

Become Your SASSy



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Your Self-Aware Success Strategies (SASS)
for Work, Life, and the Balance Between

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**IGNITING CONFIDENCE
FOR WOMEN ON THE RISE**

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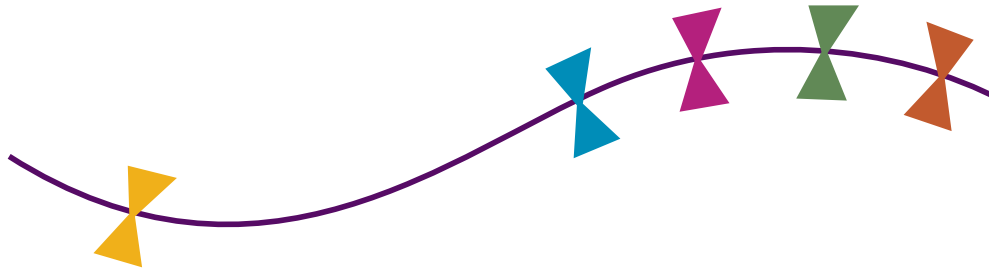
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For now, I take this opportunity to specially thank, in memoriam, three stellar KU faculty from the department once called Human Development and Family Life (now the Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences), who have all passed from our professional ranks and this life: Dr. Elizabeth M. Goetz, Dr. K. Eileen Allen, and Dr. Donald M. Baer. Mentors and teachers who launched my career, they are always missed and ever-present in my mind and heart.

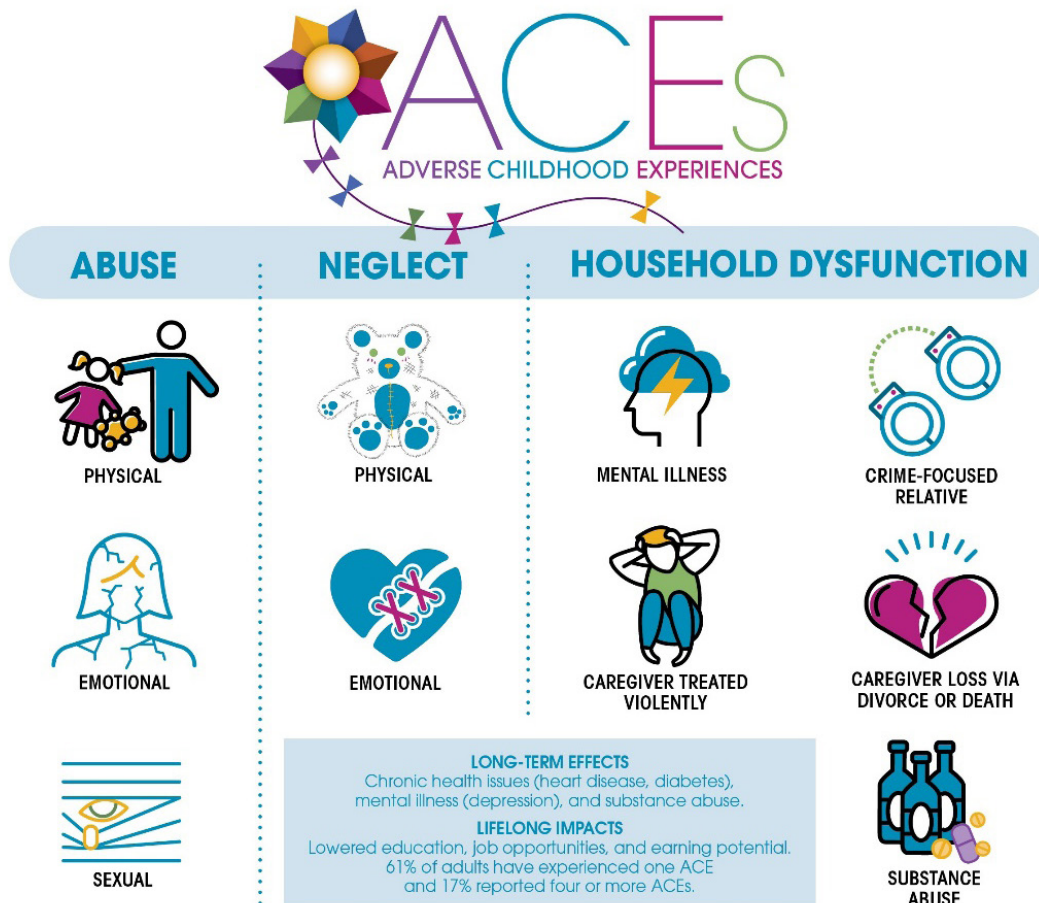


The BIG DEAL to Deal With

What was the **Big Deal** you needed to deal with that first kept you from rising? What used to hold you back from productivity and success, however you define them, but no longer does?

