

*I Am  
A  
Bregdan  
Woman*

*Book # 1 in Messages From Bregdan*

**Ginny Dye**

*I Am A Bregdan Woman*

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*For My Bregdan Chronicles Family*

*My readers have made it possible for me to  
write the Bregdan Chronicles – and now  
Messages From Bregdan. I've learned so much  
from all of you... made good friends... and  
shared special moments.*

*As the years unfold with many more books to  
come, I look forward to sharing the Journey  
with all of you!*

## Chapter One

Let's get to it.

You know, people don't pick up a book to read the Preface. Or the Foreword. Most skip over them. Those who actually read them are eager to get to the reason why they're reading the book in the first place. At least, that's my opinion, and since you're reading my book, I guess you're stuck with it!

I figure I'm just going to dive right into it. If you don't know who I am, you'll figure it out as you read. The truth is, I'm the least important component of this book.

You're reading this book because you want to be a Bregdan Woman – even if you don't really know what that means yet. You definitely know you long to live your life with courage, hope, purpose, boldness and compassion. You're hoping I have some words to say that will make this possible for you.

Me too!

I've resisted writing this book for a long time.

I think writing a non-fiction book is terrifying. Yes, I'm the best-selling author of 16 historical fiction novels (at least as of today) and lots of teen and children's books, but that's completely different. I get to hide myself in the characters who populate my books. I weave what I hope are impactful words and truths into them, but they come from the mouths of my characters. People don't pick up my books looking to punch holes into my words because

they're threatened or challenged by them. They're just reading a story... I love that!

All of that is completely different from the book I'm writing now.

I want you to know that I don't believe I'm an expert on how to be a Bregdan Woman.

I don't believe I have all the answers for how *you* will become a Bregdan Woman.

I'll tell you in advance that I don't always live out the things I'm going to write. I try... but I'm human. I mess up. I fall short. I don't always do the things I know I should do.

I struggle with the belief that when I write this book, people will scrutinize me more closely and look for all the ways I'm *not* being a Bregdan Woman. As a very private person, that's not particularly appealing to me.

*But...*

So be it.

I chose to write this because I believe it's critically important.

I believe these words should be heard.

I believe that writing this book will change me as much as it's going to change everyone who reads it.

I suppose I even believe it's a good thing that people will scrutinize me, because it will motivate me to work even harder at becoming, and being, the woman I long to be!

Bottom line? We're all on a journey. I've decided that it's okay to take the risk of walking this journey with every single woman who reads this book.

Even if you've read lots of books like this before, perhaps I will say something in a new way that will enable you to truly hear it and apply it to your life.

Perhaps you're at a place, today, that you've never been in before. This is *your* time to break through into becoming the woman you long to be.

Are you ready for the Journey?

You're not going to walk it just with me. Sure, I'll tell things I've learned along the way from my own life experiences, but you're also going to hear about dozens of other women who are walking their own journey to be Bregdan Women.

I wouldn't be who I am without the influence of hundreds and thousands of other women. No, of course I don't know all these women personally. Well, at least not in the flesh. I believe I know them personally because I know their stories. I've researched their lives. I've written their stories. I've seen where they came from, and where they ended up.

These women gave me hope when I had none. They gave me courage when I was terrified. They motivated me to press through when I wanted to (and sometimes did) curl up into a fetal position and give up on life. They helped me overcome the abuse of my childhood and become a powerful woman. Not perfect – but oh, so powerful!

All of this will be blended into the pages you're about to read.

Here's something that will be very important as you read this book. Whatever you do, don't just sit down and read it straight through.

Take the time to think about the questions I ask you.

Take the time to write down your answers.

Take the time to examine your life with honesty and integrity.



Here's the thing. ***If your life is everything you want it to be, you wouldn't be reading this book.***

I'm proud of you for choosing to read it.

Your life can only become what you dream of it being if you're ready to do something different than what you're doing now.

Are you ready for that?

Here's your first question.

### ***Why are you reading this book?***

This is the most important question within these pages. Why?

Because you can't change something you can't identify.

I communicate with women all over the world. I've worked with teenagers and women for decades. It's astonishing to me that most women simply can't identify how they want their life to be different. They can't identify how *they* want to be different. They just know they're unhappy or dissatisfied with the life they're living.

There are also far too many women who can't identify or acknowledge the very real problems in their life.

They don't know how to verbalize that fear controls them because they're too afraid to look at it honestly.

They don't know how to say they want to be bold because they've been taught to believe that boldness is not something to aspire to. They hide their real desires. In time, their psyche can't even acknowledge the desire.

They don't know how to communicate how much they long to have purpose in their lives because they've given up believing they truly *do* have a purpose. Or that they can.

So... take a few minutes. Take a few days, if that's what is needed.

Answer the question.

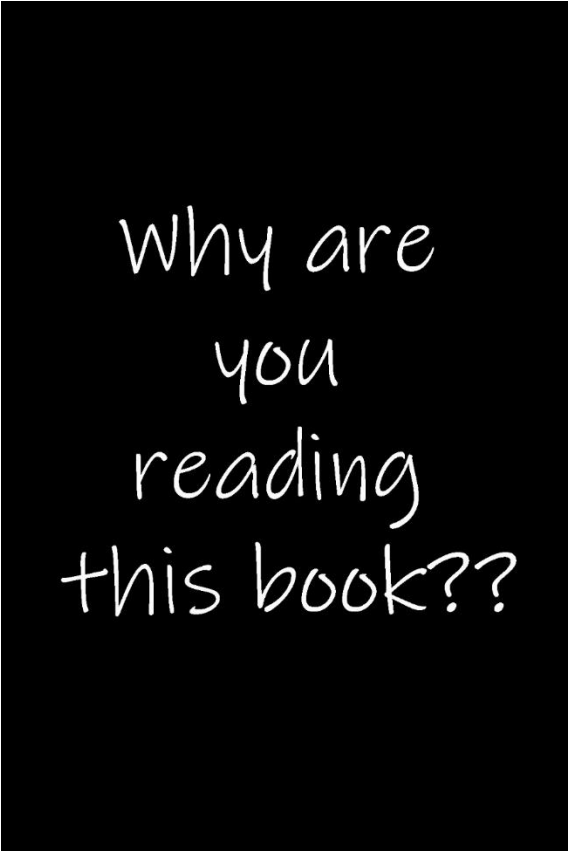
I'm going to include 2 blank pages after each question. I encourage you to use them. Make this book yours. Make it a reflection of the journey you're starting right this minute!

Obviously you're not going to get your 2 blank pages if you're reading an E-book version. I encourage you to keep a journal as you go – writing down your thoughts as you read and examine your life.

Don't let this be a book you merely *read*.

Make it a book you *experience*. Make it a book that changes your life! Then I'll know that overcoming my reluctance to write it was worth it!





why are  
you  
reading  
this book??

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Journal Pages

*Journal Pages*

Chapter Two

**What is a Bregdan Woman &  
Why Do I Want To Be One?**

Excellent question!

My readers actually coined this phrase. I write an historical fiction series called The Bregdan Chronicles.

When I was trying to decide what to call the series, I was searching online for different names and terms. I stumbled on *Bregdan*.

Bregdan is a Gaelic term for weaving and braiding. I fell in love with it instantly because it reflects my beliefs about history. I believe that every life that has been lived until today is a part of the woven braid of life. I believe it takes every person's story to create history.

Before I started writing the Bregdan Chronicles, I created The Bregdan Principle.

## *The Bregdan Principle*

Every *life* that has been lived until  
today is a part of the  
woven braid of life.

It takes every person's story to create  
**HISTORY.**

Your life will help determine the course  
of history.

You may think you don't have much of  
an impact.

**YOU DO.**

Every  
**Action** you take will reflect in

Someone else's *life.*

Someone else's *decisions.*

Someone else's *future.*

**Both GOOD and BAD.**

And, yes, that means *you*. One thing I like to do is read this aloud, substituting I/My to make it personal.

*Every life that has been lived until today is a part  
of the woven braid of life.*

*It takes MY story to create history.*

*MY life will help determine the course of history.*

*I may think I don't I much of an impact.*

*I DO.*

*Every action I take will reflect in someone else's  
life.*

*Someone else's decisions.*

*Someone else's future.*

*Both Good and Bad.*



I also happen to believe women are incredibly powerful. I believe we have the ability to make a massive impact on the world... and on the lives around us. That belief has led me to create a vast array of powerful women characters in the Bregdan Chronicles.

Still, it was a reader who wrote me one and told me that she aspired to be a Bregdan Woman.

I was intrigued and asked her what she meant. Her response brought tears to my eyes.

*I long to be a Bregdan Woman because I want to be something very different than what I am. The women in your novels inspire me to be more than I am. They inspire me to be brave. They inspire me to do more with my life. They make me believe my life can be different.*

That was the beginning. Without my saying a thing, I began to hear from more and more women saying they wanted to be like the Bregdan Women they were reading about.

The term took on a life of its own.

I sent out an email to the thousands of readers on my mailing list, asking them what it meant to *them* to be a Bregdan Woman. Hundreds of readers responded with thoughtful, insightful, heart-breaking, humorous, life-changing responses. I've kept every one of the letters and emails I received – and continue to receive on a regular basis.

I read every one of them in preparation for writing this book. They produced as many smiles and tears this time, as they did the first time. You'll read some of them within these pages.

As I read the letters, I knew I was looking at the genesis of a book. All the things you will read are reflections of what my readers believe a Bregdan Woman is – or should be.

It doesn't matter if you've ever read one of my novels. Every woman longs to be a *Bregdan Woman*.

Every woman longs to live their life with courage, hope, purpose, boldness and compassion, and so much more.

I know I do.

Let's start with...



Chapter Three

**COURAGE**

fear

/ 'fir/

*noun*

an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat.

To appreciate courage, you have to begin with an understanding of fear.

I'm starting here because I believe fear is the root cause for all the ways you're dissatisfied with your life. I see it over and over in the lives of so many women.

Another definition says: *Fear is the unpleasant and often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger. It is anxious concern.*

That's certainly an accurate definition – but only partly. You read this definition and immediately think about the fear you feel if a vicious dog is barreling toward you with its teeth bared, or your airplane is sputtering at 30,000 feet, or if you've just been given a diagnosis for a life- threatening disease.

*Hint:* Those are times when fear is an appropriate reaction.

*Fear is a normal part of life. It's a necessary human instinct. It allows you to take action to escape danger when you're being threatened.*

But, hey, you already know that. How do I know? Because you probably use it as justification for whatever fear controls your life – applying this truth to far too many situations. Think about it...

Are you afraid of living your life alone?

*Justification...* Isn't everyone? My fear is normal.

Are you afraid someone might take something you believe rightly belongs to you?

*Justification...* Doesn't everyone? My fear is the only reasonable response.

Are you afraid of stepping outside your comfort zone and doing something completely new that could make you look foolish?

*Justification...* Duh! Everyone is afraid of this. I would be foolish to *not* be afraid.

You bundle up all your fears and anxieties, and wrap them in paper with a red bow. The tag on it says: *These fears are a normal part of life. I am meant to have them to protect myself.*

Okay. I hear you. I realize it can seem like the entire world is a scary place. I also realize there's certainly an agenda to *make* you believe that.

I can see your eyes widening as you read the last words. It's usually the response I get when I say this.

I hope you'll listen carefully to what I'm about to say because freedom is waiting just around the corner. There really is an agenda to keep you in fear.

Media. Politicians. Corporations. If big money is attached to it, whatever that something is has a vested interest in keeping you afraid. People who are afraid are easy to control. They're easy to manipulate.

I see this played out on television, in newspapers, in magazines, and certainly on the internet.

Studies have been done that show people were much less afraid 150 years ago than they are today. Why? I would argue that there were just as many things to be afraid of 150 years ago, but the vast majority of people had no way of knowing what they were. No televisions. No internet. No radios. Most people didn't read the newspaper.

The world was out there, but as far as they were concerned it didn't impact them. For the most part, they were right! They lived their life the best they could, dealing with what came at them on a daily basis.

Fast forward to today. You're trying to live your life without fear, but you're being inundated with reason after reason to be terrified or angry.

The problem doesn't really come with your being afraid of terrorism, corruption, climate change, economic collapse and on and on... Any reasonable person is going to be concerned about these realities. Any reasonable person is going to take action to try to protect themselves.

The problem comes when these fears and anxieties overflow into *every* area of your life.

Suddenly, everything becomes terrifying. Everything is a reason for fear. Everything is a reason to point at life and decide it only makes *sense* to live with fear. It only makes sense to let fear control your life because it's the only way you can stay safe.

Please know I'm not downplaying any of these very real threats and dangers. They're out there.

They've *always* been out there.

The word *always* is extremely critical here. The world hasn't changed. Horrible things have happened since the beginning of time. War. Famines. Revolutions. Acts of terror. Natural disasters.

Being an historical novelist, I've learned about so many of them. On the one hand, learning about them is depressing.

On the other hand, it gives me hope.

Hope?

Yes.

Even with all the horrible things that have happened, we're all still here. The human race continues. Though we face many struggles, we've come such a long way. While there are plenty of things that need to change, so much has *already* changed.

For the better.

Women have fought, and continue to fight, all over the world to make life better for everyone. It wasn't so long ago that women couldn't vote here in the United States. We lacked even the most basic equal rights. Opportunity was scarce.

Women were shoved into a locked box that so many believed they would never be set free from.

Fear and intimidation controlled them.

Fear and intimidation made them believe things couldn't change.

Fear and intimidation caused them to believe that perhaps they *shouldn't* change because women weren't really equipped to have equality.

Nonsense.

Things are *better*. I don't believe they're good yet, but they're better.

I don't know about you, but I find great hope in that reality.

Change can happen. Fears can be overcome. Women have taken the keys to unlock the boxes society has tried to trap them in.

Knowing just how much has *already* changed gives me courage.

It makes me stare fear and anxiety in the face, and then tell it to go take a long walk on a very short pier.

Fear and anxiety can make you want to bury your head in the sand and sing a song of doom.

You may be looking at these words right now and wondering just what they have to do with *your* fears.

Everything.

My experience shows me there are certain things that most women are afraid of.

If they're in the workplace, women are afraid of their employer because of the control they have over your life. They're afraid of what having children will mean to their work life or career. They're afraid of not being valued. They're afraid of sexual harassment on the job.

Women are afraid of other women. It breaks my heart that women are often the worst critics of each

other, judging other women mercilessly. We're used to battling men to find our place in the world – we shouldn't have to add women to the list.

Women are afraid of success. It may sound a little crazy, but it's true. Cultures all around the globe have taught women to keep a low profile and not stand out. Too many of us have convinced ourselves that success will do nothing but create more negative issues in our life.

Women are afraid of themselves.

Excuse me?

It's true.

Too many women are afraid of themselves and of their potential. If you actually understand your potential, then it means you have to take the next step to achieve it. Women are afraid of following their dreams and pursuing their passions.

Women are afraid of failure - at the same time they're afraid of success. Talk about a whirlpool of conflicting beliefs that will pull you in and never spit you back out... This isn't exclusive to women, of course, but in a system that's rigged for women to fail, I believe the fear is more daunting than it is for men.

Women are afraid of losing the way of life they want. They're afraid of unemployment. Not having health insurance. Not being able to take care of their children.

The list goes on and on. Each of you reading this book has to determine what *you* are afraid of.

If you're feeling overwhelmed right now by all the potential for fear, you don't need to be. You may believe the deck is completely stacked against you.

You have politicians, the media and corporations feeding fuel to your fears on a daily basis – adding tremendous pressure to the fears you already have just because you're a woman.

Hopeless?

NO.

Absolutely not!

You have the power to choose COURAGE.

Ahhh... now we've gotten to where I wanted to take you.



Courage is a choice. In the face of all the things that generate fear and anxiety, you can choose Courage.

It's time to hear about women who have empowered me to move beyond the fears in my own life.

I'm going to start with Bethany Hamilton.

Bethany, who lives in Hawaii, was in grade school when she started her quest to become a professional surfer. Surfing is her passion. She spent every available minute in the water; even homeschooling so she would have more time to pursue her goal. When she was 8 years old, she entered her first major competition and eventually took the division championships that year. This girl obviously had what it took.

It was almost all taken away from her on Halloween morning, 2003. Bethany was 13 years old. She was surfing with her best friend, Alana, and

Alana's brother and father. The waters were calm, not good for surfing, so Bethany was just lying on her board, her left arm dangling in the cool water.

She had no way of knowing what was coming.

She remembers a flash of gray, a lot of pressure, and a couple fast tugs. She also remembers watching the jaws of a 15-foot tiger shark cover the top of her board and her left arm. She watched in shock as the water around her turned bright red.

The shark was gone as fast as it appeared. So was her arm – bitten off almost to the armpit.

Bethany was horrified, but not in pain at that point. She yelled to her friends and their father, Holt. *"I just got attacked by a shark!"*

**It was a combination of miracles that saved Bethany at that point.**

High tide allowed them to make it over the reef without going around. Holt knew enough to wrap his shirt around the wound to act as a tourniquet while they paddled the quarter mile to shore. While Bethany drifted in and out of consciousness, a nearby vacationer who was a paramedic, rushed to help her.

Surgery saved her life, but her arm was gone for good; and everyone, Bethany included, thought her surfing days were over. Balance is everything when surfing. How could she balance with only one arm?

Within a week, spurred by her passion for surfing, Bethany was thinking something different.

***I can do it. I know I can do it!***

She wasn't ready to give up what she loved so much, but it would take time for her body to heal.



There was a huge outpouring of love and support from Hawaiians and people all over the world. Love, food, flowers, cards, money... Bethany gathered hope and courage from the waves of love aimed toward her.

It was only a few weeks later – the morning before Thanksgiving - when Bethany headed back for the water. Her love of surfing wouldn't let her wait any longer. Her family and friends were there to cheer her on when she stepped into the warm water for the first time since the attack. It was like coming home.

Bethany smiled and waved, then jumped on her board to paddle out – pushing down the fear of what might be waiting under the water. *She knew too well...*

She failed at her first attempts to ride the board, struggling to push herself up with one arm and keep her balance. Tears rolled down her face, and the crowds cheered when she caught her first wave and rode it in.

### **Bethany was back!**

**Really back.** Only months after her vicious incident, Bethany amazed thousands by achieving the unimaginable; taking 5th at the 2004 National Scholastic Surfing Association Nationals Championships. That September she struck again, winning the Open Women's Division of the NSSA's Hawaiian conference season opener. After placing in the finals of the National Surfing Championships, Bethany secured a spot on the USA's National Surfing Team.

Ask Bethany if she is afraid of sharks and she'll say yes. Her heart pounds when she sees a shadow

in the water. She has nightmares. But she also has a dream. Moving beyond her fears is necessary to accomplish her dreams – the sole way to fulfill the passion she has for surfing.

She knew the only way to move forward with her life was to stare her fears in the face, acknowledge she was afraid, and then go out and do it anyway!

Yes, I realize only a tiny percentage of people will ever have to face a fear like this, but her courage inspired me to take steps in my life that I wouldn't have taken without the courage she exhibited.

So, I'll ask you. What fears do you need to stare in the face?

What fears do you need to acknowledge are stopping you from living your life the way you want to?

What do you want and need to go out and do anyway?

Some of the stories I share in this book are well-known people you can Google and learn more about. Others are women I've been blessed to know through the years that you'll never hear about anywhere else..

And one dog.



Huh? A dog?

I've learned I can gain courage to overcome my fears in many different ways.

Caspian was a new addition to my household. He had shown up in the front yard of my 100-year-old

Virginia farmhouse one early morning. I could see hints that he was a chocolate Labrador retriever, but he was skin and bones, covered with ticks, fleas and sores, and had been shot – his skinny body riddled with buckshot. I took one look at this pathetic animal and told him he was home.

It took weeks of vet treatments, baths and many bowls of food, before he finally began to look like a dog that was going to make it. His bones began to disappear, his coat took on a shine, and he became my constant shadow to show his appreciation for me saving his life. He was always with me – except when I went upstairs to my office...

My home had a wide expanse of wooden stairs that led to the second floor. Caspian was terrified of them. It didn't matter what I did to build his confidence, or what wonderful tidbit of food I tempted him with, he refused to climb those stairs. He would just cower at the bottom step and shake all over whenever I got him near them. Yet, when I went up to my office, he was overcome with despair at being separated from me and laid at the bottom whimpering and whining.

I had no idea what had created this fear, and I had even less of an idea of how to conquer it. After two weeks of daily attempts, I finally gave up. If he didn't want to climb the stairs – so be it. My only defense from his pitiful whining, however, was to turn the music up any time I needed to be in my office. When I would leave my office and come downstairs, Caspian would erupt with frantic joy to be reunited once again.

About a month into this pattern, I was awakened one morning by a noise. I lay in bed trying to identify what it was.

*Click, click, click. Silence. Click, click, click. Silence.*

It kept on for close to fifteen minutes before my curiosity finally overwhelmed my desire to stay under the warm covers. I threw aside my quilt, grabbed a robe and went out to investigate. When I identified the source of the noise, I stood there with my mouth wide open.

I watched as Caspian carefully climbed the stairs. *Click, click, click.* He got to the top, turned around, and then started back down. *Click, click, click.*

When he got to the bottom, he turned and gazed at me as if to say, *It's really no big deal. I can do this!*

And then he did it again, and again, and again. At least 25 more times – after already having done it for 15 minutes before I finally came to investigate.

I watched his confidence grow with each ascent and descent of the “dreaded stairs.” His tongue hung out in joy and at the end, his tail was wagging in triumph over his fears. He knew he would never again have to be separated from me because of the stairs.

I already loved him, but that day I gained an incredible respect for his courage and resilience.

I was also challenged about what I was willing to do to overcome *my* fears.

*Was I willing to stare my fears in the face and then take the steps to overcome them?*

*Was I willing to feel the fear, and then do it anyway?*

*Was I willing to attack my fears, for as long as it took to overcome them?*

I made a lot of decisions that day that have given me a much richer life – and I have Caspian to thank for it!



So now I pose the same questions to you:

*Are you willing to stare your fears in the face and then take the steps to overcome them?*

*Are you willing to feel the fear, and then do it anyway?*

*Are you willing to attack your fears for as long as it takes to overcome them?*

Every time you're faced with a fear, try to remember a courageous dog that was able to conquer his fears with love and determination – and then follow his lead. All of us are afraid of something in our lives. There's no shame in being afraid.

The key to victory, however, is to face your fear head on and do whatever it takes to overcome it. You can let your fears stop you from achieving all you want in life, or... *you can follow Caspian's lead and conquer the stairs!*



Are you waiting for the step-by-step plan to how to overcome your fears?

I'm not that kind of writer. Why? Because I believe the power to change your life is found within

stories. I could give you a list of “do this”, but the vast majority of you will read it, think there might be some good ideas in there, and then you’re going to go back to wallowing in your fears.

*But stories...*

I have written so many stories of women who have done amazing things and overcome daunting challenges, because every time I wrote one of them, I found something I could apply to my own life. I found inspiration to take another step toward the life I live today.

I’m hoping the same thing is going to happen for you. My hope is that these stories will weave their way into your soul and mind, becoming a part of you and providing courage to help you navigate your life.



*Marion was a powerful inspiration to me.*

Marion Luna Brem was 30 years old when she was handed a death sentence; cancer of the breast and cervix. In the short span of eleven weeks, she had two surgeries: a mastectomy and hysterectomy. Next, she suffered through the horrible effects of chemotherapy.

In addition to her pain, the cancer had robbed her of her hair, her savings and her husband. He left because he couldn't deal with the pressure. He abandoned Marion with two sons and no way to support them.

One hot morning, Marion found herself on the floor of her bathroom trying not to throw up again.

She was not only facing overwhelming pain and paralyzing fear; she was facing a major decision. Would she give up and choose death, or would she fight back? She was so very tired of the battle that had swallowed every aspect of her life. Thoughts of her children consumed her, however, making her realize she had to choose to live for them.

Once she made the decision to live, she was faced with just what that meant.

She needed to get a job, but she had little work experience and next to no formal education. Add to that equation the fact that she was a woman, and a Latina, and the prospects looked as dismal as the bathroom floor.

Marion's best friend suggested a job in sales. At first, certain she would fail, Marion pushed the idea aside.

And then she decided to act on it. There weren't any better options. She chose the male dominated car sales industry. That may seem an odd choice, but it was actually quite strategic.

In her healthier days she'd been a switchboard operator at a car dealership, so she knew there was good money in car sales. She'd also witnessed how the salesmen talked exclusively to the men and virtually ignored the women.

Her instincts told her women were a more important part of the equation than they were given credit for. Statistics now prove she was right. When couples buy a car, the woman influences the decision 80% of the time.

It wasn't an easy road. Marion put on the wig that covered the effects of her chemotherapy and started

looking for a job. She was flatly refused applications (because she was a woman) in 16 car dealerships. Finally, at the 17th car dealership she told the manager what she'd observed about women car buyers. He hired her on the spot, telling her he had been thinking about hiring a "broad" and she seemed to be a nervy one.

I'm sure Marion wanted to walk away when he said that, but she was out of options. She took the job.

Her all-male colleagues welcomed the rookie. They didn't see her as competition, but rather as a curiosity. It wasn't until she started outperforming them that they became cool toward her. Even so, Marion received the annual "Salesman of the Year" award -- complete with a man's Rolex watch. She accepted the recognition and enjoyed her achievement.

Marion was the top producer for the next two years. Then she approached her boss for a management position. He refused her because he didn't want to remove her from sales - she was making too much money for the company.

Difficult as it was, Marion left the security of that position and hit the pavement again. She knew what she wanted and wouldn't let anyone stop her.

She was finally hired as an entry-level manager at a new dealership. The dealership thrived.

During the years, her own courage and dreams had grown.

Two and half years later she was ready to start her own dealership.



