

A white bucket hat is the central focus, shown from a top-down perspective. In the bottom left corner, a pair of rose-colored sunglasses is partially visible. The background is a plain, light gray surface.

A WHITE HAT **& ROSE COLORED GLASSES**

Unlocking Your Power through Clarity & Action

Susan Sherbert

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Clarity and Action

By
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SAMPLE CHAPTER

“Susan Sherbert’s remarkable insights will help you transform your old way of thinking and have you looking at problems from a different angle. This book gives you all the tools you need to see where you’re going and what you need to do to win. A must-read for any entrepreneur!”

Mike Ludlum
Entrepreneur Magazine

Introduction

In my first book *Grown-ups Don't Skip*, I focused on showing grown-ups how to have more fun and enjoy life by learning to think like an excited little four year old. I am very proud of the ideas within those pages and I believe in that message one hundred percent, yet this next book is so much more! It takes that “think like a child” foundation and blasts the concept into a whole new dimension. What I did not fully realize when I wrote that first book was the massive impact, and pure power, that comes from the mindset of a child.

The exciting news is that we were all kids once! That means our confident, fearless, and open-minded attitudes are still within us somewhere. Imagine how many obstacles, fears and limiting beliefs we could overcome if we could tap back into the magic power of the simplified childlike thinking we once had! Dreams would be easier to find. Failures would seem like mistakes or “boo boos” instead of feelings of defeat or rejection, and of course there would be tons of creativity and imagination. Best of all we would see a world full of possibility instead of hopeless negativity!

I whole heartedly embrace the potential of childlike thinking, yet at times I may get overexcited and let too much fun slip into my writing style. I realize that is not always popular in the competitive business environment, but I just cannot help myself. Fun and happiness are an important part of life too! I mean really, just because you are an adult who wants

to be successful doesn't mean you have to read boring material. It is so frustrating to me! Why can't a book be both empowering and enjoyable at the same time?

Hopefully *A White Hat and Rose Colored Glasses* can help you shift some harmful beliefs, fuel your passion and motivate you to take action towards a successful life you will love. I am confident that these pages will be a mind opening experience for you. The problem is, the adult in me also knows that I only have about a page and a half to prove it.

So let me work my magic and begin by wrapping an important lesson around a simple story. As a result I hope to leave you with plenty to think about and maybe even an unforgettable "aha" moment of inspiration. Here we go...

A puffy yellow car

It all starts in an ordinary yard on an ordinary day. A little girl around the age of four is cheerfully scooting around in one of those puffy plastic push cars. You know the ones with the wide yellow pillars supporting a rounded yellow roof. Anyway, as she cruises down her imaginary highway in that plastic little car, she has to suddenly stop to avoid an obstacle in the road. Her mother is in the way like a gigantic tree blocking her path.

Beep Beep! She honks. "Get the #*&\$ out of the way!" There was a frantic gasp, followed by total silence as all eyes turned to the sweet little girl behind the toy wheel.

You can imagine the shock and horror on her mother's face, especially since there were other mothers and children in the yard. Then quite naturally the child sticks her head out the space that represents a window and holds up her hand. "It's okay mommy... I'm in the car."

Wow! Can you see the important lesson in that little story? I sure can. Let's ignore the obvious fact that the mother cusses in the car. The thing I want you to see is that somehow, that little girl formed a real and honest belief that says it is okay for people to cuss as long as they are within the confines of a car. She was confident in that belief and responded with full conviction as if it was a known fact! Of course that is not the lesson the parents intended to teach their child, but as children we make sense of the world any way we can, and often the lessons we learn are not always accurate. As a result we end up putting two and two together and logically conclude the answer must be six. Then the child's little brain takes that information and files it away as one of the basic rules of life that we carry into adulthood.

What would have happened if that embarrassing little incident never occurred? That little child may possibly have gone through her entire life believing that swearing was perfectly acceptable within the confines of a vehicle. When she gets her driver's license she will be a model driver obeying all the rules of the road. Until someone gets in her way that is. Watch out! Those four letter words will start popping out without even an ounce of guilt or remorse.

There will no need to feel bad or apologize to her best friend sitting next to her or to the nervous boy who sits next to her on the way to the prom. In her own mind, the lesson that she learned was that it is perfectly okay to swear in a car.

If you look at your own life, how many beliefs do you have that may not be true? How many lessons did you learn that were not the message that was intended to be taught? Maybe the first girl who broke your heart drove a puffy yellow car so you are now skeptical to date women who drive yellow cars. Maybe you buy into common beliefs that rich people are greedy, sales people are pushy, or that touching a frog will give you warts. Who knows how our immature brain makes those mental connections that we live by as adults. Maybe now is the time to bring some clarity into your life by unlearning your unspoken rules that may not be true after all.