Surprisingly, the Big Deal is sometimes not as obvious as you would guess. When I was young, I barely survived as one of life's walking wounded. I had a serious problem applying alcohol and drugs as anesthetics for my pain. Yet, for me, "addiction" did not show up as a Big Deal. Daily drug and alcohol use was just life as I coped with it. Just a little self-prescribed pain numbing... Nothing to see here, folks!

I also had a traumatic childhood that I had not even peeked at. As soon as I did, my childhood was the glaringly obvious Big Deal! Checking off seven of the ten **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**, and earning the diagnosis of **Complex Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD)** from a childhood full of trauma, turned out to be the Big Deal to Deal With.



Over time, it became clear that those ACEs lay beneath and were the root cause of ALL the other Big Deals to deal with in my life: alcohol and drugs, for sure (as actor and comedian Russell Brand says, trauma truly is the gateway drug), and also food addictions and 100 extra pounds on my body, imposter syndrome, depression, rising debt, and sexual dysfunction.

These and a gang of other, “littler” Big Deals to deal with ran riot in my life until age thirty.

Some of you share one or more of those Big Deals with me, and some of you have had other Big Deals to Deal With. Maybe your glaringly obvious Big Deal was being the victim of an abusive spouse, *being* an abusive spouse, working in a toxic workplace, hiding an addiction to gambling or an eating disorder, clogging the arteries of your home with secret hoarding... the list is long of creative ways to cope badly, so there are many more.

Maybe for you there are also layers beneath what was obvious on your surface. Perhaps, like more than 61 percent of the population, your childhood included at least one of these ACEs. Or are you a member of the more elite club of almost 17 percent of us with four or more ACEs in our pasts?

The universally shared and single most important feature of Big Deals to Deal With, *whatever* they were for us, is that *they held us back until we dealt with them*. In fact, this outcome of “failure to rise” is what we usually see first because the Big Deals themselves simply occur for us as normal life. This thing I do? *Well, that is just the way it is.*

Then, suddenly, someday, something occurred differently for us. We saw the Big Deal as something to deal with, as a barrier to our success, and the spell was broken. I woke up the morning after my thirtieth birthday party with this thought fully formed in my mind: *I wonder if there is something wrong with getting high every day*. After that moment, I could not un-ask that crucial question, “Is something wrong?”

I was a young professional, active in and emerging as a leader of my local community of fellow professionals. A doctoral student with only a little experience and serious responsibilities, I directed early learning programs for universities, serving forty or more little children and their families. And it had never before occurred for me, prior to that wake-up call at age thirty, that my daily use of various drugs and alcohol was of any concern. Looking back now, I'm a little horrified that I was in charge of so much but personally was such a mess. Fortunately, a driving need for high performance can be a trauma response too, and I am *loaded* with it.

I went to therapy—individual and group, every week and sometimes more. I got clean and sober.

And yet life still did not work very well. **Something else was missing.**

The intersection of my career and my early trauma recovery brought me the answer. **If you have already dealt with the Big Deal** that used to hold you back **and you are still not rising** as you should in life, then what you need is more SASS. The seven **Self-Aware Success Strategies** are the tools you've been looking for to remove all the invisible "little" things that are *still* holding you back, even after you have courageously confronted the big and glaringly obvious ones.

But I want to be clear that the SASS is NOT what you need in that first moment of hitting awareness. When you are in the stunning moment of realizing that 1) you are in a pit, and 2) the way out of the pit is to stop digging and start climbing, *right then*, you need other tools. You need a ladder, some light, and some helping hands for a bit, just to get back to level ground, the starting platform, before you can lift off and rise. That ladder, light, and those helping hands might be therapy and/or some other forms of initial recovery work.

Once you're standing with your face lifted to the sun and ready to move beyond that first transformation of your life, *then* you are ready for your SASSy birthright.

Yes, the birthright of your **SASS is there for you when you are ready**, but not in that first crisis. After you are a year clean and sober, when you are out of the abusive marriage and finding a new life, after you firmly settle into the new job away from the toxic team members, that's the window of magic for the SASS. **When you are past the Big Deal to Deal With**, out of the pit, and have that foothold on solid ground but *still* feel held back from your launch, *still* cannot rise to your success—your SASS awaits to empower your flight. That is your time to rise.

Wouldn't that time be now? Are you ready for seven simple success strategies that really work?



TRUST

I deserve to relax and depend on others.

INDEPENDENCE

I deserve relationships in which we joyfully
discover each other's stories.

FAITH

I deserve the birthright of creativity
as my very essence.

NEGOTIATION

I deserve to have what I want.

VISION

I deserve to try my hand at anything
and be supported in my efforts.

COMPROMISE

I deserve relationships of generosity and balance.

ACCEPTANCE

I deserve to freely choose which parts of my past
to release from any further influence.



Success at What?

