

P R O P O S A L

# INVINCIBLE

The 10 Lies Children Learn Through Their  
Experience With Domestic Violence And The  
Truths To Set Them Free

**By Brian F. Martin**

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And The Truths To Set Them Free

**Brian F. Martin**

*I never knew that my mother slept with a knife under her bed.  
And she never knew that I slept with a bat under mine. But there we both were,  
in the same house, a room apart, keeping our secret weapons handy, terrified of  
what the night might bring.*

*Three decades later, as I look into the eyes of my adorable six-year-old daughter  
and four-year-old son, I wonder how different their lives would be if they had to  
sleep with weapons under their beds. Fortunately, they'll never know this  
burden, for they are loved, protected, and secure, just as every child should be.*

*But for millions of children around the world, this is not the case. Their hearts  
are filled with fear, anger, and hopelessness. They're battered and bruised,  
suffering in silence, and frightened of the night. What should be happy dreams  
are nightmares, and they sink into defeat.*

*But there is an answer--a secret to stopping the violence and undoing the  
damage, a pathway to creating a brand-new life that defies defeat—one that  
makes every child, and every adult survivor of abuse, invincible.*

*Introduction, **Invincible***

In *Invincible*, **BRIAN MARTIN**, founder and Chairman of The Makers of Memories Foundation, an organization dedicated to healing children and adults impacted by domestic violence, makes his literary debut with an inspirational book offering a blueprint for recovery, including powerful techniques to conquer and transcend the past.

Published at a critical juncture, *Invincible* is the first book to fully address what UNICEF calls “one of the most damaging, unaddressed human rights violations in the world today,” an epidemic affecting 275 million children globally.

The book authoritatively provides tangible, concrete steps that will enable 40 million adults who experienced domestic violence as children in the U.S. to

understand what occurred, how it impacted them, and how to ultimately change the meaning of the past, empowering them to pursue a revitalized future.

Based upon the author's poignant personal history, illuminating case studies, and cutting edge research, this 200-page guide discusses chapter-by- chapter the ten most common damaging emotions that children in violent homes internalize and demonstrates how each emotion can be transformed into its virtual opposite, turning pain into power.

The ten emotional "lies," based on research conducted by the world's leading researchers, are introduced by the author in the first pages of the book: "*We can turn ourselves from feeling scared to confident, from guilty to innocent, from hurt to healed, from angry to passionate, from hopeless to optimistic, from depressed to grateful, from resentful to giving, from worthless to worthwhile, from unattractive to beautiful, and from unloved to loved.*"

"Just as we learned the wrong things about ourselves," he writes, "we can re-program ourselves to learn the right things too."

Neither academic nor theoretical, Martin's user-friendly first-person narrative reflects his passion for effecting real change.

Each chapter contains crisp and vivid stories from the author's early life that dramatize the main themes, supported by stories from others, expert opinions, and the latest empirical research. And it ends with a section called THE TRUTH—designed to motivate and inspire. It's a series of affirmations, techniques, suggestions, questions, and exercises that crystallize the message and encourage readers to reflect and transform themselves.

As we read in the book's Introduction, "Through no fault of their own, children are thrust into a horror film in violent homes, their developing brains and nervous systems traumatized by screams in the night, broken glass, slamming doors, and police sirens--all of it injuring the soul of a child."

And it's happening *everywhere*.

In the U.S., there are more than 3 million children who experience domestic violence every year, a child injured every 35 seconds. And tragically, two thousand of them die annually, the most frequent fatalities age four and younger.

"Again and again," Martin writes, "children are humiliated and beaten down, and see the person they love most hurt and threatened, yet they're unable to do

anything about it. With no voices, no resources, no physical strength, and no one to rescue them, they wind up feeling worthless and depressed, convinced that their lives will never change. But I'm telling you that they can."

*Invincible* begins with a first-hand account of Martin's chaotic early years, where violent rampages and sleepless nights were the norm.

"I came from nothing," he reflects in the book. "My mother was a waitress, doing everything she could to survive with two children; my father was in jail. We had very little. But that wasn't the true challenge. The horror of our house was the presence of my mother's violent boyfriend, a failed football player whom she met on a late shift."

We first meet the author as a six-year-old, a handsome dark-haired boy hiding upstairs, watching through the spindles of the staircase as his mother is brutally beaten.

Desperate to protect her, on several separate occasions, starting when he was a first grader, he attempts to kill his mother's boyfriend--using a bat, an icepick, and even a gun. He later learned that this was not so uncommon, as two-thirds of boys who commit murder are trying to do the same thing.

"But I just couldn't do it," he admits, "which only made me feel more impotent, powerless, and pathetic."

There came times, though, when all this changed—several pivotal moments of redemption that turned him around.

As we read, rather than continuing the cycle of violence, Martin had a series of awakenings that allowed him to recognize the inner strength he'd developed as a result of the abuse.

He used that strength to constructively propel himself to a series of personal and professional achievements. He became a business leader in the marketing and media worlds, and today, at age 38, is focusing his efforts on his vision—to live in a world where no child is touched by domestic violence.

"But what were my chances for success?" he writes in the Introduction. "The only role model I had liked the idea of throwing lit cigarettes at me or throwing me across the room into furniture.

"If I could recover from what happened to me, I know that it's possible for others as well," affirms Martin, who has committed his life to creating awareness

of childhood exposure to domestic violence and offering survivors an emotional lifeboat that can enable them to fully heal from it.

"For anyone who feels trapped in a violent home, as hopeless as it may seem today, this misery will end," he promises, "and my book is going to prove that it can."

\* \* \* \* \*

A magnetic speaker, described by Anthony Robbins as "a passionate, articulate advocate who never gives up," Martin recently appeared on the nationally-syndicated TV program *Dr. Phil* and before Congressional leaders to discuss how children are affected by violence and what can be done to enlighten the public about it.

"My mission," states Martin, "is to demonstrate to anyone who still feels defeated that what you were conditioned to believe about yourself is a LIE. You were not to blame. You are not worthless. You did not deserve this. I believed those lies myself for a very long time, but no longer. And through my foundation, I carry that message to children suffering today, giving them the tools they need to pursue the hopeful future that they deserve."

As he relates in the book:

*A few years ago, I took a group of children living in violent homes on a trip to Disney World where we watched an amazing fireworks show called "Wishes." There I was, sitting in the Magic Kingdom next to a six-year-old boy, one of the cutest kids you've ever seen. At the end of the show, a star shot over the Castle and you were supposed to make a wish upon it. I asked the little boy: "So what's your wish?" He looked up at me and quietly said: "I wish you could make him stop hurting her." My heart stopped. I just shook my head, and put my arm around his shoulders. I remembered that when I was exactly his age, that was my wish too. And I thought to myself, this should not be the wish of any child, much less a first-grader.*

In an effort to bring increased public attention to an epidemic affecting millions, Martin's foundation has recently produced a groundbreaking documentary film, *43 Million Secrets*, dedicated to the corresponding number of childhood survivors of domestic violence in the U.S. It will be screened in February on Capitol Hill before an audience of congressmen, policy makers in the federal government, and leaders of national nonprofit organizations.

In all of Martin's work as a public speaker and educator, and as a pioneer in the field of domestic violence, he inspires audiences by telling them about some of the most accomplished people in the world who have survived abuse and gone on to greatness.

This list includes Bill Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, Senator Scott Brown, Halle Berry, Joe Torre, Patrick Stewart, Christina Aguilera, Macaulay Culkin, Drew Barrymore, Anthony Robbins, and

Tina Turner, "all of whom found ways to change the meaning of their experience and move beyond their pain," he says, "and mine their greatest potential."

"But beyond the celebrity stories," says Martin, "I promise that you'll be inspired by the resilience of the *children* you read about here in the book, how their bravery was welded through adversity, and how their suffering gave them invincible strength.

"And in the end," he believes, "children need dreams to get through the nightmares, so the true secret of becoming invincible is having a higher purpose, a belief that there's a destiny out there for *you*—something that you can create that's uniquely yours, that gives you a compelling future, something to look *forward* to. That's the birthright of every child.

"The legacy of a violent past does not have to be a lifetime of pain, unrealized dreams, therapy, untapped potential, anti-depressants, misery, addiction, or regret. And you don't have to perpetuate the cycle of violence."

\* \* \* \* \*

## About the Author: **BRIAN MARTIN**

*Anthony Robbins: "Brian is passionately committed to improving the lives of children and adults impacted by domestic violence—and his unique ability to connect with people makes his book a true source of inspiration and strength."*

*Jeffrey Edleson, Ph.D.: "Brian is a dynamic powerhouse who has the insights, initiative, and experience to begin a national movement to end the cycle of violence in our society once and for all."*

Brian F. Martin is Chairman & founder of The Makers of Memories Foundation, an organization devoted to transforming the lives of children and adults impacted by domestic violence and to creating a world where no child is touched by this issue. He is also the Chairman and founder of Brand Connections, one of the largest targeted media and marketing services companies in the U.S. A leading voice in the fast-changing media landscape, Martin has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Advertising Age*, *Crain's New York Business*, and *Brandweek*.

