

“It’s not always easy to dare, to dream, and to do...this book explains not only why, but how to take those steps—with full confidence and success.”

—Gretchen Rubin, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Happiness Project*

WHITNEY JOHNSON



Dare

Dream

Do

Remarkable Things Happen
when you Dare to Dream

PRAISE FOR
WHITNEY JOHNSON AND *DARE, DREAM, DO*

“We all have dreams; dreams that seize us, consume us, and inspire us to reach for greatness. Yet the clamor of the world conspires to distance us from our dreams, draining them of their potency. In *Dare, Dream, Do*, Whitney Johnson shows us, through story and practice, how to reclaim our dreams and become as daring as we always imagined we could be. It is a book at once poignant and powerful.”

—Marcus Buckingham, best-selling author, *StandOut*,
Now, Go Discover Your Strengths, and *First, Break All the Rules*

“In *Dare, Dream, Do*, Whitney Johnson explains, in manageable, concrete terms, how to identify and pursue the possibilities to build a happier life. It’s not always easy to dare, to dream, and to do, and Johnson’s book explains not only why, but how to take those steps—with full confidence and success.”

—Gretchen Rubin, the *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Happiness Project*

“I read *Dare, Dream, Do* with a highlighter clenched between my teeth and a pad of sticky notes in my hand. Whitney Johnson has written a book that is hopeful, honest, and beautifully written. Her wisdom combined with the amazing stories make dreaming accessible and practical without diminishing its power or magic.”

—Brené Brown, Ph.D., LMSW and
author of *The Gifts of Imperfection*

“Rethink the fundamentals of your life. Figure out what you were meant to do. Disrupt your status quo. That’s Whitney Johnson’s invitation (and challenge) to each of us in *Dare, Dream, Do*. I urge you to accept her invitation.”

—Clayton M. Christensen, professor, Harvard
Business School and best-selling author

“As an accomplished business leader, Whitney Johnson acutely understands how to translate ambitions into action. *Dare, Dream, Do* not only ignites the courage to pursue your aspirations, but also serves as a powerful guide to achieve what once may have seemed out of reach.”

—Moira Forbes, publisher *ForbesWoman*

“Whitney Johnson maps out a masterpiece for women that is filled with wisdom, strategies, fascinating stories, and all that matters most in life. She takes us on a journey as we learn to express our dreams, embrace our powers, and expand our hearts. *Dare, Dream, Do* is an incredible book. I want to give this book to every woman I know.”

—Lolly Daskal, president and founder of Lead From Within:
Heart-based Leadership for Work and Life

“Whether you are just setting off on the journey to adulthood, making a career transition, nurturing a family, or looking for meaning in an empty nest, *Dare, Dream, Do* will inspire you. And whether your dream is to start an orphanage, a dress company, or a family of eight, you’ll find your story here. Don’t know what your dream is? Whitney Johnson gives you the tools to dig it out, ‘date’ it, commit to it, and make it happen. I love this book! I’ll be sending it to just about every woman I know.”

—Wendy Ulrich, founder of Sixteen Stones Center for Growth,
partner at the RBL Group, and co-author of *The Why of Work*

“With this beautiful and inspiring book, Whitney Johnson will make you a believer in dreams again. She shows us how they help shape life’s meaning, and why dreams are a practical necessity when it comes to reaching your fullest potential. The key is figuring out how to turn those dreams into reality—and *Dare, Dream, Do* is the roadmap you’ve been looking for.”

—Heidi Grant Halvorson, associate director of The Motivation
Science Center, Columbia Business School, and author of
Succeed and *Nine Things Successful People Do Differently*

“Every woman, regardless of age or profession, should read *Dare, Dream, Do*. Through stories of real women, their dreams and their struggles, Johnson’s book has created an instant community. What’s more, she has opened the door for women to empower themselves to dare, dream, and do.”

—Joanne Wilson, angel investor, The Gotham Gal,
and co-founder of the Women’s Entrepreneur Festival

“Wow. Right from Whitney Johnson’s heart directly on to the pages of *Dare, Dream, Do*. Read this important book today. It will inspire you to become the gatekeeper of your own dreams and take personal control of achieving them. Johnson’s passion is compelling. It’s worth daring to be great.”

—Saul Kaplan, founder and chief catalyst,
Business Innovation Factory

“*Dare, Dream, Do* belongs in every success toolkit. Business leader and master storyteller, Whitney Johnson shows how remarkable things happen when we dare to claim our strengths, own our dreams, and do what we’re meant to do. A fabulous guide for business and for life.”

