

MASTERFUL MENTORSHIP



*Leadership, Life,
and Love Lessons*

REKESHA PITTMAN

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To a wise woman,
Thank You.

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INTRODUCTION

I met my mentor when I was a freshman in college. When we were introduced, I had no idea how much that woman was going to change my life. Not only did she help me get my first job on campus, she also helped me navigate through adulthood. She is still my mentor to this day.

Our conversations over the years have produced some very memorable lessons. Each of the chapters contains a quote directly from the mouth of my mentor. Her advice prepared me to endure heartache, calamity, and flat

INTRODUCTION

out stupidity over the past few decades. It is my distinct joy to be able to share these mentorship moments with you.

I did not understand everything that she was trying to tell me initially. Some of the lessons took a few years to take root. Now that I am well beyond my teens, twenties, and (yes) thirties, I can no longer keep these treasures to myself. I must share her wisdom with the masses.

I do not believe that mentorship should produce clones. Although I share many of the same belief systems as my mentor, we have different personalities, styles,

INTRODUCTION

preferences, and likes. That is perfectly fine with the both of us.

Although I would love to scream her name for the entire world to hear, she prefers her privacy. This book has been written in her honor. Along with the vital lessons in leadership, life, and love, I will also highlight the ways that I have applied this information, along with some of the lessons I have yet to learn.

Are you ready to be mentored masterfully? Let these pages guide you, make you laugh, and allow you to celebrate those who pour into your own life. I hope you decide to honor them in a way that affirms and encourages.

LEADERSHIP

Lessons

Chapter 1

Be Careful What You Put in Black & White

Words were always my weapon of choice. What I lacked in verbal speed, I made up for when I wrote what I felt was an intelligent (or a *this is why I am right and you are wrong*) note. Writing my thoughts down granted me the opportunity to carefully consider every detail I wanted to include.

For a real touch of in-your-face intelligence, I could add a

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few extra adjectives to really get my point across. I became an expert in sarcasm. I loved to debate in person and over the phone. If I wanted to prove my point without interruption, a lengthy email or letter would suffice.

When I was in the traditional working world, I loathed what I considered to be stupidity in any form—especially in the workplace! I often heard “document everything” from people at the office who felt mistreated or expected to be. I listened to many horror stories about how supervisors unfairly targeted some people and I chuckled as others

Be Careful What You Put in Black...

talked about some of our co-workers and their office antics.

I made sure that my email folders were filled with any evidence I needed if the day arose when I had to defend myself at the job. I would write down dates, times, and any incidences I felt might be noteworthy later. Even though I had a good reputation at work, I admit that my education gave me a bit of a superiority complex when it came to thinking before speaking.

One day, a co-worker sent an email to me insinuating that I did not get a task done. Since I had evidence that I did complete the work, I almost danced in my seat

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while preparing my response to her obvious error! Where did she get off accusing me of not doing my job? Game on!

I had just finished composing a scathing summary of the facts to highlight her many shortcomings in an email draft. I wanted to share the foolishness that happened with my mentor before I pressed send. I called her up and spilled all of the dirty details. After she listened to my passionate version of the facts, she calmly said, “Be careful what you put in black & white.”

My mentor had worked for over 25 years at the same institution at that time. Even though I’d

Be Careful What You Put in Black...

worked a few seasonal, part-time jobs since the age of 14, I had no idea how to handle the politics of working in corporate America full-time. I was about to make a mistake that I could not erase.

She explained to me that anything I sent to someone else could possibly be used against me in the future. I might be accused of insubordination if I sent an incorrect response to a boss. I may not be considered a team player if I was unpleasant with my fellow co-workers. I did not want to be ridiculed or accused of being an “angry black woman,” so I deleted the draft. At least it felt good to get it out.

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I learned quickly that I had more emotion than practical wisdom at the time. I was still in my early twenties. Now that I am older (don't even try to guess my age), few things that bothered me then still do now.

Beyond the workplace, I had several moments when I had to literally walk away from the computer in order to avoid printed declarations of war and egomania in written form. I now read (and re-read) my compositions. *Is the tone correct? Am I unclear in any way? Is there anything that I have written that can be considered offensive or inaccurate?* Just because we do

Be Careful What You Put in Black...

not mean to cause damage does not mean it will not happen.