In recent years, as a philanthropist, educator, and children's rights advocate, Martin has effectively used his corporate expertise and resources to create awareness about the epidemic of childhood exposure to domestic violence, and design programs to combat it in order to end the suffering of millions. Whether appearing before Congress, or on radio and TV, Martin is a passionate, articulate spokesman, who has committed his life to service and contribution. Through his foundation, he has created an ambitious national action plan to end the cycle of domestic violence once and for all.

\* \* \* \* \*

A native of New Jersey, Martin understands this issue intimately. His father spent the early years of Martin's boyhood in jail, while his mother, a waitress, was continually abused by her longtime boyfriend, who overshadowed every part of his childhood.





While over the years he made a number of attempts to kill his mother's abuser, the prospect of incarceration kept his impulses in check, and he became the first man in three generations of his family not to serve time in prison.

At eighteen, working as a waiter and in a local factory while attending community college, the enterprising teen was given one book by his mother which led him to devour other self-help and psychology books, and biographies of his heroes, role-modeling those he admired and discovering, within himself, an inner strength and resilience he'd gained, he says, through his ordeal with domestic violence.

Determined to become financially independent, he discovered a unique gift, the ability to market and create business opportunities, fueled by immense drive. He put himself through college and graduated Magna Cum Laude from Rutgers University, where he earned his MBA, and thereafter began building his companies.

In 1997, at the age of 24, he started Brand Connections with \$1000 while working as a marketer for the pain remedy Advil. In just a decade, he expanded his business, connecting 80% of the Fortune 500 brands with more than two billion customers worldwide. In 2008, he sold the company to a private equity firm for \$150 million. By this time he had become a pioneer in inventively using strategies that included product sampling, targeted out-of-home media, experiential marketing, and social media integration—all skills he brings to the promotion of *Invincible*.

In 2007, committed to using his business expertise and financial resources to fight against domestic violence, he founded Makers of Memories. Martin's foundation is the only national domestic violence organization dedicated exclusively to helping children. The father of two children, Frank, 5, and Ella, 7, Martin divides his time between New Jersey and New York. Visit: [www.makersofmemories.org](http://www.makersofmemories.org).

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### **Collaborator Biography**

Bestselling author and veteran celebrity interviewer **Glenn Plaskin** specializes in writing self-help & inspiration-oriented books. His published work includes ***Horowitz: The Biography of Vladimir Horowitz***; ***Turning Point: Pivotal Moments in the Lives of America's Celebrities***, ***Katie: Up & Down The Hall: The True Story Of How One Dog Turned Four Neighbors Into A Family***; and ***The Power To Change Today: Simple Secrets To The Satisfied Life***. His profiles have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Daily News*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Family Circle*, *US Weekly*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan*, *W*, and *Playboy*. His interview subjects have included Katharine Hepburn, Nancy Reagan, Calvin Klein, Senator Edward Kennedy, Audrey Hepburn, Elizabeth Taylor, Leona Helmsley, Barbara Walters, Diane Sawyer, Donald Trump, Al Pacino, and Meryl Streep. His TV appearances include *Oprah*, *The Today Show*, and *Larry King Live*. He lives in New York City. Visit the author's web sites at [www.glennplaskin.com](http://www.glennplaskin.com) and [www.katiebook.com](http://www.katiebook.com).

## **MARKETING & DEMOGRAPHICS**

As founder and chairman of his own foundation and as one of the nation's leading marketing and media entrepreneurs, Brian Martin is in a unique position to partner with a publisher in effectively promoting his debut book. As outlined below, the 38-year-old businessman and educator will do this in four primary ways:

- **Foundation Initiatives**
- **Self-Funded Marketing Strategies**
- **Traditional Public Relations Outreach** (The author has retained his own publicist, Lawrence D. Kopp, President of the TASC Group)
- **Social Media Campaign**

The dramatic arc of the book's structure will be seductive to those who identify with the issue and to anyone interested in the welfare of children, as well as personally intriguing to the Americans who were exposed to domestic violence as children. TV and radio programs, blogs, newspapers, and magazines will find the narrative compelling, as it totally reframes one of society's most complex and damaging problems from the standpoint of the child's experience, using unique case studies, the latest empirical research, and the author's personal story.

**INVINCIBLE** is targeted directly to:

- an audience of 43 million adults and adolescents in the U.S. who experienced domestic violence as children, combined with an additional 40 million affected family members
- a global audience based on UNICEF'S estimate that 275 million children are abused each year
- a secondary worldwide market of readers who annually spend \$693 million on self-improvement and inspiration books.

### **FOUNDATION INITIATIVES:**

- **Production of *43 Million Secrets***, a documentary film featuring the case histories of affected families, together with commentary from interventionist Anthony Robbins and others, set for national release via film festivals, non-profit partners, and digital platforms.
- **Bulk Purchase of the book**, to be distributed to foundation clients, domestic violence shelters, child abuse advocates, and all major U.S. domestic violence organizations, a total of 5,000 copies.
- **Book Trailer**, a dramatic 3-minute video with music and narration to be used in a national ad campaign, on the foundation's web site, and in social media marketing.

- ***Invincible Web Site***, with a user application, allowing visitors to share their story and read excerpts from the book
- **Congressional Outreach:** A series of events have been planned, which started with a congressional briefing on October 12, 2011 to educate leaders and policy makers about the problem of childhood exposure to domestic violence and possible solutions.
- **Children's Book:** Working with a team of award-winning writers and illustrators, the Foundation will create a book for kids 5-8, to be given away as a bonus with any hardcover purchase of *Invincible*.
- **Intervention Program:** A new national intervention program, with a corresponding national marketing campaign, will train and guide adults who are part of the informal protective network of vulnerable children.

### **SELF-FUNDED MARKETING STRATEGIES:**

- Targeted Outreach Program To Client Brands: Using his relationships with 300 Fortune 500 companies, the author will procure endorsements and promotion initiatives from such clients as Walmart, Proctor & Gamble, Chrysler, etc.
- With ownership access to Smiley360.com and Brandshare, samples of the book will be provided to 200,000+ target consumers who are heavy social media users in return for online reviews and recommendations.
- Promotion Coupons: One hundred thousand coupons issued to book readers will be inserted into packages shipped from online retailers to consumers offering a 20% voucher for the purchase of the book

### **TRADITIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS OUTREACH**

Telegenic and articulate, Brian Martin is an accomplished public speaker who has appeared before Congress and on such national TV programs as Dr. Phil. He communicates his message expertly using stories from his own life, and those of children he's worked with at his foundation. In partnership with the publisher, his media campaign would include:

#### **TV**

- Pitch major network and cable morning shows such as The Today Show, Good Morning America, American Morning, etc.
- Pitch major public policy shows such as Morning Joe, Rachel Maddow, Anderson Cooper 360, etc.
- Pitch local affiliates in New York City, Washington DC, Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston.
- Pitch daytime talk shows such as Dr. Phil, The Joy Behar Show, The Ellen DeGeneres Show, etc.

#### **sRADIO**

- Pitch public radio programs such as Weekend Edition, Tell Me More, This American Life, The Diane Rehm Show, The Tavis Smiley Show, The Leonard Lopate Show, etc.
- Pitch talk radio shows such as The Curtis Sliwa Show, The John Gambling Show, The Tom Joyner Morning Show, etc.

### **PRINT MEDIA**

- Pitch all major newspaper book reviewers, advocacy and non-profit reporters, feature reporters, etc.
- Pitch major newswires such as Associated Press, Reuters, Bloomberg, etc.
- Pitch major newspaper magazines such as Parade Magazine, New York Times Magazine, Washington Post Magazine, etc.
- Pitch major magazines such as Family Circle, Woman's Day, O Magazine, etc.

### **INTERNET**

- Pitch major blogs such as Salon, Slate, Huffington Post, Christian Science Monitor, etc.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING**

- **Intimately aware of how social media has changed marketing, Martin will bring to bear his network of resources to leverage electronic word of mouth.**
- **Facebook:** A dedicated Facebook page will be developed and managed to build an on-line community of readers and supporters to promote purchases of the book.
- **Twitter:** A promotion campaign using Twitter will be planned and executed to enhance the marketing efforts outlined above and generate and sustain interest in the book.
- **SEO:** A robust search engine optimization program will be implemented to build links from promotional sites for the book to blogs and other media outlets.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS OUTLINE

*INVINCIBLE* is organized into ten main chapters, each ending with a TRUTH section, plus a Preface, written by X, followed by an Introduction.

