

MARGIE WARRELL

*Best-selling author of STOP PLAYING SAFE*

# BRAVE

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50 EVERYDAY ACTS *of* COURAGE  
*to* THRIVE *in* WORK, LOVE *and* LIFE

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Margie sets herself apart with a powerful and inspiring message, paired with her energetic, down-to-earth and disarming delivery. Margie's insights helped me bolster my personal vision for a candid, collaborative and forward-leaning workplace. She provided practical advice on how to challenge ourselves and others to be more courageous, take more risks and find more success.

**Kathy Calvin, President and CEO,  
United Nations Foundation**

Nothing worthwhile is achieved living timidly and avoiding all risk. *Brave* will help you build the confidence to dare more boldly and live more bravely.

**Carolyn Cresswell, Company Founder and  
Managing Director, Carman's Kitchen**

Fear and doubt are the two greatest enemies to success in business and life. Written for busy people on the go, this practical and encouraging book will guide you to achieve your greatest goals in work and life.

**Kate Carnell AO, CEO Australian Chamber  
of Commerce and Industry**

*Brave* will help you grow your 'courage muscles' to achieve your biggest dreams and wildest ambitions. Read it often. Practise it daily.

**Emma Isaacs, CEO, Business Chicks**

If you have ever doubted your ability to achieve these wildly big goals, you don't need to any longer! *Brave* needs to become your most valuable book as it will give you useful insight, tips and tricks to ensure you live your life fully!

**Paul McKeown, Head of Retail,  
The Body Shop**

Many people doubt themselves too much, and back themselves too little (particularly us women!). If you want to live more bravely, more boldly, and more fully, this book was written for you! It's a game changer.

**Deborah Hutton, media personality**

A unique blend of the practical and inspirational, *Brave* will help you overcome the fears and doubts that are holding you back in your career, business, relationships and life.

**Joe Powell, Managing Director,  
SEEK Employment & Learning**

Courage is the basis for all success. Without bravery and courage you can go through life making excuses about why you can't or shouldn't do things. Our first instinct is often to say no as it's easier and feels safer. But true courage comes from saying YES—to yourself, your ambitions and your happiness. Read this book and you'll be on your way to a bigger, braver and more fulfilling life. Enjoy.

**Janine Allis, Founder of Boost Juice and  
Executive Director, Retail Zoo**

Courage is more needed than ever in today's 'play it safe' world, where taking the soft option can be all too easy. This book will help you to build the courage needed to do the right thing rather than the easy thing—to go out on a limb, have tough conversations, challenge the norm and risk failing. It should be read widely.

**Michael O'Keefe, CEO, Aesop**

*Brave* is better than a book—it's a manual for life full of wise, useful and actionable advice that only an author who has earned her stripes—through triumph and tragedy—could write. Be braver. This book will show you how.

**Bill Treasurer, author of *Right Risk* and  
CEO, Giant Leap Consulting**

*Brave* is the handbook you need to start living your life more purposefully, passionately and courageously. No more holding yourself back or dimming yourself down! You deserve a life you love and this book will help you live it!

**Michelle McQuaid, best-selling author of  
*Your Strengths Blueprint***

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MARGIE WARRELL

WILEY

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# About the Author



A *Forbes* columnist, best-selling author and media commentator, Margie Warrell is a thought leader in human behavior who is passionate about empowering people to live and lead more courageously.

Drawing on her background in business, psychology, coaching and diverse life experiences, Margie runs leadership, resilience, communication and courage-building programs worldwide. Her clients include NASA, British Telecom, The Body Shop, Australian Federal Police, Wells Fargo Bank and Accenture.

Margie walks her talk when it comes to living bravely. She's had many adventures since growing up on a dairy farm in Victoria, Australia, including having four children in five years while relocating to three countries! She has ventured off the beaten track in over 60 countries through the Middle East, South America, Central Asia and beyond. She also spent three years working in Papua New Guinea.

As the founding CEO of *Global Courage*, a women's leadership organisation, Margie is a passionate advocate for gender equality and emboldening women to be more powerful catalysts for change. She has spoken at global women's events with the United Nations Foundation, Ernst & Young, Oracle and many more. She is also an Ambassador for Beyond Blue.

Best-selling author of *Find Your Courage* (McGraw-Hill) and *Stop Playing Safe* (Wiley), Margie regularly shares her insights with leading media such as *The Today Show*, Fox News, *Sunrise*, CNN, and Al Jazeera. Her expertise has also been featured in *Psychology Today*, *BRW*, *O Magazine* and *Wall Street Journal*. Margie travels regularly between Australia and the USA. For more information visit [margiewarrell.com](http://margiewarrell.com).

