



D A R E
to
R I S E

**Transformational Reflections to
Know Your Vision**

KAREEN ARISTIDE

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Dare to Rise

Transformational Reflections to Know Your Vision

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This book is dedicated to all the risers that I've had the privilege of walking with so far. You have dared to embark on the journey of transformation, and it has been a true joy to see you rise! Every version of you that arises is more radiant and more resilient than the previous one. You inspire me to continue rising, and together we are changing the world and making history! Thank you for trusting me. Thank you for believing in yourself enough to say a loud, resounding YES to rising!

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Introduction

This book is the first of a series to help you make room in your life for the next best version of yourself. No matter where you are on your personal development journey, there's always a next best version of yourself ready to rise. The truth is, it's not an easy journey. It requires choosing yourself and being intentional in making room for rising.

Our lives are busy. Every day we are solicited left, right, and center for our attention. The fact that you purchased this book means that you are ready to take the next step toward prioritizing yourself and journeying towards the next version of who you are. Congratulations! If this is your first time taking this step, I promise you will not regret making this life-changing decision. Suppose your personal growth is already a priority in your life. In that case, I hope you pick up a few valuable nuggets to add to your personal development toolbox.

I believe there are three aspects to rising – *knowing your vision*, *solidifying your passion*, and *taking concrete action*. These principles are the themes of a 90-Day personal development program I designed to create space to BE before we DO and to embrace living from the inside out. This book can be used as a companion to the program or as a stand-alone tool. I recommend you read one reflection daily and carve out at least 10-15 minutes daily to see results.

Knowing Your Vision: A Foundation for Rising

The reflections outlined in this book focus on your vision of yourself from the inside out. Although there are several definitions of vision according to the Webster dictionary, there's one that says that vision means “*a manifestation to*

the senses of something immaterial” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). This definition is key to our discussion because it refers to manifesting something unseen, hence something invisible. The version of ourselves we currently experience is based on a particular vision of ourselves manifested to our senses and experienced by others. So, our vision of ourselves is like an invisible pair of glasses we have throughout life.

We must go deeper before we go higher. If we want to rise and grow correctly, we must ensure that what we see outwardly is truly the manifestation of what we see inwardly. Sometimes it requires going backward to move forward to course correct. For example, we see ourselves through our parents’ vision when we come into this world. There could be things we end up adopting as our vision, but, in reality, it isn’t. Or maybe that vision is simply not conducive to the next version ready to rise. One of the essential ingredients to rising is having the right vision of ourselves for where we are in time, and becoming our very best allies to manifest the correct vision. When we have a good sense of what’s happening internally, we can manifest the right vision inside out.

Some questions to ponder when tackling knowing your vision include:

- *Do you know who you are inwardly?*
- *Is there congruence between who you are inwardly and outwardly?*
- *Do you think the worst of yourself, especially if you make a mistake or do something wrong?*
- *If something happens and somebody does verbal diarrhea on you, do you tend to think the worst of yourself?*
- *Is how you think of yourself conditional to how you behave or don’t behave?*
- *What do you really believe about yourself?*

Regardless of your answers to these questions, your vision of who you are internally should translate to who you are externally. Your vision reflects your identity and confidence, so you must know what that inner vision is and its source. The truth of who we are must be solid and cannot be influenced primarily by what happens in your external reality. If this is your case, get ready for a change. The reflections in this book will bring you to focus on your

inner vision. It will cause you to be intentional about living from the inside out so that you become stronger and more resilient as you dare to rise now.

I

Your Environment

The first step toward success is taken when you refuse to be a captive of the environment in which you first find yourself.—Mark Caine (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

1

Reflection 1: You Are a Product of Your Environment

You are a product of your environment. So choose the environment that will best develop you toward your objective. Analyze your life in terms of its environment. Are the things around you helping you toward success – or are they holding you back?—W. Clement Stone (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

Today I invite you to think of yourself as a product. You will want to keep this perspective as you go through the other daily reflections. When we talk about the environment, we usually focus on the external environment. I suggest that the focus should be on the internal environment first. That is the first goal of this book. We are focusing on our internal environment. Since you're a product of your environment, it would be best to take care of your internal environment first so the product can be what you want it to be. I want you to ask yourself, as you go through these reflections: where is my focus on a daily basis? Is it primarily internal or external?

