

Sharon Melnick, PhD

A series of concentric circles, resembling ripples in water, are centered in the upper half of the cover. The circles are light gray and fade out towards the edges of the white background.

IN YOUR POWER

React Less,
Regain Control,
Raise Others

WILEY

Introduction

“I can’t sleep. I can’t focus. It’s like I’m under siege,” Mary shared.

“He’s squeezing me out and trying to lower my ownership stake.” In her partnership group in a financial firm, Mary told me the senior partner started spreading rumors that she’s a bully and the team is afraid of her. The young analysts joined in. She tried to speak to the offending partner, but he reacted with hostility, making the situation worse. She didn’t feel she could get a fair response from the HR director or from their regional head because they were longtime buddies of his. She feared her only way out was to leave the firm. But that would be a big blow to her reputation, and why should *she* have to sacrifice all of the clientele she had worked for 20 years to establish?

The senior partner also criticized her for her “quality over quantity” client service approach. “He’s making me feel like a failure. I’ve lost my confidence, and now I’m even questioning—maybe I *should* change, and maybe I really am a bully.”

Mary felt powerless.

So did Steve. He was the head of a fast-growing technology start-up, and his team members’ repeated mistakes were like nails on a chalkboard to him. “I can’t *get them* to be more careful and to follow through on their work plans,” he explained. He was getting impatient and would react, thinking, “They’re lazy,” and also questioning, “Am I a bad leader?” He brought his irritation home to his wife, which he knew was unfair.¹

2 Introduction

Mary and Steve were in situations that are similar to those many of us face: You feel that *other people* determine what happens to *you*. Their behavior ‘gets to you’, and puts you into a mental swirl. You rehash the scenario, convincing yourself they’re wrong or that there’s something wrong with you. You get hijacked and react emotionally instead of responding with thoughtful intention. You see limited options to resolve the problem because whatever you’ve tried hasn’t worked. You feel trapped. You want to be a role model for others or be the bigger person in the scenario, but you can see you are showing up as a diminished version of yourself.

This is what it’s like when you are “out of your power.”

You want *relief*. You want the other person to do what you think they should do, believing that is the only way to achieve a good or fair outcome. What you really want is to get back to your calm confident self and refocus on living your life and making a difference for others in your company, community, or family. You want to be back “in your power.”

If this describes how you are feeling anywhere in your life, this book is for you.

I share the psychological insights and strategies you can use to immediately stop the mental swirl and quickly recover to be “good in you.” With fresh ways of overcoming your automatic reactions, you’ll be free from the effects of other people on you. You’ll achieve bigger business results, get promoted, improve the culture, and connect with difficult loved ones.

You’ll shift your experience from that of the thermometer to the thermostat. When you are the **thermometer** your mental and emotional state goes up and down according to other people’s behavior. You fixate on others’ actions and see yourself at their mercy, as if “others act, all I can do is react.” The climate outside of you determines the weather inside of you. You experience yourself as the casualty, not the creator of the outcome.

As the thermostat, instead *you* set the tone of your interactions with others, no matter what their behavior is, and you set the temperature of your internal state as well. You are able to bring people along in your vision. The thermostat harmonizes all the conditions in a room—the humidity, air flow, movement of people—to reach the decided-upon temperature. As the thermostat, you can steward the whole situation to make it better.

When you're in your power, you make an impact not by reacting to the behavior of people who are limited, but rather by raising yourself and others to be limitless.

By the end of my first discussion with Mary, she regained this sense of control and confidence. She stopped taking the situation personally, her emotional upset evaporated, and she slept well that night. She no longer looked to others to know her worth. Within days, the discussions she initiated with her partners led them to cease badmouthing her. She earned so much respect from them and for her client service approach that within 60 days they voted *her* Partner in Charge of the group. Within 90 days, she brought in the biggest deal of her career, producing a windfall they all benefitted from now that she'd begun enforcing their contractual agreement to do an equal draw on profits. Then she led an approach to diversify the talent in their group, and together they've grown the pie.

Mary got back in her power!

I have coached and trained over 40,000 senior leaders, entrepreneurs, and professionals in all levels of organizations around the world, and what I've found is that in the challenging situations where you find yourself off your game, *the underlying issue* is always that you're pulled out of your power.

We are made to feel powerless in many ways. We feel unseen, unheard, or can't make an impact on people who are important to us in our professional and personal lives. We may be dismissed,

4 Introduction

overlooked, or uncredited by a manager, or sabotaged by a colleague. We can't convince executive peers to move past corporate scorecards toward true transformation in the culture. We might feel disrespected by a bully boss, a difficult family member, or be overloaded with more than our fair share of work. We can't get our team members to live up to our expectations or respect our leadership. We don't get our needs met by a partner or friend. We're made to second guess ourselves.

Business as usual can put us out of our power by piling on excessive demands and constant change. In the workplace and culture at large, we don't feel psychologically safe, and these places are rife with harms in the form of inequitable pay and advancement, microaggressions, and violence. On social media, we have reason to fear we'll be cancelled or trolled. Political systems make us feel our values are not protected, or are violated.

Being out of your power is not a sign of some inherent weakness within you. Usually it means you care—about getting a good result, about fairness and respect, and about the greater good. Everyone can get out of their power regardless of how emotionally intelligent or highly accomplished they are. An acquaintance of mine is a former army general. His son verbally attacks him regularly and every day he has the sinking feeling he's a bad father. As we'll explore in the next chapter, we are even biologically hardwired to get kicked out of our power.

When we get out of our power we do what we can to help us regain control. We blame the offending person for what they've done, or haven't done, and plan what we'll say to them if we have the chance. We seek sympathy in venting to others. We spin about whether to stay or go and then get to the point we start to disengage. We try to not think about the situation by drinking, numbing ourselves with social media, or other unhealthy habits.

Well-meaning advice from friends, family, or blog writers tells us to “let it go; just leave! give it time; be persistent!” This advice offers encouragement rather than true empowerment.

It suggests we grit our way through the problem or continue to do things that aren't working. It doesn't address that something fundamental to you is being crossed—your sense of self, your truth, your boundaries, your vision, your sense of fairness about the way the world should work, or all of these.

Wrestling with these situations can interfere with our mental well-being and contribute to burnout over and above our culture of “too much to do.” We can even develop mental health symptoms, such as anxiety, which comes from thoughts about lacking a sense of control. Or depression, which can come from anger that is turned against oneself when no recourse is available. Emotions and behavior from past traumas can be reactivated, and post-traumatic symptoms can develop when you experience the situation as inescapable.

Not having an effective way to navigate these scenarios derails careers. I've seen it be a major reason people leave an organization (or relationship) or decide to stay but just go through the motions, which is not who you are. The temptation is to avoid collaborating with the other person, eroding connection and trust among coworkers, friends, and family members. Leaders can react with overwhelm or pursue their own agenda rather than serve the team.

Being out of your power destroys dreams and kills joy.

More than ever we are determined to overturn these situations when we face them, personally or collectively. We are fed up with situations where someone else's actions make you feel bad about your value or constrain your success. With the ongoing stress of pandemic-related circumstances, economic uncertainty, and an overdue reckoning on social injustices, our resilience is worn down.

We are factoring in our mental well-being and prioritizing environments where we can do meaningful work drama-free. We're ready to be the change we want to see in the world, making things better for all involved. We want to go beyond the temporary

effects of a massage, a manicure, or a good workout. We seek a practical response repertoire we can use in the heat of the moment to further our goals and experience lasting well-being.

