



# SOAR

Stories of remarkable women



# GlassSKY is dedicated to the empowerment and advancement of women.

GlassSKY is dedicated to the empowerment and advancement of women. We believe that all girls and women should be encouraged to reach their full potential. When we invest in women, we all win. Economies strengthen, societies improve, cultures evolve and the next generation becomes healthier and better educated.

Yet, females today continue to be bombarded with outdated messages that tell us that appearance is valued more than intelligence. This is particularly harmful to young women and it must change. At GlassSKY we are committed to do our part.

When we launched in October 2015, we interviewed some of the best thinkers in this space, including Canada's Research Chair in Gender, Dr. Marnina Gonick, whose latest research can be found profiled on GlassSKY.org. We also sought out innovators around the world who are working to engage young women in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and give them the skills and inspiration to aim higher. We spoke with leaders who work with young women and girls every day, from the Girl Guides to guidance counsellors, from the YWCA to the Boys and Girls Club. And we conducted a survey about the opportunities and issues facing young women. Overwhelmingly, the need for better role models surfaced time and again. Specifically, we were told that media needs to produce more stories that show women who have triumphed over adversity, pursued their goals and succeeded in a variety of fields – instead of the constant barrage of sex and celebrity. That's when we decided to launch SOAR – a series profiling remarkable women.

SOAR is about Sparking Opportunity and Advancement through Role Models. Role models can inspire us to look within to discover our own strengths, and become clear on our goals and values. They can help us accept our own challenges and understand that we have the power to overcome odds and change our life for the better.

The incredible women profiled are making a difference in their own community, and some on the global stage. There are accounts of adversity, excellence and women helping women. With different journeys and destinations, they all offer powerful wisdom on how women can succeed, and soar in their lives. We are very grateful they supported our vision and participated in this project – thank you!

Our hope is that this book will trigger conversations in homes, at schools and in community centres where young women can learn from these role models and be inspired to pursue their full potential.

Robyn Tingley, Founder GlassSKY



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Exclusive to GlassSKY, Alyson Queen has written a series of stories on remarkable women. Some are making a difference in their own community, and others on the global stage. There are accounts of adversity, excellence and women helping women. With different journeys and destinations, they all offer powerful wisdom on how women can succeed, and soar.

					
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*Rosie winning the gold medal in 2012 in London*

# Road to Rio

## Rosie MacLennan

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As the youngest of four, Rosannagh (Rosie) MacLennan often tagged along to her older siblings' trampoline lessons. It didn't take long before she was hooked. Rosie started competing internationally at age 11 and was Canadian National Women's Champion in 2005, 2009 and 2011.

At the 2012 Olympic Games in London, Rosie earned Canada's only gold medal at the Games – and achieved a personal best. Now she's off to Rio to once again represent her country.

Rosie is a recent graduate of the University of Toronto with a bachelor's degree in Physical Education and Health. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in exercise science, also at U of T.

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## Q&A with our Golden Girl

**GlassSKY:** You are on the road to Rio! How are you doing?! Are you counting down the days?

**Rosie:** I am doing well! I am getting excited and really focused on training, making that last push. Things are definitely going in the right direction but I am happy to have a few more weeks to prepare. I am not counting down specific days but do have an idea of how long I have so I can plan my training.

**GlassSKY:** What does it feel like to represent your country?

**Rosie:** It is an incredible honour to represent your country. Anytime I put on a Team Canada uniform, I feel very proud. Firstly because Canada is a great country but also because it is an absolute privilege to be representing your country in something you love. Each time I put on the Maple Leaf, it represents the entire journey to that moment.

**GlassSKY:** In sports, each event is unique. The competitors, the outcome, your performance – they're all different. Sometimes you soar to gold and other times you probably have to reflect on what happened. How do you deal with the ups and downs that come with being an Olympian athlete?

**Rosie:** I always try to keep in mind why I do the sport. I hold on to that love of training, the love of doing skills and perfecting them. I know that my capability as an athlete is not defined by one competition. I also truly believe that you need those downs. You need them to test you. You need them to learn. You need them to gain perspective and strength. No athlete reaches the Olympics without some adversity but it's the grit and resilience that get you through, along with an entire list of people who support me and are there for me every step of the way. They help give me strength.

**GlassSKY: How do you mentally prepare for your events?**

**Rosie:** There is a lot that I do to mentally prepare for events. I always try and imagine what the environment will be and I work with a sport psychologist to prepare for a lot of different situations. At the event, I have a routine that I do. I will listen to certain music to put me in the right mental state. Before competing, I do a lot of deep breathing and imagine my routine in my head, focusing in on what I need to pay attention to in each part. I try to keep it simple and when I get nervous, I focus on my love of the sport and the fact that I am living my dream.