—Liz Strauss, international business strategist
and author of *Successful-Blog.com*

“As a lifelong dreamer, I was immediately intrigued (and even moved to tears) by Whitney Johnson’s observations that women feel it isn’t their privilege to dream, and that most people don’t dream well in isolation. In this book, Johnson inspires a shift in mindset to resolve these two problems. She makes a case for the importance of dreaming and equips readers with the reflective fodder to identify their dreams and bring them to fruition via elegant prose, insightful questions, community-driven stories, and Johnson’s own intriguing personal history. Whether you’re trying to identify your dream, forge a new path, or confirm that you’re on the right one, *Dare, Dream, Do* will inspire you to rock your personal space and

also think beyond it—whether that means paying it forward, creating collaborative teams, or showing your children how to dream.”

—Christine Koh, neuroscientist turned writer, editor, designer, and digital strategist (ChristineKoh.com)

“*Dare, Dream, Do* is a well of wisdom, strategy, and shared personal experiences of women who have overcome the mundane by choosing to dream, and living to dream. Motivated by her own learned sense of dreaming and seeking her own passions, Whitney convinces women that dreaming isn’t senseless, but that it’s actually necessary for purposeful living. She offers both motivation and a strategy for coming out of our shells and doing what we were meant to do. . . . and truly gifted to do. *Dare, Dream, Do* is the sideline coach we all need to see that our secret wants and dreams are realized.

—Sarah Wright, children’s book illustrator and textile designer, Sarah Jane Studios

“Read this book for your soul and read it for your future! Join Whitney on an inspired journey toward realizing the power and potential in yourself. Relish in the magnificent and wise reflections of strong women who are living their dreams and being their best. Learn how to catalog your talents and channel them toward a thrilling future. Then start dreaming BIG.”

—Betsy Morgan, former CEO, *The Huffington Post*, and president of The Blaze

“Whitney Johnson has crafted a wonderful, eloquent, and accessible step-by-step prescriptive on how to uncork the bottomless bottle of hidden dreams. *Dare, Dream, Do* is a manual on how to dream big, rightsizing your dream, and recognizing the potential within. It helps us understand that in order to find who we are, we must step up and step out, discovering what we are meant to do and what our story is meant to be. Whitney’s tour de

force captures architect Daniel Burnham's imperative: 'Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood.' Dream big today, and bigger tomorrow."

—Craig Hatkoff, founder of the Tribeca Film Festival, and co-author of the *New York Times* bestseller, *Own and Mzee*

"Inspiring and honest, *Dare, Dream, Do* really touched me. For someone who grew up with a single mother in a small town in Finland and got through the ranks of the highly competitive American fashion industry, hanging on to one's inner dreams is a must. Whitney writes in a straightforward engaging way and analyzes the wonderful magic of believing in your dreams. *Dare, Dream, Do* is a book that I would highly recommend for anyone in the beginning of their careers, or in the middle wondering if they are realizing their full potential in life."

—Johanna Uurasjarvi, creative director, Leifsdottir, former creative director, Anthropologie

"*Dare, Dream, Do* is filled with great advice and energizing true stories from real women who are bootstrapping their way toward a dream. Pick up this book and you just might find yourself living a life you've only imagined! This should be required reading for anyone with a forgotten wish, a pie-in-the-sky fantasy, or a quiet dream hidden in their heart. In other words—everyone."

—Barbara Corcoran, NYC real estate mogul and investor on ABC's reality show *Shark Tank*

"It is rare to encounter someone with a seemingly magical ability to help so many people achieve their dreams. Whitney Johnson is one of those people. On every page of she invites you to dare, dream, and then do. Truly, she is a dream whisperer."

—Jane Clayson Johnson, Emmy award-winning journalist and author

Dare, Dream, Do

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PART ONE

Dare

Why Dreaming Is Essential

Do not dare not to dare.

—C.S. Lewis, *twentieth-century British author*

Dreaming is an inalienable right. We knew this as children. We believed we could be or do anything we imagined. Astronaut, Egyptologist, prima ballerina, mother of a dozen children, President of the United States—sure, why not? Unfortunately, as adults we often put our dearest dreams away, as life hands us unexpected challenges or circumstances and the harsh realities of economic necessity whittle away at our energy and our hopes. Dreaming truly becomes a dare.