Success? At what? At whatever you define as your mission! Please do not let society's or others' definitions of success confuse you and yours. You can be successful as a parent, manager, farmer, bicyclist, or teacher. Your success can be as an artist, CEO, doctor, dancer, mentor, builder, gardener, banker, research scientist, car mechanic... When Jack Canfield, famous for the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series, set out to write *The Success Principles*, he interviewed dozens of informants and not all from the world of business. Each of them was from unique life missions.

Success is not only about climbing a corporate ladder. In fact, success cannot be limited at all by definitions related to money or other status symbols. True success comes only through alignment of our activity to our mission and the value we add to the world.

What is the mission you serve and what is the value you bring to the world?

If you are not yet sure, the three-year-old's First Adolescence **Success Strategy of Faith** will help you discover the passion of your life mission. Then, to guide your journey to that North Star, you may need the six-year-old's First Grade **Success Strategy of Compromise** and the seven-year-old's Second Grade **Success Strategy of Acceptance**. Those three of the seven Success Strategies focus on alignment with your values and ensure success in a mission that explodes from your passion.


Being uncertain right now about the *what*—the mission—is fine. You might believe you are quite clear about it and still revise it on the road ahead. For sure, if you are about to read on, you know three truths: (1) you have dealt with those glaringly obvious Big Deal weights on your ankles; (2) you continue to feel something is still holding you down; and (3) you seek a solution, almost desperate to understand what is missing in your success.

No matter what your *what* turns out to be, this little book is about to be your secret sauce. I've been where you are and have known these three truths. The solution you seek is right here. These seven **Self-Aware Success Strategies** are the missing ingredients to release those invisible weights and RISE!



Why Self-Aware?

Self-awareness is the true key to success. In fact, lack of self-awareness is the one true weight on all our ankles, though it manifests in many forms. The trick is to get a good look at it.



“Self-awareness is not self-centeredness,
and spirituality is not narcissism.
‘Know thyself’ is not a narcissistic pursuit.”

– Marianne Williamson

But inattention to and unawareness of self is a true blind spot in your vision. You literally cannot see how you get in your own way! Think of your personal blind spots as glittering objects attached to a little selfie-stick sprouting from the back of your head. Each of these little trinkets dangles just behind your head, below the top of your crown and invisible to you when you look in a mirror in front of you.

Turn your head to the left and your blind spots swing around to stay behind you. The mirror to your left reveals nothing new. Turn to the right; same result. Your blind spots travel and stay blind, behind your head, no matter which way you turn to see them.

However, and sadly, everyone who knows you at all can see your blind spots quite clearly, or at least see some version of them they are capable of seeing. As we react to the world’s moment-by-moment events, our blind spots guide our reactions in ways we cannot see at all, but which can be obvious to others.¹

1 Thanks to the author and teacher Cynthea Jones, co-founder of the spiritual retreat center Diana’s Grove (closed 2010), for the original version of this metaphoric image for blind spots.

A unique and tricky combination of mirrors can let us see what is hanging out back there, so obvious to everyone else. That special array of mirrors is often found in therapy or in self-help work on personal and spiritual development, or in training for leadership.

Every blind spot comes paired with its own special weight, holding you down, keeping you from rising to your success. One of the challenges central to our blind spots is that each friend, loved one, co-worker, and acquaintance interprets that little bobbing trinket in their own way. We cannot see it and, therefore, *cannot self-define it or manage its expression*.

Ready for an example? **If one of my blind spots is that I cannot trust** anyone else to meet any of my needs (I could not, back at age thirty), then that lack will be visible in my behavior in a variety of ways. When **I will neither ask for nor accept offers of help**, some will interpret those clues as meaning I feel superior to them. By others, I may be admired as someone who feels competent and self-assured. Their lenses; their interpretations. My behavior is the same in both cases, and I am neither of their stories/labels.

When I deflect all praise and compliments, I may be seen as humble or perceived as a martyr. **If I do not delegate, accomplish goals through a team, or ask for deserved rewards** (e.g., praise or bonus), or **if I follow team members closely** to ensure they perform, I may be seen by some as disorganized, controlling or micromanaging, inept, or a loser. Others may see a leader who selflessly gets things done and ensures quality.

As long as my blind spot—in this case, the total absence of the **Infant Success Strategy of Trust**—is something I cannot see, *others can define me*, interpreting me through their own lenses and biases. For years, I was providing a vague disinformation about myself, from which others could make their own meaning. Maybe you are, still?

Once I saw how blind I had been, I could face the truth that I needed the **Success Strategy of Trust**—and badly! Gaining that **SASS** in life allowed me to dismantle that blind spot entirely. Now my intention to trust and my open communication about trust in relationships strengthens my success.