**GlassSKY: We've heard so much about the dangers and challenges of concussions. You had one. Talk to us about what happened and how that has affected you. Has your routine changed at all as a result?**

**Rosie:** My recent concussion was probably the hardest challenge I have faced in my athletic career yet – physically and emotionally. It was a challenge because physically I felt perfectly healthy and in some ways stronger than I ever had, but there was something off. I experienced headaches and pressure in my head. At the beginning, I had trouble coming up with words and putting together sentences. Any mental task, including carrying on conversations was very challenging and exhausting. Over time, with the support of many different health professionals, I was able to retrain the parts of my brain that experienced dysfunction. The most challenging and lasting part was issues with spatial awareness. I would get dizzy in the air and my eyes would have



trouble staying stable which, when you are flipping and twisting, is not ideal. I did a lot of eye exercises to, again, retrain parts of my brain and still do these now. This experience definitely set me back but I am doing my best to catch up.

**GlassSKY: Olympic dreams run in your family. Tell us a bit about your grandfather and what his experience taught you.**

**Rosie:** My grandfather was a gymnast for U of T. He qualified for the 1940 Olympics for gymnastics but because war broke out, he never had the chance to compete. He was an engineer and was stationed in Guelph during the war. When I was young and started talking about wanting to go the Olympics, he was always supportive and encouraging. In the months leading up to my first chance at qualifying, he would always give me words of encouragement. It was a long shot for me to qualify for the 2008 Olympic Games but he never doubted me.

At the World Championships that year, hosted in Quebec, our chance to qualify for the Olympics, he was in the stands. I was sitting with my teammates during the last flight and when the final girl went and we realized we had earned two spots, everyone on our team and our families jumped up and started cheering. I looked back and he was sitting in his seat with a huge grin and tears running down his face. He gave me a huge hug and told me he knew I could do it. Two weeks before we left for Beijing, I was at his cottage. After a long day outside, we all sat around as he shared his Olympic journey with us and told us of his experience in the war. I will forever cherish that moment. It was that week that he passed away.

His experience taught me to always keep pushing, always give yourself every chance to do your best. If you are going to go after something, do it with all your might, never look back, and enjoy every moment. Go through your journey with compassion and support those around you. Be thankful for the experiences. Don't feel sorry for yourself in the tough moments but experience them for what they can give you – strength and resilience.

**GlassSKY: Sometimes there is sacrifice involved. Has that been the case for you, to get where you are?**

**Rosie:** I do not feel like I have made any sacrifices. I believe that in life, we are presented with options and we have the opportunity to make choices. I have made a lot of decisions in my life to follow a certain path but I do not see any of it as a sacrifice. Sport has afforded me so many incredible opportunities and I am so thankful to have the privilege to live my dream.

**GlassSKY: You're young, you're strong, and you're going to the Olympics. You're a role model for so many young women – some of whom are probably close to your own age. What is your advice to them? What have you learned in your journey so far in life?**

**"I know that my capability as an athlete is not defined by one competition. I also truly believe that you need those downs. You need them to test you. You need them to learn. You need them to gain perspective and strength."**

**Rosie:** Chase the dream and love the journey. In every experience, there are lessons to be learned. Have the courage to chase your dream. The dream is about more than the moment you reach it. It is about all of the moments leading up to it. Be present in the journey and enjoy it. You never know where you are going to end up, but if you stay true to your passions, if you open your heart and your mind to opportunity, you will wind up somewhere great. Chase the dream, love the journey.



**“If you are going to go after something, do it with all your might, never look back, and enjoy every moment. Don’t feel sorry for yourself in the tough moments but experience them for what they can give you – strength and resilience.”**

**GlassSKY:** Talk to us a bit more about role models. Who has inspired and motivated you, and why?

**Rosie:** There are so many people who have inspired me and motivated me in my life. I find role models in all aspects of my life but in sport, two people have had significant roles in inspiring my imagination and motivating me: my coach Dave Ross and my teammate Karen Cockburn.

Karen was the one who changed my childhood dream of being an Olympian into an actual goal. The Olympics always captivated me, but it was when I watched her in the first-ever Olympics that included a trampoline competition, that my dream began. I watched her train over the next year and then in 2000, watched her stand on the podium – I knew then that I wanted to follow in her footsteps. She has guided me and supported me in my entire athletic career.

*NOTE: After this interview, Rosie was named Team Canada’s 2016 flag bearer at the opening ceremony in Rio, and she won the gold once again at the Olympics.*

Dave has been my coach for 17 years. He has always been able to inspire my imagination and stretch what I believed to be within the realm of possibility. It is because of him that I love pushing the limits and seeing how far I can go. He motivates me to keep pushing.

**GlassSKY:** Give us a little insight into the real Rosie. If you could be doing anything else right now, what would it be?

**Rosie:** I honestly don’t know what I would be doing. I love my sport, I love training and I can’t imagine being anywhere else or doing anything else at this point. I do have ideas of other things I want to do which include travel (competing gives you a great idea of where you want to go back to). I plan to finish my Masters of Science at U of T after Rio and would love to do an MBA at some point. When I am not training, I love spending time being active outside (wake boarding, wake surfing and biking in the summer, snowboarding and skiing in the winter) so I would likely be doing more of that. I love spending time with family and friends. I also really enjoy reading.