Reflection 2: Scooping the Crap

Everybody's got the things that are crap about them, and that's inescapable because we're a product of our environment and our environment isn't always great.—Phil Dunster (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

As you focus on your internal environment, you might encounter some crap. When we dare to rise from the inside out, we will be facing the crap within ourselves. Now, you don't want to avoid the crap. You want to get close enough to scoop it up, get rid of it, and as a result, remove the flies. What do I call flies? Fears, doubts, anxiety, etc. - things that are preventing you from rising. So often, those things are attracted to the crap within us. Of course, there'll always be crap that comes here and there throughout our journey, no matter our level of rising. And so the goal is to become skilled at scooping the crap! So, my question today is: Are you willing to get close to the crap, even though it smells? Will you choose to be brave enough to scoop it up and get rid of it?

3

Reflection 3: Your Internal & External Environments

Whilst the greatest threat to your mission is the internal aspects within you, the external circumstances need to be covered against as well. Scan your external environment and circumstances.—Archibald Marwizi (Top 34 Quotes About External Environment, n.d.)

Today we're talking about the external environment and how it influences or impacts our internal environment. For example, when it's summer, it can get so hot outside. But when we get indoors to a place with air conditioning, the cooling it brings is just incredible! Think about that for a moment. Recall that sensation if you can. Or for those of us who live in a country with four seasons and do winter running, we love that cold/hot contrast, don't we? It's just amazing! My point is that we become very aware of the interaction between our internal and external environments and how one influences or impacts the other.

Similarly, once you understand where you're at in your internal environment, you can better understand how it is affected by your external environment. It is asking you to be very intentional. Ask yourself: how does my internal environment become better or worse depending on the external

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circumstances or the situations I go through in life? What environment is more conducive to that next best version of me rising?

II

Your Temperature

Are you a thermometer or a thermostat? A thermometer only reflects the temperature of its environment, adjusting to the situation. But a thermostat initiates action to change the temperature in its environment.—Nido R Qubein (Famous Authors | A-Z Quotes, n.d.)

4

Reflection 4: Your Emotions as Temperature

When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion.—Dale Carnegie (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

Today I want to talk about the temperature of your internal environment. Just like a room has a temperature, our internal environment also has a temperature. And how do you get to understand the temperature? It is by becoming aware of your dominant emotion. So throughout the day, check in with yourself, check to see what is the dominant emotion that you're experiencing. Is it fear? Doubt? Joy? Love? What is it? Be very aware of what it is. Maybe you can check in with yourself every hour or every noonday, whatever works for you. Have a practice of checking what temperature you're maintaining inwardly.

One of my favourite personal development experts, Brendan Burchard (2017), gives a great tip on how to check your temperature in his book *High Performance Habits* (highly recommended by the way). He suggests that we use our phones to create alarms for the different emotions that we want to cultivate. For example, you can use Joy as an alarm at 9 am, Peace at noon, Love at 3 pm, and so on to remind yourself daily what temperature you want to maintain. Try it for a week or two; you'll also influence your external

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environment!

5

Reflection 5: Your Emotions and Feelings

Our body translates our thoughts into chemical and physical responses that we experience as emotions. In other words, emotions are the body's response to the thoughts we think.—Mali Apple (69 Feeling Quotes – Inspirational Words of Wisdom, n.d.)

Knowing how you feel is the first step toward taking control of your emotions.—Thibaut Meurisse (Popular Quotes, n.d.)

Today we continue with the discussion on temperature. The internal and external environment interaction shows in our emotions and feelings. And so when we do this self-awareness exercise about looking at where we're at inwardly, those are the two things we will encounter. In that regard, it's essential to understand the difference between emotions and feelings. Again, Brendan talks about this in his book (Burchard, 2017, p. 69). Emotions are very automatic and sometimes very physical and spontaneous. It's really about reacting. A feeling is seen more like an emotional state; it's what your interpretation of that emotion is. So, a feeling is much closer to a belief, and it is something you can choose more readily than an emotion. So today, think about this distinction. Can you see the distinction between an emotion and a feeling? Can you distinguish that within yourself?

6

Reflection 6: Your Beliefs as Temperature

Our inner beliefs trigger failure before it happens. They sabotage lasting change by canceling its possibility. We employ these beliefs as articles of faith to justify our inaction and then wish away the result. I call them belief triggers.—Marshall Goldsmith (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

Belief in oneself is incredibly infectious. It generates momentum, the collective force of which far outweighs any kernel of self-doubt that may creep in.—Aimee Mullins (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

Today we are talking about our beliefs as another way to gauge our internal temperature. The Webster dictionary defines belief as “something that is accepted, considered to be true, or held as an opinion” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Our beliefs significantly impact our ability to know our vision. They are *generalizations* and *rules* that we adopt that shape our identity and our view of the world. They shape how we think about ourselves, the labels we put on ourselves, and our perception of ourselves. For example, statements like “*I always make mistakes*” or “*I should not show my emotions*” or “*I’m so amazing.*” These beliefs become the basis of our inner dialogues and everyday conversations with others. They often originate from

REFLECTION 6: YOUR BELIEFS AS TEMPERATURE

several sources in our external environment, such as family, work, school, life events, etc. What beliefs do you hold dear? Are these beliefs supportive or destructive to your rising?

