

Fearfully and
Wonderfully Me
*Become the Woman You are
Destined to Be*

RIA STORY

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DEDICATION

To women all over the world:

We cannot change everything, but we always have the power to change ourselves.

May you have peace about the things you cannot change, the courage to change yourself, and the wisdom to understand changing yourself changes the world.

And, may you love yourself enough to do so.

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INTRODUCTION

As I began writing, I was thinking about what I wanted to say to you. I thought about what I *could* say to you that *would* make a difference to you, for you, and in you. Is it crazy to think my words, typed on my Mac computer in my home office, and then edited by my husband Mack in his home office, (on the other side of our house) could actually help you change your life and your world for the better? No, it's not because I know something about you: You are *destined to be* more, you can *become* more, and you *should* become more.

Notice that I said, “help *you* change your life and your world,” not “change your life and your world.”

I can't do it for you. This isn't a book about what you should *do* differently in order to reach your goals, achieve your dreams, and *become* the woman and leader you are destined to *be*. It's about *how to BE* different in order to accomplish those things. Or, I should say, *how to become*. But, you must do the work. And, it will be work.

After spending six minutes thinking about and writing the last paragraph while my hot coffee became cold, I decided the best way to tell you it's going to require work was to simply say: *It will be work*. There's no reason not to be crystal clear about the work that will be required to reach your potential. I'm sure you've heard the cliché— if it were easy, everyone would do it.

It's not easy. It will be work. *Becoming* the best version of you, whatever that looks like, will require personal transformation. You must transform from who you are now into who you have the potential to *become*.

The early chapters of this book are dedicated to developing your mindset, both how to do it and why it's

important. That sets up the foundation for transformation. After that, you will find the Seven Elements of Transformation, which are the steps I believe we all must travel to transform ourselves. The first four Elements focus on internal transformation and support the last three Elements of external transformation.

But, just reading the book isn't enough. If all you do is read the book, nothing will change. You must apply the principles to benefit from them. To help with this, I've created accompanying worksheets with application exercises and reflection questions you can journal through on your own or discuss with others in a group. These worksheets are at the end of the book, beginning on page 121. Additional worksheets are available to download for free at: FearfullyAndWonderfullyMe.com/workbook.

There aren't any easy buttons, magic pills or shortcuts. I can't do it for you. I don't have all the answers. You do. But, they are often hard to find.

What I do know is this: You can transform yourself.

I know because I've done it. And, I'm still doing it. Personal growth and transformation, or *becoming* the woman and leader you are destined to *be*, isn't a one and done deal. It's a lifelong journey, and I'm still (thankfully!) alive to continue my never-ending transformation.

It's absolutely been worth the work. As you grow and develop yourself, you will find you not only *become* the "best version of you," but you will also realize your influence with other people increases exponentially. Whether you are a stay-at-home-mom or a CEO of a multibillion-dollar global organization, you need to be able to influence other people. It's the essence of leadership. Women are major influencers in the lives of their spouses, children, family members, co-workers, communities, and in the world. But, we must intentionally develop ourselves in order to

develop and increase our influence in an effort to reach our potential.

Your journey will be different than mine.

I'm not the expert in your life. You are. I'm not an expert about anyone's life but mine. But relative to the human experience, what is most personal to each of us is most relevant for all of us.

I've spent my entire life preparing to write this book.

I have acquired a lot of knowledge and experience along the way. Much of it was gained the hard way during lessons learned through mistakes, setbacks, trauma, obstacles, challenges, and all types and sizes of problems.

I learned many lessons during my successes, achievements, wins, triumphs, and victories too. I've also read hundreds of books that allowed me to learn from the failure and success experienced by others.

I've transformed a lot through the years while learning to effectively share my heart and my story with the thousands of women I've reached all over the world through my books, podcasts, articles, blogs, and speeches. As I've shared my story with others, there have been times when I felt I received much more than I gave.

I want to share with you how I transformed.

How I transformed from a broken and ashamed 19-year-old girl who had suffered extreme sexual abuse since age 12 by my father who also trafficked me to others in the later years.

How I transformed from a 19 year girl who chose to escape from that abusive home (without much more than a couple of duffle bags and a pillowcase stuffed with a few clothes and personal items) leaving behind the father who had abused me for years and the mother who still blames me for it to this day.

How I transformed from that abused young 19-year-

old girl into the international speaker, author, and leadership trainer I am today.

It didn't happen by accident. It happened by design.

My story isn't your story. But, I guarantee you the principles found in the lessons I've learned can help you.

I learned how to transform myself from *being* a timid waitress without communication skills or a high school diploma making \$2.13 an hour (plus tips) to earning my MBA with a 4.0 GPA and *becoming* a successful director in a large healthcare organization. This part of my transformational journey provided me with many lessons on personal and professional success.

I learned how to transform myself from *being* an insecure girl who desperately depended on approval from others for my happiness to *becoming* a confident entrepreneur who teaches and speaks on leadership, resilience, and personal growth to people at all levels all over the world. This part of my transformational journey provided me with many lessons on personal and professional achievement.