Today, the things we put in “black & white” are now in high definition and displayed in full color. Anything that I text, direct message, post, send, react to, show as an emoji, share with an emoticon, send in a gif, press “like” or “give hearts” can either work for me or come back to destroy me. Gone are the days of ignorance when we live in a “Google” era.

Multiple corporations have felt the sharp sting of viral, public, or immediate backlash in regards to company emails, advertisements, social media commentary, staff

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reactions and other statements made by someone representing them. Miscalculated communications can result in massive loss of revenue, revoke official endorsements, pulverize partnerships, cancel major platforms, damage relationships, and cripple future earnings potential. I have too much to lose if I enter a war of the words with nothing to win in the end.

This advice from my mentor still causes me to be highly strategic about everything written in my name. As a direct result of her masterful guidance, I decline to make public commentary on anything that I feel would hurt or

Be Careful What You Put in Black...

hinder my business or future goals. For this reason, I rarely discuss politics, debate religion, respond to rumors, or make questionable jokes in writing. I am sure that my clients from all walks of life appreciate it.

Do I have an opinion about world affairs, the political landscape, my personal convictions and the plight of people around the world? Absolutely! For the sake of my personal peace (and my sanity), I walk away from the computer or device if my words would cause more harm than good.

Chapter 2

Can They Follow You Home?

People can show you one side of themselves in public and another in private. While discussing my personal leadership status, my mentor asked, “Can they follow you home, Rekesha?” I’m not fond of stalkers, so she went on to probe a little more. “Will they find the same person at home that they see in public?”

Authenticity is a buzzword now. In both popular and social

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media outlets, we see multiple personalities among celebrities, influencers, clergy, and anyone who can muster up enough attention to be relevant for a moment. *Can they follow you home?*

Her question made me take a deeper look at my words, actions, habits, and the things I boasted about. I may have lacked self-confidence at times on a personal level, but I always knew how to shine with my skills. The numbers didn't lie, but did I?

At that point in my life, I started mentoring others. I had a dance company, online students, and many people who listened to me on social media and via my

Can They Follow You Home?

public appearances. Did I always “keep it real,” or did my theatrical background allow me to become someone else when it was convenient?

Instead of rewinding my inner thoughts for too long, I decided to move forward as the kind of person who was consistent both in and out of view. This did not mean that I had to be perfect; just authentic.

I have met people with “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” personas. Volunteering behind the scenes at events and gatherings caused devastation at times. I was never the type of individual to become easily starstruck or try to gain an

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opportunity with people of influence when it was inappropriate to do so.

I was often assigned roles to hand guests a microphone, make logistical arrangements, or introduce speakers publicly before a presentation. Imagine the shock I felt when people I had admired from afar were rude, inconsiderate, dismissive, arrogant, brash, or downright unlikeable! However, onstage they were charming and charismatic.

One encounter can forever tarnish the future perception that someone has of another. I didn't want to be like that. I wanted to be the type of person that people

Can They Follow You Home?

could follow all the way home and not be disappointed.

I continue to allow this principle to permeate my thoughts as I consciously interact with staff, friends, associates, and even followers. I would love for people to be pleasantly surprised when they meet me, and even more impressed when they experience the same level of concern, care, passion, and application of what I teach away from the eyes of the crowds.

“Can they follow you home, Rekesha?”

Absolutely!

Chapter 3

People Vote With Their Feet

I admit that I have been a critic most of my life. To be fair to myself, this has more to do with my administrative abilities than mere negativity. I have this uncanny ability to spot what is wrong in the hopes that it can be fixed.

I was speaking to my mentor about some of my observances concerning faulty leadership practices. I talked about how many people in the organization were

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disgruntled and how those beliefs were creating a negative environment. Some complained privately, but kept silent in times of conflict and confrontation. The negative impact started a small exodus away from the company.

My mentor patiently listened (as she always does) and then said to me, “People vote with their feet.” I let the impact of the statement simmer. Even when people are not verbal participants, their actions reveal exactly how they really feel.

Leaders who do not make an effort to foster a healthy company culture or environment within their organizations will eventually

People Vote with Their Feet

have less people to influence. Some will not take action until there is a crisis. Whenever there is widespread absence, there is an urgent need to tackle what causes more departures than arrivals.

