

HUSTLE FROM THE HEART

A PATH *to* SUCCESS *for*
FEELERS, HEALERS, *and*
SENSITIVE ENTREPRENEURS



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FOREWORD

Sixteen years ago, I had a vision: to create a lifestyle brand rooted in wellness, transparency, and real nourishment. What I didn't have? A background in food manufacturing, a business plan, or any clue how to get a product onto a grocery store shelf. What I did have was a gut feeling—and, perhaps more importantly, the early guidance and inspiration I received from Joshua Rosenthal.

When I completed my health coach training at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, Joshua's teachings stayed with me in a way I didn't fully understand at the time. I thought I would be a nutrition counselor, working one-on-one with clients. And for a while, I did just that. But a turning point came when I baked a batch of blueberry muffins for a local race in New York, hoping to attract interest in my counseling services. No one wanted to sign up for nutrition coaching—but everyone wanted the muffins.

That moment, as small as it was, shifted everything. I could have ignored it or brushed it off as a fluke. But something Joshua often said echoed in my mind: "Feel the fear, and do it anyway." That became a personal mantra. I leaned into the unknown, into scrapiness, and into instinct.

From my Upper West Side apartment, I began selling baking

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mixes. I hand-delivered them to natural food stores and shipped orders myself. My first granola recipe—still unchanged today—was born in that same tiny kitchen. I invested \$5,000 of personal savings into the first production run, not knowing what would come of it. By 2013, we were being pushed into national distribution by Whole Foods. I remember crying on the subway after reading the email. It was the kind of moment that catches you off guard but also confirms that you’re on the right path.

Today, Purely Elizabeth is in more than thirty thousand stores across the country, with more than \$200 million in annual revenue. We’ve received major investments and built out a dream team, yet—at our core—we’re still guided by the same principles that fueled those early days: lead with purpose, trust your intuition, and create something that serves people’s lives.

So much of that mindset was seeded by Joshua.

When he asked me to write the foreword for this book, I was honored—but also deeply moved. Joshua has played such a quiet but powerful role in my journey, and I know I’m not alone in that. What he offers in *Hustle from the Heart* is something rare in the world of business books: permission to lead with empathy—to build not by becoming someone else but by becoming *more* of who you already are.

In these pages, Joshua shows you that being sensitive, thoughtful, or heart led isn’t a liability; it’s your edge. His voice is steady and generous. He’s been in the trenches, and he shares his wisdom not from a pedestal but from beside you. He understands the chaos and beauty of starting something from scratch—of building something deeply personal while staying grounded in service.

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Reading this book, I saw so many of the lessons I lived through reflected back to me: stepping outside your comfort zone, trusting imperfect action, allowing the vision to evolve, and surrounding yourself with people who see your potential before you fully do. It reminded me of the years I worked without outside investment because I wanted to hold onto the soul of the company. The times I led with intuition rather than strategy. The moments I had to quiet the noise and go back to my “why.”

Hustle from the Heart is for anyone who feels called to do things differently. It’s a guidebook for the dreamers, healers, and feelers who don’t see themselves in the usual entrepreneurship success stories—and don’t want to become hardened in order to succeed.

Joshua’s story and his way of teaching affirm that your softness, your sensitivity, your deep desire to help others—these are your superpowers. His journey with the Institute for Integrative Nutrition was proof of that for me when I was just getting started. And now, this book can be that proof for you.

Read it with a pen in hand and an open heart. Let it challenge you. Let it soothe you. Let it remind you that the bravest kind of success is the kind that stays true to your soul. Then get out there and build something beautiful.

—ELIZABETH STEIN

Founder and CEO, Purely Elizabeth

INTRODUCTION

Do you feel a deep calling to make a difference in the world but struggle to turn that passion into a thriving business? You're not alone. As the founder of the Institute for Integrative Nutrition (IIN), I've seen countless coaches, healers, and creatives face this exact problem.

These individuals—maybe you're one of them—are some of the most caring, sensitive, and passionate people on the planet. They're empathetic, purpose-driven, and dedicated to helping others. Yet when it comes to the business side of things, they freeze up. Marketing their services? Awkward. Having money talks with potential clients? Terrifying.