I learned how to transform myself from *being* a body shamed teenager who was using and abusing food to cope with almost daily sexual abuse to *becoming* a strong, healthy, happily married (since 2001) woman who runs 26.2 mile marathons. This part of my transformational journey provided me with many lessons on mindset.

I learned how to transform myself from *being* a small-town sex trafficking victim in no-where Alabama who spoke to almost no one to *becoming* a professional speaker who has spoken at Yale University, on a TEDx stage, and at the United States Capitol in Washington DC. This part of my transformational journey provided me with many lessons on intentional growth.

I've learned it's possible for all of us to get better in all

areas of our lives. I've learned how to help you increase your influence, develop your leadership, and maximize your results. And most importantly, I've learned how to help you *become* the woman and leader you are *destined to be*.

Not because I'm special.

Because *you* are.

Chapter One

FEARFULLY AND
WONDERFULLY ME

“I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works...”

~ Psalm 139:14

In 2003, Mack (my husband) and I bought our first home. Since we were moving from a small mobile home, we chose to buy a lot of new furniture. That part was fun!

One of the few pieces of furniture I picked out and had my heart set on was a huge 4' X 7' wall mirror with a beautiful frame for our bedroom. I didn't care if he made the final choice on the bed and nightstand. But, I wanted that mirror, so I could use it while getting dressed.

Call me vain, but having a large mirror *really* helps when I want to see if my shoes match my outfit – an area I haven't always excelled in. A mirror also helps when putting on a bathing suit for the first time in Spring and realizing it shrank while it was packed away for the Winter.

That mirror has remained with us through several moves. To this day, it's still in our bedroom. And, pretty much every day, the next-to-last thing I do before I leave the house is look in that mirror. Did I remember to put makeup on? Check. (Don't laugh! I once got to work and realized I had NOT put makeup on!) Does this top complement this skirt? Check. Do I have on the right shoes? Check.

But for years, there was something else I noticed when I first I stepped in front of that mirror naked.

My flaws.

My first thoughts weren't, “Look at that strong woman who can run a marathon.” Or, “There is a healthy woman who makes great nutritional choices 95% of the time.”

No. My first thoughts were, “Cellulite!” Or, “Saddlebags, thunder thighs, etc.” Those thoughts were immediately followed by, “I need to lose weight, tone up,

go on a diet, or go to the gym.”

I know I’m still not perfect. In fact, I’m pretty far from perfect in every way possible, not just physically. However, I know God created me in His image just as He created you in His image.

The paradox of being human is that we are created in the perfect image of God, yet we aren’t perfect. We know God doesn’t create mistakes, only miracles. But, when was the last time you felt like you were a miracle?

As women, we don’t have any trouble believing babies are miracles when they are born. And think about it, the fact we can actually grow another human inside of us is pretty miraculous too. So, why do we have so much trouble continuing to believe we are *still* a miracle? Why do many of us think, almost subconsciously, “God must have been having an off day when He created me.”

Most of us excel at noticing our flaws and embracing a feeling of insecurity and inferiority because of those flaws. Next, we become experts at creating self-limiting beliefs about our potential based on those flaws. And ultimately, we allow those beliefs to hold us back.

These beliefs may or may not be about physical insecurities. They may be related to social, mental, or even spiritual insecurities. We all have insecurities. “I’m not enough” is the lie we often tell ourselves because of our insecurities. We say things like: I’m not *pretty* enough, *smart* enough, *skinny* enough, *talented* enough, *brave* enough, *strong* enough, or _____ enough.

The theme of “I’m not _____ enough” is one that I believe is universal for almost all women at some time in their lives.

I touched on this in my book, *Bridges Out of the Past: A Survivor’s Lessons on Resilience*, but I bet you already know exactly what I mean.

I don't mean we make a mistake and then realize we goofed up. That's guilt. In this case, we simply correct the mistake if possible, learn the lesson, and move on.

I mean that gut-wrenching feeling that we *are* the mistake. That we are somehow dirty, messed-up, unworthy, unlovable, fundamentally flawed, horrible, or "less-than."

If you tell me you have NEVER, and I mean NEVER struggled with this, I'm going to trust you are being completely honest with me, but perhaps not completely honest with yourself. If you have ever done or not done something because of the fear of what other people might think about you, you've struggled with this.

Your insecurities don't have to become self-limiting beliefs. You aren't a product of your circumstances. You are a product of your choices.

The key is realizing you make mistakes, but you are not a mistake. You aren't perfect, but rather "imperfectly perfect." You are made "fearfully and wonderfully." In this sense, "fearfully" means *awesome*. So, you were created "awesomely and wonderfully." In other words, you *are* a miracle.

Being a miracle doesn't mean you are perfect, but it does mean you are human. We will always make mistakes and do the wrong things. But when we realize what we do, what we look like, or where we were born doesn't determine our worth, value, or choices, we can begin to learn from our mistakes, learn to laugh at ourselves, and learn to move on.

