



THE **BOUNCEBACK**
Artist

THE 8-STEP SECRET TO CONQUERING
LIFE'S SETBACKS

Susan Baroncini-Moe, M.A.

YES PRESS

Indianapolis, Indiana

“Once every few years a book comes along with an insight so penetrating, so powerful, and so demonstrably true that it instantly changes the way we think. Such a book is *The BounceBack Artist*. It isn’t the number of times life knocks you down, it’s the number of times you get back up, and Susan’s experience and wisdom will benefit everyone who reads her book.”

- Robert Thomas Bethel, author of *Strengthen Your Business: Fail-Proof Strategies from the Man Who Has Rescued 77 Businesses*

“Setbacks are inevitable but bouncebacks must be intentional. This book takes the mystery out of how to rebound more quickly and positively. It will give you helpful ideas successful, healthy people use that you can use to deal with life’s challenges.”

- Mark Sanborn, author of *The Fred Factor* and *The Potential Principle*

“Susan sets a new standard for rebounding from life’s setbacks with a smart mix of wisdom, mindfulness, positivity, and practicality. If you’ve had a setback, whether at work or in your personal life, *The BounceBack Artist* is your path to getting back on track.”

- Ellen Petry Leanse, bestselling author of *The Happiness Hack*

“As a business owner and entrepreneur, this book is one of the most effective and pragmatic I have seen to help leaders get unstuck. The Bounceback Artist is a tremendous tutorial in how to lift yourself up from a setback or something you may perceive as a defeat. Susan’s transparency and compassion are entirely evident and compelling. I recommend this book to anyone who is looking to get better (personally and professionally) and enlighten the way they see this rollercoaster we call life!”

- Shelli A. Herman, President and Founder, Shelli Herman
and Associates, Inc.

“There are lots of books about having a positive attitude, and that’s all well and good. But in *The Bounceback Artist*, Susan Baroncini-Moe gives us an actual step-by-step plan that can help anyone overcome adversity and create opportunity from challenges. This book goes beyond feel-good platitudes. It provides an actual strategy for action that can turn your life in a productive, positive direction. Buy this book. It’s a game-changer!”

- Joe Calloway, author of *The Leadership Mindset*

“Susan really gets it! A setback can happen to anyone, especially those in the entrepreneurial space. This book has a clear, effective process to finding your way back from a setback. A must read for anyone who wants to get back to business, fresh and without baggage.”

- Steven Hoffman, author of *Make Elephants Fly: The Process of Radical Innovation*, Captain and CEO of Founders Space

“Learning how to overcome personal and professional setbacks and put them behind you quickly is a trait of successful, happy people. The Bounceback Artist makes this overwhelming process manageable by breaking it down into tangible steps called the REBOUNDS program. The advice and homework in each step of the plan will help you deal with the complex emotions of setbacks, learn about yourself and get your life back on track in no time. It will even help you be better prepared for future challenges.

Susan Baroncini-Moe is no stranger to setbacks herself, and her personal perspective is proof you can overcome adversity and come out stronger on the other side. Drawing on her own story as well as those of her many clients over the years, her advice is direct, compassionate and actionable. There isn't a person among us who would not benefit from reading *The Bounceback Artist*.”

- Brande Plotnick, healthcare brand and product marketer

“Everybody has career setbacks or plateaus, but high achievers know how to process negative feedback to change and grow in order to reach the next level. This book is like having Susan Baroncini-Moe as your personal coach, guiding you from a place of denial and negativity to a place of joy and empowerment. Highly recommended!”

- Kevin Kruse, New York Times bestselling author and CEO,

LEADx

“Life will knock you back on your ass at times. That’s when we all need a coach in our corner barking at us to ‘Get back up! Get back up!’. I am happy to say your coach is right here, in this book you hold in your hands. Get ready to punch life’s challenges right in the nose.”

- Mike Michalowicz, author of *Clockwork* and *Profit First*

“Anyone who’s had or will have a setback (i.e. everyone) should read this book. Business expert Susan Baroncini-Moe’s profoundly practical plan provides a sorely needed roadmap for overcoming life’s inevitable difficulties.”

