Being You
Believe in yourself and enjoy your best life.

QUICK OVERVIEW
“Don’t get your hopes up.” Rita Davenport heard that misguided advice from well-meaning (and a few not-so-well-meaning) people many times. Growing up poor, with parents who expected little but hardship, Davenport wanted more out of life—more joy, more experiences and, yes, more money.

“What good are low hopes? No, I think high hopes are the only kind worth having. And high expectations are even better,” she writes in the wise and charming Funny Side Up: A Southern Girl’s Guide to Love, Laughter, and Money. “A hope says, ‘I’d like to do that.’ An expectation says, ‘I will do that.’” Davenport goes on to share insights on how to develop an unconquerable spirit, live with gratitude and look for humor in every situation.

Funny Side Up recounts what she learned from living a life of high expectations. The first in her family to graduate from college, Davenport went on to host a popular television talk show, serve as president for a multimillion-dollar skincare company, and develop her powerful, very Southern voice as a motivational speaker. Her book, like her life, focuses on helping people see and expect more for their lives, and to laugh a lot along the way.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE
Phyllis Diller was a divorced mom of five living on welfare when she discovered her passion for making people laugh. Although she finally knew what her passion was, she didn’t become a famous comedian overnight. She performed her stand-up act in local pubs for free, until eventually, her practice paid off.

Identifying your passion isn’t enough to be successful in life. Once you know what your passion is, the next step, according to Rita Davenport, is to get great at it. By practicing, you hone your strengths. And that’s when you really outshine the competition and surprise the naysayers.
Whether your passion is speaking, presenting, managing, marketing, writing, cooking, golfing or _________ (you fill in the blank), make a point to study your craft. Read books, attend seminars and practice the necessary skills. Repetition and intense focus will put you at the top of your game.

Why are you here? I know there’s a reason. None of us are here by accident. What is your gift? And what are you supposed to do with it?

I fervently believe that every single one of us is sent into this world with a unique purpose. Not only that: I believe we are each sent into this world with a purpose and with all the talent we need to fulfill that purpose. And by everyone I mean you. But you’ve got to find those gifts within yourself—and you have to have the courage, the passion, and the belief in yourself to let them shine through.

Oh, and if you’re not sure you know what your purpose is, don’t worry, because you were born with clues built right in. If you played hide-and-seek when you were a kid, remember what your friends would say when you started getting close to finding the right hiding place? “You’re getting warm.” Finding your purpose is a lot like that. When you start getting closer, you get warm. And when you get real close, you get hot. It’s called passion.

IT STARTS WITH PASSION

The passion of genuine enthusiasm is an energy you can generate yourself. How? Simple: by focusing your time, effort, and energy on those ideas, activities and pursuits that get you excited. Hey, it’s not rocket science.

Stay with me, though, because there’s more here than meets the eye. When you feed your soul by spending time on things you love, that you are excited about, your enthusiasm becomes contagious. Being around someone who’s passionate about what they’re doing rubs off on other people. It catches like a wildfire (the good kind) and warms them. It makes them want to be around you more and gravitate to that positive energy you’re exuding. You become a magnet for that positivity—for greatness—and it’s wonderful. I want you to think for a moment about the people you’ve known or respected who had a true, inspired passion for what they were doing in life and the journey they were on. It makes you feel good inside, doesn’t it? Empowered? Energized?

Do you see where this is leading? You’ll never accomplish the things you’re capable of and live your life to the fullest entirely on your own. It takes a support team of others who buy in to what you’re up to. So how do you find those people? You don’t have to: they will find you. The people, resources, situations, and circumstances you’ll need to fulfill your purpose will all be drawn to you—so long as you’re on purpose.

Let me tell you something: you have a purpose, or else you would not be alive today. You want to live a rich life? Find out what your purpose is, get crystal clear on it, and throw yourself into it.

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When I say you have a talent, you may question that. But don’t—because you do! I questioned it about myself for years. I didn’t intend to do what I’ve done for a living. I intended to be Tina Turner. Unfortunately God didn’t give me Tina Turner’s voice. (He had already given it to her. He also knew I wouldn’t have put up with Ike for a second.) I got over it.

What do you love to do? What are you passionate about? Whatever that is, dive into it and get good at it. No, get great at it.

NO COMPROMISE

Once you discover what your purpose is, you can’t let anyone else tell you differently. I’m not saying you should stick your fingers in your ears and close your mind off to
To forgive is divine—and divinely human.

