

How Decisions in Life are Shaping Leadership Journeys with

PURPOSE



Impact, Influence & Positive Transformation

22 Authentic and Bold Stories
by a Global Collective of Leadership Consultants

Curated by Eve Simon

Copyright © 2020
Authors, see Contents
hello@purpose-book.com

Printed and Published by:
BoD – Books on Demand, Norderstedt

Editing: Various Editors
For authenticity, stories written by authors from the UK have been edited in
British English, all others in American English.

Consulting and Design by Fempress Media, Germany

ISBN: 9783748107262

All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced or
transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or
otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Contents

Introduction: The Spark	9
Making The Most Out Of This Book	13
My Journey Towards My True Self Agneta Dieden – Sweden	15
Author Of Your Own Life Story Abby Barton – United Kingdom	27
Moving From Legal Grounds To Solid Ground Andrew Cohn – United States	37
Sunflower Ann-Sofie Ellefors – Sweden / Luxembourg	45
Evolution Of Me Artur Chernikau – Latvia	55
A Call To Adventure Carl Lindeborg – Sweden	65
Discovering My Gifts Dr. Erika Maria Kleestorfer – Austria	79
Leaders: The Shamans Of A New Paradigm Eve Simon – Germany / United States	91
The Road Home Fredrik Lyhagen – Czech Republic / Sweden	103
My Path To Purpose: A Series Of Dots Graham Bird – United Kingdom	113

I Did It!	
Hans Veenman – The Netherlands	123
Dare To Be Happy	
Jean-Christophe Normand – France	135
Invent Yourself, Then Reinvent Yourself	
Karin Verhaest – Belgium	145
Where There Is A Will There's A Way	
Kristina Zumpolle Flodin – The Netherlands / Sweden	155
Lead With Your Heart	
Lasse Wrennmark – Sweden	165
Two Good Reasons	
Marion Bourgeois – Germany	173
A Drawing Of A Tree	
Michele Scott – United Kingdom / South Africa	187
The Magic Of Life-Changing Encounters	
Mikaela Nyström – Finland	195
The Calling Of The Heart	
Monika Jankowska – Poland	203
From Cell To Soul	
Shuntian Yao – China	213
River Of Life	
Simone Alz – Germany	221
Be The Change	
Xavier Bertrand – France	231
Conclusion by Cyril Legrand	243
A Higher Cause	251
Acknowledgment	253

Introduction

The Spark

There's a saying that 7 people around the world have the same brilliant idea at the same time. Only those who are crazy enough and brave enough to act on this spark while including others in the process are innovative enough to bring their ideas to reality. This was certainly the case in the creation of this book.

I was inspired to bring people around the world together to share their deep authentic stories about how purpose became their driver in life and business.

My vision was to create a book that empowers, encourages and invites leaders – and by leaders I mean everyone, not just by position but by mindset - to look beyond the obvious, to drive change for the greater good and, last but not least, live an authentic and self-actualized life.

There was no question about who I wanted to do this with: my colleagues and friends of the Oxford Leadership community. I'm grateful beyond words that many of them said yes to my crazy idea and started creating with me.

The book you are holding in your hands is not meant to be a lecturing book nor a sales pitch. Rather, it's a collection of authentic, bold and often vulnerable personal stories – all with an individual perspective and experience.

Herein you'll find 22 stories – some you may relate to more than others. Perhaps some of the stories will inspire you to reflect in ways that are surprising. Our intention was to move you through the sharing of our individual personal stories – regardless of the direction in which it takes you.

The book might help you find answers to questions you may have such as:

- What impact can a purpose have on me and society?
- Why do purpose-driven companies perform better?
- Where does purpose come from?

- How does purpose influence my life?
- How do I even find my purpose?
- Why do we as leaders need to reflect on purpose anyway?

You might feel inspired and uplifted. You may even find answers to questions you never considered before.

What unites us within the Oxford Leadership community is that we don't think of ourselves as working for a 'company' just to earn a paycheck – rather, a purpose to be aligned with. We all share a common purpose at Oxford Leadership to 'Transform Leaders for Good'. And even though we are all independent, this is what brought us together through the years for clients all over the world.