III

Your Foundation

You can't build a great building on a weak foundation. You must have a solid foundation if you're going to have a strong superstructure.—Gordon B. Hinckley (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

7

Reflection 7: Going Deeper Before Going Higher

Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility.—Saint Augustine (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

Do you wish to be great? Then begin by being. Do you desire to construct a vast and lofty fabric? Think first about the foundations of humility. The higher your structure is to be, the deeper must be its foundation.—Saint Augustine (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

Today we are talking about your foundation. As we've been exploring the importance of focusing on the internal environment, we looked at it as temperature. We can also look at it as foundation – just like a high-rise needs a strong foundation, we as a person or a product also need a good foundation. Another similar type of analogy is the tree. A strong tree has very, very strong and deep roots. And we can say the same thing about an iceberg; no matter what we see on the top, the bottom is way deeper. So, what does this mean? It illustrates the importance of taking the time to go inward to ensure that our foundation is proper. Because when we dare to arise,

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we must make sure that we go just as deep to ensure that we're solid when we're rising. Today, ask yourself these questions: what is the makeup of my foundation? How strong is my foundation? What are the things in my life that shake or move me?

Reflection 8: You are Made in 3 parts

Although one soul lives in the whole body, and all the body's members are controlled by one soul, still the whole body and the whole soul and the parts of the universe are vivified by a certain total spirit.—Giordano Bruno (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

Today we're still talking about our foundation. As we've been talking about ourselves as the product or as being like a tree or an iceberg – whichever you want to have as an illustration – there's an important aspect to flesh out here. It's the fact that there are three parts to us: body, soul, and spirit. In straightforward terms, the body consists of the five senses: sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste. Our soul houses our intellect, emotions, and will; the spirit is where we have our intuition, communion, and conscience. You always want to be mindful of these three parts.

Specifically, I believe that we *ARE* spirit, *POSSESS* a soul, and *INHABIT* a body. And as we may or may not realize, society always puts more emphasis on the body. But daring to rise means we live from the inside out – it must start with our essence, spirit first, soul second, and body third. You must constantly be aware of where your attention or focus is, especially as you interact with your external environment. Do you know who you are in spirit? Are you well acquainted with your soul? Is your body the sole focus of your

care and attention?

Reflection 9: Matters of the Heart

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.—Antoine de Saint-Exupery (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

Today we are talking about the heart. As we introduced the foundation or the composition of the human being as being made in three parts, body, soul, and spirit, there's also this thing called the heart. And it's not a little thing. So, we have our physical hearts, but we also have our spiritual hearts. And this is a pathway between our soulish realm and our spirit realm.

We don't realize how much this space is life-giving. Keeping it at a specific temperature is very important so we can easily access the true core of who we are. We hear a lot about following our hearts and often talk about having a broken heart because it's a crucial part of who we are. It sometimes needs as much attention or even more than any other part. My question to you today is: how is your heart? And also, how in touch are you with your heart?

IV

Your Self-Image

The person we believe ourselves to be will always act in a manner consistent with our self-image.—Brian Tracy (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

10

Reflection 10: The Self-Image Exercise

Authenticity is everything! You have to wake up every day and look in the mirror, and you want to be proud of the person who's looking back at you. And you can only do that if you're being honest with yourself and being a person of high character. You have an opportunity every single day to write that story of your life.—Aaron Rodgers (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

When you look in the mirror, what do you see? Do you see the real you, or what you have been conditioned to believe is you? The two are so, so different. One is an infinite consciousness capable of being and creating whatever it chooses, the other is an illusion imprisoned by its own perceived and programmed limitations.—David Icke (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

Today I want to introduce the Self-Image Exercise. This exercise is based on the work of one of the founders of personal development, Louise Hay (Wells, 2016). You're going to come up with one attribute from your internal environment that you like or love, and you're going to form a positive statement (also known as positive affirmation) about yourself. I want you to focus on who you are and not what you do for this exercise. We

cannot base who we are, our worth and value, on what we do. Because the minute we're no longer able to do it or are not being recognized for it, we risk sinking dangerously low. Remember this: you are not what you do!

The principle of BEING before DOING must be the basis of your self-image and, consequently, your rising. For example, if you believe yourself to be patient, you will create a sentence like this: "*Kareen, I love you because you are patient.*" You're then going to say it out loud in front of a mirror for the next seven days. You will take just a few minutes of your time each day to say this statement out loud as you look at yourself in the mirror. Make sure you look yourself straight in the eyes. Say it with conviction, even if you don't fully believe it yet. I promise it will make a massive difference in moving you forward and changing the temperature of your internal environment. Creating loving, genuine, and positive statements that you repeatedly say to yourself will result in a lasting internal temperature shift!