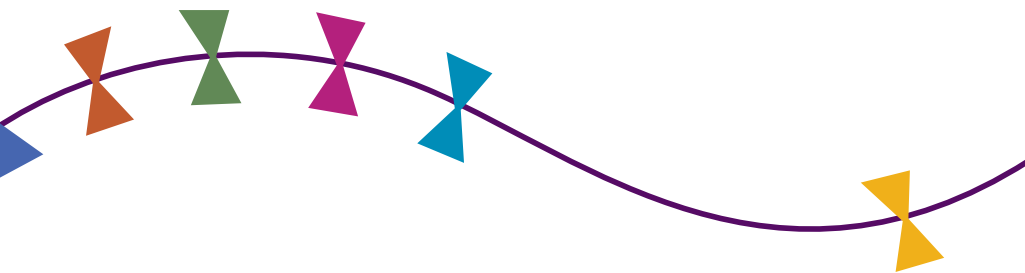
Self-awareness is a requirement for this process of dismantling the blind spots that limit our success. Sadly, self-awareness is not a natural condition for many adults. *Self-consciousness*, yes, but not self-awareness.

If you want to be successful, it is time to learn the difference between the two and to integrate self-awareness into your daily life.

Looking deeply and honestly at yourself may be a challenge, even a painful one. If not painful, it will not be stress-free. Honest self-awareness is not a breeze, a walk in the park, a box to check, or any other simple metaphor for ease.

Not interested in that level of work? No problem. Continue seeking success in other ways, and I wish you all the best with your efforts.

Want to be *really* successful? Want to change your maladaptive patterns in life once and for all and be done with them? Okay! Then it's time to get SASSy!





The SASS

These seven **Self-Aware Success Strategies** are your birthright. You were meant to have them. In fact, the opportunities for their development were programmed into your pattern for maturation, your innate plan for growing up human.

You were literally born to trust, to pursue a passion, negotiate for what you want, and all the rest. These seven social and emotional assets for success in life were **meant to be core strengths for you**, all developed and in place before you were eight years old.

And they probably were not. If only the windows of opportunity in your maturational calendar were the sole requirements for successful acquisition of these assets! To understand, you need a pain-free mini-lesson in child development. You must understand that the developmental dance designed to bring you these SASSy capacities relies on three intertwined processes. Maturation opportunity, alone, is not enough.

To achieve our birthright of self-awareness and the related success, these three “strands of development” were supposed to work together in specific ways. Not only is this dance delicate, but our most important steps were taken so early in life that we had no role in the choreography, and we do not remember the steps we danced, at all.

Your genetically programmed maturational windows in which to develop each of the seven Success Strategies opened for a while and then closed, in a sense. The adults in your life handed you shiny, strong, effective tools or dull, weak, broken tools, or they had no tools at all to give you, having never received any in their early years. With the tools you had or your own best efforts without any, you dove through that window of opportunity and did your best to carve out some meaning.



THE DANCE OF EARLY DEVELOPMENT

From the mixing of these **three strands—opportunity, tools, and meaning-making**—you created your understanding of:

- ◆ Who you are and your value in the world
- ◆ How to decide who others are and their value in the world
- ◆ The best ways to get what you want for comfort and safety and ease in life
- ◆ Strategies to avoid pain and other discomforts, to prevent dis-ease

Essentially, **you created your core lessons about how to be successful in the sandbox of life.** You learned these core lessons from birth through age seven. Then you practiced and honed them from seven through fourteen years and have been applying them to your “adult” life ever since.

How’s that adulting going for you? Finding ALL the success you want? Meeting all the benchmarks you expect for yourself? Or is it possible you

have a little maladjusted toddler still running your daily show at some level? A preschool bully running roughshod over your playmates at work? A second grader with low self-esteem and no personal resilience as your publicist and image maker in the world?

My good news for you is that it is never too late for Development Do-Overs. The delicate dance of crafting your personality over the first seven years of your life can be rechoreographed! You can retrace these early pathways with new tools, in “grown-up” form, now, today, no matter how old you are. These do-overs are at the heart of the opportunity offered to you through my books, keynotes, SASSy Coaching Cadres, and other programs.

And **here are the Success Strategies** you can develop or strengthen to increase your success.



The Infant Strategy: Trust

A newborn infant is a tiny bundle of endless needs. Usually weighing in at around seven pounds, each new little human is incapable of meeting its most basic needs. Newborn babes cannot even lift their own heads for a few weeks nor sit up without falling over for almost six months, let alone stay safe and forage for their own food.

By grand design, though, this little being who is entirely dependent on others for its survival has two superpowers. First, babies can communicate from their first breath. Second, they are adorable, invoking our desire to help. Yes, babies can yell, “HELP!” from their first inhale. *Help! I need food! Help! I am cold! Help! My clothes are wet and itchy! Help! I need a rest! Help! I can’t reach my woobie!*

And they have big bright curious eyes and sweet little cupid's-bow mouths, so we WANT to help them. From our first moment of life, we each have these two amazing gifts for getting others to meet our needs and, thus, help us navigate the world. Yes, we adults, too, can express our needs (HELP!), and we are lovable and beloved by others who want to help.