Being in your power is the ultimate form of self care. It is the root cause solution for the successful life you want.

As a business psychologist and executive coach, I began to make the connection between being out of our power as adults and insights I learned from 10 years of research at Harvard Medical School in my early career. My initial focus was on studying what we bring with us from childhood into our parenting in the next generation. For people who had difficult experiences, I came up with methods to heal the wounds, become their own person, transcend their patterns, and act toward their children in a way they would have wanted for their own life.

Without realizing it, in my research I had been putting together the psychological processes of getting back in your power. Over 20 years of coaching clients, I heard about the issues they were struggling with in their workplace, and I started to see how the approaches I had developed for helping people overcome early trauma-related patterns in their parenting applied to a broad range of work and social environments in which people don't feel seen, heard, or can't have the impact they're here for.

And I needed this myself! I was a person who reacted all day long to other people and got tossed about by matters large and small that didn't go my way. If a friend said something ambiguous to me, I'd spend the rest of my day rehashing it. I sought others' approval and tried to prevent their disapproval. Books told me to "look within," but all I found was a cacophony of self-criticism. Life happened *to* me. When I used my voice, I didn't see it have an impact. As is true for so many, being out of my power had become my way of being in the world. I plunged myself into learning how I could coach people to apply these approaches in

work challenges, starting with how I could use them to build ownership over myself as well.

From coaching thousands to be confident influential leaders, I've observed that the biggest unlock to business outcomes rarely comes from one or another specific tactic but rather from knowing how to get in and stay in their power. It comes from their new way of understanding what the problem is, the energy they emit, and the command with which they bring others along into win-win solutions.

The word “power” is loaded. We associate it with being predatory, selfish, or manipulative and with people abusing their power. Being in your power is *not* about wielding your power *over* others or achieving your ends through force. This happens with people who are *in* power but not in *their* power. They may behave in these ways because of insecurity, fearing that if they don't show they are powerful, they will be subject in the same ways to others' power.

Research suggests that, as the saying goes, power can go to your head. Studies show that high-power individuals *are* more likely to direct their energies in pursuit of their own goals and that their empathy can be reduced.²

Being in your power has a different character. The word “power” comes from the Latin root “posse,” which means “to be able.” In your power is your ability to stay “good in you,” no matter what's going on around you. Being in your power is the *ability* to alchemize the challenging aspects of what goes on outside of you in order to get “into a good place” inside of you *so that* you can then take actions to achieve your aims and make the situation as you envision it should be outside of you.

Being “in your power” actually encompasses two abilities: To be in your power and to use your power as a force for good. The

“for good” piece is key. I want to redefine “power” so we embrace it as a force for good.

When I refer to using your power, I mean the *power to use yourself as an instrument to make a situation better*. The power to get a better result, to resolve friction at root cause, to implement innovative ideas, or to create a culture in which you and others thrive. It’s the potential of this positive use of power that led Ron Carucci, expert on executive success and author of *Rising to Power*, to say what he found in his 10-year study among those who assume leadership positions is that the biggest abuse of power is not using it!³

When you are in your power, you have a sense of control over your own mental and emotional state, thoughts, and actions—you respond rather than react. You decide who you are and what you will and won’t accept—you own your choices. The course of your life isn’t happening *to* you, it’s happening from you, through you, and for you.

You achieve your desired impact to make the situation better, not only for you but for *everyone* involved.

In your power, you stop taking things personally or holding onto them. Your well-being is preserved regardless of others’ behavior because other people are not the supply line to your emotional oxygen, you are. You don’t have to worry about their judgments of you, because you decide who you are. That gives you freedom!

In your power, you’re Teflon to the negative effects of situations—you can see them as they unfold in real time, understand everyone’s motivations and needs, and respond strategically. You model new standards and hold space for new conversations. You also know how to quickly step back into your power if you do get kicked out of it.

What you say is heard, you get the outcome you want, the situation gets resolved at root cause. You are proud of how you

handled it; it doesn't fester or continue to drain you. Your energy is freed up to devote to the people and activities you love and the contribution you are here to make. You are able to inspire and lift others, empowering them with your power. You leave the situation better than it was when you came into it.

When you are in your power, you raise everyone around you.

You'll see the effects everywhere in your life. Being in your power:

Fuels resilience and mental well-being. It gives you a calm, clear mind so you can hold onto your important thoughts. And have renewable energy.

Allows you to resolve problems rather than deciding to leave. Being able to handle unyielding situations allows you, if it's the right fit, to stay and rise in the organization, transform a poisonous relationship into a fruitful collaboration, and bring a huge win to the team—or grow your own company.

Enables you to make a difference for others. You can grow power in other people once you've grown it in yourself.⁴ Being able to make a bigger impact makes my clients giddy and brings the delight back into work.

Helps you cope with societal injustice and change it. Systemic inequities must be resolved by dismantling the structures that hold them in place, that is the only and ultimate fix. Until that is complete, being in your power can help you personally deal with injustices—helping you not be triggered and overcome their personal effects on you. Being in your power will set you up to sustain yourself and respond effectively and emphatically so you can be an agent of change.

In the following chapters, I'm going to show you how much power you have, right now, within you, that you can use immediately to start feeling good in you and achieve the change you desire. I take you on a tour of what I call Power Portals. They are like doorways that lead to new ways of understanding the

situation you are struggling with and how you can transform it. There are 12 of them.

The first six Portals will show you how to get in your power and stay there when challenged. The next six Portals show you how to use your power for the good of all, both in interpersonal scenarios and in positions of power, regardless of what role you are in. You'll learn from a wealth of stories of others who were challenged and out of their power and then turned their situations around to get buy-in for their ideas, get promoted, get the team performance they wanted, or resolve personal friction to strengthen a relationship.

As you learn to access the power the Portals open your eyes to, you will find that being *in your power becomes a lifestyle*. You'll walk in the world as an infinite creative force to make any situation serve your good intentions and steward outcomes where everyone wins. In your power you are a Change Agent, simply by the way you show up.

Around the time this book was starting to become a possibility, I had a call with a colleague of mine, Jo, who's a senior HR leader. A few days prior she had left her role as the HR lead in a start-up after one year, saying about the experience, "It was like quicksand, but I persevered." She was confused: "I was hired to bring in a new vision, and then the founders blocked the vision." She started to question herself: "Am I smart enough to do this? I became afraid of saying the wrong thing when these jackasses say the first thing that comes to mind. I felt like I was losing my mind." She confessed: "I know that whole idea of putting your oxygen mask on first before you can do it for others, but I lost that ability even though this wasn't my first rodeo. I'm usually the one telling *other* people how to handle this."

What does one do in this situation? "I went to people I follow on Instagram searching for a quote or a meme that could help me. I saw a video by a guru telling me how I should

look in the mirror and tell myself I believe in me. That helped for 30 seconds.” Then she said to me, “I know I have that within me, but I’m unable to find it and tap into it now. I wish there was a place I could go and fill up how to be in my power, how I could find this within rather than have to seek it elsewhere or through other people. Can you recommend a book I could read over and over again to regain it?”

I shared with her my framework for understanding her situation to ensure it doesn’t happen again. At the end of our conversation she said, “This is the first time I’ve felt calm in months.”

Oh, and about that book recommendation she asked about, “I got you, Jo. Here it is.”