Throughout our personal development and growth journeys, we've all experienced the power to start within. Self-mastery of emotions, thoughts, vision, values, barriers, and purpose is the key to greater impact. This is what the world needs - leaders who become conscious and alive to powerfully use their influence to make an impact for the greater good – for the people they lead and the society they touch.

Staying true to your purpose and bringing a vision into the world isn't always easy. Sometimes you need to lean in even further, face the shadows, describe an outcome you don't even know yet, or convince people beyond some present context.

My vision became our vision and thus came alive. I am deeply grateful for every contribution ... for every one of the dearest authors, muses, vision givers and storytellers who said yes and went the extra mile to put their purpose into writing.

Ecosystems such as the one from Oxford Leadership are more likely to survive the future – because they share, contribute, support, expand, adapt and cherish their relationships. They fly freely - connected by a deeper purpose. Isn't this the superpower of the 21st century?

I believe in the collective – with each individual making the whole complete. The world will be healthier with individuals and companies who are driven by a purpose higher than themselves. Leaders are not those who are defined by their titles but rather by a mindset that will challenge the status quo to create new solutions. I believe business is the driving force for creating a society where everyone can thrive. Purpose is giving us an innate superpower to go this extra mile, not for personal benefit but for the greater good.

May you gain great insights inspired by our stories and the love between the lines.

In gratitude,

Eve Simon
Curator of the PURPOSE book

Making The Most Out Of This Book

As you dive into the following twenty-two chapters, we suggest you take some time in-between reading to reflect on your own journey toward your unique purpose. Above all, we hope you will get inspired by our authors' stories.

Please consider the following six questions to learn more about what brings meaning to you in order to live a life in which your purpose can have more impact:

1. What are you most passionate about?
2. What would others say is your unique contribution?
3. What do you most enjoy doing when you tap into skills or talents that come naturally to you?
4. What did you love doing as a child before anyone had an opinion about it?
5. What would you do if you had no fear?
6. When you reflect upon your experiences and the competencies you have, what has life prepared you to give?

Life is a journey, and purpose ignites the path. Our awareness and the decisions we make influence how wisely we use our time on earth.

Enjoy!

Discovering My Gifts; The Precious Lessons I've Learned Along The Way

by Dr. Erika Maria Kleestorfer

My experiences have taught me many lessons about living more authentically and bringing my gifts into the world. Both personally and professionally, I have learned what brings me joy and creates more success for me and my clients. My hope is that sharing my story will prompt you to take action to reach your own goals and dreams.

A small child dealing with grief

When I was 6 years old, my father committed suicide. He was 44 and diagnosed as bipolar. His only relief was to leave this planet. And then life changed for me overnight.

The evening my mom informed my 2-year-old sister and me about his sudden death, a new chapter opened in my life - not only on the outside but mainly on the inside. I suddenly felt I needed to be an adult. As a sensitive child, I didn't want to be a burden for my mother. I felt she already had a lot to carry. She was 31, had two kids, a company to run and a few family members who blamed her for my father's death.

My mom never openly shared her pain with us, but I felt it deeply. She wanted to

protect us by hiding it. So, I started to function as she needed me to. I behaved accordingly and started to be the funny/entertaining girl in the family to release stress and lighten the grief. When people asked me about my dad, I told them he died of cancer, as I was ashamed to tell the truth. At that time, he was the only person I knew who had committed suicide. I felt stigmatized and thought everyone was talking about us behind our backs.

She told me years later that she thought that if we had questions, we would ask her. But she rarely spoke about it. Of course, I had many questions but I didn't ask them. I feared that if I asked, I would hurt her, and that was the last thing I wanted to do. I wanted to protect her from more pain. (Shortly after my father died, we also lost a dear friend of my mom and her younger brother. Both, like my dad, were gone within seconds). So, somehow, I started taking responsibility for her. Something a young girl can't actually do, but as I couldn't save my father, I didn't want to also lose my mother. That unconscious decision was probably the birthplace of my "helper" and "being strong" attitude. Looking back, I realize now that I took over a role that was definitely too big for a 6-year-old girl; however, I learned this only years later in therapy.

