

“Linda Rendleman’s book will touch both your heart and your mind as you read through her struggles, accomplishments and thoughtful exercises. Her statement, ‘I am in charge of my life,’ sums up how she found success; and her sound advice will help you find success, too. This book is a must-read for every woman.”

Elinor Stutz, CEO of Smooth Sale, LLC and Author of
Nice Girls DO Get the Sale: Relationship Building that Gets Results



“Linda Rendleman has clearly brought forth the passion that helps women in their journey to succeed. She brings many years of dedication and commitment to the reader and fully understands what makes the female professionals of today tick. This book will surely bring out the best life in everyone who reads it.”

Ron Sukenick, Author and Speaker
Relationship Strategies Institute



“Linda Rendleman knows women’s issues and how women think, how they work, and how they should succeed. In this heart-warming book, Linda gives lively stories and examples that reflect her years of accumulative wisdom and knowledge, that are at the core of her strengths as a champion of women’s rights and achievement.”

Bob Berting, President
Berting Communications



“Women from all walks of life will resonate with Linda Rendleman’s message that we all have similar concerns and challenges. This easy-to-read book is an encouragement and a reminder that we are all in this together.”

Marlene Chism, author of *Success is a Given*

**Women Like Us: Real Stories
and Strategies for Living
Your Best Life**

Linda Rendleman, M.S.

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To Mom

Keep on dancin'—Shuggy Wuggy

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Foreword

Straight from the heart. With grace and dignity. That is Linda Rendleman. This book exemplifies all of the qualities and devotion of Linda. Many times painful yet ultimately hopeful, there are passages that apply to all, and some that will be felt directly while escaping others. But it is all Linda, a true friend to so many.

Linda and I were members of a Mastermind organization in Indianapolis, a small group of speakers/authors/trainers dedicated to helping each other succeed. The organization still exists even as I have moved on, continuing its mission. As you will find, this book pursues a similar beneficial cause, that of helping other women succeed in a world that sometimes still, unbelievably, tries to shut them out, while also celebrating the sameness and differences that define women today.

I personally know many of the women who have shared their journeys in this book. From the surface, one might think these women are drastically different in personality and beliefs, but their stories of struggle and triumph share a commonality that will ring true across generations. State Senator Pat Miller is a particular favorite of mine. Her attitude of Servant Leadership is commendable and quite in line with my personal beliefs. However, it is her ability to use that Servant Leadership across disciplines that is truly admirable.

The “Tribute to My Dad” narrative, though short, is remarkably revealing. Reading it makes me wonder how my own daughter, now a young adult, perceives her father. Such opportunities for deeper processing into one’s own actions abound within this book.

A guide for contemplating and then acting accordingly, *Women Like Us* is ultimately a book about heart and soul. Not Linda’s. Yours.

Gregory A. Ballard, Mayor
City of Indianapolis

Acknowledgements

I would like to gratefully acknowledge all of the contributing writers who so graciously provided me with their own stories. These women understand the importance of mentoring and supporting other women and realize their own stories of struggle, survival, growth and perseverance are important to the motivation and inspiration of all of us.

I would also like to gratefully thank Carol Rozboril, who unselfishly spent many long hours helping me craft my message. Carol, our friendship spans forty plus years and what a gift it has been to renew it.

Thank you to Dr. Kathleen Brehony who helped me launch the journey of writing my first book and finally, Jim Cahill. Jim, you have my heartfelt appreciation for your encouragement to persevere at times when the task seemed daunting.

Introduction

I was almost a Prom Queen. It's true. Under the colored lights of the pavilion, with my high school sweetheart escorting me, my hair in what we called an "up do" and my pink empire waist formal with the little pink satin rose at the bodice, I danced and twirled and felt like a princess on that beautiful spring evening. The whole school had voted. It was time for the announcement. I held my breath. I was one of five candidates. One of five girls singled out of all of the senior girls in my high school. One of us, yes one of us would be named the prettiest, the most popular, the one for all to admire, the one of the most worth—or so it seemed to me, a 17-year-old in 1967 in Martinsville, Indiana.

The girls standing next to me wishing the same wish were my friends over the years. We played together, laughed together, screamed a million "first and ten do it again" chants at high school football games and cried over Beach Boys and Otis Redding songs. Some of these girls would go on to be quite accomplished and educated, I know all became mothers. But today, the only competition, the only focus was for the prestigious title, *Queen of the Prom*.

The sound of the winner's name rang in my ears. It was not my name. No, I did not win the title of Prom Queen that year. The title went to the beautiful and intelligent Cathy James. I came really close. How do I know that? Forest Wildman, our school superintendent, pulled me aside after the announcement—with what he thought were the best intentions—to tell me that I missed being crowned by two votes. "We probably should have recounted,

but, my dear, with all the preparation left to be done by prom night, we simply didn't have the time." Two votes—I lost by two votes! A recount certainly should have been in order, don't you agree?

