

FINDING YOUR
POWER

THE BLACK
AMERICAN'S GUIDE
TO UNDERSTANDING
POWER IN LIFE



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Chapter 1

Finding Your Powers: The Black American's Guide to Understanding Power in Life

"Nearly 70% of Black Americans report experiencing discrimination regularly."(Color of Change, 2018)

Read that stat slowly and you'll notice, the frequency at which Black Americans experience discrimination is not 'sometimes'. Notice that the frequency at which Black Americans experience discrimination is not 'sporadically', nor is it 'every now and then'. The frequency at which Black Americans experience discrimination is 'regularly'. Potentially, daily. This stark statistic, from Color of Change.org(2018), is a constant reminder of the societal hurdles we face every day.

My simple thought on this fact is, "since we will likely deal with challenges that make us feel bad about ourselves, it's important to have something designed to make us feel good about ourselves." Our mood will contribute to how effectively we will be able to overcome these challenges. When your confidence is up, you can be more productive,

and you can be more effective. The stat about discrimination also underscores the critical importance of how we, as Black Americans, need to be selective on how we choose to invest our time and energy. How we choose to spend our days, matters. The energy of our chosen environments can affect the decisions we make. We can't change the fact that there will be obstacles in life, but we can change how we approach and navigate these obstacles. We can't change the fact that there will be storms while we're at sea, but we can change the set of our sails so we can navigate through the storms effectively.

In a world that often seeks to persuade us to focus on external challenges, if we have the proper perspective, we can accept those messages for what they are, and use them as tools to help us contribute positively to the group. Even though challenges have been an inherent part of the Black American experience, it is also important to understand that Black Americans have been overcoming these challenges and creating our own environments of prosperity since the 1800s. Unfortunately, stories like James Forten, Sarah Boone, or Mary Ellen Pleasant probably will not be taught in school, but the truth of our existence is always there for those of us who are willing to learn. Remember, you are a part of a group that has consistently overcome historically challenging odds again and again and again. That spirit of overcoming has become a part of your DNA signature, so use it.

If we're not careful, we could be tricked into chasing external validation and becoming overwhelmed by external challenges, at the expense of wisely fortifying our internal validation. Learn more about your job, yes. Learn more about your family, yes. Learn more about the area you live in, yes. But the one thing that you want to make sure you take the time to learn about, is yourself. You are more powerful than you think. You are God's magnificent creation, and you have eight different intelligences at your disposal that you can use to generate revenue by serving the needs of groups or individuals. This book will give you the framework you can use to turn your time into your greatest asset. Every day is a brick. Don't worry about what the building will look like years from now, just focus on laying the best brick Today.

The allure of external validation is a powerful, yet perilous, siren song. When we talk about external validation we mean; 'a deep desire to gain approval from other people'.

Do you want approval from others, more than you want to approve of yourself?

If the answer is yes, why?

If the answer is yes, do you believe that this approach will help you or hurt you as you journey through life?

Wanting acceptance from external forces is a natural desire, but this desire can begin to work against you when your desire for external acceptance exceeds your desire for internal acceptance. I committed crimes as a young man because my desire for external approval exceeded my desire for internal approval. I wanted to impress friends who were just as lost as I was, and who had contributed nothing to society up to that point, just like I had. These were the people I was trying to impress. Smh. When I step back to think about it, it makes total sense. My deep desire to behave in a manner that pleased the people around me could only lead me to building a life of mediocrity, because I was, like many others, born into an environment of people with average to below average productivity. It took me a few decades to understand the importance of honestly assessing whether or not I approved of myself. I encourage you to think about that statement, and start working toward self approval, if you haven't already.

In a society that frequently undervalues Black lives and Black contributions, the desire for recognition and acceptance can become an all-consuming quest. However, this pursuit is often a treacherous path, particularly in this current climate. The increased exposure to narratives that perpetuate harmful stereotypes can lead to devastating consequences for those who choose to commit to imitating those character types. Please do not mistake entertainment for guidance. Entertainment is intended to entertain. Even though these character types are a reality in every race, I think it's important to remind ourselves every now and then that we can become whoever we choose to become. We are influenced by others, yes without a doubt, but make sure you put your own special signature on everything you do. YOU are the magic of it all. The more YOU you are willing to bring to the experience, the more magic happens. We will each ultimately be defined by our impact on others, so why not become great at what you're good at, and use that talent to impact other people.