# Workbook



1. Rosie shared her belief that failure is important to test you, and to gain perspective and strength. Can you think of a time you didn’t succeed in something and what lessons you learned?



2. Rosie’s mental preparation for competition includes imagining the situation ahead of time, listening to music, and using deep breathing techniques. Are there ways that you prepare for stressful situations to improve your chances of staying focused and succeeding?



3. Role models were very important in Rosie’s journey. List three people you consider to be your role models, and what you learn from them.



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Susan Aglukark is one of Canada's most unique and honoured artists, and among our most significant cultural treasures. An Inuk from Arviat, Nunavut, Susan began her musical career at 24, and embodies graceful honesty and strength in her music while candidly describing the struggles of the Inuit and Aboriginal communities. While many of her songs celebrate her rich cultural heritage, she has also courageously tackled topics like suicide and abuse. Her rise is inspirational for all Canadians, particularly young women who see in Susan a hero, a survivor, a champion. She rose to the very top of Canada's music industry as the first Aboriginal to earn a Top 40 hit, as a multi-Juno award winner, and as the recipient of Canada's highest recognition – the Order of Canada. In June this year, she received the Governor General's Performing Arts Lifetime Achievement Award. We are thrilled GlassSKY caught up with Susan to discuss what this latest recognition means to her, and to hear her advice for young women.

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## Q&A with Dr. Susan Aglukark, O.C.

**GlassSKY:** Congratulations on receiving this year's Governor General's Award for the Performing Arts – an amazing achievement! Can you reflect on that for us?

**Susan:** Thank you. It was truly an honour to receive this award. Everything about the event was humbling. I feel that I am so fortunate to have landed in the life I am living, and that such awards are always incredibly humbling.

**GlassSKY:** You ventured into music at 24. What took you in this direction? What were you doing before?

**Susan:** I feel that I more or less stumbled into the career. Before beginning the writing of the Arctic Rose album, I was working for Indian and Northern Affairs as a Communications Coordinator, with no "writing" experience or any real "creative" experience or knowledge to draw from. I did not initially approach the process as a possible career, I was simply relieved to have an outlet for the anger I had been harbouring.

# Workbook

**GlassSKY:** What has been the highlight of your career and why?

**Susan:** The highlight has been that my career has been my healing.

**GlassSKY:** What new projects do you have on the horizon?

**Susan:** I am working on a new album hoping to have it out for late fall early 2017.

**GlassSKY:** You've always been true to your heritage from Nunavut – and have worked to honour and showcase Canada's Indigenous peoples. Although it appears that progress is being made, can you speak to the current challenges and opportunities for our Indigenous people, from your perspective?

**Susan:** I have tried to be true to my Inuk heritage. I think the greatest challenge right now is creating opportunities for us to showcase our talent and to take our talent on live concert tours where artists are paid properly.

**GlassSKY:** GlassSKY is focused on empowering our women and girls – and we've heard so many stories of just how important role models and influencers can be. Who is or was the most influential person in your life, who motivated you?

**Susan:** My greatest motivators have always been my mother and father. They have lived through the greatest change and taught me the value of perseverance and adaptability. They have shown me the value of purpose and commitment. Without these, I would have not continued beyond my second major label album.



**GlassSKY:** Through SOAR, we will be including your story in a collection of remarkable women role models for young girls. What message do you have for them?

**Susan:** I would say to the young girls and ladies, embrace being a young woman. Embrace your journey, embrace your desire or goal and the path towards it. There is nothing in this world more rewarding than looking back and saying to yourself, "I did the best I could and I am proud of what I have done."

**GlassSKY:** Finally, tell us. What inspires you and your music?

**Susan:** I am inspired by dreamers – people who fearlessly pursue dreams and goals despite any personal situation or circumstance.



1. Susan is a survivor who used music to help her heal. Is there some experience you feel you need to heal from so you can move forward positively and live your life more fully?



2. Susan's career in the music industry happened by chance and because she was open to new experiences. Are there activities or hobbies you enjoy that could potentially become your career?



3. Susan's parents taught her the values of purpose and commitment. Can you think of a time when you stayed committed to a goal and saw it through to the end?





Dr. Kristin Baetz

# Connecting the Unconnected

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Dr. Kristin Baetz, a Canadian scientist and professor, who is also a mother, wife and volunteer. She is trailblazing new research methods, wants to see more young women enter science careers – and offers some straight talk on the reality of juggling a career and family.

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When you sit down with Kristin Baetz and ask her to talk about what she does for a living, her eyes light up. She describes a very complex scientific matter this way: it's a way of connecting the unconnected. It doesn't take long to realize that is also how she looks at life. "If you spend your life looking at a piece of sand in the sandbox, you might miss the giant picture of what is going on around it."