PART I

Be the Thermostat (Not the Thermometer)

CHAPTER 1

From Out of Your Power to In Your Power

“It is never too late to be who you might have been.”

—George Eliot, pen name of English author
Mary Ann Evans

Early in my career, I had tickets to a rock concert in Washington, DC, one of those blockbuster lineups with all your favorite musicians. As the stands were starting to fill, I noticed a cluster of people in the row ahead of mine, and to my surprise I recognized one of them. It was Tipper Gore, wife of then Vice President Al Gore. She was a strong advocate for policies to improve the lives of women and children, and I thought we might have synergy in our missions. Without a moment's hesitation, I marched over to her, reached out to shake her hand, and said, “Hi! I'm Dr. Sharon Melnick. I do psychology research at Harvard Medical School on how parents who grew up in difficult circumstances can have resilience and confidence to break intergenerational cycles . . .”

Tipper's interest was piqued, and we chatted about our work and about her daughters. Suddenly, she turned to her Chief of Staff and said, "Melissa, could you get Dr. Melnick's contact information? We want to invite her to the White House to share the policy implications of her research."

On the flight home, I thought about how fortunate I am that from early in my life, starting at about age five, I have known what work I wanted to do in the world. I wanted to help people turn their private suffering into powerful service and make the contribution they're here to make.

This is what I was *here for*, what I had studied for so long and worked so hard for. Now maybe I had made a connection that would make that dream a reality. I wrote a short description of the research and emailed it to Melissa.

A few weeks later, as I was lacing up my sneakers to go for a run, my phone rings. It was Melissa! She filled me in about Tipper's initiatives helping millions of families around the country, and at a certain point she popped the question, "Will you come down to the White House to share the policy implications of your research?"

My heart raced with nervous excitement imagining how I could make such an impact. So what do you think I said?

Well, of course, I said . . .

"No."

I didn't exactly say no; I said, "I'm not sure I know enough yet from the research. Let me get back to you when we know more." (It's okay, go ahead and gasp.)

Why? I pictured myself sitting around that table at the White House presenting our findings to Tipper and a group of important policy makers. Even though I had won an award for my work, I was convinced that those people would think I wasn't smart enough. So I prioritized what I thought *they might think about me* over the once-in-a-lifetime contribution I could have

made to the lives of millions of families.¹ I gave them all the power to determine what impact I could or couldn't make.

Even if I was in my power during other parts of my day, in that moment I was pulled out of my power. Whether it's someone else's behavior or something that gets activated in ourselves, we shift into a state in which our thoughts, emotions, and actions align to disempower us.

If you can think of being in your power as a state you can get out of, then by definition it's a state you can come back into. When you *name* it, you *contain* it. You can know when you're in and when you're out.

Returning to this state is inherently within your control even though the catalyzing event may not have been. You want to devote your energies to making this your default state. It crystallizes your intention—there aren't 10 things you have to “work on” in yourself, *just one* to cultivate.

The phrase “out of your power” also reminds you that you've disconnected from a *source* of this power within you and outside of you. It's state you get into, it's not *you*. This will help you have less self-judgment if your prior approaches haven't worked or if you still react despite your best intentions not to. In this chapter you will learn what puts you into an out-of-your-power state and keeps you there, and what it takes to get back in your power. (As it turns out, I was invited again to present at the White House about 15 years later and said “yes”. As you start to act “in your power”, you magnetize opportunities to you.)

To become more conscious and in command of being in your power, let's first understand its three essential attributes:

1. A Sense of Agency

You see yourself as the creator of your life. You think, “I *can*.”

Life is not happening *to* you. You maximize what you can control. You always see options, and you are intentional in your choice

of responses. You see yourself as responsible for your thoughts, feelings, and actions. You make choices about whether your current situation is right for you—appreciating that you *always have a choice*. You operate in your stride, without limits or interference.

2. A Sense of Sovereignty

You own who you are. You think, “*I am.*”

You have an inviolable sense of yourself. You write the narrative about yourself and rewrite narratives that have been put on you. You consciously decide what you believe about yourself, *you* determine whether you are worthy and enough. You are sure of your values, what you stand for, and what you are here for. Though you learn from others, you trust your own counsel rather than outsourcing your opinion of yourself to others, or second-guess.

What you think, feel, and say all align and inform how you act. You are able to say yes when you genuinely mean it, and say no when you don’t. You are able to ask for what you want and speak your truth without fear of reprisal. You’re driven by your values, not what other people impose on you or how you’re trying to get other people to think of you.

You know how to create the mental and emotional “weather” inside of you and surrounding you. You recover quickly back into your center if you react emotionally. You know inner peace.

You know what you want and enjoy the choices you make for yourself. You know how to fill your own needs, so you don’t have to pressure anyone else or make them wrong for not giving you what you need. When others do support and love you, you can take it in and be filled up by it.

3. A Sense of Efficacy

Your efforts effect change. You think, “*I make an impact.*”

Your actions have the desired results. You can act to make your situation better—not only for yourself but for everyone involved. The way you communicate “lands.” You turn a *no* into a *yes*. You move others to action.

You can look beyond the finite problem to see infinite possible solutions. You understand all angles in the context, taking into consideration yours *and* others’ needs, and pursue win-win solutions. You resolve the underlying problem at root cause. You attach your own goals to the betterment of all.

You know how to get out of bad situations and find or create good new ones. Your approach transcends the current paradigm.

In sum, these three attributes of being in your power characterize being in—and staying in—your flow. These descriptions hint at the vast array of possible things you can control, ways you can manage yourself, and find resolution, no matter the challenges you are facing.

What Happens When You Are Kicked Out of Your Power?

Getting kicked out of your power starts when something happens to emotionally hijack you. Each person experiences this in their own way, ranging from an intense internal alarm to a subtle sensation. Maybe you get a pit in your stomach or constriction in your chest or throat. It might be like a streak of electricity coursing through your veins or conversely, energy draining out of you like rain down the side of a window. Perhaps you want to do a silent scream or maybe you simply notice a blip on your emotional EKG.

After our initial emotional response, our thoughts put us into a mental swirl. Your reaction beelines to your worst insecurities,

immediately thinking that others' actions mean you are not enough or you don't matter. Our minds become noisy as we blame the offending person for what they did wrong and think what they should have done instead. We carry the experience with us into our next meeting, into our family life, and into restless nights. We feel as if the other person or people have all the power to determine how the situation unfolds. And we feel made small.

Then we act. In the heat of the moment, we might react in a defensive tone. We might avoid, such as not sending an email we know we should send. We numb ourselves with food, drink, drugs, or online entertainment binges. We go on the offensive, strategizing how to get one up on the offender by putting them one down. We might vent endlessly to anyone who will listen. Or we might appear as the swan on a lake, displaying calm above the water while full of commotion below the surface.

This describes an acute reaction to an interaction you may have on any given day, but when you have to interact with that person or system over time your response becomes an automatic patterned approach to that important relationship or your life in general (and a natural adaptation can be to dull our emotions to spare ourselves the pain).

You might even hold *yourself* hostage with self-doubt when alone with your thoughts (even despite objective evidence you are crushing it). Once this spiraling occurs, you start to develop the sense that the frustrating situation is just the way things are or turn the accusatory lens on yourself: "This is just the way I am."