What are you good at?

If you put in the practice, do you believe you could become one of the best in the country at it?

You definitely can, but be honest with yourself about whether or not you believe that.

Finding Your Powers: The Black American's Guide to Understanding Power in Life, will give you a truthful strategy that you can use to preserve yourself, strengthen

yourself, and strengthen your impact on those around you. Keep in mind, this information is only useful when you use it. We will provide you with a few simple foundational expectations, foundational goals, foundational actions, and foundational values that will allow you to build toward a calm, cheerful, successful life.

Foundational expectations will help you understand circumstances that every person should expect to experience in this life, this will help you continue to move forward as situations arise. Foundational goals will provide you with aiming points that would benefit any person who is committed to moving in the direction of these aiming points. A ship without a destination will soon be shipwrecked, so it's important to have fundamental destinations in life. Foundational Actions will give you daily activities that will undoubtedly benefit any person who chooses to do the activities and confidently navigate the outcomes. It's not about what happens to you in life, it's about what you do about what happens to you, that makes the difference. And lastly, Foundational values will provide you with a few simple values that we can use to evaluate our behavior to make sure we are behaving in a manner that will get us to where we want to go.

Do you expect yourself to behave cowardly or to behave courageously in difficult situations?

Clarifying our expectations in these situations will allow us to more effectively anticipate which actions will lead to our satisfaction, and which actions will lead to our disappointment.

These concepts will likely be a disruption to your current way of living and will require you to have the courage to challenge the ideas and challenge the circumstances around you. However, the resulting relationships and outcomes will be worth it. Your relationships with your loved ones will grow even stronger because your example of authenticity and progress will now give them permission to authentically be themselves and share their ideas for progress as well. The high tide raises all boats.

And just so we're clear, these principles are derived from the oldest book in human history. The beauty of the truths in life is that they are simple. In this complex world with an immeasurable amount of moving parts, it's comforting to know that the truth is still simple.

There are only three primary colors, but look at what artists like Michaelangelo and Basquiat have done with them. There are only 10 digits, but look at what Albert Einstein and Benjamin Banneker did with them. There are only 26 letters, but look at what people like Ava Duvernay and Walter Mosley did with them. The connecting

message between these facts is that masterful genius is rooted in simplicity. Do not be confused by the simplicity of the good life.

Why did I write this book?

Simple, because I am a Black American who began in a low-income environment with a low sense of understanding of this country and a low sense of my value in this country. Eventually, I learned enough and tried enough to work my way up the ladder to experiencing success, having a confident understanding of this country, and having a confident sense of my value in this country. Which makes me uniquely qualified to share my experience in a way that could save someone else a considerable amount of time. I personally believe the historic struggles we have endured, and the consistent resistance to allowing us to simply Be, has made us more powerful than most. I am a person who believes that life happens for us, not to us. It's up to us to discover the lesson, then learn the lesson.

Also, what I have learned in life is that if you can teach a person how to tap into their natural powers, that person can continue to develop their skill on their own and that person can grow into an incredible version of themselves. By helping another person recognize and cultivate their inherent strengths, you can unlock a cascade of transformative growth. Those once hesitant steps now become confident strides, the once muffled voice now finds its resonant power, and the once obscured vision now sharpens itself into a clear path with clear action steps. This act of empowerment allows people to transcend perceived limitations, and to evolve into the remarkable versions of themselves that they were always meant to be. The writing of this book is my latest attempt to help people transcend their limitations.

Keep in mind, this book is for anyone. Any person who reads this book can benefit from the messages they will find inside. The doctor, the custodian, the middle school student, the repairperson, and the window washer. Literally, anyone who reads these messages can benefit from them. This book is intended to give the reader Hope. My definition of Hope, as given to me by my 10-year-old daughter, is; a strong belief in the good things inside of yourself and a strong belief in the good possibilities. Simple, but accurate. My belief is that encouragement is the fuel that powers Hope, so this book is meant to encourage and inform you.