# Acknowledgements

Every book involves an act of courage in some measure. This book is no exception and so I want to acknowledge the many people who've supported me in the journey to bring *Brave* into your hands.

To Lucy Raymond, my editor at Wiley. When I first mentioned the idea of writing this book, with its short focused chapters, and which didn't fall squarely with Wiley's core 'business book' genre, I held little confidence it would be of interest to them. More personal than my previous book *Stop Playing Safe*, this book has therefore been not just an act of bravery for me, but for Wiley which has backed it. So Lucy, a heartfelt thank you for your faith in me and in this book! Thank you also to the whole team at Wiley and my delightful (and patient!) editor Sandra Balonyi. Once again, you have enabled me to share my passion and insights more broadly through the words in this book.

I can't let it go without mentioning that during the writing of this book I celebrated 21 years of marriage (yes, a child bride!) to my husband Andrew. While the length of a marriage doesn't necessarily reflect the love within it, I'm very fortunate to have married someone who has always been my most ardent champion. So to Andrew, thank you. Our lives are often extremely busy as we straddle two hemispheres pursuing our dreams and nurturing our children to pursue their own, yet you always make time for me — to bounce ideas off, encourage me, counter my doubts and point out where I'm selling myself short. You've helped me to 'train my brave' countless times.

Acknowledgement also to my four loud but exceedingly loveable children: Lachlan, Maddy, Ben and Matthew. Ten years ago, when I began writing my first book, *Find Your Courage*, you were aged six and under, and still watching *The Wiggles*. During the writing of this book one of you left home and one of you jumped out of a plane with a parachute (landing safely!). While I sometimes feel sad

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that this family-rich season of my life is passing so quickly, I could not be more proud of the big-hearted, passionate, adventurous and good-humoured young people who call me ‘Mum’. Keep shining brightly and bravely. Just tidy your rooms first!

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Of course, I’m also immensely grateful to my family, friends and ‘followers’ — online and offline — whose support is always, always, appreciated. We can go so much further together than we ever can alone, so thank you for inspiring me to think bigger and live braver. Yes, I know that’s grammatically incorrect but, as I write in this book, rules can be soooo over-rated!

And last, but not least, thank you to my dad and my mum, Ray and Maureen Kleinitz. You gave me deep roots, strong wings and profound faith in a higher Power far greater than my own. Knowing that you would have been proud of me no matter what I did has freed me to follow my heart in all matters, to live purposefully and to pursue work I love. What a different world we would live in if every child could grow up feeling so unconditionally loved. It’s my deepest hope that this book will help to bring greater love into more hearts, peace into more homes, and, in some small way, joy into more lives. If it does, then know you played your part.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, elegant initial "M".

“ I WAS SCARED MANY TIMES ON  
EVEREST, BUT THIS IS ALL PART  
OF THE CHALLENGE. IT IS NOT  
THE MOUNTAIN WE CONQUER,  
BUT **OURSELVES.**



—  
*Sir Edmund Hillary*  
—

# Introduction

How many times have you kept your mouth shut when there was something you really wanted to say? How often have you held back from doing something for fear of failing or appearing foolish? When did you ‘go along to get along’, only to regret it later? Do you sometimes tell yourself that you’re not smart enough, strong enough or brave enough to make that change or take that chance?

If you’ve ever thought to yourself, ‘If I just had the guts’, you’re not alone.

None of us is immune to fear—of failing, criticism, rejection or being ‘found out’ as unworthy in some way. Yet, left unchecked, our fears can confine our lives in countless ways. Which is why living fully is synonymous with living bravely: being willing to back yourself and take a risk, speak your truth and exit your comfort zone to go after what you truly want, change what you don’t and honour yourself fully.

PLAYING SAFE AND AVOIDING  
RISK *doesn’t* MAKE US MORE  
SECURE, IT MAKES US *less* SO.

The truth is that living bravely is not easy. If it were, we all would be! There’s no magic formula or pain-free, 10-step plan to permanently liberate yourself from fear. The only way to be brave is to act bravely—day in, day out—when times are easy and life feels good *and* when times are tough and it doesn’t. It’s why I’ve written this book: to help you strengthen your muscles for living bravely. Not just because of what you can accomplish when you do, but because of who you will become in the process. Stronger.