Preface: By An Authority In The Field Of Domestic Violence

Introduction: THE SOUL OF A CHILD

CHAPTER ONE: TERRORS IN THE NIGHT: Scared To Confident

CHAPTER TWO: THE BATTLEFIELD: Guilty To Innocent

CHAPTER THREE: BEYOND THE WOUND: Hurt To Healed

CHAPTER FOUR: IMPULSE TO KILL: Angry To Passionate

CHAPTER FIVE: TEST OF FAITH: Hopeless To Guided

CHAPTER SIX: THE HAPPINESS BAR: Depressed To Grateful

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE BALM THAT HEALS : Resentful To Forgiving

CHAPTER EIGHT: ACHIEVER OF DREAMS: Worthless To Worthy

CHAPTER NINE: A NEW REFLECTION: Unattractive To Beautiful

CHAPTER TEN: THE HUNGRY HEART: Unloved To Loved

-SAMPLE CHAPTER-  
**THE HUNGRY HEART**  
**- From Unloved To Loved-**

*"If my own mother and father don't love me enough to protect me from all of this pain, who else could ever love me?"*

Could a child who asked herself this question go on to become one of the most beloved and adored figures in the world?

Oprah Winfrey did.

Four nights out of seven, for my entire childhood, the man who abused my mother invaded our house. And you could smell him coming. I can never forget the disgusting combination of Scotch, cigarettes, and "feet."

Let me explain. He was cheap and selfish with his money and liked to keep it all for himself, never sharing any of it. He worked as a bartender, as I did, for many years. And in that line of work, you're on your feet for 10 hours at a time. He certainly didn't invest any of his money in leather shoes and, instead, purchased inexpensive patent leather ones. And because they didn't breathe, they emitted an absolutely rancid odor. And *that's* what he smelled like to me.

As we saw in the last chapter, my mother chose him because of her initial attraction, and because he was helpful to her at work, but that soon dissipated into a nightmare of masochistic dependence and violence.

But with a former husband in jail, two kids and no money, my mother heavily depended on him, though he was anything but supportive.

Still, he paid attention to her—and I guess even negative attention was better than nothing at all. He also reinforced her opinion of herself—that she was worthless.

Knowing the story of her pain and abuse as a girl, I could later see that none of this was her fault. If her mother and father had not hurt her, and told her she was "fat, stupid, and ugly," (as *their* own parents did to them, mind you) she would have known that she deserved so much better than Jack. But she didn't feel that she did. Nor did she see the harm she was doing to me and to my sister.

Looking back, I can see how difficult it was for her to run the household or express consistent caring and affection. She was just too overwhelmed—

overworked, physically exhausted, stressed by financial pressure, and strung out by nightly fights.

There was a period of time, in fact, when the violence in our house was constant--the open-handed punches, screams, and tears filling every night. When I tried to stop it, I got pushed aside, swatted away like a fly, as if I didn't matter. And as always, I felt powerless--and insignificant, which can make you feel incredibly angry.

Making matters worse, we were often broke, with no money to pay the light or phone bill or the rent, much less take a vacation.

But one summer day, all that changed. My mother told me she was going to take me away on a little trip. She'd had a particularly violent fight with Jack and, looking back, I think she was toying with the idea of leaving him.

So off we went in our beat-up old car--a white Monte Carlo with red interior. It was so rusted that half of the floor was rotted away. I was sitting in the back seat, staring down at a hole in the floor, watching the yellow lines flash by as my mother drove.

But I didn't care. All I knew was that with every passing yellow line, we were getting further and further away from Jack.

Where were we going? I had no idea. But we wound up at Lavallette beach at the Jersey Shore—at a place called The Trade Winds Motor Lodge.

The room was so quiet and calm. It was just the two of us. For once, I felt really safe. And for that one night, it was as if we were in heaven. Up until that point in my life, it is the only night of peace I can remember.

The next morning, I was sitting on the beach with my Mom, enjoying the hot sun and being near the water. And I remember telling her that I never wanted to leave. She told me: "What's happening at home is not your fault. And it's not your job to protect me. But I can tell you that what you're going through is making you stronger than you'll ever know."

That was the last thing that I remember her saying before we left the beach.

Back home that night, with Jack on a rampage, my head got slammed into the side of the coffee table, the edge of it so sharp that it split my skin in two. My face was covered in blood.

So there I was, home again--alone, afraid, and wondering, "If my mother doesn't love me enough to get me out of this place and keep me safe, *what is love*? And if she doesn't love me, how could anyone else?

I later learned that feeling that I was unloved was yet another lie I'd been conditioned to believe. In truth, she loved me as much as any mother could ever love a son.

\* \* \* \* \*

As a child, I didn't understand the word *love*. I didn't know what it was or what it meant. And I've struggled with that word my entire life. In fact, for the last 38 years, it's been the hardest, most uncomfortable word to say out loud. I could say the most extraordinarily foul and profane word in a church more easily than I could say love.

So what is it? We all know that love is an emotion defined by tenderness, affection, and caring. And when two people feel this toward one another, they act that way. It's expressed in the spirit of kindness and compassion.

You can see it in someone's eyes, feel it in their touch, and hear it in their words. And it's the one thing that a child needs most, and the one thing they get the least of in a violent home. It's a deep tender caring for the well being of another.

"I love you" wasn't something that was said in my household. But even more than that, I didn't know what it was supposed to *feel* like.

Maybe that was because I was always so alone as a kid. At least, it felt that way.

My sister, as you know, had run away to live with my grandmother when I was in first grade, refusing to tolerate any longer the nightly fights and the beatings that she endured from both my mother and Jack.

And after that, being the only child, there was nobody to play with and little camaraderie in the neighborhood. And for children who are raised in violent homes, even when they have siblings, they're often alone in their own minds.

During the daytime, our house was silent, and although I liked it better than the explosions at night, it was still a deadly vacuum to live in.



My Mom slept a lot during the day and worked nights as a cocktail waitress. So I took care of myself. I didn't have many friends—and I didn't really want the friends I did have coming over my house. I was too embarrassed for that.

I was sometimes with my father on weekends, helping out at his jewelry store in Newark. But the rest of the days of the week, I fended for myself. I had dinner alone. I watched TV alone. And I put myself to sleep alone.

This all-encompassing loneliness was my reality, the feeling of utter emptiness and unwanted solitude.

Like many kids in violent families, you feel abandoned, deserted, and detached. Love comes and goes so sporadically that it's a foreign concept, a riddle never to be solved. You sink into malaise, feeling excluded and set apart. You may withdraw and show no interest in your surroundings. And your solitary existence negates the possibility of real connection.

Children in violent homes who feel lonely often have poor relationships with their peers. Some kids, as we saw earlier, are consistently rejected or victimized by classmates, while others are the victimizers themselves, preying on those that they perceive as weaker than them.

Coming home from school, you return to the same bleak atmosphere, an empty or chaotic household. There's a sameness to the day. And in the end, all that aloneness spells just one thing—the heartfelt belief that you are *unloved*.

So like millions of children growing up in violent homes, you're alienated and estranged from the very people who are supposed to care for you. Tender caresses become slaps. Soothing voices become put-downs. And loving glances become evil stares.

The end result is that you feel unwanted, unsafe, and bereft of love. This feeling of being so uncared for--and undervalued—makes you feel as if you don't even *deserve* love. And without any consistent source of it, you give up hope that you'll ever have it. So like a prisoner hungry for crumbs, you take whatever you can get.

In my house, although blissful moments were few and far between, from time to time, there were moments of comfort, when I glimpsed what love could feel like.

For example, when my mother did get home from work, there were many, many nights when I found great comfort in her arms, and I remember the excitement of her coming into my room to tuck me in.

She'd put my stuffed bear right next to me and lie down with me in the bed. She'd still be dressed in her uniform, and I remember the feeling of her starched blouse brushing up against my face. I smelled a combination of her perfume, restaurant food, and the Niagara spray starch that she ironed into her uniform, to make it crisp.

And on those nights, there was a book she used to read to me called *Goodnight Moon*--the classic children's book by Margaret Wise Brown. I could never forget the images of the red balloon and the cow jumping over the moon, the bears, and the kittens and the mittens and this quiet old lady whispering "hush."

And finally you got to a point in the story where it was time to say Good Night to everything. "Goodnight room. Goodnight moon. Goodnight cow jumping over the moon. Goodnight light, and the red balloon..."

I loved this story and my mother never tired of reading it to me. Those were the nights that were extraordinarily comforting to me, when I felt really safe.

And much later in the night, when I heard the loud voices, the thing I remember most about that book was my wishing that I could say "Goodnight Noises." The shouting would make my heart race. And even today, when I hear a sudden loud voice, the adrenaline starts pumping, and I'm brought back to those nights again—a haunting memory of soothing bedtime stories interrupted by terrifying screams.