- Zach Mercurio, Bestselling Author of *The Invisible Leader: Transform Your Life, Work, and Organization with the Power of Authentic Purpose*

“Obstacles are not the problem...how we deal with them is. Susan provides a unique and effective 8 step process to help anyone through anything.”

- Matt Manero, author of *You Need More Money!*

“Inspirational, insightful, and empowering, *The Bounce-Back Artist* provides a practical, step-by-step plan for getting rid of the brain junk that gets in the way of success. As a trusted friend and gifted coach, Susan Baroncini-Moe brings clarity into getting back in the game when life throws us off course.”

- Ben Cope, CEO of Internet Genius Consulting

“*The BounceBack Artist* is a rare opportunity to delve into an acclaimed life coach’s revealing personal journey and learn tools—in an easy-to-digest step-by-step program—that will move you forward. It’s the next best thing to one-on-one coaching with the amazing Susan—honest, sage advice that motivates as it enlightens and focuses you on processing your past and planning for your future, one that is full of possibility and promise.”

- Julie Cantor, MD, JD, Founder & CEO of Harlan and Adjunct Faculty, UCLA School of Law

Susan is a master at helping you identify what's holding you back, why it's holding you back, and how to overcome it. She has the ability to just "get" you, even if she's never met you, and in *The BounceBack Artist*, she meets you where you are with actionable steps you can take to not only bounce back, but become the best possible you. If you're ready to bounce back, you simply can't go wrong with Susan's guidance."

- Stephanie Hinderer, Publisher of *Curl Magazine*

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Published by Yes Press, Indianapolis, Indiana.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data: LCCN: 2018914090

ISBN 13 PB: 978-0-578-41539-0

ISBN 13 Ebook: 978-0-9822793-9-7

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*To my clients over the years who have put
their faith in me to guide them along their path:*

*“Promise me you’ll always remember:
You’re braver than you believe,
and stronger than you seem,
and smarter than you think.”*

- Christopher Robin to Winnie the Pooh

Change

by Ellen Bass

This is where I yank the old roots
from my chest, like tomatoes
we let grow until December, stalks
thick as saplings.

This is the moment when the ancient fears
race like thoroughbreds, asking for more
and more rein. And, I, the driver,
for some reason they know nothing of
strain to hold them back.

Terror grips me like a virus
and I sweat, fevered,
trying to burn it out.

This feat is so invisible. All you can see
is a woman going about her ordinary day,
drinking tea, taking herself to the movies,
reading in bed. If victorious
I will look exactly the same.

Yet I am hoisting a car from mud ruts
half a century deep. I am hacking
a clearing through the fallen slash
of my heart. Without laser precision,
with only the primitive knife of need, I cut
and splice the circuitry of my brain.
I change.

PREFACE

MOST PEOPLE WHO KNOW me or have read about me probably think I lead a charmed, easy life: I own a successful business, I'm married to a real, live rock star, and we live in a nice home with our two super adorable dogs (seriously, check my Instagram feed, @suebmoe — they're ridiculously cute). I've broken a Guinness World Record and appeared on national TV, hosted four podcasts and written a bestselling book.

I imagine that most people think these things came easy to me. My dad was a doctor, so I grew up with many advantages: I had plenty of nice things and went to private school. I also have the privilege that comes with being white, so all in all it probably seems like life has been pretty smooth sailing. And in some respects, it has.

Except the story I've shared in these short paragraphs doesn't give you the whole picture. I have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which went undiagnosed until I was in my mid-30s, and I often refer to my early 20s as "The Dark Years" because of just how depressed and troubled I was during those few years. Perhaps most importantly, I grew up in a highly dysfunctional family.

If you don't know what an ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) score is, it's a number that measures the types of childhood trauma one experienced before the age of 18¹ (see

Appendix A to calculate your own ACE score). My score is a 4, a score held by a little over 12.5% of the population. What does that 4 mean? Well, it's considered a pretty high score, which surprised me when I found out, since I really didn't think my family was that different from many other families. I was well cared for and I was never sexually abused in any way. I suppose that's why discovering that a 4 was a high score surprised me.