The Holiday Ham

Here is another lesson disguised as a story but you may have already heard this one. If so this time I want you to focus on the bigger picture instead of just listening to the words. Again we go back to our little girl from the toy car only this time she is a bit older and a bit wiser. Since there were no hard feelings over the incident in the puffy yellow car, she proudly watches as her mother preheats the oven, takes the ham out of its wrapper, and warms the sticky ham glaze. Next her mom picks up a knife and carefully cuts one end off the ham, swirls it around, and trims the other side.

Perplexed our inquisitive little girl asks, “Mommy, why did you cut the ends off the ham?”

“Gee, I’m not really sure, dear. I guess that is how my mother taught me.” The child gets off her stool, goes into the other room, and puts her elbows on her grandmother’s lap. “Granny? Why did you teach mommy to cut off the ends of the ham?” Again, there was a confused look. The grandmother responded, “Well I suppose that is just how I was taught. Why don’t we go call your great granny and see what she has to say?” When great granny gets on the phone, her response is “Darling child, what makes you ask such a silly question? Back in my day the ham was simply too big to fit into my pan.”

All right! Another insightful moment! How many things do we do simply because that is the way we have always done them? I have an entire chapter dedicated to the resistance to change because change is scary, uncomfortable, and just doesn’t feel right. We prefer to do things we know, understand and are familiar with. That is the easy way to go. Not to mention that tradition is umm, tradition. It’s just how things are done - don’t mess with it. A thought shift that might be helpful here is to learn to bring back one of our wonderful childlike thinking ways and start asking that annoying little question “Why?” Asking why goes a really long way to finding the clarity that will change, well, just about everything.

It was only a lime

Here is one more story and it began when I was in line at the grocery store. The woman in front of me had just done the final tap to pay her bill when her husband came rushing up holding a lime. Apparently they needed a lime for a recipe they were doing that night. The lady, who reminded me of a grown-up version of our puffy car girl, turned to me and politely asked if I would mind if the checker rang up her last minute item. It was only a lime so I gave a don't worry about it wave, turned to the checker and said, "It's okay just add it to my order." No big deal right, again it was only a lime?

Well, this is the point where all of that adult thinking comes rushing in. Here stood a fully grown adult woman and she was practically stuttering with unspoken anxiety trying to figure out how to respond. "Er, Oh no! Really you don't have to do that," she said all in a fluster. Gee I had thought I was doing a nice thing, and all she wanted to do is refuse my offer. Why all the stress?

To me it was a bit like looking at a scene with a thought bubble pointing at her head. I imagined it went something like this: I can't take money from a stranger, in fact I shouldn't even be talking to strangers. If I take the lime will there be strings attached? Will I feel obligated somehow? What does this stranger think of me? I can't impose on her to pay for my stupid mistake. Wow, there is simply way too much thinking going on here.

Of course she finally accepted my offer to pay for the lime, but before she left the store, I heard her mumble something to her husband about having to “pay it forward.” What? It was only a lime! Do adults really think that way?! Of course we do! There is a lot of stuff happening in our head. Now if I had offered to buy a child a popsicle, the kid would most likely have responded “Thanks lady!” And a smile of appreciation would be all that was required. Yet as adults, our subconscious thoughts can run wild and really complicate the simplest of things.

Remember - pure childlike thinking is still within us somewhere. We can learn to question our beliefs, ask a lot of really good questions, and clear out some of the complicated old junk that we carry around with us every day. The secret to success in life, and in business, begins by clarifying our thinking and becoming aware of the unwanted thoughts and feelings that could be blocking our path. It will certainly be a bumpy ride, but the journey back to where we began is a trip well worth taking.

Not what you want to hear

It is time for me to put on my good guy hero white hat because I must do what is right, and have a difficult conversation. Unfortunately even with all of the stories and lessons within this book, they won't do you one bit of good unless those life altering awareness moments are followed up with real world physical actions. I am truly sorry to have

to break the harsh reality to you but this book cannot fix your problems. That is something you, and you alone must do. I hope the tidbits of information I provided here will assist you in finding your big bold dreams, true vision, or meaningful purpose, but the actions you take, or don't take, are all up to you. I realize it sucks to hear it but there are no quick solutions or short cuts. Only actions. If you are being totally honest with yourself at this very moment, I would hope that you are starting to comprehend that you contribute to both the obstacles and the successes in your life. That is probably something that is uncomfortable to hear, and you may even be feeling a little resistance or fear right now, however like it or not, it is time to accept the fact that you are responsible for the changes you desire.

Please don't let those words stop you! Instead turn the resistance into a challenge. Confidently put on your very own good guy white hat and do the things you know you need to do. That means the first action you must take is to simply get started. That can be a really difficult thing to do, and luckily I address fears, blocks, and other reasons why we stay stuck later in the book, but don't let your inspiration fade away before you even give your new beliefs a chance to grow! Take that meaningful first step and take action! There is so much strength in getting started, why not do something simple like make a commitment to read this book? That's it. Read a book. You can surely handle that one action.