Wiser. Happier. More purposeful. More resilient. And more whole. As E. E. Cummings once wrote, 'It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are'.

I discovered the power of 'training the brave' while learning how to ride horses growing up on a small dairy farm in rural Australia. I was six the first time I got on a horse at our local show. It was very exciting but...oh...the ground seemed so far down. With each lap of the pony ring, my fear began to abate, so much so that by the time I was being plucked off the saddle I'd decided that riding horses wasn't so scary after all (at least not small ones).

Being relatively isolated from the activities available to city kids, I decided to try my luck in soliciting my parents to buy me a pony for my tenth birthday. I had no great expectation I'd get one. A drought had meant that money was tight, but my dad managed to get enough dollars together to buy me an old, beginner-friendly gelding named Roby. He arrived on the back of Dad's old cattle trailer the day I turned 10.

## COURAGE ISN'T ABOUT *fearlessness*. IT'S TAKING ACTION EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE SCARED.

Always careful about getting value for money, Mum and Dad saw no sense in getting me a small pony I would soon outgrow. Their logic made sense. As I stared up at Roby, 14 hands high, I felt particularly small. However, given that I was now double-digits old, I was determined to make the most of this special birthday present and I set about learning how to ride him.

Every morning before school I'd get up early and head out to the front paddock to catch Roby. A wily old thing, he didn't make it easy on me and I'd often have to enlist the help of my siblings to round him up and put on his bridle. As it so often does, my

persistence paid off. By the time I was 11 years old, I was a half competent rider (albeit a rough one) and signing up to compete in the local gymkhana. The problem was, Roby was too slow for the barrel race and no amount of kicking could prod him beyond a sluggish canter. So, before I turned 12, I was back to lobbying my parents—this time for a horse with more ‘go’. Call it good luck, the law of attraction or the power of a child’s prayer, but just after my twelfth birthday we won a horse in a raffle. Twenty cents a ticket, or six for a dollar. ‘The perfect price!’ Dad said.

Smokey (ingeniously named because he was the grey colour of smoke!) arrived straight from the rugged mountains of the Victorian high country and had only two speeds: zero and a full gallop. Needless to say, he had more ‘go’ than Roby. Much more. So I had to dig deep and dial up my courage yet again. Within a few months, and after numerous falls and close scrapes with trees, I’d mastered Smokey and began winning those barrel races. Yee ha!

## THE MORE OFTEN YOU *act* BRAVELY, THE MORE YOU GROW YOUR ‘MUSCLES FOR LIFE’.

I don’t share this story to impress you with my horsemanship. In fact, by the time I was 17 I had largely given up riding because I was too busy finishing my high-school studies and flipping burgers in the nearby village cafe to earn money for university. Rather, I share it because learning to ride Roby, and later Smokey, taught me early on that the more often we act bravely, the braver we become.

Building courage by taking action amid our self-doubts, misgivings and fears is a lesson I’ve learned many times since leaving my parents’ farm—first to study business at university in Melbourne, later backpacking around the globe and starting my first career in

the corporate world, and then forging a second career while raising four young children. Time and time again I've discovered that the only way to tame fear is by stepping right through the raw heart of it. By staring down our fear and pursuing challenges that inspire us even as they scare us (like having that fourth child!), we nurture strengths, hone talents and unlock potential that would otherwise have remained dormant.

## EVERY WORTHWHILE ENDEAVOUR REQUIRES MAKING YOURSELF *vulnerable.*

As you look back on your life up to now, I'm sure you can recall having to do things that scared you at the time, but which no longer do. Having done them many times, the fear they once incited was replaced with a quiet confidence that flowed into other areas of your life. Bravery (and courage—I use the words synonymously throughout this book) does that. In fact, clinical studies confirm that by practising new behaviours we build and then strengthen neural pathways in our brain so that, over time, they become our unconscious default behaviours. Likewise, when you consciously choose to say and do things outside your comfort zone, you build your 'courage muscles' for taking on bigger challenges and for responding more bravely to those that land unwanted in your lap ... because, sooner or later, they will!

While the lessons and insights I share in the pages to follow are supported by a wealth of psychological research, I had no desire to write an intellectual exploration of risk-taking, the neuro-science of fear or how to overcome it. There are many excellent books written by research psychologists and neuroscientists that do just that. Rather, I wrote *Brave* to help you become more conscious of where fear may be holding the balance of power in your life and to share practical ways for you to reclaim that power so you can make



more conscious and courageous choices to truly thrive in your work, relationships and life (no matter what is going on around you!).