## **The professor, scientist and champion**

The Canada Research Chair in Chemical and Functional Genomics, Kristin is a professor at the University of Ottawa in the Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology. She is also President of the Canadian Society for Molecular Biosciences, a volunteer organization of about 1,200 researchers across Canada.

More recently, she was named Director of the Ottawa Institute of Systems Biology, which is a research-intensive institution of more than 30 scientists.

"It's a different type of science than we've done in the past, and we come at things from a difference angle. We look at every gene or protein in a cell, globally. We go in somewhat blind. We have no clue what we're going to get, and we find these innovative and large leaps of knowledge by doing things in an unbiased fashion. We end up with things we'd never expect and that's where the real innovation comes from."

In her role as President of the Canadian Society for Molecular Biosciences, she regularly reminds her fellow researchers of the need to promote science, wherever and whenever possible.

"We're really trying to make the government understand the importance of funding research in Canada. It's absolutely critical. If we don't fund basic research, we'll never see true innovation and knowledge."

### The journey

The road to becoming a successful independent researcher is a long and challenging one, often involving a lot of moving around and many women disappear from the field when they want to start a family.

"The myth of having it all can be overwhelming and results in a lot of young female scientists saying 'how can I have a demanding, competitive career along with a family?'

"I have yet to hear a male colleague ask that question."

### Behind the scenes, give a nudge

Kristin is a strong advocate of women mentoring women, to work through the unique challenges for females in her field. Among other things, she mentors female postdoctoral fellows on a monthly basis at the Faculty of Medicine.

During one of these lunch gatherings, you may hear the latest excitement from the lab, but you will also hear Kristin and other women scientists discussing issues such as unconscious biases, how to juggle priorities at home and at work, how to promote their work and – sometimes the most difficult – how to promote themselves.

She also has good advice for other professors, teachers and mentors of young women entering science: give a needed nudge. "I have tried to mentor by both example and encouragement. When I see talented PhD students, I am always asking them 'Have you thought about Postdoctoral Fellows? Have you started to write scholarship applications? Do you need help or want to discuss what you are doing next?'"

"I think my department has done a good job of trying to bring more women into the field, but it's still an incredible challenge because women often self-select out. We're a long way off from true equity."

Originally from Toronto, Kristin clearly has had the drive and motivation to pursue her passions. Her husband, Doug, has also been a strong supporter of her career and their family.

**"I never shy away from letting my trainees and colleagues know that I have other responsibilities – my family. When I need to leave to pick up a sick kid or take time off to volunteer, I make a point of advertising this."**



*Kristin, with her daughter Isla, spends time encouraging young girls to consider careers in STEM*

### Family first

Kristin is a driven individual, and she makes it crystal clear that she has a very important role outside of the lab. Her family comes first.

"I never shy away from letting my trainees and colleagues know that I have other responsibilities – my family. When I need to leave to pick up a sick kid or take time off to volunteer, I make a point of advertising this."

Her comments are indicative that the workplace, at least hers, is changing. Technology has a role, yes, in terms of being connected from anywhere, anytime. But there is a bigger movement at play. Women like Kristin have influence in senior roles in science. They are willing to walk the talk on family and career and in turn are empowering others to have far more flexibility than ever before.

# Workbook



1. Have you ever thought about working in STEM – science, technology, engineering or math? Maybe a program on television inspired you to think about work in one of these areas. If so, discuss and list 3 STEM careers you are curious about and would like to learn more about.



2. Dr. Kristin Baetz highlighted three key relationships in her profile – people who supported her and are important in her life and career. Who are they, and why do you think she values them so much?



3. Education played a large role in Dr. Baetz' success. Have you thought about furthering your studies in some way? If so, list the area. If not, why?

"One of the main reasons we hear of females dropping out of science at the highest levels is because of the perception that one cannot have a family. In fact, one of the greatest benefits of being a professor is that I don't need to be tied to a desk 9-5. More people need to know that you can do this job and still have children and be actively involved in their lives."

**"One of the main reasons we hear of females dropping out of science at the highest levels is because of the perception that one cannot have a family. In fact, one of the greatest benefits of being a professor is that I don't need to be tied to a desk 9-5."**

Her advice to young women? Go for it.

When Kristin speaks about her career, the conversation is sparked with passion and conviction. She is doing what she loves. With a Bachelor of Science from Queen's University, a PhD from the University of Toronto and a Postdoctoral Fellowship from the University of British Columbia, she has worked incredibly hard to arrive where she is today.

Now, she readily admits that it isn't an easy field, especially for women. But that doesn't mean she wants women to shy away from science. In fact, it's the opposite. She wants to see more young women and girls enter STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) careers.

"Being a scientist is an amazing and creative career. You never do the same thing twice in a day. I really hope more girls continue on and pursue it."