You might be quite in your power in some but not other areas of your life. You may *know in your mind* you are really good at what you do but *in your bones* you still question yourself. You may have a group of supportive friends and a family who loves you but can't get your manager to see you. You may be a successful entrepreneur, but your children or your partner make you feel disrespected. It confounds you.

We all have the resources within us to make agency, sovereignty, and efficacy our default state so that even when we are pulled out of our power for a time, we can quickly get back in our power. But we also all have response patterns built into our human nature that will put us out of our power and keep us there if we are not intentional.

Three Power Derailers: Overcome Your Hardwiring to Be in Your Power

Human nature sets us up to be kicked out of our power—and stay there—when a situation:

1. Seems out of your control;
2. Activates an unresolved pattern in you; and
3. Is not improved by your attempts to make it better.

We are even hardwired through evolution to have these derailers determine our responses. But once we are aware of them, we can override them. First let's start with an understanding of how these three derailers operate.

We Focus on What We *Can't* Control

We only get out of our power when the problem seems out of our control. When you focus on what you can't control, you *leak your power*. Your nervous system's resources are redirected toward monitoring incoming information about any potential threats to physical survival or emotional well-being.

These threat detection parts of your brain are like a Marine sentry on the lookout 24/7/365. When a threat is perceived, the Marine sentry sounds an alarm to begin problem-solving to cope

with it. Our minds are programmed to focus much more on what we *can't control* in a threatening situation than what we *can*. Your attention will naturally be pulled to the ways you feel “done to,” assessing the list of factors out of your control.

We have a built-in follow-up response, which allows us to get back into a place of safety within, once we learn that the stimuli in the environment are no longer a threat. But when we focus too intently on what we can't control, our attention loops only on the threat. Then the Marine sentry can't signal it's okay to let our guard down.

Our acute sensitivity to such threats was demonstrated by a study done with college students. They were asked to write about interpersonal situations in which they had power over others, then ones in which others had power over them, and then complete a cognitive task. Even a brief experience of being out of one's power—simply by writing about a situation in which they felt powerless for a few minutes—reduced their sense of agency and what they thought they could control.²

When threatened, the brain also filters all incoming information through one question: “How will this affect *me*?” *The survival mechanism of your brain literally sets you up to take things personally.* While in early human evolution the threats we had to be alert to were primarily about our physical safety, David Rock, author of *Your Brain at Work*, highlights that today threats to our status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, and fairness (SCARF) are primary.³ We are wired to be social, and we are constantly looking to other people in order to assess how safe we are and how well we are doing. We micro-track and then interpret other people's behavior. This is especially true if you're in a lower power position; you'll pay greater systematic attention to behavior of the person in the higher power position.⁴

Over time your brain associates this “How will this affect me?” question with the more general question “*What does this*

mean about me?” This leads us to the second factor that derails us from being in our power: a personal subconscious reaction you have to the perceived threat.

We Act Out of an Unresolved Pattern

When you become stuck out of power, it's because there is a personal “hook” that gives the situation a disproportionate effect on you. Your brain associates the current situation with a prior experience that registered strongly with you emotionally, and you perceive the theme is related or being reenacted in the current situation.

Every human has had some—or far too many—experiences that have caused us to feel powerless. In order to try to control and make sense of it, we tried to explain and assign a meaning to it, which will remain as an unresolved source of fear, pain, or self-doubt unless actively processed. This is like “kindling” inside of our psyches. Other people's actions, or the circumstances we're in, can act like a match that lights it afire. These are triggers, a painful reminder of similarly themed past experiences. They teleport us into a reexperience of powerlessness.

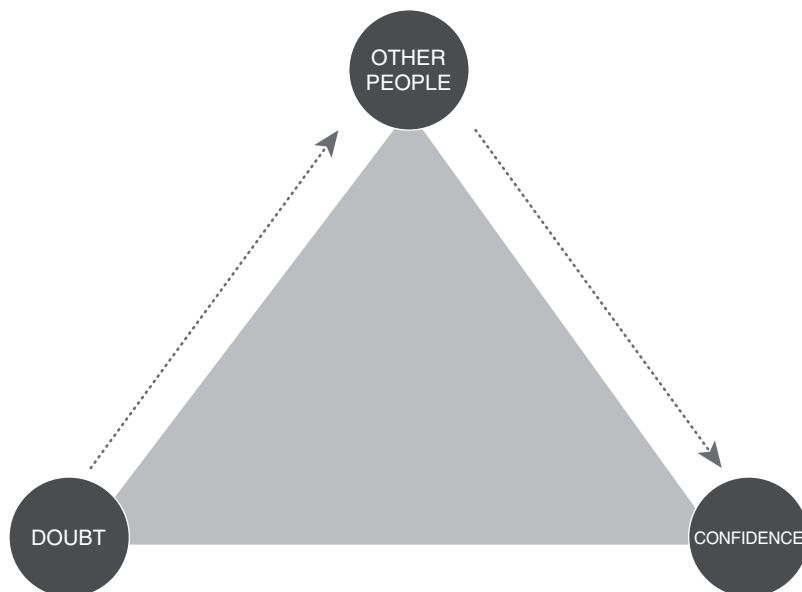
Our kindling leads us to personalize the situation, making it about issues from our past rather than seeing it objectively in the present. This subconscious process elevates the perceived gravity of the current situation as implying something about *who you are, beyond the current specifics*. We're often unaware of our kindling because it is embedded deeply in our psyche.

For example, let's say a colleague left you off an email chain for a meeting. If you are in your power, you might approach the colleague to discuss the value you could bring to the meeting or why it would be helpful for you to hear what the attendees discuss, and then ask to be included. But if an unresolved pattern gets triggered, you might instead ruminate about how you've been left out, telling yourself, “I'm not respected,” “I'm not smart

enough to be invited to the table,” or “They’re trying to marginalize me,” fully convinced that’s what objectively transpired.

Even though the specifics of the current scenario might differ markedly from the situations you faced earlier in your life, your mind has connected the current and the past events through a chain of associations. Suddenly, a situation has become a referendum on your worth instead of an everyday interaction among flawed humans.

Then *here’s the clincher*: When our kindling has been alighted and we’re stuck out of our power, we often look to involve other people in shoring ourselves up. We’ll seek their validation and acknowledgment, try to prove ourselves even more, or vent to seek sympathy. We’ll hold back to prevent them from criticizing or rejecting us and wait for their permission to boldly do what we know we should. We’ll try to please and be perfect in order to not disappoint them. You *give away your power* trying to change people and circumstances outside of you in order to fix something that is insecure inside of you.



As I introduced in my first book, *Success Under Stress*, this diagram shows you the visual of how we commonly *give our power away*. You'll act toward other people (depicted as the arrow up the left-hand side of the triangle) in order to get other people to act toward you (depicted as the arrow down the right-hand side of the triangle) *so that* you can feel secure in yourself. Your time, energy, and attention go toward managing other people's perceptions of you. You outsource your evaluation of yourself to others and overweight their opinions. In short, you involve other people in your own efforts to feel worthy inside. I call these approaches "Indirect."

With an Indirect approach, *it matters* how others think and act toward you because you *need* their input in order to be in your power inside yourself. By setting up a formula where you have to go through others in order to get the thing you need most inside of you, this *gives away* your power. It sets you up to be the thermometer.

I was the thermometer when I held myself back from an opportunity to make an impact on millions of people's lives because I was worried about what the people around the White House table would think of me.