As I got older, by the time I was 8, 9, 10, there was no more tucking in. That all ended. The fights were intense. My mother was struggling. Jack was a madman. And my sister was gone.

I felt *unlovable*. So even if I had said the words "I love you," what meaning would it have had? My love, I believed, was worth *nothing* because I was worth nothing. And how could I possibly ever love someone if I didn't love myself? I had nothing to give. After a while, this realization wasn't even painful.

I was just numb, dead inside—closed, hostile, and angry.

\* \* \* \* \*

Like many children growing up in a violent environment, I also felt like an outcast to our extended family. My relatives wanted nothing to do with my mother. But my loyalties were entirely to her--and I would have done anything to protect my Mom. So I felt I had to choose sides.

I can never forget Thanksgiving when I was eight years old. All my aunts and uncles, and their children, were coming and the dinner was being held at the home of one of my mother's four brothers—the wealthiest of them, which meant, to me, that he was living in a “normal” house, on the Jersey Shore.

That afternoon my mother and I pulled up to this nice home, and as we were walking up the hill to the front door, her brother came outside and told my Mom: “Your son's welcome here, but you're not—not anymore.”

That sliced through me. And I refused to go inside. But my mother made me. As I later learned, my mother was banned from his house because my sister, Dawn, had told all the relatives what was happening in our household—not only about what Jack was doing to us, but how my mother sometimes slapped me and my sister around too. As I think about it today, I can understand why she told them that.

But I wonder if my extended family's reaction to my mother would have been different had they really been aware of the impact that domestic violence has on children. In a situation where an adult is terrorizing a defenseless child, family members can and should step in to provide protective defense. But instead of doing that, my mother was shunned.

This alienation is common—as the “secret” or shame of the abuse keeps one part of the family separated from the other. But being estranged from relatives only isolates children more and amplifies the problem. They feel emotionally abandoned, convinced that they're both *unloved*—and *unlovable*.

The first part—feeling unloved—may be true. But the second, being unlovable, is a total lie.

So a child is both right and wrong. They *feel* unloved. But they are *not* unlovable. This is a damaging falsehood that makes them believe that they are defective and unworthy of tenderness or care.

*Every* child is lovable and deserves to feel that way. And when they don't, it's confusing and terrifying to admit: My parents *don't* love me. This psychic pain is the worst kind of punishment—just as destructive as physical abuse.

In fact, children who feel unloved suffer as much or more than if they had been physically injured. The one thing that they most need is taken away. And the pain of it tears away at their spirits, contradicting everything mankind has been trained to need and expect.

There isn't another species on the planet that requires love to survive to the degree that we do. So the realization that you're *unloved* brings with it the threat of death and extinction, and most children can't bear the existential agony of that reality.

In short, *we need love*: Right from the start, love is a condition for a baby's ability to thrive, no less vital than milk. A child needs to be touched. And most children get love automatically and unconditionally. A newborn clings to its mother, the powerful hormone oxytocin creating a profound bond between them.

This "cuddle chemical" is essential for milk production, nursing, and the mother's ability to bond with her offspring. It triggers a feeling of profound connection. And in this blissful state, a child basks in the comfort of a mother's arms—knowing the world is a safe place to be.

But if a baby is routinely deprived of touch and affection, the consequences are severe, the possible result being the so-called *failure to thrive syndrome*. This occurs when a baby is ignored, perfunctorily fed, or left alone. A child will despair and become lackadaisical and unresponsive. In extreme cases, the baby may even stop eating, waste away, and die.

*That's* how essential it is for a child to be loved. And a child shouldn't even need to think about getting it. It should be as automatic as your heart pumping or blinking.

This capacity to give and receive love is unique to human beings--our greatest gift and strength, a sure defense against loneliness and alienation. Love is our equivalent to the rhino's horn, the cheetah's speed, or the python's squeeze.

But when a child isn't loved, they come to the disastrous conclusion that they're unlovable. And they blame themselves for it.

As neuroscientist David Sousa observes: “A child inundated with violence concludes that they are profoundly unlovable and the physical effects of it are devastating. Their stressed systems have elevated levels of cortisol, which interferes with the human growth hormone. So muscle, bone, and organ growth are all slowed down, while the continuing presence of cortisol and adrenaline compromises the immune system, which explains why abused children are so often sick.”

If parents knew what damage they were causing to their children--they would never allow it to continue.

And while my own mother failed to get me out of that environment, I know she loved me terribly and would have done anything she possibly could to protect me—and I her. If only she knew.

But she didn’t know. And, of course, as a child, she’d experienced the same violent environment. And now, as an adult, she didn’t know any better because she was so focused on her own pain and survival. She couldn’t stop to think about love. But she, like all mothers, believed that she was doing the best she could to show me love.

So often, though, these women are overwhelmed and out of control. They have low self-esteem and no good information. They themselves don’t understand why they feel so numb. More than three quarters of them grew up in the same type of household.

And that numbness voids out the conscious need for love. You feel as if you can survive *without* it. Your motto becomes: *I don’t need it and I don’t want it.*

So in the end, you’re left feeling more alone and unloved than ever.

\* \* \* \* \*

Michael was a 7-year-old who saw his mother, Jane, abused on a daily basis. His father, Tom, an electrician, would typically go out drinking with his buddies after work, get drunk, and warn Jane that, “when I come home you’re going to get it.”

The boy watched his mother’s arm painfully twisted behind her, her hair pulled out, and face slapped. One time, his father punched her so hard that one of her teeth was broken.

Michael was terrified of the fights, and would break down in tears because he didn't know what to do or when it was going to happen next. He'd beg his father to stop, but it never helped. Meanwhile, his four-month-old sister was wailing in her crib, unattended.

When Michael was alone with his father, Tom was gruff and angry with him, hypercritical of everything the boy did.

All this resulted in Michael feeling unloved and alone--disconnected from both parents, with nobody to care for him or offer reassurance. He got no affection, no pats on the back, nothing at all in the way of tenderness or consistent concern.

His mother, like my own, coped with the abuse by drinking alcohol daily, too depressed and hung over to properly attend to her son. She expected him, at age seven, to pick out his own clothes, get dressed, and make his own breakfast.

As the years passed, she never asked him about his friends at school, where he went in the afternoons, or when he'd be back. And when he did come home, she'd allow him to watch TV shows that were totally inappropriate for his age.

Through it all, Michael was forced to keep the violence at home a secret, which only made him feel more isolated from relatives and neighbors.

In the end, he blamed *himself* for all of it, thinking that if only he were a better son, his parents would love him and the violence would stop. Like so many other children, he tragically concluded that it was his fault. The reason for this is quite simple: The last part of our brain to develop is the Neocortex or new layer—the portion of the brain responsible for logic, cause and effect, reasoning, and rational thought. And it isn't fully developed until early to late teens, depending on the child.

Therefore, as strange as it may seem from an adult perspective, a child's brain has not sufficiently developed for them to understand cause and effect, to rationally or logically understand that what's happening at home is simply not their fault. So they tell themselves the same thing that I told myself from kindergarten on:

*"When I'm here, violence always happens. I can't stop it from happening. And if I weren't here, it wouldn't be happening. So this must be my fault. I'm causing so much pain to the person I love most in life. I am worthless. And if I'm not good enough, then*

*I'm unworthy of anyone's love, time or affection. I feel as though I am dying--and might just as well be gone."*

As time passed, he was often thrust in the middle of their fights. They wanted him to take sides, and he felt as if he could never win.

His father would tell him things like: "Your Mom doesn't love you. She's a real bitch, isn't she? And did you know your Mom is trying to sleep with someone else?

Sometimes, just to appease his father, Michael would agree that his mother was a bitch, later feeling guilty about it.

Ultimately, the teenage Michael became more and more aggressive himself—mimicking his father's behavior--and because of it, his mother eventually took him for counseling. There, he was diagnosed with depression and anxiety.

When asked to confide his three wishes, he said (1) he didn't want his parents to say mean things or hit one another, (2) he wanted them to stop drinking, and (3) he wanted to get a Wii for the TV so he could escape into a different world.

But he never mentioned the one thing he needed most.

\* \* \* \* \*

One factor that intensified the violence in Michael's household was the habitual use of alcohol by his parents. A recent survey found that as many as 80 percent of child abuse cases are associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs.<sup>1</sup> In fact, 50% of batterers have an addiction issue, while more than half of those accused of murdering their spouses are known to have been drinking at the time of the incident.

In our house, alcohol was just a part of our everyday existence. My mother drank on a daily basis, and I never thought much of it. I didn't know life without it.

"Babe—make a happy birthday drink," my mother would say, and that was my cue to mix scotch up to the first layer of ice cubes and soda, which later became one of my daily drinks of choice. I was only eight. Bottles and glasses were lined up in the kitchen where ordinarily you'd find a toaster or a coffee machine.

