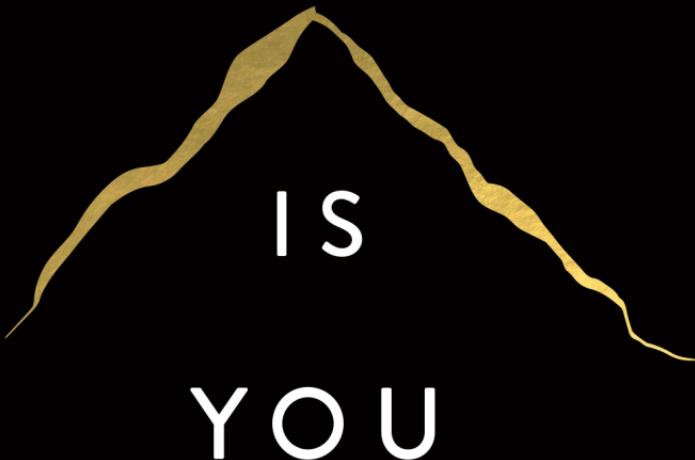


“The ultimate seeker’s guide for those brave enough to face their true north and take their power back.”

— JENNA BLACK, INTERNATIONAL COACH

THE MOUNTAIN



TRANSFORMING SELF-SABOTAGE
INTO SELF-MASTERY

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INTRODUCTION

MUCH LIKE NATURE, life is very often working in our favor, even when it seems like we are only being faced with adversity, discomfort, and change.

As forest fires are essential to the ecology of the environment—opening new seeds that require heat to sprout and rebuild a population of trees—our minds also go through periodic episodes of positive disintegration, or a cleansing through which we release and renew our self-concept. We know that nature is most fertile and expansive at its perimeters, where climates meet, and we also transform when we reach our edge states, the points at which we are forced to step out of our comfort zones and regroup.¹ When we can no longer rely on our coping mechanisms to help distract us from the problems in our lives, it can feel as though we've hit rock bottom. The reality is that this sort of awakening is what happens when we finally come to terms with the problems that have existed for a long time. The breakdown is often just the tipping point that precedes the breakthrough, the moment a star implodes before it becomes a supernova.

Just as a mountain is formed when two sections of the ground are forced against one another, your mountain will arise out of coexisting but conflicting needs. Your mountain requires you to reconcile two parts of you: the conscious and the unconscious, the part of you that is aware of what you want and the part of you that is not aware of why you are still holding yourself back.

Historically, mountains have been used as metaphors for spiritual awakenings, journeys of personal growth, and of course, insurmountable challenges that seem impossible to overcome when we are standing at the bottom. Like so much of nature, mountains provide us with an inherent wisdom about what it will take to rise up to our highest potential.

The objective of being human is to grow. We see this reflected back to us in every part of life. Species reproduce, DNA evolves to eliminate certain strands and develop new ones, and the edges of the universe are expanding forever outward. Likewise, our ability to feel the depth and beauty of life is capable of expanding forever inward if we are willing to take our problems and see them as catalysts. Forests need fire to do this, volcanoes need implosions, stars need collapse, and human beings often need to be faced with no other option but to change before they really do.

To have a mountain in front of you does not mean you are fundamentally broken in some way. Everything in

nature is imperfect, and it is because of that imperfection that growth is possible. If everything existed in uniformity, the gravity that created the stars and planets and everything that we know would not exist. Without breaks, faults, and gaps, nothing could grow and nothing would become.² The fact that you are imperfect is not a sign that you have failed; it is a sign that you are human, and more importantly, it is a sign that you still have more potential within you.

Maybe you know what your mountain is. Maybe it's addiction, weight, relationships, jobs, motivation, or money. Maybe you don't. Maybe it's a vague sense of anxiety, low self-esteem, fear, or a general discontentment that seems to bleed out onto everything else. The mountain is often less a challenge in front of us as it is a problem within us, an unstable foundation that might not seem evident on the surface but is nonetheless shifting almost every part of our lives.

Usually when we have a problem that is circumstantial, we are facing the reality of life. When we have a problem that is chronic, we are facing the reality of ourselves. We often think that to face a mountain means to face life's hardships, but the truth is that it is almost always because of the years we have spent accumulating tiny traumas, adaptations, and coping mechanisms, all of which have compounded over time.

Your mountain is the block between you and the life you want to live. Facing it is also the only path to your freedom and becoming. You are here because a trigger showed you to your wound, and your wound will show you to your path, and your path will show you to your destiny.

When you arrive at this breaking point—the foot of the mountain, the heat of the fire, the night that finally wakes you—you are at the crux of the breakdown, and if you are willing to do the work, you will find that it is the entry-way to the breakthrough you have spent your entire life waiting for.

Your old self can no longer sustain the life you are trying to lead; it is time for reinvention and rebirth.