She went to the drugstore and bought 50 school folders and created portfolios. She called them her "brag folders". They contained her certificates, press clippings and a biography. She sent the package to fifty CPAs all over Texas. Two weeks later, she received a call from one of her contacts. He became her silent partner, put up the working capital and millions in loans, and Marion opened a Chrysler dealership.

Just five years after selling her first car, Marion Luna Brem opened "Love Chrysler", complete with a heart logo on every car. Marion's motto: *"It's not just the hearts on our cars, it's the hearts inside our people. We're spreading Love all over Texas!"*

Today, Marion is cancer-free, the owner of two car dealerships, part owner of a bank, an author, and an international speaker.

You know, five years may sound like a short amount of time to accomplish what she did, but I don't think it was. When you're living those five years it can be incredibly daunting. It was five years of overcoming one fear after another. Five years of meeting challenge after challenge.

I hope Marion's story fills you with courage. And determination to never let your fear control you.

What steps can *you* take to change the reality of a life you're dissatisfied with?



I truly do understand the power of fear. I almost let fear stop me from becoming a writer. I shudder

sometimes when I think how close I came to missing the purpose of my life.

It all began with one day...

Some days stand out in your mind so clearly that you can remember every moment. You can remember every smell. Every thought you had. Every word that someone says. You remember that the sky was cloudless, and the day was hot and thick with humidity.

You remember it was a day that totally changed what you believed your life would be.

I had one of those days...

My story of being a writer begins the day I vowed I would never write.

*I quit writing when I was 16.*

That was the day fear swallowed my burning desire to create.

It was because of my grandfather.

I'll tell you more about my grandfather in a moment, but first I have to dive back into the years before I was 16. I've always loved to write, and I've always loved to read. I still have a vague memory of the day all the jumbled letters on a page made sense to me. I don't remember how old I was, but I do know I was reading at a college level by the time I was in the third grade.

The school librarian learned to not question what books I checked out. After many futile attempts of telling me I was too young for whatever book I had chosen, she merely smiled and waved me on.

The summers, when it became too dark to play ball or explore the woods near my house, were spent reading. My bedcovers became a tent illuminated by

a flashlight. I would read until I couldn't keep my eyes open.

My mother took me to the public library every week. They had a limit of eighteen books that you could check out at one time. I would choose my eighteen books, and then hand my mother a stack of eighteen more so I would have enough to last the week.

The public librarians learned to not question my choices either, though I'm sure they didn't truly believe I was reading the books I walked out with. I'm not sure what they thought I was doing with them, but I couldn't miss the looks they exchanged with each other as they stamped my thick stack of books at the checkout. I'm sure they wondered what kind of mother would allow their daughter to check out adult books. No, they weren't erotic, just advanced beyond what the average third and fourth grader would read; at least, that's what they told me.

No matter... the books opened up worlds to me that I never knew existed. They gave me hope that my life could somehow be different.

I read.

And I wrote.

I wrote stories of worlds where people were loving and kind. I wrote about fun and laughter. I wrote about all the things I rarely experienced.

Yes, I read because I wanted my life to be different. Without going into unnecessary details, I'm just going to say that I had a traumatic childhood. My dad walked out when I was a toddler. There was a lot of sexual, mental and emotional abuse from many different corners. The result of the abuse was that I

became hard, shut off, and desperate for a love that wasn't there.

I found hope and reason to keep going through the books I read. I couldn't get enough of them because they were the only thing that made me believe life might be worth living. Surely, the writers couldn't be writing about a life that could never exist – even for someone like me.

*Back to the day I was 16...*



To understand why I quit writing, I have to start with the story of my grandfather, Wallace Lorrimer Gaffney. He was Dandy to me.

Dandy was one of *the Gaffneys* of Gaffney, South Carolina. If you could hear my voice when I say that, you would hear the deep Southern, genteel drawl I can call on when I want to. When I was sixteen, Gaffney was just a name to me. My parents had never taken me to Gaffney, but I'd heard a few stories. I've learned much more in the years since.

Gaffney, South Carolina was founded by my Great-great-great-great-great grandfather, Michael Gaffney. Captain Michael. His life could well be rich fodder for a novel, but that's not the purpose of this book so I'm going to keep this brief. Captain Michael arrived in New York City from Ireland in 1797, but left the city after Yellow Fever almost claimed his life. He eventually moved to Charleston, SC, where malaria attempted to finish what Yellow Fever had failed to. Malaria failed, as well.

Eager to escape the low-country mosquitoes, Captain Michael moved to a little crossroads in Cherokee Indian wilderness country and decided to start a new life. His little general store grew into what is now Gaffney, S.C.

The few pages of Captain Michael's journals that I have read tell me my ancestor was quite a writer. Did my writing gift start with him? Go back further? I have no idea.

Back to Dandy... The Gaffney family was well-respected, revered, and they had high expectations for anyone who bore the Gaffney name. My grandfather was no exception. All seemed to be going as planned when he graduated from high school and entered The Citadel, a prestigious military college in Charleston, South Carolina.

He continued to fulfill the Gaffney expectations when he excelled at The Citadel. Before graduation, he was selected to be the new editor for the Gaffney newspaper. I can only imagine the excitement of this young man who was accomplishing all he had ever dreamed of. Dandy was on his way!

*Until...*

Until tensions in Europe exploded into World War I. Military students at The Citadel were among the first to be called into service. Instead of moving back to Gaffney and taking over the newspaper, Dandy found himself on his way to the battlefields of France.

Like so many of the young men headed into war, Dandy chose to get married before he left.

But, alas, his choice was not one the Gaffney family approved. Louise Leddingham was beautiful,

feisty and strong – all wonderful qualities that were unfortunately overshadowed by the fact she was half-Cherokee. Gasp! A Gaffney heir was going to marry a half-breed? How could that be? I'm sure his family did their best to talk him out of doing this horrible thing that would bring dishonor to the family, but Dandy wouldn't let the Gaffney prejudices control his choices.

I have no idea what the wedding was like, or if anyone even attended, but he married his Louise – whom I knew as my beloved Nina – impregnated her and left for war.

This is where things got messier. In spite of how his family felt, Dandy had no choice but to send his new bride to live with his family in Gaffney until he returned from war.

Let's just say that the Gaffney family treated Nina horribly. They cared for her physically, especially after they found out she was pregnant with a *Gaffney* baby, but they were never kind to her.

When my mother was born, it got even worse. I sometimes wonder if Nina had any idea of what was about to happen.

My Great-Grandmother – Dandy's mother – prodded on by her family, decided a Gaffney baby would *not* be raised by a Cherokee half-breed. So... when my mother was born, they kidnapped her from Nina. I don't know the whole story of how it happened, but my writer's mind can easily fill in the details.

It did not end well.

Remember me saying Nina was feisty and strong? Let me just add that you didn't want to get in her

way if she decided to do something, and you most certainly did not want to be on her bad side. I never heard the whole story of how Nina got my mother back, but she did. I wish I'd been a fly on the wall!

I've seen pictures of my mother as a baby with her Gaffney relatives, but Nina is not in any of them. Bitter at how she'd been treated, she refused to have anything to do with them. Who could blame her?

Dandy returned from World War I and the family moved to Charlotte, North Carolina because Nina refused to live in Gaffney any longer. Again, who could blame her?

Dandy's life was forever changed because of his family's bigotry and actions. He was a Citadel graduate and a decorated veteran, but his job as editor at the Gaffney newspaper was long gone, the economy was struggling, he had a new wife and child to support, and he couldn't return to the roots that would have opened doors for him. Not knowing what else to do, he spent his entire adult life in marketing – completely pushing aside his burning desire to write because he had a family to care for.

But Dandy never forgot his dreams. He also recognized that I had inherited his writing ability.

All I ever wanted to do was write.

I wrote endlessly. I dreamed of being a writer. I filled notebook after notebook with stories. I amazed my teachers with my ability to use the written word.

I knew what I wanted to do.

*Which leads me to the day I quit writing at age 16...*

I remember that it was a hot, sunny day. I remember not realizing my dreams were about to die – smothered by an unreasonable fear.



Dandy was dying. He had been confined to bed for months. Nina had been caring for him, but he knew he was nearing the end.

I know *now* that his intention was to encourage me. I probably even knew on some level at the time, but it didn't change the outcome.

Dandy called me to his side, took my tanned hand in his white, withered one, fixed me with his glittering eyes and said, "Ginny, you have the gift that I never used. Whatever you do, don't let it go to waste like I did."

Two sentences. Sentences uttered with burning intensity, meant to sear into my soul and fill me with passion to be a writer.

*Two sentences that wrapped me in fear.*

Why?

As soon as Dandy uttered those words, my brain started spinning. *What? The gift? I had the gift? What if I didn't have the gift? What if I couldn't really write the way he believed I could? What if I let him down? What if I wasted the gift like he had?* The questions rampaged through my mind and heart.

I stared back at him. Of course, I didn't speak any of the things pounding through my head. How could I tell my dying grandfather that he had just terrified me beyond all measure? I nodded mutely, managed a weak smile, and then fled from the room.

By the time I got home, I had made my decision.  
*I would never write again.*



Yes, I know it doesn't make sense, but fear never makes sense, and I had the double whammy of all the years of abuse that had so wounded me. I just knew I couldn't face the specter of failure. I couldn't face the realization that I might not have the *gift*. I couldn't live with the knowledge that I might waste the *gift* and disappoint my grandfather. I couldn't live with discovering I wasn't good enough.

In my sixteen-year-old brain, the only way to avoid these horrible possibilities was to simply quit writing.

*So I did.*

Oh, I did school assignments of course, but ignored the pleas of my teachers to keep writing the stories they had grown to love. I was done.

I kept reading – diving into books more and more – but I wouldn't write. I wouldn't position myself for failure. The longer I refused to write, the larger the fear grew – until it was no longer a fear. It was *truth* to me.

If I wrote, I would fail.

When I got to college, I took the required Freshman English class, but turned my academic pursuits in an entirely different direction, graduating with a degree in Outdoor/Environmental Education – which I loved! As in high school, I ignored the voices of my college professors who told me I had a special writing gift after they read my papers. So what? I just wanted to get a good grade.

I had made my decision.

I would *not* be a writer.

You could talk me into trying just about anything else, but that topic was closed forever.

Until life brought me up short.

I was 29 years old when an unexplained illness landed me in bed for six months.

I'm not going to bore you with the details of my illness, but it's a necessary addition to this book if you want to understand why I went against my vow to never write again.

I went from running eight miles a day, and playing tennis and softball for hours, to not being able to get out of bed. I had one of the first diagnosed cases of Epstein-Barr Virus and it was a doozy. I've battled it for the last thirty years – most of the times successfully, but sometimes not. I'll keep fighting until I've won the battle completely, but that's not what this book is about!

The reason I'm telling you all this is because going from being massively active, to not moving at all, was devastating.

The only thing I could do was read. So, I read. And read... and read... and read... 82 thick books and counting. Now don't get me wrong. I love to read. But there is a limit.

The day came when I thought if I had to crack the pages of one more book I was going to go out of my mind. But what was I going to do? I didn't own a television because I didn't want one. Turning my brain off by staring at a screen wasn't appealing. I had to do *something*.

Well... it just so happens all of this transpired at the same time in 1986 that Apple Computer came out with the very first MacPlus computer – the boxy thing that used floppy disks. I still don't know why

they called them floppy disks since they were certainly not floppy, but I digress...

I had someone rig up some boards across my bed to act as a desk, plugged in my first computer, slapped in a floppy disk with instructions and learned how to use it. Then the question became, what am I going to *do* with it? This was before the days of the internet and email. My wonderful MacPlus computer was basically a sophisticated typewriter. I certainly had no use for one of *those*.

Until I did...

The day came when, faced with the prospect of reading another book or doing something on my fancy typewriter, I took a deep breath and started writing.

I really knew nothing about writing. I had taken only one required college writing course. I had certainly never studied it. All I had done was write stories until I was sixteen. I destroyed them all. No one would ever have the opportunity to read them and tell me I wasn't as good as Dandy.

The one piece of advice that must have stuck from my one writing class was to "write about what you know about". I knew about teenagers and horses.

Lying in bed, typing away on that antique computer, I wrote my first book. A teen novel about horses and teenagers. 200+ pages.

I never had any intention of doing anything with it. Never planned for anyone to see it and would have been horrified if I thought that might happen. I wrote that book to maintain my sanity while I figured out how I was going to get out of bed. At some point, I actually printed it out – perhaps just to prove to

myself I did it – but I stuffed it in a manila envelope and vowed no one would ever see it.

I was also getting better. After six months, and with help from two marvelous chiropractors who became my good friends, I finally climbed out of bed and began my journey back to health. I celebrated my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday by hiking up a mountain – slowly, but I did it.

Yes!

I put the manuscript for my first book at the bottom of a deep drawer and went back to living life. I left California and moved to Richmond, Virginia. I had been in Virginia for about a year and a half before it happened.

*It?*

A friend came to spend the weekend. We'll call her Amber because I don't want to embarrass her, though truth be known she probably takes complete credit for my career! It's possibly the truth!

We had spent the night before laughing and talking. After a good night's sleep, I opened the door to my home office and stopped dead in my tracks. All I could do was stare in shock. I finally found words.

"What are you doing?" I asked quietly.

Seemingly oblivious of the dangerous light glinting in my eyes, Amber looked up with glowing excitement and said, "Why didn't you tell me you'd written a book?"

"I believe the bigger question is why you're reading it?" I struggled to control my temper. It takes a lot to get me angry, but she had succeeded. I have seldom felt so violated.

Amber had never seen me angry, so she remained totally clueless to what I was feeling.

“Ginny, this is wonderful!”

I picked my words carefully. “Let’s see... You’re in my office uninvited. You’ve rifled through private drawers, and then you opened a sealed envelope to find what you’re reading. Now would probably not be the time for you to say you actually hate it, so please don’t mind if I’m not giving your opinion much credit.”

Something in my tone must have gotten through to her because her eyes opened wide as she carefully put the manuscript down on my desk. “Are you angry?” She was genuinely puzzled.

“Duh.”

“But why?”

I shook my head in disbelief. “You really have to ask that question?” Amber had no idea she had reignited every fear that had been controlling me for half my life. What she saw as anger – what I was experiencing as anger – was really nothing but terror.

Amber took a deep breath and then picked up the manuscript again. “Look, I realize I shouldn’t have been snooping through your desk, but you should be glad I did.”

I narrowed my eyes as I searched for words that wouldn’t destroy her. Since I couldn’t come up with any, I remained silent.

“Seriously, Ginny,” Amber continued. “You needed me to find this because it really *is* good.”

I shook my head in defeat, hating the terror that gripped me. I had to get out of my office. I fought

for a casual tone. "I don't really care. Just put it back in the envelope and come have some breakfast."

"Why?" Amber persisted. "How can you not care? I had no idea you could write like this."

I turned and walked from the room. "I'm eating breakfast," I called over my shoulder. I thought I was having the final word, but it turns out Amber was just getting warmed up.

She started in on me again when I laid a plate of blueberry pancakes in front of her. "You need to get your book published."

"Give it up," I muttered, wondering if snatching her plate away from her would make her stop talking.

"I won't," she said defiantly. "Do you know how many people would give everything they have to write like this?"

My mind flashed back to my grandfather's insistence that I had his *gift*, but I shook my head stubbornly. "I wrote that when I was sick. I'm not doing anything with it."

"What else have you written?"

"Nothing," I said flatly.

Amber stared at me. "This is the first thing you've written?"

"Since I was 16," I admitted, wondering how I was going to stop this crazy conversation. I shoved bites of pancakes into my mouth at a faster rate. Escape seemed to be my only viable option.

Amber put down her fork and continued to stare at me. "Seriously? This is the first thing you've ever written? And it's this good?"

“What do you know?” I snapped. I was trying to stay calm, but her insistence had pushed me into fight or flight mode. Since I was sitting in my own kitchen, I decided to fight. “How would *you* know if it’s any good?” Now, Amber was a good friend, but I didn’t know a lot about her past.

“Do you know what I did before I became a lawyer?”

“Do I care?” I countered.

“You should,” she said, her whole manner suddenly quiet and focused. “I was a middle school librarian. It was my job to choose books for the students to read.”

I couldn’t come up with a response.

“I *do* know what I’m talking about,” Amber continued. “I don’t know how in the world you could write a book like this without ever having written anything before, but when I say it’s good, you should believe me.”

“It doesn’t matter,” I finally managed.

“Why not?” Amber challenged.

“Because I’m never going to write another one.”

Amber sat back in her chair and fixed her gaze on me. “Funny. You don’t look that stupid,” she said bluntly.

I shook my head. My appetite destroyed, I pushed back from the table and then dumped my pancakes in the trash.

Amber suddenly realized how upset I was. “Look, I don’t know what happened to make you decide to not write, but it must have been huge. I’m just going to tell you that you have to get over it. Very few people have the gift you do.”

I wanted to clap my hands over my ears to shut her voice out. *Ginny, you have the gift that I never used.* Nothing could drown out the echo of my grandfather's words ringing in my head. Once unleashed, they were like a tape on auto-replay. All the years of trying to shut it out had melted away in one morning. It was as if I were back in my dying grandfather's bedroom, listening to his plea.

"I'm not going to leave you alone until you send this off to a publisher," Amber stated firmly.

I glared at her and then stalked out of the kitchen. I leashed my dog and took him for a long walk, hoping she would have run out of steam by the time I returned two hours later.

No such luck. My time away seemed to have only given her the opportunity to hone her position. She started in on me with her best lawyerly arguments as soon as I entered the house.

I resisted for four months – in spite of Amber's weekly phone calls – but I finally decided to do the one thing I knew would shut her up. I would send the book to a publisher, get it rejected, and then have proof that would make her give me some peace.

More importantly, I would have evidence that I had been right to live in fear all those years.

I was terrified, though. What was I thinking? Did I really want to take the action that would prove I'd been right all along? That I didn't have the *gift*?

Just when I would decide to move forward something would jerk me to a stop.

Remember the story I told you earlier about my dog Caspian and how he conquered the stairs? Well,



all of that happened at the same time I was dealing with my own fears about writing.

As I watched Caspian walk up and down those dreaded stairs, I had to answer the questions swarming in my mind.

*Was I willing to stare my fears in the face and then take the steps to overcome that fear? Was I willing to feel the fear, and then do it anyway? Was I willing to attack my fears, for as long as it took to overcome them?*

Caspian broke through my wall with his courage.

Fine. I would send in the manuscript.

And, yes, you guessed it. That was my first book published. 50+ books later, I am beyond grateful that Amber and Caspian helped me move beyond my fears.

I'm also grateful I've been able to move beyond my fear to write this particular book! Just as I suspected it would, writing it is changing me as much as I hope it's changing you.



Having people (and perhaps a dog) in your life to challenge you and encourage you is important, but you are the only one who can make the choices to move beyond your fear and take action.

You are the only one who can choose COURAGE.

Here's your question:

What are you  
afraid of?

How are you  
going to choose  
COURAGE?

Take some time to truly think about this. And write about it.

**What are you afraid of?**

**Why? What has created this fear?**

**What would you do if you *weren't* afraid?**

**How would it change your life?**

*Journal Pages*

Journal Pages

WAIT!

Don't keep reading if you haven't recorded your thoughts. Remember, it won't help you if you merely read this book. If you truly want to be a Bregdan Woman, you need to *experience* it. Go ahead. Have the courage to truly look at your fears.

It can change your life.



Now if you're ready, let's keep going.

Chapter Four

**BOLD**

*Bold*  
*adjective*

1.

(of a person, action, or idea) showing an ability to take risks; confident and courageous.

Being bold is not the same as having courage. I do, however, believe you have to have courage in order to *be* bold.

Over and over, I have women write me that being a Bregdan Woman means being bold.

It means standing up for what you believe in.

It means fighting for what you believe is right.

It means speaking your mind clearly.

It means knowing you're powerful.

It means being who and what you know you are – no matter what anyone thinks.

It means doing the things other women won't do because they're afraid.

It means tossing aside the labels society wants to put on you.

It means bouncing back from criticism and judgement – continuing to *be* and *become* who you're meant to be.

It shouldn't be hard.

It is.

In most cultures around the world, women are taught and encouraged to *not* be bold. We're taught that boldness makes us less of a woman. We're taught that we'll be seen as hard and bitchy if we stand our ground in many situations. We're taught we have a "role" we're meant to fulfill, and that being bold diminishes that role.

Ridiculous!

Or as my grandmother would say – Poppycrack!

I decided early on that I wasn't going to be controlled by labels and expectations. I graduated from college in 1979. While the other women graduating around me moved into marriage or expected careers, I decided to do something different.

I had watched far too many people (both male and female) do what was expected. At the tender age of 22, I had watched, or read about, so many people in their 40's and 50's suddenly start questioning their entire lives. They struggled with why they hadn't followed their dreams; why they hadn't pursued their passions; why they had never gone after what they really wanted.

I knew enough to know I didn't want to be one of *those* people.

One month after graduation, I loaded up what would fit in my VW convertible, gave the rest away, and left NC to move to Texas, where I took over the horsemanship program for a large ranch/camp. My family was shocked. I remember my father saying, "I put you through college so you could run away from real life and take a job for \$8000 a year?"

I knew better than to say what I was thinking; *No, you put me through college so I could become an*

*independent woman with the courage to live life on my own terms.*

It was a bold move. One I'll never regret. I was determined to live a life full of adventure. I wanted to explore America. I wanted to do something I was passionate about. Working with horses and teenagers halfway across the country checked every box for me.

I have glorious memories and relationships that have endured to today.



Unfortunately, just two years later, I got sucked into the expectations of life that were fueled by a fear that swallowed my boldness. I got married, even though I didn't truly love the man I married. I spent three years in an abusive marriage before I found the courage to say *no more*. I picked myself up and went back to living boldly – on my own terms.

While I have spent great portions of my life living boldly, I have also spent far too many portions of my life controlled by fear and expectations. I would be bold one minute, and then do things that were the complete opposite of bold. We all carry baggage in our lives that tries to trap us, stuff us inside zipped confines, and not let us go.

I've learned something...

Being human can control our actions when we least expect it, but we *always* have the power to choose something different.



If that didn't jump out at you and slap you in the face, you're reading too quickly. Let's try that again.

*Being human can control our actions when we least expect it, but we always have the power to choose something different.*

One of the great things about getting older is that I can look back at all those experiences and know I was only truly happy when I was living BOLDLY. It makes it so much easier to make that choice on a daily basis now.

I have decades left to live as boldly as I desire and choose.

One of the great things about getting older is that it's easier to ignore the labels and expectations and live BOLDLY.

My great hope is that my words and my passion can help young women call bulls\*\*\* far sooner than I did, or give older women the courage to call bulls\*\*\* and finally start living the life they want to live.



I've been so inspired by women who've had the courage to live BOLDLY.

*Like Marcia Wallace...*

Traveling the road from Iowa to New York City takes a little while. The young, red-haired woman felt her dreams grow as each mile took her farther away from the familiar and closer to her dreams. Thoughts of home tried to squeeze out her anticipation.

Shifting her weight, Marcia wondered where home would be in ten years. Wondered who she would know - what she would do. Right now, though, the focus was on getting a job, getting discovered, and seeing her name up in lights.

The memory of Marcia's graduation from college that morning didn't last long. A few hours of celebration and she was out of Iowa. Deeply relieved to leave behind her unhappy childhood, complete with alcoholic and abusive parents, Marcia was finally free and on her own. With more weight (230 lbs) on her body than money (\$150) in her pocket, she knew she had better live fast and wisely. Years later, Marcia advised theatre wannabes, and others starting out, to make sure their dream money at least equals their body weight!

This dreamy, starry-eyed woman packed her bags and left on the road to pursue her dreams. Happily, she found peace along the way. Marcia continues today to see dreams fulfilled with successful stints in New York and Hollywood - the stage and television.

Before you think she landed in New York City and quickly made her dreams come true, you need to understand it wasn't that way at all. The road to her dreams (and her peace) came littered with more than a few detours.

*"Marcia? You applied to substitute teach and we can use you. Can you start on Monday? See you then."*

*"Marcia? The job typing scripts is yours. You can start with Hello Dolly."*

*"Marcia? We need someone to sell bed sheets. Great, you can start tomorrow!"*

*"Marcia? You cannot yell "shuto upo" to the Spanish students. Please take your things as you leave."*

Slowly, the voices changed.

*"The Emmy nomination goes to Marcia Wallace!"  
"The Emmy goes to Marcia Wallace!"*

It's easy to read about Marcia and just notice her *pages* of acting, television, animation, Broadway, theatre, Hollywood, game show, and comedy club credits and think, "Wow! Look at what she did."

However, if you look a bit deeper, you realize that more accurately, the thought is "Wow, look how far she came!"

If you still can't place Marcia, think back to the zany, red-headed receptionist on the *Bob Newhart Show*, with Bob Newhart and Suzanne Pleshette that ran in the 1970's! Or remember the voice of Edna Krabapple on the *Simpsons* – that's Marcia.

If you're still scratching your head because you're too young for that to have been part of your life, then that's what Google is for!

Marcia was also a breast cancer survivor, a rape victim, a widow, had her house burn down, lost 100 pounds, became a single mom when her husband died, suffered a nervous breakdown with a stay at a psychiatric unit (she called it "the bin"), and survived menopause!

She added author to her credits in 2004. You've gotta love the name of her book: *Don't Look Back, We're Not Going That Way* with the greatest subtitle, *How I Overcame a Rocky Childhood, a Nervous*

*Breakdown, Breast Cancer, Widowhood, Fat, Fire & Menopausal Motherhood and Still Managed to Count My Lucky Chickens.*

Bold?

Absolutely. Marcia passed away in 2013 but she left behind a powerful legacy. She took all her courage, wrapped it with boldness and set out to live a great life.

Granted, only a small percentage of us will experience fame, but we *all* can live Boldly.



Amanda (not her real name) taught me a lot about living boldly. I met Amanda when I was accepting investments for one of the companies I started in my past. I had received an email from her requesting a phone call so we could discuss the investment.