Encouragement from Kristin and others like her is seriously needed. According to a Statistics Canada Report in 2013, young women are less likely than their male counterparts to choose a STEM career, regardless of mathematical ability. Currently, women account for 39% of all STEM graduates. "My advice is always to go for it and do not limit yourself. You can always find ways to make things work. It may not be Martha Stewart perfect, but life isn't perfect."

When you ask how she manages to juggle all of the pieces of her full life, as a scientist and professor, mother to Duncan (11) and Isla (8), wife and community volunteer, she sums it up with a chuckle.

"Life is chaotic. But in a good way."





# Virtues and Vision

Barb Stegemann

*Barb Stegemann – business woman, innovator and visionary*

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Meet Barb Stegemann, a woman who beat the odds on poverty, stigma, and a hearing impairment to achieve global recognition as a businesswoman, philanthropist and visionary.

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She rubs elbows with former presidents and fashion and beauty experts. She's been named one of Canada's most powerful women, and she's even been appointed the first female Honorary Colonel at 14 Wing Greenwood in Nova Scotia. Barb Stegemann, founder and CEO of the The 7 Virtues Beauty Inc., is flexing women's buying power through a social enterprise.

It all started because, in 2006, a member of the Taliban drove an axe through the head of her best friend, Captain Trevor Greene, when he was serving in Afghanistan for the Canadian military.

## The 7 Virtues

Her whole business model is about creating change through trade and economic empowerment. She buys legal oils from countries that have been ravaged by war or natural disaster. And she turns them into perfume. In Afghanistan, she buys orange blossom and rose – giving farmers an alternative to growing the illegal poppy crop for the Taliban opium trade.

"The way to build peace is to honour each other's faith and dignity," says Barb.

Her philosophy is about rebuilding, rather than destruction. She leverages the fact that women are responsible for 85% of the world's consumer buying decisions, and taps into people who want to buy ethical products that help make the world just a little bit better by their purchases.

She's quick to point out that the younger generation gets it. "I'm not alone anymore. It's hard when you're constantly pushing ideas that are before their time. Now we're creating a movement."

Her ideas make dragons cry, literally. She was the first woman from Atlantic Canada to successfully pitch and land a deal on CBC's Dragon Den. When she partnered with venture capitalist and philanthropist W. Brett Wilson, things took off. Her book and fragrances, now five in total, are in 90 Bay stores across Canada.

There is plenty on the horizon too. She's dabbling with lipstick, getting back to smaller, intimate book club gatherings for women, and is set to launch a celebrity fragrance featuring jasmine from India this fall.

Yet, she always balances profits and business with her values, "Never, ever compromise what you believe to be true."

**“All the resources you need are right in front of you”: Socrates**

Barb will be the first to tell pretty much anyone that, along with her husband Mike and children, she is loving the journey right now.

“We’re blessed, we’re working hard. I dreamed this, I designed this, I am living this.”

“I wasn’t just pouring coffee. I was a human being having a conversation about business with some of the most powerful people, in the air, and I learned some of the most valuable lessons on those flights.”

#### Deep Faith

It’s fair to say that Barb is a visionary, and she’s on a mission.

So what drives a woman like that?

“I have deep faith, a faith in humanity. There is something beautiful about the divine, the spirit of the soul.”

Some say God, others say Allah or Yahweh or Krishna or Jehovah. To Barb, it’s beyond the name and denomination; it’s about mind, body and soul working together, like Socrates taught.

“My whole life’s journey is to – daily – earn the right to be worthy of the divine soul I’ve been given, that we’ve all been given. I believe our gifts were not given to us to keep to ourselves. We must have the courage to share our gift with others.”

#### Advice at all ages

One of Barb’s goals is to create ambassadors in our young girls by encouraging them to buy better and smarter and think about the global village.

But she also wants them to be patient and accept that the road might be bumpy.



Barb and Trevor – turning tragedy into triumph



Barb with Bill Clinton in Haiti



Perfume oil farmers in Afghanistan

**“Follow the smart people, observe what the wise do. You can learn and watch and ask good questions. Every question is a good question.”**

But her early days weren’t easy for her or her family. They lived on welfare, and she had a hereditary hearing impairment. She was judged and made fun of.

She went to university despite the challenges and got her degree – and hasn’t stopped learning since.

“My life plan didn’t quite work out at first, so I thought what can I learn? I knew I wanted to travel, and I wasn’t ready to sit in a cubicle. So I poured coffee as a flight attendant for nine years.”

Barb figured out that often what we need to learn is right in front of us.

# Workbook

"For some reason society tells us that once you finish school, everything will be clear. I want girls to know that it's ok to change your mind. It's ok to not be sure. Have your dreams, protect them fiercely. But be patient with yourself, be kind to yourself."

**"I want girls to know that  
it's ok to change your mind.  
It's ok to not be sure. Have your dreams,  
protect them fiercely. But be patient  
with yourself, be kind to yourself."**

Oddly, sometimes the path takes you right where you want to be, even if you don't realize it at the time. Just like pouring coffee as a flight attendant.