Good thing, too, because our earliest needs evolve and become much more complex. That is, we become able to meet our survival needs—to feed and clothe ourselves and come in out of the rain—while we develop more nuanced emotional and psychological needs for identity, communication, a sense of self-worth, validation of our power, and more.

If your early months of experience were what you needed and deserved, in the tool-driven Learning strand of development, then your Construction work created something like this meaning: *The world is there for me. I need stuff and stuff shows up. I need people and people come.*

If development of this Infant **Success Strategy of Trust** went well and it is one with which you are well skilled, then you are aware of your needs, you feel comfortable expressing what you need, and you feel safe in the adult version of yelling “Help!” You can communicate your needs, expect them to be heard, and *trust* they will be addressed in some way.

Essentially, with this Success Strategy in place, you know what you need, feel okay with all of it, and trust others to be there for you when you need them to be. Somebody else mocking you as “needy,” as an attempted negative label, has no impact at all. *Yes. I have needs. So do you, dude.* Using Trust as a strategy for our success, we can meet each other's needs with a little communication. In fact, when you own your Trust, shoving your needs down into the darkness and pretending you don't have any just looks silly to you.

So, how's that whole needs and trust thing going for you? Are you getting your needs met at home? At work? With your aging parents, siblings, spouse, or adult children? In your service work? Do you know who you trust and what needs you are getting met? Are you comfortable speaking up for your needs? Do you feel alone, knowing you have nobody upon whom you can rely?

The Toddler Strategy: Independence

This choice of the word Independence for the toddler's **Success Strategy** is no surprise to those of you who have been parents or who have ever paid attention to a toddler. Their mission in life is to express—in ALL the ways—who they are as an independent being with their own needs, thoughts, feelings, and longings (wants).

The toddler motto seems to be *SEE ME! I AM ME! And that is absolutely NOT YOU!* Because their understanding of spoken words arrives long before their ability to speak, this deeply profound motto (*See-Me-I-Am-NOT-You!*) is simply encapsulated in a single word response, repeated frequently and with resonance: **“NO!”** Literally, the longer version of the toddler motto is 100 percent relevant for each of us, even today. See me. I am not you. The toddler's Success Strategy is to hang onto that unique identity, despite powerful and pervasive pressure to be Somebody Else; to be just like everyone else.

Mostly, toddlers quickly lose their grip on their true identities in the face of family and cultural pressures. The process is a sad one to observe.

If we do NOT succumb to others' redefinition of who we are, here is what happens. We learn to know how we feel rather than learning which emotions are the “right” ones to have. We discover our own opinions rather than cataloging which ones will get us the attention we crave. We feel free to express our whole selves rather than curating the parts to reveal and hiding other bits as unacceptable to those we love. We become adults who live in precious presence, experiencing the world and responding to it in the Now, rather than wearing a social mask for the sake of staying safe, of simply surviving the world.

Did you, long ago, start pretending to be a version of yourself that is not fully authentic, to stay in the loving circles of your family and community? Do you believe that *if they knew the real me, they wouldn't love me?*

At some point, did you decide to forget who you really are, what you really want, how you really feel, and what you truly desire? Not sure?

Try this simple test: It's time to choose the next lunch you will be eating, and you can have *anything* you want! Access factors like cost and location are irrelevant. Quickly now, in less than three seconds: *What do you want?*

The “First Adolescence” Strategy: Faith

The “first adolescence” begins at age three with the same kind of courage and abandon as the second adolescence will in ten years. Naturally fearless, curious, and naive about the realities of the world, both ages run headlong at all that appears shiny and delicious to them, and which has suddenly and enticingly become accessible.

Three-year-old children have gained enough mastery over the mechanics of their body that they have now turned their attention to everything else and everybody else in their little universe. And the outside world is a world of magic and mystery to this illogical young explorer. There is so much they are seeing for the first time, and without even a whisp of our logic or drop of knowledge of the laws of physics, their vision of the world is quite fanciful!

For adult success, this little child must carry a big Faith with them for many decades. They must believe in themselves, in their dreams, in their imagination. They must have hope, partnered with their faith in things unseen, to carry them through the hardest days that life will offer.

And they face enormous hurdles to carrying even a simple Faith past their fourth birthday. You see, there are dream crushers everywhere in the lives of three-year-olds, ever-ready to mock their wide-eyed wonder.

And if you were among the lucky ones who carried your **Success Strategy of Faith** all the way to today, then you are among those who live a joy-filled life. You are someone who spontaneously gasps at a stunning sunset, giggles at a leaping baby goat, and feels reverence when the world briefly falls into silence around you. You are never bored because your mind is full of all the possibilities. So many.