I personally understand that there are numerous articles whose purpose is to highlight the negative aspects of being Black in America, but that's not what I'm here to do. Negativity is a part of the reality, yes, but so is Triumph. I love being Black, and I wouldn't change it for anything you offer. No thank you chief.

As I have grown throughout my life, I have gotten to the point where I actively search for positive traits in other people. Since I have expertise in the Workforce Development space, I search for traits that would be helpful to a person in their career. If I see a person showing these positive traits while I'm out in the world, I will let the person know that they possess valuable attributes, tell them what those attributes are, and I will ask them if they have considered elevating to a higher or more fitting role.

Just the thought of seeing yourself operating on a higher plane and in a higher role than you currently are, can be the idea that sparks the action. The one thing I am certain about, is the fact that there will continue to be messages designed to make us feel bad about ourselves as Black Americans. So, instead of complaining about it, I created a collection of messages designed to make us feel good about ourselves as Black Americans. Yes, I am my brother's keeper.

The Trenton Miles Story

"For thirteen months, Sir – and counting." Trenton Miles' response to the question of how long he had been working here, resonated far beyond a simple answer about his tenure at the local grocery store. It was a testament to his character, and a quiet declaration of his dedication. At just eighteen years old, this young person consistently stood out as a beacon of professionalism as the customers moved up and down the bustling aisles. Each "Sir" and "Ma'am" was delivered with genuine respect, he stood with confidence, and his gaze was direct and engaged. He wasn't just a cashier; he was also gifted in mental math, calculating each customer's change with uncanny precision, a feat he performed without drawing any attention. His exceptional skills weren't a boast, they were a quiet demonstration of his inherent capabilities, a hidden talent revealed only through observation.

This young man, with his unwavering professionalism and sharp mind, possessed the raw materials for success. Recognizing his potential, I shared an opportunity with him: an Electrician Apprenticeship program. I thought his meticulous nature and

aptitude for numbers, coupled with his professional demeanor, would be a perfect fit for him and a perfect fit for the program. I saw in him a spark that deserved to be ignited. So, I reached out to the program administrator to let him know about this potential candidate, and that kickstarted the journey toward Trenton's future.

Six years later, Trenton's story is a story of inspired transformation. He's not just an electrician with a regional power company; he's also a budding entrepreneur, running his own thriving business. His journey is a testament to the power of recognizing your inherent strengths and having the courage to seize opportunities. He has discovered his "Powers," the unique blend of skill, character, and determination that sets him apart. Trenton Miles, once a grocery store cashier, is now a testament to the fact that with dedication and the right opportunity, anyone can illuminate their own path to success and build a brighter future for themselves and those around them.

Many would say, and I'm included in this group, that there is a transformative power in focusing on internal validation and self-improvement. When we prioritize our own growth, define our own values, and cultivate our own self-respect, we reclaim our narrative. There are many incredible people throughout history who look just like you. All you have to do, is show the courage to become who you were meant to be.

Consider these illustrations that I'm certain we've each seen in life:

1. **The Entrepreneurial Visionary:** A young woman, instead of seeking validation through fleeting social media trends, leverages social media to highlight her products and services, and she invests her time in developing her business acumen. She focuses on building a strong network, mastering her craft, and cultivating a resilient mindset. By prioritizing her internal drive and vision to increase her visibility and sell more products, she targets organizations and groups that fit her customer profile in addition to individuals, and she builds a thriving business, creating opportunities for herself and her community.
2. **The Community Advocate:** A young man, instead of succumbing to the pressure to conform to destructive stereotypes, dedicates his time to mentoring young people in his neighborhood so they have a firsthand example of a positive contributor in their environment. He focuses on building strong relationships and encouraging the young people to grow and seek opportunities, which fosters a sense of belonging, and empowers the next generation. By focusing on internal purpose and community betterment, he cultivates a life of profound impact.