I made the phone call, listened for a few minutes, and then gently asked, “Amanda, how old are you?”

“Eighteen.”

“I see. And do you really have the \$10,000 required for an investment?” I asked gently. I knew it was possible, but not likely.

“Well, no,” she admitted, “but I believe I can get it.”

The desperation and determination in her voice were palpable. Having spent so much of my life working with teenagers, I wanted to know more. “Why don’t you tell me about yourself, Amanda?”

My heart broke as she shared her story. Her father had died in a fire when she was young. Her mother, not able to deal with it had spiraled into alcoholism and drugs, made some bad decisions, and ended up in prison. Amanda and her sister ended up separated in foster care, bounced from home to home. Just a few months earlier, she'd been released from foster care with nothing but a bag full of belongings.

"What are you doing now, Amanda?"

There was a long pause. "Trying to figure things out," Amanda said quietly. "I just graduated from high school."

"How did you do?" I asked, knowing most foster kids struggle academically.

"I was Valedictorian of my class," she said softly. "I want to go to college, but I don't have the money."

To make a very long story short, by the end of the conversation I had hired her to work for me, agreed to wire her money to move to Washington from California, and promised I would have an apartment waiting for her when she arrived.

I never regretted my decision. What was there to regret? It was obvious this young woman was intelligent, determined and BOLD. No, she didn't have a penny to invest but she had all the criteria for success, and I knew she could create a great life if she was just given a chance.

She had many challenges and hiccups along the way, but she's grown into a confident woman with a career in business management, complete with a Master's Degree!

*Here's to living Boldly!*



I suppose I should warn you that many people don't want you to live boldly. Your choice to do so will make you a threat to both men and women.

A threat?

Here's an interesting thing about human nature. I believe everyone knows what they *should* do to create the life of their dreams – they just don't do it because they let fear stand in their way.

When they see someone else (*anyone* else) doing what they're too afraid to do, they feel threatened. In some completely ineffective way to make themselves feel better about their own weaknesses, they attack the people who dare to live boldly and go after their dreams.

They believe that criticizing others will somehow diminish the sense of their own failure.

It's wrong.

It happens.

And, yes, it hurts.

You also can't let it stop you. If you choose to live boldly, knowing people are going to be threatened, you can prepare yourself for the criticism and judgement. It won't keep it from hurting, but I believe it *will* keep you from giving up and shrinking back into the place of fear that has controlled you before.

Every leader in the world (no matter what they are leading) deals with criticism.

Every successful person lives with criticism.

You basically have two choices.

You can let the criticism stop you in your tracks. You can refuse to launch the business you dream of or lead the community project you envision. You can hide the risky idea you had and refuse to do the unconventional things that bring you joy and fulfillment.

Or... you can absorb the criticism, know it comes from people living in their own fear, and keep right on going.

There are times, of course, when you can learn from criticism. Whenever I receive some type of critique, I examine it and determine if there's something I can learn from it. There are times when I discover nuggets of truth that make me, or what I'm doing, better. There are also times when I toss it aside and know it doesn't have anything to do with me.

One of the best pieces of advice I ever received came within the pages of a book written by Eugenia Price, entitled *From One Writer's Heart*. Eugenia (Genie) was a beloved writer to so many (including me). She shared, however, that there were people who wrote her saying they were bored by her books, or found them to simplistic, or that the characters were too good.

She explained that no writer *writes for everyone*. There are many different writers, many different genres, and many different styles of writing. Some will love what you write. Others won't.

Write for *your* readers.

I took that advice to heart.

I have so many readers who love what I write. I also have people who write to tell me how much they *don't* love what I write. Because of Eugenia Price, I just laugh and acknowledge that it's not possible for me to write for everyone.

Instead of letting the criticism keep me from doing what I love to do, I just smile, send a mental blessing to the person who wrote it, and keep writing!

You can do the same thing.

No matter what you do, someone isn't going to like it.

You can let it eat your lunch and stop you in your tracks... or not.

I asked a group of women one time how they handle criticism. Their answers were enlightening.



*I realize my ideas are innovative and unique. The people I'm presenting them to simply don't get them. It doesn't make my ideas bad. It just means I'm sharing them with the wrong group of people, or I need to give them time to realize I'm right.*

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*Hmmm... When I receive criticism it's usually because what I'm presenting or doing doesn't go over well with that kind of person. I either change how I'm communicating it, or I keep looking for the people who resonate with what I'm doing.*



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*When people lash out at me, it's usually because they're feeling threatened. It has nothing to do with me. It used to send me home in tears, but I've toughened up. I'm doing a good thing. If people are feeling threatened, it must be because I'm doing it really well. I'm going to keep on doing it.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*I handle criticism best if I look at the person with compassion. If I focus on the fact that they're unhappy with their own life or that they're simply having a bad day, then their words or actions don't have the same power to hurt me. I just feel sorry for them and keep right on doing what I know I'm supposed to do.*

I hope you take these women's words to heart.

Choose to live boldly, and never let anyone stop you.



When I think about boldness, there's one woman who completely stands out to me.

Barbara Henry.

You've probably never heard of her, but you may have heard of Ruby Bridges – the little black girl who was the first, and only, black child to attend the first

desegregated school in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1960.

Very little has been said about the only white teacher at William Frantz Elementary School who was willing to teach the first grader who had been chosen for this experiment.

I am fascinated by her story.

Barbara was raised in Boston, in a school that gave every student respect and a sense of worth; irrespective of class, community or color. She learned to appreciate all people, and she learned to abhor prejudice.

Marriage to a dashing Air Force Lieutenant landed her in New Orleans in 1960. She applied to be a teacher, not realizing the chaos she was getting ready to walk into. The superintendent called shortly after her application and offered her the position of the first-grade teacher. She accepted joyfully, eager to get back into the classroom.

When she arrived at school for her first day on November 14, 1960, it didn't take long to figure out the citizens of New Orleans weren't thrilled with their schools being desegregated. She had to make her way through a raging sea of protestors to the front barricade, where she gave her name to the police and was escorted through.

The only reason she made it through the throng was because she was white. If they'd known what she was there for, she's certain she could never have made it through.

Certainly, she was overwhelmed, but she also felt as if her whole life had prepared her for that moment.

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She'd been hired to teach first grade. In reality, Ruby Bridges was her only student. On the first day of desegregation, every single student and teacher left the school because it had allowed a black student. Parents arrived to remove their children from a school that would allow one tiny black girl entrance into their white world.

The first-grade teacher she was replacing, because the woman refused to teach a black student, had stripped the classroom of everything. Barbara walked into a cold, bare classroom, in the midst of a silent, empty school.

Shortly after her arrival, she was called down to the basement to meet her student who had been escorted in through the back by Federal Marshals. When she met little Ruby for the first time that day, she fell in love with her instantly. Barbara took her hand and escorted her to class. Thus, began their solitary adventure.

Barbara had to be everything. The art teacher. The music teacher. The gym teacher. The total math, reading and phonics teacher. She turned on music during recess so they could do jumping jacks and pretend jumping rope. Why pretend? Because there weren't two people to turn the rope!

Teachers and students eventually returned, but only to the rest of the school. No one else ever entered the first-grade classroom that was guarded by a Federal Marshal every day. No other teachers offered to participate in Ruby's education.

Barbara was on her own.

Moving to New Orleans as a Bostonian already set her apart from everyone else. Teaching Ruby made

her the target of anger and overt hostility. She was ostracized by the residents of New Orleans.

It didn't matter. Barbara was BOLD. She knew she was doing the right thing. Nothing would stop her.

She was only able to teach Ruby for one year. At that time, pregnant teachers weren't allowed in classrooms. (This didn't change until the late 1970's, with problems still existing to today). When Barbara discovered she was going to have her first child, she had to leave teaching. She and her husband moved to Boston to be closer to her family.

Ruby never forgot her, however. Thirty-five years later, Ruby found her. They reunited on an Oprah show and began a new adventure together.

The two women now travel the country; speaking about racism, equality, and the power we all hold to make a difference if we are willing to be Bold.

One woman's decision to do the right thing ended up being a hallmark of the Civil Rights Movement that changed a country.

That's what I call BOLD.



*There's one more thing I want to share with you before I move on. It's the best advice I ever received...*

I had been invited to attend a friend's family reunion. Coming from a very small family (I had one aunt & uncle and two cousins that I rarely saw) I decided it would be a kick to go to my first

ever family reunion. I wasn't quite prepared for the reality.

It was a little overwhelming to be surrounded by hundreds of people – all related! My friend had 20 sets of aunts and uncles and untold numbers of cousins. Add in seconds and thirds; great aunts and uncles... You can imagine the swarm of people on that hot July day. There seemed to be more people than the infamous North Carolina mosquitoes buzzing around!

I met as many strange faces as I could handle, then escaped to the sanctuary of his grandma's shady porch. That's where I found his grandma who had also retreated there to escape the heat.

She was so beautiful with her lined, weathered, ebony face surrounded by soft silver curls. Her dress, solid white with lace, was fresh and crisp even in the withering heat. It was her face that drew me, however. She looked so happy and peaceful, her eyes shining with a bright light that embraced me immediately.

She patted the step next to her rocking chair with her foot. "Have a seat and rest a spell."

I sank down gratefully.

"Kinda a lot of them, aren't there?" she asked, reading my mind immediately.

"More family than I've ever seen in my life," I agreed, laughing with her when her silvery laugh tinkled out. I relaxed against the porch column as we shared stories of our families. She had many more stories than I did, of course.

There was a brief silence, and then Grandma fixed me with her bright eyes. "Can I give you some

advice?"

I nodded eagerly. I was already so impressed with her loving, lively spirit that I wanted to hear anything she had to say.

Grandma settled back in her rocking chair, her face softened by a faraway look. "I want you to imagine you're my age. 87 years old. You're sitting in this rocking chair and you're looking back over your life – thinking of all the things you wish you'd done." She paused and leaned forward to make sure I was listening. "Now go do them."

Grandma reached down to grab my hand. "You don't want to live a life that ends in a lot of regrets. You got dreams, girl. I can see them in your eyes. Now go do them."

I listened – with both my heart and mind. And I want you to know, *I've been doing them* ever since. I'm so thankful I got that advice when I was so young. It's given me the courage to do things against the norm, bucking the tide any time I shy away from things that I know I'll regret if I don't do them. Her advice has given me the courage to be me.

One of the things I did was make a list of all the things I wanted to do in my life. It's changed and grown as I've gotten older, but I love marking things off as I accomplish them.

Let me share just a small portion of my list with you...

1. Travel in every state in America (*I've done 49 so far*)

2. Work on a ranch in Texas – *done*
3. Write a book for Teenagers – *I've published 6*
4. Write historical novels – *I've published 16*
5. Work with High School kids – *Yes. I loved all 18 years!*
6. Speak 3 foreign languages – *I'm working on Spanish but still have 2 to go*
7. Play the guitar – *I'm not great, but I play. I love it!*
8. Play the piano – *not yet, but I will*
9. Travel on every continent – *not yet, but I'm working on it.*
10. Own my own business – *I've owned five. I'm having the time of my life with my publishing company!*
11. Bungee jump – *What a rush! Now that I've done it, my goal is to bungee from a bridge in New Zealand!*

12. Zip line – Yes! Now I want to zipline in every state!

13. Hot Air balloon – Yes!

My list is MUCH larger, but it gives you the idea. Make your own list. Put it up where you can see it, and then start working toward marking off each accomplishment. I don't know if you're 21 or 91, but I learned a long time ago to live as if this was the last day of my life – because you never know how much time you have.

I also decided a long time ago to make the most of every day – believing that if I was still breathing, I had that day to live to the fullest and make a difference. I'm 62 today, but I plan on still living that way every day of my life.

Life can be thought about. Or it can be LIVED!!

***Boldly.***

I hope you'll decide to live every day, every moment with gusto – coming to the end with absolutely no regrets! No matter how you define success – you will have achieved it!!

*Here comes your question...*



What do  
you want  
to do  
BOLDLY??

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## Chapter Five

### **PURPOSE**

pur·pose  
/'pərpəs/

*noun*

1. the reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists.

Oh boy, this seems to be the thing women struggle with the most. Well, *all* people, actually, but since this book is about women, that's where I'm going to focus.

Over and over, I'm told a Bregdan Woman knows, and lives, her purpose.

I agree.

This is also where so many women flounder...

#### ***Purpose.***

So many people struggle to know what theirs is.

Purpose is the **why** – why you're here. It's knowing what your special calling in life is. Your purpose is what makes you unique – the special gifts and abilities you were born with and can contribute to the world.

Young or old – it can be tough to know what your purpose is. But it may be the most important thing you discover about yourself. I believe your lasting happiness depends on it. Knowing your purpose will

fuel your efforts and give you the drive to keep pressing on, no matter what challenges you face.

Some people think you can't know your purpose when you're young, or they think if you're older that it's too late for it to make any difference. Nonsense!

You're never too young to begin to fulfill your purpose.

Likewise, you're never too old to live the best life you can live. It's never too late to live with the feeling that you are fulfilling your destiny.

Here's a thought to wrap your brain around: ***Everyone dies, but not everyone really lives.***

Too many people flounder through life – waiting, hoping that the moment will come when their purpose becomes clear. In the meantime, they're simply going through the motions of living, never experiencing the exciting spark of aliveness that comes from knowing your purpose.

What about you? Do you know why you're here? Do you wake up every day, excited about your life?

If you don't, you're not alone, but I believe you can change that.

Finding your purpose is a process requiring self-reflection and patience. It seems unfair that you don't just automatically *know* why you're here, but life isn't always fair (surprise, surprise!).

Here's the first thing I want you to do.

Pull out a sheet of paper and write, "How I Want to Be Remembered." Better yet... let's do it right here.

Yes – I'm going to give you two blank pages in just a moment.

I want you to add some columns: Friends; Spouse; Children; Co-Workers; Community; the World. If you go to church or another place of worship, belong to a team, or another special group, add them in.

Now...List all the qualities, deeds and characteristics you would like to be remembered for. It's not too late...

*How I Want To Be Remembered*

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*How I Want To Be Remembered*

Oh, come on... are you really just going to keep reading? This isn't a book you're meant to just read – you have to *experience* it. I hope you don't mind if I keep reminding you. If you do mind, you can just roll your eyes, but it's not going to stop me!

I hate the idea that you'll get to the end of this book and just chalk it up to something else you read that didn't really change things for you.



When you've made your lists, go back. Find the pattern that shows your highest values. Discover what drives you.

Determine your purpose.

People ask me, "Once I determine my purpose, does that mean I quit whatever I'm doing to pursue that?"

Maybe.

Maybe not.

Each person has to make their decisions about how they live their life.

The important thing is to spend enough time with yourself to learn your purpose, and then make your decisions around that knowledge. In this area, just like everyone in this book, my greatest inspiration has come from women living *their* purpose.

The world is full of women doing just that.

One woman who has inspired me for decades is Jane Goodall.





Have you ever had someone comment on something you said or did and you responded with, “that’s just how I am”? Perhaps it was something astute that you said, a keen observation that you made, or something you did that they thought was extraordinary, but to you it wasn’t especially impressive.

Jane Goodall was like that.

Jane was born in 1934 in London, England and grew up on the southern coast of England. As long as she can remember, she’d loved animals. Without being able to verbalize it, she seems to have known her purpose from the time she was born.

When Jane was two years old, her father gave her a life-like toy chimpanzee named Jubilee. Well-meaning friends warned him that it would frighten her, but she adored the toy. (In fact, she still has it and it currently sits on a chair in her home in England.)

Many children love animals, but that wasn’t all that made Jane stand out. At age four, she stayed on a farm and helped collect hen’s eggs. When she asked the adults how the hens could lay such big eggs, no one could answer the question to her satisfaction.

Determined to satisfy her curiosity, she hid in the small, stuffy hen house for four hours to find out! (If you’ve ever been around young children

this age, you know that's pretty extraordinary. Actually, it would be amazing for any age kid, and many adults!)

Unknown to Jane, the family had called the police; everyone was frantically trying to locate the missing four-year-old. Imagine her family's relief and amazement, when Jane came rushing out of the hen house in great excitement to tell them how hens lay eggs. Instead of scolding her daughter, Jane's mother sat down with her and listened intently.

Now, that's a wise mom!

Not surprisingly, Jane's favorite childhood books included *The Story of Dr. Dolittle*, *The Jungle Book*, and the Tarzan books. By age 10 or 11, she was dreaming of going to Africa to live with animals. But instead of discouraging her, Jane's mother said, "*Jane, if you really want something, and if you work hard, take advantage of the opportunities, and never give up, you will somehow find a way.*"

Believing her mother's words, Jane did what it took to get to Africa. At age 23, she sailed to Kenya to stay on a farm with a friend, working as a secretary nearby. She had no college degree, but she knew her purpose and she had tremendous passion.

She had come to Africa to work with animals. She would find a way.

In Kenya, she learned about Dr. Louis Leakey. She was determined to meet the famous paleontologist and anthropologist. She wrangled an appointment and ended up being interviewed

by him about Africa and its wildlife. Dr. Leakey, impressed with her knowledge and passion, hired her as his assistant. Jane joined him and his wife on a fossil-hunting expedition to Olduvai Gorge in Tanganyika (now Tanzania).

She wasn't working with the animals that had brought her to Africa, but it was another step toward her fulfilling her passion.

After three months at Olduvai Gorge, the group returned to Nairobi, Kenya, where Jane worked at a museum. That was when Dr. Leakey first spoke with Jane about studying a group of chimpanzees on the shores of Lake Tanganyika.

Jane remembers that moment. *"I could have gone on at the museum. Or I could have learned a lot more about fossils and become a paleontologist. But both these careers had to do with dead animals. I still wanted to work with living animals. My childhood dream was as strong as ever. Somehow, I must find a way to watch free, wild animals living their own undisturbed lives. I wanted to learn things that no one else knew, uncover secrets through patient observation. I wanted to come as close to talking to animals as I could."*

Don't forget her love for Dr. Doolittle!

At first, the British authorities resisted the idea of a young woman living among wild animals in Africa. But they finally agreed to Leakey's proposal after Jane's mother volunteered to accompany her for the first three months. In 1960, Jane and her mother arrived at Gombe National Park in Tanganyika.

*And the rest is history...*

Jane Goodall was finally living her purpose. Her years of solitary, patient observation and research taught us that chimps hunt for meat, use tools and have unique personalities. Her few months field study, turned into the longest such study of any animal species in their natural surroundings.

Jane writes: *The most wonderful thing about fieldwork, whether with chimps, baboons or any other wildlife, is waking up and asking yourself, 'What am I going to see today?'... It can be exhausting climbing high, far and fast. Around 3 pm you feel very weary because of spending a lot of the day on your tummy, crawling, with vines catching your hair. Living under the skies, the forest is for me a temple, a cathedral made of tree canopies and dancing light, especially when it's raining and quiet. That's heaven on earth for me. I can't imagine going through life without being tuned into the mystical side of nature. People are too busy nowadays.*

You see, Jane wasn't doing anything extraordinary on purpose – she was simply fulfilling *her purpose* – her childhood dream of living with and observing animals. She was living out the proclamation: that's just how I am.



Do you remember your childhood dream – what you answered when someone asked you what you

wanted to do “when you grew up”? Does it still make your heart race? Can you still see yourself living it out? If your answers are “yes,” you’ve most likely just identified your passion – your life’s purpose. And it’s never too late to reclaim it!

Jane’s mother was right.

*If you really want something, and if you work hard, take advantage of the opportunities, and never give up, you will somehow find a way.”*



I realize very few people will ever fulfill a purpose that will make you as renowned as Jane Goodall – though I would argue every purpose is necessary to create the kind of world we all want to live in. You may not ever be well-known, but that doesn’t mean you can’t fulfill your purpose for each season and moment of your life.

*Like Camille...*

Imagine you’re standing on a street corner, watching kids ride by. Their calls and whoops of laughter fill the air.

*“Hey! Mom...look at me – I’m riding! I can ride the bike with one hand!”*

*“Wow! Everybody, watch me pop a wheelie!!”*

*“Dad! DAD! Can I ride my bike over to the store and get a coke?”*

*“MOM! I’m riding over to Jessie’s house, ok?”*

Last week these Missouri kids couldn't go anywhere because they didn't have bikes! Living in a poor neighborhood, bicycles are a sign that kids are "big kids" and can have some freedom. Every kid wants a bike but not everybody can afford one.

But these kids...? Thanks to a youth group from a church in town, these kids received their bike as a grand gift!

This is where Camille comes in.

*Ring! Ring! Ring!*

The morning alarm by Camille's bed went off and she woke with a smile!

"*It's meeting day!*" she thought as she jumped out of bed and eagerly got ready.

She loved figuring out ways to help. She knew today's group discussion would be all about the bicycles. And just like their other community service projects, she'd be right in the middle of it!

Camille and her teenage friends meet once a week in the morning *before* attending high school classes to discuss their latest "giving projects."

She's committed to changing her world and the world of those around her.

Camille gets up early to meet with her group when she could sleep in. She's excited about their latest endeavor, "Bikes 4 Tykes." Unlike their traditional coat and food drives, focusing solely on younger kids makes the gift extra special. The teens noticed many children walking to school and thought gathering donated bikes would help the kids do things that they hadn't been able to do before.

I absolutely love that Camille and her friends paid attention to the world around them – watching to see how they could best help.

A funny thing happened as Camille and her friends gathered for coffee and discussions before school...teens who didn't go to her church started asking how *they* could help. The group has expanded to other kids from other churches and other schools.

They didn't start with a strategy of how to grow their group. It just happened. Other people saw what they were doing in their forty-five-minute meetings and wanted to be part of it too.

You really don't have to go to Africa and crawl around among the chimps to fulfill your purpose.

Camille gets it! She loves to discover new ways to be a giver! Teens today are doing wonderful things. I know we don't always hear about it but keep your eyes open and you'll notice that many times the folks doing the best work are the teenagers! They're looking for a purpose and, like Camille, want to do their best to reach the world around them...45 minutes at a time.

Here's the thing. You may not have a lot of time. You may not have all the answers. You may need other people to help you fulfill your purpose.

It's fine to start where you are – watching your purpose unfold as you walk forward into the unknown.



It's important to understand that everyone's purpose is different. You need to find what *you* are passionate about.

While I might not share the passion of this next young woman, I have no trouble appreciating the power of her purpose. That's enough to inspire me.



Kristina was excited. She didn't know what she was going to do, but she had set aside today as the day she was going to take action on her desire to start her own business. She grabbed a shopping basket and headed for the home office supplies section of the store.

She would start her new journey by getting organized.

She walked up and down the aisles, picking up item after item, disappointed with what she was seeing.

*No way, she thought to herself. This is too expensive.*

*That's too flimsy. It will fall apart after a few uses.*

*This is all so boring. No style. No inspiration.*

She glanced over at another customer who looked at an item, shook his head, put it back on the shelf, and left the store.

Kristina left the store that day with very few items, but lots of ideas.

She had discovered her purpose!

Born in Sweden, Kristina "Kikki" Karlsson loved the simplicity and timelessness of Swedish design,



but living in Australia, she was unable to find the beautiful or stylish products she was used to in her native Scandinavia.

She truly did love everything about stationery.

Kikki applied that passion to what she was finding out about the lack of quality and stylish home office supplies. Adding her appreciation for design, she knew what she wanted to do.

*She knew there was a niche to set up products to supply to home offices.*

She was smart about it, though.

It's wonderful to know your purpose and to be passionate about it, but that should also compel you to be thoughtful and intelligent.

Kikki did extensive market research to see if others felt the same way she did. The answer was resoundingly affirmative. She created a very clear design philosophy. *"It's Swedish: very simple with natural materials."*

That may sound quite simplistic but keeping things simple can be amazingly effective and successful.

It certainly was for Kikki.

She started with boxes (for filing and organizing) and gradually expanded to items like notebooks, greeting cards, pens, and wrapping paper. She named her company, kikki.K Stationery.

Kikki enjoyed immediate success. Her success stemmed from "striking a chord with Melbourne's design-conscious" population. Within the next eight years, there were kikki.K stores in Sydney, Brisbane, and neighboring New Zealand.

Starting with just \$3000 in 2001, by 2007 Kikki had 23 stores creating revenue of more than \$20 million. Competitors offered her \$40 million for her business – but she wasn't selling.

She also wasn't done growing. To date, there are 102 kikki.K stores. Her products are stocked in another 250 stores, and sold online to stationery and design lovers in over 147 countries worldwide. She's also a sought-after international speaker.

Amazing!

Once Kikki found her niche, she never looked back, and she stayed focused. Although she has people tugging on her from all sides with many wonderful ideas, Kikki hasn't strayed from her objective. She uses only Swedish designers and keeps her line of products simple and stylish.

I learned a lot from this driven young woman (only 24 years old when she started). She has five basic keys to her success. They are:

- find your niche
- don't stray from it
- stay focused
- love what you do (be passionate)
- surround yourself with mentors and give it your all

Something Kikki says reveals she truly does understand the meaning of "purpose".

*"If you have a bad day, unless you're passionate, there's nothing to carry you through. It's never about money. The resilience came because I was passionate, so even on the hard days I loved it."*

YES!

Kikki is so right. Purpose is never about money. Money may, or may not, appear because of your purpose, but it can't be about that. Only *passion* will see you through to create your purpose.

That bears repeating... *Only passion will see you through to create your purpose.*

What are you passionate about? For Kikki, it was stationery and being organized.

Once you discover *your* passion, then I encourage you to use the rest of her keys to advance to the next level: find your niche, stay focused, surround yourself with mentors, and give it your all.



Your purpose can change through different seasons of your life. What your purpose is as a teenager, may look very different from your purpose as an adult. Your purpose as a young adult, or middle-aged adult, may look quite different as you age.

Nobody ever said you can only have one purpose in life. If they did, they don't know what they're talking about!