You must release your old self into the fire of your vision and be willing to think in a way you have never even tried before. You must mourn the loss of your younger self, the person who has gotten you this far but who is no longer equipped to carry you onward. You must envision and become one with your future self, the hero of your life that is going to lead you from here. The task in front of you is silent, simple, and monumental. It is a feat most do not ever get to the point of attempting. You must now learn agility, resilience, and self-understanding. You must change completely, never to be the same again.

The mountain that stands in front of you is the calling of your life, your purpose for being here, and your path finally made clear. One day, this mountain will be behind you, but who you become in the process of getting over it will stay with you always.

In the end, it is not the mountain that you must master, but yourself.

SELF-SABOTAGE IS NOT ALWAYS OBVIOUS AT THE ONSET

When Carl Jung was a child, he fell on the ground in school and hit his head. When he got hurt, he thought to himself: “Yes, maybe I won’t have to go back to school now.”³

Though he is known today for his insightful body of work, he actually didn’t like school or fit in well with his peers. Shortly after his accident, Jung began experiencing sporadic and uncontrollable fainting spells. He unconsciously developed what he would call a “neurosis” and ultimately came to realize that all neuroses are “substitute[s] for legitimate suffering.”

In Jung’s case, he made an unconscious association between fainting and getting out of school. He came to believe that the fainting spells were a manifestation of his unconscious desire to get out of class, where he felt uncomfortable and unhappy. Likewise, for many people, their fears and attachments are very often just symptoms of deeper issues for which they do not have any better way to cope.

SELF-SABOTAGE IS A COPING MECHANISM

Self-sabotage is what happens when we refuse to consciously meet our innermost needs, often because we do not believe we are capable of handling them.

Sometimes, we sabotage our relationships because what we really want is to find ourselves, though we are afraid to be alone. Sometimes, we sabotage our professional success because what we really want is to create art, even if it will make us seem less ambitious by society's measures. Sometimes, we sabotage our healing journey by psychoanalyzing our feelings, because doing so ensures we avoid actually experiencing them. Sometimes, we sabotage our self-talk because if we believed in ourselves, we'd feel free to get back out in the world and take risks, and that would leave us vulnerable.

In the end, self-sabotage is very often just a maladaptive coping mechanism, a way we give ourselves what we need without having to actually address what that need is. But like any coping mechanism, it is just that — a way to cope. It's not an answer, it's not a solution, and it does not ever truly solve the problem. We are merely numbing our desires, and giving ourselves a little taste of temporary relief.

SELF-SABOTAGE COMES FROM IRRATIONAL FEAR

Sometimes, our most sabotaging behaviors are really the result of long-held and unexamined fears we have about the world and ourselves.

Perhaps it is the idea that you are unintelligent, unattractive, or disliked. Perhaps it is the idea of losing a job,

taking an elevator, or committing to a relationship. In other cases, it can be more abstract, such as the concept of someone “coming to get” you, violating your boundaries, getting “caught,” or being wrongly accused.

These beliefs become attachments over time.

For most people, the abstract fear is really a representation of a legitimate fear. Because it would be too scary to actually dwell on the real fear, we project those feelings onto issues or circumstances that are less likely to occur. If the situation has an extremely low likelihood of becoming reality, it therefore becomes a “safe” thing to worry about, because subconsciously, we already know it isn’t going to happen. Therefore, we have an avenue to express our feelings without actually endangering ourselves.

For example, if you are someone who is deeply afraid of being a passenger in a car, maybe your real fear is the loss of control or the idea that someone or something else is controlling your life. Perhaps the fear is of “moving forward,” and the moving car is simply a representation of that.

If you were aware of the real issue, you could begin working to resolve it, perhaps by identifying the ways you are giving up your power or being too passive. However, if you aren’t aware of the real problem, you’ll continue to spend your time trying to convince yourself to not be triggered and anxious while riding in the car and find that it only gets worse.

HOW TO GET OUT OF DENIAL

Maybe this preliminary information about self-sabotage resonates a bit, or maybe it resonates a lot.

Either way, if you are here because you truly want to change your life, you are going to have to stop being in denial about your personal state of affairs. You are going to have to get real with yourself. You are going to have to decide that you love yourself too much to stop settling for less than what you really deserve.

If you think that you could be doing better in life, you might be right.

If you think that there is more that you are here to accomplish, you might be right.

If you think that you are not being your authentic self, you might be right.

It does not serve us to use endless affirmations to placate our true feelings about where we are in our journey. When we do this, we start dissociating and get stuck.

In an effort to “love ourselves,” we try to validate everything about who we are. Yet those warm sentiments never quite seem to stick, only ever temporarily numbing the discomfort. Why don’t they work? Because deep down, we know we are not quite being who we

want to be, and until we accept this, we are never going to find peace.