The scary thing is, according to the research, as your ACE score increases, so too do your risks of encountering other issues like health problems (physical and mental) and substance abuse. Plus, people with higher ACE scores tend to be less successful and struggle with their finances².

So how have I been able to achieve so much with such a high ACE score? How have I managed to avoid alcoholism and drug abuse? How was I able to become an adult with even a modicum of success?

How did I learn how to bounce back? How did I learn how to thrive, even when I was programmed (in many ways) to fail? I believe it is through the REBOUNDS Program, which is the result of my experience of going through setback after setback in life, fighting my way through, rebounding again and again, bouncing back and achieving my goals, in spite of some of the challenges life dealt to me.

The REBOUNDS Program takes into account that you too may have been programmed in very specific ways to fail. It takes into account the messages you heard growing up and the things you've been told as an adult. But it's much more than that.

This program, at its core, is about accepting that each of us has been given challenges in one way or another, but we are not defined solely by our challenges. You are not your ACE score. And you are far more resilient than you may imagine. Resilience is one of the biggest keys to conquering your ACE score, by the way (calculate your resilience score in Appendix B).

In addition to the challenges life brings, all of us have also been given gifts. Now is the time to recognize those gifts, own them, inhabit them, and fully realize your own potential.

You've probably been through a lot, or else you wouldn't be reading this book. Right now, you may feel like you can't do much more than just getting up each morning. That's okay. You don't have to do anything you don't want to do.

But make no mistake about it, I'm going to push you to do a *little* more than you think you can handle, a little faster than you think you can. *I* believe in you. I know that you can bounce back. I know that whatever has happened, you can bounce your way back to achieving everything you want in life.

My mom's favorite character in *Winnie the Pooh* was Tigger. I never asked her why, but looking back now, I think she loved Tigger's effervescent optimism. Tigger was the consummate BounceBack Artist. No matter what the trouble was, Tigger was ready to bounce that trouble away.

I want you to begin today by thinking of yourself as a little bit like Tigger. You're going to bounce your way back! You're going to rebound! You're going to get your mojo back!

And you're going to do it faster than you thought you could. The REBOUNDS Program is all about moving you out of this place of anger, frustration, depression, and resentment, and into a place of empowerment, achievement, and joy.

So let's jump in...or better yet, let's bounce!

*“Buddy, if you're gonna pounce,
you've got to have some bounce!”*

- Tigger

INTRODUCTION

LIFE. IT'S A ROLLER coaster, isn't it? Things are going along well, everything's in harmony, you're happy and healthy, then BOOM. A setback. It's just how things are. From breakups and divorce to illness to lost clients and bad performance reviews, from the jobs you didn't get to the jobs you wish you hadn't, life is full of setbacks.

NO ONE IS IMMUNE

None of us is immune to setbacks, either. 100% of people fail in one form or another, at some point in their lives. There's literally *no one* on this planet who hasn't had a setback.

Let's look at a few examples. According to the Small Business Association, 30% of businesses fail in the first two years of operation. Of those that are left, 50% fail in the first five years. And 66% fail in the first ten years³. That means only 23.1% of businesses succeed past their first ten years, and only 1% will achieve millionaire status.

The failure rate is staggering. A business failure can have a significant impact on your self-worth and your belief in your ability to be a successful entrepreneur. If you close one business, you may be afraid to open another. If you do start another business, you're likely to be plagued with self-doubt and fear, which hampers good decision-making.

There's more. Only 2% of athletes go on to be successful as professional athletes⁴. That's a 98% failure rate!

Half of all marriages fail⁵. That's factoring in first, second, third, etc. marriages, and of all different types. One study in England showed that a quarter of British people married their first love, which means the remaining 75% experienced at least one heartbreak. Whether a breakup or a divorce, there's no shortage of stories of people who have no idea what to do with their lives after their marriage or a significant relationship ends. It's a deep setback, and unless you do some serious work, you're likely to take the damage from each failed relationship into the next one, creating even bigger potential for problems.