However, whatever action you chose to start with, turn it into a commitment by keeping an open mind and allowing new and uncomfortable ideas to sink in. Don't give up when you disagree with something you read or hear some negative comment. And don't let your hectic life be an excuse not to try, to stay stuck, or avoid finishing what you started. Face your fears. Keep your promises. Take better actions!

Once you become aware of just how much weight your thoughts and feelings have over the actions you take, you can then begin to shift your mindset and adjust your priorities. Change will happen if you begin replacing old worn-out beliefs that no longer serve you, such as cussing in a car, and replacing them with bigger, stronger and bolder ways of thinking. I hope you allow this book to be a tool to assist you in redefining what is important because if you are not playing the game of life with clarity and action then you are at a disadvantage. Now go put on that wonderful white hat, adjust your rose colored glasses, and let's get started!

*“When your thoughts, feelings and actions
work together you truly can create the life of your dreams”*

Why A White Hat and Rose Colored Glasses?

Almost every motivational book, workshop, or program is founded around some combination of three basic concepts: thoughts, feelings, and actions. These three elements have changed countless lives and they are the key to changing your life as well. Focusing on your thoughts and behavior to produce better results is an almost universal message of success...however instead of using those three words to describe this book, I have reduced my motivational vision down to just two words: Clarity and Action.

White Hat: Good guys wear white - well at least that is how I see it in my simplified childlike way of thinking. Good guys put on their white hat and do the right thing. They are heroes that are confident, courageous, and never ever give up. They are honest. They are brave. When there is a job to be done or your world needs saving, you want a good guy on your side. One of my favorite sayings is about not confusing kindness with weakness because there is no doubt that strength and integrity are woven into the fibers of that wonderful white hat.

Little kids wear white hats every day yet they are totally ignorant of the power it holds. It is not until we grow up that we begin to fully understand the struggles, risks and sacrifices that it takes to claim the honor of possessing something as special as a white hat. It is a symbol of all things good so it baffles me as to why anyone would want

to wear anything else. We will discuss that point later but the important thing to realize is that in the context of our adult way of thinking, I use the image of a white hat to represent the hero. Not a hero in a book or a movie, and not the real life men and women that do unbelievable things. The hero that I am talking about is you.

I want you to put on that white hat and become the hero in your own life. I want you to do the things you know you should do, and then be proud of your actions. Can you imagine the thought shifts you could have if you begin to remember even a tiny part of that courageous little kid that believed that they could change the world? For the purpose of this book, I have chosen a white hat to represent the actions a hero takes to transform mental thoughts into positive real world results.

White Hat = Action

Changing your thoughts is the first step towards success, but following up those insights and “light bulb” moments with the right action is what will help get you unstuck from whatever is holding you back. Be the hero in your own life and be proud to wear a white hat.

Rose Colored Glasses: As you can probably tell by now, I frequently wear rose colored glasses and I don't see anything wrong with that. Who wouldn't want to see the world through a positive lens? Would the world be a better place if everyone put on dark glasses and focused on the negative energy? Because of my belief in the power of

childlike thinking, I like to use rose colored glasses as a symbol for improving our vision. I see them as a tool to help us clarify and focus, not as blinders to reality. Rose colored glasses have gotten a bad rap. Anything that accentuates the positive should be a good thing. Wearing rose colored glasses helps us gain insight into our own thoughts and feelings so we can see the changes that need to be made.

I truly don't understand how wearing rose colored glasses is seen as a bad thing. As kids life was simple and our parents protected us so our vision was pretty good. We didn't need to wear glasses. We just sat back and enjoyed the day. Well, as responsible adults life has changed quite a bit since then. We have no choice but to live in a world of reality. We have commitments, jobs, and family. Fears, worries, pressures, and failures are all too common in the grown-up world. People let you down; but they also lift you up. You laugh, you cry. You feel joy and experience pain. This is all part of the real world we live in. Welcome to life.

Just as a white hat is a symbol of action, I see rose colored glasses as a symbol of clarity. Look at your thoughts, feelings, and limiting beliefs and try to see past those blocks to find your true vision. Learn to know when you are wearing your rose colored glasses and when you are hiding behind your dark glasses. Life is made up of both positive and negative, good and bad, and the right set of specs can help you see the world from a well-rounded perspective. Bad parts of life exist but it is up to you to see beyond them. Learn to focus on the possibilities of a world full of creativity, love,

and change for the better. A strong vision has the power to open your mind so that you may begin to clearly focus on the things that truly matter in your life. To me, rose colored glasses don't limit or block vision - they enhance.

Rose Colored Glasses = Clarity

One other point is that glasses are not laser eye surgery. That means we don't wear glasses all the time. We put them on and carelessly take them off. Sometimes our vision is fine. It's on track and we clearly see our life and the direction we are headed. Other times we get so stuck that that our vision becomes out of focus and unclear. We don't even realize we have our dark glasses on. Corrective lenses are helpful because they give us insight into our thoughts and behavior. They allow us see both the positive and the negative so we can embrace what is working and fix what is not. In my childlike mind I see rose colored glasses more like x-ray vision or night vision goggles. Those devices are used to discover things that are hidden, blocked or hard to find. How cool is that!