11

Reflection 11: Your Internal Dialogue

*Your internal conversation is an invitation for change.—Jennifer Ho
(Popular Quotes, n.d.)*

*To know ourselves better, we must slow down enough to feel our feelings
and to hear our deeper thoughts.—David D. Corbett (69 Feeling Quotes -
Inspirational Words of Wisdom, n.d.)*

Today we are talking about internal dialogue. You want to be aware of your thoughts as they mirror your internal dialogue. Some of us can hear our thoughts and or voices in our heads. Still, we need to go further and be more intentional about what it is that we're saying to ourselves on a daily basis. Be very curious. Be very aware of what you're saying and your thoughts about yourself, especially when facing challenging situations. So again, we talked about how our external environment influences our internal environment. The various things, events, and circumstances we go through in life often influence our internal dialogue. I encourage you to be very aware whenever you're in different situations as you go about your day—be very aware of what you're saying to yourself.

Are you saying things like, “I’m so stupid?” Or, “I can’t believe I did that” with a hint of disdain? Or maybe you’re being positive more often than not and

saying things like, “*I’m so proud of myself*” or “*Wow, I’m so awesome!*” What does your internal dialogue sound like most of the time? What is it that you’re talking to yourself about on a daily basis? Remember, you’re also speaking your statement for the next few days. Continuing to say the positive statement daily in the mirror will significantly help set the tone for your internal dialogue. It will help you ensure that your internal dialogue is positive or building you rather than destroying you.

12

Reflection 12: Be Still to Know

Learning how to be still, to really be still and let life happen – that stillness becomes a radiance.—Morgan Freeman (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

While some question whether Stillness is selfish, it's the opposite. It gives you greater capacity to embrace others, like putting your own oxygen mask on first in an airplane. As the saying goes, you can't pour from an empty cup.—Darcy Luom (Popular Quotes, n.d.)

Today I want to talk about being still. In knowing our vision, it's essential to realize that it doesn't come easy for us to understand what's happening in the innermost part of our being. And so an excellent tip or trick is to be intentional about setting aside some time to be with yourself—"me, myself, and I" moments or simply "Me Time." It requires slowing down. It requires saying no to busyness and shutting everything down—the phone, the computer, the TV, any background noise. I even recommend shutting out all the lights. If you can make it as dark as possible, it is ideal. It's a moment where you're truly focused on being still and knowing who you are from deep within.

I believe that it's essential to be aware of what we know of who we are. And

as we talked about internal dialogue and internal environment, taking that time to BE and confront who you are is essential to manifest that next best version of ourselves. And being still is the best way to go about it. I invite you to try it—take some time, even if you can start with only five minutes, try it. I love to curl up in a ball and shut out all lights. I even like to put a blanket over me so that I'm in complete darkness and intentionally tune in to what is happening inside me.

And then this is where I also encounter God. There's a verse in the Bible that says, be still and know that I am God. I believe we can discover an even more profound aspect of ourselves when we decide to live by the principle that we're not alone in this universe. There's a more incredible being, someone greater than us, who deeply cares and wants to see us through. And so I invite you to this experience, to encountering yourself and ultimately encountering the God of the universe that has an invitation for you if you choose to respond.

V

Your Self-Care

Life is busy, and demands on our time are constant; carving out some for ourselves can be difficult, but remember, it's quality that counts more than quantity. Even a few minutes a day can make a big difference. Strive for balance, and regularly do things that replenish your reserve in all areas of health – body, mind, heart, and soul.—Joe Kelly (Popular Quotes, n.d.)

Reflection 13: Defining Your Self-Care

Self-care is never a selfish act – it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to true self and give the care it requires, we do it not only for ourselves but for the many others whose lives we touch.—Parker Palmer (Popular Quotes, n.d.)

By making time for self-care, you prepare yourself to be your best so you can share your gifts with the world. Rest and self-care are so important. When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve others from the overflow. Self-care isn't selfish. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.—Eleanor Brownn (Mackey, 2022)

Today is about self-care. We discussed our internal environment and how to focus on it through stillness. And the idea of self-care is a vital part of it all. I want you to come up with your own definition of self-care before sharing a few definitions I want to discuss in the next few days. What does self-care mean to you? There are a lot of different meanings to self-care, and often it's about the body, right? We mainly focus on the body—having a spa day, etc. So, what does self-care mean to you, and how does that relate to what we've discussed so far? How does that relate to your

self-image? Your internal dialogue? Your internal environment relating to your external environment? Do you consider these things that we've been talking about self-care? Just think about that. Again, I invite you to define what self-care means to you in the context of rising. When you choose to prioritize self-care, you essentially choose yourself.