I believe the most important thing we have to learn in this life is the capacity to forgive. The most difficult, even horrific circumstances sometimes show up in our lives for no seeming reason and to no perceptible good end. But whether or not we can see it at the time that it happens, there is always a reason, and there is always a good end. If you cannot find any rhyme or reason for why a particular painful or difficult episode in your life should have happened, then take a look at this possibility: perhaps it came about purely as a gift—a gift to help you learn the depth and power of forgiveness.

You know the expression, “To err is human; to forgive is divine”? I love that, but I like to add three more words:

To forgive is divine—and divinely human.

Forgiveness makes for a richer life. It makes you a richer person.

What if you feel you are not a very forgiving person? As they say, practice makes perfect, and even when that is not altogether true it does at least make it better.

KNOWING ERMA

Soon after I began doing the show at Channel 5, Erma Bombeck, the enormously popular newspaper columnist
and author of such bestsellers as *The Grass Is Always Greener Over the Septic Tank* and *If Life Is a Bowl of Cherries, What Am I Doing in the Pits?*, came on my show as a guest. I was a huge fan of Erma’s and we connected immediately.

One of the things I learned most from Erma had nothing to do with her amazing accomplishments or fabulous level of success, but with her complete and utter authenticity. Erma was exactly Erma, no more, no less, and no other.

In 1984, Erma was on the cover of *Time* magazine, and I asked her what that felt like. “Rita,” she said, “if you do what you can do, with what you have to work with, you’ll always feel good about yourself—and you’ll feel as important as anybody on the cover of a magazine.”

That was an illumination for me. That was when I began to understand where low self-esteem comes from: it comes from comparing ourselves to Erma Bombeck, or to the models on the pages of fashion magazines, to our neighbor up the street, or the most popular kid in class.

When I was a little girl I always felt ashamed of the fact that my family was poor. As an adult, I came to realize that it wasn’t the fact that we were poor that I had felt bad about. It was the fact that I was comparing myself to others who had more than we did. And there will always be someone richer, someone smarter, someone better-looking, someone more talented, more capable, more influential than you are. So what! You know what they will never be? They will never be you.

Since that time, I’ve been on the cover of a number of magazines myself, and as exciting as it was at the time, I eventually had to admit to myself that at the end of the day, that magazine cover ends up lining the bottom of someone’s birdcage. It’s just not as big a deal as I thought it would be. Erma was so right. How you feel about yourself isn’t dictated by whether or not you end up on the cover of *Time* magazine, or up on a stage, or lauded and praised by the world. How you feel about yourself is something that comes from inside yourself, and it is 100 percent up to you.

Erma didn’t get on the cover of *Time* because she’d been part of any scandal, or found a cure for cancer, or been to the moon, or gotten elected to public office. She just made people laugh—and she was authentic.

GIVING KINDNESS BRINGS YOU KINDNESS

The more love you give to others, the more comes back to you, too—and not necessarily from those people you’ve gifted the most.

Whatever it is you’re lacking in your life, start giving it. If you don’t have enough love in your life, then start giving love. If you don’t get enough praise, then give more praise. If you want standing ovations, then give standing ovations. If you want to be hugged, then give hugs.

And it truly is that simple. You’re only going to get in life what you give away. The only thing you possess is that which you release.

If you want a rich life, then enrich the lives of others. You don’t have to be financially wealthy or have any more than you have right now to be a powerful philanthropist. *Philanthropy* is just a fancy pair of Greek words smushed together that simply means loving people. There are so many ways you can give and so many ways you can show love to others. Just look around in your environment and see who you can give a hug to, who you can encourage or support. It doesn’t cost a lot of time or money, but each time that you interact with people you can leave them feeling better about themselves.

Edgar Cayce once said, “The way to heaven is on the arm of the man you help.”

When I reach the end of my life, I don’t want to feel that there were things I could have given that I never got around to. I want to feel that I have reached out and helped other people to the fullest extent that I was capable of doing. I want to be used up.

There’s a saying I love: *Elephants don’t bite, but mosquitoes and ants do.* It’s the little things that we have to take care of and watch out for and be on top of, because they are really the most significant part of our lives. Your life isn’t measured...
What Goes Around Comes Around

I learned the importance of little kindnesses from my daddy, who never went past the third grade but from whom I learned more about life than from any college professor.