And if you talk about jobs...well, just imagine how many people apply for one position and don't get the job. Now consider how many people are out there in the world who have gone on *many* interviews and still haven't found the job they want. Imagine the folks who *did* get the job, but hated it. We know that happens a *lot*, because more than 70% of workers report that they are not satisfied with their jobs⁶.

Now let's say you're one of those people who got the job, and your company, like most, does annual performance reviews. Setting aside my personal opinions regarding the efficacy of performance reviews, let's talk about what happens

in these reviews. 22% of people tend to cry in their performance reviews⁷. Crying in a performance review suggests to me that it's not a great review—can we agree on that, generally speaking?

Once you've had a negative performance review, typically things don't improve. 67% of companies report an increase in absenteeism, resignations, or both from employees who have experienced a negative performance review⁸. *Some* people might be motivated by a negative performance review, but the research shows that most are not. In fact, following a negative performance review, 37% of people start looking for another job and 20% flat-out quit⁹. That's 57% of people who have had a bad appraisal instantly start looking for a way out.

When you've had a bad performance review, you feel horrible. You didn't get the raise, the promotion, the good scores, or the positive feedback. You're angry, embarrassed, and humiliated, and you're likely scared your job is in jeopardy. You're worried that you're not who you thought you were, and you're worried that other people think poorly of you.

Then you begin to dislike your job, so your performance is even more negatively affected. Consequently, if you have a negative performance review, you're more likely to have *another* negative performance review, creating a downward spiral.

All of these types of experiences can lead you to integrate the negative feedback you receive in the process, regardless of what form it takes. And ultimately you can easily end up with a poor self-image, a lack of confidence, and even anxiety and depression.

No one is immune to setbacks. We've all experienced them. And while some of us seem to live a charmed life with few setbacks, some of us have had more than others. In fact, some people experience so many setbacks that they wonder, "Is this all there is? Will life always be like this?"

SETBACKS CAN PROLIFERATE

The funny thing about setbacks is that they're like Tribbles, those fuzzy little aliens from Star Trek. Like Tribbles, setbacks can replicate like crazy. That's right, one setback, if not handled properly, can beget another, and another and another. In fact, that's why some people have experienced so many setbacks. Setbacks create their very own cascade effect.

THERE'S GOOD NEWS

Here's the good news; it doesn't have to be like that. Having spent the last 20 years working with clients on their setbacks and helping them bounce back, as well as bouncing back from my own setbacks, I devised a simple formula to help my clients bounce back from their setbacks - to turn them into BounceBack Artists. Note that I'm saying it's a *simple* formula. I'm *not* saying that it's *easy*. But it's eminently doable.

I grew up unconsciously knowing the BounceBack Artist formula. I used it every day, every time I dealt with trouble at home, when I experienced romantic breakups, any time someone said something unkind to me. The REBOUNDS Program has helped me through every bad moment, bad job, every setback I ever encountered—even The Great Recession. It's always been a part of who I am.

As a coach, in addition to a great big toolbox of coaching tools, I apply the strategies that have been successful in my own life to my client work, helping clients bounce back from failing businesses, bad relationships and breakups, bad interviews and jobs lost, and those dreaded bad job performance reviews.

My clients, who hired me feeling lost, frustrated, angry, pessimistic about the future, or generally unsure of where to turn next, all rebounded and relaunched, finding themselves back in their lives, happier and more fulfilled than ever. In this book I'll share some of their stories with you¹. The truth is, it took a while for them to bounce back, and in the last couple of years, I started to wonder, "Is it possible to rebound faster? Does it *have* to take so long?"

The answer, as I discovered, is *no*. You don't have to take a year or more to rebound from a setback. You can bounce back and relaunch in just nine weeks. And that's exactly what we're going to do.

***You don't have to take a year or
more to rebound from a setback.
You can bounce back and relaunch
in just nine weeks.***

¹ All names and identifying details have been changed to protect my clients' privacy and confidentiality. Most stories are composites of multiple clients.

[1]

“IF ONLY I’D DONE THE WORK SOONER”

I’LL NEVER FORGET THE first person who called me crying, because she’d had a bad job performance review. Joanne was a successful executive who’d worked hard, played the game, and thought she’d done everything it took...until her review came, and she was blindsided when her boss told her she hadn’t been meeting expectations.