I have had to examine my own leadership habits in light of this. When less people participate, it is not always because there is something critical going on. I might be presenting something that is not a priority at the moment. At times, my ambitions may have been a bit premature or just needed a little retooling before I promoted my projects to the public. Whenever people stop participating, start investigating.

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I often take note of what causes people to respond excitedly as well as the types of content that creates engagement. In no way am I suggesting that we become people-pleasers, but let's aim to be people-reachers. The number of lives that I impact will determine the strength of my leadership.

When people begin to disappear, I take inventory. Are any of my systems broken? Is there something of greater value that I can offer? Is it time to upgrade my level of presentation? Has my message become less relevant? Is this needful right now? Is it time to launch something new? It is

People Vote with Their Feet

always good to tap into what we can do to become better.

I cannot blame people for not speaking up before finding the nearest exit. As a leader, it is my responsibility to ask any necessary questions and make the right decisions. This means that I must remain surrounded by groups of people who are not afraid to tell the truth.

When people vote with their feet, I pay attention. Although I want the unnecessary people to leave when the relationship or connection is no longer viable, I don't want to watch my best supporters place their efforts elsewhere.

Chapter 4

Don't Overdo NOTHING!

I am addicted to excellence and sometimes I go overboard. I refuse to call it obsessive compulsive, but I notice everything. I have grand visions in my head that I try my best to make come true.

You would probably say that I am hard on myself, and I am. If I make even a small mistake, it can bother me for days. I did not see this as a problem, but as a gift, until I started losing sleep over

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much of what I considered to be unfinished tasks.

I often share my grand plans with my mentor. We were on the phone once and she said, “Don’t overdo **nothing!**” It did not have to be proper English for me to get the point. Though I appreciated addressing the smallest detail, sometimes it became a waste of energy because it did not add more value to the event, presentation, or occasion.

I used to be guilty of overpacking my bags for weekend trips. Now, I make a conscious choice not to take more than I need. Not only are my back and arms thankful, I am sure that the

Don't Overdo NOTHING!

airport and hotel staff are equally as grateful.

The funny part of all of it is, making a decision not to go overboard did not compromise my excellence. Instead, it allowed me to present my best with greater ease. Yes, I am still tempted to do more than is necessary, but more times than not, I win the battle by crossing some of the extra items off of my list of requirements.

I will never choose to settle for mediocrity, but I accept that every celebration does not require a professional fireworks display. I rarely experience pressure to keep up with anyone else. Most of the

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time, I am competing with my last venture.

I was always looking for ways to top my last effort. Usually, this resulted in me sparing no expense in order to feel satisfied. This is no longer my approach.

I now spend less time trying to impress myself and focus more on making a meaningful impact. Instead of obsessing over minuscule things, I spend more time with the people involved. As opposed to being discouraged about not meeting some unreasonable goal, I think about the amount of people I can help.

Shifting from performance-based ideology to serving people

Don't Overdo NOTHING!

is much more enriching. I can never overdo something if my efforts come from the heart and not from the desire to be the brightest star in the sky. Well done beats overdone any day!

LIFE

Lessons

Chapter 5

You've Got to Train People How to Treat You

Call me naïve, but I have always been the type of person who expects people to do what's right when it comes to interacting with others. As a result, I have been utterly shocked every time that I have been treated poorly because I make an effort to be respectful.

When I genuinely love someone, I will try my best to maintain a healthy relationship with them,

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even when it is to my own detriment. Unfortunately, this does not eliminate my tendency to complain about cycles of mistreatment that I have continued to experience with similar personality types.

I was particularly angry one day about something that someone had done to me. My mentor simply replied, “You’ve got to train people how to treat you.” At that moment, I realized that I had not been enforcing appropriate boundaries in my relationships. I allowed people to take advantage of my kindness and compassion.

Gradually, I started speaking up for myself. I studied healthy

You've Got to Train People...

ways to handle confrontation and tried to be more mindful of taking things so personally. As a result of having many needful conversations, I realized that I was making wrong assumptions in several instances. I learned to stop guessing and to start asking.

Training people how to treat me also had to be demonstrated through my actions. I started saying “no” more. When I was uncomfortable with something, I would say so. If the mistreatment was bad enough, I found a way to terminate the relationship to prevent further damage.

I rarely allow people to openly disrespect me. I even have to

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confront strangers from time to time about violating my personal space or taking liberties with their entitlements. I speak my mind and move forward.