During my days growing up, I enjoyed listening to hip hop music and I enjoyed experiencing hip hop culture on a daily basis. I was a big Jay Z fan, and I also had high verbal linguistic intelligence. Which simply means that I knew most of the words to his songs, and yes, I would frequently rhyme them in any mirror that crossed my path. One of my favorite Jay Z lines from my time as a teenager was from 'Justify My Thug'. The line goes, "Foolish pride, is what held me together through the years I wasn't felt, which is why I ain't never played myself".

This line resonated deeply with me. I didn't interpret this line as arrogance because I feel no resentment or fear when I see a confident black person. I was raised around all black people for the first seven or eight years of my life. This line helped me to get a profound understanding of self-worth. To me, it meant that unwavering self-validation, and a deep-seated belief in my own capabilities, would be my anchor during times of adversity. This interpretation became a guiding principle, and a constant reminder that external validation is fleeting, while internal assurance is a fortress. By consistently affirming my own value and refusing to compromise my integrity, I have been able to navigate many challenges in life with resilience. Because of my actions and my principles, I have been able to maintain stability and achieve success while staying true to my own path, regardless of external pressures.

One of my earlier run ins with the challenge of external validation came when I was in the seventh grade and a girl told me I was ugly. Now if one of my friends had told me that, I would have hit em with a comeback and moved on to the next thing. However, this was different. This was a girl telling me this. I was sitting in the bleachers in the gym, I want to say it was before a basketball game or something. As I was sitting there, these two girls come up to me, I know them both, and one of them hands me a note, then they walk away. I open the note to read it, and it's a poem about me being ugly. I'm laughing as I write this because I wish I remembered what the words were, but I don't. When I think back to that moment, I remember just feeling embarrassment as I sat there. Not because this was the first time I was called ugly, I come from an extended group of family and friends that can get very colorful when battling with words, so I had definitely been called ugly before. I was likely embarrassed because these people were relative strangers. This was the like the world coming to me while I was just minding my business and saying, "Oh yea bruh, by the way, You're ugly."

I was caught off guard because that's not what I came to the game for lol. I came to the game to watch a beatdown, not catch a beatdown. I guess you can say that for me it was one of those humbling reminders that life gives us sometimes. One point of the reminder is, external validation is fleeting, it will come, and it will go. And the other

point of the reminder is, until you validate yourself internally you will always be susceptible to the pain of other people's opinions.

As a 12-year-old, external acceptance was important to me, but it wasn't some all-consuming thing. And this may sound crazy, but I believe the experiences I had with my family of us viciously clowning each other growing up made the Ugly experience a lot less painful than it may have otherwise been, but it did hurt. I took the pain, and I went back to work. I continued performing well in school and I continued getting better at sports. As time went on I was probably still ugly to her, but the energy from the public at large was that I was trending toward the opposite of ugly.

Fast forward four years from the note, and I'm a junior in high school. At that time I'm still a good student, and I'm a really good basketball player, who had recently been on the cover of the local sports page in the newspaper because of the season I was having. Things were lining up pretty good around that time, and my confidence was undoubtedly elevated beyond where it should have been. So, I'm sure you can imagine my delight when the same girl who handed me the Ugly note four years ago, was trying to get me to take her out on dates four years later. Shout out to Mike Jones.

I did not take her up on the offers, and that was the first time I began to realize that dealing with acceptance from others can be a very tricky thing. It could build me up, but it could also tear me down. On some level I began to establish the belief at that point that it would not be wise to build my self-esteem on something as fickle as acceptance from other people. Just like the three little pigs, building my self esteem on acceptance from others, would be like building a house with straw. And unfortunately for us, there are big bad wolves all over the place who are more than willing to blow your house down.

The core of my argument lies in reclaiming our expectations. We must refuse to allow society to dictate who we become. We must take control, define our own goals, and chart our own paths.

Expectations are the primary determinants of satisfaction or disappointment

If we allow external forces to set our expectations without taking a minute to evaluate whether the expectations are helpful or hurtful, we are perpetually at the mercy of

society's whims. However, by periodically evaluating our own expectations, we gain a deeper understanding of our desires and motivations, and we can build our self-esteem on our own terms.

Ask yourself:

- What are my top 3 abilities?
- What are my top 3 qualities?
- How do I want to use my talents to help other people?

