Who Believed in You?

Dina Powell McCormick
and David McCormick

Who Believed in You?

HOW PURPOSEFUL MENTORSHIP CHANGES THE WORLD



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"If I have seen further, it is by

standing on the shoulders of giants."

—*Sir Isaac Newton*

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Who Believed in You?

PART I

The Four Pillars of Transformative Mentoring

Your Invitation

Here's a true story about a powerful executive, a writer at the beginning of his career, and a bird in a wicker cage.

The name of the bird is long forgotten, but the name of the executive is Deanne Barkley. It's the late 1970s in Hollywood, and Ms. Barkley chairs NBC's entertainment division. She's described in the press as having "more economic clout than probably any other woman in television."[1]

On this particular day, a young, unknown writer has managed to wrangle an appointment with her. As he's led into her office, he pauses long enough to notice the bird in a beautiful wicker cage on the other side of the room.

Interesting, he thinks.

Knowing he only has minutes to make an impression, he sits and gets right to the pitch. He has a comedy project he wants Ms. Barkley to buy. Two projects, if things go well. Thankfully, she appears highly intrigued, laughing during all the right moments. Until right in the middle of the pitch, when they both hear a soft thump. The bird has inexplicably keeled over.

Dead.

The writer's mouth falls open. He's positive his pitch is over. This will go down as the worst meeting in the history of Hollywood!

But much to his surprise, Ms. Barkley glances at the bird with a bewildered expression, furrows her brow as if searching for an explanation, then starts to laugh. Hysterically. "This is a moment for both of us!" she roars, wiping her eyes. "Kismet. Destiny. Fate. I'm buying both your projects. We're going to do this!"

Deanne Barkley didn't just buy the young man's screenplays that day. She also became his behind-the-scenes coach and personal door-opener. She introduced him around her network, which included moguls of the entertainment industry. Fortunately for the writer, Ms. Barkley's near legendary status opened a lot of doors.

She went further, advising him to develop a signature look. To stand out in Hollywood, she said, he needed an iconic identity. How about going by the moniker "Shorty"?

He wasn't sure about that one. But heeding her advice, he decided to adopt a spiky hairstyle. That was sure to get attention, and it seemed cool and original. (Also, his four-year-old daughter immediately approved.)

The writer continued to make the rounds in Hollywood. But there was still a problem, as he told us in an in-depth interview for this book.

"The meetings would go well at first, but I often had trouble toward the end of those meetings, particularly if a meeting grew long. My ideas were good, but my pitches kept getting rejected."

Ms. Barkley observed several meetings, then pulled her protégé aside. "Here's why the meetings aren't going well," she said. "It's because you're an exaggerator. You have a good heart, but in your effort to make a sale, you push a point too far. It comes across as disingenuous."

Who was that young exaggerator? Brian Grazer. You've probably heard of him. If you haven't, you've likely seen his name in the credits of a movie. Today, he is one of the most successful movie producers in Hollywood.

"I took her words to heart," Brian told us. "Deanne Barkley was smart and judicious, and I thought, *Wow, that's some big, tough love she just gave me.* It was true: I was trying to build my life on hyperbole. This was a fatal flaw."

He decided to change things. He took to imagining an old-school light switch, the kind you can flip up or down. "From then on, whenever I went to a meeting," Brian said, "I'd visualize that light switch. If ever I felt like I was exaggerating, I'd mentally tap the switch. That rebalanced everything. I became very adept at always telling the truth."

Those who know Brian today say he's one of the most precise and honest people in the business. If he's set to shoot a movie tomorrow, and someone asks him if he's shooting a movie, Brian will say no, and clarify that the shooting hasn't yet begun.

Brian's first two movies, *Night Shift* and *Splash,* eventually emerged from those early pitches to Deanne Barkley. *Night Shift* forged his friendship with actor and director Ron Howard. Eventually, they cofounded Imagine Entertainment, which launched them together into a slew of other successful projects. *Splash* was nominated for an Oscar, became the most successful film at Disney in a decade, and launched the careers of megastars Tom Hanks, John Candy, and Daryl Hannah.

And for this Emmy and Academy Award–winning writer and producer, that was only the beginning.

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Brian's incredibly productive alliance with Deanne Barkley captures so much of what we want to explore in the pages ahead. A seasoned professional meets a young, aspiring talent. The ensuing conversation sparks a formative relationship. In time, the relationship molds the young talent and produces a long and successful career, which in turn resonates across and benefits society.

It starts with a willingness in the heart of the seasoned professional. Helped by a very unexpected prompt (thank you, dearly departed bird), Ms. Barkley caught the spirit of the moment. She followed through with enthusiasm and a growing belief in the young man's potential, investing not just in his projects but also in the person, helping Brian become a more honest and authentic leader. She changed the trajectory of his life and ultimately through him shaped American culture for the better.

Her example shows the key takeaway of this book in action. It's important to help people develop successful careers, but even more important is the shift that can happen from that effort. A true mentor can unlock a person's capacity to be their best self. The benefits compound and help change many people and, over time, even an entire society, for good.

The young talent must do their part too. Ms. Barkley's leadership decision took courage and foresight on her part, but it required faith, humility, and a lot of nerve from Brian to trust her and to learn from her. By cultivating the relationship, laying bare his weaknesses, and being open to her guidance, he set himself up for an incredible journey. It takes the mentor and the mentee, together, to make these relationships work.

We have both been the grateful recipients of such transformative connections. As we'll get into later in the book, we found mentors in family members, coaches, teachers, and bosses. Many became our dear friends. All played an invaluable role in our lives. They challenged us, drove us to aspire to greater heights, and most of all, through their belief in us, shepherded us to a deeper understanding of who we were capable of being.

The power and promise of such relationships drive the conversations you'll find in the following pages.