Like many victims of abuse who drink, my mother found temporary relief from the stresses of being in a destructive relationship. But because alcohol is a disinhibitor—it allowed her to let loose in a way that only fueled the violence,

making her depression and anxiety worse. It was as if she told herself: "I don't like who I am, so I am going to escape it and quickly turn into somebody else."

Obviously, most kids aren't mixing alcoholic drinks for their parents. But in a violent home, appropriate boundaries are not set. Alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug use are rampant. You have no personal space. Your sleep is interrupted. Your meals are sporadic. Your homework sits undone. The house is a mess. Personal hygiene goes out the window. And there are no family outings.

All this left me on the sidelines, observing two out-of-control adults battling each other. And I took in that aggression, becoming more that way myself as I got older. And if I thought anyone was trying to take advantage of me, I'd become even nastier.

The only thing I was in love with was me. Why? Because, like many kids in violent homes, you become self-focused, narcissistic in a very selfish way. It's a form of self-preservation, but totally prevents you from an intimate connection.

As a young adult, I felt as if I had to concentrate solely on *me* in order to accomplish things, which made me feel better about myself. *Then* I'd be worthy of somebody's love--anybody's love. In other words, I felt that I had to earn love, rather than believing that I deserved it, or was entitled to it.

What would make me feel worthy of love? First and foremost, it was financial independence. Even as a little kid, I kept a running wish list of all the things I wanted in life. For example, I desperately wanted a helicopter, so I could take my mother and me away at any time.

I also wanted to own Disney World, because I figured it was a safe place to be; I wanted three bodyguards to protect me and my Mom; an invisible gun, so I wouldn't get caught using it; a house we owned, rather than moving from one rented apartment to another; one million dollars, which would fix a lot of things; and a man who would take care of my mother rather than hurt her. (That was always my number-one wish, the thing that I prayed for.)

But I never dreamed of *anything* having to do with love. Not a single thing I wrote down mentioned having a family or a partner who loved me. It never was a need. To me, *things* were needs.

Even when I got married, I had a sense of *companionship*, but I don't know if I felt love. I know that I would have done anything for her. I would have died to



protect and provide for her. In fact, I felt that by providing THINGS—I was showing her my love. But I was terribly wrong.

I'm 38 now and, over the course of my entire life, have been in two long term relationships. That's it. First, there was a girl in the eighth grade, a platonic friendship that lasted until I was a freshman in college. And second, there was the woman who became my wife, now my former-wife, whom I met at a county college. I couldn't believe that a woman who was *that* attractive could ever possibly want anything to do with me. But we moved in together when I was 18 and that was it.

Still, for years, I couldn't say the words *I love you* to her. Yes, we had things in common, we got along, I had a deep tender caring for her, and I knew she wouldn't hurt me. But love? I really didn't understand what that was.

But I did know one thing. Time and time again, I proved that I was the most important thing in the universe.

In short, I was in the business of providing money—not love. I just had no time for that. My job was to create and give my wife all the things she could possibly need. In fact, as I look back on it, I was like Mr. Banks in the movie *Mary Poppins*. Remember him? In the song “Cherry Tree Lane,” he marches through the door and wants his slippers, sherry, and pipe ready for him. He's cold and aloof. As the lyrics go:

*Precision and order  
That's all that I ask  
The running of a household  
A straightforward task  
The children, the servants  
They're all your domain  
Whilst I remain the sovereign  
Of Cherry Tree Lane*

In my case, I walked in the door and figured, how lucky for them is the life I provide? It had nothing to do with love.

But things began to change with the birth of my daughter. As I mentioned in the Introduction, when I saw Ella's little fingers reach up to me, and when I held her in my arms, that was the very first time I felt a surge of love go through me. I'd never experienced anything like it before and was confused by it at first. I had

tears in my eyes and felt incredibly protective toward Ella—and vowed that nothing would ever hurt her.

But after my daughter was born, even with that initial sense of love, I was not really “there” emotionally for my daughter or my wife at the time when she needed me most, still consumed by work and my own needs, rather than hers.

Like many people who are driven by ambition, you warrior your way through life, not allowing anything to stop you, determined that nobody is going to take advantage of you.

Instead of using physical force to hurt someone (which I knew wasn’t smart and would land me in jail), I became skilled at using *words*, or any manipulation, to influence people and get them to do what I wanted them to. And when they didn’t, I was successful at using words to cause emotional harm, to teach them a lesson.

I did it just the same way Jack used his hands, phone cords, and cigarettes to punish me and my mother. But after I’d used those words, I felt miserable, just as Jack and millions of others must have felt—pathetic, empty, weak, and awful.

Yet I continued behaving this way—selfishly seeing people as trying to hurt me and before they did, I would hurt them—unable to tap into the one thing I desperately needed—love for myself and for others.

So what was the solution? Fortunately, fate stepped in.

\* \* \* \* \*

One day, I casually struck up a conversation with a woman I met on the bus—something I ordinarily didn’t do. And I honestly don’t know what drove me to do it.

She told me that she was a professor of theology at Yale. And I joked: “I’m sorry, but I really don’t know what that means. Are you a nun?” (How ignorant!)

She explained that her field was studying religious traditions, her research focused on the secrets to happiness. “So what’s the secret?!”

She answered that there were many—but I told her that ours was a short bus ride and I really wanted to know.

She summed it up brilliantly and quickly for someone as impatient as I was. She said that when you study all of the world’s religions, and examine people

who are happiest, and whose lives are most filled with love, they all embody one fundamental principle: *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*

"The Golden Rule?" I asked. "Really, that's all you have for me?"

"That's it," she said, "right in Matthew 7:12."

There it was, the secret to feeling loved and connected, told to me on a bus. And here was a woman who had actually dedicated her life to studying all of the world's religions, ones that had collectively influenced the majority of the people on the planet. The scope of it is massive. So I had to consider what she concluded.

At first, I was skeptical. Her so-called secret seemed trite. But the promise of the Golden Rule, she explained, was that I could feel more peaceful, and less depressed or angry, all by merely treating people the way I wished they treated me. This intrigued me.

"For starters," the woman laughingly told me, remarking on my serious expression, "You can smile!"

Really? So I went back to work and studied and researched maniacally all of the data and research on the Golden Rule – study after study concluding the same thing she'd told me.

When you make others feel important, appreciated, respected, and when you can create in them the good feelings that they want in themselves, you yourself actually feel better--happier and more at peace. So I thought I would try it.

And as unnatural as it was (and, at times, still is), I have learned that it's really true. You can be friendly. You can call a charity to volunteer. You can donate something you don't use. You can stop to help—when someone needs a hand. You can mentor a child, or teach a skill you know. "The more you give," she told me, "the more you get back."

After this encounter, I thought about what she said for days. And I realized that I could find ways to apply the Golden Rule. As Shakespeare wrote: *How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a weary world.*

While I may not have been ready, at first, to offer hugs, give a friend a massage, or babysit, I could offer my ear, and just be there for someone who needed to talk.

Most important, I finally got to the point of realizing what harm my actions were causing, recognizing how badly it made me feel. This awareness actually gave me *hope*, and a determination to change.

I began to see that if you want to feel *unloved*, do unto others what was done to *you* (in your childhood); but if you want to feel loved and connected, you need to try to understand what somebody else is going through—*why* they do what they do.

It's really simple. You practice empathy. You exercise compassion. You withhold criticism. You assume positive intent. And you rise above resentment and retaliation.

Of course, there are times when another's intent may be hurtful, and our immediate reaction would be to defend against that, just like we did as children. But now we can identify it, understand, and accept it. Perhaps ask yourself, "What's really going on here?"

The Golden Rule isn't about revenge. It's about treating others well, *despite* how they treated you. It's giving someone else the feeling of care that you never felt—and that your parents probably never had a chance to feel. It's the thing you do to demonstrate to yourself and to the world that this cycle stops with you.

It's reversing time and wiping the slate clean. It's performing acts of kindness that cut through loneliness. And you lead by example. So if you want to be treated with more compassion and kindness, you act that way towards somebody else. As Gandhi taught, *be the change we want to see in the world*. And then notice how differently you feel.

Happier? Calmer? Less stressed? More secure? More willing to trust others?

There is an ancient prayer on the Golden Rule that includes these lines:<sup>1</sup>

*"May I gain no victory that harms me or my opponent.  
May I reconcile friends who are mad at each other.  
May I, insofar as I can, give all necessary  
help to my friends and to all who are in need.  
May I never fail a friend in trouble."*

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea

Each day, I actively try to make at least five people feel more important, more appreciated. I either do this in person or by writing e-mails. I want them to feel better after the interaction we share. I try to give them the same thing that I need.

And the tenderness implicit in this exchange is the exact thing I never got and needed most—validation, a pat on the back, recognition, and encouragement.