You may have never considered these questions before now. Don't feel bad if that's the case. I didn't ask myself these questions until my 36th year of life, and it still wasn't too late. Looking back at it now, it's fascinating that I allowed so much time to pass without ever even thinking about doing inventory of myself. The one constant in my life is Me, and I never took the time to measure my own abilities. On some level I think I knew that I was important, but it never crossed my mind to inventory my skills and my values, then decide which values and skills I would use to carve out my space in this life. Such a simple concept, but the environments I was spending my days in made such a simple concept seem like it was a galaxy away. By answering these questions frequently, we gain clarity of purpose, and it helps us develop the courage to pursue our own dreams, regardless of societal pressures. When you are clear on who you are and where you're going, it can serve as a forcefield to the distractions of life. Remember, the important things take months and years to build, not days and weeks.

My hypothesis is this: if Black Americans can exhibit the courage and self-assurance to define their values and skills, and decide where they want to go in life, then they significantly increase their chances of leading calm, cheerful, successful lives.

This is not to say that external challenges will disappear. If I were to tell you that life is easy, I would be lying to you. Life is dangerous, and life is difficult. And, you can become strong enough to overcome both the dangers and the difficulties. Discrimination, systemic barriers, and societal biases will continue to exist. Unfortunately, those three obstacles go back to biblical days with the Egyptians and the Hebrews. However, when we are clear on what to expect in this environment, and we are grounded in our own sense of worth and purpose, we are better equipped to navigate these challenges. How you feel about me, will never be as important as how I feel about me. Also, I will never truly know what's going on inside of another person's mind, but I will always feel what's going on inside of me, so that is the garden I focus on tending to. The discussion of

whether having obstacles in life is right or wrong is a futile use of mental energy, in my opinion. We must embrace the unfortunate realities, and work to understand them.

Each of us was dropped into this world in different environments, and each environment has its own unique inherent obstacles. I was dropped into an environment in Fairmont, NC and Lumberton, NC. At my grandma's house in Fairmont there was 10 or more of us in a 4 bedroom one story house, and at my grandma's house in Lumberton there was 10 or more of us in a 3 bedroom one story house. It was me, my brother and sister, my cousins, and sometimes even my parents and aunts and uncles. Looking back at those times, we were obviously not rich, and I believe we did get public assistance, but I had a blast growing up. Of course some bad things happened as well, but I wouldn't trade my childhood for anything.

I, personally, am happy to have been given a life. I did nothing to earn this life, so I am grateful for it. I did nothing to deserve this life, with these abilities, so I am grateful for it. Regardless of wherever I was dropped into, it is my responsibility to get an understanding of the environment, then learn how to successfully navigate that environment. I am grateful for this opportunity at life, so I have learned to willingly embrace the challenges. I don't believe my brain is big enough to ever understand why things happen the way they happen in this life, but I do trust that I was brought here to figure out how to be happy and to figure out how to create a life that allows me to feel proud of my contributions. Do not be confused by the simplicity of the good life.

To live a calm life, we must reject the external chaos, and find peace within. To live a cheerful life, we must cultivate gratitude and joy, regardless of external circumstances. To live a successful life, we must define success on our own terms, and pursue it with unwavering determination. The definition we like to use for Success is; deciding on a clear goal, then moving steadily everyday toward that predetermined goal. Keep it simple.

We must understand that time is our most valuable asset. How we choose to spend our time on a daily basis will determine the trajectory of our lives. Let us choose to invest in ourselves, in our communities, and in our future. Let us reclaim our narrative, and chart our own course towards a life of purpose, fulfillment, and unwavering self-respect. Trust me, your days are one of your weapons. Use your days to stack up good until it's great. Believe it or not, when you move with a clarity of purpose and a clarity of strategy, people normally just get out of your way!

In these 12 chapters, we will give you the strategies and tools that will help you sculpt your own unique image, and carve out a path for yourself as you embrace the adventure

of your journey. These concepts will serve as the foundational elements to the improved version of You. Also, this is not a novel. This book is written like a collection of strategies; complete with multiple headings, numbers, and bullet points. We also use stories to try to illustrate what these concepts and values may look like in real life. To be honest, this book is written in a format that can only accurately described as, “unusual”. But at the end of the day, aren’t we all.