"Follow the smart people, observe what the wise do. You can learn and watch and ask good questions. Every question is a good question."

## Peace, Love and Respect

Her advice has a personal tone to it. That's why people listen closely.

At one point in the conversation, the woman who is packaging peace one bottle at a time, talks about the importance of love and respect – both of oneself and for others.

"I didn't have parents who had a loving relationship. I didn't have a reference point. I didn't have a role model when it came to what being a loving partner looked like, so I didn't know what to look for myself until much later in life."

She wants to ensure that girls are not being disrespected. That means working together, as women, to help them build confidence and find their voices.

"Never compare yourself to anyone else. It takes daily practice, like building a muscle. If you practice becoming jealous or negative, then that's what you will achieve."

## The story has just started

With a non-stop speaking schedule, a book going into its 6th edition and new products underway, you'd almost think Barb would be ready to step back and revel in her history-making success.

Unless you know Barb. Like her best friend Trevor, who recently took his first steps after what can only be called a miracle recovery, she's just getting started.

*Learn more about Barb's journey to Make Perfume, Not War at [www.the7virtues.com](http://www.the7virtues.com).*



**1. Barb overcame several challenges in life, including a physical impairment, financial struggles and growing up with parents who didn't always get along. Are you facing any challenges that you would like to overcome?**



**2. Barb emphasized the importance of faith, love and respect. She said that respecting yourself is a 'daily practice'. How are you practicing self-respect and love?**



**3. Barb has a truly global perspective and encourages women to recognize their significant buying power. Can you think of things you buy that are helping or harming people in other countries?**





# Shattering Stereotypes

from Harvard to Hollywood  
Brooke Ellison

Despite being disabled since her youth, Brooke is an inspiring voice who is redefining what it means to be disabled. Harvard valedictorian, author, and the inspiration behind a Hollywood movie, she is shattering stereotypes every day. With her fellow Harvard grad, Alison Loat, they are tackling policy for people living with disabilities at the World Economic Forum.

She was 11 years old, lying in a hospital bed in New Jersey after a freak accident on her way home from school, and grappling with the notion of never using her arms or legs again.

Yet somehow, Brooke Ellison found the strength to look deep inside and convince herself that her life wasn't over. It would just be different.

Fast forward to May 2000, when she delivered these lines as part of her Harvard graduation speech:

"Ten years ago, I was hit by a car. No one expected me to live. I have been paralyzed from the neck down and on a respirator since that time. Tomorrow, I will graduate from Harvard. Miracles happen."

## Redefining Disability and Opportunity

"All of the things that I was defining myself by were really not all that significant. Just because my life was different than it had been, did not mean it was in any way inferior or should prevent me from making a difference in the world."

For Brooke, that meant re-thinking things like appearance or physical activity. From there, she started shattering the stereotypes that she and her parents encountered about disabilities, even in her school.

"Board of Education members were fearful that my presence in the classroom was going to be disruptive or upsetting to the other students."

It went further than that though. She witnessed a mindset that a disability "was something to be afraid of, or something that is contagious, or something you offer a hard gaze from."

*Photo on previous page:  
Inclusive Future was created to give a global voice to people with disabilities. Brooke Ellison, centre,  
is pictured here at a World Economic Forum workshop in New York City where the idea began.  
L-R: Brooke's mother, Jean Ellison; Shika Pappoe, a volunteer on the project; Brooke; Alison Loat.*

Shattering that stereotype has become a life goal.

Brooke was the first quadriplegic to graduate from Harvard. In 2012, she completed her PhD from Stony Brook University.

**“All of the things that I was defining myself by were really not all that significant. Just because my life was different than it had been, did not mean it was in any way inferior or should prevent me from making a difference in the world.”**

Her story has reached and inspired millions, including the late Christopher Reeves. The last directing project that he worked on before he died was Brooke’s life story. The television film “The Brooke Ellison Story” aired in 2004, after his death.

She’s also written a book with her mother about their collective journey “Miracles Happen: One Mother, One Daughter, One Journey.” (note: this is a fantastic read)

But there’s more.

You see, if you want to take on the system, you need to be a part of it. So in 2006, Brooke ran as a Democratic candidate for New York State Senate. Although the incumbent ultimately regained his seat, her campaign was endorsed by the New York Times and also featured on the Today Show.

#### Along comes Alison Loat

Brooke’s friendship with Alison Loat began at Harvard when the two were graduate students at the Kennedy School from 2002–2004. They first met in the cafeteria. Alison offered Brooke some assistance in getting her lunch.

Alison herself is an inspiration, co-author of a best-selling political book, “Tragedy in the Commons.” She was named one of Canada’s Top 100 Most Powerful Women in 2013.

“When Alison and I first met, I was at a point in my life, 14 years after my accident, where I still hadn’t really fully gone through the emotional and mental transformation that often accompanies disability.”