10 hours and everything will be fixed

When I was 30, I was in a happy relationship, and we wanted to have a child. For that reason, I wanted to "clean up" inside myself. I had no experience whatsoever with psychotherapy, and thought it would take 10 hours and everything would be fixed/clear. Ha ha! Good joke. The 10 hours turned out to be a two-year journey.

I thought mainly about the early death of my father and other friends and family members who died before my 20th birthday. They all were gone in a second through suicide, car or motorcycle accidents, or a plane crash. No chance to say goodbye.

Everyone who has ever done therapy knows that this is not an easy journey. I was confronted with old, often unconscious topics, very painful at the time and hard to believe, swallow and integrate. There were numerous moments where I thought it would have been so much easier not to start. Before that, life was so much easier – just black and white and easy to navigate. Many times along the journey I felt very fragile, like a newborn baby, and insecure about who I truly was. I realized that I never really allowed my inner child to be a child. I took over responsibilities that were way too much for a young girl. I had, in fact, buried myself emotionally next to my father. I put myself in an invisible inner cage, not allowing myself to be fully alive, happy, light, naughty, and - at times - even demanding. I learned to be the well-behaved girl to be accepted and loved. I didn't want any other person to leave me ever again.

Looking back now, I see that the painful therapy was definitely one of my most important experiences. It was like looking into the mirror and realizing who I really was, what is missing and how to heal open wounds. I struggled and worked hard

to heal myself from the inside out. It felt like starting an intimate relationship with myself. And it still deepens more and more every single day.

Vienna, credibility and sports

When I was 14, I moved to Vienna. My hometown was just an hour away, but I had to move in order to attend the arts and crafts high school there. I loved it. I lived at a dorm with nuns in the city. Living with nuns had its good and bad aspects. The good part was that I met lovely colleagues and we played sports almost every day. I felt protected and cared for. What I didn't like were the double standards of the nuns. What they preached and how they lived were often totally contradictory. For example, they talked about love and how important community was, but their behavior showed something totally different. I was quite often confused about what to believe. I sensed something more than what I was being told. I felt a desire to know the truth, because the contrast between the verbal messages and reality was confusing. I wanted to know: What is true? What should I believe? Is what they say true, or what they do? Shall I trust my gut feeling or their words? This experience with the nuns was probably the origin of my excellent intuition and sensing skills. Painfully learned, it is now one of my biggest strengths and gifts in my life and business.

A similar situation happened at home. I understand my mom wanted to protect us, but although she always told us she was fine, I often sensed her suffering and struggle. So, as a child, I started doubting my feelings. Is what I'm sensing accurate? Am I making up a story or can I trust my gut feeling? This is something I struggled with for many years. I truly had to learn this skill – step by step - always connecting to my inside first. I asked myself: what do I really want, feel or sense in this situation? Once that was clear (and, to be honest, it took me a while), I checked my perception with others to get feedback. By doing so I became more and more confident in my ability to trust my gut feeling and sense what's happening around and inside me.

What was fantastic in my childhood was sports! I was encouraged to do many different things – from skiing, vaulting, dodgeball, tennis and my beloved ballet. I guess this was the space where I learned to train and work really hard, to develop my performance-oriented, competitive mindset. To this day, I just love to win, and if I don't win, I want the game to be at least fun and joyous. As with everything, there are always two sides of the coin. What I definitely learned at home, at school and with sports was to perform well, be competitive (healthy!) and goal-oriented. The downside was that I felt that just being was not enough. I felt I had to earn love, appreciation and interest.

I went to ballet from age six to 12 and it filled me up with joy and pride. And when I first stood there and people applauded and my mom gave flowers to me on stage, something magical happened. I realized how much I loved being on stage, being seen and appreciated.

I guess the appreciation coming from the outside helped me to become ambitious and goal-oriented. What I didn't know then was that I can give myself everything I was looking for others to give to me. And I can do this by turning inward, connecting to my needs and fulfilling them either alone or by reaching out to friends or family members.