## TO THRIVE IN OUR CULTURE OF FEAR WE MUST NOT LET IT SET UP *residence* IN OUR LIVES.

Fear is a powerful emotion wired into our psychological DNA to protect us from pain. Yet left unchecked it can infiltrate into every corner of our lives, erode our confidence, amplify our anxiety and steer us down a path of cautious, comfortable—but oh so vanilla—mediocrity. Our culture, and the media that shape it, thrives on fear. Fear sells. Fear wins votes. Fear feeds on itself. Needless to say, at every turn we're bombarded with reasons to feel afraid, play safe, settle and sell out, batten down the hatches, stock up on canned food and buy that Hummer! Yet in our increasingly anxious, accelerated and uncertain world, it's only by discerning the legitimate fears that are serving us from the imagined and sensationalised ones that aren't that we can forge the deeply authentic, meaningful and truthful lives we yearn to live. Only then can we live powerfully, consciously choosing to move towards the aspirations that inspire us, rather than away from the fears that stifle and diminish us.

## COURAGE IS A *habit* AND LIKE ALL HABITS, IT CAN BE LEARNED.

Just as the way you fold your arms—right over left or left over right—is something you do without any thought (go on, try it now), so too is how you engage in the world around you. The more often you act a certain way, the more habitual that behaviour becomes, until it's second nature and hard to do any other way. And

so it is with living bravely. The more often you ‘train the brave’ that waits quietly within you, the braver you become. One act of raw courage at a time, one day at a time, over the passage of time *you become what you do*: brave, strong, self-reliant and equipped with everything it takes to pursue your greatest aspirations.

Sir Edmund Hillary, who, along with Tenzing Norgay, was the first man to ascend Mt Everest, did not begin his mountaineering career by taking on the world’s tallest mountain. He started by climbing the smaller peaks in his homeland of New Zealand. There, he built up the skill, strength, stamina and courage needed to raise his sights to the most indomitable summit of all. Likewise, as Dr Gordon Livingston wrote, ‘If we aspire to be brave we must practice it in small ways so we are prepared when more is required. Because sooner or later, more will be required’.

Turn on the news today and you’ll find reports of people who seem hell-bent on inciting fear and oppressing freedom. While we’re right to look to our leaders to act with courage, we must first look to ourselves—into our own hearts, homes, workplaces and communities—and ask ourselves, ‘Where am I failing to act with the courage I wish to see more of in others?’ Only when those of us with the freedom to stand up, to speak up and to champion for change find the courage to do so, can we create a more peaceful, equitable and secure world for those who still don’t. Just imagine the world we could create if we each took personal responsibility and all committed to living braver lives driven by what inspired us rather than what scared us.

## GROWTH AND COMFORT *never* RIDE THE SAME HORSE.

*Brave* is not a book to be read only once, nor does it have to be read in any particular order beyond the first part, which outlines the 10 ‘building blocks’ for living bravely. It’s a book to be read

## INTRODUCTION

with an open heart, an open mind and a pen in your hand. Pick it up whenever you have a moment to yourself, lay your hand on its cover and trust that whatever page falls open holds a message that's beckoning you to greater bravery in some aspect of your life. At the end of each chapter I've given you a short 'Train the Brave' challenge, which invites you to move from 'thinking' to 'doing'. At the end of the book is an invitation to join my *10-day Train the Brave Challenge* to further help you step boldly into action. Nothing beats it!

Growth and comfort never ride the same horse. I learned that growing up on the farm and I've learned it countless times since. Living a deeply meaningful and rewarding life calls on you to step outside your comfort zone—to stretch yourself and to trust yourself—again and again and again. While it's never easy, it's always worthwhile because while bravery won't always guarantee your success—in work, in love and in life—it will always precede it.

Dare bravely. Work bravely. Love bravely. Lead bravely. Live bravely.

Living your life fully—purposefully, passionately and wholeheartedly—is a life-long journey of learning to embrace your vulnerability and accept your fallibility, all the while trusting in yourself that you were born for a mighty purpose and are stronger than anything you ever face. If this book helps you to see this truth more clearly, even in some small way, then it has served its purpose. In doing so, you've helped me to serve mine. For that I'm deeply honoured and immensely grateful.

“NOTHING IN LIFE IS TO  
BE FEARED, IT IS ONLY TO BE  
**UNDERSTOOD**. NOW IS THE  
TIME TO UNDERSTAND MORE,  
SO THAT WE MAY FEAR LESS.