Fear and self-doubt hold them back from even starting. Others launch their businesses but get stuck, unsure of how to take the next step. The result? They undervalue themselves, miss out on financial abundance, and procrastinate going after their dreams.

If you're nodding along, I'm here to tell you it doesn't have to be this way.

As a highly sensitive person myself, I understand how intimidating entrepreneurship can feel. So many people out there want to "crush the competition," and you and I are wired differently. But here's the

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thing: You don't need to become a shark to succeed. You can build a thriving business without selling your soul. That's the heart of this book: learning to "hustle from the heart." It's about building a thriving business without losing your sensitivity. Trust me; I've done it.

Thirty years ago, I was a broke forty-year-old with no idea what I was doing, just holding onto a wild idea about starting a nutrition school. The field of health coaching didn't even exist yet, but I saw a major gap in the healthcare industry: People needed guidance on nutrition and emotional well-being that traditional doctors simply weren't providing. So I rented an office in New York City. For the first few years, I couldn't afford rent, so I slept on a couch in the office of the school. I didn't have an MBA or a business plan, but I believed in my vision. I followed my heart and intuition, and I learned how to balance that with grit, hard work, and determination. Now, IIN is the largest nutrition school in the world, health coaching has grown into a billion-dollar industry, and I get to give back in ways I never imagined.

How did I do it? I'll be sharing all the unconventional secrets that helped me get to where I am today—including things I've never shared publicly before. You'll learn how to

- Question traditional ideas of success to define what truly matters to you
- Find challenges that energize rather than drain you
- Build mental strength to overcome obstacles and setbacks
- Create a business that fits your unique personality and values
- Leverage your natural strengths to stand out in the marketplace
- Let go of perfectionism that keeps you stuck

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- Trust your intuition and recognize synchronicity in business opportunities
- Develop an authentic brand that attracts your ideal audience
- Value your services and price them with confidence
- Connect with clients who appreciate what you offer
- Stay calm and focused when facing business challenges
- Keep growing your business through continuous learning

This isn't your typical business book. No boring theories or corporate jargon here. Just practical advice and mindset shifts that work for real people.

It's for the feelers, healers, creatives, and sensitive souls who are tired of the nine-to-five grind and want to thrive. It's for the dreamers and the doers with big visions. It's for those who are committed to making their mark on the world, even if they're not quite sure how to do it yet. Whether you're ready to dive headfirst into full-time entrepreneurship or you're looking to grow a serious side hustle, you'll find something useful here.

I'm not going to teach you how to get rich quick or work two hours a week from the beach. But as someone who's mentored countless empaths and sensitive strivers over the years, I know the last thing you need is another path to burnout. You're already juggling so much—maybe raising a family, caring for aging parents, or supporting everyone else's dreams while putting your own on hold. On top of that, many aspiring health coaches and new entrepreneurs get caught up in perfecting their website or crafting the ideal Instagram post, thinking that's what building a business looks like.

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They hesitate to do the real work of finding clients because it feels uncomfortable or they're not sure where to start.

I understand: When your nature is to nurture, the boundary setting and self-promotion that business requires can feel foreign or even wrong. But there's a better way forward, one that doesn't require you to sacrifice your well-being or become someone you're not. Building something meaningful does take effort, but it shouldn't drain the very energy and compassion that make you exceptional at what you do. This journey is about self-discovery and growth, finding the courage to be true to yourself while developing the practical skills to turn your calling into a thriving business.

If you're ready to embrace your sensitivity as a strength, to challenge the conventional wisdom about what it takes to succeed, and to build a business that's authentically you, you're in the right place. I see you, I understand your struggles, and I believe in your potential. Together, we'll explore how you can not only prosper but thrive, on your own terms, by leading with your beautiful, compassionate heart.

1

QUESTION WHAT YOU'VE BEEN TAUGHT

I was an average student in school. While others seemed to thrive in structure, I felt bored and out of place. Algebra in ninth grade seemed pointless; I didn't get why it mattered in the scheme of things, and I just couldn't grasp it. I skipped the final exam because I knew I'd probably fail anyway. At some point, I accepted that my brain was wired differently. School was not unlocking my full potential.