I also had to implement consequences for unhealthy cycles of behavior, especially coming from those who have frequent access to me. Sometimes it hurts my feelings to hurt theirs, but it is what it is. Whenever I find myself in a painful cycle, I realize that I trained those people to think that their actions were acceptable. Not anymore.

I refuse to question my own intelligence and decision-making capabilities. I have decided to

You've Got to Train People...

strategically and purposely eliminate all imbalanced or misaligned connections, and I have officially adopted a win-win relationships only mantra.

Chapter 6

Some People Just Don't Deserve You

In my early adult years, I did not recognize my value at all. I allowed myself to be chosen for friendships, romantic connections, and volunteer assignments. I would often end up heartbroken or disappointed after I found myself giving much more to the arrangement than I received.

I have probably told my mentor enough of my personal history for her to write her own book about me. I explained to her how

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I was yet again being taken advantage of and she replied, “Some people just don’t deserve you.” It took me at least a decade or more to realize the power of that statement.

I have given people more time than I should have. Years of my life have been wasted maintaining associations with people who always wanted something but rarely gave much of anything in return. My time had value, but I did not realize it.

I served several organizations, giving them my time, money, and talents. Several of the services that I provided at no cost were worth real money. In addition to

Some People Just Don't Deserve You

the funds I spent, I saved them money by building free websites, assisting with marketing efforts, writing checks of support, and recruiting others to join the cause. What did I get in return for my commitment? Disregarded.

I hesitate to discuss my impaired vision regarding value in my romantic relationships. If I had a car, “we” had a car. When I had money, “we” had money. If an opportunity presented itself, “we” could partner together. I soon learned that I was a team player who was being played.

In a sudden moment, “some people just don’t deserve you” hit me deep in my consciousness. I

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am valuable. I retain my value. I constantly increase in value and I create additional value. If anyone is unwilling to invest in a mutually beneficial relationship with me, they don't deserve access to the treasure that I contain.

Instead of feeling rejected or taken advantage of, I learned the art of pruning people from my life. The good news is that I no longer use a machete to do so. I had to learn how to make a cut without unnecessary wounding. My departing words and kind actions have helped me to end disadvantaged relationships with tact and love.

Some People Just Don't Deserve You

In order to maintain my value, I cannot give away more than I receive. It does not matter what someone else thinks. I have since evicted all value villains from my life. I deserve better but everyone doesn't deserve me.

Chapter 7

Apparently, You Like It!

I was planning a major event and began to search for another main speaker to round out the roster. A woman approached me while I was at a gathering and told me a little bit about her background. I thought that she would be a great fit! Mind you, this was before the internet at a time when a simple search was not an option if you wanted to vet someone. I made

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an agreement to host her and we proceeded.

The tension surfaced almost immediately. I served as the primary financier of the conference, but she must have felt free to give me unsolicited guidance concerning what I needed to do for my event. I scheduled her to speak before me and I spoke last.

After a lot of hard work, the initial gathering was a massive success. I was offered an opportunity to host the next event at a larger venue the following year. Since I am a bit of a loyalist, I kept the woman on board and added a few new elements to the experience.

Apparently, You Like It!

She quickly informed me that she would prefer to speak after I did. I had already accepted the fact that I am a good speaker, so I agreed to let her present after me. The morning segment went well and then we started the second half of the program.

After I was finished with my presentation, she got up and said, “That was cute, but now it’s time for us to go deeper. Somebody say, ‘Deeper!’” I did not like the way that sounded at all. I thought, *Wasn’t I the host who was paying all of the money for this event? What are you trying to say? How are you trying to downplay me at my own event?*

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I allotted 45 minutes for her instruction. Afterwards, there was supposed to be a group activity. She spoke for about 15 minutes and then quickly tried to move ahead to the next session. None of the people who were supposed to assist were in place since the schedule did not call for them until at least 30 minutes later. Instead, she started calling up people that she knew to assist her. It was a disaster.

I received several complaints from my attendees about the unscheduled assistants. Since I took pride concerning the quality of my events, I was devastated to the point of tears. I even called an

Apparently, You Like It!

impromptu meeting right after the incident to confront one of the individuals. She claimed that the only reason she smelled of smoke so strongly was because someone else in her car was smoking. I knew she was lying.