For the seasoned professionals of the world, we want to know: What exactly is it that truly elevates talented, ambitious people? How can you help emerging leaders make the all-important shift from being self-serving functionaries to being selfless, trusted, and values-driven people committed to changing our society for good?

For the up-and-coming leaders of the world, we ask: How can any young person harness the potential of more senior guides? How can you truly benefit from their experience, character, and wisdom? How can you learn from your mentor, not just for the sake of your own advancement or career, but for the sake of benefiting your country too?

We believe the answers to these questions lie in a specific kind of mentoring that we'll describe throughout this book. When genuinely and skillfully implemented, it can help us find and develop the high-quality leaders America needs most.

And that gives us a lot of hope—both for ourselves and for our nation.

THE STRAIGHT LINE AND THE STEEL ROD

In the pages ahead, you'll read incredible stories of change and mentoring from some of the most remarkably accomplished leaders in America today, including more from Brian Grazer. These people have excelled in a wide range of endeavors—the corporate world, the military, haute cuisine, government, education, politics, nonprofits, and more. All of them are people who we personally know well and deeply admire. They want you to know how the "Ms. Barkleys" in their lives have made all the difference, and why you should become or benefit from such a mentor.

Before we begin, we want to be clear that we are not being political with this book. It is a leadership book. We hold our politics, views, and principles firmly, as you likely do, too, and we do not always share the political views of the individuals profiled here. We have invited people who we know and admire from across the political continuum to share their stories—not because of their politics, but because of one thing they have in common: they're all wildly successful, purpose-driven leaders full of exemplary character. We want you to learn from the best, and all of us—conservatives, progressives, and moderates alike—can admire and be inspired by a leader's character, even if we don't agree with their politics.

This book tells a tale about our nation that you've likely not heard before. Through stories, research, and key lessons, you'll see how leading lights of business, government, culture, and the military were transformed by mentors who took them under their wing, and how that experience made them better, wiser, more trustworthy leaders.

By the end, you'll have a strong picture of how you can take part in that same transformative process by helping people become their best selves, and how that action has a powerful compounding effect in our society. That's the central purpose of this book, and it forms what we call the "steel rod"—the core insight that we will reinforce throughout with stories, statistics, studies, and our own experiences and observations. In short: Transformative mentoring offers the pathway to solving the fundamental deficit of trust in the United States. This kind of mentoring helps people reach their full potential, which in turn results in significant, positive impact on our nation.

We've organized this book around eleven chapters presented in three parts.

In the first part, you'll see how there's a crisis of trust in America today, and how transformative mentoring can help fix it. These pages will build out the four pillars of this type of mentorship: 1) it encourages trustworthiness in future leaders; 2) it instills them with core values; 3) it mandates that established leaders invest time and resources into the mentoring process (an investment that must be returned by the mentee); and 4) it builds confidence in the recipients.

In the second part, you'll see what it looks like for mentoring to be put into practice. You'll discover how a grassroots institution forms the foundations of positive social capital. You'll also see how one of the important places we all spend a lot of time in each day can have a huge compounding positive effect on our society. This place can become a training ground for creating understanding, righting wrongs, and lessening gaps. You'll also see how unlikely mentors can be found in these places. A fascinating section, we promise—one that could be life-changing.

In the final part, we will describe how mentoring can bring about true and lasting change. In that section, we interviewed several high-level leaders, including one of the most powerful women in the world. We asked her about the secret of her confidence, and her answer will surprise you greatly.

Throughout the text you will find three features. The first is the results of a survey we commissioned with Jeff Sonnenfeld and his team at the Yale School of Management as well as Morning Consult, which asked thousands of recipients about their experiences with mentors. The data collected—the first of its kind—illuminates not only the importance of these relationships but how they are different across gender and race.

In addition to the data, this is a book comprised primarily of inspirational stories. Most chapters end with a "Spotlight on Mentoring," allowing today's top leaders to speak to you directly in a question-and-answer format. Imagine sitting down for coffee with them and letting these leaders pour their wisdom into your life. You'll hear about who mentored them, what that mentoring looked like, and how the influence of their mentors is still felt today. You'll discover how to unleash the same kind of positive action and influence in your own life.

Finally, we conclude each chapter with three takeaways that distill the main points of the preceding discussion. We hope these summaries help you absorb what you've read and then put it into action, and we hope that these points become fodder for discussions around workplaces, in classrooms, and in homes across the nation.

As two grateful beneficiaries of the American dream, and thankful of the mentors who helped us achieve it, we care deeply about uplifting leaders who can help meet the urgent challenges of our national moment.

If you do, too, this book is for you.

—Dina & David

1.

Trustworthiness

You have a superpower. But if you're like most high achievers today, there's a strong likelihood you don't know it. If you don't know the superpower exists, you also don't realize when it's been stolen from you, destroyed, or underutilized.

The United States has recently passed through a near-extinction event of historic proportions. What we lost is trust. This country's workplaces, communities, and shared institutions have been almost entirely stripped of it. Trust: the glue that holds families, communities, and democracies together and makes a great civilization possible. It's under siege, and almost wiped out.

Fortunately, your superpower gives you the ability to restore it. It's called being trustworthy, and it's the first pillar of transformative mentoring. When developed carefully and deployed strategically, trust can bring about enormous good.

It won't be easy to rebuild. The United States faces daunting odds. A recent report notes that while Americans still trust scientists and military leaders to some degree, we have lost our trust for almost every other type

of leader and their institutions—including business leaders, journalists, educators, clergy, and law enforcement officials.[1] It can be strange to hear that people don't trust you or your profession anymore. But that's exactly what has happened in America today.