“To improve your vision close your eyes and focus”

- Susan Sherbert

Wearing Rose Colored Glasses...

- **Improves creativity and imagination**

Promotes better problem solving skills that lead to new ideas

- **Builds confidence**

Brings out the hidden qualities and talents people already possess

- **Means facing obstacles with courage**

Improves communication, leadership, sales and success

- **Encourages change**

Reduces fears that lead to stress, complacency and poor health

- **Adds a level of fun**

More energy and joy lead to better job satisfaction and higher productivity

- **Reduces judgment and negativity**

A positive outlook encourages more participation

Chapter 8

Truth

Be honest especially with yourself

If you have a desire to transform your life and live your dreams, then it is time to become the hero in your own life. It is time to put on that symbolic good guy white hat because to me a white hat represents the old fashioned hero. These people are honest, trustworthy, and sincere. They stand up for what is right and they don't run or hide from the truth. They have honor, courage and integrity. Good guys do the things that need to be done and they tell the truth.

I realize my image of the good guy is idealistic and not total reality but why can't we strive to live up to something that good and hope to have a life that grand! Of course we will fail, mess up, and make bad choices because being a hero is extremely difficult. But the point is if we want a better life then we must live a better life. And that means we had better get used to the truth.

*“If we want a better life,
then we must live a better life”*

To tell the truth

If I had to pick a single trait that makes up the characteristics of our hero, I would say it all comes down to the truth. The truth is super important and a major piece of the foundation for the white hat. The truth is all about facts and reality yet those are different depending on the person, culture, or situation. The truth is hard to explain, yet somehow we all internally understand what the truth is, what our truth is.

Scholars have been debating the idea of truth for years and they still can't agree on the meaning. Truth is being honest and being honest is telling the truth. It reminds me of the catch 22 where you go round and round in circles getting nowhere. What am I supposed to do if I can't describe the truth? I have an entire chapter to write on the subject. Since I struggle to describe what the truth is, then maybe we should look at what the truth is not. It makes sense because when we are not being truthful, we know it. Lies, falsehoods, deception, misleading information, cheating, or even little things like avoidance and omission are all a result of not telling the truth.

It seems so simple to be honest but telling simple lies makes life so much easier. If you are asked to do something outside your comfort zone, it's easier to tell people that you are busy than to admit that you are scared. If a loved one asks your opinion and you know they are not going to be happy with your answer, a little white lie isn't so bad. Even admitting when you are wrong or made a mistake is hard to respond to with the truth.

To me, everything comes down to being honest. If you are not seeing the real facts of a situation your path is likely to be unclear. If you are telling lies, or if people are telling you lies, even with good intentions, the damage is often far worse than if you spoke the truth in the first place. I mean, how can you fix a problem if you are not aware there is a problem in the first place? Where there is deception there is likely going to be trouble.

WHITE HAT AWARENESS

*If you are not truthful, especially with yourself,
there is likely going to be trouble*

People lie

People lie. Life is not fair. There is evil in the world. That is the truth. But the purpose of this book is to help balance our view of life. We need to see the positive side of life as well as the negative and understand that good and bad coexist. This can be hard to believe at times because when life is bad, it appears so awful, painful, and frightening that we can hardly see anything but the negative. Yet the positive does exist. I recently saw one of those inspiring quotes on social media and the message really stuck with me.

“People will let you down, welcome to life...

People will also lift you up, save you, love you, embrace you, teach you, and guide you. Welcome to life!”

-Elle Febbo

The truth is super important but it is a good guy trait that is also extremely difficult to achieve. Not only do we lie to others to prevent hurt feelings or cover up our mistakes, but we lie to ourselves. We just can't help it. If you say you are going to get up at seven but hit the snooze a few times and don't actually get out of bed until seven-thirty that's a lie. We promise to quit smoking and then give in and have a cigarette. Everyone makes promises they can't keep when it comes to diets and New Year's resolutions. The truth is people lie.

Oh wait there's more! What about all of the lies that we never actually “tell” but think instead. I'm no good. I'm a lousy partner. I'm stupid. I'm not worthy. And the biggest one of all; I can't. These are all lies too, but sometimes we believe them. If you are human, you lie. If you are human you make mistakes. If you are human you also do a hundred other really great things that you never give yourself credit for, probably because you are too busy focusing on the lies, mistakes, and untruths. And that is exactly why I believe the truth is so darn important. If you would just tell the truth and admit when you are wrong or make a mistake, then you would be free to move on and get to the good stuff.