When we are in denial, we tend to go into “blame” mode. We look for anyone or anything to explain why we are the way we are. Then we start justifying. If you have to constantly—on a near daily basis—rationalize why you’re unhappy about your life, you are not doing yourself any favors. You are not getting any closer to creating the lasting change that you so deeply desire.

The first step in healing anything is taking full accountability. It is no longer being in denial about the honest truth of your life and yourself. It does not matter what your life looks like on the outside; it is how you feel about it on the inside. It is not okay to be constantly stressed, panicked, and unhappy. Something is wrong, and the longer you try to “love yourself” out of realizing this, the longer you are going to suffer.

The greatest act of self-love is to no longer accept a life you are unhappy with. It is to be able to state the problem plainly and in a straightforward manner.

That is precisely what you need to do to continue truly uprooting your life and transforming it. It is the first step towards real change.



ABOUT *the* AUTHOR

BRIANNA WIEST is the bestselling author of *101 Essays That Will Change The Way You Think* and *The Mountain Is You*. Her work on mindfulness, spirituality and self-improvement has appeared in publications such as *Forbes*, *The Huffington Post*, *USA Today* and *Thought Catalog*, where she is currently a partner. Brianna is also the author of two poetry collections, *Salt Water: Poems On Healing & Wholeness*, and *Ceremony: Poetry & Prose*. Her life's work is to help people activate their potential by rewriting their inner narratives with more alignment, truth and purpose.

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...ay, given that there are people who use money in selfish ways, it is even more important that good people with great intentions are fearless in pursuing of acquiring this essential tool to create more time, opportunity, and wellness for themselves and others. You have to recognize that being healthy makes you less vulnerable, not more, and that criticism comes with creating anything for the public and isn't a reason to not do it. You have to show yourself that there are many different ways to self-soothe that are more effective than unhealthy food choices and that there are far better ways to connect with others than through negativity.

Once you begin to really question and observe these pre-existing beliefs, you begin to see how warped and illogical they were all along—not to mention distinctly holding you back from your ultimate potential.

SELF-SABOTAGE
WHAT'S...

we are, we end up avoiding the work that is required to actually become that good. We sabotage ourselves because it is the willingness to show up and simply *do it*, again and again and again, that ultimately brings us to a place of mastery.

HOW TO RESOLVE THIS

Don't worry about doing it well; just do it.

Don't worry about writing a bestseller, just write. Don't worry about making a Grammy-winning hit, just make music. Don't worry about failing, just keep showing up and trying. At first, all that matters is that you *do* what you really want to do. From there, you can learn from your mistakes and over time get to the place where you really want to be.

The truth is that we actually do not accomplish great feats when we are anxious about whether or not what we do will indeed be something impressive and world-changing. We accomplish these sorts of things when we simply show up and allow ourselves to create something meaningful and important to us.

Instead of perfection, focus on progress. Instead of having something done perfectly, focus on just getting it done. From there, you can edit, build, grow, and develop it to exactly what your vision is. But if you don't get started, you'll never arrive.

PROGRESS, NOT PERFECTION!



What you do every single day accounts for the quality of your life and the degree of your success. It's not whether you "feel" like putting in the work, but whether or not you do it regardless.

This is because the outcomes of life are not governed by passion; they are governed by principle.

You may not think what you did this morning was important, but it was. You may not think that the little things add up, but they do. Consider the age-old brainteaser: Would you rather have \$1 million in hand today or a penny that doubles in value every day for the next month? The \$1 million right now sounds great, but after a 31-day month, that one penny would be worth over \$10 million.

Making big, sweeping changes is not difficult because we are flawed, incompetent beings. It's difficult because we are not meant to live outside of our comfort zones.

If you want to change your life, you need to make tiny, nearly undetectable decisions every hour of every day until those choices are habituated. Then you'll just continue to do them.

If you want to spend less time on your phone, deny yourself the chance to check it one time today. If you want to eat healthier, drink half a cup of water today. If you want to sleep more, go to bed 10 minutes earlier tonight than you did last night.

If you want to exercise more, do it now for just 10 minutes. If you want to read, read one page. If you want to meditate, do so for 30 seconds.

Then keep doing those things. Do them every single day. You'll get used to not checking your phone. You'll want more water, and you'll drink more water. You'll run for 10 minutes, and you won't feel like you have to stop, so you won't. You'll read one page, grow interested, and read another.

At our most instinctive, physiological level, "change" translates to something dangerous and potentially life-threatening. No wonder why we build our own cages and stay in them, even though there's no lock on the door.

Trying to shock yourself into a new life isn't going to work, and that's why it hasn't yet.

You don't need to wait until you feel like changing to start changing. All you need is to make one microshift at a time and then let the energy and momentum build.

YOUR MIND IS ANTIFRAGILE

Is your brain the greatest antagonist in your life?

Is irrational fear at the core of the majority of your greatest stressors?



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