Some good reasons exist for this loss of trust within institutions and across society. There are too many examples of business leaders who have clawed their way to the top, overtly intent only on personal gain with little concern for the employees who have made their ascension possible, or even worse deceived employees, investors, and customers along the way. Too many journalists have discarded their mandate to report the news in an unbiased manner, and instead have led with their leanings, stirring up tensions and suspicions. University officials have mocked conventional values and raised tuition rates, while students who graduate with four-year degrees have emerged confused about their futures and the goodness of America and have struggled to land jobs on par with their educational level. Political leaders from the Left and the Right have fostered divisions, been mired in scandals, and shed their integrity, resorting to grievance peddling and fearmongering. Faith leaders have failed to acknowledge and subsequently discipline and remove predators.

No single person, party, organization, or profession is to blame. Yet this shocking decline of trust for our leaders has helped fuel much division and violence today. As citizens, we tend to model what we see, and our crisis of trust has only become more profound, emerging more intensely with each new hurdle our society faces. Columnist David Brooks has defined the problem as follows:

> Social trust is a measure of the moral quality of a society—of whether the people and institutions in it are trustworthy, whether they keep their promises and work for the common good.
>
> When people in a church lose faith or trust in God, the church collapses. When people in a society lose faith or trust in their institutions and in each other, the nation collapses.

> We [have] had chance[s], in crisis, to pull together as a nation and build trust. We did not. That has left us a broken, alienated society. We are living in the age of that disappointment. It has produced a crisis of trust.[2]

A CRISIS OF TRUST

Where is this "crisis of trust" coming from? Once integrity has been shed and trustworthiness has been tarnished, the loudest voices in society have urged us to fear other Americans. They've shouted at us, claiming we're radically different. They've insisted we can't agree with others. The only way to allay this fear, they've contended, is to join ranks with increasingly polarized and insular groups.

Nationwide, we have observed and felt sharp divisions. It's gotten so bad that more than one-third of all Americans polled would support their state seceding from the union.[3] Given the implications, that's a staggering statistic; one in three Americans would be content with not being part of the United States.

As a result, America has become a nation of us against them. Red versus Blue. Rich versus poor. Urban versus rural. Vaccinated versus unvaccinated. Whatever wedge might exist between people—the loudest voices have told us to amplify that wedge and drive it in further. The wedge has done its damage. A national magazine declared that "there is no advanced industrial democracy in the world more politically divided, or politically dysfunctional, than the United States today."[4]

That's tragic. We Americans are beginning to believe that we're no longer "one nation, indivisible." That mistruth might bolster news ratings and make money, but it's also raised our levels of anxiety, loneliness, anger, and depression. Social commentator Timothy Carney has noted in his book *Alienated America* that polarization is only increasing, social connections are failing, and "much of America is mired in a recession of social capital."[5]

Think of social capital as a network of positive, trustworthy relationships, organized around common purpose. That's what we've lost, and that loss has contributed to the crisis of trust. Social capital is who you're connected to—in school or work, in your neighborhood and city, in the marketplace and soccer field. Social capital allows you to achieve what you greatly value. But when a country has "a recession of social capital," as Carney describes, any person in that country is hard-pressed to accomplish anything for good. You try to make connections at work, but your colleagues seem interested only in self-promotion. You hope to be friends with your neighbor, but she's put a sign in her front yard that makes you furious. You want to go to church, but you don't trust the authenticity of those who lead the community in worship.

It's not too late to reverse course. Cultural analyst Robert D. Putman has argued that America has been a trust-filled, hopeful, united country before, with deep wells of resources found in communities and social infrastructure, and that we can become a stronger, more united country again. Those who doubt the veracity of this statement need only to think back to the tragedy of the 9/11 attacks to be reminded of the common humanity, empathy, and community that all Americans experienced in that moment. We don't need to agree about everything. But we cannot waste or destroy the precious gift of our lives and careers on infighting, ethical scandals, and exploitive business models that purposely prey upon other people's insecurities, angers, and fears. We are all on the metaphoric playground together, so we better learn how to play well. Dr. Putman writes:

> When Tocqueville visited the United States in the early nineteenth century, he was struck by how Americans resisted the temptation to take advantage of each other and instead looked out for their neighbors, not because Americans obeyed some impossibly idealistic rule of selflessness, but rather because we pursued "self-interest rightly understood."

> An effective norm of generalized reciprocity enables that reconciliation of self-interest and good neighborliness. And where such a norm prevails, its effectiveness is manifest in generalized social trust.[6]

Congruent with this analysis and hinting at solutions, Dr. John Hillen, professor at Hampden-Sydney College, notes: "Very early in career development, we need to train executives in ethics—not just smarts, but *wisdom*. . . . We need leaders to not just run institutions well, but to run *good* institutions."[7]

That's exactly what this book is about: the need to create leaders who are better trained in "wisdom," to use Hillen's word. We must train people to become their best selves, which in turn produces social capital, overturns the crisis of trust, and has a compounding positive effect on our society. The trust extinction event can be reversed.

You can regain our superpower—and together, so can *we*.

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL, FOR THE NATION

Make no mistake, we have no intention of bashing America—the opposite is true. We catalog these problems because we love this country, are deeply concerned about how the loss of trust has divided us, and are optimistic that together we can overcome that which ails us.

For all its faults, America remains rich with opportunity and promise, and there's a reason that people from all over the world continue to cross oceans and deserts to migrate here. In America, each person has value. We are free to question, to act, to protest, to disrupt, and to innovate—and that's a huge part of what makes our future very bright. In America, you have the freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition. You have these freedoms because America is still the land of opportunity, and you're invited to pursue this opportunity for yourself and your family—to live the American dream. In exchange, all this country asks for is your

patriotism. It calls on you to pledge allegiance to the American flag, and you do it for a reason—because you are part of one nation, *indivisible.*

But what if we become divisible? What if the bonds that weave our national fabric fray? That's exactly what the extinction of trust threatens. The division that has already been sown will continue unless we stop it.