Am I capable of doing this everyday? Sadly no. Do I fail? Yes. But with each passing day, I am failing less and less.

At times, am I still harsh and hurtful? Yes. At times, am I wrong? Yes. But there are also times when I feel justified in behaving as I do, realizing that someone may, in fact, be trying to hurt me, though they won't try it again.

Sometimes, though, when the roles are reversed and someone expresses their caring and affection toward *me*, I don't believe it. I know it's a deep insecurity within me, not trusting that someone loves me.

But on days I can actually take it in, I feel satisfied, as though I am enough. It's a feeling of pride that I'm able to act in a way so differently from what was natural for me. And it's amazing how much calmer I feel.

In fact, from a strictly physical point of view, it's been proven that practicing the Golden Rule reduces chronic hostility—decreasing the levels of cortisol and adrenaline that used to flood our system. Studies<sup>2</sup> show that altruism leads to pronounced improvement in confidence, self-awareness, self-esteem, and a reduction in depression.

You experience a “helper's high,” a rush of euphoria, followed by a longer period of calm and emotional well-being. It starts a chain of positivity. It makes you feel grateful. And best of all, you no longer feel so alone.

When I think of people being connected, the image that comes to mind is watching baseball. I remember once seeing a photograph of the Yankees in the New York Post, and there's the entire team, standing around home plate, their arms around each other, with huge smiles on their faces. They were jumping up and down, celebrating, in a way that very few adults ever do, having just won a mid-July game against the Royals.

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<sup>2</sup> Schwartz CE, Sendor M. Helping Others Helps Oneself: Response Shift Effects in Peer Support. Social Science and Medicine. June 1999.

If you are reading these words right now, then you too have achieved a victory. You've won. We've won. Why? Because we're part of a fraternity, a team of survivors who have pulled through and survived, and become stronger and more resilient because of it. And with each small triumph, we should celebrate, just as the Yankees did that night. In fact, we've had far more to overcome than any athletic team and are more deserving of celebration than any of the men on that field. We're part of a team, completely connected with a common goal, just as they were.

If they can do it, we certainly can.

As survivors of these homes, we typically don't allow ourselves to feel that connected or overtly happy. We're loners. So it's not easy to trust or join any group.

But what an amazing thing it is when you become *part of* something greater than yourself, rather than set apart. That's when you feel sheer jubilation.

And to me, that's the essence of love--being part of something bigger, something that you can give yourself to, when you let go and finally trust. You say, "*You know what, I am worthy of being a part of this team. I am worth being loved by them. I don't need to be alone anymore. That's worth celebrating.*"

It's ironic that, as adults recovering from abuse, we need to adopt a practice that may be uncomfortable or foreign to us. Yet, it's by practicing The Golden Rule that our healing can be found.

So treat your family with kindness. Lift up your co-workers. Help a stranger in need. Give a compliment. Encourage your friends. Help them. Contribute what they need. And make others feel better about themselves—appreciated, important, and confident--all the things that we never felt.

And when you do this, you'll find a growing satisfaction, a real belief in yourself, the knowledge that you are loved--and that you are lovable.

And that hunger for the one thing you needed most will, at last, be satisfied.

\* \* \* \* \*

Since we began this chapter by talking about my mother, I wanted to end it the same way. Just recently, she was diagnosed with cancer, and she's battling it bravely, her strength and optimism a source of inspiration to me.

Living with cancer has made her appreciate every moment of each day in a way that she never had before. She feels free of all the conditions that weighed her down. And because of it, part of the purpose of her life is to share with others what happened to her, so that it won't happen to somebody else.

If she hadn't gotten sick, I don't think she would have been supportive of me writing this book. Actually I know she wouldn't have been. So the cancer has, in a way, been a blessing. That's the meaning we are choosing to give it.

No longer is my mother alone or lonely, mistreated or unloved. At last, our family shares the love and connection we always wanted. In fact, she splits her time between living with me in New Jersey and staying at her home in Florida. At a recent outdoor birthday party for my seven-year-old, Ella, my mother was out in the backyard, cutting the strawberry shortcake and surveying a troupe of 30 kids romping in the pool, telling me how happy she was to see this peaceful, happy day.

And as you know, throughout the years, a huge part of my drive was working hard to amass enough resources so she would no longer live in scarcity. I wanted to be able to provide and protect in a way that I wasn't able to as a child. No matter what, I was going to get that done, which I did.

Although I want to do anything I can to make her life very comfortable, she doesn't really want much. She recently told me: "I can live where I want. And I don't need to work. That's enough. And I'm so proud of you. I've lived a very blessed life."

I thought: You've got to be kidding me. Here's a woman who was abused as a girl, who had one husband in jail who threatened to kill her if she even glanced at another man, and another partner who abused her for 30 years. She struggled financially raising two kids alone—and *she's* lived a blessed life!?

Yet, she feels so grateful for everything she has. And she's forgiving too. I asked her if she ever saw Jack, or kept in touch with him.

"No, no, I don't babe."

"But how do you feel about him now?"

And her answer reminded me of that day we spent together on the beach:

“You know, as a kid, he went through all the violence, all the same things that you saw. He didn’t know any other way. Because of who he was a child, he couldn’t stop himself.”

I was so struck by my mother’s ability to see Jack compassionately, and understand the insidious cycle of abuse that repeats itself again and again. To me, in that moment, she had mastered the lesson of love.

A few weeks after that conversation, I took her on a special trip to Paris for Mother’s Day. One night when we were having dinner at the Palais Royale, one of the oldest restaurants in the city, I gave her a present which I hid under her napkin. It was the French edition of *Goodnight Moon*.

And in the book, I had written: “*Dear Mom, for all the nights that you were there to read this to me. Thank you. I am more proud of you than you can ever know. With all my love.*”

When she lifted up the napkin and saw the book, she started to cry. Then she put it down, got up from the table, and walked out. And she never came back to the restaurant that night.

The next day, she told me that she was very grateful but didn’t want to talk about what had happened the night before. I later came to understand that her reading that book to me had given *her* as much comfort as it had given me. It represented a tender connection between us. And reading it gave her a reason to stay in my room, the safest place in the house. Not even Jack would have come in and ripped her out of it while she was lying in bed with her child.

So my bedroom, and the nightly ritual of reading that book, were my mom’s safe harbor, which is why I believe she was so overcome by emotion when she saw the book again. *Goodnight Moon*, read over and over in that little room, was for her, back then, the only peace she ever knew in life.

As she now faces the end of her life with such courage, bravely determined to fight and not yet leave us, she has the same sense of safety and peace as she did reading that book to me so long ago. She *knows* she’s loved.

Nowadays, we’re both safe, both secure, just as we were decades ago at the beach on our magical getaway when, for at least a day, we escaped.

But now the pain is gone forever. I’ve come through the worst of it, just as you have, weathering all the emotions we’ve talked about—fear, resentment, and



guilt, the nights of hurting, and the anger, depression, and hopelessness that left us feeling worthless, unattractive, and unloved.

But those emotions were the lies that we all were conditioned to believe. And at last, we know that we are not powerless or weak. We are stronger than we ever knew. We are resilient. And we are invincible.

This is the Truth. And knowing it, we're set free.

As for me, on nights I spend with my mother and children, we're united in the one thing I always wanted--tender caring love.

In this, we are bound together, forever.

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE TRUTH

On this day, I understand why I felt so unloved as a child, trapped by the illusion that I was unworthy of love. My childhood memories were littered with feelings of fear, threat, and intimidation. The people who were supposed to love me the most were the ones who hurt me the most. So growing up in that kind of environment, I can see how difficult it was to understand love, let alone feel that I deserved it. And if I wasn't worthy of love, then how could I love myself or give love to anyone else? So in the end, I never knew what love was.

But now I understand that those illusions of unworthiness were not true. I know that I wasn't the cause of those endless nights of fighting and fear. I couldn't control them and I didn't deserve to be subjected to them. Today, I know that I deserve love. I'm destined for it. And I have the power to extend it to others. And in doing that, whether in large or small ways, I see that I can find love on a daily basis. I realize that by simply making others feel the way I want to feel, I can experience love in ways that I never knew possible. Love, in fact, is all around me if I just allow it to come to me.

**On this day, I will make others feel the way I wish to feel.**

For this is the true secret to overcoming the feeling of being unloved. I cannot find value in blame or retaliation. I cannot find it in obsessing on the past. I cannot turn back the clock to create a rewritten childhood. Today, in this moment, I find real comfort in the simplicity of making others feel the way I wish to feel. This is the pathway to happiness, to contribute what I have to give—empathy, kindness, knowledge, and time—that I gain what I most need—connection to others. As Benjamin Disraeli once said: “We are all born for love. It's the principle of existence, our natural birthright.” And love, in its many expressions, is the cure.