Even though we made it past the debacle, I still maintained a friendship with the woman in spite of how I felt. Every time I said something that she did not agree with, she would say that maybe it was time for us to go our separate ways.

I spoke with my mentor about the situation and she replied, “Apparently, you like it! So, keep going back in there to get hurt

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until you have had enough!” I sat back in stunned silence.

I did not realize that somewhere deep down inside, I could have ended the drama without any guilt. My age did not make me a slave to abuse of any kind. I did not have to work with people who dishonored and disrespected me. As a leader, I had the freedom to make the decisions that I felt were most appropriate.

Yet, I allowed the relationship to continue. Soon after, she hosted an event and I was a guest. I participated and was supportive.

At the end of her event, she pulled me into an empty meeting room and said, “God told me to

Apparently, You Like It!

cut you off and to make it a clean cut.” I smiled at her and said, “Ok.” I then walked out of the door with a smile on my face. I was free!

A few weeks later, a letter of apology came to my post office box. She confessed that she made a mistake. By then, I was over it. I decided that I did not like the way the relationship made me feel and I no longer had an obligation to play mind games.

Although we ran into each other again many years later, I was much wiser when it came to discerning manipulative behavior. I got so good at detecting similar personality types, that the time

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invested in harmful connections became shorter (if at all) with people who exhibited familiar patterns. Apparently, I did not like being mistreated anymore and cutting those ties were fine with me.

Chapter 8

You Can Pay Now or... You Can Pay Later

My mentor always emphasized the importance of planning for the future. I watched her bring home treasures from the dollar store as she showed me how much she saved on great finds. She smiled as she stored the surplus for her future.

I had known her for at least 20 years by that point. I met her son in junior high and watched as he

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went on to Stanford University and became a success in his own right. He was an only child and she raised him to be a high achiever.

Although she did receive child support while he was growing up, she told me that she used the money received for the purposes of his enrichment—afterschool tutoring, music programs, activities, and educational experiences. She provided what was needed for his living expenses. He was smart, respectful, and honored his mother for as long as I can remember.

After I had a daughter of my own, my mentor gave me several

You Can Pay Now or You Can Pay Later

fantastic parenting tips. She told me how to prepare baby food from scratch. I got some pointers on how to communicate with my daughter on a level that she could learn from. My mentor also invested in my child's first educational toys and learning systems.

Out of all of the wisdom that she poured into me concerning child rearing, I believe that this one was the best: "You can pay now, or you can pay later—but you **will** pay!" Basically, if I did not invest in the best interests of my daughter during her childhood, it would cost me dearly later. I chose to pay upfront.

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My daughter became a fluent reader by the age of 2. I am not talking about simple words. Her superior reading skills impressed all of her teachers, school staff, and even the parents of her classmates. She absorbed concepts quickly, and educational games took precedence over common ones.

My daughter attended preschool for three years prior to entering Kindergarten. Not only did I want her to be fully prepared academically, I wanted her to get ahead.

I also travel frequently with my daughter. She took her first plane ride while she was 2 months old

You Can Pay Now or You Can Pay Later

and is a very pleasant travel companion to this day. She usually enjoys our flying experiences—except when her ears hurt right before we land.

I continue to seek out opportunities for her enrichment and personal development. As she is introduced to new scenarios, it is interesting to hear her talk in a way that is far beyond her years on this planet.

My child is often complimented and rewarded by waitstaff for her impeccable table manners. She makes people laugh and smile with her witty remarks. I know that no child is perfect, but if I have to make a choice between

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paying the price now or paying for it later, just call me an early investor.

Chapter 9

Don't Be an OLD Fool!

I will admit that I made some silly decisions when I was younger. Even though my mother taught me to learn from the mistakes of other people, there were still situations I was not prepared for. Experience may be called a good teacher, but rehearsing the same dysfunction showed me that there were some subjects I apparently missed.

As I got older, I noticed that some of the people that I had

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expected to have accomplished more by a certain point in their lives did not. I witnessed both men and women who made questionable choices and then complained about the results of their failures.

I would frequently talk to my mentor about some of my findings, to which she said, “Don’t be an **old** fool!” In essence, there are some mistakes that should have an expiration date. Choosing to remain stagnant is evidence of foolishness.