In all the years he drove me to school, from first grade right up through college, we never once passed a motorist with car trouble without Daddy pulling over to help them. It used to irritate me sometimes because it would make us late. “Daddy,” I’d complain, “do you have to stop and help everybody who’s got the hood up on their car?”

“Yes, I do,” he would say, “because someday my babies might be on a highway with car trouble themselves, and somebody is going to stop and help them because we’re stopping to help this feller right now.”

Well, I’ve since been stuck on the highway with car trouble myself, and those people my daddy stopped to help were nowhere around! I’ll say to myself, “Okay, now where are they, Daddy? You said they’d be here!” But you know what? Someone else always stopped, and when they did I’d say to myself, “Thank you, Daddy.” What goes around truly does come around.

by grand gestures and earth-shaking events as much as it is by the little things you do—or don’t do—every day.

Before I go to bed every night, there are two things I ask myself:

1) What did I learn today?
2) What did I do today to help someone else?

If you want to have a good night’s sleep and wake up feeling good about yourself, start taking a moment to ask yourself those two questions every night. You are your destiny; what you think about today is what you’ll become tomorrow. If you start planting those two questions in your mind, those seeds of greatness, in time you will harvest their fruit.

THE OTHER SIDE OF FAILURE

Failure is simply the negative feedback that gives us the opportunity to practice; its purpose is to show us that the path we were trying out wasn’t the ideal one for us. There’s nothing wrong with failing—unless you use it as an excuse to shy away from developing your gifts and pursuing your purpose in life. When some effort of yours fails, you can let it shut you down, in which case you withdraw into yourself, get bitter, and shrink from making other new efforts. Or you can use it as an opportunity to learn, grow, and get fired up. You’re going to make some wrong decisions in your life. And you’ve got to have some valleys in your life, so you can appreciate the peak experiences. But you can’t give up on yourself. If you don’t believe in yourself, nobody else will believe in you either, and that makes doing anything practically impossible.

Failure is also one more opportunity to develop a strong sense of humor. Have you ever had something happen that seemed just awful at the time, yet months or years later you found yourself laughing about it? Here’s what you do. First, get into the habit of saying, “Someday we’re going to laugh about this.” And after you’ve said that, then say, “Hey, why wait?”

The secret is to laugh sooner.

I was speaking in front of 700 people in Houston one night, and as I walked onstage I happened to look down—and noticed I had a string of toilet paper about two feet long caught on the heel of my shoe, trailing along behind me. Option A: turn tail and run backstage. Option B: start to cry. I went with Option C: I started laughing. I survived the night just fine. Hey, I was grateful it wasn’t in my panties. You’re going to have disasters large and small happen to you. It’s just the way it is.

You’ve got to be able to laugh.

When I reach the end of my life, I don’t want to feel that there were things I could have given that I never got around to.
ACTION STEPS
Get more out of this SUCCESS Book Summary by applying what you’ve learned to your life. Here are a few thoughts, questions and activities to get you started.

1. Are you clear about your life’s purpose? If you don’t know what your purpose is, try to identify a few things you are genuinely passionate about.

2. What are your top three strengths or talents? How are you using those things in your day-to-day life?

3. In what areas of your life are you compromising or conforming to others’ opinions? Do you want to change that?

4. Who do you compare yourself to when measuring success? How does that keep you from living an authentic life?

5. What do you want more of in your life? Love, kind words, accolades? Start giving away whatever it is you want. Find at least one way to express or share with others what it is you desire.

6. Before you go to bed tonight, ask yourself, What did I learn today? And What did I do to help someone today?

7. Are you still cringing over an embarrassing moment? Try, instead, to laugh about it. If the situation still seems less than funny, list a couple things that could have gone wrong but didn’t.

About the Author
Rita Davenport is an internationally recognized expert on the principles of success, time management, goal-setting, creative thinking and self-esteem. Her unique background as an entrepreneur, corporate executive, author, humorist and broadcaster make her a popular keynote speaker. She has been a guest on more than 200 radio and television shows, including Good Morning America and The Today Show.

Rita lives in Scottsdale, Ariz., with her husband and high school sweetheart, David.

Recommended Reading
If you enjoyed Funny Side Up, you may also want to check out:

Love Does by Bob Goff

Today We Are Rich by Tim Sanders

The Magic of Believing by Claude Bristol

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