Reflection 14: Self-Care is Prevention

Self-care is how you take your power back.—Lalah Delia (Popular Quotes, n.d.)

One person's self-care isn't necessarily another's—there is going to be a lot of individuality.—Gail Saltz, M.D. (Mackey, 2022)

Today I want to go into definitions of self-care. The Webster dictionary says: “*care for oneself*” – super simple. And then, it adds another slight specification where it says, “*health care provided by oneself, often without the consultation of a medical professional*” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). I find that very interesting. We often don’t realize how much our definition of self-care can prevent complications, ailments, and diseases in our physical bodies. That’s because many of our soulish realm issues and spiritual issues frequently transpire in whatever is going on in our bodies. The interactions between the invisible and the visible are constant. And so it’s essential to be very aware of what is happening that could be influencing one from the other.

Again, talking about self-care can be very different for each of us. But the way I see it, the most critical thing to understand is that self-care is prevention. You have to think about it as a way to protect yourself and give yourself a way to

prevent some more serious complications that could happen. And even if you are experiencing some complications, knowing that there could be an internal or invisible source to it that you maybe haven't dealt with yet is enormous!

Our bodily ailments are often psychosomatic, meaning they originate in the soulish realm (*Psychosomatic Disorder | Pathology*, n.d.). So, not being able to connect with who you are in spirit or not being able to quiet your soul can impact what you see manifested in your body. We're again talking about that interaction between the internal and external environment - this is so key here. That's why we must be very clear about what self-care means to us and decisively make it a priority. Are you ready and willing to prioritize your innermost being through self-care so you can rise?

Reflection 15: Self-Care is Compassion

If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.—Jack Kornfield (Popular Quotes, n.d.)

*I found in my research that the biggest reason people aren't more self-compassionate is that they are afraid they'll become self-indulgent. They believe self-criticism is what keeps them in line. Most people have gotten it wrong because our culture says being hard on yourself is the way to be.
—Kristen Neff (Popular Quotes, n.d.)*

Today we're going to talk about compassion. As you continue to think about what self-care means to you personally, I want to bring what I believe is one of the essential principles of self-care—compassion. So many times, we have more compassion for other people than for ourselves. We tend to treat ourselves more harshly when we make mistakes or when we're not living up to our expectations, beliefs, or rules. And so, I want you to pay close attention to how much compassion you give to yourself. Refer to times when you make a mistake or have a setback - how are you treating yourself? Do you have compassion for yourself? Do you see yourself as a gift, a phenomenal being that needs to be cherished, cared for, and loved?

Because like I said, many times we give more importance to other people

than ourselves. When we deal harshly with ourselves, it shows. I want you to pay close attention to how you treat yourself, care for yourself, and practice self-soothing and compassion daily. Be very conscious of that. Whenever you encounter various life situations, be very attentive to how you treat yourself. Commit in advance to practicing more self-compassion than before. Simply start by noticing how you speak to yourself. When you make a mistake, fall short, or feel like you should be further than you are, what kind of mercy, grace, and compassion do you give yourself? Begin to course-correct right away and commit to being the next best version of yourself's best ally!

VI

Your Mental Health

*Mental health isn't all of me, but it's a massive part of my journey
and a massive part of my whole being.—Adwoa Aboah
(Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)*

16

Reflection 16: Demystifying Mental Health

It is okay to have depression, it is okay to have anxiety, and it is okay to have an adjustment disorder. We need to improve the conversation. We all have mental health in the same way we all have physical health.—Prince Harry (Zapata, 2022)

You are not your illness. You have an individual story to tell. You have a name, a history, a personality. Staying yourself is part of the battle.—Julian Seifter (Zapata, 2022)

Today we introduce another very influential aspect of knowing your vision - your mental health. I love the WHO definition of mental health that says (Mental Health: Strengthening Our Response, 2022):

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.

As you focus on yourself inwardly, your mental health will be revealed. Having good mental health enables you to fully engage in the reflections in this book and help your next steps in the rising process. In this discussion, it's

indispensable to understand that there's a distinction between mental health and mental illness. I want to bring your attention to a quote that I love from the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) that says this (*Mental Health: What Is It Really*, 2020):

Mental illnesses are described as disturbances in thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that are severe enough to affect day-to-day functioning. Some examples are anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, and mood disorders, such as major depressive disorder and bipolar disorder.

Mental health, however, is a state of well-being, and we all have it. Just like we each have a state of physical health, we also each have our mental health to look after. It's not just about surviving, it's about thriving. It's enjoying life, having a sense of purpose, and being able to manage life's highs and lows.

