with kindness and power.
- Creating daily mindfulness so you can hear the wisdom inside you.

All of these practices allow you to clear the mental clutter and make room for your vision to unfold.

Conclusion

A Journey to Confidence and Clarity

I wrote this book for women over 50—because that’s the age when I *woke up*. I stopped living from reaction and began living from intention. But honestly, if you’re in your care giving or 40s—or even 70s—this work will meet you wherever you are. You are never too late. You are always right on time. You’ve made it to the final chapter. That alone is a huge accomplishment. Take a deep breath. Feel it. Celebrate it. You’ve just completed a journey that invited you to step more fully into your life with clarity, confidence, and peace of mind. And now, the next part begins. Keep reading books that feed your spirit. Keep journaling. Keep meditating. Keep dreaming. Keep growing. This isn’t the end. This is a lifelong invitation to be more of who you are. And if you ever forget, just come back to this moment. Come back to your breath. Come back to your truth.

You are worthy of everything you desire.

You are already everything you need.

Now go live it—with grace, power, and joy.

A Personal Note from Dr. Sonia Toledo

Dear Reader,

Thank you for choosing *The Resilient Woman*. The fact that you picked up this book tells me something important about you. You are someone who believes in growth, healing, and the power of your own story.

Writing this book was one of the most vulnerable and meaningful things I have ever done. My hope is that it met you exactly where you needed it most, whether you were in the middle of a storm, just coming out of one, or simply preparing yourself for what lies ahead.

If this book touched your heart, challenged your thinking, or gave you the courage to take one step forward, I would be deeply grateful if you would take two minutes to leave a review on Amazon.

Your words matter more than you know. Reviews help other women who are searching for exactly what you found in these pages find their way to it.

Scan the QR code below to leave your review now.



From one resilient woman to another, thank you for trusting me with your journey.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jana Kross".

With love and gratitude,

Dr. Sonia Toledo, writing as Jana Kross Author |

Speaker | Founder www.dignityofchildren.com

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