Chapter 2

Foundational Expectations: The 6 Human Needs

If you understand what to expect from life and what to expect from people, then you can anticipate what is about to happen.

The beginning of any good strategy is the foundational expectations. If we want to win, it helps to know what to expect in this environment. It helps to be able to anticipate. The ability to anticipate is the primary benefit of having clear expectations for life and for people. The universal truths that you will discover over these next hundred and something pages, will help you get a more usable understanding of what's happening around you. In my opinion, these are the things that really make a difference in life. Listen to me, listen to the other sources, and then arrive at your own conclusions. Don't be a follower, be a student. Take in the information, yes, but as with all things in life, weigh the information, then arrive at your own conclusion. Your unique understanding, and your unique perspective, is the key to it all.

When I built up the courage to evaluate and adjust my expectations, my life began to change for the better. The reason my life began to change for the better is because I was

willing to evaluate what I was doing, and why I was doing it. It's like the story of the little girl at Thanksgiving dinner.

There was a little girl playing at Thanksgiving dinner who was playing in the kitchen while her mother put the ham in the oven. The little girl asked her mother, "Mommy, why do you cut the end off of the ham before you put it in the oven?"

"Well," says her mother, "that's the way my Mother always did it, so I just followed her tradition. I think it helps to release the juices or something, and that's why the ham's always tender. But I did get it from my mother, so you might want to go ask her."

So, the little girl, now determined to get to the bottom of this ham end mystery, went into the back room of the house and approached her grandmother with the same question.

"Grandma, why do you cut the end off of the ham before you put it in the oven?"

"Well," says her grandmother, "that's the way my Mother always did it, so I just followed her tradition. I figured it was to get the end crispy like the rest of it, and maybe lock in the juices. It's my mother's recipe though, so you might want to go ask your great grandmother."

The little girl said "thank you" to her grandma, then she walked down the hall and into the living room and approached her great grandmother with the same question.

"Great Grandma, why do you cut the end off of the ham before you put it in the oven?"

"Well," says her great grandmother, "we had a really small oven, so I had to cut the end off of the ham so it could fit."

"But our oven is bigger now," responds the little girl, "so why do we still cut the end off if we don't need to?"

"Well," said her great grandmother, "I guess because no one had the sense to stop and ask why. Until you."

Take the time to evaluate if your actions are in line with the goals you want to accomplish. It's important to know whether you are getting closer to your goals, or further away.

Are there things you do that you don't have a clear reason for doing?

In life, we are each susceptible to picking up habits from the environment around us. That is a natural occurrence. It is helpful for us to periodically evaluate some of these actions to make sure they really make sense for who we are Today.

The 6 Human Needs is a concept popularized by Tony Robbins that will help us understand what to expect from people. The 6 Human Needs concept says that the six things every human inherently needs are; Certainty, Variety, Significance, Connection, Contribution, and Growth. When you take a few minutes to think about it, it makes total sense. These are the six things that we are consistently searching for, even though we don't consciously acknowledge that we are.

Once we understand the six human needs, it becomes more likely that we can understand people's actions based on the needs they are attempting to satisfy. The six Human Needs concept also claims that when a person finds one activity that satisfies at least four of the human needs, then it is likely that the person will become addicted to that activity. Simple, but also fascinating.

The Need for Certainty

In the intricate tapestry of human experience, the six human needs weave through our lives, shaping our behaviors and guiding our decisions. So, if we can understand our needs, we can evaluate and adjust our behavior accordingly. One of the six human needs is Certainty. By Certainty, we mean predictability, stability, and a sense of control over our circumstances. Certainty provides a foundation upon which we build our lives and gives us a sense of security that allows us to navigate the inherent uncertainties of existence. Knowing that you can go home to the same house every day provides you with a degree of certainty. The mothers in the story continued to cut the ham the way their mothers had cut it before them because it gave them a comforting sense of certainty.

Certainty is the need for assurance, stability, and predictability. Certainty is one of the reasons people stay in bad relationships, and certainty is one of the reasons people continue for years at the jobs they constantly complain about. It's the desire to know what to expect, so we can feel safe and secure in our environment. When we seek

certainty, we might find ourselves adhering to routines, establishing clear boundaries, or seeking guarantees. It is natural for us to gravitate towards familiar patterns and predictable outcomes.