A new chapter of America's story needs to begin. We Americans must realize the importance of personal and institutional integrity. We must grasp the distinction between the necessary and valuable debate of and disagreement about ideas, and the hatred of each other. We must renovate America's culture to ensure it is rich with social capital and trust. It's going to take a collective effort to rebuild trust in our country. But that's what we hope this book will help to do.

The promising news is that each of us can be part of the solution. We can do our level best to be courageous, principled, and motivated to serve our entire community. In doing so, we will foster, encourage, and build wiser, more trustworthy leaders. Such leaders are vital for helping our nation navigate the treacherous waters of our time and for leading us to the distant shores of a wiser, more trustworthy America.

We can't think of a more timely and strategic way to create a better, more enduring future for our country than to build a culture of trust. As ethicist Sissela Bok put it, "Whatever matters to human beings, trust is the atmosphere in which it thrives."[8]

So, what is needed to create wiser, more trustworthy leaders?

THE TRANSFORMATIVE EXCHANGE

The specific solution we espouse is transformative mentoring. We use the word "transformative" deliberately. It means we believe in a person so much that we actually help change the course of their life. Transformative mentoring encourages a metamorphosis toward wisdom.

Traditionally, mentoring has been largely understood in *transactional* terms: An employee approaches a supervisor and asks to be mentored.

Why? Because the employee wants a promotion, a stronger résumé, access to their supervisor's network, or useful, specific feedback.

With *transformative* mentoring, the relationship is established with larger goals in mind. Career advancement, yes. Expanded networks, yes. Yet as positive and important as those outcomes may be, they are secondary to the priority business at hand. A mentor who cares about the whole person will tap into the mentee's deeper needs and values. The mentor will inspire the mentee with new possibilities, help them achieve greater clarity and confidence, and seek to instill in them a desire to reach for a higher moral purpose.[9]

A few definitions are needed here. Transformative mentoring is different from coaching, where the main goal is to improve conditioning, awareness, or performance. It's not the same as being a role model, because a role model could be someone you never meet (although role models can have a transformational effect on people). Transformative mentoring affects us at the microlevel. As a transformative mentor spends time with a mentee, instincts, performance, and character are shaped and enlarged. If done well, the emerging leader learns to live and lead with more competence and integrity. A new, wiser leader is born.

The cornerstone of transformative mentoring is the trust between the mentor and the mentee. Trustworthy mentors encourage and empower the mentee to be vulnerable and honest with them—to bear their deepest concerns and aspirations in the knowledge that their mentor will respect their confidences and is committed to their well-being. Likewise, trustworthy mentees seek guidance and friendship not for worldly gain alone but in honest pursuit of understanding, self-improvement, and wisdom. When the two meet, and a trusting relationship is formed, a new standard is set. Trustworthiness becomes the defining value of a deep and mutually beneficial relationship.

Put another way, your superpower of trust is restored with profoundly positive effects for our community. Transformative mentoring produces people who help restore social capital by infusing the mentee with values.

Wiser, more trustworthy leaders help guide and unite our communities and institutions that have become so fractured today—the family, the neighborhood, the church, the civic association, the educational institution, and the business world.[10] Transformative mentors produce leaders who are not concerned solely with their own interests, but about our country as a whole.

Imagine a time when today's despairing statistics are reversed. Envision a renewed America where we've regained our trust for our leaders and their institutions. We trust business leaders again. We trust journalists again. We trust educators again. We trust clergy again. We trust law enforcement and judges and attorneys and state officials and politicians. We trust our leaders because they have been mentored to be trustworthy, and now they display that trustworthiness in the way they lead.

That's why building more trustworthy leadership is not merely a good idea; it's also a patriotic duty. We must undertake it for the people around us, and also for our entire country. We have to reconcile the very real problems we see in America today with the faith and hope we have for America's future. This necessity to live wisely affects us all, because we are all leaders in some way. Every single one of us. Think back over your life history. You can probably see how a handful of mentors made all the difference for you. If your mentors had not existed, you would have become a very different person. Similarly, you see big opportunities before you today. If you invest in another person's life now, you can make a tremendous impact.

People today actually crave true transformative mentoring from their higher-ups. A recent survey by PwC asked people what they look for most in the workplace. It showed that the most desired benefit by employees—and one they said could boost any company's bottom line—was not more vacation days or the addition of Ping-Pong tables in the lunchroom. What they wanted was more compassionate, empathetic leadership.[11]

Metamorphosis at this level invariably happens in a series of one-to-one exchanges. The positive effects can be as magical and welcomed as compound interest. A parent passes on their hard-won values to their child.

The child apprentices to a teacher who concurs with the parent and helps instill values and skills. The youth rises up to become a community leader or a terrific parent or the school's much-admired football coach. The coach (or community leader or parent) goes on to mold the character and self-discipline of a team of students. One student, in turn, becomes an outstanding citizen. Another becomes a responsive and principled politician. A third becomes a successful and trusted businessperson. A fourth becomes a visionary entrepreneur. The positive legacy in individuals and groups deepens and spreads.

Mathematical genius Sir Isaac Newton pointed out that his scientific discoveries wouldn't have been possible without the contributions of those who went before him. He famously declared, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."

Think of this book as your call to become a giant.

"WHO BELIEVED IN ME?"

We share a deep conviction that influencing an entire nation for the better through transformative mentoring relationships is not only possible but central to our purpose and privilege. We are two proud Americans from middle-class origins—a daughter of Egyptian parents who immigrated to Texas, and the son of educators from rural Pennsylvania—and we are privileged to have lived the American dream at the highest levels of business and government.

Although we worked hard, we did not rise to these levels unaided. In addition to strong supportive families, we were fortunate to have outstanding mentors who, at key moments, guided, inspired, taught essential principles, and helped us make smarter choices. Without them, our lives would have turned out very differently. And without them, we would certainly have missed out on what we might call the "virtuous cycle," as many of our mentees have become valued colleagues, friends, and supporters.