It's hard sometimes. But when you catch yourself doubting yourself, remember to love who you are. Who you are gives birth to who you may *become*.

Chapter Two

YOU ARE DESTINED
TO BE MORE

“What we believe determines how we behave.”

~ Andy Stanley

You chose to read this book because, at some level, you feel called to *be* more. You want things to *be* better. You are hungry to *become* a better version of yourself, a bigger influence in the lives of others, and a better leader of yourself for your family, your company, and your community. You know you aren’t “there” yet. You know you are playing below your full potential, but you also have a desire to get better and to *be* better.

Let me be clear: **There is nothing wrong with you.** However, as Michael Josephson said, “You don’t have to be sick to get better.”

Consider the top athlete in any given sport in the world: Is he or she trying to get better? Absolutely. That’s why they are the top athlete in their sport – they spend pretty much every waking minute and every resting moment trying to get better. There is nothing wrong with that athlete. They simply want to *be* “better.”

Your definition of “better” is going to be different than mine. In fact, every woman’s definition of “better” is unique to her.

To you, “better” might mean raising your daughter to have the confidence you always wished you had. It might mean running a 5K or a full 26.2 mile marathon. Better might mean improving your communication skills. Better might be increasing your influence with your 15-year-old son. Better might be starting your own business, getting out of debt, getting out of a hurtful relationship, getting healthier, quitting smoking, getting a promotion, or having enough willpower to say “no.”

Better simply means *becoming* the woman and leader you are destined to *be*. It’s tapping into your potential to do

more, have more, and *be* more.

You must believe it though, because your belief drives your behavior. If you don't believe you are capable of your "better," you won't align your behavior with it – and you won't create it.

In the past, I believed I wasn't a good runner. I grew up hearing my father say how clumsy I was, how uncoordinated I was, how I wasn't really athletic, etc.

As long as I believed him, that was my reality. As a result of my belief, I didn't adopt the behaviors of a runner. I believed I wasn't a good runner, so I didn't run.

Much of my personal growth began when I started going to the gym and got involved in group exercise. Eventually, I started teaching high energy group fitness classes as a side job. That caused me to grow, and I started to re-examine my self-limiting beliefs about my physical inabilities. In 2010, I wanted to start running, so I hired a running coach. In 2011, I ran my first 26.2 mile marathon.

My finishing time wasn't very impressive. It took me more than five hours to make it to the finish line. But, it was impressive for me because I realized I may not be a talented runner, but I was a determined runner.

Two weeks after my first marathon, Mack and I started mountain bike racing. I was actually good at that. So, I stopped running and focused on biking and won four state championships in two years in my division.

I quit mountain bike racing when I started my new journey as a speaker and author. I no longer wanted to give up my time to train and compete. So, I started running a little more over the next few years to maintain the fitness level I had achieved while racing.

In 2018, my group fitness instructor career began to come to an end as Mack and I started speaking and traveling more throughout the U.S.A. Suddenly, I began to

focus my time on my personal fitness because I was traveling too much to be helping others with their fitness. So, I set a goal of finishing a marathon in four hours or less and came within five seconds of doing it.

I started to believe I might be capable of *becoming* a “real” runner. So, I started to behave like a “real” runner.

Belief drives behavior. “Believe it and you can achieve it,” is a cliché you’ve likely heard. This may not be true for every single thing you want to accomplish (some things just aren’t physically possible), but it is true in most cases. One thing is for sure, if you *don’t* believe it, you’ll never achieve it because you *won’t* even try.

When I let go of my self-limiting beliefs about my ability to run, I realized most of what had held me back as a “real” runner was my belief that I couldn’t run. My behavior was based on *my* belief. When I began to believe I could *become* a “real” runner, I changed my behavior. In 2019, I completed a marathon fast enough to qualify to run in the Boston Marathon, one of the world’s most prestigious marathons. You can only run in this race if you have a fast enough qualifying time or if you raise a certain amount of money for charity.

The world needs you to *become* your version of “better.” As Rachel Hollis said, “The world needs you to show up for your life and take hold of your potential!”

Your potential was given to you. What you do with it determines what you are able to give to others.

Your potential was given to you for a reason. It was given to you in order to help you fulfill your purpose. Your “why am I here” is your purpose. It’s *why* you were created. Those dreams you have of better? They are inside you for one reason: you are capable of making them come true. Who do you want to *become*?

Chapter Three

MOVING BEYOND THE
VICTIM MINDSET

“Every woman who got to where she is now started from where she once was.”

~ Ria Story

What happens to us in life is not as important as who and what we *become* because of what happens to us.

Go back and read that sentence again.

You’ve experienced adversity, faced obstacles, or had to overcome challenges in life. We all have. I don’t have to know you personally to know you have been through something traumatic. And, I know this: Life is hard. We don’t all experience the same adversity, but pain is not a “respector of persons.” We are all going to, or have already, experienced pain.

But, what we do with our pain is our decision.

We can take what life gives us and *be bitter* about it or *be better* because of it.