Outside of school, I didn't quite fit the mold either. Raised in a close-knit Orthodox Jewish community in Toronto, Canada, I watched my parents, both Holocaust survivors, work tirelessly to build a good life for our family. While I deeply appreciated their devotion, I often felt confined by the strict rules and rituals of our faith.

In our insular community, the focus was always on the

uniqueness of our Jewish heritage, not only stretching back thousands of years but also carrying profound biblical and ancient significance. However, as I grew older, I began to question this narrative. I sensed there was a deeper truth beyond what I had been taught, and I developed a strong desire to broaden my horizons, explore different perspectives, and connect with the wider world beyond my community.

As a teenager, this search for understanding led me to devour hundreds of nonfiction books. From Eastern philosophy to Western science, I consumed it all. Hungry for knowledge and fresh points of view, I searched for answers to questions I didn't yet know how to ask.

Eventually, I met someone—a rabbi—who truly understood how to help me. He got me into graduate school by using my extensive religious studies as undergraduate work, and before I knew it, I had a master's degree by the time I was twenty. People who know me call this “classic Joshua”—always finding creative ways to work the system!

But this was just the start of my journey. After graduate school, I took a leap into the unknown and joined a spiritual community in Berkeley, California, called the Aquarian Minyan. To say it was a culture shock would be an understatement. This environment was the polar opposite of the sheltered, insular world I grew up in—open, carefree, and a little wild. I had no idea how to operate in an anything-goes type of setting, but I welcomed the discomfort, knowing it would push me to grow.

Eager to expand my consciousness, I explored different holistic practices in California. One in particular—Rolfing—completely altered the way I viewed the world. Rolfing is a form of bodywork that realigns the body's structure through deep manipulation of

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the fascia, the connective tissue around muscles and organs. Practitioners use their hands to apply pressure and movement, working to release tension patterns and improve the body's alignment, flexibility, and overall function.

During one session, the practitioner focused on my pineal gland, sometimes called the third eye or God spot. He used a finger cot to do very deep work on the palette of my mouth, then up my nose, connecting with my brain's nervous system.

Immediately afterward, time lost its meaning. I walked outside and just stood there, like I had nowhere to go and nothing to do for the rest of my life. I felt grounded in the present moment and connected to something greater than myself.

This crack in the cosmic egg experience changed something in me. I guess I must have seemed different, because my parents back in Canada started to worry. During one long-distance phone call, my mother suggested I come home to rest. But after boarding the plane back to Toronto, I panicked. If I went home, I'd be stuck again in a life that felt limiting. In that moment, something crystallized: I could no longer conform to the expectations others had imposed on me. I got off the plane before it took off.

A week later, my mother flew to California to check on me, and I panicked again. Her presence felt suffocating, reminding me of my restrictive childhood. Desperate to avoid her, I left the campus with just the clothes on my back—no money, no ID. I just needed to wander alone, to search for truth on my own terms.

What followed nearly killed me.

I ended up on some guy's private property, and he called the police. When the officers arrived and learned that I had no form of identification, they told me I was under arrest.

“What did I do?” I asked, genuinely curious.

“You’re trespassing on private property, and we have no way of knowing who you are,” one officer replied.

“I’m just me,” I said, then added, “How do I know who *you* are?”

They took me to the police station and put me in jail. My confusion and fear led me to cause a disruption, which only made things worse. Soon, I found myself strapped to a stretcher, loaded into a police van, and taken to a psychiatric hospital. There, they injected me with drugs against my will.

The next thing I remember is waking up restrained in an all-white room. I thought I had died and gone to heaven, because I couldn’t move or feel anything. The medication had put me in an altered state; I was basically a vegetable.

Thankfully, my dear mother searched for me, going from one police station to another and filing missing persons reports until she finally found me and got me released on the condition that I go to a private psychiatric facility. Once there, they diagnosed me with schizophrenia. Doctors said I was incurably ill and my mental illness would forever limit me. All the while, I didn’t believe them. Deep inside, I knew there was nothing wrong with me.