We've noticed that we can identify the pivotal influencers in our lives by asking a simple question: *Who believed in me?*

The following profiles show the giants on whose shoulders we stand, and for them we are deeply grateful.

WHO BELIEVED IN HER? (DINA'S STORY)

I was raised far from Washington and Wall Street. My family emigrated from Cairo, Egypt, to Dallas, Texas, when I was just four. We spoke Arabic and were Coptic Christians, a minority religion in the Middle East. My father had been an Army captain in Egypt under Anwar Sadat and believed in Sadat's vision of peace with Israel. (In 1977, Sadat became the first Arab leader to visit Israel in a bid for lasting peace between the two countries.) My mom graduated from the American University in Cairo and eventually became a respected social worker in Dallas. But when they first arrived in Texas, my parents needed to take a humbler tack. They worked multiple jobs and eventually opened a convenience store to feed our family and earn a living.

Fully embracing the American dream, my parents were convinced that hard work, discipline, and education would bring our family a better life. My parents worked seven days a week throughout my childhood, while encouraging my younger sisters and me to pursue our dreams with all of our strength. I arrived in the United States knowing no English. My parents continued to speak Arabic at home, so I maintained fluency in Arabic while learning English. Eventually, my whole family became naturalized citizens of the United States.

One transformative chapter in my life was attending Ursuline Academy, an all girls' Catholic high school in Dallas, Texas. The motto of Ursuline is *Serviam*, Latin for "I will serve." Arguably, the most famous graduate of Ursuline is Melinda French Gates, who has described to me the profound impact Ursuline had on her. As she helped build and lead

the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (now known as the Gates Foundation), that same *Serviam* spirit guided her to impact and save millions of lives around the globe. Today, she has stepped out on her own to invest $12.5 billion in organizations that support and empower women and girls around the world, including many organizations that mentor and support women.[12]

As for careers, my parents always told my sisters and me that in America we could become anything we wanted—"as long as it's a doctor, a lawyer, or an engineer." Those were secure professions in their eyes, and they wanted the best for us. So, it came as a shock to them when I showed an interest in politics. I worked full-time as a legislative assistant to a Texas state senator and also waited tables to help pay the tuition at the University of Texas in Austin where I was a full-time student. This was well outside my parents' wheelhouse.

Fortunately, one of my most important first mentors was my grandmother Nora. She was very open-minded for her generation and strict faith and for the subculture she'd grown up in. Tough, kind, and intelligent, she worked as a transcriber for the United Nations, and she always believed in me. At home in her kitchen, the warm smell of fresh baking in the air, she would whisper her affirmations and tell me, "God has a plan and purpose for your life." My grandmother instilled in me the confidence to proceed.

After graduation, I deferred my admission to law school, and followed my experience as a legislative assistant to Washington, DC, where I became an intern to Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, another of my earliest mentors, and eventually a junior member of the leadership staff of House Majority Leader Dick Armey.

After four years on Capitol Hill, I joined the 2000 presidential campaign of Texas governor George W. Bush. President Bush later named me assistant to the president for Presidential Personnel, a senior White House role with thirty-five direct reports. At age twenty-nine, I was the youngest person ever to hold that position. President Bush remains a mentor and

friend and included a portrait of me in his book *Out of Many, One*, about immigrants who have contributed greatly to America. Later, I became assistant secretary of state for Educational and Cultural Affairs, and later deputy undersecretary of state for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Dr. Condoleezza Rice became one of my main mentors at the State Department. We talk with her in chapter 3.

After almost eight years in Washington, DC, I was recruited to Goldman Sachs in 2007 and moved to New York, becoming managing director of the firm's global impact investing business, as well as the first-ever director of its Office of Corporate Engagement and president of the Goldman Sachs Foundation. I led the team that launched was called 10,000 Women, a global initiative to foster economic growth by providing women entrepreneurs with business education, mentoring, networking, and access to capital. This was an unprecedented investment initiative for Goldman Sachs, with a projected budget of $100 million. Many people at the firm wondered whether we were on the right track. Would it really be worth our effort and capital to help women entrepreneurs around the world?

While preparing for the launch of the 10,000 Women initiative, I got to know Dr. Ruth Simmons, then a member of the Goldman Sachs board of directors and president of Brown University. During a board trip to the Middle East, Dr. Simmons and I spent time in the air discussing my role and the challenges of starting a complex initiative that was unlike anything Goldman had previously done. I confessed that I was anxious about my upcoming presentation to the board, which would be the final hurdle for getting 10,000 Women approved and funded.

At age thirty-four, I was confident in my analytical and presentation skills, but the Goldman board could be a notoriously tough audience. Since there was no precedent for 10,000 Women, I'd face challenging questions about how we would design the program, allocate the firm's resources, attract outside partners, and measure success. In the days leading up to my presentation, Dr. Simmons encouraged me, advising me on strategies to present to the board. As president of Brown University, she

undertook her calling to build a new generation of leaders. She knew what an important movement this could be, and she knew the potential was huge: to have a global financial institution with the reach of Goldman saying the best investment we could make is to economically empower women around the world.

As expected, my presentation drew some sharp questions. After all, the board's number one mission was managing risks to the firm. At a key moment, Dr. Simmons spoke up with a passionate statement of support for 10,000 Women and my ability to lead it. She reminded everyone that sometimes you have to take a leap of faith and do the right thing, even if you can't be sure of the outcome. Dr. Simmons put her own credibility on the line to demonstrate her faith in me, bolstering my confidence then and in the years to come.