Setting aside the fact that with good leadership strategies, feedback like this should *never* come as a surprise, Joanne was devastated. She was in shock, most of all. She’d worked hard and thought she was meeting important benchmarks, so when she heard, “not meeting expectations,” her stomach dropped, and she actually stopped hearing anything else.

She didn’t hear the good things her boss was pleased with. She didn’t hear him tell her how she could improve. She couldn’t focus on the advice he offered. All she could do was sit there and try not to cry.

When Joanne called me, she said, “I feel helpless. I had no idea this was coming, and I can’t believe I didn’t see it.”

It had been several weeks since the review. In that time, she had ruminated over the conversation so many times that she was completely defeated, beaten down, and she had no idea how to move on. She didn't even feel as if she *could* move on.

"I'm desperate," she told me, "I used to love my job, and now I hate it. I sit in meetings resenting everyone and everything. I can't stop thinking about what my boss said to me, and I'm terrified that all my coworkers know what happened. I'm humiliated."

Joanne was in pain. Her whole world had come crashing down around her, all because of some negative feedback from her boss. When I asked her what positive things he'd said, she was unable to recall anything good that had come out of the review (more on why her memory worked that way later!)

She told me she'd taken some time off work to deal with her emotions and figure out next steps. It hadn't worked. She returned to work and was just as miserable as she had been before she left. She couldn't get back into the swing of things, once she believed her boss thought so little of her.

Joanne's experience wasn't unusual. Not by a long shot. It's not at all uncommon for people to react like this to a negative performance review, especially when it comes as a huge shock.

Most people are unprepared for the shock and have no idea how to handle the situation. They're angry, hurt, embarrassed, shamed, terrified their coworkers will know, and fearful of losing their livelihoods. And they think they can't

possibly return to a state of equilibrium at their current job, which is why so many people end up checking out at work or eventually, leaving their jobs. In fact, that's exactly what Joanne did. After we spoke, she took some time to think about what she wanted to do. Eventually, Joanne decided that her boss was wrong, her company was the worst, and, rather than working with a coach, she would just find another job where they *did* appreciate her.

Joanne went to work for another company. This time, though, she started out with a chip on her shoulder and took the damage from the previous job into her new role. It didn't go well.

She called me a year later, after another bad performance review. Her psyche was even more broken and battered this time around, because she hadn't properly gone through the process of dealing with the first review.

This time, after all she'd been through, Joanne was finally ready to do the work. Super motivated, she completed the nine step REBOUNDS Program in twelve weeks. Twelve weeks! It took her just three months to navigate through and come out on the other side...and she could've done it so much sooner.

Most people are unprepared for the shock and have no idea how to handle the situation. They're angry, hurt, embarrassed, shamed, terrified their coworkers will know, and fearful of losing their livelihoods.

I always wondered how much angst, resentment, and stress she would have saved herself if she'd worked the process the first time...and so did she. In our last session together, she said, "If only I'd done the work sooner!"

[2]

THE BOUNCEBACK ARTIST IS BORN

WHEN I WAS IN college, I took a summer temp job working as the front office receptionist at a local radio station. I loved it. I was the first face everyone saw when they walked into the building, and I could see the DJ booth right from my desk. I worked hard at that job, and I thrived in the fast-paced environment. I did so well that when Julie, the station's executive assistant, was going out on maternity leave, she recommended me to take her place temporarily.

I was so excited to take on the new challenge. Julie supported all of the salespeople who sold advertising on the radio station, as well as the sales manager and the general manager of the station. I dove into the job, just as I had the receptionist job. The executive assistant job was very different from the receptionist job. When I was working at the front desk, I just had to answer the phone, give directions, and make coffee and copies. I didn't have a ton of direct contact with the salespeople or anyone else who worked at the station, except when they were coming and going. Even then, few of them came

through the front door—our staff parking lot was in the back. I had very little contact with the staff until I was working in that back office, supporting them directly.