Lies are bad, the truth is good. We know that. Isn't that one of the first lessons we learned in childhood. So what happened? Telling or hearing the truth can be difficult and a lie can be a quick easy fix. Making excuses, avoidance, and fibs are certainly easier ways to go but if we are not careful the lies and negativity can take over the focus of our lives. My hope is that you begin to seek out the truth in spite of the discomfort and fear. Welcome the honesty of others and begin to uncover some of the uncomfortable feelings you have been avoiding. Your life can change once you learn to become conscious and aware of when you are telling lies. When you confront your mistakes and acknowledge your fears it opens your life up so good things may enter. Awareness is my idea of the truth.

WHITE HAT AWARENESS

Awareness is my idea of the truth

The truth is uncomfortable

The truth is supposed to be a good positive trait, so why do we spend so much time and energy avoiding it! We tell little white lies to spare hurt feelings all the time, and even worse, we lie to ourselves. Why is the truth so difficult? Maybe it is because the truth can be very uncomfortable. If we tell the truth, we could get in trouble. If we tell the truth we could hurt someone. If we see our own truth we may have to admit that we were wrong. The truth is uncomfortable.

It can also be healing, empowering, and free us from a lot of negative thoughts and feelings. As humans we care about people so we lie to protect them from the emotional pain. Too often this does more damage than good because whatever the problem is it still exists. Lies rarely fix things, they only hide or delay the emotions.

It's a bit like sweeping dirt under a rug. The issue is still there. The lie only covers it up so no one can see it. Whatever it is that we try to hide behind the lie will be waiting for us to be dealt with sometime in the future. Seeing at least some of the dirt is a good thing. You need to be aware of what is causing you damage so you can figure out how to repair it. Covering it up or pretending the truth doesn't exist is not helpful in the long run.

I think this could be why rose colored glasses have gotten a bad reputation. People tend to associate them with blinders that help avoid the truth. This encourages people to see the illusions created by the avoidance or the lie. I am trying to change that because I believe rose colored glasses should help you see the whole uncomfortable truth problems and all. You should be able to see the good and the bad. That means you see the dirt under the rug but you also see a lot of positive solutions to fixing whatever is causing all that pain. My hope is that people use the tinted lenses to help see the truth instead of hiding from it. Rose colored glasses should enhance your vision not block it.

I understand that life is much more complicated than simply being honest, but if we don't deal with what makes us

uncomfortable, it will continue to block our path, get in our way, and make things worse. Lies complicate things. The truth should be simple. However when we don't want to face our own problems or have those difficult conversations with others, we avoid the negative emotions by telling a lie. That only adds more negativity to the situation. Become the hero in your own life by seeing the truth that you need to see and by having the courage to face the uncomfortable situations you would rather avoid. Truth requires courage.

More often than not it's the person telling the truth that struggles. Being honest means we may upset people, add to their problems, or get someone in trouble. We know the truth could possibly help, but our words could also hurt. This is especially the case if we are trying to point out something someone is not ready to hear.

My philosophy is to try to have honest conversations quickly and get them over with! How many times have we stressed and worried, almost making ourselves sick simply because we were ignoring the need to acknowledge and discuss an important issue. Then when we found the courage to speak our mind, the conversation wasn't as difficult as we imagined.

I remember this one time when I was looking after my aunt and uncle. It was a rather difficult situation because my uncle was blind with Parkinson's and my aunt was his devoted wife and lifelong caregiver. One night my uncle confided in me that before he died, he wanted to go to Scotland to visit

his brother. That was fantastic, except my elderly aunt had a bad heart and couldn't fly. That means my disabled uncle would have to make the trip without her - and she would never go for that!

*“The conversation wasn't
as difficult as we had imagined!”*

Our family discussed all of the possibilities and looked at all of our options... but how are we ever going to get my faithful aunt to agree? We could get a friend to fly over with my good natured uncle, and he would be well looked after once he got there, but who is going to tell my aunt about the trip? We can't ask her to be separated from her husband. They have been together for as long as we can remember.

For weeks, the family avoided bringing up the subject of the trip. No one wanted to tell my aunt that her loving husband wanted to travel to Scotland. How in the world would we ever get this tiny old lady to agree to something like that? Then one day I realized it was simply time have that difficult conversation we had been avoiding and stressing over for weeks. I gathered up my courage, explained the situation, and had an open and honest conversation. And do you know what my devoted caregiving aunt said? Her response was, “His passport is in the top dresser drawer.”

Apparently she truly loved her husband but she was getting old and was just plain tired. She would never complain, but she could really use a break from the responsibilities of looking after him for all these years. Thankfully this truthful

conversation ended in happily ever after! Of course not all conversations end that way, but the question really is, “Why is giving honest feedback so uncomfortable?” Our family wanted to do something that would mean a lot to my uncle, but we didn’t want to hurt my aunt’s feelings or make her life more complicated. Luckily I had that tough conversation because in the end all of my worries and concerns were just that, my worries and concerns.

WHITE HAT AWARENESS

Being honest helps us see the whole uncomfortable truth, problems and all

How you doing?