We got the green light for our initial budget of $100 million. As of 2020, 10,000 Women has blown past its original goals, supporting more than seventy thousand women around the world. It's spawned a relationship with the World Bank that has raised $1.5 billion in lending capital for female entrepreneurs. As of 2023, it has reached a hundred fifty thousand women with $2 billion in available capital, helping women worldwide gain access to business education, transformative mentors, potential partners, and other sources of investment that are essential to their success.

I still consider Dr. Simmons a mentor and friend. She is a giant, and I am proud to stand on her shoulders. I've also benefited greatly from many others who served as important mentors in my career, including Clay Johnson III, who preceded me as the director of the Office of Presidential Personnel at the White House; John F. W. Rogers, who serves as executive vice president, chief of staff, and secretary to the board of directors at Goldman Sachs; Lloyd Blankfein, the former CEO of Goldman Sachs; David Solomon, the current CEO of Goldman Sachs; and Lloyd Blankfein, the former CEO of Goldman Sachs. Lloyd was a boss, a mentor, and a friend. He always stood out as a mentor who gave me tough love

and showed me the strength of honest and loving leadership. He and his wife remain among my closest and dearest friends to this day.

In 2017, I served on the senior staff of the White House under President Donald Trump. He was very comfortable having talented, capable, and strong women serve in his administration in important roles. He gave me an enormous amount of autonomy to work on important initiatives in the Middle East, including those that eventually led to the foundations of the Abraham Accord. In 2024, he worked hard to support David's campaign for senate in Pennsylvania.

I rejoined Goldman Sachs, where I once again became a partner and served as Global Head of Sustainability and Inclusive Growth. I was on the management committee at Goldman, and I also oversaw our firm's relationships with the sovereign institutions within key countries around the world. In March 2021, I helped launch our company's One Million Black Women initiative, which will invest $10 billion over ten years to advance racial equity and economic opportunity. Launched in partnership with Black women–led organizations, this new initiative is the largest of its kind and will drive investment in housing, health care, access to capital, education, job creation and workforce advancement, digital connectivity, and financial health.

At Goldman Sachs, I had the opportunity to build many teams over the years, which served to foster mentorships. When we launched 10,000 Women, we built an incredible leadership team for the program globally. John F. W. Rogers and Russell Horwitz helped guide us and keep us focused on impact and how we would define return on investment (ROI). We needed to explain, in the language of business, how this initiative would not only be so meaningful to do, but would make an impact for the firm.

To that end, we worked to define and measure jobs created, budgets, revenue growth, and more. Ultimately, we built a massive set of partnerships in more than fifty countries. We worked with the Bridgespan Group, under the leadership of Tom Tierney, who helped us measure the

performance of the program. This independent consulting group helped us ensure we had the right metrics and were transparent in our reporting.[13]

As we constantly showed the impact of the program and how it helped the firm, one thing that struck me as remarkable was how often John, Russell, and Lloyd Blankfein would become emotional when they met graduates from the program. These amazing graduates would express their gratitude and describe how the mentoring and program had changed their lives.

Once at a board meeting, I was asked what the greatest impact of the program would be fifty years from now. Initially, I was unsure how to answer the question. Russell, who was known for only using quantitative data, whispered to me to say that if this program is as successful as we believe it will be, it will transform thousands of lives.

So far, the program has lived up to that expectation. Not only has it transformed the lives of thousands of women globally, it has transformed the lives of hundreds of people who work at the various offices of Goldman Sachs around the world. They have signed up to serve as mentors to the women. The mentors review business plans, provide lengthy video guidance sessions, and, in many instances, become close friends and confidants. Ultimately, this kind of mentoring has had a profound impact on both the mentors and the mentees. When we measured impact, we were also able to see how the graduates "paid it forward." After they graduated, some nine out of ten program participants went on to mentor at least fifteen or more budding entrepreneurs in their communities. Our team was together for more than a decade, and to this day, we still get together and express a deep sense of pride for the thousands of lives the program has impacted.

I've also seen over the years how one good way to mentor people is to highlight them and give credit where credit is due. When people work for us, we want to add value to their careers and ensure they're able to grow, reach their fullest potential, and have a strong impact. One of the greatest

legacies as a leader is to be able to see over time where your mentees end up and what they are doing today. You can know with a strong satisfaction that you helped build effective, trustworthy leaders. I'll forever be grateful for the receptiveness, drive, tough love, and friendship of people who have been on my team and have helped build and lead these programs—Noa Meyer, Lisa MacDougall, Anne Black, Kara Gustafson, Jessica Lightburn, Amy Bradshaw, Joe Snodgrass, Jen Field, Sabina Ceric, Jackie Matza, Wade Lairsen, Jessica Taylor, Leigh Farris, Katherine Jollon, Charlotte Keenan, and Erin Walsh. They have all gone on to have great impact in the world, and their influence and leadership helps many people.

Today, the work of the 10,000 Women initiative continues under the leadership and guidance of Asahi Pompey and her team. And when we built the groundbreaking program called One Million Black Women,[14] an initiative to bridge the gaps that today's Black women encounter, I was in awe to partner with and watch Margaret Anadu help build the program and investment plan that she led. She, Asahi, and I pushed hard to make it a signature legacy initiative for the firm, with David Solomon and John Waldron's constant support.

Mentors can extend a lot of different directions. With 10,000 Women, we recruited amazing advisory boards who literally mentored us as we were leading mentoring initiatives ourselves. Warren Buffett and Mike Bloomberg cochaired a partner program we initiated called 10,000 Small Businesses, where we helped entrepreneurs create jobs and economic opportunity by providing access to education, capital, and support services.