I was sexually abused by my father. From the time I was 12, until I left home at 19. He sexually abused me, emotionally blackmailed me, psychologically manipulated me, forced me to play the role of his “wife,” beat me, raped me, and trafficked me to men that he would meet on the internet.

I share my story in some of my other books (*Ria’s Story: From Ashes to Beauty*, *Beyond Bound and Broken: A Journey of Healing and Resilience*, *Bridges Out of the Past: A Survivor’s Lessons on Resilience*) along with a lot of lessons on healing, so I won’t repeat it all here. My focus in this chapter is to help you avoid having a victim mindset for the rest of your life.

What you went through doesn’t determine you. As you can see, what I went through didn’t determine me.

I’m NOT downplaying the effects of trauma, adversity, childhood abuse, domestic violence, or any other

painful experience. It's incredibly hurtful to experience those things, and the younger we are when it happens, the more difficult it is to overcome. I think trauma inflicted by other people is especially difficult to overcome. When the people we love are the ones who hurt us, those we should be able to count on to protect us and have our best interest at heart, it shatters our sense of self, our sense of justice, and our belief that the world is a "good" place.

I'm sorry you went through what you went through. I wish I could hug you right now. I hope you feel my hurt for your pain. There is no doubt pain, trauma, and adversity influence us. I am a different woman than I would have been if I had not experienced extreme sexual abuse by my father and others as a teenager. But, when it's time to move on, it's also time to let go.

The pain is there. It will always be there. What you have been through is part of your story and part of what made you the woman you are today. You are stronger because of what you experienced.

You aren't a victim; you are a survivor.

Accept that what happened did happen. Then, choose to move beyond it and do what must be done to heal. **Healing is incredibly hard work.** It may take a few years, or it may be a continuous process.

Go to therapy. Learn to paint beautiful art. Run a marathon. Talk to your best friend. Write a letter to yourself. Or, read books on healing from trauma if that's what you need to do. The methods available to help us heal are as varied as we are. Much of healing is mindset. You must learn to move beyond having a "victim" mindset and stop identifying yourself as a victim.

Let me share a moment of truth for you: **You cannot keep living with a victim mindset and reach your potential in life.**

What mindset have you created because of what happened to you? What choices are you making because of what happened to you? As human beings, as women, our greatest freedom is our ability to determine *how we respond* to what happened or will happen to us.

You choose your response to what happened. I realize it's not easy. But, it can be done. I wake up every single day and choose to use what happened to me in a positive way to help other people. This book is an example. I choose to *be* positive about something incredibly hurtful, traumatic, and painful. You can too.

If your past is still holding you back in a negative way, it's not serving you. Mindset matters.

Whoever did the thing(s) to you, or said the thing(s) to you, or caused the thing(s) that happened to you doesn't get a say in your life (and therefore, your family) and your future any longer. You get to decide, right now, to claim your life, your future, and your potential, and let the other stuff fall away. It'll still be there, but you don't have to drag it behind you for the rest of your life.

You're better than that. You're bigger than that. You're bolder than that. **You don't have to make bad choices** that hold you back from your goals, your dreams, and your life because of what happened to you, or what someone said to you, or what you went through.

What happens to us doesn't matter as much as what we decide to do about what happens to us. No one else has as much influence in your life as you do. Nothing influences your life more than you do.

The other side of that coin is that you must stop blaming your problems on other people and other things.

Move beyond being a victim.

Excerpt from *Ria's Story From Ashes To Beauty*, by Ria Story

I was 12 when Dad started having some conversations with me about the “*facts of life*.” He would tell me how infidelity in marriage was wrong and so was divorce. But, “*his needs*” weren’t being met because my mother wasn’t able to meet them. I was told they didn’t have a physical relationship for many years, but I don’t know if that is true. I know she was sleeping on the couch in the living room most nights, she said because of her back. I suspect I will never know the truth. I want to believe she had no idea what was going on, but it’s possible she knew and didn’t want to face reality, so she shut it out. Either version is hard for me to accept, but there are many things in life we don’t want to accept.

I remember times when Mom was gone, out running errands or something, and my Dad would tell her to take my brother with her. At first, all our talks were about how I needed to be “*pure*” and stay away from boys until my Dad was able to find the “*Right one that God would send.*” Then, it changed to being all about how a woman was designed by God to meet a man’s needs and that was all I was created for. I remember feeling ashamed talking about things like that, but I didn’t know what to do. It was the summer when I was 12 that he first started saying how a father-daughter relationship was supposed to be close in every way, physically as well as emotionally. I remember being told 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 my Mom and brother were gone, and Dad and I were sitting in the living room “*talking*.” Somehow, things turned into how wonderful it was that I was the perfect daughter and was so close to my Dad. We went upstairs, and he kept telling me how God intended for daughters to belong to daddies. And, if I would trust him, he would make sure I lived up to what God wanted. He told me how I was supposed to fill in since my Mother wasn’t able to be a wife anymore. He told me I was living up to God’s purpose for my life by helping him not have to commit adultery. He told me it wasn’t a sin if I helped him like that. He took off my clothes and told me the whole time I was the perfect daughter.