This would be my first lesson in disillusionment as I moved into my adult life. Years later I have been the recipient of more than one broken heart, the bearer of three children, the earner of two college degrees, and the survivor of cancer. There has been more than one occasion when I have wanted a recount, a "no, wait a minute" moment, or as a dear friend of mine used to say a "do over."

And, I know I am not unique. I am like countless other women. Maybe like you—maybe slightly different—but really very much the same.

We have a lot of the same stuff, we women. We have a lot of the same struggles, the same fears and the same desires. The basics are all there. The location and the timing may be different. The points of reference may be different. The beginnings of and reasons for our fears may be different. The way we handle similar problems are not the same, but the premises from which we operate are many times dead on the same.

I do not think this is a "self help" book—certainly didn't start out to write it as one—although in re-reading it I think, at some points it sounds a little like one. And if it does, and it is helpful to you, so be it. If I've offered tips for changing your life and you didn't want to hear them—sorry! But—on the other hand—if you're like me, and want to take a fresh look at a similar situation, you just might find a useful solution.

I have chosen to write this book to pique your interest in my personal views and identify with our sisterhood of women today. I have given you some ways to investigate further in a particular area which challenges your own thinking and provides you with change through exercises and journaling.

On these pages you'll not only get my views through a collection of thoughts and stories, but you will also read about the personal stories and attitudes of some outstanding women. These women have things to say on the matters of inspiration, health, politics, growing up in a man's world and learning to take on, and ultimately solve, problems many of us also face. In their own words, you'll read their thoughts and their personal stories. These women know and

understand that no matter what the differences in background, faith, upbringing, education or age, we are all so similar at our core.

The women in this book have laid life bits out on the pages for your reflection and knowledge. Each was invited to select a lesson learned to share with you, the reader. You'll hear from Dr. Sue Morter about how she dealt with her mother's death; Congresswoman Carolene Mays shares that her husband held a gun to her head in a drug induced rage; Lieutenant Governor Becky Skillman tells the story of her grandfather as mentor; and Darcy Keith tells of her struggles as the lone survivor in a car crash that resulted in brain injury. So you see—these are words on a page from women who want to share, in a book for women, some of the lessons of their lives in a straightforward manner.

And, I can tell you what else this book is not. It is not an in-depth look at the story of anyone—not myself, and not the contributing women writers. It is in no way meant to be a publication focused on helping you find the answers to your own life secrets. It is, however, a collection of my thoughts, opinions and attitudes on being female. Hopefully it offers some guidance for deeper thinking on a number of topics, and with active participation in your own time and in your own mind, brings you, the reader, along the journeys a woman inevitably experiences in life.

What this book is, is a written piece of many words gelling together on the page. If they resonate with you and your own struggles, joys and perceptions, continue further study through the exercises I have created. Read heartfelt pieces from outstanding women about their own lives and a few pieces of my own that still make me cry, laugh and think when I read them.

The premise of this book is to support my belief that we are all in this together. That we all, as females, carry around in our minds and hearts many of the same fears and rejoice in many of the same victories as only women can.

When you read about setting boundaries for yourself, renewing relationships, living your own passions and creating your own legends it is my wish that at least one will resonate with your soul and move you to better your life. Should this happen, my effort of putting this small book together will be rewarded.

I encourage you to use this book as a resource, mark it up as you

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see fit. Highlight and underline pages and words with which you connect. Question ideas and statements you don't. The best books on my shelves are all marked up, corners turned down, and notes made in the margins. I even write summaries of what I've learned on partially empty pages. My notes have been written in pen, pencil, marker or even one of my children's crayons if it was the handiest writing tool at the time.

I don't know it all. I don't know much. But, what I **do know** is that it is a good idea to find your own thoughts, your own conclusions, your own beginnings and endings that work for you. And, I want you to know that you and I are one in a sisterhood of women. We're sharing parallel lives and we're one and the same. We're all women and have a common bond. **We are—Women Like Us.**



*Balancing
Your Own
Woman Heart
and Soul*

Living with No Regrets

When I was about 14 years old I decided that wherever or however I lived my life, I wanted to live it with no regrets. I am not sure where that idea came from or how I came to that conclusion at that particular time in my life. Maybe it was because of an awareness of people around me who weren't happy with their lives. Maybe it was because my cousin got a divorce and I'd never known anyone who did that. I didn't even know my cousin that well, yet when I got the news that she and her husband were divorcing, I went to my room and cried and cried. Was I crying for her? Perhaps I was crying for me. Perhaps I had a sense of my own future. In retrospect, I think I could have been feeling a combination of bewilderment and fear that things change—a recognition of what may lie in store for me in the future. I think that particular day was for me a scary acknowledgement that childhood is almost over.