At a graduation speech that Mike Bloomberg gave for our summit, he began his talk by describing how proud he was of the graduates and all the sacrifices they had made. "I know about those sacrifices," he said, "because I am a small business owner myself." Mike and Patti Harris, who leads Bloomberg Philanthropies, widely recognized as one of the greatest foundations in the world, helped expand the reach of our

program in London, Baltimore, and other cities all while growing the impact of mentoring by adding hundreds of employee mentors from Bloomberg L.P. While the business education and capital provided to these entrepreneurs was highly valuable, the mentoring and business advising was often the most transformative and life-changing piece.[15]

I also believe so strongly in the power of peer mentors. One of my great honors was to become a partner at Goldman. It's a tight group of leaders who believe in excellence and a culture of teamwork. The partners can be tough—they expected all of us as peers to perform at a high level. More than one of my partners gave me strong and constructive feedback, some of the best advice I'd ever received. I was also particularly proud to be part of the special club that comprised the female partners of Goldman. These women proved to be incredibly supportive to me over the years, and I hope I've been that for them too.

Today I am vice chairman, president, and global head of client services, and a partner at BDT & MSD Partners. Mentorship is an integral part of our culture. I'm proud that in almost every meeting, no matter how sensitive the topic, our co-CEOs, Gregg Lemkau and Byron Trott, and Michael Dell, the chairman of our firm's advisory board, welcome junior partners and employees to participate so they can grow.

I recently received a note from a colleague that points to the power of transformative mentoring. This remarkable young woman worked for me for several years, then wrote this note on the brink of moving to another opportunity. I share snippets of her note not to shine a spotlight on me, but to show that transformative mentoring truly can impact people.

You have been such a huge part of my life for the past 3+ years that it's really hard for me to imagine a day-to-day where I don't continue to look to you for guidance and learn from you, as a professional and as a person.

Though I have learned a lifetime's worth of knowledge about transforming difficult problems and situations into creative solutions and successes through hard work, one of the most important lessons I have learned from you is how to harness kindness and empathy and turn it into action.

I am so proud to think of you as a friend and mentor, and I look forward to continuing to be in touch throughout the years.

WHO BELIEVED IN HIM? (DAVID'S STORY)

I grew up in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, a town about fifty miles southwest of Scranton in a mostly rural part of the state. My dad was a college administrator and later became president at Bloomsburg State College. My mom began her career as a schoolteacher and later earned an EdD in early childhood education at Lehigh University, eventually becoming a school administrator. Their example and role modeling made a huge difference in my life. They were constantly encouraging me to become my best self. Even then, I needed some outside encouragement along the way too.

I loved playing football but wasn't all that good at first. In tenth grade, I mostly rode the bench on the varsity team at Bloomsburg High School. Our coach only let me play defense in the fourth quarter, usually when we were either way ahead or way behind. But I always gave it my best and made some key tackles and sacks.

That summer, the school fired our coach and hired a new one, Tom Lynn, to take over the football program. Coach Lynn pored through tapes of the previous year's games and reportedly asked a staff member, "Who's this kid who keeps coming in at the end of the game, giving his all, and making the key tackles?" He called me into his office and said, "You've got the right stuff. I think there's a place for you on the team this year. But you've got to earn it. You've got to go to training camp and bust your ass." I went to camp and gave it my all. At the end of camp, he pulled me aside with two other guys and pronounced us co-captains of the varsity team! I was only a junior. Juniors were never captains—not at our school. He wasn't picking me because I was the best, but because he saw how hard I'd worked and he thought I could lead.

The moment proved transformational for me. I was genuinely shocked by Coach Lynn's confidence in me, which far surpassed my faith in my own abilities. He saw potential that others had missed and convinced me that I could be a varsity linebacker and team captain. With his support, feedback, high expectations, and powers of persuasion, my self-doubts began to subside. It was one of my first lessons in the power of effective mentoring. Because he saw me differently, I started to think of myself differently.

Coach Lynn had the rare skill of being simultaneously encouraging and tough. Actually, that assessment is too nice. Truth is, he gave us hell. He could be ruthless, highly demanding. Yet he had his warmhearted side. He got to know each player as an individual and figured out how to coax the best performance from each of us, whether that meant giving us a kick in the butt or a pat on the back. He taught us that we shouldn't feel ashamed of losing unless the cause was lack of commitment, focus, or mental toughness—in which case, we should feel *deeply* ashamed. He was obsessed with preparation. He used to say, "The other team might outplay us, but they will never out-prepare us." By my senior year, he had turned our team around. We were regional champions for the first time in years, and I was named all-state linebacker. He never doubted me and the rest of the team, and that made a huge difference. My football achievements helped me win admission to West Point, which completely changed the trajectory of my life.

On my first day at West Point, all new students gathered in the same auditorium, and the speaker took a quick survey designed to show us the elite caliber of our fellow students. With a tough, gravelly voice, he asked, "How many of you graduated high school with a 4.0 GPA or higher?" All over the auditorium, hands raised, but I couldn't raise mine. Then he asked, "How many of you were president of your senior class?" More hands, but not mine. He asked several more questions along those lines, showing how West Point was populated with only the best of the best. Finally, "How many of you were captain of your school's varsity football team?"

My hand shot up.

That moment felt life-changing. Two years earlier, I would never have seen myself belonging in such a crowd. Yet thanks to the support and belief of Coach Lynn, I was in. I, too, belonged. In the years that followed, I wouldn't have survived West Point—or the many challenging periods of my life that ensued—without Coach Lynn's first lessons to me about discipline, consistency, preparation, and confidence.

We stayed in touch long after I graduated. When I was in Iraq with the Army during Operation Desert Storm, about seven years after high school, I wrote him a letter about how his faith in me had made all the difference—a letter that Coach Lynn's son, Roger, later told me he had treasured. When he passed away, hundreds of people came to his wake on a cold day in December. Generations of former players paid their respects because Coach Lynn had also changed their lives. I still think about him often, even two decades after his death.