A retreat and discovering how to love myself

I have also learned that by building up my inside world, I enjoyed being alone more and more. In 2016, I attended a 10-day silent retreat with the spiritual leader Mooji in Portugal. What a wonderful experience. Before going there, I was a bit scared. What would happen? Ten days spent mostly in silence, no eye contact with 400 other participants, no reading, writing, or anything else. Just two satsangs (big group teaching sessions) with Mooji. In these morning and evening gatherings, we could ask Mooji questions. But I never asked a question in plenary. I just enjoyed listening to the questions of others and hearing Mooji's replies. What I loved the most was not talking afterwards with anyone else. I just enjoyed digesting the thoughts and insights with myself in my own, inner world. In my own pace. My own beauty and calmness.

Almost every day, I sat under the same, beautiful olive tree and loved connecting to my inner source. It was a hot August, and I could smell the heat, nature and the warm air. I felt the inner connection to myself become deeper and deeper every day, and by the end of the retreat I had experienced a profound new awareness. I felt such a strong, unconditional love for myself inside. It felt like a white, open space that held nothing and everything at the same time.

After the silent retreat, it was hard for me to go back to my "normal life". I wanted to stay in that lovely inner space. I felt whole, protected, and loved. When I arrived back home, I realized a change. I was much calmer inside, centered and grounded. And I realized that this profound space was always with me. In fact, I am that space. I am everything and nothing, wherever I go. And I could see changes in my work. I was even more calm when meeting clients. I didn't need to prove myself anymore. My presence alone was enough. And my work became more enjoyable and effective, just by me being present without seeming to do a lot (or showing how smart I am) and just sensing when an intervention is needed. It's like working out of the here and now. It is holding the most powerful and transformative energy possible to support clients in turning their visions and ideas into concrete results, whether the work is individual coaching, strategy workshops or organization culture change processes.

I felt also a difference in my private life. I had no need to prove myself anymore. I realized I am absolutely enough – actually overflowing with love and richness. And that I could only be in a relationship again with a man who is also full and willing to share his overflow with me.

I am always whole

When my father died and there was not much communication going on, my child's mind started building up stories. I don't know why, but somehow, I strongly believed that now that my father is gone that half of me was missing. So, only if there is a man in my life will I be whole again. It was this concept of two souls. I needed a male partner to be and to feel complete. And as this was my strong belief, I had to find the other part to feel whole again. And I found them. Over and over again. The first at 16. I was constantly in relationships until the age of 37 when I realized I still didn't feel whole and complete with all the men, their love and appreciation. Something was still missing. All the external appreciation and compliments didn't really land inside. I heard what they said but didn't believe it. I didn't feel it inside. Looking back, I feel a bit sorry. They gave me a lot, but nothing was enough for me, as my inner foundation was still missing. There was still this empty hole, I was searching for something. My own love and appreciation were missing. The love, respect, gratefulness and nourishment from the inside out.

During my therapy, I learned about the "inner child", the parts inside that didn't get enough love, space, appreciation, or attention in our early childhood and thus, drive us to seek those things from people on the outside. It can happen in relationships when we attract-- over and over-- partners who are similar to our parents. We want them to feed something inside that our parents couldn't. Not that they didn't want to, but they just couldn't. And as long as we attract similar people, we can't get the gifts we are looking for. I experienced that a few times. I wanted a man to tell me how wonderful I am. I wanted him to cure the loneliness I often felt as a child; however, they couldn't give that to me. This is something I have to do for myself. I learned that I can connect to my inner child and give her everything she needs to feel unconditionally loved. This is a lifelong journey and relationship with myself. It's like growing older together, staying in touch with my inner child; loving, protecting and caring for her. Showing empathy and compassion. It's about inner abundance, joy, love, boundaries, achievements and fulfillment. This means love from the inside out.

Awakening. Who I am is the gift!