What started out as just taking off my clothes progressed. Within a few months, it wasn’t just taking off my shirt and jeans but taking off everything.

Deep in the back of a forgotten drawer, my Mom had hidden a bunch of lingerie she used to wear when she was young, and they were newly married. Dad brought it out one day while we were alone in the house together. He picked out one of the outfits and told me to go in the bathroom. Then, he wanted me to put it on and come out to model it for him. I cried afterward, ashamed of being looked at like that. I was sad for my Mom too - her personal things should not have been shared with anyone, much less her daughter.

Then, the touching started.

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Excerpt from *Straight Talk: The Power of Effective Communication*, by Ria Story

I was nearly 20 years old before I realized I liked people. I never considered myself to be an “introvert” although most people would have. I simply didn’t talk to people. Ask me a question, and you would get a monosyllabic response that discouraged any further dialogue. It’s not that I didn’t want to talk or communicate with people – I simply didn’t know how.

I grew up very isolated, living on a farm in the middle of the woods. I was homeschooled. We didn’t attend church regularly, and my social contact growing up was mainly limited to field trips with other homeschoolers. In the early 1980’s in Alabama, opportunities for homeschooled children to participate in extra-curricular activities were limited, and my parents didn’t pursue most of them.

I was also sexually abused by my father from age 12 – 19. Growing up with feelings of shame, guilt, hurt, and unworthiness only compounded my natural tendency to be withdrawn, even after I left home at 19. I share more about my story in some of my other books, *Ria’s Story From Ashes To Beauty* and *Beyond Bound and Broken: A Journey of Healing and Resilience*.

Leaving home without a job, a car, or even a high school diploma, I got a crash course on the need for communication in “normal” society.

At 19, I had a great education, ability to think critically, reasoning skills, proactive attitude, and willingness to work hard. What I didn’t have was the critical ability to connect with other people and communicate *effectively*.

Since I didn’t have a GED or a high school diploma,

finding a way to make a living wasn't going to be easy, but I was determined to start making money and earning my way.

My first job was working as a server at a pizza restaurant. I worked the lunch shift, Monday through Friday every day, from 11:00 – 2:00. Most customers would have the all-you-can-eat pizza and salad buffet because it was fast and didn't cost too much.

I was the only lunch server for all 36 tables in the restaurant. My job was to set up the buffet, keep the salad bar stocked and clean, make the tea, fill the ice bin, stock the soda machine, answer the phone, take delivery orders, greet the customers when they entered, take and fill their drink orders, keep dirty plates bussed, refill their drinks, check them out at the cash register, clean the tables, chairs, and floor after the customer left, wash all the dishes, put them away, and restock everything before I left. All for \$2.13 per hour, plus any tips I made.

The lunch buffet was \$5.99, and a drink was \$1.35. Most customer bills came to less than \$8.00 for lunch. The average tip is 10% for a buffet, so the best tip I could expect would be about \$1.00 – and that's if I hustled really hard to keep their soda refilled and the dirty plates bussed. If I was too busy and the customer ran out of tea, I may not have gotten a tip at all.

I learned quickly that being an “introverted” waitress wasn't going to work. If I didn't smile at the customers, they thought I was unfriendly. If I didn't greet them enthusiastically, they didn't feel welcome or appreciated. If I didn't remember the names of the regular customers and what they liked to drink, they often wouldn't even leave me the change from their dollar.

I learned a lot of things during my years of waiting tables, off and on earlier in my career. You see the best and

the worst of people when you wait tables. But, the most important lesson I learned was to take initiative and connect with my customers. **Communicating information wasn't enough. I had to connect with them.** I could tell them where to get a plate and take their drink order, but how I did it made all the difference in whether they left me anything at all, or sometimes, several dollars.

What I want to share with you in this book are some of the lessons I've learned about connecting with people and communicating effectively. There aren't any shortcuts to success, but I hope I can help you avoid the detours and map out a faster route.

Effective communication skills are critical to our success in life.

On the professional side, the ability to communicate and relate to customers, co-workers, employees, or your boss can determine your career potential and define your success.

On the personal side, communication with your spouse, children, parents, and friends will determine your satisfaction in life (at least some of it) and define your relationships.

Regardless of your preferred personality style, or whether you consider yourself an introvert or extrovert, dealing with other people is a fact of life. Almost any situation you can think of requires you to come in contact and interact with other people sooner or later.

Your eye color cannot be changed. Your genetic ability to run a four-minute mile cannot be changed. Your ability to communicate **CAN** be changed. **Communication is a skill anyone can learn, and everyone can learn to do it better.**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Like many, Ria faced adversity in life. Ria was sexually abused by her father from age 12 - 19, forced to play the role of his wife, and even shared with other men. Desperate to escape, she left home at 19 without a job, a car, or even a high school diploma. Ria learned to be resilient, not only surviving, but thriving. She worked her way through college, earning her MBA with a cumulative 4.0 GPA, and had a successful career in the corporate world of administrative healthcare.