After West Point, I went to the United States Army Airborne School and Ranger School, where I was named the Honor Graduate. I served in the 82nd Airborne Division and was part of the first wave of US troops sent into Iraq during the first Gulf War in 1991. I was the executive officer of a combat engineering company of 130 soldiers tasked with clearing minefields and destroying enemy munitions. After four years at West Point and five years in the Army, where I was blessed to have had a number of excellent role models and mentors, I continued my education, earning an MA and PhD at Princeton University.

One of my PhD advisors at Princeton, the famed professor Richard Ullman, became another excellent mentor to me. He had worked in McNamara's Department of Defense and had served on the *New York Times* editorial board. During the first semester of my master's degree, I wrote my first paper for Dr. Ullman. He handed it back marked with a long list of comments in soft-tipped lead. Dr. Ullman used a unique key system, tying his comments to sequential letters of the alphabet, A, B, C, and so on. When he reached the end of the alphabet, he began again with double letters, AA, BB, CC. After he returned that first paper to me, I just

sighed. His list of comments and critiques was as long as my entire paper. He was unbelievably attentive, rapier-sharp with his logic. Although I improved in research and writing skills, he continued critiquing my work with that same depth for every paper. He invested as much time grading my papers as I spent writing them.

I learned to respect this man greatly. He also became a friend. At his suggestion, we started playing squash together. After I finished my master's, he encouraged me to pursue a doctorate. I had not been a great student at West Point and I did not think I had the intellectual chops to make it through a PhD. He assured me that I did, and with his help and the help of others, I completed my doctoral degree in record time.

In the years that followed, I joined and eventually ran a publicly traded technology company, FreeMarkets, which was part of Pittsburgh's renaissance, then assumed senior roles in government, including undersecretary of the Treasury during the financial crisis of 2008.

Throughout my career, in the military, government, and business, I was fortunate enough to have great mentors, many of them prominent, such as Colonel Mike Colpo, my tactical officer when I was a cadet, who later returned to West Point as the chief of staff before retiring; Ambassador Bob Kimmitt; Bob Steel, my counterpart at Treasury who went on to become deputy mayor of New York City; Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson; President George W. Bush; and Bridgewater founder Ray Dalio. Each of these individuals became valuable guides in different ways. Though Coach Lynn and Dr. Ullman weren't household names like a certain former president, they were giants in my eyes, and their mentorship made all the difference to me. They taught me how to believe in myself, to ground myself in ethics, integrity, and compassion, and to reach heights I didn't think possible. I am honored to stand on their shoulders.

I stepped down from my position as CEO of Bridgewater Associates, one of the nation's leading investment firms, and in late 2024, I'm preparing to assume my role as a United States senator from Pennsylvania, after

winning a very tight race against a long term incumbent. I've also been fortunate to mentor many people over the years who are active today in high-level roles in business and government.

One of these individuals, Colonel Everett Spain, is now a professor of behavioral sciences at West Point. In a recent interview for this book, he recalled how we used to run together when we both worked at the Treasury Department. We would meet early in the morning, at five thirty, at the National Mall in Washington, DC, and run around the perimeter. Since he didn't have a parking spot downtown, he took public transportation to get there. His commute lasted more than an hour, so he got up before four o'clock on those mornings. He described how it was always worth it. As we ran, we talked, and I would share my thoughts and advice throughout the run. He described me as an "advocate," teaching him things, opening his eyes to greater possibilities, infusing integrity into his decisions, and enriching his life.

REIMAGINING A SHARED FUTURE

This book offers a tapestry of stories that can help educate, inspire, and challenge you going forward. Whatever political allegiance or ideology a person may hold, it's hard to dispute America's urgent need for more leaders with integrity and commitment to the public good. We are championing a nonpartisan, nonideological focus on mentoring great leaders that aims to seize this moment in history for the greater good. For that reason, we believe what we're advocating here is profoundly patriotic.

Good leaders must stand tall on their principles. But they need to be open-minded to other perspectives too. They must be able to bridge disagreement by seeing both sides of an argument, and by being charitable in their interactions with others who disagree.

Toward that end, we enlisted Dr. Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, the Lester Crown Professor in the Practice of Management, and Senior Associate Dean for

Leadership Studies at Yale School of Management. We tasked him and his research team with helping us develop and shape original, proprietary, data-driven content for this book. Dr. Sonnenfeld is also the founder and CEO of the Chief Executive Leadership Institute, a global nonprofit educational, research, and leadership organization that focuses on CEO leadership and corporate governance. His team designed and implemented a survey on mentorship and analyzed the results. In conjunction with Morning Consult, a global data intelligence company, the survey was taken by several thousand people, including C-suite executives, MBA students, and the general population. This research is woven throughout the book.

Our core value is a straightforward maxim: to lead is to serve. And to serve is to lead with duty, honor, strength, and humility. Above all else, we hope to promote gratitude. Our own sense of gratitude is immense for our families, our mentors, and our country for helping each of us reach our potential. That gratitude is the ultimate ethos underlying this project, and our promise to you is a greater sense of mission fulfillment in your own life.

We are not naïve to believe that transformative mentoring solves every problem we face today in the effort to rebuild trust in American society. But transformative mentoring is an important solution, part of the overall mosaic of answers, and a way we can all contribute to a better America.

Research clearly shows how relationships that develop with mentors are among life's most important experiences. Real change can, and in fact *must*, happen. The power of transformative mentoring will help lead the way.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- America is grappling with a crisis of trust. We desperately need wiser, more trustworthy leaders to unify our nation and work toward understanding and solutions. With more trustworthy leaders, the perilous times we live in will be navigated more skillfully.
- Plenty of mentoring is *transactional* in nature, where one commodity is exchanged for another. But the solution to creating wiser, more trustworthy leaders is *transformative* mentoring, where mentors help mentees reach their full potential and lives are changed for the better.
- Transformative mentoring offers the pathway to solving the fundamental deficit of trust in the United States. This kind of mentoring helps people reach their full potential, which in turn results in significant, positive impact on our nation.