—  
*Marie Curie*  
—

—*Part I*—

# LIVE PURPOSEFULLY

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TEN BUILDING BLOCKS  
*for* LIVING BRAVELY

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“EVERYONE HAS HIS OWN SPECIFIC  
VOCATION OR MISSION IN  
LIFE . . . THEREIN HE CANNOT BE  
REPLACED, NOR CAN HIS LIFE BE  
REPEATED. THUS, EVERYONE’S TASK  
IS AS UNIQUE AS IS HIS SPECIFIC  
OPPORTUNITY TO IMPLEMENT IT.



—  
*Viktor E. Frankl*  
—

—Chapter 1—



DECIDE  
—*what you*—  
STAND FOR

I was at university at the time of the massacre that took place in China's Tiananmen Square in 1989—I was the same age as many of those who stood up to the tanks, soldiers and mighty military apparatus of the Chinese government. I remember being in awe of their bravery, particularly that of the young man standing his ground in front of an enormous armoured tank, an image that became iconic when it was broadcast around the globe.

'How could he do that?' I remember asking myself at the time, completely unable to imagine myself being so courageous. And I think it's fair to say, I never have been.

But there are many ways you can be brave. Few make the headlines. Few earn medals. Fewer still make the cover of *Time* magazine. However, every act of bravery stems from a decision to make a

stand for something that's bigger than yourself and more important than your emotional safety, comfort or pride.

If you've grown up in a democracy that respects civil liberties and freedom of speech then you've likely never felt compelled to risk your life for the greater good. Consider yourself fortunate. But regardless of your good fortune in life—or lack thereof—we're all called to make a stand for something: for the values we care about, for the difference we want to make, for the causes we believe in and for the injustice we don't. Those of us born with rights and freedoms millions only dream of have an even greater obligation to do so.

## WHEN YOU'RE *unclear* ABOUT WHAT YOU STAND FOR, YOU CAN FALL EASILY ONTO THE PATH OF CAUTIOUS, COMFORTABLE MEDIOCRITY.

Of course, it's so easy to unintentionally find yourself living on autopilot. We think we're in charge of our thoughts and behaviours, but so often we're operating from habit, reacting unconsciously to perceived threats to our security and station. Fear steers us away from risk and towards safety—or at least the illusion of it. Which is why, unless you're clear about what you want your life to stand for, it's all too easy to fall mindlessly into the path of least resistance, maximum self-interest and minimal contribution. Unfortunately, that path rarely leads anywhere worth travelling. It almost certainly contributes little to the welfare of others, which is always the richest source of satisfaction in our own lives.

Deciding to make a stand for something bigger than yourself is indispensable for living bravely. While you may never be called to lay your life on the line, start a movement or end an unjust regime,



every day there are opportunities for you to lay your pride on the line for a more important cause. Sometimes your courage will be rewarded—your risk will pay off, you'll get the job, land the date, win the client, resolve the issue, close the sale, earn the rise. Other times it won't. But who you become by the courage you've shown will always leave you better off. Stronger. Smarter. Braver. Bolder.

## KNOWING WHAT YOU STAND FOR IS THE FOUNDATION STONE UPON WHICH *bravery* IS BUILT.

Each time you make a stand for something you believe in, you make an unspoken, but profoundly important, declaration to those around you—and, most importantly, to yourself:

*I'm the author of my life, and not a passive spectator watching life play out before me. My life matters, my voice matters and my choices matter. I will not cower to conformity. I will not surrender to self-doubt. I have a role to play, a difference to make and I'm committed to living my truth, standing for what is right and against what isn't.*

In her book *My Story*, former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard wrote that it was her strong sense of purpose that fuelled her determination to enter politics and then sustained her throughout her three turbulent years leading Australia. Upon asking her to share her thoughts for my *Forbes* column to honour International Women's Day the following year, she replied, 'Changing the world, like living your own life well, requires a sense of purpose, the courage to pursue it and the preparedness to risk the most public of failures'. Indeed, Julia ultimately experienced just that. But by having the courage to make a stand for something, she made a far more meaningful impact on her country and the world than she would ever have done otherwise.

Sure, we may not all feel called to enter politics, but there are things that you, and *only* you, can do; things that will never be done if you don't do them. Making a stand for what's most important to you in this one and only precious life of yours requires letting go excuses and owning your power. It means giving up stories that suggest you aren't good enough and daring to believe that you have everything it takes to live a life that truly matters, and to leave a legacy that lasts.

