

BE YOUR BEST

A Workbook with Writings to Inspire, Educate, & Motivate

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Be Your Best is an 89-page workbook designed to offer inspiration, motivation, and encouragement to people whose work is about helping others. *Be Your Best* was written in collaboration with Project Life and the University of Missouri.

The author writes that working with people is hard work, is ever-changing, and demands a great deal of mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional resources as well as resilience. She goes on to say that learning to balance the demands of this work along with those of family life is challenging, but not impossible. The key is to remember that professional caregivers need to take care of themselves, or they won't be able to give to others. People can't give what they don't have. Oftentimes when it comes to managing their lives, many caregivers lack consistent, healthy responses to life stressors. Thus, *Be Your Best* was written with the development of personal skills in mind.

The author of *Be Your Best* used her skills that she acquired in her many years in long term care as a therapeutic recreation specialist, social worker, administrator, and professional counselor in the mental health field to create this book to keep health care professionals motivated and inspired. *Be Your Best* is divided into sections including Inspiration, Education, and Motivation. There are 20 activities to encourage reflection, affirmation, and action included in each section. On page 12 is an excerpt from the section on Motivation.

Use *Be Your Best* with your staff meetings to inspire, educate, and motivate. It will also be invaluable for the person who is responsible for staff development in your facility to use. This is a very helpful book which you will use often, both personally and with staff.

Be Your Best is available from Project Life for \$7.00 (prepaid, s/h is included). The price is the same for Canadian orders, but money must be in U.S. funds. Make check payable to University of Missouri. Missouri residents add 7.255% sales tax. Linda is also available as a speaker. Contact her at People-Building & More (816) 456-6654 for more information or e-mail her at beyourbest807@msn.com. **CF**

FINDING ABILITY IN DISABILITY

I thank God for my handicaps, for through them, I have found myself. -Helen Keller

Editor's Note: *The following is an excerpt from Be Your Best, reprinted with permission of the author. See **Resource Spotlight** on page 45 for further information.*

If we really think about it, we all have some type of disability. One of my disabilities was stuttering. I felt shy and insecure in my attempts to communicate with people outside the home. At one point, I stopped talking and sought refuge in books. Yet I didn't really like being quiet, so I became a clown. There is nothing wrong with humor, but mine was a put-down. On the other hand, I always found myself more fully self-expressed with my family. My father would frequently admonish me for my "mouthiness" and for

always needing to have the last word. Today, I recognize what he was saying. He said my mouth would get me into trouble, but I would think, “My mouth is going to make me some money one day.” And it has.

I took speech therapy for my disability, but that wasn't enough. I had to devise a lifetime strategy. I had to hook up with a power source; I prayed to God for help. In high school, I sought out leadership roles and joined service organizations that offered new information and activities. I kept praying and learned to P.U.S.H. (Pray Until Something Happens). And many things did happen. I pushed myself to step up, lead, and speak. Pushing myself into the world of talk led to presenting workshops and lectures and giving interviews on radio and television. I talked with strangers, learned how to mingle successfully in stressful social situations, and expressed my ideas in meetings. Today, my ability is public speaking or “just talking with people.”

Disability. Cross out “dis” and what do you have? Ability. There's ability inside every disability. Although I struggled with speech, I was keen on listening. Friends would seek me out for advice and frequently remark, “You are so easy to talk to.” It is no coincidence that I am a professional counselor.

I want others to feel free to express what's inside. The greatest fear that many people have is not death, but the fear of public speaking. They prefer to run an errand, prepare food, or work on a committee, but don't ask them to talk in front of people. The ability to communicate is a vital asset. If you can write and speak, you will be an asset to any job or profession. Communication is a skill, and skills can be acquired. You can become fully self-expressed, whoever you are.

Reflection

Think about one of your disabilities or “deficits.” Have you found the ability in your disability? Is oral communication a challenge for you? How is listening to others a challenge?

Affirmation

- Today, I will introduce myself to someone I don't know.
- Today, I will remember that it's just as important for people to hear from me as it is for me to hear from them.
- Today, I realize that I may be challenged and have a disability. This disability doesn't have to own me!

Action Steps

1. List the resources available to help you work on the disability or challenge that you want to overcome.
2. Talk with effective communicators. Ask them to share their stories. How did they develop this skill? What obstacles did they overcome?
3. Attend a local Toastmaster's International meeting. This organization is committed to helping people build their communication and leadership skills.

Linda is a licensed professional counselor who has worked in the mental health field with children and adults over two decades. She is also a licensed clinical social worker

and therapeutic recreation specialist. Linda's life mission is to create communities filled with empowered people. She founded People-Building & More, a personal development firm that offers motivational speaking, educational resources and programs, retreats, and life coaching. ☺