Those who bring the simple Faith of a three-year-old child to the world of adulting are the ones in work meetings who are full of energy, enthusiasm,

and edgy ideas. They are the ones who give joyful service in their churches, temples, and other spiritual communities, grateful to spend hours in simple labors. They are the backbone of nonprofit volunteerism, giving their time and treasure to long-term, grinding crises like poverty, child abuse, and climate change that they know are not likely to be resolved in their lifetimes.

Adults who still live with this Success Strategy of Faith in their daily lives are joyfully and freely creative. They may not be professional artists, committed artisan crafters, or even hobbyists. Creativity with all of life's media is simply always an option, and they may spring into unexpected artistry at any moment. They absolutely and truly do not care about others' judgments; they're immune to criticism. They are completely at ease if you "don't get" them. Tra-la-la.

These are the folks in your circle who suddenly start singing new lyrics, exactly appropriate to the moment, fitting them to a familiar tune. They are the ones who pick up the trash others leave or the driftwood on the beach and then use it to build a little temporary public art. Using the mower to sculpt islands of clover in the lawn or drawing in the mud with a stick, they cannot help but create wherever they go.

Do you remember the first rush of hot shame when your earliest efforts to express and refine your three-year-old version of Faith met your first dream crusher? And did that turn you into someone who, now, chuckles with battle-fatigued wisdom, shaking your weary head at the naivete of others' Big Dreams? *Poor dears. They'll learn not to expect so much.* Are you, without awareness, being the naysayer in the face of your beloveds' huge aspirations? Have you *become* the dream crusher?

Have you given up hope and succumbed to the routines of life? Are you spending the minutes of your life doing mostly what is expected of you or doing what you want to do? Do you climb out of bed most days simply as a resistance to the urge to climb back in rather than scrambling into the morning with Expectations? Tell me, right now, are you feeling bored?

The Pre-K Strategy: Negotiation

At four years of age, you felt the need to make some sense of the magical world of your younger mind. *Faith is all very well*, says this pre-K version of you, *but it is far too unpredictable. I want some rules.*

Still a couple of years away from real logic, this is the child who first “gets it” that mutuality, give and take, and cause and effect are features permeating every aspect of life. This is the age where *You can’t come to my birthday party* is a devastatingly real consequence of stepping beyond someone else’s expectations and limits.

The **Success Strategy of Negotiation** required you to make good use of an earlier outcome: the healthy toddler boundaries that resulted from your success with Independence...so we hope you had some success! The first “trick question” you faced on the exam of life, at age four, was: *Can you negotiate life with other people and also have healthy boundaries?*

The single most significant adult outcome of securing this strategy is that *you know what you want*. Surprised? You already know, don’t you, that most of us operate much more from what we *should* want than from what we *actually* want? The *should* may be shaped by marketing geniuses, your friends and family members’ expectations, or internal drivers you have not yet met. Truly knowing what you want, in any given situation, is, perhaps, the greatest simple gift of the early years. And we all can receive it...if all goes well.

The second most significant result from adulting with the Success Strategy of Negotiation is that you often *get* what you want. And you do it without sacrificing relationships. You negotiate with a win-win philosophy that doesn’t assume your satisfaction requires someone else to suffer loss.

Finally, this success strategy points you toward the values-based decision-making that is essential for what comes next. Adopting and optimizing the First and Second Grade Success Strategies of Compromise and Acceptance begins with knowing what you value in life. If you negotiate for what you want from the value position of generosity, guided by *There’s*

enough for both of us, you're actually much more likely to achieve a win-win success than if your core value is personal security, with the perspective, Let's make sure I get mine (and I fear supplies are short).

If you cannot now, as an adult, face the vulnerability of simply asking for what you want, with a 50-50 chance of a yes, it is a sure sign that this strategy is not yet activated in your life. Does the emotional risk of hearing a No lead you give up on the direct request and use covert operations to get what you want: manipulation, minor pushiness, full-on bullying, gaslighting, or just being secretive?

And backing up two steps to that Toddler Success Strategy of Independence, can you even identify what you want? Now that you have the powers of articulate speech and a bigger vocabulary, can you say what you want when asked to make a choice? Nothing too challenging, you know...how about which brand of appliance to buy or where to go out for dinner?

Do you feel like other peoples' victim rather than the leader of your life? Or maybe you find yourself gazing too often into the eyes of victimhood in your loved ones' faces as they give in to you...*again*. Is your first reflex to silence what you want, to fit into what the group wants? Or are you She Who Must Be Obeyed, pushing, convincing, or "persuading" the group to adopt your terrific idea?

The Kindergarten Strategy: Vision

Yes, five years used to be the age for kindergarten entry for most children, back when the translation of this word from German—*children's garden*—was an accurate term for the experience (me, I had snack and *took naps* at kindergarten!). But then, pre-K curriculum started to look a lot like K and K has become what first grade used to be...and that's a topic for another book.