This section is meant to underscore that dreaming is your privilege, and to outline why we must dream. When we dream we make meaning of life, discover the essence of ourselves, truly grow up, and most importantly, model for children how to dream. As you read the accounts of women who are wrestling with the dare of dreaming, you may want to give voice to your own story, and I encourage you to do so. The act of writing down our dreams allows us to own them and eventually act on them. As you recognize that dreaming is essential, your story will be woven into this tapestry of women's voices, who like you, are daring to dream.

1

TO MAKE MEANING OF LIFE

When I was seventeen, my parents divorced. In retrospect, it's not so much the divorce that was painful, it was everything that it meant—that my parents didn't really love each other, that maybe they never had (my mom was pregnant when they married), that they weren't happy. As their oldest child, I wondered if perhaps things might have been different if only I'd been brilliant enough or attractive enough. Or would they even have married if I hadn't been born?

Sharing those memories is still painful, even decades after the fact; but as I get older, I recognize that some of my greatest strengths were born of that sadness. For example, my desire to have a happy marriage and a happy family life is resolute. Period. (My household is far from perfect, but we're happy.) When someone I know is affected by a divorce, I understand. I know that the situation is complicated and that, regardless of why the marriage is dissolving, the experience is wrenching. My drive, my intense focus on improvement, is likely a means of trying to measure up, and I'm quite certain that my laser-like focus on encouraging and

mentoring is my attempt to be the encouraging voice I wanted to hear.

Difficulties we don't deserve happen to all of us. Yet, when we dream, we begin to make meaning of these challenges. We give ourselves hope, and we can hope that the sorrow and pain we've walked through will help lighten someone else's load.

USING CHALLENGES AS A SPRINGBOARD

When there's something we want to accomplish, the power to achieve that dream often comes from facing our most wrenching sadness. That was certainly the case for Emily Orton, a schoolteacher turned stay-at-home mother in New York City.

Emily Orton: *Running Down a Dream*

By the time my daughter Lily was four months old she was showing signs of developmental delay. Despite reassurances from my midwife and my pediatrician, I wearied myself with inconclusive Internet research about Down syndrome.

My husband called me paranoid. Finally, when Lily was six months old, blood tests revealed the microscopic extra chromosome that shook our paradigm. There was some reeling and some relief. At least now I didn't have to worry *if* anything was wrong. I could get to work.

Genuine acceptance and resilient humor, two of my husband's hallmark qualities, buoyed us over the first few hours of transition. He wanted to make T-shirts that said, "*We put the O in Chromosome*" or "*I'm down with Down's.*" He talked of how our four older children would be jealous of the cool trips Lily would get to take with us in our wild retirement years.

Encouragement from friends and family enveloped us as a whirlwind of evaluations and a battery of medical tests ensued.

Through it all, I held my girl. I nuzzled her soft, warm head. I considered her future. So much was still uncertain, but I knew she would have to work hard for every achievement. I wanted to do something hard, too. The circumstances of my life aligned to make a marathon possible. I wanted to honor Lily by running a marathon.

I began training by taking the stairs instead of the elevator. I had worked up to ten miles with my friend Heather, who served as my trainer and partner, when Lily began having seizures. Finding a pediatric neurologist on a holiday weekend was a saga unto itself. The doctor interpreted the mass of EEG scribbles as electrical misfires in Lily's brain; she was swiftly admitted into the pediatric ward.

Lily obliged us by having a seizure shortly after being hooked up to the EEG and video monitors. She was immediately diagnosed with hypsarrhythmia. Lily was subjected to more tests than I ever took in college. I learned how to give injections to my infant. By day two of our hospital vigil, I needed to run. I knew I might have to give up the marathon, but my body needed to move. My husband took over the bedside duties while I cared for and held our other children, slept in my own bed, and ran with Heather. The crisp morning air, the steady rhythm of our tandem footfall, the oxygen, the endorphins, and the encouragement of my dear friend convinced me that, more than ever, I needed to run the marathon.

Lily came home and I continued training. The neurologist assured me that the chaotic electrical impulses in her brain weren't causing damage. She descended into a developmental pause. I ran. She became very fat. I ran. Her eyes were dull and unfocused. I ran. She never smiled. I ran. My husband and our four older children needed me, too. I ran.

Heather and I trained almost every day. On weekends a larger party formed for the long runs. Sometimes the conversation would transport me into the concerns and joys of the other women. The miles of quiet along the river were a sanctuary for my searching prayers. Often enough that Heather wasn't surprised, my voice would tremble, and the wind would send tears sliding sideways across my cheeks as I uncovered my unbearable fears. But we laughed a lot, too. I always came home with flushed cheeks and the crazy notion that I could do hard things. I could carry my load that day.