How are you seeking Certainty in your life?

Keep in mind, the pursuit of certainty can manifest in both positive and negative ways. Understanding these patterns is crucial to cultivating healthy coping mechanisms and fostering personal growth.

Khadijah, a college student, was in her second year of a graduate program for business administration. For whatever reason, this year was more difficult than last year, and she found herself overwhelmed by the demands of her academic schedule. She started to feel uncertain about whether or not she would be able to handle the increased workload. However, Khadijah had previously learned about the six human needs, so she soon identified that her certainty was being threatened, and the only way to calm her stress was to reestablish a sense of certainty for herself. So, rather than succumbing to anxiety, she created a detailed study plan, and allocated specific times for each subject. She established a consistent sleep schedule and incorporated regular exercise into her routine. Of course she wasn't perfect in her execution, but this structured approach provided Khadijah with clear guidance that she was able to follow, and it provided her with a sense of control, which reduced her stress and allowed her to focus on her studies. By building a reliable routine, Khadijah found the certainty she needed to succeed.

Rakim, a 20 year Systems Analyst nearing retirement, was concerned about his financial stability, and about whether or not he would be able to adequately provide for his family after he retired. Rakim was married with three children, and two of those children were approaching college. His certainty was being threatened, and this made him feel uncomfortable. As a response to this feeling, Rakim consulted with a financial advisor and explained that he wanted to build more future stability for himself and his family. They worked together and developed a diversified investment portfolio that balanced risk and gained security. He also created a detailed budget, ensuring he had sufficient funds to cover the essential expenses. This proactive approach provided Rakim with the certainty he needed to feel confident about his financial future prior to his retirement. Planning and preparation, in this case, brought him peace of mind.

These stories are meant to demonstrate how the need for certainty can lead to positive outcomes when channeled constructively. It is a need that we each have, so it's important for us to understand how we are satisfying this need. By establishing routines,

following frameworks, planning ahead, and proactively addressing potential challenges, we can cultivate a sense of security and control.

If your certainty was threatened, how would you handle it?

Lanre, a team leader, had an intense need for control. Lanre believed that by attempting to control the things and the people around him, he would satisfy his need for certainty. Lanre believed his controlling behavior at his last job is what led to the success that landed him his current position, so he viewed his approach as effective. He micromanaged his team, constantly checking their work and dictating every step of the process. He became rigid and inflexible, resistant to any changes or suggestions that deviated from his plans. Lanre's employees dreaded his presence at work, and he began to notice that more and more of his team was 'falling ill' a lot more frequently than normal. Lanre's behavior created a tense and stifling work environment, ultimately hindering the team's productivity and damaging his relationships with his colleagues.

Lanre's need for certainty manifested as an unhealthy need for control, which negatively affected everyone around him. If Lanre had known the importance of periodic self evaluation, it is likely he would have adjusted his behavior before it got out of control. Lanre's goal was team success. Lanre could have satisfied the need for certainty by holding standing meetings on a predetermined day and time with team members to check on the status of projects. Lanre could have made sure to clarify the goal of the task, then allowed for creativity in accomplishing the goal. Team success is more likely when each member contributes and feels that their contribution is valued. Lanre's need for Certainty ultimately compromised his goal for team success.

Do you know anyone that satisfies the need for certainty in an unhealthy way?

Can you think of any positive ways they can satisfy the need of certainty and still accomplish their goal?

This anecdote highlights how the pursuit of certainty can become detrimental if we are not careful. We must periodically evaluate our behavior to make sure our needs are not manifesting themselves as rigidity, control, and resistance to change. When we cling too tightly to predictable outcomes, we limit our ability to adapt and grow. Even when you expect a certain outcome, be open to the actual outcome, then get creative enough to make the outcome work for you.

By understanding our fundamental human needs, we gain valuable insights into our motivations and behaviors. Recognizing when we are seeking certainty allows us to make conscious choices about how we satisfy that need. Rather than resorting to negative