Mental health isn't simply the absence of mental illness and living with a mental illness doesn't mean you can't have good mental health. Just like someone with diabetes, for example, can live a healthy life, so can somebody with a mental illness.

Considering this information, how do you define your mental health? Do you consider yourself in a healthy place mentally? Know that if you realize that you are dealing with debilitating mental health issues from engaging in this book's reflections, it's perfectly ok. Many times, it can be a crucial part of rising. There is no shame in this. I've included a personal story to illustrate this truth at the end of this book. I've also helped many people through their mental health journeys, so I can confidently say that you are not alone and will overcome, just like we have!

Reflection 17: The Mental Health Continuum

Mental health... is not a destination but a process. It's about how you drive, not where you're going.—Noam Shpancer (Zapata, 2022)

Today I want to continue with our mental health discussion. Maybe you're not sure how to decipher where you are regarding your mental health. That's normal. I'm happy to introduce you to an essential and easy tool that you can use called the *Mental Health Continuum*. You will find several versions of this model simply through an internet search. I will briefly share parts of the version developed by The Canadian Department of National Defence and adapted by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (2015). It is a great tool to help us know where we're at regarding our mental health. Again, there's a difference between mental health and mental illness, hence the importance of understanding that mental health is considered a continuum.

The first stage of the continuum, when you start from the left, is the healthy stage. An example of being healthy is that you have normal fluctuation of moods. One thing you can do to help yourself stay there is to make sure that you break down your problems into manageable chunks. The next phase is

the reactive mode. It can present itself as a feeling of being overwhelmed, for example. One thing you can do in this mode is to identify and minimize your stressors. The third phase is the injured phase. It's a bit more serious. An example of that would be social isolation or withdrawal. One thing you can do if you notice this is to intentionally reach out to someone you trust that you can talk to, even if you don't feel like it. And then the last phase is the sick phase, the illness phase, which is on the other end of the continuum. It's a lot more serious here. An example of what to look for is that you cannot perform your normal activities. In this phase, you must consult a mental health professional immediately.

The continuum is a very effective prevention tool that we should use regularly. Now that you know a bit more about it, can you identify the stage you are in today? If you find yourself in the injured phase, I encourage you to seek professional help in the form of therapy. You can find a therapist near you using psychologytoday.com. If you're unsure whether you need therapy, you can take the CMHA free mental health meter assessment, which will also give you a good idea of where you're at: <https://cmha.ca/find-info/mental-health/check-in-on-your-mental-health/mental-health-meter/>.

Reflection 18: Practicing Self-Advocacy

It's up to you today to start making healthy choices. Not choices that are just healthy for your body, but healthy for your mind.—Steve Maraboli (Popular Quotes, n.d.)

Today I want to continue our discussion on mental health. One tool or aspect, or concept that I find crucial when it comes to helping us manage our mental health is what is called self-advocacy. If it's your first time hearing of this term, let me share a few statements that define it very well (*What Is Self Advocacy*, 2017):

Self-advocacy is the ability to speak up for yourself and the things that are important to you. Self-advocacy means you are able to ask for what you need and want and tell people about your thoughts and feelings.

Self-advocacy means you know your rights and responsibilities, you speak up for your rights, and you can make choices and decisions that affect your life.

The goal of self-advocacy is for YOU to decide what you want then develop and carry out a plan to help you get it.

It does not mean you can't get help if you need or want it, it just means that you are making the choices and you have to be responsible for the

choices you make.

I love these statements! They illustrate so well the importance of taking responsibility for our own lives. When you make decisions and choices, it's your responsibility and your right to have a plan to respect those things. It also means having healthy boundaries. It's imperative to take charge of your life in this sense; it also gives you a sense of empowerment. Of course, it doesn't mean you can't ask for help when you need it or want it. Having help is very healthy. But when you're responsible for your actions and take heed of your rights, those decisions and choices are not dependent on others. It helps us to stay in the healthy phase of mental health. So, a few questions for you: have you been practicing self-advocacy? Who owns your decisions and choices, and what are your expectations regarding yourself and others? For those of you who just learned about this concept, are you prepared to practice it now as a way to safeguard your mental health?