Indirect behaviors are completely normal. As infants, we are biologically hardwired to seek caring responsiveness from important people in our life. It's the way human babies learn to calm their own nervous system and internalize whether we are worthy of being cared for. Just as we need to breathe in oxygen to grow physically, we must take in "emotional oxygen" from caregivers in order to grow our self-esteem. As a child grows up, we come to *see and know ourselves through the eyes of important others*. Our parents' love and attention, teachers' evaluation and praise, and peers' approval and appreciation are the mechanisms by which we come to know ourselves—favorably or not. Similarly, we are hardwired to avoid physical or emotional harm and be afraid of getting "kicked out the tribe."

In short, important people in our early lives serve as a “secure base,”⁵ and when we have a responsive caregiver, we go to them in order to be safe, soothed, and assured we matter. From this home base we get the fill-up we need to go conquer the world.

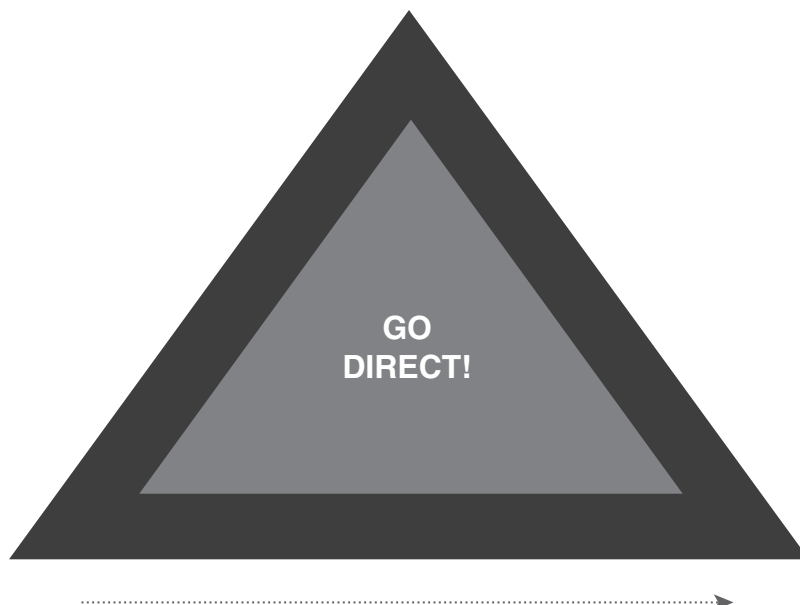
Indirect behaviors start off as adaptive. Because we have learned to know ourselves through others’ eyes and regulate ourselves through others’ input, many of us continue this approach to feeling secure in ourselves in adulthood. What I discovered in my research at Harvard Medical School is:

What you have been doing right to try to build your sense of power within (i.e., through other people) is the very approach keeping you out of your power now.

If you haven’t built the ability to be in your power from your own means, you may keep going to other people to try to get into that state in yourself. And if you don’t get the response you *need* from them, then you’re going to try harder to get it from them. It becomes a vicious cycle—you put yourself out of your power and then blame the other person for not being a good source of helping you be in your power.

You can learn to stop yourself from making any specific disempowering situation into a general conclusion that you are not enough or unworthy.

The fix is to Go Direct, which means you source your worthiness from within, independent of others’ evaluations of you. You feel filled by a sense of reward and satisfaction from your contributions. You source your sense of purpose from *your Source*, however you define it. You become a secure base for yourself to always come home to. Then you have the fill-up you need, as Jo said, to go out and be the one who raises others.



If you were thinking of this concept in terms of love, Indirect behaviors are like trying to “get love”. Go Direct is “be love.” Go Direct is “feel loveable”—because *that* you *can* control. Then it doesn’t matter how limited anyone in your personal life or work family is. (To do this, you need to discover what your kindling is and learn to Go Direct, as I will guide you to do in subsequent chapters. Note: There are four specific types of Indirect behaviors, and generic advice can be counterproductive for certain types. Go to **www.inyourpowerbook.com** to take the full Power Profile assessment for personalized learning.)

My client Susan was able to quickly get back in her power this way after years of being stuck in an out-of-power quagmire. A leader in the long-term disability division of an insurance company, she always had more claims to process than she could get through. Despite backlog being due to the company’s bureaucratic processes and challenges in hiring adequate staff,

and notwithstanding high praise on her performance reviews, she saw the problem as having to do with *her* not being enough. She was constantly thinking that she wasn't doing enough and the fire drills were hers to fix. She was constantly monitoring whether she was proving to her boss and colleagues that she was doing enough.

In one exercise together, she had an aha insight. Her mother had been big into volunteering and helping out at food kitchens. Susan had resented all the time her mother spent doing that work, so she avoided doing any such volunteer work. She felt guilty she was not doing enough—not processing enough claims, not giving enough in her community life. Once she made this connection she was able to break the hold that kindling had over her and *have a new experience of herself as enough* without having to burn herself out taking on more than was humanly possible in the hopes she'd be acknowledged for it.

Often the situation throwing us out of our power does, in itself, present real threats to our goals for ourselves and to our well-being. Getting back in our power, then, requires strategic problem-solving that addresses the true issues with effectiveness. This third derailer explains how our brains can work against us taking those approaches.

We Take Flawed Approaches to Trying to Fix the Problem

Our natural emotional stress response can derail our effective problem-solving, so we *overlook the unused power we already have*. When out of our power in an emotional state, you can only see a narrow range of options (which may be the same lack of options already thought of, and usually pertain only to how the other person should change). The increased levels of stress hormones in the brain constrict our ability for pattern recognition by shrinking the database searched by the brain.⁶

Our brains interpret new information in a way that is consistent with the way you recently interpreted this or another situation, so an out-of-your-power cycle can keep you looping on the same understanding of limited options.⁷ Research on the brains of people in high power and low power positions revealed that the while the goal-oriented centers of a high-power persons' brain are active, there is little active goal seeking among the low-power subjects.⁸

I often hear from clients, “Well, I said something but . . .” with the net that they didn’t get a cooperative response or even one at all. This was the case for one of my clients, Tara, who was able to turn her situation around after our first session. She was in sales at a Fortune 100 company. She told me she was ready to leave because her manager of six years had systematically denied every request for more resources and better assignments, reserving those for the younger men in the group. It was affecting her income, and she was to the point she had what she termed a “victim mentality.” We agreed that she would give her best shot at influencing her manager, and if that didn’t work, we’d pivot to plan B and seek a new job for her to move into.

She had described the manager as being narcissistic and only managing up, which to her meant never being supported because it was all about him. But knowing this about him gave me a great clue about how she might be able to influence him. We carefully scripted her ask, which instead of being about what *she* wanted would allow him to see how her requests would help *him* to look good for having granted them.

The next week she emailed to say she met with him and got everything she asked for (and more!) Not only did she stay with the company, but in the subsequent four months she brought in the biggest deal of her career, was promoted, and pocketed an extra \$100k in commission. In the position she was promoted to, she was able to improve the process by which deals got assigned and resources were accessed by the sales team, and in that way she was able to raise the rest of the whole sales team up as well.

This is just one small example of the blind spots we have. Though it's never okay for a manager or anyone else to deflect requests for support, you also want to appreciate that you have available to you a vast repertoire of influencing approaches that you might be overlooking.

This “blind spot” approach starts to form an out-of-your-power vicious cycle. We set ourselves up to stay stuck by having limited or ineffective approaches, then we blame the other person for not being cooperative and deepen our hurt that we are not supported, further curtailing our effective approaches.