**Today, I will make others feel the way I wish to feel.**

*And how will I do this?* I will practice empathy—putting myself in the shoes of another. I will practice compassion, understanding the feelings of another and trying to ease their suffering. I will imagine how I want to be treated and treat another in that same way. I will be friendly. I will be helpful. And I will go out of my way to offer my expertise to another. I will applaud someone's efforts rather than judging them. I will be courteous rather than impatient. I will stop the criticism replacing it with genuine compliments. I will not attempt to control others, and when I get the urge, I'll put myself in the other person's shoes. Nobody wants to be told what to do. I'll rise above retaliation, surrendering the desire to strike back even though I was treated badly. As Gandhi said, *I'll be the change*. If I want to be treated with compassion, I'll lead the way. Finally, most importantly, I'll think before I speak or act. How will what I'm about to say or do affect this person? Would I like to be on the receiving end of what I'm about to do?" This habit of *advance reflection* will serve me well.

**Today, I will make others feel the way I wish to feel.**

*And who is going to help me?* I will choose a *role model*, or a group of people who make others feel the way they wish to feel. This is a kind-hearted person who has practiced the art of turning the other cheek, forgiving the faults of others, and treating everyone as they wish to be treated. It might be a teacher, a mentor or colleague, a neighbor, friend, counselor, or even someone I read about. I will get inspired by their example and model myself on it. And I will align myself with a group of friends and peers who share my common mission. Being supported by them will create a sense of teamwork and camaraderie in my daily life, and enhance my ability to extend kindness rather than resentment. My role models will remind me that I can only receive love by giving it away. Through all this, I will be at one with the world, rather than set against it.

**Today, I will make others feel the way I wish to feel**

*And when I slip back into feeling unloved and lonely, what will bring me back to a positive state of mind?* It's inevitable that there will be days when old memories take me back, but I will remember that *an action creates emotion*. So virtually all I have to do at that moment when those feelings come to me is to stand tall, breathe, and immediately ask myself, "In this moment, how can I feel, and tap into, all of the love and guidance inside of me?" I will then find a way to connect

and contribute to another. I can give a compliment. I can open a door. I can smile. I can be friendly. I can pick up the phone, write an E-mail, or connect with a friend or neighbor who needs someone to talk to. And even when I don't feel like doing any of this, I can do it anyway. And amazingly, before I'm halfway through, the old feelings will be replaced by real connection.

**Today, I will make others feel the way I wish to feel.**

*And how will I mark my progress?* I will read this truth each morning and prior to bed each night. I will think of all the times when I applied this truth and will journal about it in a notebook. I resist the urge to live in the past, and accomplish this by marking my progress in the present. I turn away from self-pity and the temptation to isolate myself. Instead, I find every new day an opportunity to practice this truth, and derive the benefits from it.

**Today, I will treat others the way I wish to be treated.**

*And what question will I ask myself?* Since I no longer feel unloved or alone, what three actions can I take today to help *others* feel connected and valued?

### **Remember**

**You receive love by giving it away. And you create love by taking the actions that support it.**

## **CHAPTER SUMMARIES**

*Following the format of the sample chapter — “From Unloved To Loved” — the other chapters in **INVINCIBLE** likewise feature highly personal narratives, filled with poignant reminiscences of the author’s life, revealing anecdotes, survivor stories, empirical research, and lessons crystallized in the chapter’s final TRUTH sections.*

*The book includes a Preface written by X. Next is a dramatic Introduction that lays out the major themes and promises of the book. Then, each chapter examines, at length, the primary emotion addressed and takes the reader through a series of stories and examples that ultimately lead to a pivotal transition to the solution side of the theme.*

*Invincible will also feature breakout text boxes that highlight key messages, providing visual reminders to underscore the major points made.*

*Overall, the entire package delivers a powerful message--that we have in our power the ability to heal the wounds of the past and re-direct our lives, reversing the ten emotional “lies” into “truths,” creating an invincible spirit that will fuel a life of purpose and contribution.*

## **CHAPTER ONE: TERRORS IN THE NIGHT: Scared to Confident**

The book begins with a riveting account of the author’s first memory at age five, of his mother being abused: *“It happened in the middle of a winter night. I was sound asleep in my bedroom, burrowed into the blankets, everything in our apartment quiet and calm. And then I heard screaming.”*

What follows is a detailed discussion of how children’s nervous systems are conditioned by fear, traumatized by physical and verbal abuse, becoming “riot cops,” always on high alert. The *fight or flight* response, we learn, activates elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol into the body, triggering a heightened sense of fear and danger.

As Martin writes: *“I was completely fearful of everything—especially my mother’s boyfriend-- a 6’4”drunken monster with huge hands and a deep gravelly voice. He’d smack his lips together, flex his fingers, and circle his prey, my mother, like a giant man-eating shark. Fear, and the dread that comes with it, paralyzes you, limiting your life. But there comes a time when you realize you’re actually a warrior—braver than you ever knew--and that NOTHING else will ever be as challenging as what you endured. Knowing this is the first leap toward fearlessness.”*

At the chapter’s end, we learn how to release fear and shift into a reserve of courage, using a series of techniques that include the use of role models, affirmations, positive recollection of past achievements, and tapping into the inner strength that was welded by pain. Letting go of a victim mentality, the author also demonstrates how to use perseverance as a key tool to disarming fear and becoming fearless.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE BATTLEFIELD: Guilty To Innocent**

The story advances with Martin's detailed description of the "monster" living in his house: *"I cringe remembering the many times he'd roughly pull me toward him and I'd feel his whiskers—like sandpaper against my skin. He'd grab me from the back of the neck in a very controlling way. His fingers dug into me, pulling me toward him, warning me to defer to him."*

But more painful than his own "disgust" was watching his mother abused nightly, which incited in him intense feelings of guilt and shame. *"How could I allow a man to physically beat my mother? How could I let that happen?"*

We learn that the single most common belief shared by children raised in violent homes is that they're to blame. Children, we're told, are naturally empathetic, and take in their mother's suffering as if it was their own, desperately wanting to relieve it. We learn about a child's brain function, that due to a phenomenon called "mirror neurons," they *literally* feel their mother's physical and emotional pain and feel guilty that they can't stop it. So they feel responsible for an act that had nothing to do with them. *"I've often told myself that if I could get myself to believe the ridiculous lie that I was to blame, I can get myself to believe anything—including that I was entirely innocent!"*

The chapter concludes with the pivotal moment in the author's life when he finally realized that he was not to blame. A powerful prescription is given for releasing self-blame, guilt, and self-hatred by "controlling the meaning," and seeing the past through an entirely different lens.

### CHAPTER THREE: BEYOND THE WOUND: Hurt To Healed

Chapter three, detailing ways in which children are physically, emotionally, and spiritually hurt, begins with the true story of a thirteen-year-old boy who was locked up in a three-foot-high dog cage. He was kept there as a prisoner for years by his parents before being beaten to unconsciousness by his father, left to die in his cage. What survived was the boy's diary, "his words like a prayer, a reminder that we can never allow any child to be hurt, much less tortured, as he was."

We learn that five children die in the U.S. every day as a result of child abuse, more than three out of four of them under the age of *four*. And for those who endure, we see the ways in which they're hurt by alcoholism, drug abuse, and neglect; by being ignored, criticized, and humiliated; and by seeing their parents being yelled at, pushed, or hit.

To recover, we learn how to rebuild trust by assuming "positive intent"; how to heal the wound of being hurt with a series of strengthening exercises; how to recondition self-confidence by taking esteemable actions; how to experience a catharsis, an "emotional cleansing," by confiding our stories to others; and how to chart a new course by taking control of our thoughts and reactions. As Martin notes: *"I acknowledge the hurt and then put it away. I focus on the good things in the present like a laser and give more of myself than anybody could expect of me. In the end, I feel good about myself. And that's the very thing I didn't feel as a kid."*

## CHAPTER FOUR: IMPULSE TO KILL: **Angry To Passionate**

Chapter four zeroes in on the author's intense hatred of his mother's boyfriend and begins with a suspenseful account of his first failed attempt to murder him, using an ice pick: *"Afterward, I just sat there with that ice pick in my hand and cried and cried. I swear I was close to putting that pick into my own heart that night because it was my fault that I failed, because I should have done it. And I felt so weak that I hadn't been able to."*

For years after that, Martin's anger festered, "eating me up inside," expanding with time, infecting everything around it. *"Left behind is the gigantic frustration of being helpless over something you couldn't control. Feeling that impotent is cause for rage."* We learn from experts how anger affects a child's emotional development, body language, physical health, and performance at school. As beaten children are not allowed to defend themselves, they suppress their anger and rage against parents who have humiliated them, killed their inborn empathy, and insulted their dignity.