*Beth Tielke was an amazing example of that.*



O'Neill, Nebraska is a small town on the wind-swept plains. The residents are good, honest and hard-working. One, however, stands out...

I still remember the first time I laid eyes on Beth Tielke. I was at a business convention in Louisville, KY, almost twenty years ago. I saw her from a distance but could feel the joy and life emanating from her. She was surrounded by a throng of people who were hanging on her every word. I never had a chance to meet her that weekend.

One year later, I returned to that same convention location as a speaker. I walked into a breakfast meeting, saw her, and made a beeline to sit next to her. This was my chance! That was the beginning of a beautiful relationship!

Beth became a role-model and mentor to me, refining my meaning of the word *success*. This 74-year-old mother of 7, and grandmother of 40+ (last count), accomplished so much in her life.

Beth worked hard for many years on her family's dairy farm, battling cold and heat alongside her husband, Bill. She raised her 7 children, but that was just the beginning.

Aware there wasn't enough money to send her children to college, she plunged into the business world – owning a store, several restaurants, and a sandwich business – learning as she went. Most of the businesses are still running, only now her children operate them. And, yes, her children all went to college!

At 74, Beth had earned the right to sit back and enjoy life. Did she? Well, she enjoyed life immensely, but she certainly didn't *sit back*. This

dynamo of a woman traded in her brick-and-mortar businesses for three different home-based businesses. Her phone rang continuously and her home was full of friends, clients and family – that is when she wasn't roaming all over Nebraska spreading love to as many people as she could!

All of these things are wonderful but they're not what made Beth Tielke such an amazing person to me. To understand that you have to know about *Share Our Dream*.

Beth was only happy when she was giving –when she was making a difference in someone's life. She also understood that in order for a gift to make a difference it doesn't have to be large – it just has to be given from the heart, to the right person, in the right way.

*Share Our Dream* was about spreading a little bit of sunshine to as many people as she could. It was about allowing other people to give small gifts – all they are able – so they could know the joy of giving.

*It was about an elderly woman who just lost her husband crying with joy when she received a Share Our Dream card with a certificate for a piece of pie from a local restaurant.*

*It was about a little boy who realized someone cared when he got a certificate for a free ice cream cone from the local ice cream parlor.*

*It was about local businesses giving coupons for a cookie a week for Beth to give away to someone who needed a little drop of sunshine.*

*It was about a local florist donating one arrangement a month to bring joy to someone's life.*

*It was about a local resident with very little money who committed to providing a coupon for one ice cream cone a week – making a difference with what little she had.*

*It was about helping a 14-year-old pianist pay to have his first CD cut, then using a portion of the proceeds to give more gifts.*

*It was about the Share Our Dream website where local people had the joy of reading the stories of their lives, and of their friends and neighbors.*

The stories go on and on.... Once Beth started *Share Our Dream* (paying for most of the costs from her own pocket), over 1600 people benefited in some way.

It was about neighbors and friends feeling special and helping others feel special.

It was about teaching all of us how to live – how to live our purpose. It was about realizing a great life is not just about what we have, it's more about what we can give. It was about realizing that while we may not be able to "Out Give the Universe," it certainly is fun to try.

Beth wasn't satisfied to stop with *Share Our Dream*, however. I helped her build a website when she was close to 80 that ignited a movement to send packages to our military overseas. Her entire house

was FULL of things people and companies donated for the boxes she packed (along with help from her friends and neighbors) to send to “her boys”. Thousands of packages went out.

One of the saddest days of my life was when Beth passed away at age 83. I lost a part of my heart that day that will never be regained.

One of my goals in life is to be like Beth Tielke when I am her age – trying as hard as I can to emulate her *right now*. I mentioned at the beginning that Beth had 7 children. Well, actually she had 8, because she “adopted” me as her daughter. I am very proud to call this amazing woman my “Mom”!

I will forever be grateful for the years I shared with her!



Here’s the thing. All of us have the ability to fulfill our purpose – no matter how much money we do, or do NOT, have. Giving comes from the heart. True giving requires creativity and sensitivity to those around you.

I’ve always believed that as long as you’re breathing, you can fulfill your purpose for your life. I’m so inspired by people I see who not only believe that, but also live it.

It boggles my mind, however, when I see women who have decided “that time” in their life is over. They decide they’re too old. Or have too many health problems. Or they don’t have enough money. Or

one of any number of excuses to check out on life and say they're done.

I've seen it happen at 50. 60. 70. 80. 90.

The number is actually quite irrelevant.

The real question is... *Are you still breathing?*

*Are you still alive?*

If the answer is yes – which I'm going to assume it is if you're reading this book – then you can still fulfill a purpose.

Your purpose – for that moment in time.

You may be slower. You may have to be more creative. You may have to do things without leaving home.

So what?

There's absolutely nothing better than getting to the end of the day and knowing your life *matters*. That you have a *purpose*.

Only then will you be a Bregdan Woman.



What is  
your  
purpose  
for  
TODAY??

*Journal Pages*

*Journal Pages*



## Chapter Six

### HOPEFUL

hope

/hōp/

*noun*

1. 1.

a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.

A more complete definition is: *Hope* is an optimistic state of mind based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large.

As a verb, its definitions include: "expect with confidence" and "to cherish a desire with anticipation.

When I hear this word, I think of Emily Dickinson. *Hope Is The Thing With Feathers* is one of the best known of Emily Dickinson's poems. An extended metaphor, it likens the concept of **hope** to a feathered bird that is permanently perched in the soul of every human. There it sings, never stopping in its quest to inspire.

A Bregdan Woman has HOPE.

More importantly, a Bregdan Woman *pursues* HOPE.

## *Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 101*

A dictionary definition can never do justice to a word as powerful as HOPE.

Hope is the only thing that will carry you through all the setbacks, defeat and pain that life will inevitably throw at you. No one escapes life without setbacks, defeat and pain.

It's not whether or not you will experience these things – it's what you will do *while* you are experiencing them and *after* you experience them.

I've had more setbacks then I can count, or perhaps more than I care to keep track of. I've suffered defeat. I've failed at many things I tried. I've had more pain then I care to ponder.

Every single time, I had a choice to make. Would I wallow in my pain and defeat? Or would I choose HOPE.

I'm happy to say that I chose HOPE every single time. It's the only thing that kept me going in life. It didn't always happen immediately; in fact, I'm not sure it *ever* happened immediately.

There were times I wallowed in my pain and defeat for a while.

There were times I truly didn't believe I could keep going.

Yet, every time, I eventually chose hope.

Hope that things could be better.

Hope that the outcome the next time would be better.

Hope that the next relationship would bring me joy.

Hope that the next thing I tried would lead me to the outcome I dreamed of.



The real question, I believe, is what gives *you* the ability to keep hoping?

You probably already know what happens when you don't choose hope.

You don't believe you have the ability to change your life or your situation.

You believe any efforts to change your life are futile.

You blame yourself for the way your life is.

You believe that whatever happens to you is beyond your control.

You have no energy or motivation to make the effort to change things.

You don't believe you have a purpose or that your life matters.

You don't want to risk the pain or further disappointment by trying again.

You believe it's easier to simply live in your state of hopelessness.

*Except it's not.* And you know it. It's another reason you're reading this book. You want to believe there's a reason to hope. A reason to keep going.

I'm not kidding when I say I've had many setbacks, defeats, pain and disappointments. There are times that I journaled about the fact I was nothing but a complete failure, and that nothing I tried would ever succeed. There were times I curled up in a fetal position, crying my eyes out. I couldn't bear the thought of more pain and disappointment. I

## *Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 103*

remember thinking death would be a far better option than trying once again.

I promised to be honest and transparent...

Yet, I kept going. I kept trying. I got up off the bed or floor.

I chose life.

*Why? How?*

I found the courage to keep going in the stories of people who let nothing stop them. I started writing stories of these people almost twenty years ago. In the beginning, I was doing it only for me. I needed their stories. I needed to know how other people found happiness. How other people overcame incredible adversity to create the life they wanted. How other people made a difference with their life.

Learning their stories gave *me* hope.

Their stories restored *my* hope.

Their stories strengthened *my* hope.

Eventually, over the course of many years, the number of stories kept increasing. I now have over 600 of them! I'm sure I'll never stop.

Why did their stories matter so much?

Because it made me know I wasn't alone.

Neither are you...



*This is one of the first stories I wrote. I wrote it many years before I started writing about this time period in my historical novels.*

It's early in the morning and I have something I want to share with you.

I've thought about this through the week, as well as laying in my bed this morning listening to the birds usher in the day as the sun lightened the horizon.

Many years ago (in the 1800's), a movement swept through America. The call went out to all who had the courage and vision to "Head West." What a picture was drawn for them...

***The West is where you want to be. There is land for everyone for the taking! Beautiful. Fertile. Opportunity for everyone. Don't miss your chance to be one of the first to stake your claim!***

The call went out and hordes signed up to join the wagon trains pulling out of Independence, Missouri. As the pioneers bought supplies and lined up their wagons, their eyes shone with the excitement of what would be waiting at the end of the trail. They were pulled forward by the hope that things would be better for them.

I think it fair to say not one of them had a real understanding of what lay between Missouri and the far west they envisioned in their dreams.

***Can't you hear the conversation?***

"Why, honey," one confident husband says to his rather nervous wife, "there isn't going to be anything to this. We've got a nice, sturdy wagon. We're all together, and we have plenty of food. We're just going



to roll along the trail for a while and soon we'll have everything we've dreamed of. Just think of it!"

I don't know how long before the starry looks faded from their eyes - somewhere between broken wagon wheels and Indian attacks. Maybe it was the weevils in the flour, or the snowstorm that left them stranded in the mountains for months on end. Perhaps it was losing a child to illness because there weren't enough medical supplies, or simply the fatigue that came from fighting dust, heat and long days of the grueling cruelty of the trail.

Every pioneer who started down the trail, if they didn't die, had one of three things happen. Some gave up and turned back. Others decided they couldn't take any more and simply built a house where they stopped. Then there were the others... the ones who made it all the way to the West.

Yes, somewhere along the way the starry look faded from their eyes... *faded* ...to be replaced by determination. Broken wagon wheels; Indian attacks; weevils; snowstorms; death; fatigue; choking dust and long days. They all became daily obstacles to be endured and overcome, but at some point, each person who made it simply decided nothing was going to stop them. They had left behind their former lives to go someplace new.

**They were going...**

**Their HOPE got them through each day.**

***The vision of these brave people kept me moving forward. Okay, life was going to be a lot harder than I envisioned it when I was***

***young and starting out to accomplish my dreams. I decided I wasn't going to be one that turned back. Or one that simply stopped along the way and decided the life I had was simply going to be enough.***

***I had dreams. I was going to make them come true!***

Maybe you're just looking at the trail, thinking, "No way. Not me. That just looks too hard." Yet your heart yearns to go where the trail will take you.

We're back to that choice you have to make every single day. You can stay right where you are, or you can go on an adventure to accomplish what you dream of accomplishing. Not going may seem safer, but the truth is that not going will only assure you stay right where you are in your life.

What do you want? Where do you want to go? The only way to get there is to start your journey – and then determine to not let anything stop you.

You have to choose to let HOPE carry you through, above and around all the obstacles.



*Paula Lucas infused me with hope at a crucial point in my life...*

No person should live with abuse. But living in the Middle East, without any kind of support system, left this American woman even more victimized.

*"Shut up!"* Wham! Slap! Scream!

If only these words were from a movie. . . The bruises, cuts and abject terror spoke of just how real they were.

How had Paula Lucas gotten to this place in her life? The fear for herself and her children was worse than the physical and emotional pain. She knew what she had to do, but first she had to find a way to move beyond her panic.

For thirteen years, she experienced the horror as she and her children were terribly abused by her husband. As a U.S. citizen living abroad, her choices were limited. Living in the Middle East, she had no one to ask for help. She sought help from the American Embassy in the beginning but received nothing more than sympathy and a pat on the back. Her efforts to find resources for battered American women and children overseas revealed nothing.

The abuse continued.

She knew if she abandoned her marriage, and got caught before reaching U.S. soil, she faced imprisonment and would never see or hug her children again. She also knew her failure would ensure they would never escape the abuse.

The day came when Paula finally realized she had to take those risks because it was up to her to get her kids and herself to safety.

Somehow... enough HOPE remained in her to believe she could do it.

Day after day - for thirteen years - Paula had wondered how to escape, how to survive.

Night after night she had cried on the inside...pleading for answers that never came.

*"I have to get away. How can I leave? Can I make it back to the U.S.? How? When? Help me!"*

These thoughts ran through her mind time after time. Fear, loneliness, anguish, and despair mixed around the love she sometimes still felt toward her husband. The cycles of abuse and care waxed and waned like the lunar pull of the moon. Each tide change brought her closer to complete despair.

The care of the children during the day kept her mind occupied... at least when things were calm. Cries and fears always magnified themselves in the stillness of the night.

Paula knew she had to escape. Hope caused her to create a plan to break free from the abuse.

Frantic on the inside but patient on the outside, Paula waited until her husband was gone on a business trip, and then began the search for their passports. He'd hidden them to keep her and the children inside the confines of both the house and the border. Terrified and desperate, she felt defeated. Anguish took over as she ransacked her home in the search. Finally, trembling with panic, she discovered the passports.

A tiny glimmer of hope gradually rekindled in her heart. Knowing her time was limited; she packed one suitcase for her and her 3 boys... and left.

Risking prison if caught, she took all her courage and walked out of the nightmare and, eventually into freedom.

Her escape was just a first step, however. She escaped Dubai, but her husband stalked her and her children through the US, *vowing to hunt them down and slaughter them like animals.*

I can only imagine the terror. At forty years old, with three sons, age 4, 6 & 8, they lived like gypsies along the California and Oregon coast, hiding from the man who vowed to kill them.

She couldn't settle anywhere. She was homeless, penniless and living on welfare and food stamps.

Yet, the same hope that had empowered her to flee Dubai rose up in her again.

She started fighting again . . . but this time it was with the U.S. government. Due to the regulations of coming "home" and the bureaucratic red tape, she found herself homeless and fighting for the custody and safety of her kids, yet again. The freedom she longed for remained elusive. A domestic violence shelter was her only refuge.

Paula spent many more nights wondering, *"Will I get to keep my kids? Will we ever get out of this shelter? How many more women are just like me living abroad . . . all over the world with no one to call? I need help. They need help."*

Fortunately, Paula was a fighter.

It wasn't enough to save herself and her children. She had determined it was up to her to start an organization to help U.S. women leave abusive situations abroad.

While living in the shelter, Paula worked nights to take care of her kids and continue to fight for custody. The days, she devoted to helping women living around the world.

Through sheer hope and tenacity, her dream eventually became reality. Paula established the American Domestic Violence Crisis Line.

Through the years, it evolved into Pathways To Safety International. This organization is the only one with a world-wide international toll-free crisis hotline:

**833-SAFE-833**

Whether women reach out through phone or email, help is available. The organization helps in so many ways: Legal advocacy, professional counseling, danger to safety relocation, transition services and pet protection. They understand what women in crisis need.

Research shows that 9 million U.S. citizens live abroad. This non-profit organization supports an estimated 50,000 of those women and children who are suffering abuse. No one knows the true number...

Paula's vision to reach and help these suffering women didn't happen overnight. She lost a few battles but eventually she won a large part of the war against abusive isolation. American women anywhere in the world can now call and receive counsel and help.

Her survival ensures HOPE to anyone who needs it.

Paula determined to live and to help others live. She succeeded because she didn't quit. She is no longer homeless and is happily married. Not even a

bout with cancer has slowed her down. Paula just continues to give and give.

She gives HOPE to other women.

As the 2005 Volvo Corporation Hero for LIFE award winner, Paula's dream is still to ensure the safety of women and children everywhere. She never dreamed of winning anything with her life's work... except her own life.

She knew that giving HOPE to other women would keep her own alive and strong.

No matter what she faced, she kept moving forward – giving hope along the way.



Bregdan Women know that giving hope to others is a sure-fire way of ensuring hope of your own.

If you're struggling, take a small step toward someone else, and eventually your steps will lead you to a better place.



*Maria Baryamujura lost everything she owned.*

Three times.

If you ask her how long you should hold on to hope, this is what her answer would be.

For as long as it takes!

*If you look at her life today, you won't see where she came from...*

Maria nods and a huge smile lights up her face as the villagers burst into excited chatter. This is what she lives for; this is what is helping to change the face of her country.

When the chatter dies down, the community leader stands. *"Miss Maria, we would like to open our humble village to those who would learn from us. Our women can show others how to create mats and baskets. Our young people can perform our traditional dances. Our men can show others the hidden beauty behind our village. My wife and I, and several others will open our homes."*

Maria Baryamujura has once again brought the potential for income to a rural village along Uganda's main tourism circuit. Prior to her innovative approach, these villagers had no hope of attracting tourists or income. Many were barely eking out a living; others were deserting their villages to seek employment in the cities.

As the villagers come up to greet Maria, she thinks about how far she has come.

Maria was always an excellent student, always at the top of her class. She was also a natural leader. As an award for her achievements in high school, she was selected, with one other student, to travel to Queen Elizabeth National Park in South Western Uganda. She had never seen such scenic beauty as they traveled along the great East African Rift Valley. She still remembers the tea estates and the picnics on the escarpments overlooking crater lakes. As she traveled, she fell more in love with her homeland.



There was something about the trip, however, that bothered her greatly. At dinner one evening, she leaned over to her fellow student and said, *“Look around; you and I and the waitresses are the only Ugandans in here.”*

That observation influenced the rest of her life.

Maria’s future was bright and held enormous promise – until 1976. As a pregnant mother of three, she witnessed the brutal murder of her husband during Uganda’s civil war. Now a widow and single parent, she was plunged into survival mode. She worked as a dairy farmer, church warden, travel agent, radio talk show host, motivational speaker, tourism consultant and airline representative, as well as running a series of retail businesses. She lost all her earthly possession two different times during the war, but her childhood ambition for success never wavered.

She also never lost her passion to bring impoverished Ugandan villages into the tourism trade. Throughout all the setbacks, she never lost her vision.

She never lost her hope.

Finally, in 1989, Maria opened Safari Seekers Tours and Travel and provided a different twist on the usual tourist package. Remembering her high school experience and the absence of Ugandan citizens in the tourist trade, she offered a double opportunity.

Tourists would be given the opportunity to interact with rural people and experience their culture as they traveled through the country.

And rural Ugandans would be pulled into the tourism industry, infusing their villages with income that was rightfully theirs.

Maria called it Homestead Tourism.

As her tour company expanded, so did her vision of what could be accomplished. She established COBATI (Community-Based Tourism Initiatives) in 1998 because she believed Ugandans should enjoy economic benefits from the tourists visiting in “their backyards” instead of leaving their homes in search of alternative ways to survive.

COBATI encourages local participation at the homestead and community level, while also empowering local people through mentoring and training.

With her almost 30 years of experience in tourism development in and outside of Uganda, Maria is able to link local villagers with tourism opportunities. She is opening up *a world of adventure and opportunity by directing tourists to Uganda’s countryside... offering opportunity to disperse benefits from tourism into the rural economy.*

What an imaginative young woman! Maria took what she knew and created a new twist to it in order to help those who couldn’t help themselves.

The list of awards Maria has received from the industry and her country is very long. None of those mean more to her than a rural village’s pride in sharing their culture and traditions with others – and earning an income while they do it.

I hope Maria’s story inspires you as much as it did me.

She never lost HOPE that her life could be what she dreamed – no matter how many times she lost everything.

Through persistence and hard work, creative thinking and innovation, she's making a huge difference to people who have been ignored and marginalized. She has brought HOPE and tangible success to hundreds of people because of an observation she made as a teenager – an observation that shaped her life.

Maria doesn't think of herself as a hero, yet she certainly is to many, many people. Most heroes don't think of themselves that way at all. They simply acted on something they were passionate about.

I believe there are three things that are needed to become a Bregdan Woman.

- *Act on something*
- *Be passionate*
- *Never lose HOPE*

I challenge you to choose to be active and passionate about something! There are opportunities knocking on your door every day. Don't be afraid, and don't hesitate to answer and open the door!



*I have to share one more story with you because I love it so much...*

The little black-haired girl stood spellbound. Eyes glued to the TV, barely breathing, her complete

attention was focused on the screen. Only 5 years old, she froze in mid-step.

On that television, in her grandmother's house, was the most fabulous woman she had ever seen. She was a beautiful black woman...and she was on TV.

Who was that woman? Niecy had to know.

Who was the woman that had captured this youngster's attention and burned a desire deep within her soul?

*"Grandma, look at her. Just look at her, look at her."*

*"I see, sweetie. It's Lola Falana. She's an actress."*

*"Grandma. Grandma. That's what I want to do."*

*"What, baby?"*

*"Be on TV, be black, and fabulous!"*

From that day forward, Niecy's nickname became *Lola*. Every step she took headed in the direction of acting. Her dream never changed, and her vision never altered. She learned later that Lola wasn't the first African American woman on television; she was just the first African American woman that Niecy had seen.

This aspiring actress's life included some very hard, even tragic times.

Times that would test Niecy's commitment.

Times that would threaten to kill her hope.

At 15, Niecy witnessed the attempted murder of her mother. An ex-boyfriend shot her. Her mother survived, but six years later her brother was not as fortunate. Michael was fatally shot at his high school. His murder broke her mother's heart.

Soon after that, Niecy's mother succumbed to depression. Niecy found her own comedic voice out

of necessity as she tried to crack the sadness surrounding her mother's life. Most mornings she'd stand at the foot of her mother's bed telling jokes and creating laughter. Her goal was simply to get her mother to sit up and get out of bed.

It worked!

As the depression lessened, her mom invited relatives and friends over to hear the hilarious antics of her daughter.

Pulled forward by hope, Niecy got married, had her first son, and then graduated from college. Now it was time for a job.

Calling an agent for whom she'd auditioned months prior, she told him the rock bottom facts: *"I don't know if you remember me. I'm Niecy Nash, I'm broke, I've got a baby, and I need a job."* That very brave and spunky move led to her first paid acting job in the movie *"Boys on the Side"* opposite Whoopi Goldberg.

The rest of her acting roles came because she devoted her life to simply following her dream with whole-heartedness.

*"Acting is the call of my life, I felt like I didn't have any other choice. I wasn't committed to anything else,"* Niecey says.

Along the way Niecy became an accomplished stand up comedienne, an improvisation expert, a sitcom actress, and reality television show host.

"Miss Niecy" is known for her reoccurring roles as the hostess of TV's top-rated reality show *CLEAN HOUSE*, and Comedy Central's Deputy Raineesha Williams on *"RENO 911."* At one time, she had three television shows running simultaneously! Her

impressive résumé (In 2020) reads: 21 movies, 52 TV shows, 19 major award nominations with 8 wins, plus a Hollywood Walk of Fame star!

I believe that makes her dream of being "*on TV, black and fabulous!*" absolute fact.

She's also the spokesperson for *Mothers Against Violence In Schools*. Her mother founded M.A.V.I.S., after the death of Niecy's brother, Michael. Its "*mission is to inform the public of the violence children encounter on school campuses.*"

I believe Niecy's words best communicate her hope and tenacity.

*Posted by Niecy on September 12th, 2008*

I'm tired!!! I am a mother of three with a demanding career. Demanding.

It's a good tired though, because I am living my dream. I know so many people who don't have the courage to live their dream. Whether its fear of success or fear of failure...it's a hot mess! Fear causes you to be paralyzed, immobile, and rooted in wrong.

If you find yourself in that place, do all you can to get out. You don't have to eat a whole side of a cow to know that it's beef. All it takes is a bite! Pray about it, talk about it, write down the vision for your life and press toward the mark. No Matter What! The right now of your life is a gift...that's why it's called the present.

If fear is not your friend and you are walking out your goals, don't forget to celebrate yourself. Celebrate your

accomplishments. I'm preparing to have a party to celebrate ...that I'm the only African American woman who got a pilot picked up this season. I'm proud of that.

Even if my show gets canceled, I'm celebrating the fact that it was picked up!

I'm celebrating the fact that I'm walking out my destiny one footstep at a time. Fearless. Strong. Happy. Not Perfect. Funny. Very Funny. Very Happy.

Get Into It!

Niecy!"



Remember how I started this chapter...

Hope is the only thing that will carry you through all the setbacks, defeat and pain that life will inevitably throw at you.

It's not whether or not you will experience these things – it's what you will do *while* you're experiencing them, and *after* you experience them.

A Bregdan Woman has HOPE.

More importantly, a Bregdan Woman *pursues* HOPE.

*You know what to do with the next pages...*

What do you  
hope for??

How are you  
hanging on to  
HOPE??



*Journal Pages*

Journal Pages

## Chapter Seven

### **GRACE & COMPASSION**

#### *Grace:*

Divine grace is a theological term present in many religions. It has been defined as the divine influence which operates in humans to regenerate and sanctify, to inspire virtuous impulses, and to impart strength to endure trial and resist temptation; and as an individual virtue or excellence of divine origin.

#### *Compassion:*

Sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others. Compassion motivates people to go out of their way to help the physical, mental, or emotional pains of another and themselves.



Whew! These definitions are a mouthful. I think there are much simpler definitions.

*Grace is getting something you don't deserve.*

*Compassion is choosing caring and kindness.*

I can wrap my brain around these definitions much more easily!

Bregdan Women are full of grace and compassion. One of my favorite memes on Facebook is:

*In a world where you can be anything – be KIND.*

This part of the book is extremely challenging for me to write because it is so important to me. I'm praying I find the right words to communicate how intensely I feel this!

I'm going to start with Compassion. When this word stands alone, it's much easier to communicate.

In its most simple form, Compassion is caring. Compassion is kindness.

Compassion is reaching beyond ourselves and making someone else more important than we are.

In many instances, compassion is stepping into someone else's pain and living it with them.

Compassion enables a Bregdan Woman to embrace those people who share her world – even ones she may not relate to.



