

Girl, Wash Your Face

By - Rachel Hollis

“If Rachel Hollis tells you to wash your face, turn on that water! She is the mentor every woman needs, from new mommas to seasoned business women.” —**ANNA TODD**, New York Times and #1 internationally bestselling author of the After series

“Rachel’s voice is the winning combination of an inspiring life coach and your very best (and funniest) friend. Shockingly honest and hilariously down to earth, Girl, Wash Your Face is a gift to women who want to flourish and live a courageously authentic life.” —**MEGAN TAMTE**, founder and co-CEO of Evereve

“There aren’t enough women in leadership telling other women to GO FOR IT. We typically get the caregiver; we rarely get the boot camp instructor. Rachel lovingly but firmly tells us it is time to stop letting the tail wag the dog and get on with living our wild and precious lives. Girl, Wash Your Face is a dose of high-octane straight talk that will spit you out on the other end chasing down dreams you hung up long ago. Love this girl.” —**JEN HATMAKER**, New York Times bestselling author of For the Love and Of Mess and Moxie and happy online hostess to millions every week

“In Rachel Hollis’s first nonfiction book, you will find she is less cheerleader and more life coach. This means readers won’t just walk away inspired, they will walk away with the right tools in hand to actually do their dreams. Dream doing is what Rachel is all about it. You will be, too, when you read her newest book.” —**JESSICA HONEGGER**, founder and co-CEO of the Noonday Collection

INTRODUCTION

Hey Girl, Hey!

This is the big opening letter to my book, the part where I tell you all the things I'm hoping for as you read it. This is the moment where I outline my intentions and—if you're already game to read on—this is where I fire you up more about what to anticipate. This is also the important letter for someone standing in the bookstore right now trying to decide if she should buy this book or, like, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*—and the words she's reading now will decide for her. I mean, that feels like a lot of pressure for one little letter, but here we go. This book is about a bunch of hurtful lies and one important truth.

The truth? You, and only you, are ultimately responsible for who you become and how happy you are. That's the takeaway. Don't get me wrong. I'm going to tell a hundred stories that are funny or weird or embarrassing or sad or crazy, but each of them is reaching for this same pithy, Pinterest-worthy truth: your life is up to you. But that truth will never be believable if you don't first understand the lies that get in the way of it.

Understanding that you choose your own happiness, that you have control of your own life, is so important. It's one of those things we grasp with both hands and put up on the bulletin board as a reminder . . . but it's not the only thing you need to understand. You also need to identify—and systematically destroy—every lie you've told yourself your whole life. Why? Because it's impossible to go somewhere new, to become something new, without first acknowledging where you are. The self-awareness that comes from truly digging into what you've come to believe about who you are is invaluable.

Have you ever believed that you aren't good enough? That you're not thin enough? That you're unlovable? That you're a bad mom? Have you ever believed that you deserve to be treated badly? That you'll never amount to anything? All lies. All lies perpetuated by society, the media, our family of origin, or frankly — and this is my Pentecostal showing—by the Devil himself. These lies are dangerous and devastating to our sense of worth and our ability to function. The most sinister thing about them is that we rarely hear them at all.

We rarely hear the lies we've created about ourselves because they've been playing so loudly in our ears for so long that they've become white noise. The hateful narrative bombards us every day, yet we don't even realize it's there. Recognizing the lies we've come to accept about ourselves is the key to growing into a better version of ourselves.

If we can identify the core of our struggles while simultaneously understanding that we are truly in control of conquering them, then we can utterly change our trajectory. That's why I do what I do. That's why I run a website and talk about how to make a centerpiece, or parent with kindness, or strengthen a marriage. It's why I researched thirty different ways to clean out your front-load washer before I taught my tribe how to do it. It's why I know the perfect ratio of balsamic and citrus to make your pot roast taste amazing. Sure, I cover a whole host of topics using my online platform, but ultimately they boil down to one thing: these are the elements of my life, and I want to do them well. The posts demonstrate how I am growing and learning, and I want them to grow and encourage other women too.

I suppose if I'd been into homeschooling or knitting or photography or macramé, I would have used those things to try and better myself and boost up my friends. But I'm not into those things. I'm into lifestyle stuff, so I focus on creating content that falls under the banner of lifestyle media. Early on in this career, though, I realized that a lot of women look at lifestyle imagery as what they should aspire to be. Many of those images are impossible—another lie foisted upon us—so I set out to be honest from the beginning. I vowed to be authentic and sincere, and for every gloriously styled cupcake picture we produced, I shared a photo of myself with facial paralysis.

If I went somewhere fancy like the Oscars, I balanced that with a post about my struggle with weight loss and pictures of me forty pounds heavier. I've talked about it all: struggles in my marriage, postpartum depression, and feeling jealous, scared, angry, ugly, unworthy, unloved. I have tried to be totally real about who I am and where I'm coming from. Seriously, the most famous thing I've ever done was to post a picture of the stretch marks on my saggy tummy on the internet. And yet . . . And yet I still get the notes. Women from all over the world still email and ask me how I manage to keep it all together while they struggle. I can feel the pain in those emails.