No regrets became my creed. As I look back, my mantra was probably as much out of fear as out of a need to control my life. So this determination to do my best, to make my desires come true, to live my level best with no regrets became the way I lived.

I didn't make it easy for myself. I married young, at 19. I had a child by age 21 and graduated from college just before her second birthday. I have vivid memories of sitting at my Smith Corona typewriter in our little apartment in Martinsville, Indiana with Janie on my lap, typing away about a book I had read, a teaching curriculum I was assigned to write, or a review of a speech for a public speaking class. Even today I can see Janie and her dad at my graduation from Indiana University. I can see her little brown and gold pinafore dress, her blond pigtails and big brown eyes. I can see

her little wave to me as I walked down the aisle to get my diploma in the bright red graduation robe. This young woman, this young mother, and this young wife earned a degree no one could ever take from her. This certificate of discipline and dedication came amongst cheese sandwiches—when that’s all there was to eat—shoes with holes, and third day jeans, delivering my precious Janie to the next door girlfriend/babysitter so I could make it to my classes. All these motions day in and day out created an accomplishment which became a significant part of the whole of me.

Years later, I repeated a similar challenge when I attended graduate school while carrying my beautiful son, A.J. I experienced pelvic pain that I felt must be making me black and blue from his weight, and added an additional forty pounds mostly in my hugely blossoming belly. I was so proud of the fact that I delivered my 10 lb. 2 oz blue-eyed baby boy, settled him in, and was back in classes without missing one of them. (A snowstorm and one class cancellation on the day he was born assisted my “no class left behind” record.) What an achiever I was. I must have been in the “I Am Woman” stage of my life then—so silly when I look back on it. The woman I am today would have closed the doors, pulled down the shades and snuggled with my new baby boy for as long as the world would allow.

It was only my middle child, Catherine Ann, who came at a time when I wasn’t scaling some mountain or reaching for some goal. Her entrance into the world was marked by the resignation of Richard Nixon (she was born the same day he resigned from office) and she was an easy, 45-minute birth. I think she somehow knew her mom needed a little cooperation.

You see, when I was younger I had lots of things to do—lots of mountains to climb, lots of challenges to prove my worth. No regrets. That’s me. I read once that you really are all alone in life. You can have a partner, parents, friends and children. But, they can only be in your life as a parallel. You are the creator, the developer and the liver of your very own life. I think that scared me. And, with that knowledge that I really am all alone, I studied, and I worked, and I climbed. Was it out of fear of loneliness—or just plain fear of the unknown?

A legend, my legend, has and is being written and created each day. Now in the days of quiet with my children gone, with children

of their own, I am in reflection. Quiet reflection is good for the soul, they say. Charting the path that ends up being a life can be a reaction to circumstance and situation. Some plan carefully. Others react to the moment and go where it takes them.

My choice of living life with no regrets—realizing my own special star still stirs within me. Many journeys have been completed. Many more are waiting. There have been sufferings and awakenings. There has been great joy and bitter pain, as well as the equilibrium of just plain day-to-day living. Is my story really so different than many?

I've learned many things about flourishing in the world around me since those early days. I've learned that living with no regrets doesn't necessarily mean trying to do it all, all the time. Living with no regrets means knowing who I am and how I want to conduct my days. It means realizing what makes me happy, and what makes my life rich. It means living uncompromisingly to make that happen.

How do we get there? How do we get *balance*? It seems like such an overused word. How many times have you said you need to get balanced? How many times has one of your friends told you she or he is striving for balance? How many times has a good friend or loved one cautioned you about being sure you create balance for yourself? And, how many times have you tried to create it for yourself but failed? How many times have you started over?

I think some people equate balance with structure and being in control. After all, if in control one can direct each and every day and minimize stress and confusion—that's true. But, what about the surprises? What about the richness of life which comes from new experiences just around the corner? What about the bank teller you meet who tells you a joke to make you laugh, or the child and mother with whom you strike up a conversation in the park just because you found a park bench on which to eat a sandwich on a nice sunny day? What about the phone call you weren't expecting from a friend with news of her newest grandchild or the death of a parent?

If living a balanced life means one which is predictable, count me out. Surely it is good to know what we can count on. Surely it is good to know that we will be secure in case of flood, famine, fire or some other natural devastation. Surely a certain balance of fun, work, relaxation and spirit is desired and promotes longer, healthier living.

Linda Rendleman, M.S.

All are good! But, I believe the stuff of life that brings us balance is the variety. Knowing who we are and how we want to spend our time day to day and acting on that knowledge **defines balance**. If I want to spend 12 hours a day working on a project for which I am passionate, that gives me a sense of satisfaction, and creates my own special balance, I will. And, if I choose to say “no” to requests that will task me and take me off course from my goals, I will. Whatever I do to create balance and turn off all interference is what I will do.

I believe balance, steadiness or stability is a personal thing. In this section you'll find more ideas on creating and maintaining your own personal equilibrium.