

Bridges Out of the Past

A Survivor's Lessons
on Resilience

Ria Story

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WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT RIA AND HER STORY

"I want to start by saying thank you...You made me want to try at life because you made me realize that you can make it anywhere you want, no matter where or what you are from. THANK YOU SO MUCH!" JONATHAN, HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

"Ria's book (Beyond Bound and Broken) is full of hope and inspiration, and she shows us that despite experiencing horrific trauma as a young adult, that if we choose to, we can get past anything with the attitude that we bring to our life...Her book is full of wonderful quotes and wisdom."
MADELEINE BLACK, AUTHOR OF UNBROKEN

"I am using your material to empower myself and my female clients. Thanks for sharing your story and a wonderful journey of growth." SUE QUIGLEY, LICENSED CLINICAL THERAPIST

"Very few 'victims' would be willing to share such a personal story. However, nothing about Ria is average. She chose to rise above her painful past and now positions it in a way to offer hope and healing to others who've been through unspeakable abuse. Ria's Faith and marriage keep her grounded as she reveals the solid foundation which helps her stand as an overcomer. Read this story and find yourself and your own story strengthened." KARY OBERBRUNNER, AUTHOR AND FOUNDER OF AUTHOR ACADEMY ELITE, ON RIA'S STORY FROM ASHES TO BEAUTY

"Thank you, Ria, for bringing our conference to a close. You were definitely an inspiration to all of us! Awesome Job!"
MELINDA, PRESIDENT AGS

"I was truly inspired by your presentation and the life lessons taught." JENNIFER, CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

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"Beyond Bound and Broken is a deeply inspirational book; one that will stay with you for years to come. The lessons are deep, yet practical, and her advice leads to clear solutions. This is a profoundly hopeful book. We all face pain, difficulty, and doubt but with resilience, we can lead vital, flourishing lives. Ria's story although sometimes painfully difficult to read because of the trials she endured is a story of great courage and compassion both for herself as victim and for those who betrayed her. Forgiveness is a strong theme as is courage. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is struggling to move forward after experiencing a great trial." AMAZON CUSTOMER

"...it was awesome! Ria has a real gift. I came away with so many helpful tools! Thank you, Ria." STEFANIE, CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

"May God continue to bless your efforts. Your triumph is a great joy, and a gift to all that would hear or read it."
LOUIS O., HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATE

"What an inspiration you are to all of us especially the women audience. Your book is a clear example & step by step guide on how to become an effective leader. It is so easy to read and simple yet meaningful which is the beauty of this book."
K. POONWALA, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, ON *LEADERSHIP GEMS FOR WOMEN*

"What a great read! Thank you for such an inspiring and heartfelt book. Keep up the excellent work!"
A. RAMIREZ ON *LEADERSHIP GEMS FOR WOMEN*

"I wanted to thank you for your book Leadership Gems (for Women). Your insights are right on target and this will help me in my work!" S. GUERARD, ON *LEADERSHIP GEMS FOR WOMEN*

"I truly enjoyed the encouraging words you had to share. I admire you so much, and you are such a dynamic and motivational speaker. You are a true inspiration."

LAURA, CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

"Your story is so inspiring, and I find it so amazing to see what you have done with your life! You are truly an inspiration to me, and for other young women like me who have also overcome struggles...You are living proof that no matter where you come from, or what has happened in your past, it does NOT define you, and it does not define your future."

EMMA, PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST

"Ria's openness to speak of her unique story is commendable...I recommend reading this inspiring story to anyone who wants reassurance that they can, and will, overcome whatever obstacles life throws their way." MATT WATSON, REGIONAL SALES MANAGER, ON RIA'S STORY FROM ASHES TO BEAUTY

"I have actually read this book twice. I took many things in the book and have applied them to my own life. I greatly admire Ria for her strength and in reading this book I found some strength within myself. Thank you, Ria, for sharing your story." ANNA B., AMAZON CUSTOMER, ON RIA'S STORY FROM ASHES TO BEAUTY

"Ria's vulnerability and larger than life attitude is magnetic. She is not just a survivor but a woman that thrives, as evidenced by her courage to live out her dreams in spite of what she endured. Her resolve and dependence on God is to be emulated!"

DEBI MARKLAND, VP WELLS FARGO BANK, ON RIA'S STORY FROM ASHES TO BEAUTY

"Thank you for helping make our event a success!"

DAVID, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES EGOV/BOARDDOCS

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INTRODUCTION
BRIDGES OUT OF THE PAST
AND INTO THE FUTURE

BRIDGES OUT OF THE PAST

"I am not a product of my circumstances. I am a product of my decisions."

~ Stephen R. Covey

There once was a 12 year old little girl who carried a dark secret inside. Shy, quiet, and lonely, she didn't have many friends, and she was afraid to talk to the ones she had. She was afraid someone might find out what daddy was doing when he tucked her in at night. He told her not to tell anyone because they wouldn't understand.

She didn't understand.

I still don't understand.

It progressed as I got older. By the time I was 17, my father was regularly having sex with me and would bargain with me for sexual favors in return for something like an outing with my friends. He started sharing me with other men, so in his words, he could *"help me find an ultimate experience in life."* An *"ultimate experience"* apparently meant lots of things to him.

One time, it meant taking nude pictures of me riding my horse. One time, it meant tying me up naked, putting a gag in my mouth, and beating me with a riding crop until I was black and blue. One time, it meant watching another man have sex with me. And then, they changed places.

Life was almost not worth living. I considered a razor blade and a tub of warm water to end it.

I left home at 19. I left behind the father who sexually abused me for seven years. And, I left behind the mother who blamed me for it. I left with a few pillowcases and one duffle bag stuffed with some clothes, and not much else. I left without a job or a car. Because I was homeschooled, I didn't even have a high school diploma. I had never been to a real school.

