

REFUSING
to LOSE

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Never surrender
to life's challenging times

A gripping, true story of moving from desperation to strength

Stephanie Davis

Refusing To Lose

Never Surrender To Life's Turbulent Times

Stephanie Davis

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Dedications

for Olivia

Through thousands of seizures, life-changing challenges, and unexpected complications...you have led the way with courage, strength, hope, and determination. You aren't just my inspiration you are a leader for many.

I love you Olivia...this one's for you!

...and for Bruce

As I've written, reflected, and re-read my ramblings, I see a pattern that emerges from the depths of despair. Through darkness we found light. Through rain, the horizon cleared. Together, you and I have saved our child's spirit, taught lessons to the others and found a deeper meaning of love and respect. With you by my side I am complete. One half of one incredible team.

With all my love — s.

Introduction

When writing this book I divided it into two parts.

Part 1 is **my story** and is a shorter, but powerful part of the book; I'm sharing it with you for many reasons. I want you to know where I've been and where I am now. I want you to know that through crisis and sorrow and things that make no sense, you can find stability, happiness, and a new "normal".

You too can find your way.

Part 2 highlights the **secrets** I learned to help me stay sane in the midst of chaos; it's all about moving forward. Part 2 is about understanding how to analyze where you are now, deciding what you want to leave behind and discovering what to take with you to create a happier, more peaceful, and powerful person.

If I can do it – you can too!

This section is where I share personal stories and secrets that help me sort through life's challenges and tragedies and still keep laughter in my heart and a smile to share with others.

My challenge is different than yours. And yours is different than your best friend, your neighbor next door, or your



colleague. Some of us struggle with medical challenges for ourselves or loved ones, others face relationship problems, divorce, financial struggles, weight issues, confidence problems, career transition, and just plain messy life stuff. None is more important than another. Just different. And all challenges affect our happiness and those who love us.

Learning to shift perspective, to have confidence to face the chaos, and to keep on smiling is what this book is about.

It can be what YOU are about.

Sprinkled throughout each chapter in this section I will ask you questions that are meant to evoke real emotions and feelings. I refer to this as *reflection* and have designed it to help you begin the process of your new journey. I've included a small space after each question for "quick thoughts" that may come to you at the time.

An added bonus to the book is an **interactive journal** that you can download free from my website www.refusing-tolosebook.com

Most people have a challenge or two in their life they would like to change or improve upon. As a Life Coach I often encourage my clients to utilize the practice of journaling as an effective way to sort through mind-clutter, helping them move closer to their goals.

Even if you've never journaled before, you may enjoy this interactive approach; thought provoking questions are posed and are similar to those that I might ask you during a one to one coaching session.

The more energy you devote to answering these questions and completing the exercises the more you will learn about yourself and how you want to proceed with your journey. Take time thinking over each question.

I am confident that writing from your heart will help you move forward to a happier, healthier, new you.

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Part I



My Story



She's lying in the pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) now. Her head is bandaged, her body still. The sights and sounds of the ward are familiar. Machines are sounding off – beeping, whirling, lights are flashing. It is busy. Many sick children today. And my daughter is among them, again.

I remember back to the beginning. The first time Olivia was here. My skin crawled every time I walked in to the ward. The smell of antiseptic, the stiff cold air, crying parents, distraught grandparents. Death. Sometimes it felt like death.

I remember thinking that PICU was the darkest, saddest place I had ever seen. Back then it was too hard to comprehend that we were a part of this seemingly grave, sick world.

I see things differently today. I watch in awe at the amazing team of nurses interacting seamlessly to provide medication, treatment, and attention to each child under their care. I watch a grandmother sitting next to her little one reading the Bible, explaining each verse. I see a couple in the corner embrace and hold each other for a very, very long time. They seem to be amazed watching their child breathe,



slowly breathing in and out, in and out. They have hope; I can see it on their faces, I hear it in their voices.

I reflect on our part of the journey. This isn't the end. It's the beginning. For us it's the beginning of *recovery*. We've been in PICU many times before and each time Olivia has moved on to the next phase of her life. Each time our journey out of here has been different.