Describing anger as a titanic force—"the Niagara Falls of emotions"—the author teaches that anger can only be healed when it is turned into passion, just as the Falls are channeled to produce electricity. The secret, he says, is finding something in life that you love to do, a passion that drives you forward toward your goal. *"You put all of yourself into something until you have nothing left in reserve. This is living with passion, which is the true antidote to anger."* When a person lives like this, we learn that he or she is said to be a "golden-haired lion," channeling the entirety of their strength into every action with total sincerity.

## CHAPTER FIVE: TEST OF FAITH: **Hopeless To Guided**

Chapter five begins with a vicious fight on the night Brian's mother is caught with another man in the house (her half-dressed date for the night), Jack beating him to a pulp and nearly strangling the boy too. Racing down the street to the police station with his frantic mother, young Brian is hopeful that he'll never again see Jack, who is temporarily held in custody. But two days later, the "monster" returns.

*"In that moment, I felt there was no hope--nobody to protect me—not the police, social services, our extended family, or anybody at school. You feel despairing and lost because there is nothing that you can do to change your fate."*

Expert neuroscientist David Sousa explains how the stress hormone cortisol is spiked at record levels in the bloodstream of an abused child, upsetting the dopamine cycle in the brain, leaving a child in despair. We learn that children with high hopelessness scores are at greater risk for suicide and depression. And we see how abused women (including the author's mother) find temporary relief by using alcohol and drugs.

It isn't until the author's mother gives him a self-help book at age 17 that he feels "a sliver of hope"—guided into the land of what he calls "the hopeful and chosen." He shows anyone trapped in a violent home that the misery will end and demonstrates the powerful technique of creative visualization, proving that envisioning a new life helps bring it to fruition. We see how optimism, faith, and hope combine into greatness, how out of unbelievable pain something good must come, a higher purpose leading the way.



## CHAPTER SIX: THE HAPPINESS BAR: Depressed To Grateful

Depression is described as “the quicksand of emotions” --making you sink deeper and deeper into a world of gloom, negativity, physical lethargy, and sadness. We learn the reasons why so many abused women (including the author’s mother) remained stuck in violent relationships, which include the fear of being alone, financial need, the hope that it might get better, and the craving for attention. Living in a masochistic world of *control* and *coercion*, women, and their affected children, feel defeated, unable to cope, and helpless to change anything--profoundly depressed.

We see that depression directly affects the chemistry and structure of the brain, the result being sleep disturbances, cognitive dullness, and loss of pleasure.

The author compares his existence to others’: “On sitcoms like “*Family Ties*,” I saw what life could be like: ‘Wow, look at that, they have a dining table! They’re happy. There’s no blood or screaming. No broken plates. Nobody is drunk. The police aren’t coming. And the house is neat. That’s really different!’”

Ultimately, we learn that the author’s salvation is not family therapy or anti-depressants—but cultivating the art of gratitude, “the ultimate positive emotion that allows you to conquer your past and replace it with positive intent.” Gratitude, studies prove, is the strongest link to mental health of any character trait and the author demonstrates how to cultivate it by creating new mental habits and by directing *focus* and *behavior*. “It’s *impossible* to feel depressed in a grateful state of mind,” he concludes.

## CHAPTER SEVEN :THE BALM THAT HEALS: Resentful To Forgiving

Like many young adults, the author admits that, for years, he could never get out of his mind what took place in his house: “Every time I thought I was free of it, I’d still feel the anger and regret, the blame and bitterness, and an intense sense of injustice. I was spiteful, bitter, cynical--and resentful. I couldn’t release the past. So I was stuck in it--the ultimate victim.” He becomes a self-described “hater,” deeply resentful of his mother, of Jack, of his extended family, of classmates-- envious of anybody who had advantages that he felt so deprived of.

We see that victims of abuse feel locked in the past—wronged and insulted, injured and indignant about it. They hold a deep grudge that winds up only hurting them: As the author notes: “I use the metaphor of the snakebite. It isn’t the actual bite that kills you--it’s the venom. So when you hold a grudge or resentment, you allow the poison of hatred, revenge, anger, and blame to destroy you. For years, I was resentful and unhappy and miserable. So who was getting hurt? Them or me?”

The pivotal moment came when the author’s resentment and self-focus became intolerable, so he starts “experimenting with kindness.” To his amazement, with a “helper’s high,” he feels markedly better. He soon learns that the only way to dissolve resentment is by *giving* and *forgiving*—letting go of grudges and giving an unconditional pardon -- the gift of total absolution. “Forgiving isn’t forgetting, but it’s letting the hurt go. You forgive the unforgiveable—and miraculously--you’re free.”

## CHAPTER EIGHT: AN ACHIEVER OF DREAMS: Worthless To Worthy

Chapter eight opens with the dramatic life story of the author’s mother,

from childhood to the time she met Brian's father, to meeting the man who abused her for 30 years. *"It wasn't accidental that my mother wound up being in a disastrous relationship,"* he writes. *"It was in the cards. She was raised to feel inconsequential, without any value or merit. Her father and mother beat her and told her she was 'fat, ugly, and stupid'. And she believed it. That's what worthless is. You feel incompetent, defective, and contemptible."*

As the story unfolds, we see that millions of children like her grow up feeling what the author identifies as the four D's—*defeated, defective, deserted, and deprived*. Belittled, shamed, and humiliated, the victims misinterpret their abuse as proof that they are insignificant.

As the chapter unfolds, the author demonstrates how he uses personal ambition and visualization to become what he calls *"an achiever of dreams,"* determined and directed in the pursuit of tangible goals, a singular focus being the key. *"You have to prove to yourself, through persistence, that you are valuable, competent, and worthwhile. And you do this by dreaming about the life you want—what it looks, sounds, smells, and feels like. Plant it in your heart. Write about it. Make plans to create it. And go to sleep dreaming of it."* To this end, the author provides a series of exercises and techniques for strengthening confidence and self-worth and activating imagination, which gradually heals the wound of damaged self-esteem. No longer disabled by the lie of worthlessness, the healing process becomes a rapid one.

## **CHAPTER NINE: A NEW REFLECTION: Unattractive To Beautiful**

Chapter nine begins with the story of a 21-year-old Miss Texas beauty pageant contestant, an aspiring Miss America, ironically told as a child that she was unattractive and fat, believing it to be true. As we learn, in violent homes, parents hurl cruel epithets at their children—often impugning them as ugly, repulsive, worthless, or bad. These harsh rebukes and unfair put-downs are emotionally deadly, the result a deep psychic wound. *"Conditioned to believe these lies, cute little kids feel flawed and imperfect, crying themselves to sleep, confused and discouraged. They ask themselves: 'What's wrong with me?'"* Handicapped with a distorted self-image, self-hating adolescents, we learn, are prone to self-mutilation, anorexia, bulimia, depression, sexual promiscuity, even suicide.

On the solution side, we learn that feeling attractive and healing damaged self-esteem is not about vanity ("most of us aren't actors or models") but about the inner qualities we project into the world—character and our talents, assets, and unique gifts. ("Plastic surgery is not the answer!") The author demonstrates the power of a smile and provides the secrets to ending the cycle of harsh self-judgment: We no longer compare and despair; we learn the art of giving and receiving compliments; we surround ourselves with a supportive peer group; we learn to forgive; and we activate a habit of self-appreciation. The end result is a new reflection in the mirror—"seeing the good in you, understanding the pain, and opening up to pleasure."

## **CHAPTER TEN: THE HUNGRY HEART: Unloved To Loved**



In chapter ten, the previous themes of the book are woven into an emotional climax in the present-day, when the author, together with his mother and two children, finally achieves a life of strong affection, peace, and security. But the chapter begins in quite a different place, with a heartrending description of the author's empty heart: *"As a child," he confides, "I didn't understand the word love. I didn't know what it was or what it meant. It just wasn't part of my life. In a violent household like mine, tender caresses became slaps. Soothing voices became put-downs. And loving glances became evil stares. My love was worth nothing because I was worth nothing."*

We see how loneliness and neglect left a abused child feeling abandoned and undeserving of love. The author found comfort, though, at bedtime, when his mother read him his favorite story, *Goodnight Moon*. And this, together with one idyllic day at the beach, inspired in him a hunger for love. But well into adulthood, he was unable to feel or express it.

A pivotal moment comes with the birth of his daughter, when, with tears in his eyes, he feels "a surge of love" go through him, a sensation he'd never felt before. But even then, love eludes him. *"The turning point came when a complete stranger on the bus told me about her research into The Golden Rule--that I could feel happier merely by treating people the way I wished they treated me."*

This becomes the catalyst for cultivating empathy, compassion, and connection. *"I learned that you receive love by giving it away. And you create love by taking the actions that support it."* The book comes to an end with an emotional reunion with his mother in Paris, where he gives her a French edition of *Good Night Moon*. The safe harbor represented by this book now, at last, becomes this family's reality. Together with his mother, the author demonstrates understanding and forgiveness of the past, with their eyes directed on a far happier future.

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