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After leaving home, I built a wall around what had happened to me. To survive, I locked my past up tight behind the wall and threw away the key.

Mark Twain said, *“The two greatest days in your life are the day you are born and the day you discover why.”* On August 14, 2013, I found my “*why*” and shared my story publicly for the first time. In doing so, I shattered the bonds of shame, fear, and false guilt that had held me captive for 20 long years, since I was 12 years old. I broke down the wall I had built, finally realizing it was holding me prisoner to the past.

In life, we all experience pain, grief, and loss. Resilience is learning not only to survive, but also to thrive. Resilience is rising from the ashes of what happened to us and becoming more brilliant because of the flames. Resilience is the difference between *“I didn’t die,”* and *“I learned to live again.”*

Resilience is learning to build a bridge out of the past, instead of a building a wall around it. There isn’t a *“hierarchy”* on human suffering. If you have gone through, or are going through, something painful, difficult, sad, or tough, it hurts. I don’t share my story, so you will think *“Gee, I don’t have it as bad as she did, so I don’t have the right to complain.”* I share my story, so you will know I have overcome what I went through and to let you know you can overcome what you’ve been through.

I share much of my personal story in my books, *Ria’s Story From Ashes To Beauty* and *Beyond Bound and Broken: A Journey of Healing and Resilience*. I revealed my story in different ways for different reasons in those two books. I also have other books that contain parts of my story to support the lessons I share in those. If you have already read any of those books, you will know some of my story already. However, this book is by far my most vulnerable

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work. That's not an accident. I know it's an intense read. Believe me, it's much more intense to write it than it is to read it. Only when I'm sharing my struggles can I use my story to motivate you, inspire you, and give you hope.

I know my ability to reach you, inspire you, and help you is limited if I'm not willing to be vulnerable, authentic, and transparent. Therefore, I'm about to share some of my most painful memories as well as some of my greatest joys. Ironically, when we share joy, we multiply it. And when we share pain, we minimize it.

In the first section of this book, I will share several chapters of my personal story in chronological order to provide you with perspective, a bit of insight, and the foundation to support the following sections.

In the second section, I will use the acronym RISE to reveal my four-step process that will help you intentionally become more resilient.

In the third section, I will use small chapters filled with stories and lessons on resilience supported by my thoughts on overcoming specific issues such as fear, shame, pain, bitterness, and hate. Carl Rogers said, *"What is most personal is most universal."* These are all topics I've dealt with personally. They are also the topics others ask me about most often.

Since the day I first shared my story publicly, thousands of people from around the world have shared with me how my story has inspired them. What inspires them most isn't the story of my past – it's how I have chosen to respond to what happened to me.

John C. Maxwell said, *"There are people who've had it better than you and done worse. And, there are people who've had it worse than you and done better. The circumstances really have nothing to do with getting over your personal history. Past hurts can make you bitter or better—the choice is yours."*

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Everyone has a story of adversity. We can all relate to the struggle of staying positive, hopeful, and inspired in the face of adversity. The struggle is real. It's a struggle because the choice to let go, move on, and build our bridge out of the past is a choice we often struggle to make. As psychologist and Holocaust survivor Dr. Edith Eger said in her book, *The Choice*, "*Time doesn't heal. It's what you do with the time. Healing is possible when we choose to take responsibility, when we choose to take risks, and finally, when we choose to release the wound, to let go of the past or the grief.*"

If there weren't other options, there wouldn't be a struggle because we wouldn't have any other choice. For example, you won't have to struggle with the decision to process the oxygen you breathe today – you don't have a choice. It will happen. However, you may or may not struggle to choose a positive outlook today because there are other options. And sometimes, those other options are easier. Often, the more difficult choice is the better one.

Resilience requires us to look at adversity as an opportunity to become stronger. Resilience is realizing our circumstances don't define us because we always have the freedom to choose our mindset, attitude, and outlook.

With the knowledge that we can make choices comes the responsibility of choosing well. Certainly at times, it's easy to pretend we don't have a choice while making excuses for why we can't overcome something.

But, excuses won't take you to where you want to be in life. We can take what life hands us and be bitter about it or become better because of it.

Your life story isn't about what happened to you. It's about what you did and who you became from that moment on. What matters is the rest of your story, and you will add a paragraph to it one choice at a time.

PART I:
RIA'S STORY

CHAPTER ONE
IN THE BEGINNING

BRIDGES OUT OF THE PAST

“Hardship often prepares an ordinary person for an extraordinary destiny.”

~ C. S. Lewis

In the beginning, it seemed innocent enough. Growing up, I was *“Daddy’s little princess.”* And like many little girls, I thought my daddy was the best dad in the world.

I was seven years old when my parents bought land in the country. They spent the summer driving there almost daily as we worked to clear the land where they planned to build our home. They built it themselves. When we finally moved in, the house was unfinished. But, my brother and I weren’t old enough to care.

The interior walls were only bare studs. Camping out in our sleeping bags seemed like an adventure at first. We had a raw plywood counter in the kitchen that the sink and stove sat on. There was one wood burning stove in the corner of the living room to provide the heat for the house, and it never seemed to warm the second story where the only shower was located. There was a big attic fan but no air conditioning.

For years, until we got a few air conditioning units for the windows, I burned up in the summer. I would find myself sweating at night even though I was on top of the sheets. And, I froze in the winter until I got a space heater for my room. I remember trying to get my numb fingers warm by the stove. The house wasn’t sealed up well either. One summer when thousands of millipedes swarmed the house, hundreds of them found a way to crawl inside. We were stepping on them barefoot, picking them out of our shoes, and brushing them off of the furniture.