As I continue to cross through the decades, this means more to me now than it had in the past. When I find myself going through

Don't Be an Old Fool!

the same scenario a few times, I tell myself, "Don't be an OLD fool!" It forces me to confront any poor habits, bad choices, or decisions that I make by having the best interests of everyone else in mind but my own.

I cannot be a fool with my money. I can't afford to be a fool with my health. I don't want to look like an idiot in front of my daughter. I refuse to waste years ignoring any obvious flaws that need to be addressed.

Old fools are everywhere! They did not prepare for the future. They are bitter. They are self-destructive. They are stubborn. Many of them refuse to

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forgive. Most of them refuse to change.

Old fools can be rich or poor. Old fools can be famous or unknown. Old fools can be friends and family, but none of them can hide.

I know now that my decisions are evidence of having wisdom or a lack thereof. It is my responsibility to make sure that I am not a fool in relationships, business, parenting, retirement planning, and life in general.

A fool has settled for being the victim of circumstance. I may not be “old” yet, but I have decided that being a fool is not a positive attribute at any age.

Chapter 10

I'm Not Making Tea Anymore

My mentor makes some of the best iced tea that I have ever tasted. I could literally drink glass after glass of the stuff. Whenever I visited her, she usually had a salad, a meat dish, and a vegetable dish on standby and shared them with me freely.

About 20 years into our relationship, I was on my way to another visit with her. I asked her if she could make some of her famous tea. “I’m not making tea

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anymore,” she said. *What? Did I miss the memo?*

Apparently, the tea was very labor-intensive. Instead of brewing the tea herself and preparing the citrus and sugar to add to it, she found a shortcut that saved her time. Although I was disappointed with her decision, I learned to appreciate the effort that she had made over the years to be a woman of great hospitality.

My greatest takeaway at that moment was realizing that just because someone had always done something a certain way did not mean they were obligated to continue. It freed me to be able to decline the things that I no longer

I'm Not Making Tea Anymore

wanted to do. I do not have to perform a duty just because I have always done so before.

It's perfectly acceptable to stop doing things that don't serve me well in order to make better use of my time and energy. There are some areas in my life in which I am not willing to "make tea" anymore. I am fine with that.

Chapter 11

Nobody Misses Takers

I will freely admit that I have allowed myself to be taken advantage of financially more than once. When it wasn't money, I enabled people to rob me of my time. In other instances, my loyalty was taken for granted.

I found myself repeating the same painful conversations multiple times. I knew that I had a problem with boundaries, but my love for people made it difficult

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for me to make the decision to terminate the relationship.

There was one particular situation that started to spiral out of control. Not only was I paying a percentage of my monthly earnings in the arrangement, my time was heavily dedicated to the cause. I grew increasingly frustrated with the seemingly endless list of requirements, restrictions, and reprimands that levied more and more from me without a return.

As counseling sessions with my mentor typically went, she always had profound insight for me with a dash of naked truth. I was plotting my escape from the

Nobody Misses Takers

arrangement. I looked forward to the day when I would no longer be saddled by an apparent one-sided relationship. She looked at me while I was standing in her living room and sharply said, “Nobody misses takers!”

I was not going to miss the situation at all. Even after I left, I have had no desire to return to unbalanced arrangements where I do most of the work and sacrifice my talents only to be asked for more. That season was over.

I knew that I had to do more than just say that it was not going to happen again. I started listening to talks about setting proper boundaries and even read books

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to help me become stronger. I learned not to agree to partnerships without researching the cost of the investment first. These reinforcements have helped me to spot a detrimental offer very quickly. It feels good not to waste my time or emotions on the undeserving.

I am a giver, but that does not make me a fool. I have learned to let my generosity flow from having the right motives instead of having my worth manipulated out of me. I don't miss my old way of thinking and I surely don't miss being pimped in a relationship. I don't miss my takers because I have learned to dismiss them.

LOVE

Lessons

Chapter 12

Can You Live with it for the Rest of Your Life?

Until you experience certain behaviors in a relationship, you may not truly know how much tolerance you possess. This can happen in business partnerships, friendships, and love relationships. You have to know what you can live with and what you can live without.

When I was engaged, I did not have many complaints about my husband-to-be, but there were a

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few things that got on my nerves. I was not bothered by typical nuisances like leaving the toilet seat up or seeing a few items out of place.