Let me tell you one of my biggest pet peeves and hopefully by the end of the story you will see the lesson I’m trying to get across. I just hate it when people, virtual strangers, ask me “How you doing?” That question makes me cringe. It sounds like fingernails on a chalkboard to me! Why? Because the guy at the grocery checkout doesn’t really want to know how I am feeling - so why ask!

Or even worse, I’ve heard listeners calling in to a television show and the first words out of their mouths are “Hi Ellen, how you doing?” Like she is going to tell a caller and a million other listeners that she is having a bad day, or that she is worried because her dog is sick. Even if she is having

a fantastic day, she doesn't have time to answer that question in detail. It's not a simple yes or no answer. How you are doing requires an explanation and the person asking should have the time to listen to the response or they shouldn't be asking the question.

The whole thing is just so ridiculous to me, and that dang "how you doing" phrase has become a standard greeting in our society. In fact I was asked that three times within an hour or so last night. Everyone says it. But not me! Why do I find those three words so irritating? Because if you ask me how I am doing I'm going to tell you! If I'm having a bad day I'm not going to lie and say I am fine when I am not! Why would you put people in a situation where you are almost required to lie? That one simple question has forced us to become a society of liars. I'm fine. I'm good. I'm okay. Everyone is not fine all the time! There are days when we are truly having a bad frustrating, horrible day, yet people automatically respond, "I'm fine." Liar Liar your pants are on fire.

You may not even be consciously aware of that dread question but I am super sensitive to it and I refuse to get sucked into a dishonest response! That means when people ask me how I am doing, I am ready with my automatic reply. Usually I just say 'Hi' or instead of telling lies, I simply wait in silence for just a second or two. By then they have already moved on because people don't honestly wait for an answer anyway. However if I am having a bad day I often

respond, “Don’t ask,” and sometimes I’m sure the person never even noticed that I didn’t respond with the expected, “I’m fine.”

I know all this may sound pretty stupid, or even crazy, but I truly don’t like to lie, and I really get irritated when untruths become a subconscious habit. Do me a favor and tomorrow or the next day make a point to pay careful attention to just how many times you automatically respond to that how you doing question. You just may be surprised at the amount of lies that you are subconsciously telling.

WHITE HAT AWARENESS

*Untruths can easily become a subconscious habit
Say what needs to be said*

The other day a group of us were talking about a movie we had seen. My best friend and I both rolled our eyes and started to express our negative opinions about how stupid the story line was. It was so bad that we couldn’t even finish watching the entire film, yet it won an Academy Award. Totally ridiculous! Then I turned to another friend and asked her opinion. What a position I had just put her in! Of course she was never going to say that she enjoyed the film after we had just totally trashed it. So what was she supposed to say? She did exactly what was expected and said something about it being okay. In other words, she lied.

The incident got me thinking. My friend and I were both telling the truth and expressing our opinions about the movie, however we made it very intimidating for someone else to express a different opinion. We put the other person in an awkward position so of course she was not going to express her true opinions - just agree and keep the peace. It was a casual social setting so why would she want to make waves and have to defend her views? She probably should have had the courage to say she loved the film but remember all that talk about keeping us safe and letting fear and negativity win? She didn't know us that well and she certainly didn't know how everyone else around her would react. Her instinct was that her opinions could cause her trouble or pain - so she played it safe. She told a little white lie.

It is so unfortunate because far too often we are untrue to ourselves. We give in and agree or tell people what they want to hear because that is the easy way to go. We lie to keep the peace because if we express our opinions the results are unknown. We don't know how people will react. I only hope that these lessons help people become more conscious of their tiny untruths so their first instinct is to tell the truth and express their opinion. Tell a white lie if you must, but make it a conscious choice to do so.

The whole thing makes about as much sense as what I call the "Barry Manilow Syndrome." For some odd reason people seem to resist publicly admitting that they are a Barry fan. Yet if no one is a Barry Manilow fan then how in

the heck does he manage to sell songs and fill up concerts year after year? Not bad for a man no one seems to like. The point is, you have opinions, preferences, likes and dislikes. You are free to express your opinions and tell people the truth even if you disagree with them. If you are a Barry fan, be proud of that. Make telling the truth and expressing your opinions your automatic response. Telling lies happens, but lies should make you feel uncomfortable!

WHITE HAT AWARENESS

*Tell a white lie if you must,
but make it a conscious choice*

A promise is a promise

Responsibility is also a very strong white hat hero trait because I see responsibility as the truth in action. What I mean by that is that when we keep our promises and do what we say we are going to do, we are turning our words into positive action. We are living the truth, not just talking about it. When we keep our commitments we are choosing right over wrong, and when someone is responsible, a lie never enters into the equation.

People who are heroes keep their promises. Following through and being true to your word builds respect. It is also one of the biggest differences between success and failure and the super successful people take this to the extreme. Their “nothing can stop me” mentality is based on one thing,

being true to their word. Once a commitment has been made these people fulfill their promises. If they say it, they do it. They are among the few who say they are going to call you back and actually do. If they decide to lose twenty pounds before a big event, they accomplish that too.