VII

Your Vision

Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others.—Jonathan Swift (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

Reflection 19: Connecting to Your Risen Self

Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.—Carl Jung (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

The vision that you glorify in your mind, the ideal that you enthrone in your heart - this you will build your life by, and this you will become.—James Lane Allen (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

Today I would like to give you a little challenge. I would like you to take some time to describe the vision of your next best version of who you are. Grab a pen and paper and write about your risen self. It could be a prose, a poem, a narrative, a rap, a song, etc. Use your imagination and creativity as you allow it to arise from a moment of stillness. Just have a picture of what that looks like for you. When I say dare to rise, who comes up? What is the picture of this being that is risen for this moment in time? What is the image of you rising from within look like? Once you've written it, I invite you to record it. You can either record it in video or audio format, and then I want you to listen to it. I want you to put it on repeat. As you listen to

it and truly connect with that vision, it will sustain your decision to rise. If you're more of a writer, you can always type it up, print it out, and put it on your mirror or anywhere you will see it often. But I firmly believe that having it in video or audio format is powerful to ingrain this part of the process. Enjoy the process!

Reflection 20: Enemy of Your Vision - Pride

Through pride we are ever deceiving ourselves. But deep down below the surface of the average conscience a still, small voice says to us, something is out of tune.— Carl Jung (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

Today we are talking about a significant enemy of vision—Pride. As we continue to make our vision clear about who we are in this moment and time and start loving ourselves, it's vital to be wary of this thing called pride. Belittling ourselves is also pride—everything that has to do with false humility is pride. It's imperative to be aware of that. A little trick to guard us against pride is simply to believe in God, a Supreme Being, the Universe, the Source, whatever you want to call this being. The perspective that you are not the only master of your life, that you're responsible for your life but did not create yourself, is liberating. Reminding yourself that you have a Creator helps shield us from pride and helps you believe in who you are and see how amazing you are.

I love to quote Psalm 139, which talks about God saying we are fearfully and wonderfully made (*BibleGateway.Com: A Searchable Online Bible in over 150 Versions and 50 Languages.*, n.d.):

For you created my inmost being;

you knit me together in my mother's womb.

14 *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.*

15 *My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

16 *Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.*

17 *How precious to me are your thoughts,[a] God!
How vast is the sum of them!*

18 *Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.*

Yes, the human being is such a marvelous, phenomenal, miraculous creature, so believing that we are created beings is a great tip to safeguard our vision. Our physical body on this earth has finality, but our spirit does not. And since God, Source, the Universe is Spirit; it's powerful to remember where we come from as spirit first, who we are, who created us, and how remarkable we are in God. Another verse to consider is Psalm 18, verse 35, which says, "*your care has made me great*" or "*your gentleness has exalted me .*" Love it! This notion is especially critical when our reality does not match our truth.

So I encourage you to embrace the above verses, even if you don't consider yourself a spiritual person. I urge you not to let the fact that you're not a Christian or don't believe in the Bible rob you of appreciating these powerful statements. It's not about religion here; it's about a relationship. And so it's okay to recognize and praise that we're unique and dare to believe that we have a majestic Creator who created masterpieces. It's time for us to grab hold of that, celebrate that, and make sure that that is what we promote, especially to ourselves inwardly as we rise.

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Reflection 21: Enemy of Your Vision - Fear

Fear is the most debilitating emotion in the world, and it can keep you from ever truly knowing yourself and others – its adverse effects can no longer be overlooked or underestimated. Fear breeds hatred, and hatred has the power to destroy everything in its path.—Kevyn Aucoin (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

Today I want to talk about a second and equally significant enemy of vision—fear. This famous F word is a normal human emotion that we all experience. The good news is that we do not have to let it cripple us, and we do not have to live with it. Again, there’s an incredible verse that I love in 1 John 4 (*BibleGateway.Com: A Searchable Online Bible in over 150 Versions and 50 Languages.*, n.d.) that says this:

18 *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*

There’s no fear in love. Perfect love drives out of fear. Love it! When we talk about perfect, we talk about wholeness, completeness, and unconditional. That’s the kind of love that we want to let in. We need to commit to loving

ourselves wholly, completely, and unconditionally. And the easiest way to do that is to allow God's love to fill us. As I talked about earlier, as we allow in the love of a supreme being, it allows us to love ourselves more wholly and subsequently love others genuinely.

Friend, I encourage you to try it because there's so much joy, peace, and love with this way of living, which also brings a sentiment of being secure. The longing of every human being is to feel loved and to have a sense of being secure, anchored, rooted, and grounded in love. In spirit, we have this innate desire to be profoundly and deeply loved and feel secure in who we are. When we discover this love and allow it thoroughly to permeate our being, it's incredible what happens. I want to share with you a powerful statement that someone named Nicky Gumbel said (Gumbel, 2021):

Fear is a natural human emotion, but with God, you can face your fears with confidence because you can have complete trust in God for this life and for the life to come.

Commit to allowing yourself to be loved, love yourself, and love others. Love is the biggest and most powerful weapon against fear.

