

DREAMING **BIG** BEING **BOLD**

Inspiring stories from Trailblazers, Visionaries, and Change Makers

CHAPTER 7

Your Whiteboard of Life



By Diane Gies

Diane is the Founder of Elite Wellness Getaways, delivering custom retreat programs in sunny destinations designed to unplug you from your everyday world and teach new strategies to live the life you are meant to live. She advocates personal growth and creates change where change is needed.

Life is not merely a series of meaningless accidents or coincidences... But rather, it's a tapestry of events culminating in an exquisite, sublime plan."

~ Serendipi

How awesome is that quote? Better yet, what does it even mean?

I make it out to mean that every single thing that happens to you - good or bad - is a part of the greater picture. I came to realize that our lives are much like a quilt, wouldn't you say?

Think about it. A quilt is made up of several unique squares that when put together create a beautiful piece of artwork. You may look at one particular square and think, "Hmm, I'm not liking this one", but when attached to the other pieces, it does create a masterpiece.

There are events in our lives that we may look at and say, hmmm, I'm not like this, but we must trust that it is a part of the greater picture and in the end, will help create this masterpiece we call life.

I didn't always think this way. Until several years ago, I used to blame the world for all the bad things that happened to me, and I never really learned what I was supposed to learn from those experiences.

You see when the call came on Aug. 14, 2010, at 3:05 p.m. that they had just found my stepson dead in his truck, my life had come to a screeching halt and my first instinct was to become a victim of the circumstance and blame the world for what had just happened to ME. I couldn't make sense of what I had just heard.

My mind was racing back in time, scrolling through my blueprint of life, looking to find answers. When I wasn't able to reconcile what had just happened, I fell into a state of shock which brought on anxiety and fear. I then became angry. And while they tell you that it's okay to be angry, I found that I was in that state of anger for close to a year.

I blamed the world for his death. I blamed him for leaving us and messing up our lives, how dare he! By the way, when you are in victim mode everything becomes about you. I was consumed with anger and knew I could no longer go on this way - quite honestly, I was toxic to be around.

That year I had an "ah-ha" moment. I realized that we all come into this world with what I now refer to as a "whiteboard." I'm a pretty visual person so this analogy worked for me.

I look at it this way: When we arrive in this world our slates are essentially clean. We have no preconceived notions, no ability to judge, and no limitations - hence the reason so many children start their lives saying they want to be superheroes when they grow up - because they truly believe they can be! Somewhere along the way we expose our whiteboards to others and allow them to freely write messages on our board.

They write messages like:

"Are you crazy? You can't do that!"

"What are you thinking? You don't have the education or the know-how."

"You're not smart enough."

"You're not pretty enough,"

And so on...

Our parents are the first people to leave messages on our board. They bring us into this world with a vision of us being successful and happy, and perhaps having what they didn't have. They leave messages on our board teaching us what we can and can't say, what we should and shouldn't do, all to help us succeed in life. They are the first to contribute to our belief system.

For example, my father is a wonderful man who was raised in a war-torn country. Both he and my mother had to escape the Communist country and had to endure many hardships and disappointments along the way. As a result my father never trusted anyone. Wanting to protect his little girl, at a very young age his message to me was to never trust anyone because they will hurt and disappoint you.

I believed him. He was my father, and we trust what our fathers tell us, don't we? And so I took that message into my adult life. Consequently, I was never emotionally available to anyone. My relationships suffered and I found myself floundering as I tried to find that one person I could trust.

My Mother, having been hurt and disappointed herself, would tell me to never get excited or something bad would happen. She loved me and wanted to protect me from the pain that she endured from all her disappointments. I was little and had no point of reference, so I believed her.

I never tested her theory. I just learned at a young age to never get excited. I became an adult and watched the world go by, never getting excited about anything for fear of something bad happening.

When I reached high school my Father wanted to prepare me for life. He wanted me to have the luxuries that he never had so he would tell me that I needed to find a job that earned a lot of money, and then (and only then) would I be successful in life. He truly believed that money would bring him the success and respect that he felt he deserved, so it would to me as well.

And so you see, the message that was placed on my board had good intentions, however, my interpretation of that message was, *“Unless you had money you really wouldn't make a difference in the world nor would anyone respect you”*

The problem with this message was that I was never motivated by money but rather my motivation came from helping others. I looked for volunteer opportunities whenever I could, but I was discouraged from doing so because it wasn't making me any money and would get me “nowhere”. Not wanting to disappoint my parents I would stop volunteering.

As a result, I really struggled my way through high school, not knowing my purpose for even being there. My marks reflected my poor attitude and I was left with a 60 percent average in school. That completely defined me and left a message on my whiteboard leading me to believe that I was not even smart enough to further my education so I could get a good-paying job and be successful in life.

Fast forward through secondary school, I managed to pull my grades up and did complete my post-secondary school education. At that point, I had already convinced myself that I got in by fluke rather than by the fact that I was smart enough. I graduated and landed myself an amazing job that not only paid well but had one incredible pension.