Amanda was concerned about her next-door neighbor who had moved in just a few months earlier. Actually, she was concerned about her next-door neighbor's children. She very seldom saw them outside their house – except on the days they went to school. When she did, she hated the haunted look

she saw in their eyes. She could tell they weren't happy.

Were they being abused? Her blood boiled at the thought. What kind of monster lived next to her?

She had only seen the mother once – when the woman was coming home from a trip to the grocery store. With the exception of that one time, the woman was never outside. Granted, the cold rain of a Pacific Northwest winter keeps most residents inside, yet even on sunny days, the woman never ventured outside.

No one in the neighborhood had met her or knew anything about her.

It was what Amanda heard one night, though, that made her take action.

She had gotten up in the middle of the night to use the restroom. Half-asleep, she was jolted awake by what sounded like screams coming from her neighbor's house. She hurried to the window and pushed it open so she could hear more clearly.

"Help me! Someone *help* me!"

Then, silence.

Amanda continued to listen but heard nothing.

Should she wake her husband? Had she imagined it?

Could it have been a television show that had been muted?

She stood at the window for several minutes, but nothing broke the stillness of the night except for the wind blowing in the trees.

There were no lights on in the house. There was no sound from the children.

Nothing.

Amanda finally returned to bed, but her sleep was troubled for the rest of the night.

The next morning, she knew she needed to do something. She couldn't live with herself if something horrible happened – either to the woman or the children – and she had done nothing. She'd heard far too many stories on the news about people who ignored the signs of trouble around them, until it was too late.

Amanda waited until she saw the neighbor's children load the school bus with her own son and daughter before she baked some cookies, put them in a tin, and ventured next door. No one answered her knock, but instinct told her the woman was inside.

Now that she'd decided to act, she wasn't going to be deterred.

It took several minutes of knocking before she finally heard someone approaching the door. Amanda's heart began to pound harder. She was there, but she didn't really know what she was going to find, or what she was going to do.

The door cracked open. A disheveled looking woman with tired eyes stared out at her.

"What?" Her voice was as weary as her eyes. It managed to be both distant and suspicious.

Amanda took a breath. "Hi. I'm Amanda. I'm your next-door neighbor. I brought you some cookies." She smiled as she held up the cookie tin.

The woman's eyes widened with surprise, but then quickly narrowed with suspicion. "Why?"

Amanda hesitated and then decided to just be honest. "I thought I heard screaming coming from

your house last night. I came to see if I could help.” She smiled and prayed the woman wouldn’t slam the door in her face.

After what seemed an eternity, the door slowly opened. “Please come in. I’m Lillian,” the woman whispered.

What unfolded in the next hour changed Amanda’s life.

Lillian was barely holding on.

She and her husband Bob had rented the house so that Lillian would have a place to be with the children while Bob traveled back and forth to the North Dakota oil fields for work. After a year of unemployment, the oil field job offered good pay and benefits. The situation wasn’t ideal, but once they got out of debt, they would explore other options.

Lillian didn’t know anyone in their town, but they had chosen it because Bob could fly in and out easily and cheaply – allowing him to come home every couple of weeks to be with his family.

Just two weeks after the move, one day before his first trip home, Bob was killed in an oil rig accident.

Lillian was alone in a town where she knew no one. They had already almost run out of money. The oil company had sent the pay Bob was due before his death, but it was almost gone. She had received an eviction notice the day before.

“I don’t know what to do,” Lillian said softly, tears rolling down her cheeks. “I don’t know how I’m going to take care of my kids.” Her eyes dropped with shame. “I guess I reached the end of my rope last night. I thought about killing myself, but I couldn’t

leave my kids alone. I don't really remember screaming."

Amanda did the most compassionate thing she could do at that moment – she wrapped Lillian in her arms in a long embrace.

When Lillian stopped sobbing, Amanda assured her she would help. Then she went back home and got on the phone.

By the end of the week, she had gotten enough money from neighbors and agencies to pay the back rent. Lillian's pantry and refrigerator were full.

Amanda's husband got Lillian a job working where he was employed, while Amanda promised she would care for Lillian's kids when they came home from school. Other neighbors pitched in to help.

The entire neighborhood, rallied by Amanda's compassion, stepped in to meet the needs of the struggling family.

One year later, Lillian and the kids were able to smile again, and they were well on their way to financial stability.

Amanda learned an unforgettable lesson about compassion and the power of reaching out to those around her.



*Compassion can be experienced (and lived) in so many ways. I've received amazing stories from my readers...*



While going through a divorce, my mother fretted over her new worries: no income, the same bills, and no way to afford groceries. I was twelve, old enough to know we were in trouble. I joined her in worrying about my little brother and sister. It was around this time that we started finding boxes of food outside our door every morning. This went on for months, until she was able to land a job. We never did find out who it was who showed such compassion, but they truly saved our lives.

Their compassion has given me inspiration to show kindness to everyone I can. I aspire every day to be a Bregdan Woman.



My mother was a teacher for forty years. She had reached retirement age but wasn't sure she wanted to retire. Until she met Gretchen. Gretchen was new to town and looking for a teaching job. She was also a new widow with three children. She had left her previous teaching job to be near her family after her husband died from cancer, but there had been no jobs available in my mother's school district.

My mother realized what she should do. She retired from her position, with the stipulation that Gretchen be her replacement. Gretchen is still a beloved teacher in that school.

My mother taught me more about being a compassionate Bregdan Woman than anyone ever has.



I met an incredible Bregdan Woman last week. I had to write and tell you about her. I flew home for two weeks to care for my sister, who had emergency surgery. I'm a painter, so I took my paints with me – wanting and needing something to do while she was resting. I was heartbroken when they were all taken at the security checkpoint. I had totally forgotten about the liquid rules for carryon baggage. The attendant was very kind and offered her sympathy, but I lost them all, nonetheless.

When I returned home, I was stunned to find the same security attendant waiting for me in the baggage area. She had saved all my paints, checked my ticket to see when I was returning, and then met me so she could give them all back.

Wow! I've learned that Bregdan Women are compassionate, but I'd never seen it displayed so beautifully before. I thanked her profusely and then sent her the first four books in your series!



Wow, indeed! There are so many ways to show compassion and kindness. The powerful thing is that your acts of compassion can change not only one person's life but can also have repercussions throughout all of history.

Compassion truly is just that powerful!



When I think about Grace & Compassion, the first thing I think about is that it's something you give others when they don't deserve it – or when they don't believe they deserve it.

It's always a choice you have to make.

It's often a very difficult choice.

*I'm not sure there was ever a more difficult choice to be made than one that was made on October 2, 2006.*

Terri Roberts had shared brunch on October 1st with her 32-year-old son, Charles, his wife and their three children. There was nothing about that relaxed meal to give a warning of what was about to happen.

Charles put his daughters on the school bus the next morning, saw his wife off to work, and then drove to a one-room Amish schoolhouse and walked in with a handgun. He ordered the adults and boys to leave, barricaded the door, tied up ten little girls between the ages of 6 and 13, and refused to negotiate with the State Police that soon surrounded the building.

Less than an hour after his arrival, he opened fire, shooting all ten girls. He killed five of the young girls, injured the others, and then killed himself.

I'm quite certain you're feeling the same horror I felt when I learned this for the first time. I stared at the words, my hands over my mouth, not able to even begin to make sense of what I was reading.

Terri still remembers the disbelief and sick horror when she learned what had happened. She had never dreamed the scream of the sirens filling the air had anything to do with her son. She and her husband were equally shattered.

They were first sickened for the murdered children, the ones who had been injured, the families, and the close-knit Amish community that would never be the same.

They were horrified for their daughter-in-law and their three beloved grandchildren.

Right on the heels of those feelings, was the panicked certainty they would have to move far away. They're not Amish, but were close friends with many in the community – including parents of the murdered girls. They were certain they would be ostracized, blamed for not knowing the evil their child was capable of.

That very afternoon, while Amish parents still waited for word of whether their daughters had survived, an Amish man named Henry arrived at Terri's home with a message: *The families did not see the couple as an enemy.*

Rather, they viewed them as parents who were also grieving the loss of their child.

Tears flowed freely from everyone.

On the day of their son's funeral, the world watched in amazement as close to 30 Amish men, some of them the parents of the victims, came to the cemetery and formed a wall to block out media cameras. Parents, whose daughters had been murdered by their son, offered their condolences to the grieving couple.

I'm quite certain I've never read a more poignant description of grace & forgiveness.

They're really one in the same thing. When you offer grace to someone, you're offering forgiveness.

I have long believed that the greatest gift in forgiving someone is the gift you give yourself.

For most people, forgiveness and acceptance come at the end of a long emotional process. The Amish, however, forgive first and then every single day work through the emotions of it.

I had to stop and ponder this thought for a long time when I first read it. I invite you to do the same.

*They forgive first and then every single day work through the emotions of it.*

Decisional Forgiveness.

The Amish willingness to forego vengeance doesn't undo the tragedy or pardon the wrong – it constitutes a first step toward a future that is more hopeful.

The power of this strikes me every single day.

Their choice to offer grace to Terri freed her to offer her friendship back to them – all of them bound together by their grief.

Their forgiveness also showed her the way toward forgiving her son for the horrible thing he had done. If the Amish could forgive him, how could she not?

Time has passed, but what happened that day can never be forgotten.

Rosanna King was only six years old the day of the shooting. While the other injured girls recovered,

little Rosanna was not so lucky. The bullet that entered her brain changed her life forever.

Now 19, she sits immobile in her wheelchair, unable to speak or feed herself.

Terri developed a strong bond with her and helped care for her in the years after the shooting. Terri spent nearly every Thursday evening with Roseanna; bathing, reading, and attending to the girl. Overwhelmed by the reality of what her son had done to this beautiful, severely handicapped child, she would cry uncontrollably the whole way home.

The next week she would be back, giving all she could to the family so in need of compassion and kindness.

Terri recognized the gift of grace and compassion that she had been given. Until she died of cancer in 2017, she gave in every way she could.

Every day, she tried to give back to the community that embraced her and her family through their horrendous nightmare.



Then there is compassion and grace for *yourself*.  
Huh?

I believe this is absolutely as important as giving grace and compassion to others.

One thing that women often forget is that...  
*You Matter.*

We forget we're human. In our humanity, we're going to make mistakes. We're going to blow it.

I know I certainly do.

All of us reading this book share that reality.

If I believe it's important to offer grace and compassion to others, isn't it equally important to offer it to myself?

I know so many women that can't, or don't, do that.

They lose themselves in constant blame for mistakes they've made.

They lose themselves in constant caring for others, without giving themselves the same amount of grace and compassion.

Mother's subordinate their smallest need to their children's.

Daughter's completely assume the burden of caring for elderly parents.

Wives sacrifice their career for their husbands

Women put in extra effort for others without making requests for themselves.

We're taught that sacrificing ourselves for others is the ultimate gift of love. We believe the lie that being sacrificial makes us better.

We believe that it makes us the women we're supposed to be.

*I disagree.*

I believe in giving in every way I can, but I'm not willing to sacrifice *myself*.

It breaks my heart to watch so many women sabotage their own interests, stunt their emotional and intellectual growth, and deny themselves the full richness of life because of continual self-sacrifice.

Most women don't want to admit that while they are committed to sacrificing themselves for others, they also struggle with the bitterness that comes from refusing to care for themselves.

Walking the line between sacrifice and self-care can be incredibly challenging, but the battle for balance is worth it.

I realize I could do nothing but give to others all day long if I was willing to do that. I've learned to ignore the voices clamoring in my head – finding the balance that comes from accepting that *I Matter*, too!



*I've gotten great responses from women I have asked about this:*

It's alright for me to take time off from work if I need to. There will always be demands on me. There will always be more to do. It's alright for me to take care of myself.



It's alright to go for a long walk in order to recharge my batteries. For so long, I pushed aside my own health because the people in my life had so many needs. I've finally realized that I matter. I also realize I can give more when I make sure I have what I need, as well.





It took me a long time to understand that I matter. I quit school when I got married. My husband needed me to help him finish school, and then support his career. I never questioned doing it. Until I realized how unhappy and dissatisfied I was with my own life. I had dreamed of so much more.

When I decided to go back to school, my husband told me I would hurt our family. He wanted me to do nothing but be available for him and for our children.

I struggled with my decision because I love my husband and children, but I believed I could do it all.

It was reading one of the Bregdan Chronicles that gave me the courage to make the decision that was right for me. I enrolled in school.

My family survived. My husband eventually decided he was proud of me, and my children cheered loudest at my graduation.

Me? I've been a nurse for six years now. I became the Bregdan Woman I always knew I could be.



Grace and compassion are not just something you offer others. It is equally important to offer them to yourself.



There's one more thing I want to share with you while I'm writing about this. I have a bright blue Toyota pickup truck named Grace.

I named my truck (her) Grace because I wanted a constant reminder of the choices I made during an especially difficult time in my life.

Without going into a long, sordid story, I was in the midst of a prolonged legal battle that had threatened to rip my heart out.

I vacillated between heartbreak and fury on a regular basis – while struggling to do what I believed was the right thing.

Friends told me I should go for the jugular because of what had been done.

My attorney assured me I should go for the jugular because of what had been done. I would easily win.

The anger in me longed to follow their advice.

During this entire process, I spent time alone in my hot tub every morning – searching for the best way through the situation.

The words that reverberated in my head every morning were...

You guessed it.

*Grace & Compassion.*

At my angriest, the words continued to ring in my head.

*Grace & Compassion.*

At my most heartbroken, the words continued to ring in my head.

*Grace & Compassion.*

At the end of the battle, no one got everything they wanted. I walked away with far less than I could have

demanded – and easily gotten. The ramifications of my decisions will be felt in my life for a long time.

So be it.

I walked away with the most important thing to me.

Peace.

Coupled with the knowledge I had navigated the entire situation with *Grace & Compassion*.

Every time I climb into my truck, I'm reminded of how I want to live my life.

I, too, long to live my life as a Bregdan Woman.

I hope you spend a good chunk of time with this question...

What have  
you learned  
about  
Compassion  
& Grace?

How are you  
going to live it?

*Journal Pages*

Journal Pages

## Chapter Eight

### **DETERMINED**

de-ter·mined

/də'tɜrmənd/

*adjective*

1. having made a firm decision and being resolved not to change it.

Every Bregdan Woman has to be determined.

I have worked with, and communicated with, so many women who have great ideas or solid plans for what they want to do in their life.

Unfortunately, far too many of these women are great at *talking* about what they want to do but fall far short of actually *doing* what it takes.

Here's the truth – the vast majority of things (perhaps ALL) do not happen easily and quickly. It takes great determination to make a firm decision and resolve not to change it.

Determination can also be a little tricky, though. The hardest thing is when it has to walk hand in hand with *change*. We'll talk more about change in another chapter, but for now – there are times when your determination has to apply to a BIG goal; while also accepting that the path to reach that goal may change and look completely different than what you envisioned.

Here's an example:

I have journaled for most of my life. It helps me to write things down on paper. I can work through pain and conflict in my journals. I can write out my dreams and goals and come up with a plan to make them happen. I have kept all the journals I've ever written. It's fun to go back and read them... and remember.

I haven't yet died from the agony and pain I've experienced that I thought would kill me. I've reached so many of my goals, but never quite the way I envisioned.

Right now, I just want to tell you about a journal entry from when I was twenty-five.

*I am going to be financially free – living in a log home in the mountains.*

I laughed when I read that recently.

It is true that I'm financially free and that I live in a beautiful log home at the base of the mountains I love to hike. I call it *Bregdan* – as a tribute to my readers, and also as a reflection of what the word means. I love my home with a passion!

What made me laugh was the reality that from the moment I wrote that entry I have moved fifty times. I never owned a home until now. I chose to not be tied down as I traveled and roamed around North America.

The other reason for the laughter is that I've only been financially free for the last four years. Up until then, money was a constant struggle and a source of great frustration.

Here's the thing, though... I *made a decision* to be financially free. I was determined to make it a reality. No matter how many times I failed. No



matter how many times I had to change course. No matter how many tears I cried.

I was determined to reach my goal, so I didn't give myself the option of giving up. Oh sure, there were moments when I curled into that fetal position I've mentioned before, but I always got back up and kept moving. Sometimes I felt like I was moving forward. There were other times I was certain I was moving backwards. It didn't matter, though.

I was determined. I was *moving*.

It took me almost forty years before I bought Bregdan. *Four decades*.

That's a long time to hang on to determination. That's a long time to hang on to a dream.

I'm grateful for something I learned a long time ago. I had the choice to give up on my dream. I could have decided it was too hard, settled for a regular job that would allow me to get by, and give up on my dream.

But that would be like all the people who *Headed West*, decided it was too hard, stopped where they were and built a house. I'm not saying it's bad if that's a decision that made them (or you) happy, but it wasn't what I wanted. I was *Headed West*. I wasn't willing to settle for less than what I had dreamed.

Ten years.

Twenty years.

Thirty years.

Whatever. I had a dream. I was determined to make it happen!

*And I have. I'm grateful every single day.*

There's really nothing magical about determination.

You make a decision.

You resolve to never change it and to never give up.

You keep walking toward that decision.

The thing that helped me most along the way was learning the stories of other determined people. I know you knew the stories were coming...



Debbi was only nineteen years old when she reached a crossroads in her life. She was married to a well-known Economist, and had quit work to play the role of a conventional wife. She hadn't expected her decision to deal such a hard blow to her self-esteem. No one seemed to think she had anything to offer – including herself.

One night, at a party, things reached a head. People were falling all over themselves to talk to her husband – they were treating her like an absolute zero, walking away from her in most conversations. Until the party host approached her.

She *tried* to talk to him, answering his barrage of questions. She *tried* to appear sophisticated, urbane and clever – failing miserably at her attempt to be something she wasn't.

Her host finally asked, "What do you intend to *do* with your life?"

Debbi was a nervous wreck at this point. She blurted out, "Well, I'm mostly trying to get orientated."

Her host looked at her with disgust. "The word is oriented," he snapped. "There is no such word as *orientated*. Why don't you learn to use the English language?" He spat out his words and walked away.

Well, you can imagine. Debbi was crushed. She cried all the way home. But somewhere, in the middle of all the tears, she *made a decision*. She would never, never, NEVER let something like that happen again. She was done living in someone else's shadow. She would find something of her own.

As she pondered what she was going to do she thought back to the old boat motor that had accumulated dust in her family's basement when she was growing up – her parents and 5 girls in a two-bedroom, one-bathroom home. Her father was going to buy a boat for that motor *someday*. He never did, and to Debbi that motor became a symbol of putting off dreams until it's too late to achieve them.

Debbi had watched her father die with his dreams unfulfilled. She didn't want the same thing to happen to her. She would do *something*.

*But what?!*

The only thing Debbi was really good at was making cookies. She had been baking and experimenting with recipes since was thirteen. She'd add more butter; use less flour; or try different kinds of chocolate. She'd finally hit on a recipe that she believed was ideal. Her cookies were soft, buttery and crammed with chocolate chips.

She realized she had to use her gifts so... Debbi decided to open a cookie store.

Every single person in her life told her it wouldn't work.

No one believed in her.

It didn't matter. She had *decided*.

On August 18, 1977, when Debbi was twenty, she opened her first store.

No one came. Not one person walked through the doors of the store she had worked so hard to create.

By noon she was desperate. She stared at the empty store and decided if she was going to go out of business, she would at least do it in style.

Debbi loaded up a tray of cookies and went out into her shopping arcade, trying to give away cookies. No one would take them. Can you imagine her heartache and frustration? I'm sure she was hearing the voices in her head of everyone in her life who had warned her she would fail.

Debbie was determined, though...

She figured she had nothing to lose at this point, so she headed out to the street. She swallowed all her pride as she begged, pleaded and wheedled until people finally took her samples. She smiled as their faces lit up.

She went back to the store and sold cookies to the people who had followed her wanting more. By the end of the day she'd sold \$50 worth. The next day she sold \$75 worth.

The rest is *Cookie History*. . .

Debbi Fields became the owner of over 600 Mrs. Fields stores – with sales in the multi-millions. She is also the mother of 5. She did indeed find something of her own!

She eventually sold the company, but as of this writing, she is still the spokesperson for Mrs. Fields.

## *Book 1 of Messages From Bredgan 149*

You will face obstacles. You'll face people who don't believe in your dreams. So what? It's YOUR life. It will become what YOU decide to make it.

Debbi Fields shared this in a speech: *"Whatever you do in your life, you have to be absolutely passionate about it."*

Debbi was passionate about cookies. Passionate about excellence. Passionate about living with no regrets.

She was also DETERMINED.



*At one point, I asked readers from my Bredgan Chronicles Family to write me about what it means to be a Bredgan Woman. This woman's response amazed me:*

First of all, thank you for asking me about being a Bredgan Woman. I believe I'm a Bredgan Woman, but I didn't get there on my own! When I was young, I dreamed of being a nurse, but those dreams faded when I married and became a mother.

For the first 16 years of marriage I was a stay-at-home Mom and mother of 5 children. Then things changed. I took a job as a nursing assistant to help supplement our income when my husband was laid off from his job and was attempting to start his own business.

A year later, I was encouraged to further my education in nursing, but we didn't have the financial stability to take out a loan for my

schooling. I was very disappointed but had told God if that door didn't open, that I would accept that meant He had other plans. He is an on-time God! Several days later I discovered my work had a grant program that would pay for my college. I signed up, not realizing how drastically my life would change.

The first day of classes, my husband was diagnosed with kidney failure. I was ready to quit school, but he encouraged me to press on. I went to class during the week and worked weekends – struggling to make ends meet because my husband could no longer work. The days and weeks blurred together, but I received my LPN license a year later.

My husband grew sicker and was in dire need of a kidney transplant. In the midst of all this, my supervisor told me I should continue school and become a RN. I realized I may very well be the only one who would be able to provide for my family of seven. I wouldn't be able to do it on my LPN salary.

I went back to school. God once again provided the finances. Despite the fear and struggles, my dreams from long ago were coming true.

I'm still not sure how I did it. I juggled school during the day as I tended to my husband on dialysis, and then took care of my kids in the evening – on top of working eight hours a day. Sleep was a rare commodity.

Only with the strength of God did I become that Bredgan Woman. You see, to me a Bredgan woman pursues her passion in life. With a support system to lift her up and encourage her, she can accomplish that which she feels she is called to do. She doesn't

quit in the face of adversity. I've learned a Bregdan Woman may sometimes doubt her decisions, and there may be a change in plans, but she always moves forward. She never looks back. A Bregdan Woman always looks for an opportunity to gain experience or learn skills to accomplish her goal.

Yes, I became a registered nurse, but I didn't stop there. I gained the certification to coordinate the care planning process for the elderly. Inspired, I continued on to become a Director of Nursing, and then a Medical Records Director.

I had a goal to advance the quality of life and the care of the elderly. Once I knew I could accomplish whatever I set out to do, I was determined that nothing would stop me.

Life is not about the destination - it's about the journey.

~ Judy



*There was another response to my request that I have to share:*

You asked your readers to let you know how they see themselves connected to the Bregdan women. Sometimes, when I'm feeling tired or depressed, I think of Carrie, Rose, and Abby. I think back on what I have done so far with my life and now I can ask myself, "What would Carrie, Rose, or Abby do?"

I married when I was seventeen. All I ever wanted to do was be a good wife and mother. I didn't even consider education higher than my high school diploma. I worked for many years as a typist and later, an insurance agent. After almost suffering a nervous breakdown from working for a very chauvinistic employer, my husband told me to stay home and care for our three daughters. I was happy and soon out of danger of suffering a breakdown. However, it wasn't long before I was bored and looking for something to do.

I volunteered at my daughter's middle school; in the library and the computer class. It didn't take long before I knew I wanted to work with kids as a teacher, not just a "helper." I thought about college but didn't really think I could do it.

One of my high school classmates was running for County Attorney at that time. He was going door-to-door, talking to voters, and stopped at my house. We talked awhile and I shared my thoughts and doubts with him. I will never, ever forget what he said to me. "You can start college now and in four years you will be that much closer to your goal, or you can do nothing and in four years you will be right where you are now."

At the ripe old age of 40, with that wisdom ringing in my ears, I started college.

We had a community college in our small town, so I set a goal that I would attend until I earned an associate degree. I went to the college one evening during enrollment. Another friend, who was teaching at the Community College, was helping with enrollment. I told him what I wanted to do but



explained I didn't know what steps to take. He told me I should start with two classes and see how I felt at the end of the first semester. He recommended Psychology and English I for the first two classes and said to follow him, because the first class started about fifteen minutes ago. That was how I started college. I worked as a transcriptionist in Medical Records at the local hospital during the day and went to college at night.

By the end of the first semester I felt like a new person. I was hooked! I achieved my goal of getting an Associate Degree in Education, working the night shift when I needed classes only offered during the day. About that time, The Newman University in Wichita, Kansas decided to start an outreach program for a four-year degree. I enrolled in those classes, evenings and Saturdays, and completed my BS in Education. I started teaching as soon as I graduated in December 1993.

I then went on to earn a master's degree in English as a Second Language by attending classes on Saturdays, driving 25 miles for these classes. I taught ESL at a middle school during the day and taught ESL to adults at the Community College at night. I also got another master's degree in Administration.

Once I made the decision to become a teacher, I never let anything stand in my way. Your books taught me that I just had to be determined to reach my goal.

I retired from teaching in Kansas in 2005, moved to Nevada and taught there until retirement in 2014. When I read about Carrie, Rose, and Abby I

feel like I tried as persistently as they did, and I connect.



I love reading stories about determination! Every single one I read strengthens my own decision to never be deterred from accomplishing the decisions I make.

Years ago, spurred by my own need to be DETERMINED, I wrote the following story. I hope reading it does as much for you as writing it did for me!



***I'd like to introduce you to the miracle of Chinese Bamboo...***

It all begins with a seed - and with the vision of someone willing to wait.