The entire family came to cheer for me at the marathon. They were at mile 1, mile 20 and mile 26.2. The older children held signs, waved orange pom-poms, and shouted out to me. Lily was disinterested and slumped in her stroller. The medication wasn't working. I hugged her and gave her a big kiss. I ran for both of us.

Running down my dream kept me two steps ahead of despair. The unexpected, protracted trial I was facing gave focus and purpose to my marathon dream. My training schedule gave routine, energy, and sustaining friendship to my uncertainty. Achieving what I set out to do reminded me that I can do hard things one step at a time.

Psychologist Howard Gardner outlines eight different types of intelligence in his groundbreaking theory on multiple intelligences (see also Chapter 7). The first two aptitudes, logical-mathematical and linguistic, are the most valued by our society; the others—kinesthetic, interpersonal, musical, naturalist, spatial, and existential intelligence—are less so. When Emily Orton discovered her daughter had Down syndrome, it wasn't her logical-mathematical and linguistic strengths that were her ballast, it was her existential intelligence—the ability to ask and then answer life's big questions.

After the heartbreak of Lily's diagnosis, Emily had a choice: she could give in to fear and sorrow or she could channel her pain into a dream. Training for and running a marathon gave her a refuge, a way to make meaning of her "protracted trial." It also helped Emily discover an ability to do hard things, to run toward her dreams and find hope for her daughter's future. Our challenges can be a blessing if we use them as a springboard for our dreams, pushing us to go places and do things we might not have imagined possible.

Tereza Nemessanyi is another example of dreams emerging from our deepest challenges. While grieving her mother's death, Tereza was inspired to launch Honestly Now (honestlynow.com), a digital platform that provides advice to women struggling with questions both trivial and profound.

Tereza Nemessanyi: *My Honest Moment*

The inspiration to create my startup, Honestly Now, came at a dark moment. My mother had just died, and I stood in front of the mirror, getting dressed to deliver her eulogy. Mom had been my best friend, biggest fan, and she was always the one to tell me the truth when I needed to hear it. Trying on her red blouse, I instinctively turned to ask her, "Is it okay to wear red for a funeral?" In that moment, I realized, I wouldn't ever hear her advice, or feel her warm hug, ever again. My father had recently died as well, and as a new mom myself, I felt deeply alone—like the last one standing, with people who needed me but not sure how I'd step forward.

Realizing that many women lack a support structure when they need it most, I set out to build the beta for Honestly Now—a digital platform to help people get honest feedback from their friends—delivering the advice, affirmation, and

warm hug I used to get from my mom. We initially designed Honestly Now to help on questions about our personal appearance—you post a picture, and your friends and experts vote. Am I a vanity case? Maybe, maybe not. But because I saw women frequently confounded with how to present themselves to the world, especially through transitions such as parenting, divorce, health issues, and aging, I wanted to give them confidence by affirming them, and connecting them to people who could help. Just as importantly, though, my MBA-brain could define and describe this market, size it, and engineer a way to turn it into a business. I had a coherent, cohesive business plan. We seeded our beta with my friends, women like me.

As I described the vision of Honestly Now to people, some “got it,” but some clearly didn’t. A confident group, venture capitalists tend not to be the type to reconsider their decisions once made. One prominent VC had difficulty grasping the concept of “local aesthetic services.” Too broad, he said. Pick one vertical and one geography and roll it out that way—such as New Yorkers’ hair. This felt much too far away from my moment in front of the mirror. Perhaps the world needed a “hair app”—but I didn’t feel I was the one to bring it forth.

In his book on Lean Startups, Eric Ries describes that what people say and what they actually do are often very different things. As we launched Honestly Now, this quickly turned out to be true for us as well. People cared only a little amount about their appearance every day—and then rapidly moved on to a whole host of other thorny life questions.

Tania pitched out a question about thank you notes: is it okay to send your son’s thank you notes via cubby mail at school? Marla needed to know—should she use the picture of her scuba diving for her Match.com profile? Going through a divorce, an anonymous asker discovered her husband had a fling with her best friend and neighbor, and their sons are

best friends. Should she tell her son about what happened? All important. All real. All very engaging.

So, we pivoted, and decided—ask about any decision you're making, from any dimension of your life. If it's important to you, it's important for us, and we'll find you advice for it.