Eventually, I saw a psychiatrist named Dr. Klein. He was the first person who actually talked to me and asked me what happened. As I shared my story, he listened. Then, he said what I needed to hear: “There’s nothing wrong with you. You don’t have schizophrenia. You’re having a spiritual experience. You aren’t a danger to yourself or society. You’re free to go.”

Once I could be on my own again, I traveled the world, continuing my spiritual quest. I visited temples and ashrams across Asia, immersing myself in different cultures and spiritual traditions. I

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learned along the way that normal is subjective depending on where you go. What's considered normal in one culture can be vastly different in another.

So, what is truly true? With so many different religions and ways of life, which one is right? I wrestled with these questions, realizing that most of what I'd been taught was biased or incomplete. I mean, we're all just floating on a rock in space. None of us knows what happens after we die. So why do so many people pretend to have all the answers?

Though my unconventional path exposed me to some darkness, it also led me to my inner light. It taught me to question external authority and trust my instincts. The more I followed my gut, the less I struggled, and my life improved.

Before founding IIN, I studied nutrition and did health counseling. Studying nutrition, I was confronted again with a maze of conflicting theories. Everyone had a different opinion about what we should and shouldn't be eating. And they were all religiously certain that their way was the right way. Again, I had to cut through the noise and find my own truth. I experimented with different diets to see how each made me feel. I paid attention to my energy, cravings, moods, and symptoms. Over time, I found what worked for me. This taught me that there's no one-size-fits-all approach to eating—or to anything. We are each the experts of our own experience.

When I started IIN in the early 1990s, I was thirty-eight and broke. I had no business plan. But I had a calling—a vision to create a holistic nutrition school that would empower people to listen to their bodies, honor their individual truths, and take charge of their health.

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This idea came to me in part because I noticed a major gap in the healthcare system. Busy doctors treated symptoms and prescribed medication rather than seeing the whole picture of patients' lives. What people needed was for someone to listen to them, show compassion, and help them get to the root cause of their issues.

So with no capital, I followed my heart. I rented a tiny office in New York City and started teaching classes. My curriculum combined multiple dietary theories because no single approach works for everyone. I encouraged students to experiment and listen to their bodies. I taught them that everything is food—not just what we eat, but what we feed our hearts and minds. It's all connected.

Many were skeptical and doubted the school would last, but my purpose kept me going. I believed people needed this knowledge. I was right. The classes grew quickly. IIN became a pioneering force, part of a movement that redefined health and nutrition.

Decades later, IIN has become the world's largest nutrition school. With more than 150,000 graduates in 175 countries, IIN continues to empower students to find food freedom and transform their lives.

SUCCESS ON YOUR TERMS

You might be wondering, *What does all this have to do with me and my business?* Everything. By following my calling and staying true to myself, I built an impactful organization that defied expectations. IIN grew into something bigger than anyone imagined possible. And if I can do it, you can too—by trusting yourself and not conforming to others' limited beliefs.

QUESTION WHAT YOU'VE BEEN TAUGHT

The journey to authentic success often means choosing to fit *out* rather than fit in—spiritually, financially, and in how you live your life. In India, I learned from teachers who emphasized creating your own path, even if it meant breaking from tradition. They taught that while family is precious, we shouldn't let others' expectations stop us from following our deeper calling.

The real challenge comes when we question conventional definitions of success: money, status, and external validation. These are often the markers society tells us to strive for. But what if your definition is different? What if success, for you, means inner peace, creative freedom, or the ability to make a meaningful impact? How will you know you've reached it? You'll know because your life will feel aligned with your deepest values and passions.

This isn't always easy. Family and cultural expectations, though often well-meaning, can hold us back. There's often pressure to follow a set path: Get a stable job, marry at the right age, have kids, buy a house. This is all fine if it's what you want. But what if your soul is calling you somewhere else? What if your version of success looks different?

True success isn't about checking boxes; it's about living a life that feels authentically fulfilling to you.

THE ART OF UNLEARNING

We each have a unique purpose. When we're brave enough to honor it, we can transform our lives and the world around us. First, though, we must unlearn the limiting beliefs we've picked up along the way. This unlearning is key to finding our true calling.