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My parents did most of the work to finish the house themselves, but we all pitched in and tried to help. We made a lot of progress, but it was still unfinished when I left home 12 years later at age 19.

I began attending a private Christian kindergarten when I was four, but my parents decided there was too much satanic influence in private and public education. Or, too much governmental control, which in their eyes amounted to about the same thing. So, my brother and I were homeschooled through all 12 grades. There were a few families in our small social circle that also homeschooled their children, but our peers were few and geographically far between. In the 1980's, homeschooling was a bit unusual. We also lacked the social support systems available to many homeschooled youth today.

Although I was raised in a "*Christian*" home, my parents stopped attending church regularly when I was six or seven. My father would hold home church services, sometimes with other families, but mostly only with our family. He would lecture us for hours on the Bible and provide his interpretation of what it meant to him. His version of Christian living was a set of impossible rules to live by, to fall short of, and that required us to ask for forgiveness whenever we broke them, but he was proud of how righteous he thought he was.

He didn't believe in paying taxes, having insurance, or having social security numbers. He bought quite a few guns and stocked ammunition to prepare for the day the government came to "*get us.*"

My father looked down on anyone and everyone who didn't live by his version of Christianity and had no tolerance for the opinions and perspectives of others. One time, he allowed some Mormon believers to come visit and share what they believed with us. He was nice

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enough while they were there. But once they left, he spent hours ridiculing them and searching for scripture to discount everything they had said.

My father was the dictator in our world. He liked to call himself a king and at times demanded obedience to extremely strict rules. One of his rules was that my mother always had to be home by 5 p.m. Since she was chronically late, somewhat absentminded, and always disorganized, this rule often caused us to cut short visits with friends or family. She would then speed home to try to make it home in time, all while hysterically screaming about how he was going to be so mad at her. And, he was mad when she was even one minute late.

Our home life was a roller coaster. Up when things were going well for my father and down when they weren't. Little things would send him into a raging fit, and my mother was frequently the object of his frustrations. Though very creative, she wasn't good at organizing or managing anything.

She often became hysterical over her inability to complete simple housekeeping tasks. Mounds of dirty laundry would pile up. We would completely run out of clean clothes before she got around to washing. I took on many of the household chores at a young age. My father even paid me a small allowance for it.

He encouraged me and my brother to look down on mom. In fact, more than once, the three of us had a "family" meeting to decide if she would be allowed to remain a part of our family. She couldn't have been happy. She threatened to leave on a regular basis and packed her bags more than once. However, she always remained. By the time I was a teenager, she was sleeping in the living room on the sofa. When the four of us traveled in the car as a family, my father expected me to

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ride up front while my mother rode in the back with my brother.

Mom didn't work and dad was self-employed, working as a contractor to build houses and custom cabinets. We also had a home business selling educational books and products. Occasionally, mom would travel to conferences to sell products to other homeschoolers. Most of the time, my brother would go with her. I always wanted to go, but dad usually wanted me to stay home.

I was about 12 when my father began having conversations with me about sex. Mom was never around or involved in any of these conversations. At first, I didn't think it was unusual because dad always handled the "*important*" conversations in our family. This didn't seem any different at first.

My father very clearly explained what sex was, how it worked, and how God had created women for men. He also started telling me how divorce and infidelity in marriage were wrong. He continued further down that path and began telling me "*his needs*" weren't being met because my mother wasn't meeting them.

Mom would be sent to run errands or something, and my father would often tell her to take my brother with her. He intentionally created those opportunities to be alone with me and talk about sex. At first, all of our talks were about how I needed to be pure and stay away from boys until he was able to find the "*Right man sent by God.*"

Later, the talks started to focus on how a woman was designed by God to specifically meet a man's needs. My father told me that was why I was created too. I remember feeling ashamed talking about things like that. But, I didn't know what to do.

Then, he started telling me a father-daughter relationship was supposed to be close in every way,

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emotionally as well as physically. I remember my father saying I was supposed to give my heart to him “*for safekeeping*,” but I was confused as to why that also meant in a physical way.

One day while my mom and brother were away, my father and I were sitting in the living room having one of our “*talks*.” He started telling me how wonderful it was that I was the perfect daughter and so close to him. He took me upstairs, and he kept telling me how God intended for daughters to belong to daddies. He said if I would trust him, he would make sure I lived up to what God wanted. He explained how I was supposed to fill in since my mother wasn’t being a proper wife anymore. He told me I would also be fulfilling God’s purpose for my life by helping him avoid committing adultery. He said it wouldn’t be a sin if I helped him. He then began to take off my clothes while telling me I was the perfect daughter.

After that day, my father began regularly having very frank conversations with me about sex. Sometimes, he would take me with him in the car to talk about sex and “*his needs*.” Every time we were alone, he would talk about sex, “*his needs*,” and me. He would tell me how sexy I was, how beautiful I was, and how lucky some man would be to have me.

He always talked about other women too, even my friends who were also my age. He would make remarks about their physical attributes to me. He even commented about a little girl we saw dressed up like a cowgirl at a horse show. She was probably only four or five, but she was dressed very cute in a hat and skirt. He mentioned how her mother “*Knew what she was doing*.”

I was taught women should be sexy and sexual to please men. He always wanted me to look good for him

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and made me wear my clothes too tight to show off my body.

Next, the touching started. At first, it was just him touching me. He would lay me down on their bed and rub lotion on me, gradually getting closer to the areas I knew no one else should be touching. As always, I didn't know how to stop him.

It wasn't long before he wanted me to start touching him as well. First, while he was wearing his shorts. Then later, he began taking them off.