The more power we hold inside of us and use (not leak, give away, or overlook), the more we have what we want for our life and the bigger our impact with less effort.

Turning a Vicious Cycle into a Virtuous One

These three biologically hardwired processes *are the factory settings of your human condition*, designed to help you cope with threatening situations. They are instinctive and start out being adaptive.

But these tendencies keep you living your life to satisfy basic biological needs when what you want is to live your life on your terms and to make the contribution you are here for. In your power, you *choose* how to respond in the face of challenges that could otherwise keep you in survival. You take situations where you and others were stuck in patterns, and you make a new way. You create a virtuous cycle.

On the virtuous cycle of being in your power:

1. **You maximize what you *can* control.** You have a sense of agency. You stop leaking your power.

2. **You decide who you want to be and don't personalize or get triggered.** You are sovereign over yourself. You stop giving away your power. You source confidence from within and you don't need the other person to change, or to validate you, in order to be in your flow.
3. **Your approaches are strategic and therefore effective.** You have efficacy. You no longer overlook the power you already have. Your problem-solving helps you get the outcome you want and the collaboration is better than you originally imagined.

On the virtuous cycle, life gets better and better. You trust things will work out for you because you know how to make it so. Your energy is unleashed toward your goals. Ownership of your value is strengthened because the environment actually reflects your talents. Confidence begets boldness and willingness to take risks and share your powerful truths. You get buy-in for your ideas, attract opportunities, sponsors, and partners, and grow your platform. You attract opportunities like new and next-level roles, speaking opportunities to help you bring your vision to life. The more you are in your power, the more power you have, so you can share it with others, which is a win-win and grows your impact.

Expect that across a typical day or week you will be kicked out of your power and have the immediate opportunity to get back in. With proactive practice of the approaches in this book, your bouts of being out of your power will be less frequent and less intense—you will build the muscle memory to come back into your power faster and stay longer. Make it the purpose of your life to stay in—and get back into—your power.

Now it's time for you to tap the sense of where you are at your starting point. You can do two exercises. First, take the next full minute and think of a time in your life or an ongoing interaction in which you haven't felt or don't feel in your power. Notice

where you feel it in your body, the thoughts you have, and the actions you were tempted to take. This is a good set of cues for you to know you've been kicked out.

Now take a full minute to think of a time where you felt in your power or handled an ongoing situation in that way. Notice where you feel it in your body, the thoughts associated with it, and the responses you are tempted to make/have made. You want this to become your new “home” state of being.

Going forward you can notice when you are out of your power and how you know you are still in your power. Being out of your power is a known experience and will start to become old hat—you can be aware of its early warning signs and welcome it saying, “OOPs” (out of power signal) and have it be the cue to use approaches in this book to get back in.

How well are you already doing at being in your power? You can answer the questions in the quick self-assessment below the chapter summary to get a high-level temperature check.

For the full assessment about where you are in your power (or not), and to get recommendations that are personal for your situation, go to **www.inyourpowerbook.com**.

In Your Power Practices: In and Out of Your Power

1. In your power is a state of being you can get kicked out of and get back into. In your power has three attributes: agency, sovereignty, and efficacy. What do these words mean to you?
2. There are three “factory settings” we have as humans that keep us out of our power:
 - 2.1. We focus on what we can't control. This *leaks our power*.

- 2.2. We act out of personalized unresolved patterns—we have kindling of a doubt or negative conviction about ourselves deep in our psyche that can get reactivated causing us to react personally. This doubt or criticism of ourselves causes us to involve other people in order to feel worthy inside ourselves. This sets us up to *give our power away* by trying to change people and circumstances outside of us in order to fix something that is experienced inside of us.
- 2.3 Our stress response sets us up to get myopic and take flawed approaches to solving our out-of-power problems. We *overlook* the power we already have.
3. Staying out of your power creates a vicious cycle, but practicing being in your power creates a virtuous cycle. What situations do you find where you are in a vicious cycle? Where are you/can you create a virtuous cycle?
4. Learn the signals of when you are in your power and out of your power. For each, where do you feel it in your body, what thoughts do you have, and what actions are you tempted to take?
5. Go to **www.inyourpowerbook.com** for a more in-depth assessment of where you are in your power, or not, along with recommendations that are personal to your situation.

“Are you In Your Power?” Assessment

I. Do you feel more like the “thermometer” or the “thermostat” on a typical day?

1. *Mostly the thermometer; I react to and play off others’ moods and actions.*
2. *I feel like both.*
3. *I’m usually the thermostat; I create the “weather” around me.*

II. How often do you react emotionally, not respond with thoughtful intention?

1. *Very often.*
2. *Sometimes.*
3. *Rarely.*

III. When you get emotionally hijacked by a situation, how quickly do you recover and stop obsessing about it?

1. *I rehash it all day and for several days or weeks.*
2. *I might carry it with me throughout the day, but then I start to feel better.*
3. *I get back to my center quickly.*

IV. When you’re in a situation that’s not going your way, how often do you blame the other person(s)?

1. *I often blame the other person and stay mad at them for not changing.*
2. *I blame the other person, but over time I also can see how I could learn from it.*
3. *I know how to see the ways any situation can serve my growth and my life goals.*

V. How often do you worry about other’s judgments?

1. *I often worry about what other people will think about me.*

2. *Sometimes I worry about what others think, but other times I know who I am and don't worry.*
3. *I am confident; I focus on the work or supporting others, not on judgments.*

VI. How often do you get deflated because you don't feel heard?

1. *Often—regularly I feel that I've said something multiple times but people don't listen or do what I ask.*
2. *Sometimes.*
3. *Not much—I know how to communicate with others effectively so they understand me and take action on my ideas.*

VII. How well do you set boundaries and share your truth?

1. *Not well at all—I say “yes” when I mean “no”. I get angry at others for crossing my boundaries, but I don't say anything. I don't feel comfortable sharing my truth.*
2. *Sometimes but only with people I feel really comfortable with.*
3. *I set boundaries, I minimize my interactions with toxic people, and I share my truth. I feel great about it!*

VIII. How often do you feel stuck and frustrated you can't get others to cooperate with what you need in important relationships?

1. *Often.*
2. *Sometimes.*
3. *Rarely.*

You can find out how much you are in your power by adding up the number that corresponds to your answer for each question.

(continued)

If you got a score of 20 and above, congratulations; you spend a good deal of your life in your power and probably are a great role model, leader, and mentor for others!

If you got a score of 16–20, you have some experience being in and staying in your power, but might feel there are still too many times you can get kicked out of your power. You're starting at a great place, and there's many strategies that will help you stay in your power.

If you got a score of 15 or below, you're spending a good deal of your time out of your power. I'm excited for you to learn many strategies to get into and stay in your power!

CHAPTER 2

From Chaos to Control

“You always had the power, my dear. You just needed to learn it for yourself.”

—Glinda the Good Witch, from *The Wizard of Oz*

I want to open your eyes to just how much power you truly have.

A surprising feature of the human mind is that when we focus intently on something, we become blind to many other things that are within our field of vision. A famous study conducted by Harvard researchers demonstrated this by testing two teams of students. One team in black shirts and one in white were asked to pass a basketball to the other players on their team. Other students were then asked to view the short videotape and to count how many times the basketball was passed among the white t-shirt players. Keeping count was tricky because the players from the two teams were circulating all around one another. So the viewers had to really pay close attention to the white t-shirt players.