It was in my early 30s and I still remember the exact spot in Vienna. I was waiting for the streetcar to get to my office at IBM. I think I forgot something at home, and my inner critic started shouting at me...nasty words, yelling and telling me over and over again how stupid I am. And then- BANG - it was like a light bulb lit up inside. I suddenly realized how I was talking to myself!! How unkind, disrespectful and rude I spoke to myself. I realized that I treated myself in a way I would never allow others to treat me. I was my worst enemy!

At that time, I had a spiritual coach and we went for a one-week retreat to the Austrian mountains. Our first task was to be alone in silence for two hours and to

spend one hour for writing down every single thought. Hallelujah! What a simple, yet very powerful exercise. I was amazed about the amount of trash (we have up to 65,000 thoughts a day) I unconsciously thought every single minute about myself and others. How judgmental I was about myself and others. What the heck? At that same retreat, I was also introduced to the “law of attraction,” Simply put, this means that we attract what we think, feel and are (the energy we radiate). Similar thoughts, ideas, people, situations and circumstances are drawn together. Wow! I was fascinated. I love knowing that my mindset and attitude matter and make a huge difference on my outer reality. This was something I felt since I was a child but now, I learned about a “law” that supported what I believed.

With this idea in mind, I started being much more conscious about my thoughts toward myself and others. Whenever I noticed self-limiting, negative thoughts about myself, I changed them immediately into thoughts like “I am a wonderful woman,” “I am very smart,” “I am beautiful,” “I love myself,” etc.

In 2016 I started an experiment. I love to test everything for myself before offering it to my clients, because credibility is very important to me. It’s called “50 days to be your lover.” It’s all about mindset/attitude and the effect thoughts have in my life-- a bit like self-fulfilling prophecy and law of attraction combined. Every day, I tested a different mindset/strong belief and its effect on my behavior and results. For example, one day I focused on the belief that everyone loves me. Wherever I go, whatever I do, everyone loves me. I could be sitting in a meeting, saying everything that was on my mind without the fear what others could think – because on that day I strongly believed “everyone loves me.” My experiment the next day was quite different, as I focused my thinking to believe “I can’t trust a single person. I have to control everything.” With that mindset, I approached everyone with a more suspicious, controlling behavior, and I got the result I expected; narrow-minded, shallow ideas and conversations. It was amazing to see the difference in outcome depending on my beliefs and mindsets. Through this experiment I learned how to attract more of what I want by directing myself in a focused manner.

Judgment is separation

One of my toughest lessons in life has been learning not to judge. My rational mind will argue that judging is important, otherwise it’s hard to navigate through life, and that it helped me so much in the past (which is true) to have my black and white boxes. However, my inner wisdom knows that judgment is separation. It takes away the colors and possibilities in life. Judgment doesn’t accept the full person or situation. It accepts only what seems okay or right for us. The moment I judge (myself or others), I separate good from bad, right from wrong. I actually quite often separated parts of myself I didn’t like that much. If I separate parts of myself, I am not fully present, alive and powerful. I might be a well-functioning facade/machine but not a lively and emotional person.

Because I was left alone so many times in my early years by sudden deaths, I started leaving myself unconsciously over and over again. By judging certain parts of myself I was not loving my whole person unconditionally. I left certain parts behind. I wanted to stop that. Just realizing that I judged myself made me sad. Something had to change. However, changing a very strong belief/behavior needs a lot of attention.

I have always had a very strong mind and ego (Taurus!) that was not very happy when I decided to take back the control of my thoughts and well-being. There were many moments where my inner critic judged myself. It was almost a reflex. So, I started to play a different music in my mind. Whenever my mind went into judging and criticizing, I immediately thought about something positive; something strengthening, appreciative and nourishing. It felt like re-training a big muscle, turning the reflexive muscle of judging into a kinder and pleasant muscle. A muscle full of self-love, self-compassion and appreciation.

Breaking free, spreading my wings, and becoming my own source

After participating in different coaching sessions and spiritual retreats, I felt an increasing need to break free. I wanted to break out of my inner limitations and self-criticism. My coaches helped me come home to my true self and accept and fully love the person I am today. They helped me to celebrate the here and now and everything I have achieved so far – inside and outside.

It was time for me to fully show up. To stand behind myself. To say what's on my mind.