He always made a big deal about taking me one step further. He would tell me how our relationship was so special, and no one else would understand how close we were. He made sure I knew not to tell anyone.

As the months passed, he taught me how to please him sexually with my hands. However, that alone wasn't enough. He also made me tell him sexual fantasy stories and made me help him masturbate while having me lie naked beside him.

He continuously pressured me to become very graphic and more detailed with the stories he made me tell. Then, he made me start including my friends in the stories. When I was allowed to have a friend spend the night, he expected me to *"tell him a story"* that included her the following night after she had gone home. He wanted the story to include what she was wearing, what we were doing together, and what he was doing to us.

I was expected to do these things to him and for him regularly – nearly every night. He always told my mother he was *"tucking me in"* and always locked the door, just in case, but I don't think she ever tried to come in.

When mom was gone from the house, my father would show me pornographic movies, pictures, and magazines while he was *"teaching me to be a better wife."* He

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especially liked bondage type pornography. He rented the movie *9 1/2 Weeks* and watched it with me. Then, like in the movie, he bought a riding crop to spank me.

He ordered lingerie for me from catalogs – looking through them with me and picking out what he wanted. Frederick's of Hollywood was his favorite. He had Playboy magazines regularly and would read them to me while looking at the pictures of the women and talking to me about them. He told me if I ever decided to appear nude in a magazine, he hoped it would be Playboy. He also told me I wasn't going to be allowed to date any boys because "*my heart belonged to him.*"

I started having nightmares.

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CHAPTER SIX
RESPOND PROACTIVELY

BRIDGES OUT OF THE PAST

“We build too many walls and not enough bridges.”

~ Isaac Newton

Resilience is when we learn to build a bridge out of the past, instead of building a wall around it. Far too often, we wall up the pain of the past, thinking we are protecting ourselves from it. But, when we close off the pain from the past, we also numb the joy of the present. We can't numb one emotion without numbing another. And, pretending the pain isn't there doesn't make it go away. To truly overcome something in our past, we must be willing to build a bridge out of our past and into our future.

I've created a simple blueprint for building these bridges using the acronym RISE, which means we must *“Respond Proactively, Identify Accurately, Step Forward Consistently, and Experience Joy.”* Although I couldn't articulate this until many years after leaving my parents' home, these are the steps that have allowed me to overcome adversity in my life, both past and present.

You can use this blueprint to build your own bridges. Building bridges doesn't mean your past won't still be painful, or your present won't be difficult. It simply means you have a new skillset that, when applied, will allow you to create the life you want.

The first step is to *“Respond Proactively.”*

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The dictionary defines “*proactive*” as an adjective meaning, “*Serving to prepare for, intervene in, or control an expected occurrence or situation, especially a negative or difficult one; anticipatory.*” (www.Dictionary.com/Proactive retrieved November 24, 2017)

Stephen R. Covey defined proactive as “*choosing the response you will have to any stimulus.*” To be proactive, you choose your response to any situation or stimulus in life, expected or not. If you fail to choose, a choice in itself, you will become reactive to the stimulus and simply respond based on the emotions of the moment.

As Scott Peck said, “*...There are indeed oppressive forces at work within the world. We have, however, the freedom to choose every step of the way the manner in which we are going to respond to and deal with these forces.*”

For me, responding proactively to the past and to the present requires two different approaches.

R – Respond Proactively: To Past Circumstances

Proactive and reactive people alike are affected by what happens in life. However, proactive people choose *how* they are affected by what happens. They choose *how* the little things and the big things that have happened to them during their life will affect them.

We have the ability and the responsibility to look back at a situation or something that has happened in our lives, to reflect on it, and to consciously choose *how* to view the experience. We will choose to respond either positively or negatively.

Proactive people always choose to discover, uncover, and leverage the positive in any situation. Regardless of how painful, difficult, hard, or awful the experience may have

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been, proactive people always make a decision to view it in a positive light.

To a reactive person, this seems counterintuitive. *“There is no way I can view the death of my child as something positive,”* a grieving mother may think. Yet, I know one such mother who did exactly that. In doing so, she has given additional meaning to her daughter’s life by turning the story of her battle with cancer into an incredibly inspiring book that delivers hope to many others.

Those who don’t understand the concept of being proactive often say to me, *“How can you view what your father did to you in a positive way? There is no way I could view seven years of horrible sexual and psychological abuse as something positive.”*

I simply choose to apply the principle of being proactive. I choose to view the negative things that happened in a positive way. My father controlled me and abused me physically and emotionally for years, but he cannot, and never could, control my freedom to choose how it affected me. Therefore, I choose to be better because of it instead of bitter about it. My past doesn’t define the woman I am today. Only I can do that. Your past doesn’t define you either. Only you can do that.

R – Respond Proactively: To Present Circumstances

For me, responding proactively to present stimulus and circumstances is more of a challenge because I don’t have the time to reflect, think, and carefully decide how it is affecting me. Many things that happen in life require an instant response, or lack of response, in the moment. It often feels more emotional because it feels more immediate.

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Responding proactively in the moment means you realize you can't control everything that is happening or that is about to happen. But, you can always control your response to what has just happened or what is still happening.

When you don't like what has happened, you can choose your attitude and response to the situation and your circumstances. I'm training for a marathon and had a nine mile training run scheduled this morning. When I awoke, it was raining and continued to drizzle rain most of the morning which made my nine mile run very uncomfortable. In fact, the conditions were downright miserable.

I couldn't control the conditions. But, I could control my response to the conditions. So, I ran anyway. With soggy shoes, wet clothes, and a smile. External circumstances do not dictate how I feel inside. Only I can do that. Proactive people carry their weather within.