As I sought advice before my nuptials, my mentor posed a question that would govern my decisions moving forward. When considering which habits were tolerable or not, she asked, “Can you live with it for the rest of your life?”

I stopped majoring in minor issues and decided that my love was stronger than my dislike for some of his minor quirks. Marriage is often more permanent than other types of relationships

Can You Live with It for... Life?

because sharing time, space, and intimacy forges a deeper bond than other relationships that can be terminated without legalities.

If there was something that he was doing that proved to be unbearable to me, then it was up to me to decide to end the arrangement before it turned into suffering. I cannot say that I passed this test.

When conflicts arise that seem unresolvable, I have to know if it is something I can live with for the rest of my life. There are some things that I cannot live with.

Would I live with infidelity? Could I nurse him through sickness? Was I willing to be the main

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breadwinner? Should I ignore broken promises? Could I forgive deception? Was the ideal vision I had for my family just a fantasy? Could I live with it for the rest of my life? Maybe not.

No relationship is perfect, but some challenges may become insurmountable. When I faced the greatest crisis in my relationship, her input stopped, but her prayer increased. I thank her for listening nevertheless.

Marriage is the one relationship where outside opinions matter the least. Learning to live with myself is more important than figuring out how to exist with someone else. I can live with that.

Chapter 13

Don't Ever Say That Again

I can be what some people call “blunt.” Actually, my words can be very brutal if I speak what is on my mind sometimes. It is not that I dislike people, I just have low patience for willful and repeated ignorance.

If you ever get a chance to hear me tell stories, my drama training has a tendency to showcase itself. Many years ago, I would usually feel stupid when people made comments to me

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that I had no immediate comeback for. I would be spoken to in a sarcastic or unkind way, but I never knew how to respond except for general shock. I got tired of being beaten verbally, so I actually prayed, “Lord, make me quick,” to alleviate my angst. He answered.

Don’t get me wrong. I am not saying that God is cruel or unkind, but there are times when He doesn’t mince words. I got so good with my comebacks that people rarely attempt to try to have a verbal sparring match with me.

I often speak to my mentor about what happens in most of

Don't Ever Say That Again

my relationships. Years ago, I told her what I said to my husband about something that he made me unhappy about. I don't even remember what the deed was, but I remember her response to me. She listened quietly, then said, "Don't ever say that again."

Words can be hurtful. When someone loves you, there may be an assumption that your bad behavior should be forgiven simply because you have a bond. I was not thinking about the way my words might have left a wound. I was only thinking about how irritated I was as I chose those fighting words.

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Even though he never told me that he was offended, after her warning, I took greater caution when responding to him. Instead, I chose to discuss things rationally and with empathy. I have not been perfect, but at least I now own the power of my words.

It is said that you can catch more flies with honey. I am not trying to attract pests, but I get the idea. My understanding was that not saying something when I was displeased was accepting the behavior or being passive. Now, I attempt to discuss why I feel the way I do and try to find a way to resolve it that is mutually beneficial.

Don't Ever Say That Again

It is not my desire to be known as a harsh individual. Now, I am more conscious about the way I make others feel. I am responsible for the weight of my words.

Even though I had several very strong examples of feisty females in my family, I did not see many of them living happy lives. None of my aunts are married, and I have heard (and witnessed) a few physical altercations between family members. Since I never became violent, I assumed that I was alright.

I have learned by experience that you can try to be perfect in a relationship and it can still fail. The language of love is indeed

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the most challenging of them all. Matters of the heart are frequently personal, delicate, and long-lasting. I don't attempt to censor myself, but I had to learn how to speak the truth love.

When I first wrote this lesson, there were some things I swore that I would never say. Here is a real-life moment: Pain can bring out the deep hurts that reside inside of people. Even though there are things I knew not to say, sometimes I chose to war with my words instead of my hands. The truth is, they both hurt. Verbal abuse is still abuse. Sometimes, the only way to never say something again is to let it end.

Chapter 14

Girl, Get Your Strut Back!

My ambitious efforts can become imbalanced. I admit this. Whenever I faced a major crisis in my relationship, I would turn to familiar comforts to ease the stress. Food was one of them. Consuming delicious things made me feel better.

When I was single, I prided myself on my physical presentation. My hair, nails, clothing, skin, and general appearance were important to me. I felt confident

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and attractive, so when love appeared, I was ready to receive it.