These movers and shakers accomplish great things because they make a decision and accept nothing less. They are true to their word and do what they promise whether it becomes difficult or not. If they get a better offer, they still choose to honor their word and fulfill their obligation. If they decide to get a role in a film, or become president of their company they don't make excuses, or accept defeat. They just get it done. And you can be pretty darn sure that these mega successful people keep the promises they make, especially the ones they make to themselves. If they say they are going to get out of bed at 5:02, they are up by 5:01.

Obviously we are not all that responsible or that successful all the time. However you are responsible for your own actions so if you say it, then you must do it. This is not an easy thing to do and there are very few of us who can be so truthful that we keep every promise we make. However wouldn't we have more success in our lives if we were true to our word, took more responsibility for our mistakes, and reduced our lies and broken promises? Of course! The more responsible and truthful we are with our actions, the better our lives will become. Notice I said truthful with our actions. Remember, people lie and the mega successful people are no exception. That means the message we should be paying

attention to here is the importance of keeping our promises and following through with our actions. Keeping a promise and telling a lie are two completely different concepts.

White Hat Awareness

If you say it, you must do it

Responsibility

A good example about responsibility that stuck with me came from John Travolta. When he was being interviewed he said something about how he tries very hard to keep within a film's budget. What? Am I hearing that right? He is John Travolta! He has tons of money plus as a superstar he doesn't have to worry about things like budgets, does he? Other people are responsible for those details.

Well I suppose there is a reason John Travolta is one of those mega successful people because as the interview continued I realized that he is one of those people that keeps his word. The lesson I learned from that interview is that even with his vast wealth, John Travolta is responsible and stays within budget. When he makes a film, there is a contract that says I will do this work for this pay. The budget could be five dollars or five million; the amount is irrelevant. When there is a goal, a budget, or a plan, responsible people will try to honor it and not disregard it.

Budgets are not just for the corporate world either. The idea really inspired me so now when we plan parties, vacations,

or even trips to the grocery store I try to have some kind of budget in mind. It may be an extravagant budget or a very tight one but to me having a realistic target to work with helps maintain focus. Plus it is a responsible and fair way to go especially if there are other people involved. Having a budget is like making a promise or commitment, a way of saying I will do this work for this reward and hopefully everyone will honor their part. This doesn't always happen, and things always change, but at least with a budget there is a foundation to work from. I think budgets bring a very powerful awareness to a project because if you agree to do something then you should keep your word. If John Travolta has a budget, why can't you, on a smaller scale of course?

WHITE HAT AWARENESS

*When there is a goal, a budget, or a plan, honor it.
Don't disregard it*

Excuses! Excuses!

Now let's shift from responsible to irresponsible. To me making excuses is a very unproductive and irresponsible trait to have. It is certainly not a trait you want to master if you plan to wear the good guy white hat. In fact, excuses are habits full of misleading behaviors, avoidances, or omissions.

People who make excuses have a potentially destructive way of thinking because they don't want to take responsibility for their own actions and poor decisions. We have talked

about people making mistakes, messing up and doing dumb things. That is okay. That is human. The negative outcome of our action is rarely the real problem. The bigger issue is how we accept or deny our contribution to the mishap or disaster.

People who make excuses think it is always someone else's fault. They make up stories, point fingers and shift the blame to anyone but themselves. It's my parents fault. The teacher is an idiot. The boss is out to get me. The government should be responsible for that. It wasn't me. Someone else made me do it. These sound like anyone you know? Of course! We all have excuse makers in our lives. And my guess is that they are not among the most successful and supportive people in your life.

Excuses are the shifting of responsibility and a way of deflecting or at least softening the impact of a negative action or poor decision. This only perpetuates the bad decisions because if it wasn't your fault, then how can you learn from your mistake? What I am trying to say is that there is nothing positive about making excuses. Sometimes there are good honest explanations for a mishap or a negative action, but hopefully you take responsibility for your part. Excuses are the stories we tell to so we don't have to accept the responsibility for our actions.

WHITE HAT AWARENESS

*An excuse is the story people tell
to avoid responsibility*

Why all the guilt?

Before I begin here I should probably be honest and mention that this section may be a little bit biased. Why? Because I am not a big fan of guilt. I just don't see the point in all of the negative doubt and harsh feelings attached to a mistake. Guilt is something I am not intimately acquainted with. That being the case, hopefully my white hat awareness lesson is still something you can relate to. If not I won't take it personally.

Let's begin by getting in touch with all of that imagination we talked about earlier. Wow, doesn't that first chapter seem like such a long time ago? Anyway, imagine you are in a court of law and you are on trial for whatever the latest "crime" you happen to be feeling guilty about. You stand in front of the judge and he or she reads the description of the crime, injustice, bad decision, poor judgment, or miscalculation that you are accusing yourself of. Remember you are on the stand so you can't explain, justify or make excuses. You simply have to enter a plea. What will it be? Guilty or Not Guilty?