This broadening of scope in fact nudged us far closer to my seminal moment years earlier. When I'd wanted to ask mom if I looked okay in her blouse, what I really wanted to know was that I wasn't alone. I needed to feel validated and to walk out confident, not second-guessing. Women instinctively float out dilemmas to our friends, for research and affirmation. I wanted to put this instinct in your pocket, so that confidence would be available to you anytime and anywhere.

We relaunched *Honestly Now* 2.0 and announced a round of funding. There is much more to do, with constant changes afoot based on what we continue to learn. We're incredibly energized by the potential of *Honestly Now*, and the value—better decisions—our users are already making from it.

Tereza turned one of the most difficult moments of her life into an opportunity to support other women in their struggles, which helped her make meaning of her own. Pursuing a dream can have a therapeutic effect—often we face challenges emerging from forces beyond our control. Dreaming activates us and helps us feel more in control as we make meaningful choices about who we want to become.

TELLING THE STORIES OF OUR LIVES

The stories we absorb as children affect our ideas of whom and what we will be. Perhaps more important are the stories we tell ourselves as adults, as these define our sense of what is

possible. Stories help us make meaning of both the bad and the good things that happen in our lives. And stories can give us the courage to dream. Robert Atkinson, PhD, author of *The Gift of Stories*, wrote, “There is a power in storytelling that can transform our lives. Traditional stories, myths, and fairy tales hold this power. The stories we tell of our own lives carry this transforming power, too. In the process of telling our life stories, we discover that we are more sacred beings than we are human beings, that the most powerful life story expresses the struggle of [our] soul.”

As a teen, Maria Carr (mariacarr.com) came with her family to the United States as political refugees from Cuba. Maria is a professional actress, wife, and mother. While still in Cuba, Maria’s mother Mamina told her children a story that has been pivotal in encouraging Maria’s dreams.

Maria Carr: Nourishing the Soul through Stories

It was many years after we left Cuba before I wanted to eat split pea soup, even though my mother’s split pea soup is delicious.

Cuba is a tropical country where things grow freely, but communist controls greatly limited the food available. Everything had been rationed since Fidel Castro took power, and the grocery stores often had nothing at all. Even if something was allowed on your ration card, you could only buy what they had at the store. My mother stood in line for hours hoping to buy some food, a pair of shoes, anything.

For a VERY long time, *chicharos* (split peas) were the only thing she could buy, but there was no ham or chorizo to flavor the soup.

My mother continued buying and making the *chicharos* because she knew they had a lot of nutritional value. It seemed that we ate *chicharos* for every meal for weeks on end. Mamina used whatever she could from our vegetable patch to flavor them, but often they seemed just a tasteless green mash. My sisters and I grew very tired of split pea soup and dreaded mealtime.

Mamina would set out the three bowls of soup for my sisters, Isis and Nina, and for me. She spoon fed the baby, Nina, and at times when Isis and I complained more than we ate, she would reach over and put a spoonful of soup in our mouths also.

During this time my father was in a labor camp, for the crime of wanting to leave the country, and my mother struggled to care for us, alone and with few provisions. One day she went out to the back patio to do the wash and saw a cute little frog sitting by the door to the kitchen. My mother has always liked frogs, and this frog by the kitchen door gave her an idea. She began to spin wonderful stories about a crazy, adventurous frog named Antonica who would overcome great odds with her daring and creativity. Antonica helped us dream of freedom and possibilities. These exciting tales were reserved for mealtime. We ate until our bowls were empty, distracted from the bland food by the flavor of Antonica's world. Mamina knew her children were well nourished, comforted, and prepared for the challenges and adventures to come.

In 2007, I was preparing to host a TV show on a local station and was struggling with self-doubt. With encouragement and coaching from a friend, I finally realized that I had been preparing for this opportunity most of my life. All I needed was confidence in myself, the kind of confidence Antonica had taught me about, way back in Cuba.

Through this process of self-discovery, the idea came to me to start cooking with my mother. We all loved my Mamina's cooking, but I had never been interested in learning to cook like her. I began to write down her recipes and take pictures of her delicious food. I also started to write down the stories I had heard from my parents, of our lives in Cuba and coming to the United States. At some point I realized I had ninety recipes. This is a significant number to Cuban exiles, as there are ninety miles between Cuba and Key West, Florida. A relatively short distance, but oh, so far!

My effort to grow closer to my mother through cooking became another dream waiting to be fulfilled, through a book called *90 Miles 90 Recipes: My Journey to Understanding*. My mother now seemed as significant as our journey to the United States.

