

WOMEN & SUCCESS
POLLYANNA LENKIC

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While much of this book is supported by personal experiences and to the best of my memory, I have also included case studies of remarkable women who have shared their stories. In most cases, names and personal information have been changed to preserve anonymity. I would like to thank these women for their generous contribution and congratulate them on their successes. Pollyanna Lenkic.

*I want to acknowledge your investment in you;
the best investment you can make. It's time to
accept graciously your success.*

Pollyanna

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INTRODUCTION

My journey is your journey—a shared journey uniting millions of women globally. We may live in different parts of the world and come from different cultures and beliefs; however, as women, we are connected by our journey and experiences. We have common themes that derail us, unite us and move us forward in life.

We are all unique and individual and have our own paths to lead. Our challenges are also unique—except, for when they are not.

There are themes, patterns and blocks that have immersed, which show a commonality about how women perceive and experience success, how we run toward success, and how we run away from success.

We have complex strategies for sabotaging our success, often with an inability to acknowledge and celebrate the success we do achieve. We brush it off as an accident: *you just got lucky*, or *you were in the right place at the right time*. This type of thinking dominates and negates the hard work and investment that went before.

Your success isn't an accident. It's a culmination of your effort, your investment and your talent ...

... And now it's time to identify it, own it and savour it.

Your lack of success and fulfilment is *not* about your abilities, your talents or lack thereof, or what you may or may not believe about worth and entitlement. Nor is it about whether or not you feel you deserve success.

It *is*, however, about *not* taking the time to invest in your own life. Discover what's important to you; set boundaries and move ferociously toward the life you want to live. To do this it's important to understand the core of you: What makes you who you are? How does this impact those around you, and the contribution you make to your communities and the world? By understanding the core of you, you are building *your* successful life as defined by *you*.

Success is intensely personal and yet so public. We measure ourselves and others by *factors* such as rank, status, clothes, wealth etc. and we have predetermined that these *factors* define our feelings surrounding our success and the success of others.

How often have you taken the time really to look at what success means to you?

There are many fabulous books which explore success. *Amazon* lists 223,002 such books. While these books will tell you how to develop a *success* mindset and explain the psychology of success, *Women & Success* is about helping you to identify your own success.

Women & Success will encourage you to recognise how *you* feel about success; how *you* define success; and what success means to *you*. *Women & Success* is dedicated to women. It heralds from research I conducted (*Women, Work & Success*, 2006) on how women perceive and define themselves through the lens of success. It is based on years of personal and professional experiences while working with thousands of women, both in Australia and in the UK, and *my* personal journey of discovery—I want this book to be *your* personal journey of discovery and more.

NEEDS

We all have needs. I invite you to think of needs as neither good nor bad—they are what they are: things we need.

Needs change, as does the intensity of those needs. When you were younger, you may have had a need to be liked? This may or may not be a need for you now. Suspend judgement.

A place to explore is how your needs are currently being met. Are you consciously meeting your needs in a positive way? Or are your needs being expressed in a negative and potentially more damaging way? Until we become conscious and aware fully of our needs and how we are fulfilling those needs, we can fall into the trap of having those needs met in ways that don't serve us or others.

CASE STUDY: SARAH

Sarah was a successful senior director in a multinational financial institution with a reporting line of over 7,000 people. She was driven; she cared deeply for the work she did; she maintained a solid social network; and she was close to her family.

During our coaching sessions, Sarah would often speak of feeling unworthy. She would beat herself up and couldn't understand why or from where this stemmed. She acknowledged her successful career and that she was fortunate to have good friends and a good life.

As our sessions progressed a pattern emerged; however, we still hadn't uncovered the core of what was driving her feelings of

unworthiness and not feeling good enough. There was a punishing aspect to how Sarah viewed herself at times.

Sarah was a healthy, creative and resourceful person. There was nothing to fix—nothing was broken. She recognised that she was doing well in life and in her career, and she was genuinely mystified about why she would succumb, at times, to intense feelings of self-loathing.

At one of our sessions she put her head in her hand and said, ‘I can’t believe that I have done this again. It’s just so embarrassing. The walk into the office on the Monday morning is torturous’.

Sarah would often join her colleagues for Friday night drinks after work. There was a heavy drinking culture, and after a few drinks Sarah would be dancing on the tables; doing her best rendition of a pole dancer; and in her words, ‘pick up some cute bloke and take him home’. She was feeling distraught.