I can hear the shame in the words they use to describe their own hardships, and it makes my heart hurt. So I write them back. I tell every single one how

beautiful and strong she is. I call them warrior, courageous, fighter. I tell them not to give up. It's what feels appropriate to say to a total stranger. But it's not all I want to say. It's not what I would say if it were my sister who was hurting, or my best friend. It's not what I wish I could say to my younger self. Because to those closest to me, I am supportive and encouraging . . . but I absolutely refuse to watch you wallow.

The truth is that you are strong and courageous and a fighter . . . but if I'm telling you that, it's because I want you to see those characteristics in yourself. I want to grab you by the shoulders and shake you until your teeth rattle. I want to get in your face until you have the courage to look me in the eyes and see the answer for yourself. I want to shout at the top of my lungs until you know this one great truth: you are in control of your own life. You get one and only one chance to live, and life is passing you by.

Stop beating yourself up, and dang it, stop letting others do it too. Stop accepting less than you deserve. Stop buying things you can't afford to impress people you don't even really like. Stop eating your feelings instead of working through them. Stop buying your kids' love with food, or toys, or friendship because it's easier than parenting. Stop abusing your body and your mind. Stop! Just get off the never-ending track. Your life is supposed to be a journey from one unique place to another; it's not supposed to be a merry-go-round that brings you back to the same spot over and over again. Your life doesn't have to look like mine. Heck, your life doesn't have to look like anyone else's at all, but it should at least be a creation of your own making.

Is it going to be hard? Absolutely! But taking the easy way out is how you end up on the sofa, fifty pounds overweight, while life passes you by. Will change happen overnight? No way! This is a lifelong process. You'll try out some different tools and techniques, and while some of them will feel okay, maybe one will feel like the answer and then thirty-seven different others will feel like garbage. Then you'll wake up tomorrow and do it again. And again. And again. And you'll fail. You'll fall off the wagon.

You'll eat half of a birthday cake when no one is watching or scream at your husband or drink too much wine all month long. You'll fall into ruts because this is life and that's just how it goes. But once you understand that you are the one who is truly in control, you'll get up and try again. And you'll keep going until being in control feels more natural than being out of control. It'll become a way of life, and you'll become the person you are meant to be. It's worth asking, right

here, right up front, where faith plays a role in all of this. As a Christian I grew up learning that God was in control, that God had a plan for my life, and I believe in the marrow of my bones that this is true. I believe God loves each of us unconditionally, but I don't think that means we get to squander the gifts and talents he's given us simply because we're good enough already. A caterpillar is awesome, but if the caterpillar stopped there—if she just decided that good is good enough—we would all miss out on the beautiful creature she would become.

You are more than you have become. That's what I want to tell the women who write to me asking for advice. It might be tough to hear, but that knowledge is followed by this sweet truth: you are more than you have become, and you are utterly in control over what you do with that knowledge. Which led me to an idea. What if I wrote a whole book about all the ways I have struggled and then explained the steps that helped me get past those times? What if I talked about all of my failures and embarrassing moments? What if you knew that my biggest shame is that I sometimes get so angry I scream at my children? Not holler, not yell, not scold them strongly, but scream so loudly it nauseates me to think of it later. What if you hear that I likely have at least three cavities in my mouth right now because I am petrified of the dentist? What if I talked about my cellulite, or the weird third boob thing that sits in between my arm and my regular boob when I wear a tank top? Did I mention back fat? Or the hair that grows out of the mole on my face? Or my insecurities? What if I started a book by telling you that I peed my pants as an adult, as a fully grown human, and it wasn't the first time, nor will it be the last? And what if I told you that even in spite of my confessions—be they funny, embarrassing, painful, or gross—I am at peace with myself? That I love who I am even when I do things I'm not proud of? And that it's possible because I know I am ultimately in control of making change? I am in control over the person I will become. By the grace of God, I will wake up tomorrow and have another chance to do this life better.

By the grace of God, I've had thirty-five years of trying so hard in some areas of my life (like the creation of cheese-based casseroles) that I am crushing it. And in other areas (like controlling my anxiety) I am constantly working on different angles to attack the same problem. It's a lifelong journey, but I rest in the knowledge that every day I'm learning and growing, which lets me feel at peace with myself. The things I've struggled with? The lies I've believed about myself for so long? The list is a mile long. So long, in fact, that I decided to dedicate a chapter to each one. Every single section of this book begins with a lie that I

believed, and what follows are the stories of how that particular lie held me back, hurt me, and in some cases, caused me to hurt others. But by admitting to these lies, I have taken their power away. I'll share with you how I made changes in my life to overcome the struggles—some for good, and some as an ever-evolving dance between myself and lifelong insecurities.

What are my insecurities? Well, here are some of the biggest and the baddest in no particular order. I hope they'll encourage you. I hope you'll find the ideas helpful. More than anything, I hope you'll rest in the knowledge that you can become whomever and whatever you want to be, my sweet friend. And on the days that seem the hardest, you'll remember that— by an inch or a mile— forward momentum is the only requirement. Love, Rac