When someone says something you don't like, you have the freedom to choose to respond reactively from a position of anger or hurt in the moment. Most often, we end up regretting these emotionally charged responses later.

However, you also have the freedom to choose to respond to the same situation in a careful and intentional proactive way that allows you to harness and suppress the emotion of the moment. Responding without being angry or hurt allows you to respond based on the values you truly care about. Most often, choosing a proactive response based on internalized values produces a far better outcome than choosing a reactive response that is based on your feelings and the emotions of the moment.

Responding proactively means you maintain control in spite of your feelings. Other people cannot dictate how

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you feel on the inside. They can't make you hurt, upset, frustrated, mad, or sad. They can't make you happy, joyful, excited, or delighted. You are the only one who can determine how you feel on the inside. If you don't choose to become responsible, you have chosen to be irresponsible.

Dr. Edith Eger stated, *“Our painful experiences aren't a liability, they're a gift. They give us perspective and meaning, an opportunity to find our unique purpose and our strength.”* It is not what happens to us that determines how we feel. The things that happen to us only influence us. They do not determine us. It is our response to what happens to us that determines how we feel. Things only become painful when we choose to see them in a painful, reactive way.

Much like you must continually exercise to maintain your physical health, you must also continually practice being proactive to maintain positive mental health. Choosing to be proactive isn't always easy. However, it is always worth it. The more you *choose* to be proactive, the easier it becomes to *be* proactive.

Perhaps, you may eventually master the art of becoming proactive to all situations and to every stimulus in life. It's possible. I haven't arrived yet, but I work to improve and strengthen my proactive *“mind muscles”* every day.

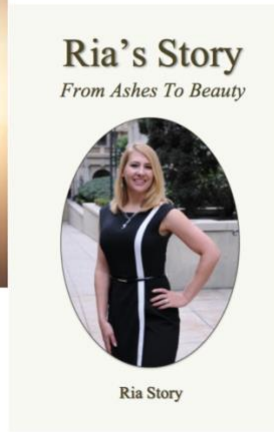
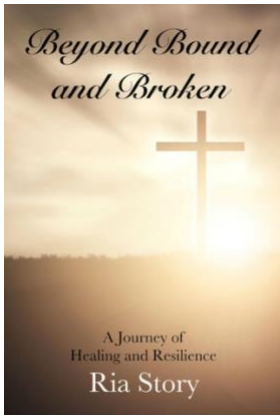
Sonya Friedman said it best, *“You have control over three things: what you think, what you say, and how you behave. To make a change in your life, you must recognize these gifts are the most powerful tools you possess in shaping the form of your life.”*

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Out of the Past: A Survivor's
Lessons on Resilience!

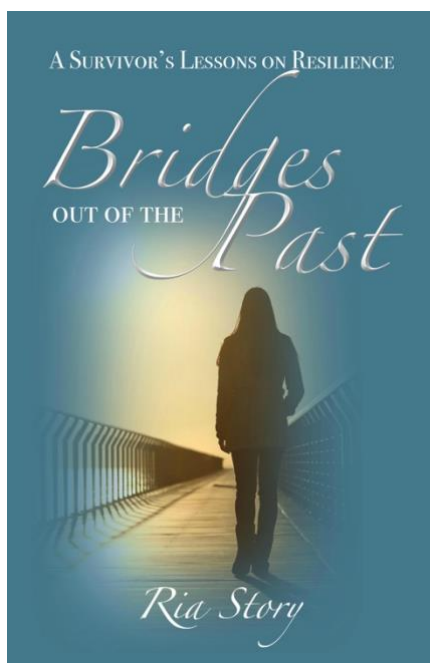
Read more books by Ria



In *Beyond Bound and Broken*, Ria shares how she overcame the shame, fear, and doubt she developed after enduring years of extreme sexual abuse by her father. Forced to play the role of a wife and even shared with other men due to her father's perversions, Ria left home at 19 without a job, a car, or even a high-school diploma. This book also contains lessons on resilience and overcoming adversity that you can apply to your own life.

In *Ria's Story From Ashes To Beauty*, Ria tells her personal story of growing up as a victim of extreme sexual abuse from age 12 – 19, leaving home to escape, and her decision to tell her story

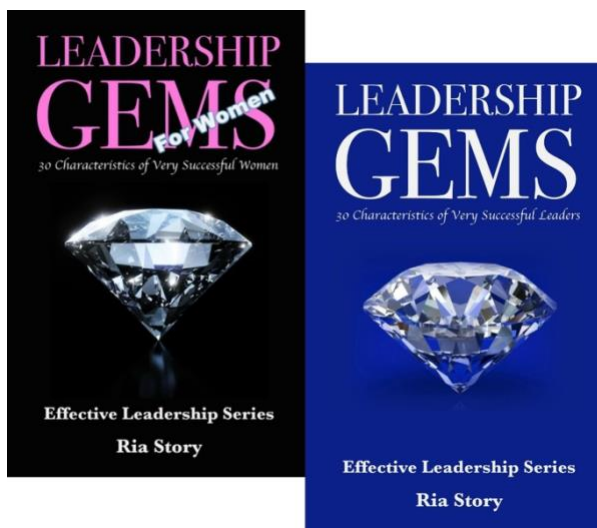
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It's not what happens to you in life. It's who you become because of it. We all experience pain, grief, and loss in life. Resilience is the difference between *"I didn't die,"* and *"I learned to live again."* In this captivating book on resilience, Ria walks you through her own horrific story of more than seven years of sexual abuse by her father. She then shares how she learned not only to survive, but also to thrive in spite of her past. Learn how to overcome challenges, obstacles, and adversity in your own life by building a bridge out of the past and into the future.