I was set for life! I was successful just like my parents had envisioned!

By the time I was 26, I found myself depressed and quite honestly embarrassed. How could I seemingly have everything yet feel like I had nothing at all? It was then that I realized that while I was living the definition of success, it wasn't my definition, it was my Father's.

At the age of 27, I married and soon after that, we were pregnant with our first child. I remember being ecstatic, calling my mother to share the amazing news. Her words to me were: *“Please don't get so excited, something bad will happen!”*

I refused to allow her way of thinking to take away from what was at that point my greatest joy in life yet. I was going to challenge my whiteboard message and be excited once and for all!

At 32 weeks into my pregnancy, eight weeks before he was due, our baby boy came into the world. While it was sudden and very unexpected, we were so incredibly excited to meet our boy and couldn't wait to hold him for the first time. There were no words to express the love I already had for him.

Within half an hour of his arrival, the doctors told us that there was something critically wrong with his heart and it was unlikely he would make it.

I remember thinking to myself, OH MY GOD I was excited when my mom told me not to be - I didn't listen! My mom was right. Something terrible has happened.

And so that validated everything on my whiteboard. I learned that I should never deviate from the messages on my board and found myself governed by the beliefs that were created by those messages. I no longer made a move in life until I referred to my whiteboard. I was reminded never to try something new because I had failed once before, therefore would fail again. I was reminded not to get excited because we all know what happens when we get excited.

My life was consumed by negativity and all the stories I had now created from my belief system. I was paralyzed by the fear of what would happen if I didn't listen to the messages on my whiteboard. Consequently, my life spiralled out of control, leaving me in a state of depression.

Several years of living a life that was governed by my whiteboard messages passed before I once again had an "*ah-ha*" moment (thank goodness for those *ah-ha* moments am I right?) I came to realize that with every whiteboard comes a whiteboard eraser...and who knew that you could use that eraser at any point in time...

So I proceeded to wipe off any and all of the messages on my board that no longer served me but were just sitting there randomly holding me captive. These were the messages that governed my every move and that held me back from being who I wanted to be and living the life that I deserved.

And do you know what else comes with a whiteboard? You bet - a marker! I decided to use my marker to write new messages on my whiteboard...messages that would help catapult me into the life I had always dreamed of living! Those new messages would be the beginning of creating my new beliefs.

My hardest business struggle:

When I decided to venture out and take on my new role as the Founder and Creative Director of Elite Wellness Getaways I remember being paralyzed with fear and asking myself "*Are you insane? Do you actually think you have what it takes to do this?*"

It was me referring back to my whiteboard and uncovering the years of messages, reminding me there was no way I could do this. I had failed before and I would likely fail again.

I had been conditioned to believe that I needed to reach a certain status in life before I could do something as big and bold as what I was about to do. I had created a story in my head leading me to believe that my voice didn't matter.

When deciding to venture out and start my business I knew that what I wanted to do with my life relied heavily on using my voice and sharing my story. This meant that I needed to have a good firm grip on my marker while I wrote the messages I needed to write on my board. The letters were big and they were bold. My hand shook as I took firm hold of the proverbial marker and ultimately took control of my life.

My message was as follows:

DON'T EVER BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE JUST ORDINARY, YOU ARE EXTRAORDINARY AND YOU GOT THIS!

And that, my friends, is the only message that counts.

A success I enjoy:

Hands down my greatest success in life thus far are bringing two beautiful souls into the world. My son, who continues to impact the lives of all those around him with his courageous story, and my daughter whose compassion and inner beauty leave an imprint on the souls of all those who cross her path. My formal education is no match for what my two kids have taught me in life. They keep me humble and remind me daily of the true meaning of gratitude.

My other greatest success is deciding to start my business in collaboration with my amazing team, where I have been able to take my background in psychology and combine it with my love of travel to deliver amazing programs that help individuals create a shift in their way of thinking and create the life that they were meant to live.

I am living the best of both worlds, combining two of my passions into one while being able to help others create change where change is needed.

Lessons I learned the hard way that might help you:

- Exposing your whiteboard to just anyone will lead them to believe that they have the right to leave a message on it. Be conscious of who has access to your board. Guard your marker and use it to only write the messages that will serve you and catapult you towards the life you deserve.
- Do not allow old messages to take up space on your board. Be sure to take regular inventory of those messages and erase those that are interfering with the life you were destined to live. Your old messages don't define you - they can be erased.
- I lived on autopilot for so many years because of my belief system that was created from those messages. Had I realized sooner that I had full control of that eraser, I would have gotten rid of so many messages that no longer served me.

One step you can take to change today:

It doesn't get any easier than this...

Pick up that eraser and start erasing those messages off your board that no longer serve you. Heck, if you have to wipe it completely clean and use bleach to get rid of the stains left behind, then do it!

Grab that marker of yours. Dream Big and Be Bold as you write your new messages and create the life that you know you were meant to live!

And remember, your life is a journey...so make it epic!