Unlearning means bringing awareness to beliefs we've internalized that no longer serve us. It means questioning what we're told, thinking for ourselves, and trusting our intuition instead of accepting everything at face value.

In my twenties, seeking spiritual wisdom meant surrendering to the unknown and letting go of what I thought I knew. This deprogramming helped me discover an authentic path forward. We all go through life accumulating knowledge and beliefs that shape our worldview. Some help us navigate life, but some end up limiting us. That's why we need to examine our biases, assumptions, and what we take for granted as truth.

For example, maybe you learned in school that grades measure intelligence. But is this a fact? Many successful entrepreneurs, including me, didn't do well in school. Good grades don't measure intelligence any more than they measure discipline and conscientiousness. So this foundational "truth" might be flawed. In the process of examining individual beliefs, ask yourself, *What evidence supports this belief? What evidence contradicts it?* This helps clear out restrictive thought patterns and replace them with beliefs that help you grow.

Unlearning also involves examining the wisdom we receive from our families and communities. Although there's value in traditional knowledge, we need to question whether these inherited beliefs truly serve us. Sometimes, the most loving thing we can do—for ourselves and our families—is break free from limiting patterns, even when it's uncomfortable. This act of breaking free is loving because it allows us to honor our authentic selves and can inspire positive change in those around us. By courageously pursuing our own path, we often expand what's possible—not just for ourselves but for future generations of our family.

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A huge part of unlearning is critical thinking, which requires taking in information objectively and evaluating sources before accepting ideas as facts. With so many self-proclaimed experts today, we really need to probe deeper, do our own research, and consider different views. Even credentialed authorities can have blind spots, biases, or hidden motives that influence their perspectives.

Unlearning is not about throwing out everything you've ever learned; it's about critically examining your beliefs and keeping only what truly serves you, so you can create a life that aligns with your purpose and values.

DEBUNKING COMMON SUCCESS MYTHS

Now that we've explored the importance of unlearning, let's tackle some common misconceptions about success. Society feeds us many stories about what it takes to make it—stories that often hold us back or lead us down paths that don't align with our true selves. By examining and debunking these myths, we can free ourselves to pursue success on our own terms.

MYTH 1: YOU NEED A FORMAL EDUCATION TO BE SUCCESSFUL

Many people think you need an advanced degree to be successful. While degrees help in certain fields, they don't guarantee you'll learn the practical skills needed to make it in the real world. Often, raw experience teaches you more.

Look at people like Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates, and Sara Blakely—they all dropped out of school and built massive

companies. My friend Michael Ellsberg wrote a book called *The Education of Millionaires*, in which he interviewed self-made business geniuses without college degrees. Most of them said the same thing: School doesn't teach the critical skills for success.

I saw this at IIN when we had many employees with advanced degrees. Surprisingly, this was one of our least successful periods. These employees focused on theoretical concepts from their MBA programs instead of addressing the practical needs of the business. They thought their education made them smarter than me, so they often ignored my guidance. Many of them viewed IIN as just a stepping stone in their careers, focusing more on padding their resumes than on driving real results for the company.

On paper, they looked impressive. But they lacked the creativity and drive that comes from real experience. That's why I prefer working with people who are street smart—those who take initiative and think on their feet. They're the ones who move the needle and get things done.

Recently, a family friend's son told me he wanted to go to school to study real estate development. "No!" I said. "Get a job with a real estate developer instead. Here's why: A, you won't have to pay for it; B, you'll get paid while you learn; and C, you'll learn the real, tactical stuff that matters in the field."

Before investing in education, think about faster, cheaper ways to gain practical skills. Want to open a spa? Don't take a course; go work for someone who owns one. Notice what mistakes they're making, and try to avoid them. Then, when you're ready, take what you've learned and start your own.

This works for almost any field. Shadow an expert, or start in an entry-level role in the field you want to break into. Be resourceful,

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learn by doing, and find mentors who can share insider knowledge on what really leads to success in a given industry.

MYTH 2: IT'S ALL LUCK

Many believe that success is just being in the right place at the right time. But success rarely comes from luck alone. Sure, I've had lucky breaks I call serendipity, but those moments were also the result of hard work, persistence, and personal sacrifice.