(Watch 7 minutes of her story at RiaStory.com/TEDx)

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Note: Leadership Gems is the generic, non-gender specific, version of Leadership Gems for Women. The content is very similar.

Women are naturally high impact leaders because they are relationship oriented. However, it's a "man's world" out there and natural ability isn't enough to help you be successful as a leader. You must be intentional.

Ria packed these books with 30 leadership gems which very successful people internalize and apply. Ria has combined her years of experience in leadership roles of different organizations along with years of studying, teaching, training, and speaking on leadership to give you these 30, short and simple, yet powerful and profound, lessons to help you become very successful, regardless of whether you are in a formal leadership position or not.

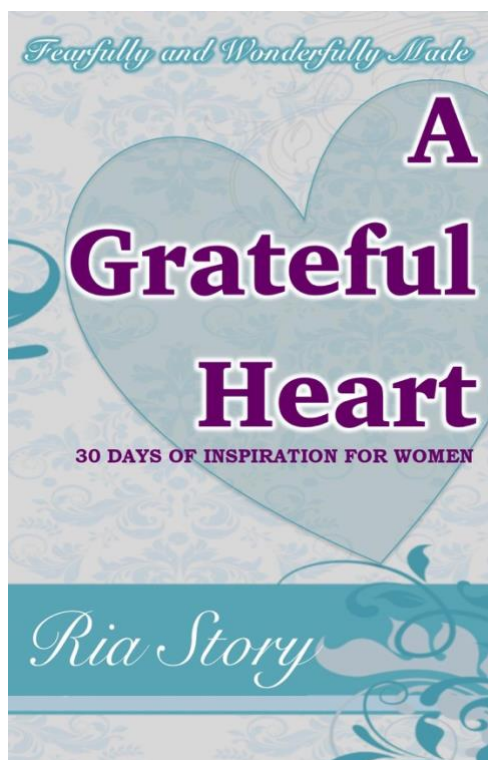
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You have hopes, dreams, and goals you want to achieve. You have aspirations of leaving a legacy of significance. You have untapped potential waiting to be unleashed. But, unfortunately, how to maximize your potential isn't something addressed in job or skills training. And sadly, how to achieve success and find significance in life isn't something taught in school, college, or by most parents.

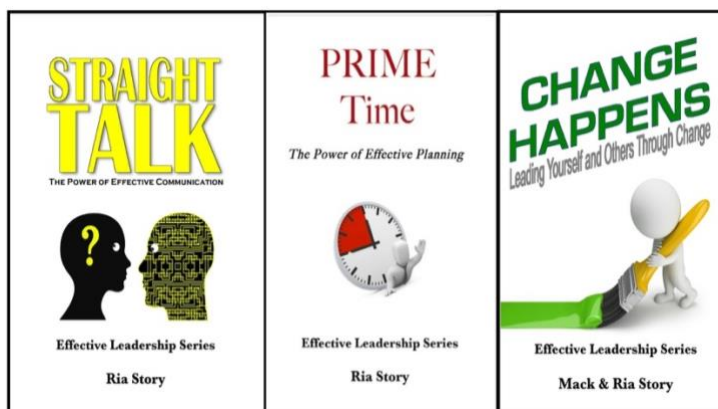
In *ACHIEVE: Maximize Your Potential with 7 Keys to Unlock Success and Significance*, Ria shares lessons to help you become more influential, more successful and maximize your potential in life. Three-page chapters are short, yet powerful, and provide principles on realizing your potential with actionable takeaways. These brief vignettes provide humorous, touching, or sad lessons straight from the heart that you can immediately apply to your own situation.

**Order books online at Amazon or
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Become inspired by this 30-day collection of daily devotions for women, where you will find practical advice on intentionally living with a grateful heart, inspirational quotes, short journaling opportunities, and scripture from God's Word on practicing gratitude.

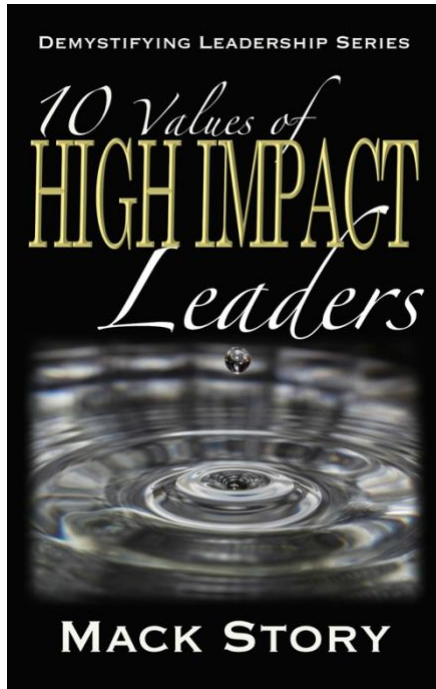
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Ria's *Effective Leadership Series* books are written to develop and enhance your leadership skills, while also helping you increase your abilities in areas like communication and relationships, time management, planning and execution, leading and implementing change. Look for more books in the *Effective Leadership Series*:

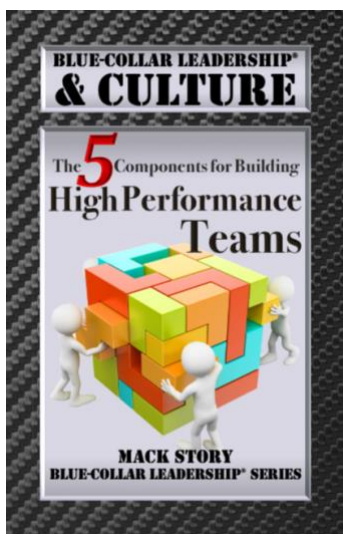
- *Straight Talk: The Power of Effective Communication*
- *PRIME Time: The Power of Effective Planning*
- *Change Happens: Leading Yourself and Others through Change (Co-authored by Ria & Mack Story)*
- *Leadership Gems & Leadership Gems for Women*

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High impact leaders align their habits with key values in order to maximize their influence. High impact leaders intentionally grow and develop themselves in an effort to more effectively grow and develop others. These *10 Values* are commonly understood. However, they are not always commonly practiced. These *10 Values* will help you build trust and accelerate relationship building. Those mastering these *10 Values* will be able to lead with speed as they develop 360° of influence from wherever they are.