Ria's background includes more than 10 years in administrative healthcare including working as the Director of Compliance for a large healthcare organization. Ria's responsibilities included oversight of thousands of organizational policies, organizational compliance with all State and Federal regulations, and responsibility for several million dollars in Medicare appeals.

Today, Ria is a motivational leadership speaker, TEDx Speaker, and author of 12 books, including Leadership Gems for Women. Ria is a certified leadership speaker and trainer and was selected three times to speak on stage at International John Maxwell Certification Events. Motivational speaker Les Brown also invited Ria to share the stage with him in Los Angeles, CA.

Ria has a passion for health and wellness and is a certified group fitness instructor. She has completed several marathons and half-marathons and won both the Alabama and Georgia Women's State Mountain Biking Championships in 2011 and 2012.

Ria shares powerful leadership principles and tools of transformation from her journey to equip and empower women, helping them maximize their potential in life and leadership.

ABOUT MACK STORY

Mack's story is an amazing journey of personal and professional growth. He married Ria in 2001. He has one son, Eric, born in 1991.

After graduating high school in 1987, Mack joined the USMC Reserves as an 0311 infantryman. Soon after in 1988, he began his 20 plus year manufacturing career on the front lines of a large production machine shop. Graduating with highest honors, he earned an Executive Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Faulkner University in 2002. He eventually grew himself into upper management and found his niche in lean manufacturing and along with it, developed his passion for leadership. In 2008, he launched his own Lean Manufacturing and Leadership Development business.

From 2005-2012, Mack led leaders and their cross-functional teams through more than 11,000 hours of process improvement, organizational change, and cultural transformation. In 2013, Mack and Ria served with John C. Maxwell as part of Cultural Transformation in Guatemala where over 20,000 leaders were trained. They also shared the stage with internationally recognized motivational speaker Les Brown in 2014. In 2018, they were invited to speak at Yale University's School of Management.

Mack has also published 13 books on personal growth and leadership development including his five very popular *Blue-Collar Leadership® Series* books.

Mack and Ria inspire people everywhere through their example of achievement, growth, and personal development.

Clients: ATD (Association for Talent Development), Auburn University, Chevron, Chick-fil-A, Kimberly Clark, Koch Industries, Southern Company, and the U.S. Military.

RESOURCES FOR RECOVERY

If you have experienced sexual assault or abuse or know of a loved one who has, there are resources available to help. You are not alone!

National Sexual Assault Hotline:
800-656-HOPE (4673)

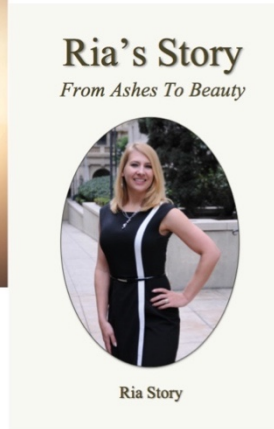
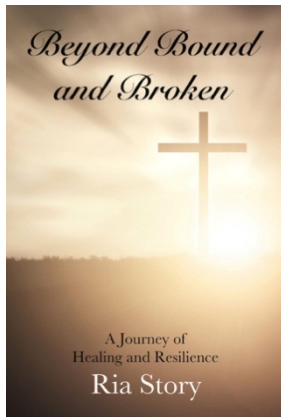
Visit: www.centers.rainn.org to search for a local crisis center in your area.

Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network has information and resources available on their website:
www.rainn.org

Department of Defense/Military Support:
www.safehelpline.org or 877-995-5247

National Sexual Violence Resource Center:
www.nsvrc.org

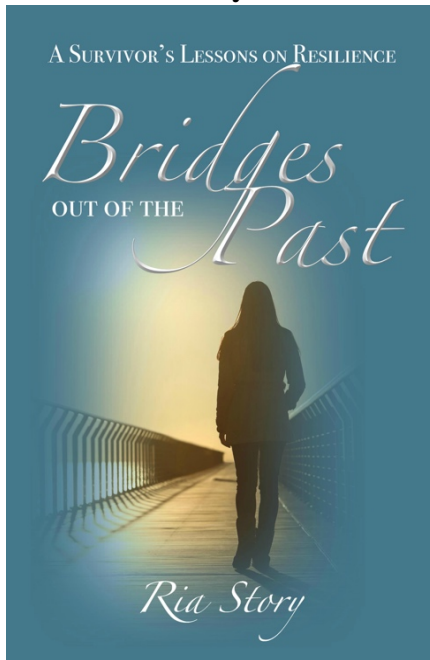
Read more books by Ria



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.