Before that summer, I had really only worked two jobs. I had worked retail, but my first job was working for my dad in his medical practice. I had worked for him since I was 13 years old, and over the years had picked up some of his habits in the professional workplace. At times my dad has a caustic and sarcastic sense of humor, and I must have picked that up and brought it into *my* workplace, because it wasn't too long before I was called into the sales manager's office for a meeting.

The sales manager told me that some of the staff said I had been rude to them, when I was supposed to be supportive and helpful. He said, "You were so pleasant at the front desk, I can't imagine why that changed, but you can't treat your co-workers like that.." He also told me I had to straighten up and remember that I was there to help the sales team. He reminded me that I worked *for* them, not exactly *with* them.

I was horrified. *Horrified*. I thought I had been doing a really good job! I could not believe that my jokes had been so horribly misunderstood. And who ratted me out, anyway? I was so angry at whomever it was that complained about me. And I was terribly embarrassed. I wanted to disappear into the floor.

I remember how red my face felt. You know that feeling when your face is hot and just *feels* red? My face was burning. I remember crying. I felt so much shame and embarrassment, thinking about how I had let everyone down and that I hadn't

lived up to the potential they'd seen in me when they hired me.

I was so ashamed. I didn't want anyone to know that I had been told off, but I assumed *everyone* knew.

I went to the bathroom and hid in the stall for awhile. I didn't want anyone to see that I had been crying. I also didn't want to go back to my desk. At all. I wanted to get in my car and drive away and never come back.

But I didn't do that. I couldn't. I was a broke college student and I was being paid by the hour: I needed the money.

I wiped away my tears and went back to my desk. For the rest of that day, I tried to pretend I was Julie, the regular executive assistant, and do everything the way she would have done it. I couldn't make eye contact with anyone. I couldn't laugh or chat the way I normally would have. I was devastated.

I went home and cried and ate ice cream. It was my first big career setback - the first time someone told me, "You are not doing a good job right now."

I wanted to stay home the next day and cry some more, but I had to work. So I did.

That day, I tried to be nice to everyone and I also tried to be deferential. I still felt horribly ashamed and embarrassed, but I also realized that I really liked my job and wanted to keep it as long as I could. I even had secret hopes that Julie would like being a mom so much that maybe she wouldn't want to come back to her job.

It took awhile for me to feel okay again. I didn't know it then, but I was in the midst of my very first bounceback.

It's easier to rebound from something like this when you're a college student and have less to lose. While I liked my job and wanted to keep it, the truth is, I didn't earn much money back then, and if I lost that job, another relatively low-paying job would have been available. I could've gone back to work for my dad, or I could've taken a job at a pizza place or worked fast food. I had options.

Working at that radio station wasn't the same as the jobs (and business) I would have down the road. Back then, I didn't have my entire career on the line, and my livelihood

If you've experienced a setback that's shaken you to your core, then it doesn't actually matter if it's the first or the twentieth.

wasn't exactly at stake. As a result, bouncing back was easier.

Still, I look back at that time as the time when the BounceBack Artist and the REBOUNDS Program were born. It was the first time I had ever experienced a blow like that, and it wouldn't be the last.

I rebounded so well that when I left the radio station (Julie did come back, by the way), I had glowing letters of recommendation from the general manager and the sales manager, talking about my pleasant personality and what an asset I would make to any team. Every member of the sales team came to my goodbye party and wished me well. When I joined LinkedIn over 20 years later and happened upon that sales manager, he actually remembered me from all those years before.

So what made that first bounceback relatively easy? The truth is, all first setbacks aren't so easy. Sometimes the first one is the hardest, because you're forced to face a painful reality: everyone in the world doesn't think you're as amazing as your mom does. For some, that realization can come as a big shock.

On the other hand, the first setback can be easy to rebound from, because you're only rebounding from that one thing. Subsequent setbacks may be harder, because you most likely haven't fully processed the damage to your psyche from previous setbacks, and that damage can really stack up.

It's also much easier to rebound when you don't have much at stake. If you're reading this, you've probably experienced a setback and have a lot to lose. If you've experienced a setback that's shaken you to your core, then it doesn't actually matter if it's the first or the twentieth.