A Chinese farmer, usually struggling to survive and provide for his family, plants the seed and sets his hope and vision on all it will provide when it towers 90 feet above his head. With a heart toward the future, he digs hole after hole, plants the seeds, then begins their care. Day after day he carries water to the spots he has marked. And because it's human nature to want to see results he carefully inspects "the spots" every day.

***Nothing.***

Knowing he has to feed his family he plants other crops, carefully sewn around "the spots" that contain the real hope for his future. He continues to water them every day, feeding them carefully, and watching.

***Nothing.***

The other crops sprout within weeks, providing nourishment for his family within months, but provide nothing for the future. These crops will not make his dreams come true - they will simply provide for the present. The Chinese Bamboo seeds contain all his hopes, his dreams. A whole year goes by...

*Nothing.*

He continues to haul water. He stares endlessly at "the spots" but sees nothing but barren ground. His hopes, his dreams, seem so very far away. There is no evidence of life. Has the seed rotted? Has it died before it ever had a chance to grow? Another year goes by...

***Nothing.***

His neighbors - those who don't know and believe in the miracle of the Chinese Bamboo - laugh at him. They mock his vision for the future. They look on with scorn as he hauls buckets of

water to "the spots." He begins to question himself. Will it ever grow? Is he pouring water, and his life's energy, into something that will reap no reward for him?

Another year goes by...

***Nothing.***

3 years of pouring water, energy and hope into the Chinese Bamboo. Nothing to show for it. Yet he's heard of the miracle of the Chinese Bamboo. He's heard of the huge rewards that come to those who believe. One day he stands over "the spots" and he cries his frustration and fears. "The spots" reveal nothing, the barren ground seeming to mock him, yet the wind whispers hope to him. He sighs and hauls yet more buckets of water. Another year goes by...

***Nothing.***

4 years.... 4 years of hoping, wishing, and diligently tending his dream. Surely the miracle will happen now. His neighbors have quit laughing. They no longer even care - yet they talk quietly among themselves of the farmer who "isn't quite right". At this point the farmer isn't even sure. Yet he's fallen into a habit, so he continues to water "the spots". He continues to feed them. It's simply what he does now, with no knowledge of reward - just the simple, now unspoken hope that life resides beneath the spots he so carefully tends. Another year passes...

***Nothing.***

5 years...The farmer is tired. Tired of hauling buckets. Tired of growing and tending so many other crops to feed his struggling family. Tired of trying to keep his dream alive. Tired of seeing no results day after day. He stares hopelessly at "the spots."

There can't possibly be life after so many years. He must have watered them wrongly. He must not have fed them correctly. If only he had done things differently, there would be growth.

Despair rocks his soul. 5 years he has poured into his dream - into his hope for a better future. His dream mocks him. The vision of a better life for his family melts away under harsh reality. Tears fill his eyes as he grabs for the last hope residing in his soul and slowly lifts the bucket to pour water on to his dream.

***After 5 years he realizes it would be folly to give up now...***

Then comes the morning when the whole village is jolted awake by the cries of joy from the farmer. They watch startled from their windows as he runs down the dusty road calling for his family to come see. As his family races back up the road after him, the rest of the village pours from their houses to see what has the crazy farmer so excited. They find the family clustered around "the spots," talking excitedly. From the edge of the road they

can see green sprouts thrusting out from the barren ground. They seem to be growing before their very eyes! The farmer is dancing.

"The miracle has happened!" he cries.

**"The miracle has come!"**

"The spots" become the place for everyone in the village to come - watching in amazement as the bamboo grows, and grows, and grows.

**5 feet. 10 feet. 20. 30. 40. 50. 60. 70. 80. 90...**

In just 6 weeks the bamboo has grown 90 feet tall! 5 years of nothing and now this... 90 feet in 6 weeks! It is truly a miracle!

The farmer stands to the side. He is aware his dreams have come true. The harvest of the bamboo will provide everything he dreamed of for his family. He also realizes the lessons he has learned are far more valuable.

***He learned to plant a dream.***

***He learned to do the daily things that would make it a reality.***

***He learned to ignore those who said it couldn't happen.***

***He learned to push past his own fear and doubt and keep taking action.***

***He learned to have faith when there was no reason to have faith.***

Now he smiles every time he walks through the village.

Everyone is hauling buckets of water to their own "spots." Gazing over at his towering 90 feet tall bamboo, they know what can happen.

Because of him.

Because of his willingness to blaze the trail and make his dream come true.



What about you? What are you willing to do to make your dreams come true?

How long are you willing to work?

How long are you willing to take action?

How long are you willing to push past your fear and doubt?

How much faith and belief are you willing to have?

How DETERMINED are you going to be?

I hope your answer is one that will help you achieve all you dream of in life!

*That's what being a Bregdan Woman is all about.*



What are you  
Determined  
to BE,  
DO, or  
Accomplish??



*Chapter Nine*

**STRONG**

strong

/strôNG/

*Adjective*

able to withstand great force or pressure.

Strength.

It means different things to different people.

I believe a Bregdan Woman should approach strength from every angle possible.

A Bregdan Woman is determined to be STRONG – in every area.

Physically Strong

Emotionally Strong

Mentally Strong

I've spent my entire life as an athlete. While I applaud physical strength, I mostly applaud physical fitness. Please know I realize some of you have physical limitations you can't do anything about. Your focus will necessarily be on emotional and mental health, while doing whatever you can in the physical realm.

But for the rest of you, physical strength empowers you in every other area of your life. There are many wonderful books written about physical fitness. I'm not here to write another one. I do, however, encourage you to make a commitment to your physical strength and fitness – a commitment

to your health. Find a great book, or a fitness coach, who can help you become fit and healthy.

I can tell you, from personal experience, that exhibiting emotional, mental and spiritual strength while you are physically weak is a daunting task.

When I was 29, I went from running eight miles a day to being in bed for six months. For all the years since, I have struggled with an auto-immune disorder that appears far too often and robs me of my strength, vitality and energy.

I have fought it with everything I have to fight it, because I have so much I desire to do in life. I don't have time to be sick. I don't have time to live without energy.

I can only fulfill my purpose if I can get out of bed.

During the thirty+ years I've dealt with this, I've learned massive amounts about how to maintain health and energy. I'm willing to do whatever it takes to stay healthy. I don't always succeed, but I'll never give up.

While I respect a lot of allopathic (traditional) medicine, I also have a huge respect for Naturopathic & Homeopathic medicine. When traditional medicine told me there was nothing that could be done to conquer my illness (they could only give me drugs to mask the symptoms), I looked elsewhere.

Through the years, I've found amazing naturopathic physicians that have enabled me to live the life I live – the author of fifty+ books, business owner and athlete.

I've learned that I'm largely responsible for my health. I'm responsible for what I eat. I'm

responsible for staying physically fit with exercise. I'm responsible for how much rest I get.

I've made a lot of choices that have been hard, but the results make them worth it. Not being sick is worth whatever so called "sacrifices" I have to make.

Most of the time I get at least eight hours of sleep – a night, not a week! If I don't, I'm fine with taking a nap in the middle of the day in order to maintain my energy. I used to be impressed with people who operate on as little sleep as possible – and strove to emulate them. Not anymore. I know they're setting themselves up for poor health.

I don't work myself to death anymore. My 100+ hour work weeks are a thing of the past. I work hard, and I get a tremendous amount accomplished, but I know there's more to life than work. I plan play, exercise and relaxation into every day.

I eat completely Paleo (no grains, corn, dairy, sugars, white potatoes). I eat lean meats and make sure I consume lots of vegetables and fruits (many times in smoothies or powered green drink form).

I've substituted coconut tortillas for wheat or corn. If I am craving chips, I've found fabulous grain-free chips that I cover with nut cheese for nachos. Coconut milk replaces dairy. Grain free/sugar free brownies made with black beans & stevia satisfy every craving for chocolate I could possibly have.

The list could go on and on... It gets a little complicated at times, but it's 100% worth it!

Thirteen years ago, when I was working 100+ hours a week to operate my business, I completely crashed. I blew out every adrenal gland in my body

## *Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 167*

with overwork and stress. I went from 100+ hours a week to none because I couldn't get out of bed.

What lessons did I learn from that?

The human body isn't meant to work 100+ hours a week. I was responsible for asking my body to do more than it was designed to do.

I was responsible for the stress I was living with.

The human body isn't designed to consume many of the things we put into it. Don't bother to tell me how hard it is to eat well. I already know. I also know it's much harder to be sick and unhealthy. You can refuse to admit that, but at some point, you and your body will pay the price for it.

And, no, before you ask, I don't always eat perfectly.

This past year was incredibly stressful. I'm far too familiar with stress eating. I found myself eating huge plates of nachos – corn chips with cheese. Sure, they were organic chips and grass-fed, organic cheese, but I shouldn't have been eating them because I know what they do to my body.

Once I got started on the nachos, I added in cookies. Gluten free but loaded with sugar.

Arrgghhh...

I kept making bad choices.

My body began to pay the price.

Acid reflux. Headaches. Fatigue.

Then the pain in my feet started. Swollen joints eventually made it incredibly painful to walk. Joint pain in my elbow only made life more miserable.

The day of reckoning finally came. I was hobbling up the driveway with my dog when I faced the truth. I stopped dead in my tracks.

“Really, Ginny, this is how you want to live your life? What you are eating is more important than being able to *walk*?”

I spoke the words out loud, listening to them reverberate in the air – facing the truth of what I was saying.

I made a different choice that day and have been living it ever since. The pain is almost completely gone. I can walk long distances again. My energy has returned and I’m thinking clearly once more.

I hope this was the last time I have to get slapped upside the head with the proverbial 2x4.

*I am responsible for how I feel.*

*I am responsible for what goes in my mouth.*

Let’s flip that around now...

**You** *are responsible for what goes in your mouth.*

*Only you.*

Don’t bother to tell me that it’s simply not possible to get rid of the stresses in your life. Don’t tell me it’s not possible for you to change your life – no matter what your reasons are.

I feel your frustration and pain. I’ve been there. I said all the same things. I kept working 100+ hours because *I didn’t have a choice*. At least, that’s what I believed. Thirteen years ago, I worked myself right into another four months in bed – unable to work, or think, or formulate words.



## *Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 169*

Suddenly, the choice was taken from me. I had no choice because I was too sick to get out of bed. All the things that I thought were far more important than taking care of myself? They simply didn't get done. Or someone else did them.

Here's the thing, though.

Here's the truth I was forced to accept.

*Being sick was my choice.*

I see your eyes growing wide. I can already hear all the arguments formulating in your head – screaming from your heart.

It's tough to accept responsibility. It's tough to accept that your health problems are because of your choices.

I know.

*I also know the only thing that will change your reality is your decision to make a different choice.*

Part of being a Bregdan Woman is having the courage to be honest with yourself. If you're facing health problems right now, ask yourself if you're partly (or all) responsible for them.

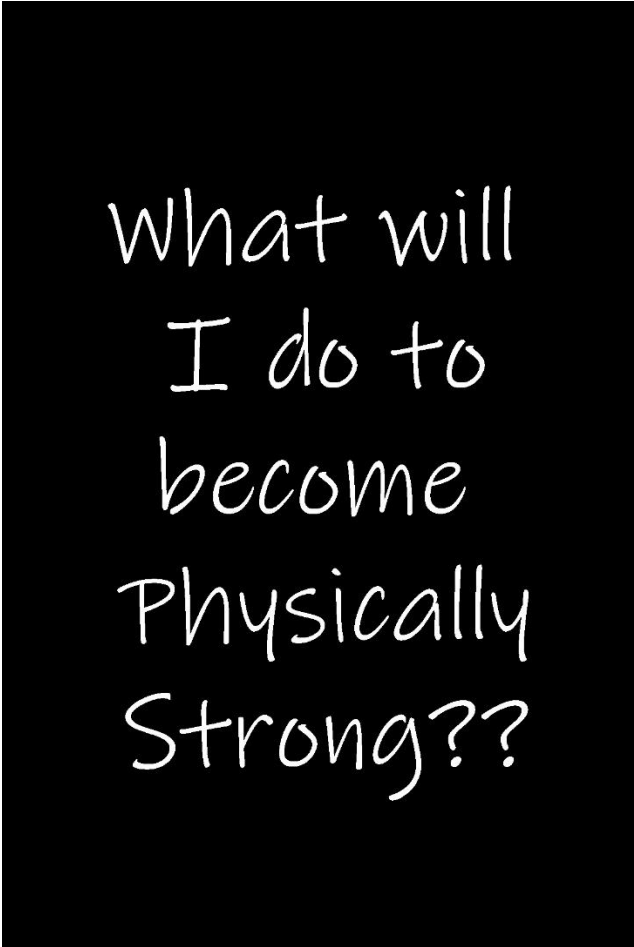
If you're stressed out and overworked, ask yourself what different choices you could make.

Accepting that your life is the direct result of your choices is hard, but I also believe it's the most empowering thing in the world!

Ask for help. Read some of the amazing books already out there. Find a fabulous naturopathic or

homeopathic doctor who can help you focus on health and disease *prevention*.

You can do it!



What will  
I do to  
become  
Physically  
Strong??





A Bregdan Woman is emotionally strong.

At the core of emotional strength is self-worth and self-respect. Women without emotional strength lack the ability to cope well with emotions or situations. Life is a struggle.

The first thing you should know is that I totally get it. The number of women who have been abused in some way – physically, sexually, mentally, emotionally – is staggering. It's sickening.

I get it.

I'm an abuse survivor.

Part of *#MeToo*. (If you're cocking your head at this hashtag, do some research and find out about the women who first displayed the courage to shine the light on abuse.)

My story is not as bad as some, and worse than many. I don't have a problem with sharing the details when it's necessary or helpful, but that's not what this book is about.

*Any* abuse is terrible.

I started down the path of healing when I was thirty-five.

It was hard. There were many times I was sure I wouldn't make it. Times I didn't *want* to make it.

I learned a lot about choices in those years.

I continue to learn about choices.

I would like to tell you that I'm emotionally strong all the time. That would be a lie.

I would venture to say that would be a lie coming from anyone's mouth – if they're willing to honestly choose to admit it.

I'm an emotionally strong Bregdan Woman with considerable self-worth and self-respect, but I have triggers that send me back to the darkness, fear and self-loathing.

It happens far less than it used to, but I long for the day when *nothing* can send me back to those places. Quite honestly, I don't know if that day will ever come.

Wounds can heal, but the scars remain. Those scars will be sensitive for life.

Okay... So be it.

When I decided to write this book, I knew it wouldn't help women if I wasn't willing to be honest.

I hold onto hope that the day may come when nothing can trigger the darkness, but in the meantime, I continue to learn lessons about how to be an emotionally strong Bregdan Woman.

RIGHT. NOW.

One of the first lessons I had to learn was that I can't let my past dictate my future.

Well, I suppose I *can*, but I choose NOT to.

My life, and how I live it, is my choice.

Yes, horrible things were done to me, but it is my choice whether I'm willing to let them control my life now.

I've met so many women who are trapped by their past.

They're trapped inside of being a victim. They're either comfortable with feeling like a victim or they're afraid to be something different.

They choose to blame their past, whether than take responsibility for their life *right now*.

I feel their pain, but I've made a different choice.

There were many stories about women that helped me along my own journey.

As I wrote them, they gave me the courage and hope to believe my life would be different.

One in particular touched me deeply...



Little Merri Durum pulled the covers over her head, hoping that if she wasn't seen perhaps her adopted stepmother would ignore her. She could hear birds chirping outside the window, but they seemed to mock her pain... if Merri had only been a bird, she could have flown away from the torment a long time ago.

This small soul began life as a loved little girl. However, the deaths of both her parents over a period of a few years resulted in her being adopted by her stepmom. What should have been a haven, became a place where she was terribly abused. Fearing the night and dreading the day, Merri could only dream of a safe, free, loving existence.

As a young girl, she endured far too much.

Her salvation came within the form of her fifth-grade teacher – a woman who listened to her, talked to her, and told her she would be great when she grew up. Hanging on to this woman's love and belief helped her to survive the horror.

Merri vowed that when she was older, she would do something to help other adopted children live in safety.

She fulfilled her vow.

Merri became one of the first African-America radio and television broadcasters in Chicago. The year was 1968. She quickly became a local celebrity. After just a few years she became the host of *The Merri Dee Show*.

Tragedy struck again.

Merri was kidnapped, along with a show guest (Alan Sandler), one night when she left the studio. Her kidnappers shot both of them in the head and left them for dead in rural Illinois.

She was abandoned, cold and bloody - with two bullet holes in her head.

Sandler was dead.

Miraculously, Merri's life-long will and fight to survive came to her rescue once again. Summoning her will to live, she crawled for help. Finding a nearby highway she managed to flag down an ambulance that was miraculously traveling that road.

Her death was expected. She was given last rites twice.

Against all odds, she survived and recovered.

Blinding headaches from the bullet shrapnel still left in her brain was relentlessly painful, but after more than a year of recovery, Merri returned to the journalistic life she loved.

Her near-death experience fueled a new passion - victim's rights. Merri was instrumental in getting the first Victims Bill of Rights legislation passed in Illinois. That bill has since become the example for the rest of the USA's victim's legislation.

She wasn't done fulfilling her vow, however.

After a thirty-year career in broadcasting, Merri served as Director of Community Relations at WGN-TV in Chicago. This enabled her to supervise the programs that reached over 55 million homes. She also worked as a manager of the TV channel's Children's Charities where over 25 million dollars have been raised. The monies raised have been given solely to children's organizations.

Because of Merri's efforts in raising awareness about the needs of orphans, the adoption rate in Illinois increased over 50 percent. The credit is given to her and WGN-TV.



As the host of the United Negro College Fund's annual "Evening of Stars," Merri has helped raise over 30 million dollars for educational scholarships.

Any of these accomplishments are awe-inspiring, but they are actually only a small representation of what she has accomplished. Her life is characterized by giving, giving and giving some more.

Merri lived a lonely and sad life as a child. She was neglected and beaten. She could be bitter and angry. Really, who would blame her? No one.

She made a different choice. She took her desperate past and made her present world better. By doing so, she's made not only her world better, but the world of thousands of other children, as well.

Today, Merri lives a rich fulfilling life. A survivor's life. She has scars on her body and her soul, but she is **STRONG**.

She is a true Bregdan Woman.

I'm quite sure there are things that can still trigger the horror of her childhood, or the terror of almost being murdered.

Each time, she gets back up and keeps moving forward.

She has chosen to give back and turn what was intended for evil into good.

Her story is a constant reminder that I have the choice to do the same thing.



I hope you too can choose that.

*I know you can.*

*Your life matters.*

*You matter.*

No matter what has happened to you, you can choose your life now.

You can choose to be emotionally strong.

You can choose to be a Bregdan Woman.

There are so many stories of women who have refused to be defined by their abuse or by their struggles.

Let them be your inspiration.

Find their stories. Devour them. Embrace them.

Make them a part of who you are.

Each one of these women will make you stronger!

What will  
I do to  
become  
Emotionally  
Strong??



*Mental Strength*

Physical strength.

Emotional strength.

**Mental** strength is equally important.

There is a ridiculous amount of nonsense in the world about women being the weaker gender.

Supposedly, there are things that women simply can't do as well as men. Hmmm... my experience has been completely different.

Women excel in EVERY field and profession.

Men on the other hand... well, I've never seen one carry a baby! Don't worry, I'm not a man hater. I have wonderful male friends and I have tremendous respect and appreciation for what so many men do, but when they add their voices to the ridiculous belief that women are less capable... or not able to do... or are not *meant* to do... At that moment, I lose my respect for them and challenge them to find out the truth.

What are women doing now? This is just a fraction of female accomplishments, so please don't think this is meant to be complete.

Women are astronauts. Teachers. Fighter pilots. Electricians. Computer programmers and technicians. Body builders. Nurses. Doctors. Welders. Builders. Farmers. Ranchers. Engineers. Truckers. Automotive Repair persons. Soldiers. Steel workers.

We owe a huge thanks to women who have fought against the stereotypes in order to do what they want to do.

The battle is ongoing. Women who decide to blow the stereotypes face ostracism, sexism, and pay

inequity. It's not enough that they do their job equally as well, or better, than many men. They have to fight.

These truths are wrong. They're unfair. They have to be changed.

There are many books written about that. I hope you'll read them all and raise your voice for women, but I'm here to help you become mentally strong.

You may have absolutely no desire to break into a male dominated field. Okay. Living in today's world still requires women to be mentally strong.

I am quite certain that every woman reading this book is sick of sexism and lack of equality.

If you're not, you should be.

To be mentally strong, you have to begin by knowing your worth.

To be mentally strong, you have to know you're capable of doing absolutely anything you set your mind to doing.

To be mentally strong, you have to take action.



I talk with so many women who believe they don't have what it takes to change their life.

If I can get them to believe they *can* change their life, then the challenge switches to making them believe they *WILL* change their life.

Change doesn't just happen because you believe it can happen. It happens when you *make* it happen.

It happens when you commit to taking action.

Where does mental strength come from?

Most often, I see it come from education. I don't know how old you are, but I do know that as long as you're breathing, you should be learning.

That might, or might not, mean going back to school. I know wildly successful women who didn't pursue a college education. They did, however, pursue education and learning while they pursued their passion.

It's *learning* that is paramount.

Never finished high school? Get your GED. Research how to do it and then DO IT. There are programs all over the country to help you accomplish that.

Didn't go to college or didn't finish college, but you wish you had? Do you long to pursue something that requires a college education?

DO IT.

I've heard every excuse in the world about how it isn't possible.

*There is always a way.*

Perhaps you can only take one class a semester.

Perhaps you have to go at night – after working all day.

Perhaps you find a program that offers classes on the weekend.

Perhaps you find online courses that can be taken from home.

If you think you're too old, I'll go ahead and destroy that perception.





## *Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 185*

Ella Washington is one of my heroines. She was born in rural North Carolina, married, and raised twelve children while working a full-time job.

She dropped out of school in the sixth grade to work on the family farm. She worked her entire life, taking whatever jobs she could get.

Passionate about education, she taught all of her twelve children how to read, write and do math before they even began school. She engrained a lifelong love for learning into all her children and made sure they attended school.

She never lost her own passion for education. When she was forty-nine, she enrolled in an adult education program and obtained her GED.

She continued working full-time but yearned for more.

The *more* came when she was 83. Her daughter encouraged her to enroll in college.

She graduated in 2018 with her associate degree at age 89.

Yes, you read that right. 89.

I'm sure you're not surprised that she was the oldest graduate in her class. I can imagine the inspiration she was to all the rest of the students.

Not to mention her children and grandchildren. I'd say she's set the bar pretty high.

She's not done, though. Now she's working on her bachelor's degree in history.

Ask her why and she'll tell you, "*Education will help you make the best life for yourselves and those who came after you.*"

Ella is definitely a Bregdan Woman!



Amy Craton, another heroine of mine was a mother of four.

When she was thirty-nine, she thought it was finally her time to pursue a college education. She started college but was quickly waylaid by divorce. She dropped out to work and raise her children.

She never gave up her longing for a college degree, however.

It took fifty years for her to make it a reality.

In her 90's, wheelchair bound and hard of hearing, she began taking online classes at Southern New Hampshire University from her home in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Nothing was going to stop her this time. She could either sit and watch Netflix all day, or she could use her mind.

At age 94, she graduated with her degree in creative writing and English – with a 4.0 GPA!

That's an amazing accomplishment for anyone, but she's not done yet. In her words, "*I'm still on the road. I have more to learn.*"

With her bachelor's degree under her belt, she's going for her Master's in creative writing and English. She hopes to write more poetry and become a children's author during her graduate program.

Wow! My bet is on Amy accomplishing her dreams!



I have friends who take college classes just for the privilege of learning – not because they intend to obtain a degree. They attend regular universities, community colleges and technical colleges. They handpick courses they're interested in, ones they feel will benefit them in some way, or classes they know they will simply enjoy.

They know the value of making education a lifelong pursuit.



Education doesn't have to take the shape of a formal education, however. I have a degree in Outdoor Environmental Education, but that was just the beginning for me. I may someday pursue another college degree for the fun of it, but I don't have to attend college in order to learn.

*Learning is learning.*

My most precious possessions are my books. Since I'm an historical novelist, you won't be surprised that I have a vast library of history books.

Here's the thing, though. I love learning about *every* aspect of history – not just the periods I write about. I believe history makes sense of the world we live in today.

History gives me an understanding of human nature that I wouldn't have otherwise.

My knowledge of history also ensures that nothing surprises me anymore. If you believe some of the

things happening in our world have never happened before, you would be wrong.

History gives me hope for change. There are many difficult things happening in our world, but I do believe we've made progress in many areas. History has made me optimistic that change will continue to happen, as long as there are people determined to create change.

That's just the beginning of what I'm passionate about learning. I have books about gardening, geology, animals, business, finances, marketing, personal development, nutrition, science, our environment, relationships, religion, and so much more.

I realize I can learn ANYTHING if I truly desire to. Every college course in the world is taught from books. Since I can read, I can learn what anyone else is being taught.

*I just have to want to.*

If you can't afford books, no problem. That's what libraries are for!

And yard sales. I have many books I picked up for 25 cents to a dollar from yard sales.

Along with thrift stores. They're one of my favorite places to go shopping! I have found so many amazing books for a fraction of their real cost. I love saving them from obscurity!

I hope I'm chipping away at all your excuses.

If you are determined to learn, you can.



## *Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 189*

You can also *listen* and learn. I have a large group of women truckers who listen to the audio versions of my books. That absolutely thrills me! I love thinking about all these women truckers rolling back and forth across our country, listening to my books.

Audio books are becoming very popular. They're opening up entertainment and learning to people who don't have the time or opportunity to sit down with a book.

Many of the books I have on my shelves can also be listened to in audio format.

Do you drive for a living? Have a long commute? Have a hobby that allows you to listen while you're doing it?

*Learn.*



No matter where you are... no matter how old you are... no matter what your financial situation is...

You can LEARN.