When great minds come together, anything is possible. In 2014, they were both individually named Young Global Leaders through the World Economic Forum. It was there that they launched Inclusive Future, a project to blow open the doors of opportunities for people with disabilities, at the global level.



*The Brooke Ellison Story was a 2004 television film directed by fellow quadriplegic Christopher Reeve, star of Superman.*

# Workbook

## Advocating for the world's largest minority group

According to a 2011 World Health Organization report, more than 1 billion people or 15% of the world's population live with some form of disability.

**"As women, we're often put into these boxes, the walls of which are based on feelings of insecurity or that we're not good enough or that we should wait or that we're asking too much or that we're operating beyond our skillset."**

As Alison points out, "You've got all the good will of the UN and the world's governments and there is barely a mention of the world's largest minority group: people living with disabilities. We needed to change that."

The project has become a movement. Linked with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, they are taking their research and stories to the UN and other international organizations.

They are also presenting policy recommendations on how to improve the quality of life and well-being for people living with disabilities throughout the world.

"This is a population that can't just be pushed under the rug...whose lives are no less worthy than anybody else's," reminds Brooke.

### Don't let anyone get in your way

Brooke's story is one of sheer inspiration and a reminder that anything is possible. She is a living example that by being different, you can really make a difference.

Her friendship with Alison shows how powerful change can happen, especially when women support each other and harness their leadership abilities toward a common goal.

Brooke sums it up this way: "as women, we're often put into these boxes, the walls of which are based on feelings of insecurity or that we're not good enough or that we should wait or that we're asking too much or that we're operating beyond our skillset."

"For any young girl or anyone with a disability, just ignore that completely. Don't let that get in your way. Just go after whatever it is that you want to achieve."



1. Brooke's accident was life changing, causing her to re-think what she valued. Can you list five things that you value in life?



2. Stereotypes influence how many of us are perceived. Can you think of ways you might be impacted by stereotypes yourself or how you might be unfairly judging others?



3. Brooke and Alison are working together to change the way people with disabilities are treated. Think of someone you know who lives with a physical disability. How can you help them?





# Winners

# Get Up One More Time

Nocha Van Thielen

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Meet Nocha Van Thielen, global marketing leader at the world's largest chemical producer, BASF. Her journey in STEM is one of constant self-discovery, learning, and perseverance. Gain insights from Nocha, a remarkable woman profiled as part of our SOAR series – Sparking Opportunity and Advancement through Role Models.

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As our conversation begins, it's clear that Nocha Van Thielen is a no-nonsense kind of global marketing leader at BASF who has a story of aiming high, constantly learning, and never giving up. She tells it with refreshing candour, sharing her lessons learned as a woman in a male-dominated industry. She's decisive, she's direct, and speaks from experience.

Her advice to others can be defined by how she coaches herself to get out of bed and go for a run.

"Don't complain about it, just get up and do it. Winners don't fail less, they just get up one more time than everyone else."

But that clarity and resolve didn't always come easy for Nocha. After completing her undergraduate degree at St. Francis Xavier University, Nocha earned her graduate degree in molecular genetics at the University of Toronto's department of botany. Like so many students though, once those degrees were in hand, the road into the real world was less than clear.

## **Continuous Learning is Key – Stretch Yourself & Take Some Risks**

"When you go to school, you have no clue about the things you can do or the variety of jobs out there." One thing was clear – Nocha knew she wanted to aim high and be surrounded by the best thinkers in an industry-leading organization that would push her to grow even further. When she saw an advertisement in the newspaper for an opportunity with BASF, the world's largest chemical producer, she jumped. It was in the United States, starting as a bench scientist in the biotechnology division. At the time, jobs in her field weren't easy to come by, and the US dollar was much stronger. It was an opportunity to pay off debt and get experience learning from a global leader.

After a few years proving herself in her role, she wanted new challenges. A continuous learner, Nocha began to pursue her MBA at night in order to open new and different doors. She then accepted a role in marketing agricultural chemicals, an area that was new to her and that would take her down a decade-long path of incredible learning and leadership.

"I started my new job when I was 38 weeks pregnant. In the span of one month I got a new job, a new baby and a green card. It was a lot of change all at once."

Add to that the fact that agriculture is a very male-dominated field, and she was frequently the only woman in the room.

**"Women can feel that they have to be perfect and if they are not, it's a reflection on them and their abilities. Men don't put the same pressure on themselves."**

"Everyone else came from agriculture, most from the same geography. They all seemed to talk the same language and have a secret handshake. It was tough and I struggled. On top of that, I had to learn the markets because I didn't know the industry."

She was determined to be successful. Looking back, she openly admits that she was particularly tough on herself at times.

"Women can feel that they have to be perfect and if they are not, it's a reflection on them and their abilities. Men don't put the same pressure on themselves."