One big step in that direction was starting my own company in 2004. Before that, I worked at IBM, holding both European and global roles in the area of management development. I loved it. I loved to lead people and projects and to learn from the best in the field. However, after eight years it was time for me to leave. The students in my "Inspirational Leadership in the 21st Century" class at the Technical university in Vienna sometimes ask me, "Why did you leave such a great company, salary and job?" The reason was that I felt as though I was not fully spreading my wings. I had the feeling of flying with retracted wings and I wanted to know what it would be like to spread my wings 100%. I could not do that with a safety net beneath me, and IBM had been the safety net.

I finally left in 2004 and never regretted it for a second. Before setting out on my own I had thought that starting my own company would mean working a bit less after my 60-to-70-hour weeks at IBM (I traveled to work with leaders all over the world). However, I was too eager and ambitious and wanted to prove that I could make it alone. I didn't take a single client with me or start working as a consultant for IBM as many colleagues did. That was not my way. I wanted to succeed on my

own feet. I was very lucky. Shortly after I left, I was introduced to Duke Corporate Education in the U.S. Deutsche Bank was a big global client and they asked me whether I was interested in leading a European project, implementing the first-ever global leadership initiative at Deutsche Bank. What they wanted was very similar to the work I had done at IBM. It was a leading-edge leadership program, combining top content with the latest technologies. I loved it. I adapted the global program and process to European standards and trained all future consultants and trainers to run different programs, as well as delivering many myself. I was back to 50-to-70 hours a week, but it felt different. Now it was my own company. My own money. My decisions. My quality. My standards. My mindset, and an awareness of the difference I was making.

In my new company, I decided what to do and with whom I wanted to work. I began to build a global network of excellent colleagues from around the world. I always wanted to have a small boutique consulting firm that could stay flexible and independent. I am proud that I have never abandoned my high ethical and moral standards. Having said this, I have also withdrawn many times from work with companies whose values didn't match mine. I don't like employees or managers who take everything for granted, who don't see and appreciate the incentives, benefits and goodies companies offer. I don't want to have to convince leaders in workshops to participate, bring the right attitude and mindset. They are all adults and it's up to them to take responsibility for their lives and the impact their behavior has on their employees and results.

Working at IBM was like attending a tough school. In my early days there, we delivered five-day leadership programs for managers from all over the world almost every week. Workshops for 24 participants, sometimes men only, sometimes a few women. Quite often some participants resisted for the first one or two days they were sent and didn't want to be there. And my colleague Sys Boe from Denmark and I tried everything to convince them about the benefits, what was in it for them and what they would gain by the end of the week. I gave everything! All my energy. And I was exhausted by the end of the week. Usually, 97% of them loved it. They were happy, fulfilled and stronger than before. But I felt exhausted, tired and drained. I unconsciously took over their responsibility! I thought it was my role to convince them. However, looking back now, I know this was not my responsibility. But this insight came only years later, with much more experience and confidence.

Nowadays, I don't accept program participants who don't want to be here. I don't want to waste my time and energy with people who are not serious or committed. I want to spend my lifetime with people who want to make a difference in this world, in their own lives and the lives of their employees. For them, I give everything, and I still have more than enough energy.

I really love my company. We have achieved so much during the last 15 years, and I can't wait to explore even more. I will expand offerings and add more online coaching and consulting work. I love to combine technology and leading-edge content and methods.

Business and spirituality

The freedom of having my own company has made me stronger every single day and help me merge my spirituality and business side. In the past, I often felt like living two lives. There was my business life on one side and my spiritual life on the other side. I even had two separate groups of friends.

Earlier in my career, I didn't want to share my spiritual side with my clients because I was afraid they might think I was odd or unprofessional. I felt I needed to play the "normal" game so as not be judged. To avoid that, I rarely mentioned words like spirituality, love, kindness or mindfulness in my business context.

My business life brought me many achievements, successes, money and great clients, however my spirituality filled up my soul and provided a sense of belonging and purpose. Within my spiritual circles, I became stronger and stronger from the inside out. The more I loved and respected myself, the less I could deny my truth. And my absolute truth is my spirit, my essence, my core. I can't say that there was one moment where it all changed. It was more an ongoing process, development and growth in that direction.