While learning how she orchestrated these flavors, I began to understand my mother as a woman with many gifts. Through cooking together, my appreciation for her has grown. I've come to realize why feeding everyone was so important to her. Nourishing the body is part of nurturing the soul.

My mother is doing very poorly now. Most of my time in the last few months has been dedicated to caring for her. Though our book has not yet been published, it has already proven valuable. It has taught me about dreams from a different perspective—helping me recognize that the lives my sisters and I enjoy are the realization of my parents' dream of freedom and opportunity for them, and especially for us.

Maria's mother's stories have been transformative. The exploits of Antonica the frog were a distraction for Maria during her childhood in Cuba. Decades later, Antonica is a powerful metaphor, one that buoys Maria when she is plagued by

self-doubt, reminding her of her parents' sacrifice and legacy. These childhood tales have opened up her imagination to new possibilities, giving her the power to dream.

CRAFTING YOUR PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Psychologist Dan P. McAdams, author of *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By*, writes: “[Our personal] narratives guide behavior in every moment, and frame not only how we see the past but how we see ourselves in the future.”

Our stories often predict our future, even as we make meaning of the past. Emily Orton's story foretells that she will again do hard things, and Maria Carr's that she will confidently face future struggles. Macy Robison (macyrobison.com), a vocalist and music educator, has made meaning of her life experiences through the creation of a cabaret-style recital titled *Children Will Listen: Reflections on Mothering*.

Macy Robison: Making Meaning through Music

As a singer, my favorite songs to perform are those that tell a story. To sing for vocal beauty's sake is not interesting to me—I'm a sucker for a good story. My love of story initially drew me to perform in a cabaret-style production of a musical. That experience gave me the longing to jump into the local cabaret scene in Boston, but I couldn't get myself started. I think I secretly believed no one really needed to hear my voice or story—there were so many others singing and doing a better job than I could have done.

Through Whitney's encouragement, I finally became motivated to create my own cabaret show and talk about something

I really cared about—being a mother. I was a new mom, and was so thrilled to be living this dream, for which I had waited a very long time. I learned songs and prepared the cabaret, but it wasn't clicking. As I continued to refine the material, one day it occurred to me that the story I wanted to tell and needed to tell was my journey as a woman and a mother. Again, I doubted. I believed that no one really wanted to hear what a mother with an eight-month-old wanted to say. The women I would be performing for were far more seasoned and wise in their mothering. But telling my own story felt right. So I began. And as I did, the lyrics in the songs written by someone else for another show became my lyrics and my story.

The story of my preparation to become a mother (including the grief at the loss of my own mother at a young age) has helped me catch a vision of the mother and the woman I want to be. Our stories need to be told. Our stories help us connect. And we can tell them using the medium that is the most comfortable for us. For me, it was singing. For someone else, it could be blogging or quilting or building a career or raising a child. The most important thing is that we tell the story.

Macy has found joy and fulfillment in sharing her story through music. She has crafted a personal narrative about her journey to motherhood, and her story is now inspiring others to examine their lives, loves, and dreams. Listening to someone else's story often helps us view our own dreams through a different lens. We also process our sorrows and our losses, and find hope in telling our own stories. Dreaming is essential to making meaning of our lives—dreaming lifts us out of what has happened in what is often a confusing, messy, and painful past so that we can craft a narrative that predicts a brighter future. And

often, as we dream, we better understand the significance of our lives, what they are now and what they can become.

FRAMING YOUR PAST, PREDICTING
YOUR FUTURE . . .

Don't be satisfied with stories of how things have gone with others. Unfold your own myth.

—Rumi, thirteenth-century Persian poet

- What are the personal narratives that frame your past, and possibly predict the future and achievement of your dreams?
- What are the sorrows in your life? Can you build dreams that help make sense of your sadness?
- How can telling stories help us discover or rediscover our dreams? What cues can we find about our dreams in the stories we most often tell (and those we don't) about our lives?
- How do the stories we tell ourselves when we're alone differ from those we tell our family and friends, our children, or those whom we mentor? For example, stories that I tell my children and mentees tend to be well crafted and confident. Stories I share with my peers are less-polished recountings of personal experiences, both happy and sad. The stories I tell myself are rarely as upbeat.
- Consider the words of writer and theologian Frederick Buechner: "God calls you to the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." If you were to craft a narrative using that quote as a starting point, what story would you tell, whether written, painted, danced, photographed, or sung?