If the "crime" you committed is true and you are guilty as charged, then take responsibility for your mistake. Pay the fine, apologize to the victim, and do the community service your inner imaginary judge requests. Accept the verdict and be done with it. You entered a plea of guilty and accepted the consequences of your actions so quit dragging out your sentence. Stop spending unnecessary negative thoughts on something that you already settled. And while you are at it,

since it is your court, your rules, why not seal the record, and stamp a big Case Closed sign on the file just to be sure.

I realize this may sound a bit silly, but to me, so does all of the brain power people waste on such an unproductive emotion as guilt. And it gets even worse because let's say the plea you entered was not guilty! That means you were innocent of all wrong doings and committed no crime at all. If that is the case then what is there to feel guilty about? You were innocent.

Okay, so maybe the situation didn't turn out as planned, and perhaps you made some errors in judgment, or didn't have all the facts, but that doesn't mean you are guilty. Getting something wrong, failing, and honest mistakes are all grounds for disappointment, but not guilt! If you are not guilty then stop treating yourself like you are a prisoner in your own mind. Your imaginary jury looked at all of the facts and couldn't find enough evidence to convict let alone waste time and energy on a trial. The evidence supports a not guilty decision then who are you to argue. Not guilty means not guilty. You are innocent of the crime and cleared of all charges. You are free to go so have faith in your own imaginary internal justice system and accept your verdict!

WHITE HAT AWARENESS

If you are guilty, accept responsibility.

If you are innocent, there is nothing to feel guilty about

Lies should be uncomfortable

I started this chapter with the idea that the truth often makes us feel uncomfortable. We don't want to hurt other people's feelings or we don't want to cause trouble so we tell quick lies to make the person feel better and our discomfort goes away. From my perspective, once again, we are looking at it all backwards. Shouldn't telling the truth be easy and telling lies be the uncomfortable part? That makes total sense to me, however we tell little white lies all the time and never even notice or consider it a lie. How you doing - remember? The nature of not wanting to burden someone with our problems by saying we are fine when we are not is a totally acceptable thing to do. If it wasn't no one would get anything done because we would be too busy listening to everyone complain. No one wants that.

On the other hand telling nothing but the truth is a totally unrealistic way to go. It is so much easier and faster to tell a little white lie. Lies are a part of life. However, lies should be the exception not the rule. Plus when you do decide to tell a little white lie, it should feel a bit uncomfortable.

One of the reasons I feel strongly about this point is because like so many other things in life, once we become comfortable with something, it becomes easy and unconscious. We don't even have to think about it. Telling a lie is a very dangerous path to take.

Lies lead to more lies. Small untruths turn into blatant lies. The truth gets pushed further and further away so we can't

even tell the difference any more. I remember an interview with the real Wolf of Wall Street guy and basically he said that when lies build up you begin to believe them. When that happens you can convince yourself that dishonesty and deception are not a bad thing.

I also remember talking with a friend who was going through a divorce. He was complaining about his wife. He was hurt that she didn't respect him. He said he just couldn't trust her anymore. I looked straight at him and said, "That's because you lie to her all the time." That kind of shocked him. I think he was at that point where the lies had become so comfortable, so common, that he wasn't even aware he was telling them anymore. In his mind they weren't lies, they had become just a way of life.

There are tons of things that make us feel uncomfortable and situations that we don't want to deal with. If something is blocking our path or getting in our way then wouldn't it be better if we hear the truth so we can fix it? Lies make us feel better but they do not lead to solutions, only more problems. Lies are even worse because they erode trust and trust is the foundation for so many positive things; strong relationships, good business, and of course our good guy hero who wears the white hat. Life's journeys don't usually start out full of deceit but tiny little lies and untruths can easily build up resulting in serious damage.

Remember how we discussed that negativity has more influence over the good stuff. Well when it comes to trusting people and telling the truth, negativity has tremendous

power. If we are dishonest or fib even once, the distrust is there for a long time afterwards. It takes a lot of truths to make up for one little lie because the negative impact of a lie lingers. In fact lies are so powerful they have the ability to hurt people to the core. Small lies can do a lot of damage so let's turn things back around by getting more comfortable with telling the truth.

WHITE HAT AWARENESS

Small lies do a lot of damage

White Hat Awareness for Truth

- If you want a better life, then you must live a better life
- If you are not truthful, there is likely going to be trouble
- Being honest helps us see the whole truth, problems and all
- Awareness is my idea of the truth
- Untruths can easily become a subconscious habit
- Tell a white lie if you must, but make it a conscious choice
- If you say it, you must do it
- When there is a goal, budget, or plan, honor it. Don't disregard it
- An excuse is the story people tell to avoid responsibility
- If you are guilty, accept responsibility; If not - you are innocent,
so there is nothing to feel guilty about
- Small lies do a lot of damage

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