Every piece of knowledge that you put in your head makes you mentally stronger.

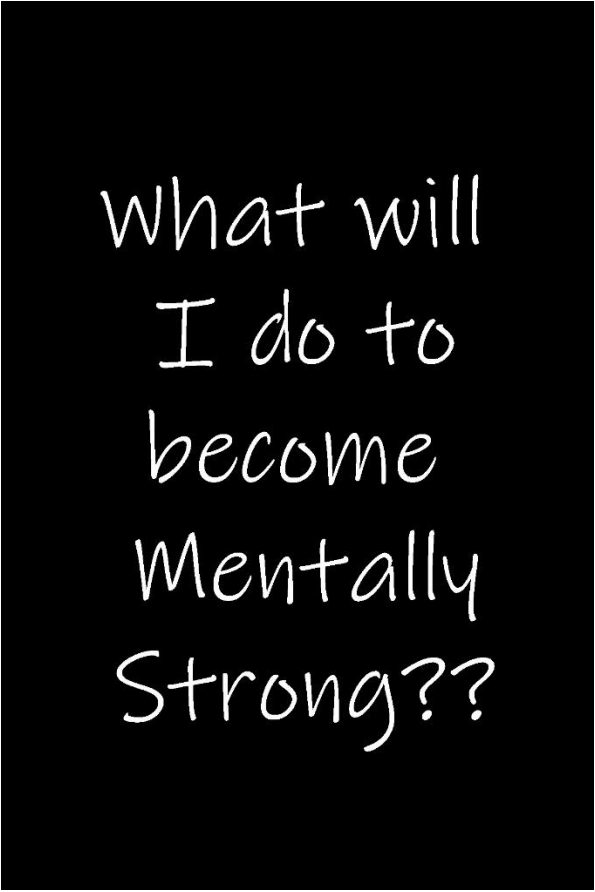
I truly do believe that knowledge is power.

The flip side of that truth is that ignorance is weakness.

Women who are ignorant are easy to manipulate and control. They're willing to believe what they're told – whether it's true or not – because they don't have the knowledge to dispute it.

Bregdan Women are determined to be strong; in every way.

Mental strength is paramount to living as a powerful Bregdan Woman.



What will  
I do to  
become  
Mentally  
Strong??



Chapter Ten

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE**



This chapter is incredibly important. A Bregdan Woman knows her life is about much more than just herself.

As the Bregdan Principle declares, a Bregdan Woman embraces that her life will have an impact on all of history.

A Bregdan Woman is committed to make a difference. In small ways. In big ways.

The best way to inspire you to make a difference is to share with you a few of my favorite stories about women who inspired me.



*This first story came from one of my readers.*

I used to think that I had to do something to change the world, but now I know that God doesn't ask me to change THE world. He just wants me to change MY world and to keep my heart open every day for ways to make that happen.

19 years ago, I had a dream (a real dream) where God gave me a blueprint to change my world. I dreamed that God wanted me to open a clinic for children who had no way to access the healthcare system, except for parents to take them to the ER. I saw this clinic in my dream with murals on the walls and white rocking chairs. I saw people I knew who were volunteering at the clinic. The dream was very vivid. When I woke, I knew for certain that God had

sent me a message and that I was meant to do something very important for my community – create a clinic that would care for everyone. I didn't have a clue how I'd go about making it happen, but I knew I'd better find a way.

The dream ended with a flood. I came to understand that this didn't mean actual waters, but obstacles that would try to stop me. Those obstacles came.

I had to have a total knee replacement; my husband was forced into early retirement because of Parkinson's; my mom had a stroke; I had breast cancer twice, only a year apart; with the second occurrence ending in a double mastectomy and chemotherapy.

In spite of these obstacles, we opened the clinic five and a half years after my dream. It's still going strong thirteen years later. It took a lot of people coming alongside me at just the right moment to make it happen.

There have been even greater challenges over the past thirteen years. My mom and my sweet mother-in-law both passed away. I had to have major back surgery and the other knee replaced. Our son was killed six years ago, our house completely robbed and burned to cover the crime. Then there were the trials to go through after the three who were responsible were caught. Last year I was diagnosed again with cancer and had surgery, chemo and radiation.

My greatest challenge happened when Parkinson's finally took my sweetheart of fifty-seven years.

## *Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 195*

I am grieving the love of my life. I don't know yet what God has in store for me. I've been a 24/7 caregiver for the past five years. Perhaps it is to just rest for a bit and rediscover just who I am now – for this season in my life.

I'm pretty sure it won't be long, though, before God makes it clear that He has something planned for me to do to make my world a little better for someone else. Like a true Bregdan Woman, I'll accept the challenge.

*Yes, her story had me in tears. It also inspired me!*



*I wrote this story about Osceola McCarty many years ago. It never fails to motivate me to do all I can with my life.*

She was an unlikely candidate to carry the famed Olympic torch. Instead of running, 88-year-old Osceola McCarty, walked – slowed by advanced arthritis...

There was a motorcycle policeman on either side of Osceola to support the torch she was holding. There would be a strong hand under hers when she became too tired to hold it aloft herself. The crowds cheered while she smiled and beamed.

Osceola never dreamed such an honor would be hers. She didn't dream of any of the honors heaped

on her in the years after... But wait - I'm getting ahead of myself.

Osceola McCarty had dreams of being a nurse when she was a little girl growing up in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Her dreams were laid aside when family needs forced her to leave school at age thirteen and join her grandmother, mother and aunt beside the washing pot in the back yard.

That big black kettle, boiling away under the relentless Mississippi sun, pelting rain, or cold winds, became her existence. You could find her, from early in the morning until late in the evening, either washing clothes or stooped over a hot iron as she crisped them up. At some point she became content with her life. She loved her work, but she thought a lot about what education would have meant to her if she could have stayed in school.

Osceola buried her grandmother, then her mother, then her aunt. And she kept right on washing and ironing. *Seventy-five years worth.*

She lived alone. She walked everywhere she went. She didn't talk much because there was no one to talk to. She pretty much just worked. With the exception of the trip she made to the bank every month to put money away for her future. In eighty-seven years, she had only been out of Mississippi once.

*So how did this elderly black woman end up carrying the Olympic torch?*

Well, it all began the day she made her monthly trip to the bank. She had decided to retire because the arthritis in her hands had gotten so bad. The bank officers suggested she should make plans

about what she was going to do with all her money. *All her money?* Yes. Seventy-five years of savings, of putting away small amounts of money, had grown to more than \$200,000!

Osceola knew she didn't need that much money. She also knew she wasn't going to live forever. After some thought, Osceola decided that upon her death she would give 10% to the church, something to each of 3 cousins, and the rest, \$150,000, to the University of Southern Mississippi right there in Hattiesburg.

Her dream of an education never came true, but she could make it happen for someone else.

*"I just want the scholarship to go to some child who needs it, to whoever is not able to help their children,"* Osceola said. *"I'm too old to get an education, but they can."*

She never dreamed of the uproar her gift would cause. Nor the honors that would be heaped on her – meeting President Clinton; numerous awards; an honorary doctorate from Harvard University; the keys to cities; travel all over America; and so much more.

Osceola simply wanted what she had worked so hard for all her life - to make a difference for others. Her philosophies of life were simple and powerful.

On work: *"I knew there were people who didn't have to work as hard as I did, but it didn't make me feel sad. I loved to work, and when you love to do anything, those things don't bother you."*

On saving money: *"A smart person plans for the future. You never know what kind of emergency will come up, and you can't rely on the government to meet*

*all your needs. You have to take responsibility for yourself."*

You see, success means different things to different people. Success to Osceola meant working hard, saving her money, and then in the end – making a difference to others. She never had much as far as material things, but when she died in 1999 at the age of 91, she was rich beyond belief in all the things that truly mattered.

How do you define success? Too many people never answer that question for themselves. They let the world define success for them, and then wonder why they're dissatisfied with the results of their life. Take some time and discover the answer for *your* life.

Here's one more of Osceola's beliefs:

On good living: *"There's a lot of talk about self-esteem these days. It seems pretty basic to me. If you want to feel proud of yourself, you've got to do things you can be proud of. Feelings follow actions."*



I completely agree with Osceola. A Bregdan Woman knows the value of making a difference with her life. She knows that all other success pales in comparison to making a positive difference in the lives of others.



## *Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 199*

What would you do with \$27 million? Meet one lottery winning California couple and see what they did. It's not what you think...

Most of us can only imagine a phone call like this:

*"Debi, You'll never believe what happened! We've won the lottery!"*

*"Yeah, right."* Debi's disbelief poured over the phone lines as she listened to her husband, Steve. She was sure it was his idea of a joke.

*"No, we've won! 27 million dollars!"*

Debi slowly begin to wonder if it could be true. He sounded so sure. But how? She was a stay-at-home mom. Steve was a high school guidance counselor. They'd only played the California lottery three times.

The third time turned out to be the charm.

*\$27 million. After taxes, they were to receive a one-time payout of \$9 million dollars.*

With 7 children of their own, Debi and Steve could certainly use the money. But they know life is about doing what they feel is their purpose.

In order to understand the true miracle of this lottery win, we have to go back in time – before Debi and Steve were married.

Several years earlier, a different sort of disbelief had spread across Debi's mind as she watched the TV newscast.

*"Reporting from the highway, a duffle bag containing a newborn was discovered today as it had been tossed from the overpass to its death. No leads on the whereabouts of the mother.*

*Unfortunately, nothing could be done to save this baby's life."*

Stunned, shocked and with her heart breaking at this tragedy, Debi was moved to do something to honor this child. She did the only action left for this little one; she telephoned the coroner's office and requested the baby's body to bury it. After that phone call, one thing led to another and soon Debi had 3 babies whose final ceremony lay in her hands.

From that fateful newscast and with her tender heart, Debi created the *Garden of Angels Cemetery* near their California home. Garden of Angels is the final resting place of abandoned babies. Babies left to die by mothers out of fear and desperation. Debi had buried 70 babies. The surrounding towns' morgues have Debi's personal cell phone number.

Deeply spiritual, Debi feels it is her calling in life to dignify the deaths of these smallest of humans.

After a call to pick up a baby, she *"goes into the autopsy room alone, where she wraps each infant in a homemade quilt, cradles it, prays over it... and gives each baby a first name."* Eventually at the gravesite, with the name etched onto the cross, Debi turns loose dozens of doves in the baby's honor.

Being completely dissatisfied and frustrated with providing funerals for these little ones, Debi began to think about what could be done. Babies simply should not die this way in the first place.

*Could a law be passed that ensured the mothers safety if she gave up her baby safely? What if there were no repercussions if the baby was turned into a hospital or a fire station within few hours of birth?*



## *Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 201*

California's 2001 Safe Haven Law allows troubled mothers to leave newborns at safe locations without fear of prosecution. It's now law in 46 states. Debi was the dynamic influence to get it passed. She dreams of a culture where her cemetery doesn't have to exist.

This was the woman (and her husband) who won \$27 million in the lottery.

Being a Bregdan Woman, she knew just what to do with it.

A little of the money went to their own kids, but mostly it went to 140 scholarships, one for a young man and one for a woman, in honor of each of the 70 babies she has buried at the Garden of Angels cemetery.

Just think how many lives and generations have been changed because of their gift!

Debi knows, though, that there is so much work left to do.

Talking to legislators, school groups, counselors and town leaders across the United States, Debi has determined that she will give voice to those babies. Her hope is that mothers everywhere learn of the option to lovingly place their baby in the hands of someone who can ensure its safety.

Details differ from U.S. state to U.S. state, but in 49 American states the Safe Haven Law is in effect. Some states even allow the child to be reclaimed within a few days if certain criteria are met, allowing the child to be "adopted" back to his/her own mother. If not reclaimed, the child is placed in foster or foster-adopt care.

Debi's heart is best shown in part of the mission statement of Garden of Angels (*written by Debi before the burial of the first three children*):

*It's about the children*

*It's about giving them DIGNITY and HONOR, instead of rejection.*

*It's about giving them a VOICE instead of silence. It's about what we could have done to PROTECT the lives of these children, and WHAT WE CAN DO NOW!*

*It's about opening our ears and LISTENING to the still small voice inside each and every one of us.*

*It's about changed HEARTS and LIVES.*

*But mostly.....It's about LOVE.*

Debi and Steve live a life of total devotion and love toward mothers and educating the public about the Safe Haven Law. They've immersed themselves in a passionate pursuit. I hope you sense their compassion and integrity, yet they are ordinary people with everyday struggles. They've chosen to be involved in something greater than themselves. They've chosen to make a difference.

I hope you too are inspired to make a difference.

There are organizations and needs surrounding you every day in every city - in any town. You don't

need \$27 million. You don't have to have legislation passed.

All you need is a willing hand, a listening ear or a soft shoulder. I challenge you to look around where you live and move out of yourself just a little. Or a lot. An hour a month can make a real difference in the life of a child, a non-profit organization, a teacher or even an animal shelter. . . and in you.



Inspired? Me too. But remember – inspiration doesn't mean anything if it's not accompanied by ACTION.

*I want you to meet Tara...*

Tara Cunningham often looks back at her decision that shocked her entire family. Back then, she wished she'd felt differently. She'd tried. Everyone knew she had sincerely attempted to feel satisfied with her political career. She had educated herself to work in politics and her rise up the success ladder had been unusually swift.

Yet, her dissatisfaction with life was equally swift. She realized that being good at something doesn't equate into happiness. She agonized over her decision, but finally realized she had to make a change – no matter what anyone thought.

She moved into a new career. With high hopes that this was "her calling," she dove into international marketing. She was confident she

would be good at her job. What she didn't know was whether she would finally be happy.

Several years later, she had her answer. Yes, she was good at her job.

No, she wasn't happy.

Her frustration was as intense as her unhappiness. *"Why can I do a job well, yet not feel good about my life? What do I truly desire?"*

She knew she had to find the answer to that question, so she began to analyze her life.

One positive aspect of her marketing job had been her European travels. She'd enjoyed Ireland so much, drawn to the roots of her Irish/Italian family, that she'd moved there permanently.

Another meaningful activity was her volunteer work with children from disadvantaged communities. Oh, how she loved those kids! They certainly provided many high points in her life. Their smiles, innocence, and genuine love brought her deep peace. If only she could work with them fulltime!

That one thought served to be the cornerstone of a life-altering decision. As she thought about doing what she loved all the time, she knew she was looking at what would fill her emptiness.

Choosing happiness and fulfillment over the world's definition of success, she quit her job and dove into working with Ireland's children.

What happened next, changed life for children and parents all over the world.

As a volunteer for *Down Syndrome Ireland* (a support organization for families and people living with Down Syndrome), Tara watched as children

with speech, hearing and language disorders lived for years without assessment or treatment. The Irish system struggled to meet the ever-growing needs of children with special needs.

Bogged down by administrative demands and time constraints, speech and language therapists were frustrated by their lack of effectiveness. Stymied by the same delays, parents lived in frustration as their children suffered.

As Tara traveled around the country, parents explained their relentless struggle to gain access to speech and language therapy for their children. After Tara bore the full brunt of a frustrated parent at a parents' meeting, she decided to find the solution.

She utilized all her skills and vast knowledge from past experiences to create an answer.

Tara founded RELEASE, an organization designed as a new way of handling speech needs. Born out of sheer desperation, RELEASE teaches the parent or caregiver how to help their child with his or her unique speech and language therapy needs.

Giving parents the necessary knowledge, RELEASE initiates their child's therapy swiftly – no delays, no long waiting periods. With the children's speech and language needs identified, they benefit sooner from personal therapy by those who love and care for them. The exhaustive drain on the nation's therapists is slowly lessening and as the program matures, more and more children are being treated in a timely fashion.

Listen to RELEASE'S Mission and Vision statements:

MISSION STATEMENT: *Release* empowers children with disabilities, their caregivers and society with the skills and tools they need to enable *them* to meet their potential living as valuable, integrated members of their communities.

VISION STATEMENT: *Release* aims to transition from a service provider of speech and language therapy to a training body, enabling registered speech and language therapists to participate in the *Release* methodology creating *widespread social change*.

Did you catch that? Her goal in helping families is to create widespread social change!

Impressive! Tara knew the only way to truly support and empower these families is to give them a changed social structure! Her life goal isn't offering a "band-aid" for the temporary problem, but providing structural change in Ireland's society.

This innovative desire and action resulted in Tara's 2007 election to the *Ashoka Fellowship*. *Ashoka* is an international organization that recognizes, funds, and supports social entrepreneurs who are changing the world.

Tara found the happiness and satisfaction she craved!

I hope you saw that she was financially successful, without being content with her work.

## *Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 207*

Now that she is satisfied with her work, Tara is truly successful with her *life*.

You can be like Tara.

Maybe you don't want to move to another country or revitalize a social structure.

That's okay.

Maybe you want to help your school or library. Perhaps you see a solution to your community's bored youth.

Perhaps you have a successful career, but you're not happy. Is your heart involved with what you're doing or are you always dreaming of something else?

Wherever you find yourself today, I urge you to listen to your heart and act upon your real desires. You may shock your family. You may astound your friends.

The important thing is that you have the power to ensure lasting peace and tranquility in your own life when you go where your passions lead you.

Become a Bregdan Woman!



*I found out about this next young lady when I was writing this book. I was so astounded that I knew I had to write her story.*

Veronika Scott never planned to be a CEO.

When she was a child, her dreams were of merely surviving. She grew up in extreme poverty. Her parent's mental health issues, drug addiction and

unemployment spiraled her family into homelessness.

Veronika struggled to overcome people's perception that she was worthless by extension – doomed to repeat her parent's life.

At one point in her childhood, everything she personally owned could fit in the backpack that she carried from shelter to shelter.

Her most treasured possession was her sketchpad. That's what steered her toward art. It was the thing she could do with almost nothing.

Her love for art – along with massive determination, scholarships and financial aid – got her into the College for Creative Studies in Detroit.

She chose to major in product design, figuring she would end up working for a big firm in New York City. More than anything else, she wanted to take care of her family.

She was focused on the path she'd chosen – until she received an unusual class assignment: *Design a project that fulfills a need in the community.*

I hope the professor who gave this assignment knows what a genius they are!

She started Googling *needs in Detroit*. She quickly learned hundreds of freezing homeless people couldn't get into shelters that were already full. They were forced to live on the streets through the brutal Michigan winters. She could certainly relate to their misery.

She had zero experience in clothing design, but that didn't stop her. She decided to design a coat that turned into a sleeping bag.



## *Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 209*

It took Veronika more than eighty hours to make the first one.

She took her early prototypes to a local shelter to get feedback from the homeless people she was making it for.

Her life took an even more dramatic turn when one of the women at the shelter began yelling at her.

*"You! You with the coat! Coat lady! This is pointless! I don't need a coat! I need a job!"*

That was the moment Veronika transformed her class project into a mission to employ homeless people.

Her coats had taken on a life of their own.

She graduated college in December 2011.

On January 1, 2012, she launched the Empowerment Plan.

Almost everyone thought the Empowerment Plan would fail. The only funding they had was the PayPal button on her blog. It raised enough to keep them going, but something more had to happen if they were going to fulfill their goal.

Veronika's former college dean connected her with the CEO of Carhartt. The renowned rugged clothing manufacturer soon became her biggest supporter.

Carhartt believed in her. They donated the first sewing machines. They donated the fabric. They flew Veronika out to spend time in their factory so she could see how the products were really made.

In short, they taught her everything she needed to know to create her dream.

Well, mostly...

Veronika started hiring homeless people to make the coats. She was immediately impressed with their

eagerness and commitment but knew she didn't know how to teach her new employees to make the coats efficiently.

Back to social media...

She posted a plea on Facebook. *I need help. Does anybody know how to sew? I need somebody to come in and teach us.*

One woman responded, and in the process became a full-time employee.

Fast forward eight years...

The Empowerment Plan has employed more than eighty homeless people. All of them now have homes of their own. Many have graduated and started their own business ventures. Not a single worker has become homeless again.

That's some impressive results!

What about the coats that turn into sleeping bags?

To date, 35,000 sleeping bag coats have been shipped around the world.

Because of partnerships with other nonprofit organizations, coats have been handed out across the entire US and twenty other countries.

The program is funded through private gifts. Each \$125 donation is enough to pay for one coat – both materials and labor. Donors can request coats go to specific communities, or wherever the greatest need is.

Veronika Scott is only thirty years old, as of this writing. She never dreamed of being a CEO and had certainly not prepared for it. She had zero formal executive training.

She'll tell you that her lack of business knowledge actually served her well. She realizes that if she'd

gone to business school, she probably wouldn't have taken the risks she did.

I love everything about the Empowerment Plan, but one aspect of it really thrills me.

Employees get paid for a full work week, but they only spend 60% of their time making coats. The other 40% is spent in classes designed to ensure they stay self-sufficient after they graduate from the Empowerment Plan.

Wow!

Classes like financial literacy, driver's education, GED test preparation & domestic violence recovery ensure the graduates are able to successfully live life on their own terms.



I'm going to continue watching Veronika Scott and the Empowerment Plan in the years ahead. I have a feeling this powerful Bregdan Woman is in the beginning stages of the massive impact she'll ultimately create in people's lives.

If you want to know more, just go to: [www.EmpowermentPlan.org](http://www.EmpowermentPlan.org).



*I have to tell you about one more. Discovering how you make a difference can change your life. Helping*

*someone else discover their purpose might possibly save their life.*

**Sandi Watkins was doomed to be a failure.**

At least that's what people thought. That's what they said. By the time Sandi got to high school she had the reputation as the biggest troublemaker in town. She had a long arrest record, mostly for petty crimes, yet everyone believed she was on a fast-track to prison.

Teachers cringed when they saw her name on their class list. Sandi was sullen; sat slumped in her seat and ignored everything going on around her. She had flunked every class in high school, but she kept moving up, because not one teacher in her school wanted to have her back again. Sandi was moving on - but she was most certainly not moving up.

No one tried to get to know her. Teachers, and most kids, were afraid of her. No one knew when she would erupt with anger, and fights were common. By her senior year, everyone was counting the days until Sandi was gone.

Then Sandi did a strange thing. She signed up for a leadership conference that was designed to get students involved in their communities. It was only because she wanted to get out of class.

The people running the conference, afraid of what she might do, didn't want her to attend. Her English teacher insisted she be allowed to attend. Despite Sandi's reputation, the teacher believed she saw something under the hard exterior.

Reluctantly, she was allowed to take part.

Something happened that first day.

At first, Sandi merely stood against the wall and watched with disdain. She would join the discussion groups, but only mumbled a few words when it was her turn to speak. Slowly, the interactive games drew her in. She began to open up when her group was asked to make a list of positive and negative things that had happened at school that year. She certainly had some things to contribute about that.

You could see the surprise on her face when the other kids in the group actually listened to her. She kept talking. Her group told Sandi her ideas made a lot of sense. They began to treat her like a leader. Suddenly, everyone realized Sandi was actually smart and had great ideas.

The next day, Sandi continued to share her ideas, signing up to be part of the Homeless Project Team. It was clear she knew something about poverty, hunger and hopelessness. No one was more surprised than Sandi when they elected her to be co-chair of the team.

Okay, maybe the teachers were more surprised – **they were appalled**. They insisted Sandi couldn't do it; that it was ridiculous to put something so important into Sandi Watkins' hands. The principal held firm, however - telling them they might be surprised with what Sandi could do. I'm sure he was hoping he was right.

Sandi and her team put together a Homeless Scavenger Hunt. They went to the Homeless Shelters to find out what they needed most. They made a list of things they planned to collect, assigning the most

points to those items the shelters needed most. She found out the homeless rarely get dessert, so she gave high points to cookies, brownie & cake mixes, jars of jelly, etc. High scores also went for blankets and coats.

Two weeks later, 50 kids hit the streets of their town, followed by support vans to carry their haul. 4 hours later they met back at the school to load everything into a school bus and take it to the shelter.

There was a slight problem, however. By the time the school bus was loaded, there was room for only one person - the driver. Every seat, every square inch of floor, all the way to the ceiling, was packed with what they'd collected. Coats, blankets, clothing, food, a lot of desserts - it was the most the Shelter had ever received.

The students had to follow the bus in their support vans.

The shelter residents had huge smiles on their faces as they filed out to help unload the bus. They cheered Sandi and her team. The paper was there to take pictures and tell stories. Sandi was a hero.

A leader.

She was definitely a changed person. The rest of her senior year she participated in class. She made good grades. She put together two more projects for the Homeless Shelter, each time bringing them what they needed most. There were no more fights or arrests.

Sandi graduated in the spring and went on to college - with glowing recommendations from many teachers at her school. Every year she leads 4

projects for the Homeless Shelters in the town where she goes to school.

Here's what Sandi had to say, "***I was on the fast-track to nowhere. I was the only one who could change where my life was going. It was scary but I knew what would happen if I didn't change was worse. I learned I really could make a difference. It changed my whole life. And I learned that other people could believe in me if I only gave them a chance.***"

I knew Sandi during her senior year in high school. I watched the transformation. She asked me to share her story to let you know you can be whatever you want to be. It's always your choice. She also wanted me to tell you that a little belief goes a long way.

One adult deciding to believe in her - to look beyond what everyone else saw - set her free to be who she really was. She's hoping you'll look around today and choose to believe in someone. Maybe that person is someone you know or maybe that someone is *yourself*.



My great hope is that after reading this chapter you understand the power you have to make a difference.

I hope you understand that being a Bregdan Woman gives you both the responsibility and privilege of making a difference with your life!

What will  
YOU  
do to  
MAKE  
A  
DIFFERENCE?



*Journal Pages*

*Chapter Eleven*

EMBRACE CHANGE

# change

/CHānj/

*noun*

the act or instance of making or becoming different.

There's one thing you can count on in life.

*Life will always change.*

Everything is constantly changing – the environment, the weather, the economy, technology, society, culture, your friends and family, your body... everything. The better you can embrace the change happening in your world, the easier it will be for you to live your best life.