Every rebound starts with you getting out of your own way. Nothing will change unless you decide that you are ready to change.

What's most important about rebounding and relaunching is the philosophy that's at the very heart of the REBOUNDS Program: that *every rebound starts with you getting out of your own way*. **Nothing will change unless you decide that you are ready to change.**

This is true even if you work in a toxic culture. This is true if you had an unfair review. This is true if you got "storied" (this is when a manager chooses an employee, crafts a negative narrative around that person, so that s/he can "help"

the employee to improve, and thus, the manager looks good in the process—it's always a losing game for the employee, though). It's true if you're going through a bad breakup or a divorce. It's true if life dealt you a horrible hand.

No matter what you've gone through, no matter what the setback, nothing will change until you are ready to get out of your own way and change, evolve, and grow.

[3]

THE SECOND SETBACK

MY SECOND TIME AROUND the setback block wasn't so easy. I went through breakups, sure, and of course personal, romantic entanglements are always challenging to rebound from, but my next *major* setback was also career-related. I'd been working for a university and was recruited by a magazine publishing company. During the job interview, I was completely captivated by the position, the company, the fact that they brought in fresh fruit every day (back when that was a big deal) and their big promises to hire an assistant for me within a year. It was my first real corporate job.

I started that job with so much enthusiasm and confidence. The Internet was still new, my web development skills were in demand, and I was super excited that a company wanted *me*.

Within two weeks of working my new job, I knew there was a problem. The only other woman on my team was in charge of managing our web servers, and she started checking my code.

Now, if you're not technical, that's okay. Just know that there is a bit of an art to coding. Everyone who codes has their

own style, just like with writing. Some people are extremely concise in their code. Some like a lot of documentation in the code, some are beautifully eloquent. There's more than one right way to code. While some ways are better and more efficient than others, what really matters is that the code works and can be picked up and understood by someone else who might come along after you to work on the code.

My code worked well across browsers and platforms, exactly as it was supposed to. I preferred to keep my code clean, without much documentation, because frankly, it was simple, straightforward code that didn't *need* to be documented. My coworker felt differently. She liked documenting practically every line. She started emailing me. Every night. In the middle of the night. She'd send me one email for each thing she felt I hadn't done the way she would have done it. In each email, she would say that my code was wrong, when in fact, it was just not done the way she would do it.

At the university, I had been treated with respect. People trusted me and my code. I had taught web design and development to staff, faculty, and students. How could my code be *wrong*, when it was clean and most importantly, it *worked*?

At first I would come into work and check on the emails, then respond to all of them in one email, letting her know that my code was working.

But when she didn't get the result she wanted, she started cc'ing her emails to our boss, who knew nothing about code. Even though he knew she was a little nutty, she'd been working at the company longer, so he trusted her more. He told me just to deal with it. I know now that he wasn't a great

boss, but back then I began to think something was wrong with me that I couldn't cope with this coworker and get her to leave me alone.

The emails got worse: capital letters and insults. Sometimes I would come into work to find thirty-five or forty emails in my inbox, written at two or three o'clock in the morning. Sometimes, upon hearing my arrival in my cubicle, this woman (who worked a couple of cubicles away) would come in and tell me she'd found problems in my code and sent me emails. I would politely thank her, explain I had just gotten in, and tell her I would look at them when I had a chance. If I didn't respond to the emails immediately, she would come back in and tell me how bad I was at my job, and how I was wrong that there were different coding styles.

Finally, I went to the Human Resources Department. They looked at the email trail and decided that she was stalking me, and they made her go to therapy. Still, things did not improve. My stress levels continued to increase, and I frequently went home and cried.

Anyone who knows me knows that I have a terrible memory. But one of my clearest memories of this time in my life was when I took a beach vacation, hoping to recuperate from some of the stress. I sat in my beachfront condo staring at the ocean and crying my eyes out for an entire week. When I got home, I felt exactly the same as I had when I left. And I still had to go back to that job.