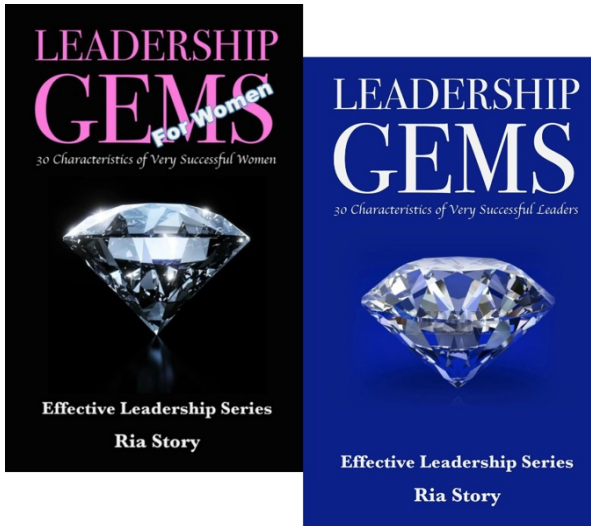
Order books online at Amazon or
RiaStory.com



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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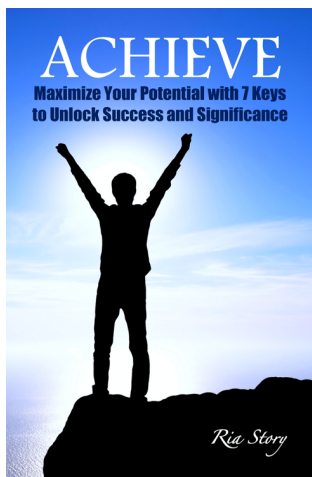


Note: Leadership Gems is the generic, non-gender specific, version of Leadership Gems for Women. The content is very similar.

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.

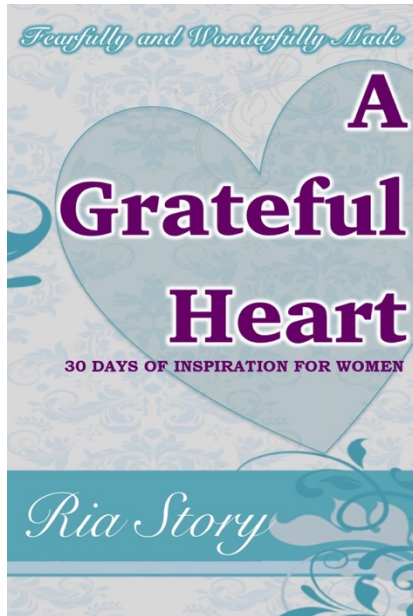
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You have hopes, dreams, and goals you want to achieve. You have aspirations of leaving a legacy of significance. You have untapped potential waiting to be unleashed. But, unfortunately, how to maximize your potential isn't something addressed in job 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.

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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.

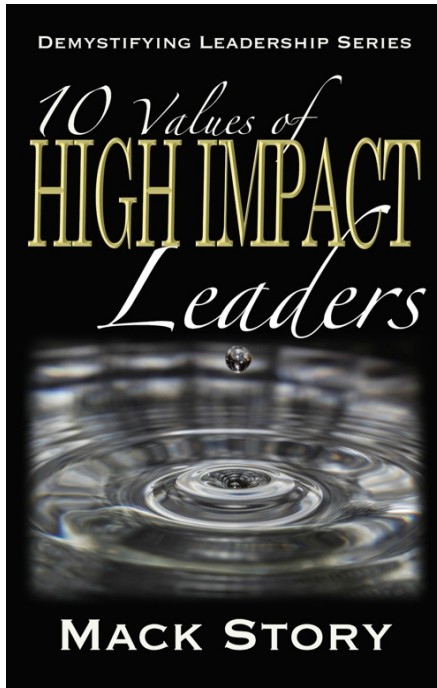
Order books online at Amazon or
RiaStory.com



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*

Read books by Mack Story



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.

Order books online at Amazon or
TopStoryLeadership.com

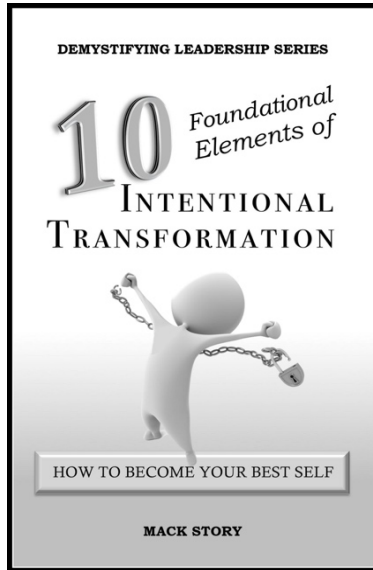


Are you looking for transformation in your life? Do you want better results? Do you want stronger relationships?

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.