What many didn't pay any attention to—didn't even see at all!—was that a student dressed up in a hairy black gorilla suit strolled right into the middle of the two teams, paused for a moment to beat her chest, and then leisurely strolled on. The researchers have shown this video to hundreds of thousands of viewers and about 50% of them did not notice the gorilla *at all*. What's more, most people who didn't spot it adamantly refused to believe it, even complaining that they must have been shown a different video. The researchers explain that “we experience far less of our visual world than we think we do . . . we are completely unaware of those aspects of our world that fall outside of our attention.”^{1,2}

When out of your power, you get *myopic*. You are so focused on the things going wrong that you don't see the many possibilities for making things better.

I want to take you on a 360-degree tour of the lush landscape of these opportunities you might not be seeing now. Think of a frustrating situation you feel stuck in and imagine that in any direction you look, there are doorways that when you open them give you a new vista. There you discover new ways of understanding the situation and new set of tools to make it better. These doorways are what I call a Power Portal.

A portal is “a way to get or do something.” Think of web portals; they provide us with access to a wealth of learning and community. Power Portals provide us with new ways of seeing, feeling, and acting so that we can be in our power. Accessing a portal transports you from a situation that makes you feel small and defensive into a whole new world in which you are strong and full of purpose.

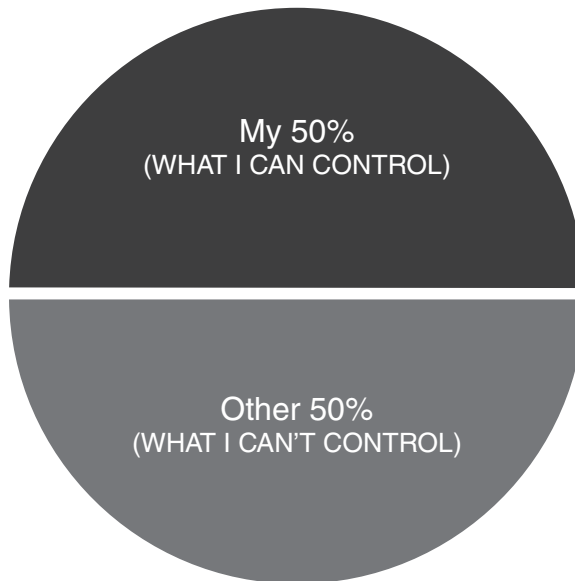
In this chapter, I will briefly introduce you to each of the 12 Power Portals. You will have a repertoire for dealing with challenges that allows you to be “good in you” *no matter* how others are behaving.

In any situation when you notice you are starting to get out of your power, ask your go-to question: **“Where's my power?”**

The master key to accessing your power is shifting your focus from what is being done to you—on what *others* are doing—and instead focusing on what *you* can do. Turn your attention to what you can control and away from what you can't.

The 50% Rule

In my first book, *Success under Stress*, I introduced a concept that many clients and readers have reported helped them feel dramatically more in charge of their lives. In every challenging situation you find yourself in, distinguish the factors you can control, which is *your* 50%, from those you can't, which is the *other* 50%. Identify the 50% that you can control, allowing yourself to not be preoccupied by the other 50% where you leak your power.



You might be thinking, “Sounds good in theory, Doc, but 50% is way too optimistic; I can only control about 10% to 20% of what’s going on at best!” Or you might be thinking, “But the 50% I can’t control *is* the problem; how can I not focus on that?” And

it might seem like you would be letting the bully on the playground get away with their bad behavior, giving them a free pass. You may be thinking, “They *should* change, they should admit they’ve been wrong; they should stop treating me that way.”

Yes, they probably should. And they may or may not be capable to. Getting them to change *is not* your responsibility or within your ability. Being in your power *is*. I want to show you that fixing them is not the only way to get the outcome you want; there’s so much more you can control than you think you can.

Taking your focus off what you can’t control and shifting it to what you can is not letting the bully get the better of you. On the school playground the teacher doesn’t usually see the bully’s behavior when it starts; they usually only turn their head to notice as you are making your response. In the playground of your life, your work evaluations, your impact, your sanity are determined by the response you make. *When you are in your power, your response creates new conditions for you, the bully, and everyone on the playground.*

You can always control what *you* bring to any situation, which is why the 50% Rule is:

Be Impeccable for your 50%.

That means, take 100% responsibility for what is within your 50%. Put your time and energy into being maximally effective at what you can control. (My fellow perfectionists: I’m not encouraging you to be a control freak; that would be controlling 100% of the pie.) When you face conditions that are unfair, discriminatory, or harmful, focusing on your 50% does not mean outside conditions are okay, they still must change and have accountability. Channeling your attention into what you can control individually and lead collectively starts you on the path to do that.

Think of a challenging situation that is putting you out of your power and what you can and can’t control. Take a piece of paper now, draw a big circle with a horizontal line through the

middle, and start writing down things you can control in your 50% above the line and those you can't control (the other 50%) below the line. This exercise orients your attention toward what you can control. I've heard from so many training participants how this idea has been immediately liberating. This is a warm-up, to get the creative juices flowing with what you already see in your control. The full effect of the creative power you have can be found in the 12 power portals.

The first six portals are meant to help you “get your own affairs in order” inside so that you can be in your power. The second six portals will leverage all the clarity and confidence that you built in the first six. They will help you use your power with other people in order to change the dynamic and make the world more as you think it should be. Altogether, the portals help you be *in your power*, give you *interpersonal* power, and know how to channel the power you have once *in power*. In each portal, you'll read stories of professionals like you who were in a crunch and used the strategies within to create notable wins across their organization or industry and to experience freedom from patterns they struggled with for a long time.

Portal One: Precision

In order to move beyond an out-of-your power situation, you have to have a clear picture of the future you want *and* the role you play in it. Declaring what you want in the fog of your disempowerment starts a new momentum. In this portal, you will quantify the outcomes you want and then articulate what I call your Horizon Point—*who you need to show up as* in order to achieve the desired outcome (because *that* you can control). Specifying this idea of who you want to be as a leader/contributor/collaborator sets you up to be intentional, not reactive. Being able to show up in this way immediately puts you in your power because you choose this persona, and when embodying it you are already participating in the interaction *on your own terms*. You'll also define how to lead others toward win-win outcomes *they want*, which helps you be in your power.

Portal Two: Perspective

Your brain operates in a way that's surprisingly similar to the algorithms on LinkedIn, Facebook, or TikTok: whatever thoughts you have, your world gives you more experiences like these. Unlike those algorithms, you have control over how you train your brain.

You'll learn about the psychological mechanisms that filter and determine your understanding of any situation. You'll start by learning the one question that flips your script from victim to victor on demand. You'll identify research-backed beliefs and mindsets to put you in your power, along with built-in cognitive biases that keep you in tunnel vision. You'll stop seeing the situation as a finite problem and start to see infinite solutions.

You'll view your challenges through multiple new lenses, each progressively zooming out from your current one, starting with a three-dimensional understanding of what's going on between you and the other person and ending with macro views such as the relevance of human history and planetary trends. These perspectives are like pouring a chemical solution on invisible magic ink, the underlying problem and bigger-picture solution reveal themselves.