But over time it did change, as I became more comfortable sharing my spiritual side. I still remember an experience with one group of leaders I have worked with for many years. Most of them are very rational, goal-and- results-oriented. We meet four times a year in a 'Leadership Circle' in my office. The goal is to address day-to-day leadership challenges and leave with a concrete plan or action on how to tackle or solve the issues. One of them is an especially smart and reflective man. And just recently he said at the end of the workshop, "Isn't everything just spirituality?" I had tears in my eyes. It was so deeply touching to me as I realized my inner YES to spirituality (not doubting or denying it for a second anymore) was positively affecting their thinking and behavior.

Who you are is a gift to this world

It took me almost 45 years to truly feel this with every cell in my body: "Who you are is a gift to this world." Who I am IS a gift to this world! My being is enough. My pure presence is enough. If I am not sharing who I really am with the world, then I am robbing people of something they need. By showing only parts of myself, I am not showing my true, rich and abundant self.

There have been many times I've asked: Am I really allowed to be happy? Can I be joyful when so many people around me have died? Was I not good enough for them to stay? What must I do to show the world my worth-- that I am worth being loved? But through my experience and learning, I no longer linger in these doubts and fear.

I couldn't save my father. So I made up my mind, behaved well, was the funny,

entertaining, good girl, and I learned to work really hard and function well. And although there was very often resistance inside, I didn't face it because I needed to survive. I needed to adapt to be accepted and loved. That was the old Erika. The Erika that was searching for everything outside.

Today, I try to give myself everything I need. I have a lovely relationship with my family and if I am not happy, I change it. If I don't have enough clarity about a client project, I ask for more clarity. If I feel upset in my relationship, I start a conversation or find a way to cheer myself up. If I feel bored, I try to find something that lightens up my day. It's MY job to make myself happy and look after myself. We are adults and we are responsible for our own happiness, health and well-being. It's not those outside (family, friends, partners) that need to make us happy and fulfilled, it's ourselves.

I have learned to own my own story and to rewrite it in my own voice. Every single moment, one step at a time. I have learned to stop telling the same old stories over and over, which actually were prolonging my suffering. I have stopped waiting for others to save me.

I started looking inside. I started connecting to my inner source. I started loving myself from the inside out. I started saying "YES!" to myself. I strongly believe that we are all here for a special reason. That we all have our very unique place on this earth that only we can fulfill. Our job is to find it and turn it into reality. Our highest self wants to have fun, play and serve others, and each of us has the ability to make this happen.

The greatest gift, freedom and source of peace for myself has been to find everything inside. To become my own source. Owning my own life, love and happiness. To never leave myself alone and be there – especially when times get tough – with a kind, loving and supportive mind and heart. This is inner leadership at its best. And once this becomes second nature, it overflows to the outside and brings even more richness, fulfillment, love and success into our lives.

I am very grateful for my life and for my journey. I believe that our toughest challenges are our greatest gifts for inner and outer liberation and development.

I have arrived. I am here, not waiting anymore.

Dr. Erika Maria Kleestorfer

Entrepreneur, Leadership Expert/Coach



Erika loves to (re-)activate existing resources, mobilize talents, bundle the energy available and turn it into measurable results. In her work, she focuses on leadership consulting, organization development and executive coaching. She is particularly interested in supporting senior executives and entrepreneurs in their decision-making processes, tackling the real issues and supporting individual and organizational growth. She is also a keynote speaker for inner and outer leadership.

The success of Erika's work hinges on her approach; which is systemic, holistic, spiritual, multicultural and networked. Erika has worked alongside a wide range of clients, such as ECB, IBM, Deutsche Bank, Baloise, Sanofi-Aventis, UBS, BASF, Telefonica, etc. Since 2004 Erika is part of the Global Educator Network of Duke CE, US. In addition, Erika is a partner of Oxford Leadership since 2009. Erika is very fond of supporting, encouraging and mentoring young professionals around the world and lecturing at some Universities in Vienna (Uni Wien, TU, WU) as well as teaching Coaching since 2004.