Curriculum may come and go, but development stays the same. So, five is and will ever be when the developmental windows of opportunity open for the *essential* aspects of kindergarten. Beneath the chosen

curriculum, kindergarten is about making your way in a larger, more complicated world. There are bigger social groups to navigate, more complex environments full of new distractions, and an almost continuous drumbeat message from every adult in your life to *hurry up and get there!*

When the field of play is huge, the rules complex and ever-changing, the opportunities plentiful, and the world pushy, *make a plan*. Figure out how the system or the process works. Take it apart and look at it, then use what you learn to create a goal and set a destination. Once you know the goal, chart the steps to get there and GO! This strategic planning is the five-year-old's superpower and saving grace. Fives are in their most natural state when planning what to do and how to do it. They need help and tools from conscious adults to learn how to go beyond planning to implementation.

When I first visited my aspiring-actor baby sister in New York City, both of us young women in our mid-twenties, I learned the real meaning of this Kindergarten **Success Strategy of Vision**. Frustrated by my inability to walk the sidewalks of the Big Apple without feeling like a metal ball pinging around an arcade machine, I asked our family's youngest for her advice. She said—it has been decades since then that I will not tally, for both our sakes, but I can still hear her words—*Set your eyes on a point on the horizon and walk. Just keep your eyes on where you're going and walk with purpose. It's amazing, but it works: just look ahead and walk.* (And it *did* work! No more pinball pinging, trying not to run into everybody!)

That is the essence of this success strategy that was your birthright from five years of age. Set your eyes on your vision, your goal, establish a plan, and then put one foot in front of the other. Now, GO!

If you are operating with this Success Strategy of Vision fully developed, then you get stuff done. You'd be the one everyone wants on the planning committee for any event. And when you set your own personal goals, everyone *does* get out of your way as you stride purposefully along your clear plan. Almost no apparent barrier can overwhelm your focused intention, and you achieve your goals consistently.

Those working with Vision as a success strategy are also known for generating or enabling Big Ideas. No matter their roles at home and work,

they are the inventors, the ones who think outside the box that holds the box where everyone else has ideas. Strategic visionaries create, play, and pretend with abandon, building on the strength of their First Adolescence **Success Strategy of Faith.**

Are you the person who knocks down those creative ideas, like a jealous kindergartner in the block area? Do you scoff at the dewy-eyed optimists who see possibility where you only see past failure? Are you the one who says, *I tried that already and it didn't work?* More emotional energy and less filter between brain and mouth might even let you pop out gems like, *That will never work!* or even, *Are you kidding? That's a crazy idea!* (I think somebody said that to you when you were five.)

Or perhaps you just smile a subtle, knowing smile and shake your sophisticated head a bit? Without the capacity for setting and achieving goals yourself, are you subconsciously—*without self-awareness*—undermining and sabotaging others' momentum? Are you like those folks who said television and computers were fads?

Do you carry the core capacity of this Success Strategy of Vision? Can you form a goal, design a plan to achieve it, and work the plan to completion? Or are you the owner of a closet full, a file cabinet full, or a mental wish list full of half-laid, half-finished plans and goals? Does your need for more SASS in the form of Vision show up in your procrastination or in your obsession over details? Are you often trapped on the hamster wheel of can't, spinning around and around the same set of negative thoughts?

The First Grade Strategy: Compromise

The six-year-old's strategy for success in life builds on the Negotiation Strategy from age four. Now that the kids are older, they have more interests, want more things, and simple win-win solutions are no longer sufficient to the task. Fitting into a larger community of fully operating personalities-in-practice requires greater nuance, a wider view, and more patience.

The six-year-old is up to all of that and more, with the right tools from the adults in their life. They can bring the awareness that they are not alone from the Infant's Strategy of Trust, the authenticity of Independence that results from their Toddler Strategy, the Faith of their First Adolescence Strategy, skills from their Pre-K Strategy of Negotiation, the kindergartner's goal-orientated Vision Strategy and pile them all together, stir them around, and generate a capacity for this new **Success Strategy of Compromise**.

Compromise always means giving up some of what we want and getting some of what we want. Why would we be willing to do that? Quite simply, because we see and care about the value of every other person as much as we care about our own value in the world. We can now care about the effect our behavior has on others. This is the point in our development at which we can learn to create a world that works for everyone rather than just for ourselves.

If you're adept with Compromise as a Success Strategy, then you're always willing to find common ground with others. To each conversation, you bring a readiness to find resolution. You are someone who works to find the places where diverse ideas and individuals intersect. When others throw up their hands in despair, you're the one who can find the solution that makes the world work for everyone. You are the kind of person who thought of curb cuts for wheelchair access and accidentally also made the world easier for the people with shopping trolleys, children's prams, and rolling suitcases, as well as those of us getting close to knee replacements.

Or are you among those who struggle to find middle ground when there is a difference to bridge? Are you mostly stuck in "my-way-or-the-highway" supervision, an either/or approach to every problem, and black-and-white thinking about the way things are? Are you missing opportunities in the many grey zones? Have you heard yourself in groups dismissing or tearing down others' suggestions while holding rigidly to your viewpoints? Do you struggle to accommodate diversity and difference in others? Or do you label people by categories, assuming that means you know who they are?