Your life, like my own, is ultimately very short. Knowing what you stand for is your testimony to the world and the only thing that will compel you to step beyond your comfort zone as many times as you need to honour all that you are, all that you can be and the difference that you alone can make.



---

## TRAIN -the- BRAVE

Knowing what you stand for in your work, in your family and in the world is crucial for living a truly meaningful life. So take a moment to get clear about (or simply to reconnect with) what you want your life to stand for. Write it down (it makes a difference!). Include the impact you want to make on those you live with, work with and encounter throughout the course of your life. Mahatma Ghandi said, 'My life is my message'. What message do you want your life to say between now and the day you die?

---

“THE **REAL** VOYAGE OF  
DISCOVERY CONSISTS NOT IN  
SEEKING NEW LANDSCAPES,  
BUT IN HAVING **NEW** EYES.



—  
*Marcel Proust*  
—

—Chapter 2—



# INTERROGATE

—*your*—

# REALITY

**A** squadron of soldiers was marching through the local town. All the parents and families had come out to wave and cheer them on. One particular soldier was marching completely out of step and as he passed his mother she turned to her neighbour and said, ‘Look, my son is the only one marching in step!’

While no-one likes to think they’re being as one-eyed as the woman in this parable, all of us can become a victim of our own biases, blinkered thinking, and misperceptions. Left unchallenged, they can shield us from confronting truths we’d prefer not to face and prevent us from taking the very actions needed to forge more meaningful and rewarding lives.

THE STORIES YOU TELL YOURSELF  
EITHER EXPAND OR SHRINK WHAT'S  
*possible* FOR YOU. REWRITE THOSE  
THAT CONFINE YOUR FUTURE.

'Have you ever noticed that anybody driving slower than you is an idiot, and anyone going faster than you is a maniac?' This question by comedian George Carlin observes the bias we all have in assuming that our perception of reality is the right one and that everyone else has got it wrong. The truth is that you don't see the world as it is; you see it as you are. The reality you live in is shaped not by the circumstances of your life, but by the lens through which you view them and the story you create. In turn, what you tell yourself is the 'truth' impacts the emotions you feel, the actions you take and the outcomes you produce...for better or worse. Every story you have either expands what's possible for you, or it shrinks it. So while the stories you tell yourself are often far from reality, they ultimately shape it.

WHATEVER YOU TELL YOURSELF IS  
*true*, YOUR BRAIN AUTOMATICALLY  
GOES TO WORK TO PROVE  
YOURSELF *right*.

For most of my life I had labeled myself an 'unathletic non-runner' and created a convincing story (convincing to me at least) about how my legs just weren't made for running. Then a few years ago I joined a boot camp and found myself running. Slowly. Heavily. But running nonetheless. Week by week, as my fitness improved, it chipped away at my well entrenched 'I can't run' story. Then I signed up for a 5k run. Then a 10k. Then a 15k. Then a half-marathon. After

I finished the half-marathon my mum said to me, ‘When you were fourteen you would have said running 21 kilometres (13 miles) was a physical impossibility.’ Indeed, I would have! Which just goes to show how profoundly the stories we tell ourselves can shape (and limit!) what we even attempt to accomplish.

We all have a lot vested in our view of the world and we all get some sort of payoff by sticking to it—whether it be a sense of righteousness or victimhood, or an excuse for avoiding the pain and discomfort of facing the sometimes difficult and harsh realities of our lives. Or of simply doing the hard work required to make a change! It’s why we tend to become defensive when anyone challenges how we see things, including how we see ourselves. In fact, psychologists have found that we actively ignore or discredit information that flies in the face of our own views (what they call our ‘perceptual defence mechanism’) and we actively seek out information that supports it (‘confirmation bias’). If you’ve ever had to deal with a parent who thinks their child is the brightest or most gifted on the planet—when in fact their child is a little brat—you’ve encountered both.

BECAUSE YOU’RE HARDWIRED TO  
*defend* YOUR VIEW OF REALITY, YOU  
MUST CONTINUALLY QUESTION IT.

We’re instinctively drawn to information that reinforces what we already believe or hope. Whatever you decide about a situation, person or yourself—good, bad or impossible—your mind automatically goes to work to prove that you’re right. Which is why you need to push yourself to actively seek out information that can jar your view of the world—something you’re wired to avoid doing! Yet it’s the information that challenges your existing paradigms, stories, assumptions (like being unable to run!) and beliefs that yields the most valuable insights and results.