She is also part of the Supervisory Board of the 'Architects of the Future'. The architects are pioneers of a new economy that connects holistic thinking with successful entrepreneurship, compassion, and solidarity with social activism.

erika.kleestorfer@oxfordleadership.com

A Higher Cause

Our mission is to make the world a better place by inspiring leaders to transform themselves and their entities into a force for good.

This book was not intended to be a profit source for us, but to share our stories, our path and beliefs to inspire you.

Therefore, the profit of this book will go to a non-profit which plants trees for an environmental impact such as reforesting the Amazon.

We believe in the urgency of major forest restoration effort. Trees provide so many benefits to our everyday lives. They filter clean air, provide fresh drinking water, help curb climate change, and create homes for thousands of species of plants and animals around the globe.

Planting trees will help save the Earth. We know we can do it by inspiring you one book at a time.

Enjoy the journey to finding your purpose.

Acknowledgment

Writing a full-length book is an act of commitment and faith over multiple months. Having 22 authors, every one busy with life and career, and with different levels of experience in writing, we are thankful to have had someone on board to lead and support us on this amazing journey.

We want to thank Doris Gross, Founder of Fempress Media, and her team, who helped us not only to assemble the vast amount of life experience and emotions but also supported us with a lot of expert insights forming the backbone of this book and helping us spread the word about this wonderful topic on purpose. Her help and patience throughout the whole manuscript development have been very valuable and appreciated.

While we made an effort to write about our valuable experiences and what made us to the humans we became, Doris and her team showed us how to frame our experiences in a book, which is valuable for our readers and to shine a light on the things that shaped us in the past and still do nowadays. There is so much more to writing a book than to just actually write it. Doris and her team took on the enormous amount of project management and organization behind the scenes, graphic design, layout, editing and also PR and marketing. With her holding all strings together we are so excited about presenting you a book, we are all very proud of.

We greatly appreciate the motivation and understanding for our crazy life and business schedules. With her help and support, we have been able to complete this book.

Learn more about Doris and Fempress Media and their expertise in self-publishing for single authors and community book projects here:

www.fempressmedia.com



„Talking about purpose is easy. Sure, we all want it – but how do we actually find ours? Be inspired by the 22 deeply personal stories of how finding a purpose transformed the authors' lives. Find yourself in their stories. Read this gem of a book, and you will instantly look at your own purpose through a fresh lens. Powerful!“

*Achim Nowack,
Author/Business Thinker/C-Suite Success Coach*

„We climb highest when we have let go of what we do not need. From these authors' examples, we learn how to discard our misconceptions, travel light and reach our goal.“

*Michael Pockley,
Zen priest, Head of Religious Studies, Devon*



„Where is the energy coming from to do the extraordinary? To lead your team to reach the targets and go further when things get challenging? I've learned what a powerful enabler purpose is. This book allows you to see the multitude of solutions, showcased by various viewpoints and experiences.“

*Roland Meyer,
Managing Director, Germany*



„PURPOSE is a refreshing book containing resonating stories – illuminating thought-provoking and heartfelt transformative experiences around reaching that place where one can align core beliefs with the workplace for a better fit and emotional happiness. Moreover, it reminds us as leaders to be conscious of those around us to ensure they're able to be in that place as well.“

*Russell Corvese,
Silicon Valley Executive*

„This book is full of honest, heart-revealing, and powerful stories about people who have found gifts to share out of their own personal challenges and grief. I am so grateful that I listened in to their voices. As a writer, I will reflect on their wisdom and courage for a long time to come.“

*Alexandria Giardino,
Translator and author of books for children, including Ode to an Onion (Ode à un oignon), The Good Song, and Me + Tree.*



„Where is the energy coming from to do the extraordinary? To lead your team to reach the targets and go further when things get challenging? I've learned what a powerful enabler purpose is. This book allows you to see the multitude of solutions, showcased by various viewpoints and experiences.“

*Dietmar Bochert,
Senior Vice President Corporate Communications at
Franz Haniel & Cie. GmbH, Germany*