Back then, just as now, I was resourceful. I bought and read tons of books on how to handle a difficult coworker. I talked to friends, colleagues, and even sought counsel-

ing. None of the advice worked. Nothing helped. I began to worry that maybe this woman was right about my code, and waged a battle within myself, debating what I *knew* to be true against what I was being told about my work.

Then, one day, I had a performance review. My boss told me that he had heard that I was difficult and that I wasn't following my coworker's instructions regarding my coding. I was shocked.

I argued with him. I defended myself. I reminded him what he had told me about "dealing with it" and explained what I had been putting up with. I asked if he had given my coworker a bad review as well. I told him it wasn't fair.

In short, if you've ever read an article of any substance on how to handle yourself in a performance review, I did the exact opposite of what you're supposed to do.

After that review, I became so angry, so frustrated, so resentful, that I started not to care - about my job, about my work. I hated my job. I hated my boss. I hated my coworker. And I hated the injustice of it all.

I developed carpal tunnel syndrome, a repetitive stress injury in the forearms and wrists that happens frequently to coders (and writers); I, of course, attributed it to having to reply to so many emails.

Carpal tunnel syndrome became my way out. I filed a worker's compensation claim and eventually, quit my job. I was so damaged and hurt by the experience that I never went back to working for anyone else again (which, side note, has turned out to be a really good thing after all).

It took years for me to get over what happened at that job. I went to therapy and talked about it a lot. I still felt angry. I worked with several coaches in those years, and I always felt like the platitudes they offered to inspire me were useless.

They would suggest that I needed to be optimistic. They told me to have faith. They told me to “get back in the game and try again.” When I got stuck in the story of what had happened to me, no one knew how to help me move on.

Not one therapist, counselor, or coach suggested that I do what I'm going to suggest to you in these pages. In fact, it wasn't until I began to think about my previous life experience and how I had conquered my setbacks before that I re-discovered REBOUNDS and put it to work again for myself.

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PUTTING REBOUNDS BACK INTO PLACE

ONCE I REMEMBERED HOW I had once gotten myself over the hump of a setback and rebounded, I tried to try to diagram out how I did it. At this point, I had started my coaching career, and I was curious about what I could glean from my own past success in conquering a big hurdle.

I realized that it wasn't just feeling my anger, but *processing* it that started my rebound journey. I had to look carefully at *why* I was so hurt and angry, *why* I felt embarrassed and humiliated. I had to get down in the muck and get dirty with my ugly, unprocessed feelings, and begin to *understand* them.

Then I had to let those ugly feelings go and move on. Just as, back at that radio station, I had to look at and critically assess the feedback I'd been given, I had to look back on the feedback I received at my job. I had to consider what I was told and assess it with complete honesty and integrity.

Once I decided not to tell myself any more stories about my past, but rather, to face the past with absolute honesty, I was able to sort out the stalking behavior of my colleague

from the feedback. I could suddenly see that, while I didn't have to tolerate her bad behavior, I had more to learn than I realized back then. I could have been more open to her feedback, and treated her with more respect.

I also began to see how my behavior changed when she challenged my code and the quality of my work. I realized that she had touched a deep wound that I didn't know was there, a wound that constantly told me, "You're not good enough." That's why her criticism hurt me so deeply.

I want to be clear that I'm not saying that my coworker was right in bullying and stalking me. Far from it. **Because I was able to separate her bad behavior from the message she was actually trying to communicate, I could see clearly where my responsibility was and how I might have handled myself more effectively in the situation.**

I was also able to see what I needed to work on so that I never found myself in a situation like that again. Back then, while I was very happy in my new coaching practice, I wasn't sure what the future might hold. I wanted to be prepared, just in case I wanted or needed to go back to the corporate world someday.

I faced myself and my own demons through the REBOUNDS process (it had no name back then, it was just an idea I was trying, really). Not only did I heal myself from the damage I suffered, but I learned a tremendous amount about myself and who I was capable of being...and I became the best version of myself.

REBOUNDS was just being born back then. Since that time, I've honed it, tested it, honed it more, and tested some

more. What you're holding in your hands represents more than two decades of work. And it's the most effective strategy for bouncing back from setbacks that has ever been created.

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