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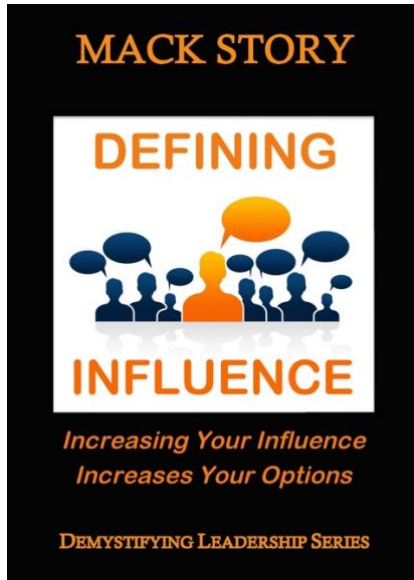
It's easier to compete when you're attracting great people instead of searching for good people.

Blue-Collar Leadership® & Culture will help you understand why culture is the key to becoming a sought after employer of choice within your industry and in your area of operation.

You'll also discover how to leverage the components of The Transformation Equation to create a culture that will support, attract, and retain high performance team members.

Blue-Collar Leadership® & Culture is intended to serve as a tool, a guide, and a transformational road map for leaders who want to create a high impact culture that will become their greatest competitive advantage.

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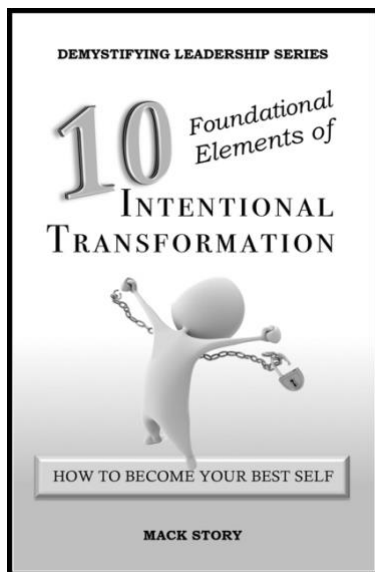


Are you looking for transformation in your life? Do you want better results? Do you want stronger relationships?

In *Defining Influence*, Mack breaks down many of the principles that will allow anyone at any level to methodically and intentionally increase their positive influence.

Mack blends his personal growth journey with lessons on the principles he learned along the way. He's not telling you what he learned after years of research, but rather what he learned from years of application and transformation. Everything rises and falls on influence.

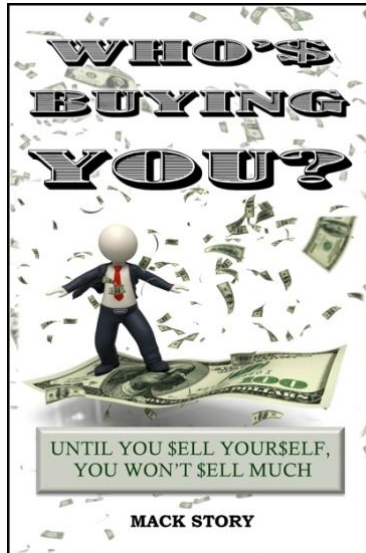
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10 Foundational Elements of Intentional Transformation serves as a source of motivation and inspiration to help you climb your way to the next level and beyond as you learn to intentionally create a better future for yourself. The pages will ENCOURAGE, ENGAGE, and EMPOWER you as you become more focused and intentional about moving from where you are to where you want to be.

All of us are somewhere, but most of us want to be somewhere else. However, we don't always know how to get there. You will learn how to intentionally move forward as you learn to navigate the 10 foundational layers of transformation.

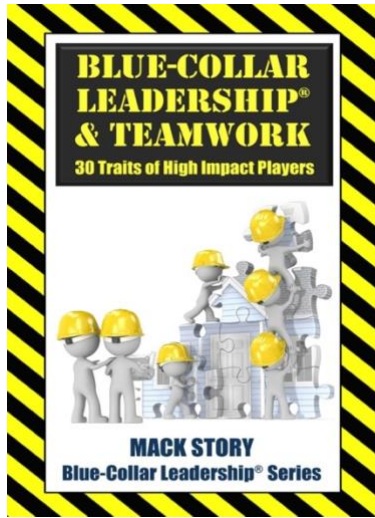
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“Sales persuasion and influence, moving others, has changed more in the last 10 years than it has in the last 100 years. It has transitioned from buyer beware to seller beware” ~ Daniel Pink

So, it's no longer "Buyer beware!" It's "Seller beware!" Why? Today, the buyer has the advantage over the seller. Most often, they are holding it in their hand. It's a smart phone. They can learn everything about your product before they meet you. They can compare features and prices instantly. The major advantage you do still have is: YOU! IF they like you. IF they trust you. IF they feel you want to help them. This book is filled with 30 short chapters providing unique insights that will give you the advantage, not over the buyer, but over your competition: those who are selling what you're selling. It will help you sell yourself.