The bar was close to the office. Any number of people from work—friends or those who reported to her, or management—may have been there. And worse still, for Sarah, one of them may have been the one with whom she spent the night.

Evidently this was a difficult topic for Sarah to explore; however, I asked her what it was that upset her most about her behaviour. While it took courage to confront her issues, the payoff for doing so was incredibly valuable and long lasting.

Sarah explained that she felt anxious the whole weekend and would dread walking into her office on Monday morning. She would relive that Friday night over and over, trying to figure out who was with her at the bar and how this would impact her reputation. She would

reprimand herself throughout the weekend: telling herself off for *being stupid* and for *doing this again*.

It took immense courage for Sarah to confront this part of her life; to deal with how it was impacting her, and to take action to change it. It wasn't about Sarah's decision of how she spent her Friday nights, for her it was about the negative spiral of self-loathing she would endure the entire weekend.

I became curious about the need that was driving Sarah. Why did she continue to engage in a pattern of behaviour and choices that would cause her such distress?

I asked Sarah to work through an exercise (The Needs Exercise, page 51) that would help her to explore her needs; to look deeply at what was important about meeting those needs; how those needs were currently being met; and what was the impact when those needs were not met.

Through her investment, courage and dedication to the task, Sarah began to understand herself and her drivers. She was able to choose a new way of behaving, and she began to reprogram how she would spend her weekends. She also addressed what thoughts and beliefs dominated her.

Through this process Sarah realised that she loved performing—singing and dancing in public was something that she loved to do. *She uncovered a need to perform*. This surprised her as she had never formally attended acting or singing classes and hadn't been in any plays or productions since school days. However, when she told her family and friends that she was interested in performing they weren't in the least bit surprised.

Sarah had uncovered a need that she realised she was meeting in an unhealthy way; she swapped the table tops of bars for a stage and joined an amateur dramatic society. (It was a pleasure to watch her play the lead in a musical six months later.)

Sarah had uncovered a need and a way to express it more positively, which also provided the basis for some deeper discoveries and positive changes.

By now having her need to perform in public expressed in a healthier way, Sarah stopped dancing on tables in the local bar. She made conscious choices about how—and where—she invested in her social time. She set some boundaries between work and social activities, and she reassessed her lifestyle choices, and her health and well-being. This resulted in improved self-esteem and reputation, and she spent her weekends enjoying herself rather than beating herself up.

The process for Sarah wasn't about her choices surrounding alcohol (however, a shift also happened here) and how she spent her time. She still chose to socialise and have relationships but she now chose to place some boundaries around how and where she did this—thus removing the need for self-loathing afterwards.

Next we worked on Sarah's beliefs, the behaviours that supported those beliefs and the outcome of those behaviours.

She identified a voice that spoke to her regularly. She identified a dialogue that she was running and realised that it supported a belief that she had carried since childhood. A voice that belonged to someone else; a person from her past, who from an early age, told her she wasn't good enough. She was now able to view this voice from the perspective of the adult she was and she choose not to buy into its

message. Sarah decided to show some love and compassion for her younger self; to let go of the belief that hailed from someone else; and to stop allowing it to drive her behaviours and choices as an adult.

The Needs Exercise

The following *Needs Exercise* was given to me many years ago by Blaire Palmer¹, a wonderful coach who worked with me after the sale of my business.

The Needs Exercise is the exercise that Sarah worked through. What made it powerful for her—and for 1000s of other clients who have invested in doing this exercise—was that she took time to work through each need, revisiting the exercise again and again over a 3–6-month period. This is an exercise of discovery—a gift that keeps on giving.

Here's how to maximise this powerful exercise:

1. Look through all the words in the following table. Circle everything that resonates with you as a *need*. There is no limit to how many you circle. Clients often call me when doing this exercise saying that they have circled most of the sheet. This is normal; there is no set number of needs. It is unique to you.
2. Take notice of what pushes any buttons. If you are absolutely convinced that, in no way, this is a need for you, circle it and have a deeper look.

¹ Blaire trained with Coach U.

3. You may find yourself laughing as a need resonates with you—circle it.
4. For any need that is neutral and has no impact on you, move on. It's possibly not a need for you.

For some clients, by diving deeply into what they need and how they meet their needs has often brought about lightbulb moments, insights, positive results and surprises—I wish the same for you.

Once you have circled all the needs look at the questions at the end of the chart and answer each one for every need circled.

Take your time to invest in the process by answering all three questions at the end of the table. Each question has a question(s) within it; take time to look at all of them individually.

