

THE
B
WORDS

13 WORDS Every WOMAN
Must NAVIGATE for SUCCESS

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Introduction

We are living in extremely challenging times in which both change and news are constant. The twenty-four-hour news cycle reveals unimaginable stories about successful, high-profile women enduring humiliating and degrading experiences for years. Although the industries have varied from news anchors, actors, and advertisers to farm workers and gymnasts, the stories are similar. Men—often intelligent, talented, and famous men like Matt Lauer or Harvey Weinstein—take advantage of women in a quid pro quo power play. The #MeToo movement has uncovered stories of abuse of power, sex scandals, and inequality. Social media provides the lens to focus on the desperate need for change. Where #MeToo pulled the cover back on the abuse, disparity, and power plays in the working world today, #TimesUp attempted to do something about it by creating dialogue, tools, outreach, and resources.

I am currently an executive vice president of risk management for a general contractor in Texas. Having worked in the construction industry—a man’s world—for more than twenty years, I have experienced my fair share of crazy antics, biases, and comments that have left me scratching my head, wondering how I got into the industry in the first place. I have been able to create a successful career, negotiate a flexible schedule before such a thing became popular, and stay married for more than twenty-four years, with both of us working, traveling, and climbing the corporate ladder. It was not easy; it was stressful and exhilarating all at the same time. I am now at a place in my career where it is time to give back. If there

is a glimpse of knowledge, encouragement, or favor that I can give to another woman who may face some of the challenges that I have, I hope to address it in this little book of “Bs.”

This book follows the trajectory of a woman’s life and career by identifying key B words that can propel her forward in creating the life she wants on her own terms. These words are challenges focused on helping you identify what within yourself might be holding you back, as well as external challenges and strategies and best practices to help you plan your life. Be they internal or external, these challenges can blow women off course like grenades due to outdated, limiting beliefs and biases that still permeate our minds and the workplace culture of today. Identifying and exploring how to handle these real-life challenges can help you successfully navigate the minefields. We also explore living in your truth in order to form Bonds with other women, to embrace your inner Badass, and to engage men as partners to build Bridges. Your ability to make necessary changes along your journey to lay the groundwork for future woman leaders will allow you to earn the key ingredient to self-defined success: the Bravery badge. The information and stories that I have collected for this book include both secondary sources and primary sources in the form of anonymous personal interviews. The names have been changed except where noted to protect the privacy of these individuals.

Each chapter provides stories and sage advice, followed by breakthrough strategies on how to best handle unique challenges at various stages in a woman’s life that impact her personal and career choices along the way. Whether you’re just starting out in a new career opportunity, making decisions to have a family, or staying in or returning to the workforce, each stage brings opportunities to achieve self-defined success. **Self-defined success** is a simple concept based on helping you to recognize, sustain, and intentionally design your life in your own way and on your own terms for the benefit of yourself and others.

- **Beliefs:** What are the limiting beliefs lurking in your own mind that are holding you back? Limiting beliefs can change the course of your career, your family, and the quality of your life; only you have the power to change them. Together, we explore the concepts of inhibition and prohibition. I provide tools to identify the limiting beliefs that hold many women back and discuss how to change a limiting belief into an empowering one that can break longstanding negative patterns that keep you from achieving self-defined success.
- **Balance:** A mythical state that women set as a goal to achieve. It is like a gold standard. If a woman could balance family, personal, and professional obligations, then she would achieve nirvana. The problem is that life cannot be balanced. In this chapter, I explore why women need to reset the goal of balance to find peace. I challenge you to build a firm foundation by focusing on both your brain and your body, which will keep you upright.
- **Babes:** What is it like to enter the workplace as a young female? How can you prepare for and deal with unique situations? What should you do when your boss comes on to you? How can you develop a professional image? I provide best practices and advice from women who have been there on how to navigate sticky situations with grace and class.
- **Babies:** There comes a time in a woman's life to explore whether or not to get married, move in with a partner, or have children. Work is a gigantic influence on these life decisions, all of which can change, delay, and influence career choices. I focus on stories of real women who have made these decisions for themselves and illustrate how to create your authentic life above the noise of other people's views and opinions.

- **Budgets:** All women must manage their personal finances and speak the language of “money” at home and at work. Historically, society has conditioned women to believe that money decisions were out of their hands, leaving many ill-equipped to negotiate salaries, maintain budgets, and ultimately achieve financial savvy and independence. These are key to achieving self-defined success. I identify limiting beliefs around money that still exist today and provide resources and proven strategies that empower and liberate women both at home and at work.
- **Bankruptcy:** A woman’s worst fear is being financially bankrupt. Women who never explore who they are and what they want out of life often find themselves emotionally bankrupt. I explore two limiting beliefs: poverty consciousness versus prosperity syndrome. Both extremes deal with money and life choices stemming from how women view the world. Furthermore, I suggest how to recognize and avoid the pitfalls of both extremes and provide a list of four characteristics of true prosperity.
- **Bias:** In the workplace, women are likely to encounter subtle forms of bias rather than overt discrimination. Unwarranted judgments are more difficult to spot because they are not obvious, yet studies show such bias is real and can derail careers. What are the subtle forms of bias, and how can you spot them? I share tools and techniques to identify unconscious prejudices in the workplace and steps that you can take to move toward change. I also explore solutions organizations should implement to identify and prevent unconscious bias in the workplace.
- **Bullies:** Bullying starts early in childhood and is alive and well in the workplace. It is real, painful, toxic, and of epidemic proportions. Is bullying behavior a sign of insecurity in both men and women, stemming from envy and power, resulting in

fear? Or is it just to be expected in the workplace as a result of the worldview that winning comes at all costs—a take-no-prisoners philosophy at work? I provide recommendations on how to deal with workplace bullies and resources for starting an antibullying campaign at your own workplace. I also explore how to identify whether you are a bully and, if so, what you can do to change your behavior.

- **Bitches:** Women will be called “bitch” by both men and other women. This term holds different meanings both generationally and culturally. Sometimes it is good, and sometimes it is obviously meant to be hurtful. I explore various scenarios that lead to being called a bitch and address the inevitable implications of owning your bitch.
- **Bonds:** Forging relationships, connecting, and ultimately forming bonds are critical to both personal and career success. Women don’t have to go it alone. Women network for different reasons and in different ways than men, and women benefit from recognizing those differences. I identify the purpose of networking and provide tactics and strategies to help women embrace the fine art of intentional networking.
- **Badasses:** What is more powerful than a woman who claims her truth and stands in her power? I share the recipe for achieving and ultimately embracing your own badass—knowing and accepting yourself so that you can make your own unique contribution to the world.
- **Bridges:** Women and men must work together to build bridges for the future. But how do we move forward, break down barriers to entry, and squash the zero-sum mentality that is widely displayed today? I provide stories of what it is like to be the only

woman in the room and offer examples of the characteristics of the good guys who change the dynamics that historically hold women back. I provide resources and steps that people can take both personally and professionally to finally impact lasting change.

- **Bravery:** To live your own authentic life based on your own definition of self-defined success requires bravery. Many people go through life and never even think about what they want. I explore my own personal example of bravery and how I hope to change my corner of the world.

This book is for young women, midcareer women, and women nearing retirement. It is also for any woman who recognizes the need to get men engaged in a conversation to bring more women into every space of the workplace, including the boardroom.

My mother always told me to make a difference in my own little corner of the world. I hope this book is in your hands for that very reason and provides some guidance, awareness, and insight to make your world just a little better today.