Over the years, various challenges made me feel as though it was acceptable to put my personal needs aside in order to prioritize my household and relationship. Financial hardship meant that I had to sacrifice some of my wants and personal care services for the greater good of the family. At least that was how I justified it.

I felt miserable. At one point, my scale indicated that I was well over 200 pounds. At one point, I was closer to 300 pounds than 200. How in the world did I let that happen?

Girl, Get Your Strut Back!

My once flowing, healthy head of hair started shedding like crazy. I hate to even admit this, but I was sitting at my desk at work one day and a small portion of my wisdom tooth fell out of my mouth into my hand. I was horrified!

I know that I am beautiful, but I had let myself go due to the extreme pressure I was under. My self-esteem was in shambles, but my emotional unrest only made the situation worse.

I wanted to feel better and take care of myself, but I was overwhelmed. When I discussed my shame with my mentor she said, “Girl, get your strut back!”

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I walk differently when I am feeling good about myself. Maybe it's because my shoes fit better. I am sure that my confidence and my posture radiate strongly when I am at my personal best.

I decided to take control of my life again. I joined a weight management program to deal with my food relationship and to regain my health. I started making hair appointments. I went to the dentist and spent thousands of dollars to get my teeth back in place. I resumed my regular visits to the nail salon. My “strut” was back! People even said that I was glowing.

Girl, Get Your Strut Back!

I also added therapy to the mix. Working through my mindset with a qualified professional was one of the best decisions I could have ever made. Of course, my therapist reinforced much of what I already knew, but also helped me implement some great techniques to help manage the pressures of life.

Many people “lose themselves” over the course of long-term relationships. Some couples find that they are no longer compatible or find ways to adjust to the changes of life. Others settle.

As a woman that has been steeped in wisdom over the years, how I feel about myself impacts

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every decision that I make. I am my best when I am confident, fulfilled, and content. Whenever I find myself slipping away from my ideal existence, I hear her voice saying “get your strut back.” I can walk in complete confidence when I am certain that I am moving in the right direction.

Conclusion

Mentorship is Masterful

What I appreciate most about my lifelong mentor is that she never attempted to make me a clone of herself. Her confidence, personal accomplishments, and freedom have been quite the example to follow. I am still on my journey to becoming my best self, but I know that she is proud of me.

My mentor poured so much into me that I have had enough reserves to mentor others by the hundreds (if not the thousands)

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both personally and through my books. Even though I do not have an official mentorship agreement with some of the people who refer to me as “mentor,” I rarely correct them.

My mentor never attempted to guide me beyond her realm of expertise. I appreciate that she did not lead with her ego but with a real desire to see me succeed. I pray that this book honors her in a way that no greeting card, gift, or phone call to say thanks ever could.

Wise woman, I would plaster your name across billboards if you gave me permission. In the meantime, I will continue serving

Conclusion

others as a result of the rich abundance that you poured into me.

To the reader, I can only hope that these sayings impact you in the way that they have shaped my life. If everyone had a mentor like mine, your life would be better for it. If you desire to serve humanity as a mentor, please lead them masterfully.

REKESHA PITTMAN



Rekesha Pittman is fearless when it comes to exploring new ideas. Although she did not come from an entrepreneurial background, she used her passion for the arts to launch her first businesses. These included event planning, book publishing, product line development, a professional dance company, and a retail store.

Rekesha realized that her core talent was teaching and training. She launched Divine Turnaround Apprenticeships in early 2011, which provided managerial training for emerging event planners. As a result of the program's success, she developed curriculum for several online training programs through her **7 Steps to a Divine Turnaround** Courses in 2011. Her 7-week courses included business training, dance company and studio management, and book publishing. As a skilled Publishing Strategist, Rekesha has personally coached over 500 authors worldwide and that number keeps growing each year.

As a professional speaker, Rekesha travels around the globe providing insight on book publishing, leadership strategies, and business development. She mentors emerging business leaders and provides content-rich virtual training programs, workshops, retreats, and masterminds. Rekesha's innovative style, technology

know-how, and to-the-point instruction leave her audiences raving for more.

Rekesha continues to inspire people via her social media presence, live videos, master classes, and book releases. She developed The EAST Formula™ to equip entrepreneurs, authors, speakers, and trainers to cultivate cycles of success.

For booking or additional information:

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