Yeah, I already know you probably don't like that. It's human nature to want things to remain the same. The majority of women feel most comfortable if they can count on things to stay just like they are.

You *want* them to remain the same.

The idea of constant and never-ending change is terrifying because change often involves risk and loss.

These women see change as something to fear or dread, instead of viewing it as a brand-new adventure that has the potential to improve their life.

But...

And this is a *big* but...

You want them to remain the same *only* if you like the way they are, *or* if you've gotten used to the way things are – even if you don't really like it. You've settled into your way of life, even if you're not happy.



The flip side of this coin is that women also *yearn* for change. They want things to be different. They want out of the bad relationship, or the bad job, or the bad location they live, or any of a myriad of things they want to be different.

Yet, whether you want it to change for good or for bad, women still resist change.

Really, *all* people resist change.

I see it all the time.

That brings me right back to how I started this chapter.

The only thing you can count on is that things will always change.

*A Bregdan Woman embraces change.*

If you can learn how to embrace change, then you can both welcome it and also *make* it happen.

I've had to learn this lesson over and over in my life.



My life has not been without twists and turns, disappointments and pain. I'm going to share one of the twists with you because it created another one of the core philosophies of my life – one I hope will encourage you as much as it does me.

At this particular time of my life, I had launched an internet company designed to create funding for non-profit organizations. My company went through several transformations. The first version was created with the help of a man who I loved like a brother. I envisioned everything, formed a team of one hundred people that shared my vision, and signed up thousands of non-profit organizations eager for our help.

Peter (I've changed his name) had the job of creating the technology to make it happen.

We made the perfect team. We spent hours on the phone talking, laughing, dreaming and celebrating our successes. I loved him.

My company grew rapidly.

One of the things about Internet companies and the power of the phone, is that you can build tight relationships with people you've never laid eyes on. I had several people on my management team I'd never met face-to-face, though we'd been working together for close to two years. I decided to change that.

I rented a wonderful home on the Long Beach Peninsula of Washington, made flight arrangements

for everyone, and went on a shopping spree. The most important condition for their attendance was that no one bring their computer. I wanted a true “family retreat”, not a work event. I loaded my truck with food and beach toys. The whole time, I tried to ignore a funny feeling in my gut. At the last moment, ignoring my own mandate, I threw in my laptop.

Everyone was coming to the Management Team Retreat, except for Peter. He had decided that taking the time to come to Washington would not work for him at that moment. Other things happened that had red flags flying in my mind and heart, but I kept trying to ignore them. Finally, I could no longer pretend I had no reason for concern.

On the way to pick up one of my Management Team from the airport, I made the difficult phone call that confirmed what I already knew in my gut. Peter was stealing the company.

You see, I had not yet learned the hard lesson that you *never* give up access to the data for an Internet company. Without your data and your coding, you can lose everything you’ve so carefully created. I was still naïve.

I learned my lesson that day.

I cried on the way to the airport, but then swallowed my tears, met my team member with a smile and chatted all the way to the beach. I had decided to not ruin everyone’s initial night. This was the first time we were all going to meet each other in

person, and I was determined everyone would have fun before I revealed the truth of what had happened.

The evening was amazing. We stayed in a hotel before we drove the final ninety miles to the house I had rented. We hugged, laughed, talked, ate pizza and played pool. When the night wound down and we retired to our rooms I couldn't sleep, however. Not much keeps me awake, but the reality of what had just happened spun relentlessly through my head.

What was I going to tell them?

A check on my computer revealed I no longer had access to our systems. I sat and stared at the glowing screen. How was I going to tell them that everything we had worked for every day for two years was gone?

I tossed and turned for hours before I gave in and got up. I jumped into my truck, drove to the coast, and stepped out onto the sand just as dawn was kissing the night sky. I was desperate for the freedom I find on the beach. I was crying so hard while I walked that I was barely aware of the crashing waves or the screeching gulls wheeling out to welcome the new day.

That's when I saw the first sand dollar through my tears.

I have a love affair with sand dollars, so I reached down to pick it up. Once I confirmed it wasn't alive, I put it in my pocket and kept walking and crying.

I truly had no idea what we were going to do. All I could see was that I had failed. I'd failed all the people who worked for me. I'd failed the non-profits counting on our company. I'd failed whatever power had given me the epiphany for my company in the first place.

The sense of failure threatened to choke me as I walked down the beach, grateful it was deserted.

That's when I saw the second sand dollar.

Absentmindedly, I scooped it up and put it in my pocket with the other one. A few steps later I spied another one, glistening as the water from a wave receded. I picked that one up, too.

Suddenly, I was on a mission to pick up as many sand dollars as I could find. Surely there were many more if I'd found three so easily. Since I'd found the first three at the water's edge, I continued to walk there, my eyes glued on the sand. I picked up two more, hardly aware I had stopped crying.

I still had no idea what I was going to do about my company, but the thrill of the hunt was at least a distraction.

The problem was that the tide was coming in. Every time I bent my head to search the water line, a wave pushed me back, forcing me farther up the beach. Strolling through the surf in January was an



invitation for hyperthermia. I clenched my teeth with frustration as the waves approached, walked away from the frothy water, and kept looking.

I found another one!

I added it to my collection, and then turned back to the water line as the wave receded – back to where I had discovered the first ones.

Another wave pushed in, forcing me farther up the beach again, away from where I knew the sand dollars were.

I found another one!

This game continued for a while. I kept returning to the water line, refusing to acknowledge that the incoming tide was going to win. Each time the victorious surf pushed me up the beach, with me clenching my teeth all the way.

Every time I found a sand dollar.

Finally, when my pockets were too full to hold even one more beautiful sand dollar, I stopped and turned to face the ocean. With the hunt over, tears filled my eyes again as the reality of my situation came crashing back in – harder than the waves crashing into the shore. I stood staring out at the waters, admiring the white tops of the waves that were catching the first rays of the sun.

*You still don't get it, do you?*

A voice reverberated through my entire being.

“Huh?” Startled, my response was out loud.

*You still don't get it, do you?*

“Obviously not,” I muttered. The moment the words left my mouth, though, I suddenly got it. I turned and stared back down the beach. The whole time I had been searching for sand dollars, I believed the incoming waves were knocking me off course.

They weren’t.

*They were redirecting my path.*

My heart pounded as the truth roared through my entire being – much louder than the waves crashing before me.

*My path was being redirected.*

Just like that, the fear disappeared; replaced by a burning determination. I patted the sand dollars bulging in my pockets, returned to my truck, and drove back to the hotel. I arrived just as my team were emerging from their rooms.

We ate a hasty breakfast and then drove the final miles to our vacation rental house. I sat them down in the living room and told them what had happened. The expressions on their faces echoed the fears and concerns that had coursed through me from the moment I had discovered the truth.

“What are we going to do?” one of them stammered.

Thanks to my early morning beach walk, I was ready. “We’re going to build a new company,” I said calmly. “None of us asked for this change, but here it is, anyway. Our path is being redirected.”

Looking back on that time, it was truly miraculous. We had never all been together in one place. Now here we were, united as a team, and ready to do the impossible.

And I had the laptop I'd thrown in at the last moment.

We did the impossible.

When we left that house four days later, we had designed a company that was far superior to the one stolen from us. When we relaunched two months later, our online shopping mall had gone from a couple hundred products to 1400 stores with *millions* of products, and the technology and programs to support it that were lightyears beyond what we'd started with.

We did what countless people told us was impossible, in an amount of time that was inconceivable to experienced tech people – including my own! All of us learned a lesson in just what was possible.

Peter? Once he had stolen the systems, he attempted to steal my team of one hundred people, believing they would come with him since he had the power. What he didn't calculate into his plan was that every single one of those people weren't in it for the money. We had a passion to make a difference for non-profit organizations, and we were determined to do it from a place of integrity. Certainly, we

wanted to make money, but it wasn't our driving force.

Every single one of my team told Peter they weren't interested in working with him. He tried to make it work for a couple months on his own, but with no team, and no relationship with the non-profits my team had brought on board, he finally had to give up. He offered to sell the systems back to me.

I declined.

We opened our brand-new online shopping mall right on time.

The power of that experience has never left me. Every time I'm confronted with a change... every time I run into a difficult challenge... every time I hit something that seems insurmountable... every time I have a failure... I remember the words on the beach that day.

*You're not being knocked off course. Your path is being redirected.*

Now, instead of clenching my teeth with frustration, I start looking for the next path. I know it's there, and I know the waves and challenges are pushing me toward it. All I have to do is find it.

I always do!

I also still have every one of those sand dollars!



In spite of the many years I've lived with that lesson, there are still times I forget.

Sometimes I forget in a BIG way.

Fast forward to thirteen years later...



A little magnet had been on my printer for almost 10 years. Staring at me. Challenging me. Mostly being ignored because I got so used to seeing it.

Until a couple months earlier.

Suddenly, the ignored little magnet was shouting my name. Demanding I pay attention. Making me question decisions and life choices. I tried to ignore it because I had so many things on my mind, but it simply refused to be dismissed. There were times I wanted to rip it off my printer and toss it in the trash, but I couldn't. It demanded to be heard. Demanded to be examined. Demanded to be acted on.

The magnet is still there.

What does it say?

### ***Destined to be an Old Woman with No Regrets***

If you had asked me a few months earlier if that was true for my life I would have said, "Yes." I was doing what I love more than anything in the world (writing books), I had amazing relationships, I had

more adventures than just about anyone I know, and I had the freedom to make choices I wanted to make.

I mean, come on, wanting anything more than that seems more than a little greedy, and it also made me very uncomfortable, because suddenly I was examining some of my choices and realizing that pesky magnet was no longer completely true - I wasn't going to be an Old Woman with No Regrets.

*Sigh...*

I finally quit ignoring it, and I spent many long hours examining what things in my life would cause me to grow old with regrets. I had to face them with unflinching honesty because, *more than anything else*, I truly want to live with NO REGRETS.

Once I had identified them, I realized I was faced with choices and actions I didn't necessarily want to make, because I knew they would not be well received.

I continued to struggle.

*No Regrets... No Regrets...*

The day finally came when I knew that no matter what the cost, I was ready to make the choices and take the actions that would free my mind and soul to truly live with no regrets. I never want to look back on my life and wish I had done something different. Wish I had done the thing I feared. Wish I had done the thing people thought I shouldn't (or couldn't) do.

I didn't want to be afraid of change.

I made those changes and choices, and then took the action required to make them reality. I can truly say that now I am living the life I'm meant to live, and that I'm gazing solidly into a future with *no regrets*. It wasn't easy, and there were pain and tears along the way, but my heart is at peace.

While my choices and actions are important to me, I wonder how *you* would answer that question?

*Are YOU Destined to Grow Old with No Regrets?*

I challenge you to take a good, long look at your life. Will you wish you'd done something differently? Will you wish you'd done the thing you feared? Will you wish you'd done the thing people thought you shouldn't, or couldn't do?

I invite you to join me on the Path to *no regrets*.

The path isn't easy. There will almost certainly be some pain, tears, and fears. There will be people who completely believe you're making wrong decisions because they will probably be so different from the choices you've made before. Here's the thing, though...

It is **YOUR** life.

**YOU** are the only one who will look back on your life and wonder if you lived it with **NO REGRETS**.

Join me... I can promise you it's worth it!

Four years later, I can tell you I am SO glad I chose to live as a woman with no regrets! I strive to be that person every single day - making choices that will ensure every day is a celebration of life!



I talk with so many women who are unhappy with their lives. I listen, feel their pain and frustration, and then speak the words I know are true.

*If you don't like your life, change it.*

It will never cease to astonish me how many people get angry when I say that. They have immediate responses:

*"You don't get it. I can't change things."*

*"I thought you would understand. I don't have a choice but to stay in the life I have."*

*"Why don't you get it? I'm stuck in this life. Changing it would be too hard."*

Wrong. I do get it. I also love the fact that change is a synonym for hope. If you're taking a risk to change your life, what you're really saying is, I believe in tomorrow and I will be part of it!



If you dislike something enough to complain about it, then you need to either take responsibility to change it or find a way to accept it.

I realize you may grit your teeth when you read this because taking responsibility is hard.

What I said above bears repeating.

*Change is a synonym for hope. If you're taking a risk to change your life, what you're really saying is, I believe in tomorrow and I will be part of it!*

As you grapple with the idea of change, I want to share one more thing. I wrote this almost twenty years ago. I feel it more passionately now than I did then...

### **Will You Settle?**

**Every day, all around me, I see people  
settling. Settling for what?**

**They are settling for less.**

**Settling for less than what will truly make  
them happy.**

**Settling for less than what they truly deserve.**

**Settling for less money because they do not  
really believe they can make more; or they  
simply do not want to do what it takes to  
change their situation.**

**They settle for doing a job they are not really  
happy in because they do not really think  
they can change their situation.**

**They settle in less than fulfilling relationships  
because at least what they have offers them**

**security, or maybe they just do not think it is possible to have all their heart yearns for.**

***People settle.***

**They settle because not settling is scary.**

**It takes them out of their comfort zone.**

**Not settling means they are going to take a risk and possibly lose what they have opted to settle for.**

***They settle.***

**They decide that they really can't have it all, so they might as well settle for what they can.**

**They pretend they are happy in the midst of it.**

**They're not happy, but they prefer it to hanging out on a limb that might break.**

**I see it all around me.**

***People settling.***

**It makes me so sad.**

**And it makes me want to scream.**

**I want to grab these people and somehow convince them they are worth so much more than that.**

**They deserve to have it all.**

**They deserve to have what makes them happy. They deserve to not struggle from day to day. They deserve to do something that fills their heart and soul with fulfillment.**

**They deserve to have relationships that make their hearts explode with joy.**

**They deserve to not settle for anything less than what they want.**

**I cannot convince people.**

**I can share my thoughts, but each person has  
to convince themselves.**

**They have to change what they believe about  
themselves; and about the world they are  
creating for themselves.**

**But I can try and shake you up.  
I can try and make you take a hard  
look at your life.  
*Are you settling?***

**Be honest.  
If you are, then only you can change it.  
Only you can decide to step out of  
your comfort zone.  
Only you can opt for the courage that will  
make you live in the fear zone.  
It is in the fear zone that the greatest  
fulfillment and success is found.**

***It is in not settling that you learn to truly  
live!***

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How do  
you  
want to  
Change  
Your  
Life??

*Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 237*

*Journal Pages*

*I Am A Bregdan Woman* 238

Journal Pages

I am ending this book on a note of change because you probably wouldn't be reading it unless you have a desire for change in your life.

It has been a privilege to walk this journey with you.

As I hoped, I have changed as I wrote it. I've been challenged, reminded of valuable lessons I've learned through the years, and inspired to continue giving 100% to be the Bregdan Woman I aspire to be!

The rest of the Journey is up to you. You read this book because you want to be a Bregdan Woman.

You long to live your life with courage, hope, purpose, boldness and compassion.

I hope the journey we've taken together will make this possible for you.

Before we part ways, I encourage you to say the words out loud...

*I Am A Bregdan Woman!!*

Blessings,  
Ginny



Now, I have a **GIFT** for you...

**THANK YOU GIFT!**

I've heard from so many of you who have read this book and would now like to read The Bregdan Chronicles that inspired it.

You would also like a copy of The Bregdan Principle. I'd love for you to have one!

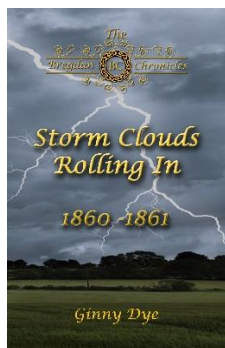
It would be an honor to have you become part of The Bregdan Chronicles Family!

See if you fall in love with the series like so many have. You'll also get a free copy of The Bregdan Principle that you can print!

I've made it easy for you.

1 – You can download a FREE PDF to your computer. Go to: [www.TheFirstBookIsFree.com](http://www.TheFirstBookIsFree.com)

2 - You can buy the digital format of the first book in the series (*Storm Clouds Rolling In*) for just 99 cents!





## *Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 241*

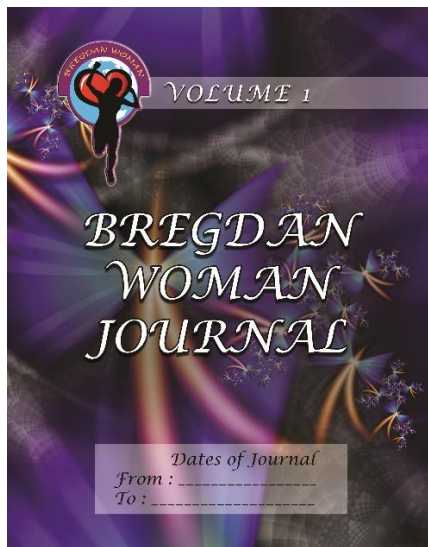
Just go to

<http://www.DiscoverTheBregdanChronicles.com>.

You can also buy the print and audio version if that is more your style.



I also want to tell you about The Bregdan Woman Journals. (This is just one of 16 cover choices!)



My shelves are full of Journals I have kept over the years. I treasure them for the memories, but mostly I treasure them because writing down my thoughts, hopes, fears,

accomplishments and failures helped me become the woman I am today.

### **A BREGDAN WOMAN.**

I strive every day to become more of the woman I desire to be. So many of you have asked me for help in becoming the woman you truly want to be. This is the best gift I could possibly give you...

The **BREGDAN WOMAN Journal** is like none you have ever seen. First, it needs to be big enough to really allow you to journal your life – so it's 500+ pages!

Each 8 1/2 X 11 page is lined and ready for you to write on.

You have 16 different covers to choose from.

But that is just the beginning... It doesn't matter what day of the year you start your journal – it will be with you for 365 days – until you're ready for your next one.

A Journal becomes even more of a treasure when it becomes even more than a Journal. *The Bregdan Woman Journals are so much more than a Journal.*

You'll find **Bregdan Woman Stories** - amazing people who will make you realize you can do ANYTHING with your life. (52 stories for every week of the year)

Every single day you'll get a **Bregdan Woman Quote**.

You'll be challenged with 100+ **Bregdan Woman Actions** for how you can make a difference with your life.

And every day you'll have a place to write down your feelings, thoughts, challenges, hurts, disappointments, successes, celebrations, relationships, actions,

## *Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 243*

experiences, adventures – all the things your life is made of.

***It will empower you to move beyond your fears and doubts – becoming a BREGDAN WOMAN who can live the life you dream of.***

The Bregdan Woman Journals will become irreplaceable treasures as you look back on your life!

**<http://www.BregdanWomanJournals.com>**



***Would you be so kind as to leave a  
Review on Amazon?***

Go to [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)

Put I Am A Bregdan Woman, Ginny Dye into the  
Search Box.

Leave a Review.

***I love hearing from my readers!***

***Thank you!***

*The Bregdan Principle*

*Every life that has been lived until today is  
a part of the woven  
braid of life.*

*It takes every person's story to create  
history.*

*Your life will help determine the course of  
history.*

*You may think you don't have much of an  
impact.*

*You do.*

*Every action you take will reflect in  
someone else's life.*

*Someone else's decisions.*

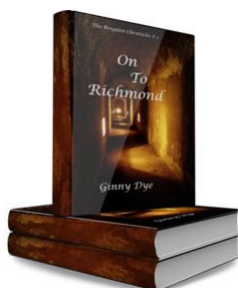
*Someone else's future.*

*Both good and bad.*

The Bregdan Chronicles



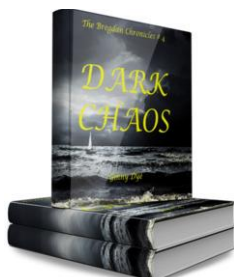
# 1 - Storm Clouds Rolling In  
1860 – 1861



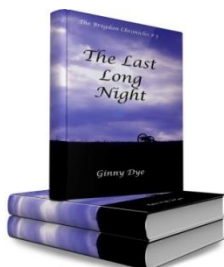
# 2 - On To Richmond  
1861 – 1862



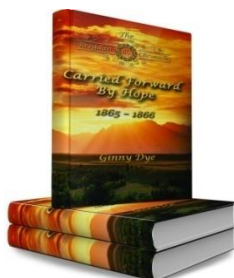
# 3 - Spring Will Come  
1862 – 1863



# 4 - Dark Chaos  
1863 – 1864

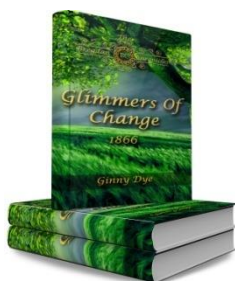


# 5 - The Long Last Night  
1864 – 1865



# 6 - Carried Forward By Hope  
April – December 1865

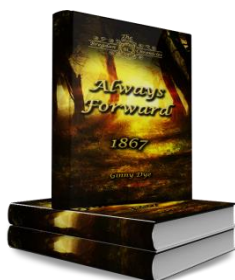
*Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 247*



# 7 - Glimmers of Change  
December – August 1866



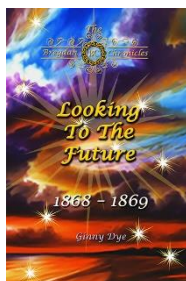
# 8 - Shifted By The Winds  
August – December 1866



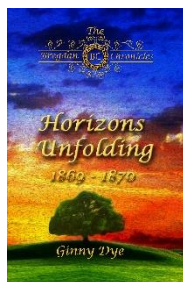
# 9 - Always Forward  
January – October 1867



# 10 - Walking Into The Unknown  
October 1867 – October 1868



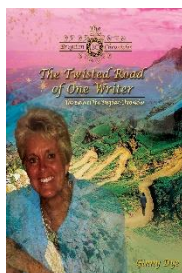
# 11 - Looking To The Future  
October 1868 – June 1869



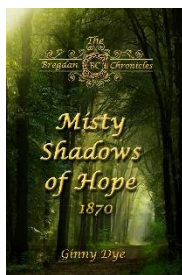
# 12 - Horizons Unfolding  
November 1869 – March 1870



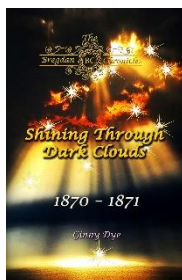
*Book 1 of Messages From Bregdan 249*



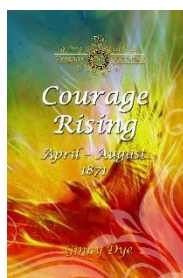
# 13 - The Twisted Road of One Writer  
The Birth of The Bregdan Chronicles



# 14 - Misty Shadows of Hope  
1870



# 15 - Shining Through Dark Clouds  
1870 - 1871



# 16 - Courage Rising  
April – August 1871

***Many more coming... Go to  
DiscoverTheBregdanChronicles.com to see how  
many are available now!***

### **Other Books by Ginny Dye**

#### **Pepper Crest High Series - Teen Fiction**

Time For A Second Change

It's Really A Matter of Trust

A Lost & Found Friend

Time For A Change of Heart

#### **Fly To Your Dreams Series – Allegorical Fantasy**

Dream Dragon

Born To Fly

Little Heart

The Miracle of Chinese Bamboo

All titles by Ginny Dye

[www.BregdanPublishing.com](http://www.BregdanPublishing.com)

## Author Biography

Who am I? Just a normal person who happens to love to write. If I could do it all anonymously, I would. In fact, I did the first go 'round. I wrote under a pen name. On the off chance I would ever become famous - I didn't want to be! I don't like the limelight. I don't like living in a fishbowl. I especially don't like thinking I have to look good everywhere I go, just in case someone recognizes me! I finally decided none of that matters. If you don't like me in overalls and a baseball cap, too bad. If you don't like my haircut or think I should do something different than what I'm doing, too bad. I'll write books that you will hopefully like, and we'll both let that be enough! :) Fair?

But let's see what you might want to know. I spent many years as a Wanderer. My dream when I graduated from college was to experience the United States. I grew up in the South. There are many things I love about it but I wanted to live in other places. So I did. I moved 42 times, traveled extensively in 49 of the 50 states, and had more experiences than I will ever be able to recount. The only state I haven't been in is Alaska, simply because I refuse to visit such a vast, fabulous place until I have at least a month. Along the way I had glorious adventures. I've canoed through the Everglade Swamps, snorkeled in the Florida Keys and windsurfed in the Gulf of Mexico.



I've white-water rafted down the New River and Bungee jumped in the Wisconsin Dells. I've visited every National Park (in the off-season when there is more freedom!) and many of the State Parks. I've hiked thousands of miles of mountain trails and biked through Arizona deserts. I've canoed and biked through Upstate New York and Vermont, and polished off as much lobster as possible on the Maine Coast.

I had a glorious time and never thought I would find a place that would hold me until I came to the Pacific Northwest. I'd been here less than 2 weeks, and I knew I would never leave. My heart is so at home here with the towering firs, sparkling waters, soaring mountains and rocky beaches. I love the eagles & whales. In 5 minutes I can be hiking on 150 miles of trails in the mountains around my home, or gliding across the lake in my rowing shell. I love it!

Have you figured out I'm kind of an outdoors gal? If it can be done outdoors, I love it! Hiking, biking, windsurfing, rock-climbing, roller-blading, snow-shoeing, skiing, rowing, canoeing, softball, tennis... the list could go on and on. I love to have fun and I love to stretch my body. This should give you a pretty good idea of what I do in my free time.

When I'm not writing or playing, I'm building Millions For Positive Change - a fabulous organization I founded in 2001 - along with 60 amazing people who poured their lives into creating resources to empower people to make a difference with their lives.

What else? I love to read, cook, sit for hours in solitude on my mountain, and also hang out with friends. I love barbeques and block parties. Basically - I just love LIFE!

I'm so glad you're part of my world!

### **Ginny**

Join my Email List so you can:

- Receive notice of all new books
- Be a part of my Launch Celebrations. I give away lots of Free gifts!
- Read my weekly BLOG while you're waiting for a new book.
- Be part of The Bregdan Chronicles Family!
- Learn about all the other books I write.

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