The Second Grade Strategy: Acceptance

Are you surprised to think of a second grader as having a fully formed personality? Neuroscience documents that the brain's network of neurons is 95 percent built between birth and five years—at the rate of a million new connections per second. At age five, all the essential social and emotional capacities for human relationships have been uniquely hardwired based on each child's relationships and experiences. The next two years allow each of us to practice those newly wired relationship arts and solidify all our strategies into a coherent personality. We find our roles, carefully craft our protective coverings, and write our own operating manuals.

If all is going well and the child's adult family members and teachers are handing them helpful tools and providing support, then by age seven, they are ready to dive headlong into the window of opportunity for this **Success Strategy of Acceptance**. With their brand-new capacity for logic, which started to come online about age six, they have now begun to notice those times when cause and effect seem unrelated.

When you were seven, you held the new capacity to understand these realities: Bad things happen to good people, good behavior may be followed by circumstances that feel punishing, and life inevitably includes both relentless loss and infinite gifts. *That is just how it is.* Resistance is futile.

The two-sided coin of the Acceptance Success Strategy is: (1) get up again, whenever you are knocked down, and (2) remain humble whenever you are able to stay standing as others fall. At this tender age of seven is where we learn to accept that life has cycles and seasons that bring life and death. The roller coaster goes both up and down. We ride the cycles and begin to understand the one consistent truth: "this, too, shall pass." *ALWAYS.* The bad passes. The truly ugly passes. The good passes too. *That is just how it is.*

If your early experiences brought you through these seven years with all these strategies at your command, and Acceptance as the crowning glory of them all, here's who you are. You deeply engage with life's

diversity rather than being passively affected or victimized by it. You find change and difference invigorating and compelling. You can cope with the reality that sometimes there is no compromise; well-intentioned people cannot find common ground. Your judgment of life's passing cycles as "bad" or "good" wanes in favor of an understanding that all experiences are opportunities for learning and growth. Some hurt. Some don't. *That is just how it is.*

So, are you still holding onto the past hurts? Still resenting past mistakes others made, or still writhing in shame at your own? Do you resist change, striving to keep everything safely known and within your comfort zone? Are you among those who irrationally fight against non-negotiables (yes, change, but also stuff like the weather and others' opinions of you)? Or perhaps you are among those who feel utterly unable to influence life? Do you blame all of life's problems on a vague or unnamed "they" or "everybody"? Do you often hear yourself say, *I had no choice?*



The Freedom to Rise

How much did you like your answers to each set of questions at the ends of these descriptions? Did you cringe a little as you admitted how you show up in relationships?

Until you gain self-awareness of how to operate with these Success Strategies in your hands and pockets, your early development is still telling your story, running your show, guiding your life. With little or no awareness of it, you are sometimes letting your former toddler-self run a meeting or your needy infant-self ask your spouse for support. Maladaptive strategies from your first seven years are the weights on your ankles, holding you down. **SASS** is the key to the locks on those chains.

How much would you like to be filled with the opportunities each of these **Self-Aware Success Strategies** has to offer you and your life? Can you hear your aspirational *Yes!* to every type of self-aware success? Yes to trusting that the world has my back. Yes to knowing who I am: what I think, want, and feel. Yes to having a dream that keeps my life energetic, to creating win-win solutions for conflicts, and to achieving my goals. How great would it feel to say, *Yes, I am a builder of communities where we support each other, and Yes, I am resilient?*

Are you eager for the freedom to rise into that SASSy success, soaring high without invisible restraints from the past? Let's go, then!

Each of these strategies was programmed into the plan for your development. The raw materials are still there, ready for your **Development Do-Overs**. It's never too late to reclaim this birthright of **Trust, Independence, Faith, Negotiation, Vision, Compromise, and Acceptance**. You absolutely can have all the success you want, in any endeavor, applying these strategies.

Embrace these seven **Self-Aware Success Strategies** at the heart of you and watch yourself RISE!



Dr. L. Carol Scott brings the SASS!

Her **Self-Aware Success Strategies** remove invisible barriers, ignite self-confidence, and empower both personal and professional evolution for women on the rise.



Carol also has a dream: to change for the better the way we treat each other in America. That dream is achieved as she teaches you "what makes people tick," including you! Seven simple **Self-Aware Success Strategies** translate into coaching for your productivity and success.

Carol integrates more than a century of theory and research on early learning and brain development, lessons from her lifetime career with children and families, and tools from her own journey of recovery after a childhood filled with trauma. A committed University of Kansas Jayhawk, she earned a dual BA in Anthropology and Human Development, an MA in Early Education, and a PhD in Developmental Psychology on "The Hill" in Lawrence.

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