Conclusion

A vision is not just a picture of what could be; it is an appeal to our better selves, a call to become something more.—Rosabeth Moss Kanter (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

You made it to the end; congratulations! Although it's the end of our discussion on knowing your vision, as I alluded to before, it's essentially the beginning of your rising journey. I hope you took a deep dive into your internal environment, understanding its interaction with your external environment. And have a better sense of your self-image, internal dialogue, heart, and the interconnectivity of your body, soul, and spirit. That you gained new insights on what self-care and mental health are all about as pertaining to knowing your vision and living from the inside out. You are now ready to move on to solidifying your passion and taking concrete action! These themes are the subject of the next books in the series. In the meantime, I invite you to book a free 30 minutes consultation with me to discuss your reflections and your personal development and mental health plan: <https://kareenaristide.as.me/consultation30min>.

And remember:

DARE TO RISE

- Your internal vision governs your external vision,
- Your vision determines your life,
- Set up an internal and external environment that allows your true self to rise,
- Who you are translates into the ways you serve humanity,
- Always be open to opportunities to say YES to rising!

I will leave you with this great quote by Marianne Williamson (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.):

You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure about you. We were born to manifest the glory of God that is within us.

A Story of Rising

The one thing that you have that nobody else has is you. Your voice, your mind, your story, your vision. So write and draw and build and play and dance and live as only you can.—Neil Gaiman (Inspirational Quotes at BrainyQuote, n.d.)

This story is the starting point of my mental health journey and how I developed a passion for this topic and the concept of dare to rise. In 2014, I was standing on the bridge near my house looking at the waves crashing in, and for a good 30 seconds, I contemplated jumping. I thought to myself, what a perfect way to end all this suffering that is and is to come. It was the second time in my life that I genuinely felt like dying was the best solution. I was in full-blown burnout - again! The first burnout happened in 2008. I overdid it again one weekend and fell asleep at the wheel in broad daylight. I crashed into the window of a basement apartment in the building right next to ours.

It was a miracle that I made it out! I still can't explain how my seat reclined at the point of impact, preventing my head from getting cut off! I came out with minor bruises on my face, eight chipped teeth, and horrible whiplash. The scene was like that in the movies. An ambulance, fire truck, police cars, news anchors, and the whole neighborhood came out to see all the commotion, including my husband. Leaving the kids inside, he got closer to see what movie they were filming. As he looked closely at the green truck halfway through the window, he thought, hey, that looks like our car. As he moved closer, he noticed the license plate number, and his knees immediately caved. Thank God two firemen were next to him and held him up so he wouldn't fall to the

ground, saying she's ok, she's ok!

The truth is, yes, I made out alive and seemed ok given the circumstances. They even sent me home after briefly checking me at the hospital because I did not look like someone who had just had such a traumatic experience. Yes, I was somewhat ok physically, but mentally and emotionally, I was far from ok. That was the first time I wished I had died. And the first time, I realized my soul was sick. After that, I got better, recuperated, and then went back to my old ways a few years later and crashed again. This time it was my body and my mind that crashed.

And on that bridge in 2014, I realized I needed to seek professional help to get at the source of what was causing me to overwork myself constantly. Not only was I in burnout mode, but I also ended up diagnosed with a dissociative identity disorder. And what I realized is that I was DOING before BEING. I had to stop everything again and learn to BE. I had to reconnect with myself, let God inward in a more profound way, and start living from the inside out to stop the cycle. I also sought the help of a psychologist. I can proudly say that I no longer suffer from disassociation by God's grace. I've been in recovery mode from the savior complex and the superwoman syndrome for the past eight years! Helping others navigate their personal development and mental health journeys has also helped me stay on track and continually allow the next best version of myself to rise.

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About the Author

Kareen Aristide stands out as a passionate woman in helping people achieve their full potential professionally, emotionally, and spiritually. She combines over 20 years of professional experience in employment counselling, entrepreneurship, wellness, and pastoral care. She has impacted hundreds of lives worldwide through consulting, training, coaching, keynotes, and life-changing events in personal and professional development with an emphasis on mental health. She's a certified Senior Human Behavior Consultant (Level I, II, and III) with Personality Insights and a certified speaker with Expert Speaker. In 2019, she was recognized as one of the top 100 black women to watch in Canada by CIBWE (Canada International Black Women Event). She is committed to educating and helping others take charge of their personal development and mental health by drawing on her own experience battling depression and burnout. After 15 years of quitting school, she finally completed her university degree in 2020, making the dean's list and receiving a B.A. Honours in Psychology, with a minor in Neuroscience and Mental Health from Carleton University. She instigated a movement called She Did It! Elle a osé! with a mission to help women develop and grow personally and professionally. She and her husband of 23 years are raising five wonderful children aged 22 to 16, some of which are also entrepreneurs!

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