Think about those overnight success stories you hear in the media. Dig a little deeper, and you'll usually find people who spent years honing their craft and putting in the effort to reach that point. Their success might seem sudden, but it's usually the result of a long journey with many ups and downs.

I've lived this. When IIN was on the brink of getting shut down, luck didn't save us. I pushed myself to superhuman limits to keep it afloat. This meant sacrificing my health and working relentlessly, but those hours got us over the line. It wasn't luck; it was grit and determination.

My parents taught me this too. As Holocaust survivors who immigrated to Canada with nothing, not even speaking English, they faced incredible hardships but kept pushing forward to build a life for our family. Day after day, I watched them come home from work exhausted. I get emotional even thinking about it now. Their experience showed me that success requires great sacrifice.

Let me be clear: I'm not advocating that you work yourself to exhaustion. The goal is to choose challenges that excite and motivate you. Balance hard work with self-care. But understand that reaching your goals will require some sacrifice. You've got to be prepared to

keep pushing forward even when things get tough, build your skills day by day, and take action consistently. While it's great when luck comes your way, don't wait for it.

MYTH 3: GRINDING HARD GUARANTEES SUCCESS

Hard work definitely matters, but grinding without purpose or strategy is like trying to chop down a tree with a butter knife: You'll wear yourself out before you see real progress. Success isn't just about putting in hours; it's about working smart, focusing on what truly moves the needle, and maintaining balance.

In a world where achievement is glorified, many people chase material success and accolades believing it will bring fulfillment—only to find that it often comes at the cost of inner peace. I've met plenty of hustle-culture entrepreneurs who sacrificed everything to build their businesses, only to end up disconnected from their families, facing health issues, and sitting alone in their fancy houses. Is that really success?

On the flip side, I've also seen many health coaches pour so much energy into perfecting their self-care routines that their businesses fall to the wayside. The advice I give to this group is that health is a vehicle, not a destination. If you're already healthier than 90 percent of Americans but your bank account is lacking, maybe it's time to shift some of that wellness energy into building your business.

Both of these approaches miss the mark. If you're burning the candle at both ends, you might reach your destination, but you'll be too exhausted to enjoy it. And if you've mastered making the perfect green juice but can't pay your bills, that's not where you want to be either.

The goal is harmony across all areas of life: health, finances,

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relationships, etc. Focusing entirely on one area while neglecting the others leads to imbalance. Remember the children's book *Hope for the Flowers*? Two caterpillars climb a tall pillar in pursuit of something more. One sacrifices everything to reach the top. The other listens to her intuition, stops climbing, and transforms into a butterfly. The lesson? Neither grinding endlessly nor waiting passively gets you where you need to go. Sometimes, success is about transformation and growth.

Many people spend their lives chasing an ever-moving finish line, following arbitrary benchmarks that don't actually reflect what they want. They get caught up chasing an idealized version of success without questioning why they're running so hard or what they're really after. As a result, they experience constant stress and anxiety about not being "there" yet—wherever "there" is supposed to be.

So what's the answer? Find your calling, push yourself beyond your comfort zone, and blend mindful intention with dedicated effort. Stay passionate about where you're going, understand why getting there matters to you personally, and be ready to put in the work—while keeping enough balance in your life to make the whole journey worthwhile.

MYTH 4: YOU MUST ADOPT A DIFFERENT PERSONA TO SUCCEED

As someone quiet and introspective, I used to think that outgoing, opinionated people were smarter than me. Their confidence made me assume they knew what they were talking about. But often, this isn't the case. Many people project confidence

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without competence—sometimes to sell something or to maintain a certain image.

If you're a sensitive introvert like me, you might feel pressured to be more extroverted or salesy in business. But qualities like empathy and emotional intelligence are even more valuable. They enable us to understand and connect with clients and customers on a deep, authentic level. Different environments might seem to favor certain personalities, but we all have unique gifts to offer.

If being introverted or highly sensitive makes you question your potential, remember: These differences can be powerful assets when used strategically. The very qualities that make you question yourself can make you the go-to expert in your field.

MYTH 5: YOU MUST KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT EVERYTHING

Impostor syndrome is a common struggle for new entrepreneurs, especially health coaches. Many feel they don't know enough to be taken seriously or don't look the part. This self-doubt often prevents talented people from even starting.