### **Supportive Partners and Mentors are Essential – No One Does it Alone**

Nocha knows just how hard it is for many women to balance a career and family. She has been fortunate to have a partner by her side, and someone always in her corner helping her raise their now 11 and 9 year old children.

"I married someone who was extremely supportive of me and my career. He's been beside me every step of the way. He was there when I had to travel, he took turns getting up with the kids. You need a real partner. That is critical in being able to manage it all."

Nocha reinforces that women also need to find someone in their corner in the workplace, too. She found hers in an unexpected place, when she wasn't looking.

"A woman came on our team who was taking a coaching course and wanted to practice coaching with someone. I only found out about this by chance when we sat together one day on an airplane and had a long conversation. By the end of the flight, she agreed to mentor me."

They worked together for a year, helping Nocha gain clarity on her next step and rebuild confidence in areas that had suffered while she had been juggling the demands of motherhood and career.

As Nocha admits, there is no "quick fix" for anyone rebuilding confidence. It takes hard work and commitment. But the process proved invaluable as a basis for her leadership.



*Nocha enjoying some down time with her family*



# Workbook



1. Nocha took a lot of risks early in her career by moving to the US, joining a new industry, and taking a new job while she was juggling a new baby. Can you think of ways you want to stretch yourself to grow by taking on new challenges?



2. Nocha had a mentor who coached her for almost a year. List two areas you would like to improve in, and think about people who are strong in those areas and could help you.



3. Nocha is 'paying it forward' by trying to support other women in her workplace. In what ways can you share what you've learned and help others?

As Nocha admits, there is no “quick fix” for anyone rebuilding confidence. It takes hard work and commitment. But the process proved invaluable as a basis for her leadership.

She is the current Chair of Women in Business at her site and she makes sure to reach out where she can – stopping by offices, going for lunch and generally trying to guide women on the simplicity of owning their own brand and credibility.

“You do a good job, you do what you need to do, you earn the credibility.”

With all her experiences behind her, and so much to look forward to, there is one main credo she lives by: success is about getting up just one more time.

“Winners get up one more time than everybody else – just one more time. I remind myself whenever I get up for a run that there are others who are staying in bed today.”

Her advice to young women entering STEM careers is similar, although she warns that to be genuinely successful, the interest has to be there to start with.

“If you fail, that’s great, you just learned. Get back up and try again and you will be successful.”

“It showed me how important it is to have someone in your corner who you can really talk to, especially if you’re feeling isolated in a work environment that is male dominated, with few people to relate to.”

## **Paying It Forward – An Advocate for Women in Business**

Recognizing the value of coaching and mentoring, Nocha is an unflinching advocate of supporting women, wherever and whenever possible.

**“I started my new job when I was 38 weeks pregnant. In the span of one month I got a new job, a new baby and a green card. It was a lot of change all at once.”**



# Personal Reflections

The women we profiled in this book have very different interests. Yet, they share several things in common. In this worksheet, we highlight five areas, and encourage you to reflect on these. This can be the beginnings of your personal action plan to achieve greater success in your life.

## 1. Learning & Growth

All of the women embraced learning throughout their lives. List three ways you would like to learn and grow more. You can think about personal growth, job-specific skills, and even spiritual growth.

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## 2. Relationships

Asking for help is important. All women we profiled told us that specific people in their lives helped them realize their potential. List three people in your life who you can work with to help you realize your dreams.

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## 3. Challenges

Overcoming challenges is part of living a healthy life. Do you have any challenges you want to be able to overcome so you can focus on a more positive life? List these and reflect on the relationships you listed in Question #2. Who can you ask for help with the problem you are facing?

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## 4. Self Respect

Believing in yourself is one of the best gifts you can give yourself. All of the women profiled said they found ways to work through negative emotions and embrace their gifts. Are you being negative about yourself in any ways? List these below and consider how you might start to change your outlook.

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## 5. Setting Goals

Having a clear focus on what you want to accomplish is very important. List two goals you want to set for yourself. Think about your health, relationships, personal confidence, education and career. Then, on the following pages, for each of the goals list three action steps that will move you closer to success.

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# Goal 1 Action Steps

1. Who can I ask for help with this goal?

2. What do I need to learn to accomplish this goal?

3. What behaviour do I personally need to improve as a first step towards reaching this goal?

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Keep this sheet with you and read it very often to help you stay focused on what matters to you. Share it with people you trust to help you on your journey. This life is yours, and we hope that this book has inspired you to think about how you can make the most of it!

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# Goal 2 Action Steps

1. Who can I ask for help with this goal?

2. What do I need to learn to accomplish this goal?

3. What behaviour do I personally need to improve as a first step towards reaching this goal?

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Keep this sheet with you and read it very often to help you stay focused on what matters to you. Share it with people you trust to help you on your journey. This life is yours, and we hope that this book has inspired you to think about how you can make the most of it!

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United Nations International Day of the Girl: October 11  
United Nations International Women's Day: March 8