BE ACCEPTED	Approved–Included–Respected– Permitted–Popular–Sanctioned–Cool– Allowed–Tolerated
TO ACCOMPLISH	Achieve–Fulfil–Realise–Reach–Profit– Attain Yield–Consummate–Victory
BE ACKNOWLEDGED	Worthy–Praised–Honoured–Flattered– Complimented–Appreciated–Valued– Thanked
WORK	Career–Performance–Vocation–Press, push–Make it happen–A task– Responsibility–Industriousness–Busy
RECOGNITION	Noticed–Remembered–Known– Regarded–Credit–Acclaim–Heeded– Seen–Celebrated
SAFETY	Security–Protected–Stable–Fully informed–Deliberate–Vigilant–Cautious– Alert–Guarded
ORDER	Perfection–Symmetry–Consistent– Sequential–Checklists–Unvarying–Right- ness–Literal-ness–Regulated

POWER	Authority–Capacity–Results– Omnipotence–Strength–Might–Stamina– Prerogative–Influence
BE COMFORTABLE	Luxury–Opulence–Excess–Prosperity– Indulgence–Abundance–Not work–Taken care of–Served
PEACE	Quietness–Calmness–Unity– Reconciliation–Stillness–Balance– Agreements–Respite–Steadiness
BE LOVED	Liked–Cherished–Esteemed–Held fondly– Be desired–Be preferred–Be relished–Be adored–Be touched
BE RIGHT	Correct–Not mistaken–Honest–Morally right–Be deferred to–Be confirmed–Be advocated–Be encouraged–Understood
DUTY	Obligated–Do the right thing–Follow– Obey–Have a task–Satisfy others–Prove self–Be devoted–Have a cause
BE FREE	Unrestricted–Privileged–Immune– Independent–Autonomous–Sovereign–Not obligated–Self-reliant–Liberated

TO COMMUNICATE	Be heard–Gossip–Tell stories–Make a point–Share–Talk–Be listened to–Comment–Informed
BE CARED FOR	Get attention–Be helped–Cared about–Be saved–Be attended to–Be treasured–Tenderness–Get gifts–Embraced
CERTAINTY	Clarity–Accuracy–Assurance–Obviousness–Guarantees–Promises–Commitments–Exactness–Precision
TO CONTROL	Dominate–Command–Restrain–Manage–Correct others–Be obeyed–Not ignored–Keep status quo–Restrict
BE NEEDED	Improve others–Be a critical link–Be useful–Be craved–Please others–Affect others–Need to give–Be important–Be material
HONESTY	Forthrightness–Uprightness–No lying–Sincerity–Loyalty–Frankness–No withholds–No perpetrations–Tell all

Here are some questions to ask yourself about your needs:

What is it about this need that makes it important enough to be a personal need? (5 reasons)

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Who am I when this need is met? How do I act? What do I think about? What motivates me? (5 things)

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Who am I when this need isn't met? How do I behave? How do I feel about myself? (5 responses)

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

MASLOW'S ORIGINAL 5 HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Investing in understanding what drives your needs will help you to make healthier choices about how you have those needs met.

In 1943, Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist, stated that as human beings we need our most basic needs met before we can move up the hierarchy towards our higher needs. His hierarchy of needs originally included five levels, to which in later years, he added three more.



FIGURE 1: MASLOW'S 5 HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

5 HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

1. Biological and physiological: this included basic needs of food and drink, shelter and warmth, sex, sleep.
2. Safety: security and protection, stability, order.

3. Love and belonging: intimacy, friendship, love.
4. Esteem: self-esteem, achievement, status, independence.
5. Self-actualisation: realising personal potential, self-fulfilment, personal growth.

We are motivated by what we need, beginning with our most basic needs, which evolved as humankind has evolved.

It is valuable to reflect upon Maslow's research to help us to understand how our needs influence our lives.

Reflect back to the needs exercise and where your needs fall into Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs'. This may help you to create order in your list of what to focus on when examining how to begin to get your needs met in a healthy way.

AFTERWORD

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

SUCCESS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU.

For me success is how I feel about who I am, my place in the world, the contribution I make and the people in my life. It's about aligning the things I do in my life to the bigger picture of who I am being and becoming.

Thank you for reading my book. It's my sincerest hope that these words and stories have provoked reflection and insight for you and have helped you on your journey.

I ask that you continue this reflection and ignite discussion with other women about success and what it means to them, while also sharing what it means to you.

Engage this conversation across generations to learn more about the women in your life.

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