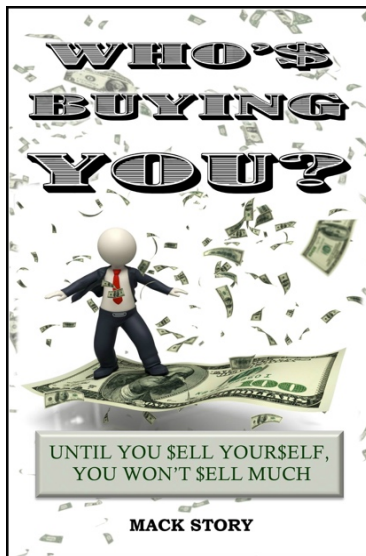
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10 Foundational Elements of Intentional Transformation serves as a source of motivation and inspiration to help you climb your way to the next level and beyond as you learn to intentionally create a better future for yourself. The pages will ENCOURAGE, 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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TopStoryLeadership.com



“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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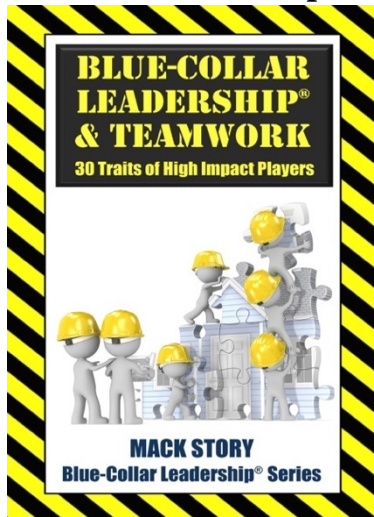


It's easier to compete when you're attracting great people instead of searching for good people. *Blue-Collar Leadership® & Culture* will help you understand why culture is the key to becoming a sought after employer of choice within your industry and in your area of operation.

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

Order books online at Amazon or
BlueCollarLeadership.com



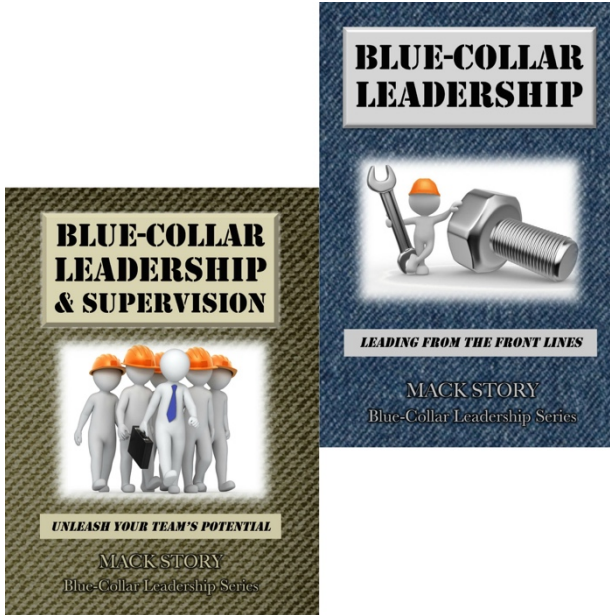
Are you ready to play at the next level and beyond?

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
BlueCollarLeadership.com



“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.

**Download the first 5 chapters of each book FREE at:
BlueCollarLeadership.com/download**

Order books online at Amazon or
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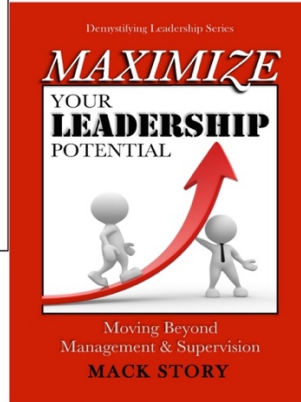
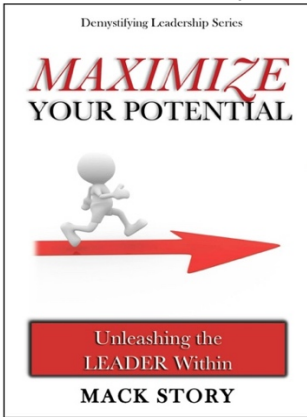


The biggest challenge in process improvement and cultural transformation isn't identifying the problems. It's execution: implementing and sustaining the solutions.

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.

Order books online at Amazon or
TopStoryLeadership.com



"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.

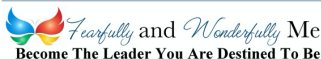
Note: These two MAXIMIZE books are the white-collar, or non-specific, version of the Blue-Collar Leadership® books and contain nearly identical content.



Ria Story is empowering women to become the leaders they are destined to beSM with leadership development content specifically designed for women.

Ria teaches leadership and success principles in a real, relatable, and practical way helping you increase your influence, develop your leadership, and maximize your results.

Sexually abused by her father from age 12-19 and trafficked by him, Ria left home at 19 without a job, money, or a high school diploma. Realizing the biggest obstacle to success is embracing excuses, Ria set her goals high and worked to achieve them. Today, as a TEDx speaker, author, and certified leadership trainer with nearly 20 years of experience in addition to her MBA and several other management degrees, Ria shares the lessons she learned to be successful and influence people.



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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

“I am using your material to empower myself and my female clients. Thanks for sharing your story and a wonderful journey of growth!”

~ Sue Q, Licensed Clinical Therapist

“It was awesome! Ria has a real gift. I came away with so many helpful tools! Thank you Ria!”

~ Stefanie, Workshop Attendee

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~ Sam McLamb, VP & COO

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