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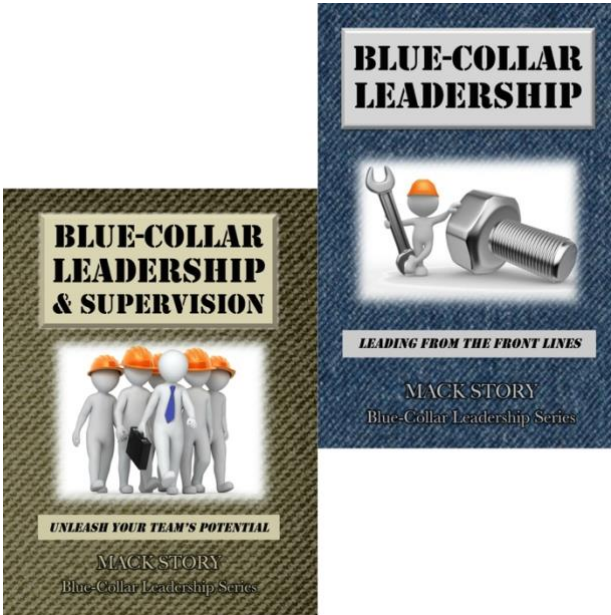
Are you ready to play at the next level and beyond?

In today's high stakes game of business, the players on the team are the competitive advantage for any organization. But, only if they are on the field instead of on the bench.

The competitive advantage for every individual is developing 360° of influence regardless of position, title, or rank.

Blue-Collar Leadership® & Teamwork provides a simple, yet powerful and unique, resource for individuals who want to increase their influence and make a high impact. It's also a resource and tool for leaders, teams, and organizations, who are ready to Engage the Front Line to Improve the Bottom Line.

Order books online at Amazon or
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"I wish someone had given me these books 30 years ago when I started my career on the front lines. They would have changed my life then. They can change your life now." ~ Mack Story

Blue-Collar Leadership® & Supervision and Blue-Collar Leadership® are written specifically for those who lead the people on the frontlines and for those on the front lines. With 30 short, easy to read 3 page chapters, these books contain powerful, yet simple to understand leadership lessons.

Down load the first 5 chapters of each book FREE at:
BlueCollarLeadership.com

Order books online at Amazon or
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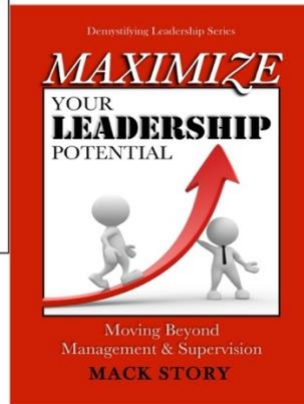
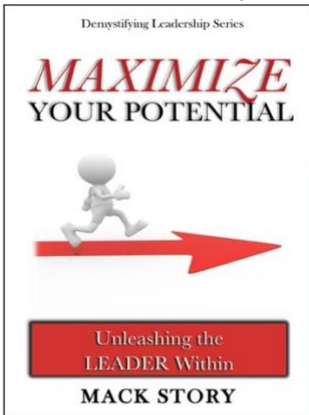


The biggest challenge in process improvement and cultural transformation isn't identifying the problems. It's execution: implementing and sustaining the solutions.

Blue-Collar Kaizen is a resource for anyone in any position who is, or will be, leading a team through process improvement and change. Learn to engage, empower, and encourage your team for long term buy-in and sustained gains.

Mack Story has over 11,000 hours experience leading hundreds of leaders and thousands of their cross-functional kaizen team members through process improvement, organizational change, and cultural transformation.

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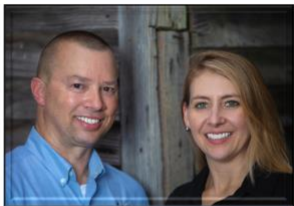


"I wish someone had given me these books 30 years ago when I started my career. They would have changed my life then. They can change your life now." ~ Mack Story

MAXIMIZE Your Potential will help you learn to lead yourself well. *MAXIMIZE Your Leadership Potential* will help you learn to lead others well. With 30 short, easy to read 3 page chapters, these books contain simple and easy to understand, yet powerful leadership lessons.

Note: These two MAXIMIZE books are the white-collar, or non-specific, version of the Blue-Collar Leadership® books and contain nearly identical content.

Top Story Leadership



Top Story Leadership simplifies foundational leadership principles into everyday language and easy to apply and understand concepts, so organizations and individuals can turn potential into reality. Mack and Ria Story are Certified Speakers and Trainers. They are published authors with more than 20 books available on leadership development, personal growth, and inspirational topics.

- Equip Organizational Leaders
- Encourage Positive Change
- Educate & Empower
- Engage the Front Line to Improve the Bottom Line



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“What clients have to say...

“My first words are, GET SIGNED UP! This training is not, and I stress, not your everyday leadership seminar! I have attended dozens and sent hundreds to the so-called ‘Leadership-Training.’ I can tell you that while all of the courses, classes, webinars, and seminars, had good intentions, nothing can touch what Mack and Ria Story provide. I just wish I had it 20 years ago!”

~ Sam McLamb, VP & COO, CMP

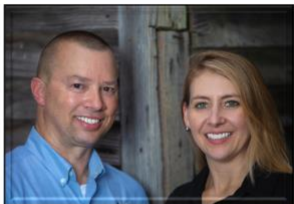
“We would highly recommend Mack and Ria as speakers...their presentation was inspirational, thought-provoking, and filled with humor. They taught us some foundational leadership principles.”

~ Stephen, President-elect, WCR

“Mack and Ria understand people! The dynamic team made such an impact on our front line supervision that they were begging for more training! We highly recommend Mack and Ria!”

~ Rebecca, Director of Process Improvement, GKN

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