Portal Three: Physiology

Out-of-your-power situations cause emotional hijack. Whether you get riled up or sunken, without tools to work out your emotional reaction, you will carry that off-kilter state into the next meeting (or next day or decade). You'll learn to move emotions through and recover quickly so that you don't stay as full of electricity or lethargy. You will learn a suite of practical exercises to immediately refind calm and your ability to think clearly instead of keeping on replaying the aggravating or hurtful situation in your mind.

You'll learn to use your agency to choose pleasure and joy over anger and disappointment. When you proactively fill your own needs in this way, you inspire others to want to give to you (and give to themselves as well)—raising everyone around you.

Portal Four: Purpose

Out of your power, you give your power away. Connection to your purpose is blocked. Your purpose is what makes you feel alive, it's a motivation and energy source that is always available for you to tap, and connecting to it can instantly eject you out of the mental swirl. You will learn to identify and act in the service of your purpose lifting yourself from your small game. No longer thinking, "Who am I to . . ." or looking to others' expectations of you, you'll learn to play your big game—this is the life and work you're *here for*. It will give you a sense of satisfaction and impact that feeds your power, and freedom from the judgments of others.

Portal Five: Psyche

What puts you out of your power? We all have kindling inside of us that is derived from prior similarly themed experiences and might be phrased as a doubting question, "Am I good enough?" or as a conviction, "I'm not worthy." The current situation is a match that ignites this kindling, setting you up to react defensively, take situations personally, and have a hard time letting them go. This is the personal *hook* that is the core of what makes you susceptible to getting kicked out of your power.

As long as you have this place of powerless that you go to within you, other people's actions and external circumstances can send you there without your permission or forewarning.

You will learn the *real reasons* you developed this narrative for your life—it's not what pop psychology says and it's not because of what's happened to you in your life. You will reclaim the narrative and be able to tell a whole new empowering story about your life.

If you are at the point where you are aware of your triggers but can't seem to move past them, you'll learn ways of transcending these past experiences and live a legendary post-story life.

Portal Six: Proficiency

There are times you can change the result you're getting in an out-of-your-power scenario through means that are entirely under your control because it has to do with your own skills and know-how. You'll use your knowledge strategically to influence the perception of you by decision makers who overlook or sabotage your talents. Leveraging your own proficiency can give you a sense of security that no matter what thwarting challenges you're facing, *you* can control the achievement of your goals and life plan. As you showcase you are a valuable, if not indispensable, contributor to others' success, you'll be sought-after and untouchable. And if you have doubts about your competence, you'll defang them.

Portal Seven: Persuasion

One of the most common reasons we feel out of our power is that we haven't been able to get someone to buy into our ideas or take action on our requests. We blame the other person for being obstinate, but it may be the case you could be more effective in your approach to influencing. You will learn to have x-ray vision into the minds of decision makers and interaction partners so you can unlock other people's energy to support your ideas and help you leverage your power. You'll learn

five hidden ways of strategically messaging your requests and bring others along in your vision so you can turn any “no” into a “yes.”

Portal Eight: Partnership

We stay spinning out of our power when we have not found a way to engage others in helping solve the difficulty we’re having. We are reluctant to or intimidated by raising the issue because we don’t know what to say or how to say it. Or we’ve tried ways that weren’t effective and now everyone is more entrenched yet sees fewer options to broach it.

I share my POWERS framework for raising issues in a way that helps the other person see that they have a stake in helping you solve the problem and motivates them to partner with you in finding win-win solutions. You will feel powerful as you approach these stuck scenarios with the mindset of a steward who leads a process in which everyone benefits, and you’ll know how to handle situations with grace.

Portal Nine: Protection

Even if the continued problem really does lie on the other person’s side of the street and you’ve tried to use your power with little effect, you can *always* protect yourself. They might be dishing it out, but you don’t have to *take it*.

You will learn an extensive repertoire of strategies to ensure that other people’s unaware, thoughtless, or mean behavior does not affect you or cause overwhelm. Forms of protection include setting boundaries and barriers, bringing the interaction onto your own terms, and continuing to engage without absorbing the situation’s negative effect.

There's a special section with an array of strategies for dealing with a narcissist, or anyone who criticizes and lies. (If you are already skipping ahead to those pages saying, "I need that now!" just make sure to come back right after you've gone through that portal because the strategies in the book build on one another.)

Portal 10: Powerful Truth

A powerful truth introduces a new level of your authenticity and humanity, which requires the people around you to pay attention to you with a new level of engagement and urgency. Speaking your truth introduces what you want and need, and it aligns what you think and feel with what you say and do. It uses your voice and brings into form what has been unspoken. When you don't share your powerful truth, you are filled with regret that you missed an opportunity.

You will learn when and how to share your powerful truth so you engage others in taking action to move beyond the status quo. You'll learn to channel your anger into the strategic display of emotion and how to respond to and neutralize micro-aggressions. You'll be inspired by numerous examples to use your voice to hold others accountable and represent yourself in the world.

Portal 11: People

Once you have reliable strategies to access your power on your own then other people can play an important supplemental role in bringing you back there and helping you stay there. Some moments we are so disconnected from our inner resources that we *need* scaffolding from outside of us to bring us back to ourselves, and trusted and caring others can help us calm our physical bodies and heal from shame. People mirror back to you aspects of your own magnificence that you have forgotten, the

effect of which is even more amplified with the right posse of people. People play a practical role as an extension of your network, mentoring and sponsoring you to further your vision and expand your impact.

Portal 12: Position

We tend to think that the power we have in our position is defined by the responsibilities outlined in the job description but generally we have more power in any given position than we realize and are harnessing. You'll learn best practices to use the power you have and to leverage that which you are overlooking to create a better outcome for your team or organization. You learn to use who you are as an in-your-power person to amplify others, including as a sponsor and ally. Also part of the power of your position is to grow and use your platform to expand your voice and create movement toward the world as you think it should be.

How to Begin Accessing the Portals

You are a creative force and you now see you have an abundance of options for regaining control and making disempowering situations better for you and everyone. Once you are familiar with all the portals, you can look around to the portal you need most and walk through it in real time. But that's overwhelming when you are first starting out, so my recommendation is that you go through the book learning and practicing them in the intended order. The portals to be 'in your power' set a strong foundation for you to have interpersonal power, and the portals, while modular, refer back to and build on one another to keep you on the virtuous cycle. That said, if there are a few portals that are screaming your name with the promise of an immediate solution to a current challenge, then have at it and go read them now (but do come back to the rest of them in order)!

I hope your head is now alight with a sense of possibility about how *you* will be able to step into your power. Let's walk through the first door.

In Your Power Practices: From Chaos to Control

1. Open your mind to the possibility that you have more power in any situation than you are currently seeing for yourself. You might start by doing a Power Inventory—make a list of all the ways you see yourself having power now. (And then let's compare it to the list you will make after reading the book.)
2. In any challenging interaction, start by asking, Where's my power? Focus on what you can control in your 50% of any interaction. Apply the 50% diagram to a challenging situation: What is in your 50% and you could start to control right away, and what factors are in the other 50%?
3. Make the 50% Rule your mantra: Be Impeccable for your 50%!
4. There are 12 Power Portals that reveal new ways of seeing, feeling, and acting—in any moment you are kicked out of your power, know that you can walk through the door of the one or more of these portals to stay in your center and lead a new resolution.
5. It's best to learn and practice the portals in the intended order, but if there's a few that are screaming your name to be accessed right now, then go for it (and when you're done applying what you learned there, go back to read the other ones).