Something tells me that each one of these innocent children will leave here to move on to their next phase; whatever that might be. I find peace praying for each of their families. I pray for their parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends. I hope they find peace and a path to move forward on. I hope that their journey is helped by those surrounding them in love. It takes time and understanding to parent a "regular" child – it takes a heavy-duty foundation to raise a more challenged one.

My eyes go back to Olivia. She still hasn't moved. Her thickly bandaged head looks too heavy for her narrow neck to support. She looks vulnerable. Weak. Fragile. I hate that. My eyes bore into her skin as I look for any sign of a seizure, a twitch, or of movement. I begin talking to her... *"Wake up honey, wake up. It's time to start digging out of the hole. It's time to begin the climb. You aren't falling deeper – you've hit the bottom, it's time to come up. Imagine the sky Olivia; it's a beautiful shade of blue, the sun is shining, the birds are chirping. Wake up so we can get started - this is the beginning of a brand new life."*

I kept my head resting on the foot of her bed for a very long time. Slumped over I prayed. As I asked for strength and peace and healing, my mind raced back over the last few years.

In 2005 my life stopped; or at least the life I *knew* did. A monster entered my family's life and I found myself fighting harder and longer than I imagined anyone ever



could. This monster terrified me, paralyzed every part of my soul and brought me more anger and hate than I thought was humanly possible. It was a long time before I stopped damning the world. A long time before I accepted that the life I knew was gone. And a very long time before I found peace and strength to create a new vision and be the leader that my family needed.

We were a very happy family of four; my husband Bruce and I, and our two young daughters, Natalie (then 8) and Olivia (then 6). The life we built together seemed perfect. Bruce and I had a loving relationship, two beautiful daughters – we were a foursome that loved to spend time together, travel together and seek adventure – we truly enjoyed being together. But as the girls got older we all yearned for more. What began as a simple discussion about adopting a boy from a foreign country quickly escalated into an all encompassing plan to grow our family.

Eight months later we were on a plane to Guatemala to meet our new addition. He was 5 months old and beautiful; we named him Ever B. Davis and immediately fell in love with our new son and brother. We spent an unforgettable week with him traveling through Guatemala, learning about his magical country, learning about him, and expanding our family. Blessed. We felt very blessed.

September 6, 2005....

Late at night, on Olivia's 7th birthday in the middle of this mysterious country something horrible happened. Some-thing that would change our lives forever: Olivia had a seizure.

As I held her in the shower – her trembling seemed endless. She was a ragdoll in my arms; shaking uncontrollably. At the time I thought she was having trouble breathing

Secret One

Reconnect With Yourself



Live Your Own Life...

Identify Your Gifts...

Learn To Listen To Your Mind and Body...

Know What Helps Clear Your Mind...

What's Important To YOU Right Now...

Create Your Own Definition Of Happiness...

It's easy to lose ourselves. Life can be chaotic and demanding. We're often pulled in many directions, trying to fill all the roles to which we've committed. Many times there's no energy left for our greatest asset – *ourselves*.

In the “giving” mindset that encompasses many of us, everyone else's needs come before our own. While attention and resources are given to the potential of others; *our* personal growth can slow to a crawl and eventually come to a standstill.

“IT'S GOT TO STOP!!!”

It's time to get re-energized about your **own** life. You deserve it. You've got one life to live – and it's not your child's – or



surrounded Olivia and our life. Any form of peace would have been welcomed. I think I would have been a better leader, a more loving partner.

It took me awhile to listen to myself, but when I finally did the rewards were great. I'm happy to say that now I can react to what's going on in my life in a healthy, positive way by *really* listening to myself and taking the necessary steps to calm my mind and body.

How did I do it? Good question!

As you work your way through the book and **downloadable journal**, I think you'll come up with the answers that work best for you. You see, it's not as simple as one "secret" or nugget of information, it's a combination of many that will help you learn to listen to your mind and body.

How you listen is different from how I listen. What works for me, might not be what works for you. I have confidence that you can find your own answers that are a perfect match for you!

How well do you listen to yourself?

When your mind and body talk do you listen? Or do you stay on life's track, charging ahead never veering from current programming?

Learn to listen to yourself

The more we listen to ourselves, the more we discover what powerful leaders we can be in our own life. And before we can lead others, **we must learn to lead ourselves.**

Let's look at how you might go about doing the same.