But think about how the field of health coaching has evolved. Thirty years ago, when the field was just emerging, coaches doubted themselves even more. They wondered how an online course could prepare them to help people improve their health when doctors train for over a decade. Despite those doubts, the field has grown enormously, proving that health coaches can trust their abilities—even when mainstream medicine doesn't fully validate them. Healers and empaths often know more than they give themselves credit for. And

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the space they hold for others through active, empathetic listening is invaluable on its own.

The reality is, no expert—in any field—knows everything. You won't have all the answers up front, and that's okay. Being a pioneer means leveraging your current knowledge and strengths while being willing to learn and grow along the way. The most important step is to begin.

MYTH 6: YOU HAVE TO BE RUTHLESS

Some think success means being cutthroat and stepping on others to get ahead. This myth suggests that nice guys finish last and compassion has no place in the business world. However, my experience has shown me this isn't true.

Throughout my career, building relationships, mentoring others, and fostering community have been crucial for long-term success. At IIN, some of our biggest breakthroughs came from collaboration and mutual support, not ruthless competition.

This doesn't mean never being assertive or standing up for yourself. There are times when you need to put your interests first. But the most sustainable and fulfilling success comes from balancing drive with compassion and collaboration.

Many new entrepreneurs struggle with this, thinking they need to be aggressive in their marketing or client interactions. They worry that being too nice will make them seem unprofessional or ineffective. But the entrepreneurs who really thrive are those who lean into their natural empathy and use it as a strength. They build deep, trusting relationships with their clients, leading to better outcomes

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and more referrals. They also build connections with peer support or other business owners in their community, which strengthens their networks and provides ongoing opportunities.

Instead of being ruthless, be authentically you. Use your strengths, including your capacity for kindness and collaboration. Look for ways to lift others up as you climb. In the long run, this approach feels better and creates a more lasting impact.

MYTH 7: LATE BLOOMERS WON'T BLOOM

Society loves early success stories. We all hear about young entrepreneurs who hit it big in their twenties. But late bloomers aren't as rare as you may think.

Vera Wang entered the fashion industry at forty. Julia Child published her first cookbook at fifty. Ray Kroc opened the first McDonald's at fifty-two. Lucille Ball was forty when the first episode of *I Love Lucy* aired. Martha Stewart launched her media empire in her forties, turning her passion for home living into a billion-dollar brand. I began IIN at thirty-eight. And others bloomed even later—Colonel Sanders franchised KFC at sixty-two. Laura Ingalls Wilder published her first *Little House* book at sixty-five. Morgan Freeman got his big break at fifty-two, with fame growing well into his sixties and beyond.

We all have our own timeline. Not making it young doesn't mean the window has closed. Consistent effort over time matters most. Late bloomers often have more resilience and wisdom gained from experience. It's never too late to bloom. The only real deadline is the one you set for yourself.

QUESTION WHAT YOU'VE BEEN TAUGHT

MYTH 8: IT'S ALL ABOUT WEALTH AND STATUS

Our culture pushes the idea that success is measured by the size of your bank account or the prestige of your job title. Social media, magazines, and other media constantly reinforce this.

Having experienced both wealth and having very little, I can tell you that money doesn't buy happiness. Don't get me wrong: Financial stability matters, and wealth can make life easier. It provides security and opens up opportunities, but it's a means to an end, not an end itself. I've met millionaires who were anxious and unhappy because they had no real sense of meaning. And I've known people with modest incomes who were deeply fulfilled because they loved their work and spent time with people they cared about.

These success myths can be comforting because they offer clear rules to follow: Get the right degree, work the longest hours, and act a certain way. But real success rarely fits into such neat boxes. Once we let go of these limiting stories, we create space to write our own definitions of success—ones that actually reflect who we are and what matters most to us.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What beliefs about success did you inherit that may no longer serve you?
2. When have you trusted your intuition against conventional wisdom?
3. Which success myth has most influenced your choices?
4. What unique qualities do you possess that traditional definitions of success might undervalue?
5. How would you define success if no one else's opinion mattered?